Exploring the experiences of South Asian students in undergraduate programmes: a case study in a New Zealand university

Ali Rasheed

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

2019

School of Social Sciences and Public Policy

Abstract

South Asians are a minority group generally reported in New Zealand as part of the category 'Asian'. Studies in New Zealand have raised questions about how the huge diversity of peoples from Asia or from Asian backgrounds can be covered by the generic term 'Asian'. The process of acknowledging and accepting South Asians as a minority group has been an ongoing debate globally. This thesis focuses on domestic South Asian students in New Zealand universities by asking:

- What measures have been successful in improving outcomes for domestic South Asian undergraduate students at AUT?

This research reported in this thesis used a single case study approach to study domestic South Asian students enrolled in bachelors programmes at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). The study used mixed modes of data collection, both qualitative and quantitative, to conduct the research. Analysis of quantitative data found that there has been a growth in the domestic South Asian population in the Auckland region but an underrepresentation of this population in bachelor's degree enrolments at AUT. Furthermore, domestic South Asian students' degree completion rates in AUT are below the university average rate of completion. However, the lack of sufficiently detailed data means these problems are largely masked by South Asian students being subsumed into the category 'Asian'. Universities in New Zealand and institutions in the tertiary education system more generally, need to collect more fine-grained data so that the performance of different groups of students can be observed and responded to appropriately where necessary.

Interviews with 16 participants from academic and professional staff at AUT and two focus groups with nine domestic South Asian students studying at AUT, were carried out and participants invited to share their experiences. Staff shared their experiences of teaching and supporting students and the students shared their current experiences of their study journey at AUT. Four themes emerged from the qualitative data: 1) the absence of fine-grained data to inform participation and completion of domestic South Asian students in undergraduate programs; 2) issues with academic and support services offered to students; 3) the absence of South Asians in university policy and strategy; and 4) a lack of acceptance

and acknowledgement that meant participants felt difficulty in integrating into and feeling part of the wider student body. In addition, as a minority group, students encountered financial hardship when combining work and study, and if they did not have targeted financial support or scholarships. Despite efforts made by AUT to provide academic and pastoral support to students overall, this study finds that minority domestic South Asian students within the broader Asian group are struggling and the lack of adequate support for these students has serious implications for them, and for universities such as AUT.

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Glossary of terms

Term	Description
Aotearoa	Name of New Zealand in te reo Māori.
ARION	Administrative and Registry Information Online (AUT's student management system).
Assessment	The procedures used to determine a student's knowledge and performance in respect of the paper learning outcomes.
ATI	Auckland Technical Institute (former name for Auckland University of Technology).
AuSM	Auckland Student Movement (AUT Student Association before 2019).
AUT	Auckland University of Technology.
AUT Chinese Centre	Free mentoring service for Chinese students for academic and pastoral support.
AUTEC	AUT Ethics Committee.
AUTonline	AUT's learning management system based on "Blackboard".
AUTSA	AUT Student Association.
Bachelor's degree	An undergraduate degree qualification conferred on persons who have completed a structured course of study that builds on prior qualifications or study and has a total value of not less than 360 points, where each paper in the course is usually worth 15 points.
Blackboard	Interactive learning tool used by AUT in a web-based learning environment.
CMS	An approach to transform teachers into facilitators for meaningful student engagement and the development of critical, creative, and ethical behaviour (Morellato, 2014, p. 185).
Decile (School)	School deciles indicate the extent to which the school draws their students from low socio-economic communities.
Disability Services	Service to provide specialised and pastoral support to students with a disability or impairment.
DRO	Disability Resource Office.
EEdO	Equal Educational Opportunities.
EFTS	Equivalent full-time student. It is the main unit of measurement of the production and consumption of education, and the basis for provider subsidies.
Entry-level Criteria	The requirements students will have to meet for undergraduate entry.
Equity Funding	A New Zealand government payment per EFTS to SAC-funded providers for enrolments of Māori and Pasifika students and students with

	disabilities studying at any level.
Equity Groups	Māori, Pasifika and students with disabilities.
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages.
Faculty Board	The board appointed by the Academic Board in accord with the University's General Academic Statute to monitor educational development within a Faculty.
FTE	Full-time equivalent.
GPA	Grade point average.
Graduate	A student who has met the university's requirements and has been awarded a qualification.
Investment Plan	A plan under section 159P of the New Zealand Education Act 1989, written by a TEO and negotiated with TEC as a funding contract.
ITMOSS	Integrated Team Model of Student Success.
KEYS papers	Papers offered for all first year undergraduate students to build confidence and skills to tackle their assignments through Te Tari Āwhina (available until 2012).
Learning Advisors	Staff who provide academic assistance to students in their study. This includes elements such as study skills development, and assistance with assignments, oral presentations, exam preparation, etc.
Learning Outcomes	Statements of knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate as a result of successfully completing a paper.
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay/Genderqueer/Gender fluid, Bisexual/Bigender, Trans(as an umbrella term)/Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic/Agender/Abrosexual/Abroromantic and the + represents those not fitting into these descriptions.
Māori	Indigenous people of New Zealand (*tangata te whenua).*
Māori Liaison Services	Team of professional and experienced Māori Student Advisors who help Māori students with academic, personal and cultural needs as well as dedicated study spaces.
Marae	Traditional meeting place of Māori, consisting of a courtyard and surrounding buildings.
Monitoring	This includes the collection and analysis of data on all aspects of a programme, identification of good practice and problem areas, and recommendations and / or action plans for improvement.
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority. A Crown entity responsible for maintaining the credibility of educational qualifications in New Zealand.
OECD	Organisation of Economic Commonwealth Development.
OPA	Office of Pacific Advancement.
Orientation	An event organised at the beginning of a semester to welcome new students. Includes an opportunity to

	meet senior students who take the new students on campus tours to familiarise them with facilities and services.
Pākehā	Māori word referring to New Zealander of European descent (thus meaning 'English', 'European' or 'foreign').
Paper	The smallest unit of work in which a student can enrol, identified by a unique code number and delivered by means of lectures, tutorials, seminars, practicals, etc. or in distance learning mode by correspondence or electronically. The length of a paper is generally one semester. In appropriate combinations papers fulfil programme requirements and thus contribute to qualifications.
Pasifika	A word used to refer collectively to people or students who have self-identified as coming from the Pacific Islands or having their ethnicity originating from there.
Pedagogy	Theory, method and practice of teaching.
Peer Mentors	Senior students who give help to students around study subjects and papers. Helping students in developing learning skills by giving them one-on-one tutoring or general academic support.
Plagiarism	Using another person's words, constructs or ideas as one's own without acknowledgement. Any student guilty of plagiarism will be liable to penalties.
Postgraduate	Advanced level of learning above Level 7 in the NZQA framework.
Prerequisite	A requirement that must be met before commencement of study for a particular paper.
Priority Group	Group of people whose participation and success in the tertiary education system is a priority for the New Zealand Government.
Programme	A prescribed set of one or more papers leading to a qualification.
PVC Māori Advancement	Office of Māori Advancement.
SAC	Student achievement component. The largest of New Zealand government's tertiary education funds, used to purchase provider-based tertiary education.
Semester	A period of approximately 15 weeks, of which 12-13 are teaching weeks, and the remainder study leave and/or examination.
Special Supplementary Grant – SSG	Supplementary funding made available to tertiary education institutions to support Māori and Pasifika students in New Zealand.
Student Allowance	A weekly payment to help students cover living expenses while they study based on criteria set out by StudyLink such as parental income or being over the age of 24.
Student Ambassadors	Senior students who help their juniors by coaching them regarding the resources and support services available.

Student Experience Team	A team providing help and supporting students from the time the student accepts the offer of a place at the university to their completion of their last assignment.
Student Hub	Central place for new or returning students to go for help regarding enrolment and welfare. This service can be accessed in person, by phone or email.
Student Wellbeing	Extends pastoral support in medical and counselling services. Provides support in areas relating to diversity, LGBTQIA+ and spirituality related services.
Te Ara Poutama	Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Development.
Te Reo Māori	The Māori language.
Te Tari Āwhina	Name of the Learning Development Centre/Student Learning Centre at AUT until 2012.
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission. TEC is a Crown entity responsible for funding most tertiary education in New Zealand.
TEO	Tertiary education organisation
Tertiary Education Strategy (TES)	A statutory document that describes the New Zealand Government's current and medium-term priorities, and long-term strategic direction, for tertiary education.
Tuition Fee	The price charged by providers to students for tertiary education, usually on a per-course basis.
Universities New Zealand (UNZ)	Operating name for the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors Committee, established under s 240 of the Education Act 1989.
Whānau	Māori word that refers to nuclear or extended family.

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where specifically explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which, to a substantial extent, has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed

Date: 25 March 2020

Dedication

This is for my wife, Fathun, with all my love

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I want to express my gratitude to my supervisor Marilyn Waring, who saved me when I almost gave up my thesis journey because of some challenging circumstances early in my enrolment. I had known Marilyn as a staff member at AUT but did not know her as a supervisor. Since Marilyn became my supervisor, I have thought that if we had more academic staff like her at AUT, every student would be successful.

To my second supervisor, Associate Professor Jennie Billot, thank you for being such a powerful inspiration and for your constant questioning which has helped me to think more critically about my thesis topic. Both my supervisors have had so much confidence in me and have helped me to complete my doctoral thesis. I consider it my great good fortune to have had them to guide me in this research. I also would like to thank our exceptional 'Potluck' community that has been a constant team of support. Team members go to any length to assist each other and heartfelt thanks go to the leader Marilyn. I believe that this is a successful model of mentoring that aligns with Tinto's (1993) theory of persistence and integration.

This thesis would not have been possible without the help of numerous colleagues, and family members'. Naming everyone who has been part of this journey is not possible, but I would like to say a special thanks to the staff and students of AUT who accepted my invitation to participate in this research and whose generosity and honesty has made this journey successful. I thank Dr David Parker who has been a mentor and a strong supporter of the cause of student success, for his insightful comments, and for helping me in proofing my draft. Thanks to AUT Strategy and Planning for allowing me to use the student database that enabled me to access quantitative data.

Finally, and most importantly this is for my sons Rishwan and Farish and my daughter Fara, who have really supported me throughout the journey and through the highs and lows in this mission, and for my dearest loving mother who recently passed away and had always dreamt of having one of her children complete higher studies – unfortunately she could be here to witness her dream come true.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

English-speaking countries such as the United States of America (USA), Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and New Zealand spend a substantial amount of their resources on providing university or college education. For example, in 2016 the New Zealand government expenditure on universities per student was NZ$10,436 (Education Counts, 2018a). As a result, policymakers in these countries are concerned about their students' success. For example, in New Zealand, a Ministry of Education report stated that the domestic student eight-year qualification completion rate for full timers was 73% (Education Counts, 2018a, p. 6).

This thesis is concerned with enquiring into the question "What measures have been successful in improving outcomes for domestic South Asian undergraduate students at AUT?"

The New Zealand government's economic rationale for supporting ethnic minority groups to succeed in education is to move the majority of the youth population from extremely low-paid jobs to skilled and high-paid employment. The Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019, Priority 3, stated that:

> To grow these benefits, we need to ensure that all individuals from all backgrounds have the opportunity to realise their talents through tertiary education. … Government expects that activity of this kind will continue to be built upon so that all learners experience an inclusive tertiary education system that supports achievement and therefore improves outcomes from study. (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment & Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 16)

As a consequence, the Tertiary Education Commission imposes financial penalties on universities that have low completion rates, and low rates of completion also put their future share of government funding at risk.

Universities spend large amounts of money on advertising and other processes to recruit students. Universities are moving to a more competitive market where students as consumers are demanding their rights to taxpayer dollars. Therefore, retaining enrolled students for the period of their programme of study is in the interest of every university (Featherman, 2015; R. S. Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999; Raisman, 2009).

The research reported in this thesis is concerned with these important issues of student enrolment, retention and success. However, I take a particular perspective on these issues which derives from my own experience, as I explain in the next section.

1.2 Why this research?

Ethnic minority student success, in terms of their under-achievement, has been a continuing issue internationally, with little progress being made (Sanders & Rose-Adams, 2014). Completing a review of the extensive literature on widening participation in higher education, Moore, Sanders, and Higham (2013) concluded that better data is integral to evaluating outcomes from widening gaps in participation so as to inform the setting up of support services for underrepresented groups and thus to enhance retention and success. The study reported in this thesis also focuses on this area of concern, specifically for Auckland University of Technology (AUT) as it faces the challenge to provide good educational outcomes to diverse groups of students and endeavours to be the university of choice for the diverse peoples in New Zealand.

Enrolment growth in higher education has increased over time, but persistence, retention and graduation rates continue to stagnate. (Tinto, 2017a); Tinto (2017b) stated that a student's persistence is determined by factors far beyond interactions with others on campus: it relates to the academic and social environment of an entire institution that leads to completion by students from different backgrounds and with different attributes. Research on student persistence in higher education has found that academic assistance in supporting students not

only helps students to achieve their potential but it also helps institutions to achieve excellence and increase financial viability (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Metz, 2004; Tinto, 2017b).

As a study of these issues, this research is an exploration of the experiences of domestic South Asian students studying in undergraduate programmes at AUT. My research has two main objectives. The first objective is to examine differences in educational outcomes for domestic South Asian students enrolled in bachelor's programmes, in relation to the average amount of students completing these programmes. The second objective is to explore the learners' experiences of both academic and non-academic support services available to South Asian students in the university.

1.2.1 Personal motivation

I come from a chain of islands in the Indian Ocean called the Maldives, situated south-west of Sri Lanka and India. There are 1,190 islands of which 202 are inhabited. These islands are geographically divided into 19 groupings called atolls. During the early 1970s the Maldives did not have a tertiary level education system. The only education available in the country was limited to secondary education in the English medium. After secondary studies, students were employed in the public sector. Private sector employment was limited and disorganised. Besides the schooling system being publicly financed, there was a requirement to work for five years upon completion. Therefore, when I completed my secondary studies, I was employed in the public sector. After four years of working in public service, I was awarded a scholarship to do a Diploma in Statistics in India at the Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata (known as Calcutta at that time). It was my first experience with tertiary studies outside of my country. Following that, I had opportunities to do my undergraduate studies in Adelaide, South Australia, and postgraduate studies in Auckland, New Zealand. All these educational opportunities were funded through overseas aid bilateral scholarships. I met many students

from other countries, including other students from South Asia, who were doing their studies in the same institutions. Interactions with fellow minority students reassured me that we were sharing similar experiences.

I completed my postgraduate studies in New Zealand and returned to the Maldives in 1999. I started working again in the public sector. This was when my children completed their secondary studies and wanted to do tertiary level studies. I wanted to give them the opportunity to do their tertiary studies; however, I did not have the financial capacity to send them abroad for tertiary education as full fee paying international students. Therefore, weighing up my options, I decided to migrate to New Zealand to provide tertiary education for my three children. So, in 2002, I moved to Auckland, New Zealand, along with my wife and three children. Since coming to Auckland, my children and my wife have completed their undergraduate studies at AUT.

Reflecting upon my own experience and the experiences of my family members while completing their undergraduate degrees, I realised the difficulties we encountered in tertiary studies as members of a minority community. I saw that it was important to have additional support for ethnic minority students because we come with different value systems and cultures to study in predominantly Eurocentric institutions.

In 2002, I acquired a job at AUT and worked at the Centre for Equity Development as an Equity and Diversity Co-ordinator. In this job, my prime responsibility was to support and report on initiatives established to improve Māori and Pasifika students outcomes. During the past 14 years of supporting and reporting on ethnic minority students statistics at AUT, I have developed an understanding of the issues ethnic minorities face in tertiary education and the support that is available.

Once of the important issues I will address in this thesis is the silencing of minorities, particularly in tertiary education. Before considering silence in theoretical terms, I want to

reflect on silence as an aspect of my own life. Personally, I did not choose to be silent on matters that affected me, but I was silent because I had lived and experienced different forms of silence throughout my life, until more recently I had started experiencing the reverse, the power of speaking out. The more I progressed in university doctoral study and experienced being part of a community of research students and other scholars, and because of the trust and inclusiveness I feel in that community, I have almost broken the silence.

The word 'silence' echoes all throughout my life. As a child growing up I have been taught to be obedient, to not speak to my own father until he speaks to me. I have frequently witnessed the fear in my mum's face in my father's presence, and how she would ask us to remain silent. Religious preaching given to me in mosques and madharsahs, the absolute expectation that I would be polite and respectful to the teachers or preachers, taught me to remain silent. In my schooling at primary and secondary levels I was trained to accept what is taught and not to question why. With this background and upbringing, my own experience of undergraduate days in an Australian university was of sitting in a tutorial and trying to hide myself because the tutor wanted me to be part of discussions. Therefore, I can easily relate to the focus groups of undergraduate students I encountered in my research who do not have the confidence to speak and therefore feel silenced.

Thus my research emerges from my experience as a minority student at universities in Australia and New Zealand and as an Equity and Diversity Co-ordinator in a university in New Zealand, in the context of a tertiary education system that pays keen attention to student enrolment, retention and success. The following section clarifies the research focus more precisely.

1.3 Context of the case

1.3.1 Introduction

AUT was established on January 1, 2000, and became the eighth university in New Zealand. AUT was formerly a polytechnic college that provided trades and technical training. It was founded as the Auckland Technical School in 1895, then in 1913 became Seddon Memorial Technical College, as it is known by many of the older generation. The name was changed to Auckland Technical Institute (ATI) in 1963, and then again to Auckland Institute of Technology in 1989, offering advanced vocational education until it became Auckland University of Technology, the youngest university and the first polytechnic to become a university in New Zealand under the Education Act 1989.[1] It has three campuses, the main campus in Auckland Central Business District, North Shore campus across the harbour bridge and the most recent addition, the South Campus in Manukau, New Zealand. AUT has five faculties and 17 schools, as listed in Table 1.1, below.

Table 1.1 AUT faculties and schools

Faculty	**School**
Faculty of Business, Economics and Law	Business School
	Law School
	School of Economics
Faculty of Culture and Society	School of Education
	School of Hospitality and Tourism
	School of Language and Culture
	School of Social Sciences and Public Policy
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies	School of Art and Design
	School of Communication Studies
	School of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences
	Colab: Creative Technologies
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences	School of Clinical Sciences
	School of Interprofessional Health Studies
	School of Public Health and Psychosocial Studies
	School of Science
	School of Sport and Recreation
Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Development	Te Ara Poutama

[1] The Education Act 1989 S162 (4) a i, specifies that a university "is primarily concerned with more advanced learning, the principle aim being intellectual independence" where "more advanced learning" is deemed by most interpretations to refer to degree and postgraduate education as opposed to other levels of tertiary education.

When it began operating as a university in 2000, AUT was well known as the university that had small class room sizes with a more interactive and student-centred learning environment. Now it has grown to 29,166 students in 2018 and hosts large lecture theatres and tutorial groups of increased size.

1.3.2 Secondary school partnership activities

AUT plays an important role in working in partnership with secondary schools in and around Auckland. AUT has a team of relationship managers who make programme guides available to secondary students in Auckland. These help students to plan their next step after secondary school. AUT invites Year 12 and 13 students from secondary schools to visit the university and meet members of the Future Students Team, who take these potential university students on campus tours to introduce them to the campus and the activities of AUT. Secondary school students are also given an opportunity to participate in interactive workshops, where they engage with and learn about university timetabling and the assessment processes of the university, and meet with academic staff. AUT also offers secondary school students scholarships to study at AUT. Academic staff of AUT visit secondary school prize-giving events and introduce opportunities for students who want to study at AUT. In addition, various AUT Schools also offer secondary school students opportunities to engage in university activities such as shadowing a leader, which is an opportunity to gain insight from the current generation of Auckland business leaders for a day.

AUT offers several support and preparation services to students both within the university's schools and outside the schools in the Student Services Division and the Library. These services range from direct academic learning support in schools to pastoral support for the welfare of students.

1.3.3 Services for AUT students pre-2012 (old model)

In the model of services for students which operated until 2012, services were delivered by specific specialised units operated by the Student Services Division. In this model, students' enrolments in their courses of study and papers were carried out by schools. Schools had Registrars, Managers, and School Administrative staff to support students in their enrolment and other course administration processes. The Student Services Division provided specialised support divisions for Māori, Pasifika, international, Chinese and students with disabilities providing academic and non-academic support, as well as a general academic support team, Te Tari Āwhina (in English, the Learning Development Centre), which was the key driver of academic support provided to the students outside the faculties. There was also specialised support for students on matters related to finance, careers, health and counselling.

1.3.4 Te Tari Āwhina's role in academic support for students

Te Tari Āwhina had been in operation since 1989. It offered courses that provided generic academic skills required for the students using Learning Advisors. Key courses offered by the centre included time management, academic reading, note taking, planning and writing assignments, and referencing and how to avoid plagiarism. These courses provided students with a foundation for understanding the assessments in their papers, for understanding the requirements of assignment tasks such as reports, essays or presentations, as well as editing, revising and proof-reading skills.

It was felt to be important to have this student academic support service because academic staff in the schools had identified gaps in the provision of learning support, especially at the beginning of students' tertiary study. Parallel student support programmes alongside mainstream programmes help students to develop generic learning skills required for their specific course of study (Manalo, Marshall, & Fraser, 2010).

Learning Advisors in Te Tari Āwhina concentrated on core learning skills rather than specific discipline support. These core learning skills were in the areas of English, Te Reo Māori and Mathematics. Te Tari Āwhina staff found that students also required discipline-specific support in addition to core academic skills. Therefore a peer mentoring programme involving senior students was started, appointing students who had previously completed the papers (usually to an A-grade standard) in a particular programme, to give content support to first- and second-year students in that same programme. These peer mentors were helpful in sharing knowledge about the papers new students were studying, and the assignments they had to complete, but also other matters such as buying second-hand textbooks, time management and accommodation. These tutors were supervised and paid by Te Tari Āwhina who ensured the peer tutors had good teaching skills and were monitored regularly.

Te Tari Āwhina also provided one-to-one learning skills tuition using email and the materials available on their website, and also through meetings arranged by an administrator at Te Tari Āwhina offices. These sessions were offered as 'drop-in' sessions and by appointment. This service helped students to meet assignment deadlines and to develop academic English skills. However, since the Learning Advisors' workloads were high, they often found it difficult to accommodate all students requiring appointments. The drop-in services were terminated in the mid-2000s because it was felt that they were used inappropriately by some students who were leaving their work until the very last minute and then coming in with assignments and seeking help without having done much prior work. Meetings by appointment did, however, continue to be offered as before.

When the Māori name, Te Tari Āwhina, was dropped, it was changed to the Student Learning Centre and then there was a period of constant review and restructuring. Between 2012 and 2018 there were significant changes to the way the university was providing services to the students.

Post-2012, AUT decided to restructure the Student Learning Centre and eventually the centre was moved from the Student Services Division to the Library. The peer mentor programme, however, remained within the Student Services Division as the Learning Communities team.

1.3.5 Services for students post-2012 (new model)

The new model has two parts and is designed to bring all services together into a high-traffic student space, similar to places where students access other services such as the library and ICT. It is designed to address students' cultural diversity needs through a cohesive, centrally located service, which includes both generalist and specialist services. This is a 'student hub' model where the focus is on accessibility of support and where any staff member in the Student Hub is equipped to provide front-line support. It is a one-stop shop model and a hub providing these services is placed in each campus. Everything that is called a service for students is in one division. The Student Hub Advisors help students with their study enrolment or administrative needs, or personal needs, by either solving the issue on the spot or referring the student to the right person on campus.

In the current model Learning Advisors have been moved out of Student Services and made part of the Library Services Division, as seen in Table 1.2. Learning Advisors' contacts with students have changed from the old Te Tari Āwhina model. Now Learning Advisors are in direct contact with students for drop-in sessions only, which are limited to one hour per day on each campus during the semester. Drop-in meetings are restricted to 15 minutes per student and two meetings per semester. Learning Advisors will not proof read or check students' work. The Learning Advisors' role in the new model is to work primarily with academic staff in schools to integrate information on academic literacies into papers.

Going back seven years, all services for students were provided by the Student Services Division. During the transition period from 2012 to 2018 there was rapid change and a lot of academic staff found it difficult to keep informed about the changes that had taken place. The

students who were in my focus group had not gone through this change and they could not make any comparison between their own experience and earlier service arrangements.

Table 1.2 Changes of student support service from the old to the new model

Service	Old Model	New Model
AUT Chinese Centre	AUT Chinese Centre	AUT Chinese Centre
Career Service	Student Advising and Careers	Employability Lab
Counselling, Medical and Mental Health Support	Health and Counselling	Counselling, Medical and Mental Health
Disability Support Services	Disability Resource office	Student Hub
Financial Support	Financial Services	Student Hub
International Student Support	International Student Support	Student Hub
Learning Advisors	Te Tari Āwhina	Library Service
Student Advisors	Student Advising	Student Hub
Māori Student Support	Māori Liaison Service	Māori Student Support
Pacific student support	Pasifika Student Support	Office for Pasifika Advancement
Peer Tutors	Te Tari Āwhina	Learning Communities
Spiritual and Religious Support	Health and Counselling	Spiritual and Religious Support
Student enrolment in programmes and papers	Schools	Student Hub

So it may sometimes happen that, when a student has a problem, the academic staff refer them to Te Tari Āwhina, not realising that it does not exist any more. Hence, students get confused about what services are available. As students, they are interested only in knowing about the services they can use now.

1.3.6 Targeted support for students

AUT has been providing targeted support for different groups of students. Three of these groups are Māori students, Pasifika students and Chinese students, with each group offered a range of services and activities. The support available to Māori and Pasifika students was a result of an initiative by the New Zealand government. In November 2000 the Associate Minister of Education (Tertiary) announced that supplementary funding was to be made available to tertiary education institutions. It was to be used to supplement new or existing support services for enrolled Māori and Pasifika students and was to be specifically focused on improving the retention, pass and staircasing rates of those students.

In response, AUT established a centre, and support structures in Faculties and Schools to support Māori and Pasifika students to close the gaps between universities all-student averages and Māori and Pasifika successful completion retention and progression rates. After operating this system for 14 years, the university decided to disestablish the central equity role and hand over responsibility to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) Māori and the Office of Pacific Advancement (OPA) to review the efficacy of the strategies to improve success rates of Māori and Pasifika students. Later, in 2017, the PVCs Māori and OPA decided to pull the funding out from faculties and use it for postgraduate activities.

Targeted assistance for Chinese students is offered by AUT's Chinese Centre. The Chinese Centre provides pastoral and academic assistance for students from ethnic Chinese backgrounds.

The significance of this background information on the support available to the targeted groups will become apparent later in the thesis. These targeted services may not be relevant to the South Asian experience, but they provide examples of what is possible in terms of targeted support.

1.3.7 A note on terminology

Terminology used in this thesis that refers to tertiary/higher/further education is employed in accordance with the preferred term in the geographical context of the research, policy, etc that is being discussed. The terms 'tertiary education'/'higher education'/'further education' refer to all forms of post-secondary education, including university study (Bok, 2015; R. J. Crawford, 2016; Thomas, 2016). The preferred term in New Zealand is 'tertiary education'.

1.3.8 Summary

Some staff who were interviewed as key informants remember the old model for student services. In the old model the Learning Advisors were focused on students and on providing core study skills directly to students; by contrast, in the new model, the focus of the Learning Advisors is on teaching core skills by working with academic staff in the schools.

For the purpose of my research, it is important to understand the history and present arrangements of both academic and non-academic support for students. As the above description has made clear, there was a period in the past when students had individual consultations with Learning Advisors. In their interviews, some of the lecturers were referring to the old method of supporting students which is no longer available. The students who were interviewed in this research do not know that there were services different to what is currently available to them.

1.4 Research focus

Asia is a large continent and Asians are a large and heterogeneous group of people. Asia can be divided geographically into six different zones (Wikipedia, 2019). They are:

1. Central Asia
2. East Asia
3. North Asia

4. South-East Asia
5. West Asia
6. South Asia

My research is focused on people from South Asian countries. There are discussions in the literature on South Asian groupings and zoning. Some scholars include Myanmar (formerly Burma) in the list of countries of South Asia (Wikipedia, 2019). However, I have taken the countries that are included by the political and economic organisation that was established in 1985 under the banner of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In other words, my research is focused on people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

This research has come to fruition because of my interest and interaction with family and friends who have shared their own experiences as minority students coming from one of the countries in South Asia who have migrated to New Zealand. The purpose of the research is to listen to the voices of this group, and find out how their academic journeys can be made seamless and successful.

1.5 Purpose of the study

When I think about university education, I usually look at successes and address the teaching and learning that take place. Intermediate transactions that take place in the process do not get reported, because the reporting is done usually by the providers or funders. In my research I look from the opposite perspective, by asking how students receive services and how they perceive other experiences.

This research focuses on domestic South Asian students in Auckland who either are first-generation immigrants or have South Asian heritage. A domestic student in New Zealand is defined by the Ministry of Education (Education, 2013) as a New Zealand citizen or the holder of a residence visa granted under the Immigration Act 2009 (Parliament Counsel Office, 2009).

The reason for choosing domestic students is that they are part of the New Zealand population and their fees are subsidised by the New Zealand government, whereas international students are usually from affluent families who pay the full tuition fees and who are only in New Zealand for the period of their study. The growth in the numbers of domestic South Asian students in New Zealand and the challenges they face as a group are reviewed by examining relevant quantitative data on educational outcomes against university performance measures. Qualitative data will also help New Zealand universities to understand the experiences of domestic South Asian students whilst studying, and will assist the universities in better serving this group. Their success as a group will lift the success of the university and the wider society.

1.6 Research questions

In broad terms, the purpose of this research is to examine educational outcomes for domestic South Asian students and to analyse their experiences during their academic journey.

More specifically, my proposed research has two objectives. The first objective is to examine differences between academic outcomes for domestic South Asian students enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes and university-wide average outcomes in these programmes. The second objective is to explore domestic undergraduate South Asian students' experiences of both academic and non-academic support services at AUT.

Drawing these two objectives together, the primary research question is:

- What measures have been successful in improving outcomes for domestic South Asian undergraduate students at AUT?

And the sub-questions are:

1. What are the key trends in participation and outcomes for domestic South Asian students enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes?

2. What are the experiences of support services that are available for domestic South Asian students at AUT?
3. What makes domestic South Asian students successful?

1.7 Overview of thesis structure

1.7.1 Introduction

This first chapter has given an overview of the thesis topic, beginning by outlining the background to my research, followed by an explanation of the motivation, context and focus of my study. Finally, the main research question was stated, followed by sub-questions to be investigated in this research.

1.7.2 Literature review

In Chapter 2, I examine how, as South Asian people, we are defined as a minority group in New Zealand, and I position my study based on New Zealand and international literature.

1.7.3 Review of Theoretical literature

Chapter 3 explores literature and theories pertinent to the research. It provides theoretical frameworks for the research by drawing on relevant concepts and theory.

1.7.4 Methodology and methods

Chapter 4 has two parts; the first one is the methodology. Here I outline why I have decided to use a case study methodology as a methodological framework for this study, and explore the nature of inquiry and the philosophical origins of my approach.

The second part of Chapter 4 explains the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. In this part of the chapter I describe how I went about selecting the participants, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After describing the methods used for data analysis I address the ethical considerations in respect of the participants in the study.

1.7.4 Findings of the research

Research findings are presented in the next four chapters, 5-8. Chapter 5 quantitative data analysis is presented and followed by the document analysis in chapter 6. Key informant interviews with AUT academic and support staff are presented in Chapter 7 while the student focus group findings are set out in Chapter 8.

1.7.5 Discussion and conclusions

In the last two chapters, 9 and 10, I present my interpretation of the findings, and then I draw out some key themes that emerge from the research. As I was finishing work on the thesis the mosque attack of 15 March 2019, occurred in Christchurch, New Zealand, and this incident has considerable relevance to my research. As a Muslim, it affected me personally. The terrorist attack also gave rise to a serious debate about racism in New Zealand, and highlighted incidents where the Muslim community was not listened to, and effectively silenced. So in the discussion chapter I have included some reflections and commentary that appeared in the aftermath of the attack. I also outline the significance of this research, along with the limitations of the same, and the applicability of the methodology. I have outlined the key recommendations that come out of my research before looking at some pointers for future research. I conclude by reflecting on my own journey.

1.8 Chapter summary

The chapter began with an explanation of my rationale for doing this research and then set out the two main objectives. I have stated the main research question and the sub-questions that will help to achieve the objectives of this research. The contribution of this study and its benefits to New Zealand universities and the wider society is outlined in this chapter. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the contents of this thesis.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter an overview of the literature that addresses the research question in this thesis is provided. Key issues that arise in these empirical studies are addressed further in Chapter Three, the review of the theoretical literature. These literature reviews have been a guide to addressing the research question and discussions in the forthcoming chapters.

The following are the topics covered in the literature reviewed.

1- Minority students
2- Ethnic minority education
3- Access
4- Engagement
5- Support
6- Retention
7- Completion
8- Use of language
9- Mentors and mentoring

Under each topic, I identified the themes emerging, and I have analysed and discussed them in the context of my research. First, I consider the definition of 'minority student' and I report on the experience of refugees in education, particularly in tertiary education in New Zealand. I then examine some of the challenges facing minority students addressed in the education research literature. The central sections of this chapter examine the literature on student access, support, retention and completion, I conclude the literature review by summarising the key issues of significance to my thesis, and those more specific to this study. These issues are namely the use of the English language in the classroom and the role of mentors and mentoring in supporting minority students.

Defining my research population was the first task of this project. Asia is the world's largest continent with a population that represents a diversity of people belonging to multiple cultures, religions, and ethnic groups. The focus of my research is the southern region of Asia, that is known as South Asia.

South or southern Asia represents the eight countries of the Indian geological plate that economically grouped themselves in 1985, and re-grouped in 2007, and named themselves the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) (SAARC, 2019, para. 1). These eight member countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. South Asia is reported to cover 2.5% of the world's surface area and is the world's most densely populated region, with 17% of the world's population claiming it as their homeland (Goswami, 2018, para. 4). International publications and associations such as the World Fact Book, the World Bank and the United Nations international Children's Fund (UNICEF) recognise this grouping of nations and publish reports on this region. For example, the World Bank has a web page reporting on South Asia called "The World Bank in South Asia" (The World Bank, 2019) and UNICEF demonstrates this on their webpage "UNICEF South Asia in action" (UNICEF, 2019). The submerging of India into the wider region has also led to the naming of this group of countries as the Indian subcontinent, and sometimes the terms 'Indian subcontinent' and 'South Asia' are used interchangeably for this group of countries or their peoples.

With clarity around a definition of the research population established, the literature search could proceed. Literature was accessed using AUT Library databases, and focused on ethnic minority students in higher or tertiary education. Resources in journals, books, conference papers, theses, and reports were included. A total of 680 scholarly books, reports and peer-reviewed English-language articles were examined, consisting of 98 books, 10 conference papers, eight theses, 54 reports, and 510 journal articles. Of these, 90% were published during

the period 2009-2018. Common themes found in the literature reviewed in this chapter are divided into four broad areas: access, support, retention, and completion for ethnic minority students in higher education.

There is dearth of literature on domestic South Asian education in New Zealand. Indeed, research done in New Zealand about minority students, other than for Māori and Pacific students in the university context has been limited. As Cao and Maloney (2017) noted:

> There is a more extensive literature on racial and ethnic differences in university retention, dropout, and graduation rates in the USA (e.g., see Rask 2010; Singell and Waddell 2010) and other countries (e.g., see for Canada: Cyrenne and Chan 2012; Italy: Belloc et al. 2010; and UK: Rodgers 2013). … There has been relatively little analysis of ethnic differences in university outcomes in New Zealand. (p. 567)

As there is no literature in New Zealand on South Asian students (as defined in this research), I have therefore drawn on research done internationally. Many of the studies reviewed here have been conducted in Europe, USA and Australia. However, many of these studies have used different definitions to define South Asian people as a group. The majority of the studies focus on Asians, but how this term is understood seems to vary across Europe, USA and Australia.

There are encyclopedic volumes of academic commentary on the concepts of 'ethnic' and 'minority'. Sociologists define 'minority' as "as representing a racial, ethnic or religious group that differs from the controlling group in a society" (Nibert, 1996, p. 129). Nibert has two important clasifications 1) a minority share a distinctive identity based on physical or cultural traits, and 2) minorities have a lower status and so do not have equal access to services. Size is not the determining factor; a majority can be a minority, it is a question of power (Nibert, 1996).

A study that was conducted in Illinois on the adjustment of ethnic minority students to US schools stated that "among college students from minority backgrounds, two factors related to belonging to a group, a sense of school belonging and ethnic identity" (Gummadam,

Pittman, & Ioffe, 2016, p. 289). The researchers found that it was difficult to combine these factors for the purposes of a grouping. In their study, Gummadam et al. (2016) used Phinney's definition of ethnic identity as "an enduring, fundamental aspect of the self that includes a sense of membership in an ethnic group and the attitudes and feelings associated with that membership" (p. 291). Defining ethnicity is complex, specifically, those with a stronger identity have been found to have a clearer commitment and sense of belonging to their group (Roberts et al., 1999). Ethnic identity is a dynamic construct involving exploration and commitment that develops over time (Phinney, 1996) and is a part of a person's inner feelings, daily experiences, and interpersonal interactions (Gaylord-Harden, Ragsdale, Mandara, Richards, & Petersen, 2007). For the purposes of this thesis, an ethnic minority student refers to a domestic New Zealand student from one of the seven South Asian countries.

2.2 Minority students

A discussion on the literature on minority students, with a focus on how that literature is defined begins this section. As this research is centred in New Zealand universities, the focus on literature associated with how minorities are defined in the context of New Zealand is emphasized. This section will discuss defining domestic students into groupings and the implications of this.

2.2.1 Definition of minority students

The most commonly used definition of minorities is in the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities 1992, which identifies minorities as "Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities" (United Nations Human Rights, 1996, p. Part 2). Broadly, however, looking at the various definitions used elsewhere, the notion of minority captures the idea of members of a non-dominant group in a situation that demonstrates an imbalance in power (Altbach, Arnold,

& King, 2014). It is a term that is both fluid and transformative, depending on the context in which it is used.

One minority group which is of particular interest for this research is migrants. Ogbu and Simons (1998) who studied minority education in Britain, India, Israel, Japan , New Zealand and the United States for 28 years, wrote that migrants can be classified as “autonomous, voluntary or immigrant, and involuntary or non-immigrant minorities” (p.155). In the first 15 years the study focused on school performance of minority and dominant groups (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). The author found that voluntary migrants are those communities who moved to a country to seek better opportunities than in their homelands, who usually succeed in life. Voluntary migrants also face hurdles on the road to survival; however, they adjust and work to fulfill their dreams. On the other hand, involuntary migrants are people such as refugees or those who were colonised, subjected to oppression or “forced to be part of the majority” (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Some involuntary migrants do not do well at school in the new country, and believe that they are marginalised and discriminated against (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). This study, while limited to school performances, highlighted differences between voluntary and involuntary migrants.

There are complexities in applying a definition of minority in universities, and yet minority students cannot be categorised into the mainstream student population given their different language, ethnicity, culture or identity. Ethnic identification is a self-nomination process and does not require any cross-referencing or examination. Students identify themselves and nominate their ethnicity, and therefore, “true identity may be over or under-reported, depending on whether or not the socio-political environment of the country is safe or favorable enough for individuals to identify their minority status” (Dahal, Me, & Bisogno, 2007, p. 6)

Other aspects of the social context can lead to further problems. For example, research conducted by the University of Massachusetts asked what were the effects of labelling Asian Americans as a "model minority" who were successful because of their hard work and determination (F. Wong & Halgin, 2006, p. 45). Their research found that the label was contested by the large Asian community. They did not accept this title as a true representation of them as individuals, Asian Americans are a heterogeneous group. The model minority label prevented them from seeking any support services they needed (F. Wong & Halgin, 2006). Asian Americans students in higher education colleges struggled with being labelled as the model minority, and with the pressure placed on them by their families to perform well, because of this labelling (F. Wong & Halgin, 2006).

Definitions of minority student used in the high school in a US context include the Harry and Klingner (2014) definition of "culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD)" and "students of color" (p. xvi). However, this definition falls short as it does not take into account other aspects of identity such as gender, religious affiliations and sexual orientation. Nonetheless, most countries in the European Union, for example, define minority using the concept of ethnic origin, so that nationality is associated with the ethnic majority group of the country (Grund & Przemeck, 2011).

There are also difficulties in comparing minority groups across nationalities or countries, due to how majority and minority populations have emerged, the different terminologies used in measurement and data collection regarding minority education, and finally simply the lack of availability of any data at all. This research focuses on South Asian students as a minority group, and in the next section, I define domestic South Asian student.

2.2.2 Defining domestic South Asian students as a minority group

The previous section identified challenges of looking at the term minority, but I need to look at just South Asian, specifically at the ethnic grouping used by Statistics New Zealand and the

Ministry of Education. Neither of these two sources follows international benchmarking practice for reporting. The definition I have chosen is very clear, and it has a good basis because it is self defining, as South Asian nations themselves chose this definiton. The convention I have used for my research is to use Asian as a major ethnic grouping and then to disaggregate the grouping by country of origin. For my research, it was important to make these clear demarcations, to identify who is included in and excluded from the population of my study.

The definition of ethnic groups used in the thesis is the one used by the TEC and Statistics New Zealand at output reporting of level one. That is to say, Asian is a major ethnic group. South Asians are further disaggregated from the Asian population by their identification as belonging to one or more of the eight countries in South Asia that are member states of SAARC (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) as their country or countries of origin.

Here I have looked at defining that category South Asian as the ethnic group that is used throughout the thesis. In the next section, I will look at refugees as they are a contributing source of South Asian migrants arriving in New Zealand.

2.2.3 Refugees

Refugees were not directly targeted as part of this research. However, the refugee situation does highlight some challenges faced by domestic South Asian students in New Zealand universities. These issues are discussed in chapter 5 of my thesis. Thus, it is important to contextualise the status of refugees in New Zealand.

Migrants and refugees are a major international phenomenon involving the movement of people which has occurred throughout human history. There is a distinction between migrants and refugees: refugees are people who are fleeing persecution, war or violence in their home country, while migrants, on the other hand, are people moving mainly for economic reasons.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines refugees as persons who are forced to flee their home countries to escape serious human rights abuses and other causes of prolonged physical and emotional distress (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006).

New Zealand's first refugee settlement was in 1944; over 800 refugees from war-torn Europe, 732 children and 108 adults arrived in Wellington (New Zealand History, 2016). New Zealand now accepts 1000 refugees per year under the UN's quota programme (New Zealand Immigration, 2018). The New Zealand Immigration website reports that during 12 years from 2007 to 2018, the total number of refugees that arrived in New Zealand was 8535 (New Zealand Immigration, 2018). Over a quarter of the refugees accepted during the past ten years, as reported by Immigration New Zealand, were from six of the eight countries in South Asia as defined in the introduction to this chapter (New Zealand Immigration, 2018). When refugees arrive, permanent residency is given, and they can apply for citizenship (O'Rourke, 2011).

Before they arrive in New Zealand, these refugees may have been in refugee camps, often for years. Therefore, many of them will not have had any formal education or would have lost much of their past knowledge. Refugees on arrival, are granted resident permits and are considered as domestic students for educational purposes in New Zealand. After arrival, many have wanted to enrol with an education provider to get a recognised qualification that will get them a job. Most refugees are enrolled in tertiary education institutions under the discretionary entrance provision because they are over 20 years with permanent residency status (Universities New Zealand, 2008, p. 1). AUT's Centre for Refugee Education also provides a six-week educational programme for refugees (Auckand University of Technology, 2019a) on their arrival.

A study on refugee background students accepted into an Australian university found that those with limited educational experiences from their own countries, would benefit from academic support in the transition to university and require additional support from the

university for them to be successful. Based on the findings of the research, Baker, Ramsay, Irwin, and Miles (2018) argued:

> That the role of universities is to support their staff and SfRBs [students from refugee backgrounds] with the conditions that encourage and nurture trusting relationships. Learning advisors, librarians, counsellors, administrative staff as well as English language support staff should be provided with relevant training and education; universities should seek to participate in the diverse communities in which they reside (fostering a trusted community-wide institutional reputation), and 'warm' support staff should themselves be supported by their institutions in the work they do. (p. 13)

Describing the hurdles many refugee-background students in New Zealand go through in their university journey, (O'Rourke, 2011) argued that "refugee-background students [need] to be recognised as [an] equity group at universities and polytechnics" and that

> refugee-background students entering bridging programmes need support structures to help them deal with obstacles including language, administration, and their perceptions of exclusion by other students and lack, of willingness to help from tutors. (p. 30)

> Refugee-background students are a resource. Not identifying those with potential and supporting them into and through university education is not cost-effective for the country as a whole. Currently, equity policies in education at both ministry and provider level fail to recognize the systemic disadvantage arising from the refugee experience. (p. 33)

In this section, I have looked at defining 'minority student' and then discussed defining South Asians as a group of minority students, migrants and refugees, as a contributing source of South Asian migrants arriving in New Zealand. In section 2.3, I discuss theories and literature related to minority education.

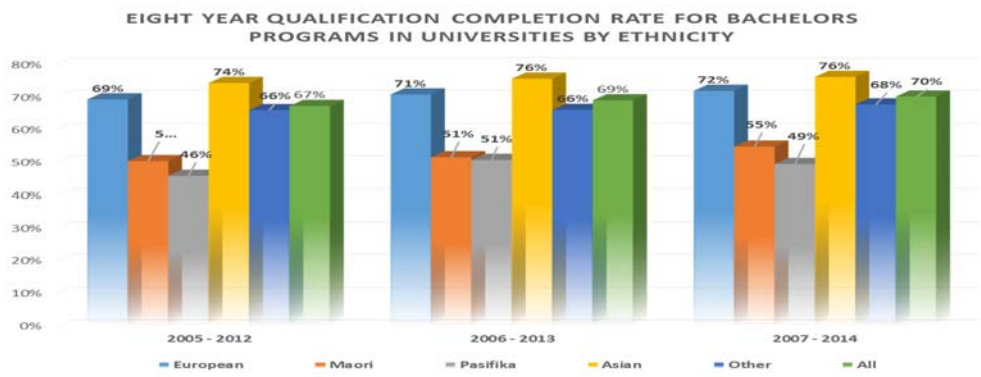
2.3 Ethnic minority education

In this section, I examine challenges that ethnic minority students face in the universities in terms of their inclusivity, integration, and vulnerability.

2.3.1 Challenges

Ethnic minority students' attrition, participation, and success have been an academic challenge to the New Zealand university sector (Curtis et al., 2014; Madjar, McKinley, Deynzer, & Van der Merwe, 2010). New Zealand tertiary education funding for ethnic minority students is limited to Māori and Pasifika students. In 2001 the New Zealand Government funded additional targeted 'support services' to increase academic success for Māori and Pasifika students in the tertiary institutions (Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006). In 2015 the proportion of Māori and Pasifika students enrolled in a bachelor's degree within the university sector was 18% of total enrolments, while the University Auckland had a share of 25%, Waikato University 11% and Auckland University of Technology 23% (Education Counts, 2016). The Education Education Counts (2018b) eight-year qualification completion rates (as seen in Figure 2.1) indicate that only 55% of Māori students and 49% of domestic Pasifika students who started a bachelor's degree in 2007 had completed successfully by the end of 2014.

Figure 2-1. Eight-year qualification completion rates by ethnicity for bachelor's study in New Zealand universities



Most studies undertaken on under-represented or ethnic minority students have suggested that Māori and Pasifika students are more likely to drop out of a bachelor's degree, and are

less likely to complete and progress to higher levels of study than others (Van der Meer, 2011). Despite additional targeted support provided by the TEC for Māori and domestic Pasifika students, there continues to be a gap between the outcomes for Māori and domestic Pasifika students and the university average. Beyond the data shown in Figure 2.1, overall qualification completion rates in 2014 for Māori (66%) and Pasifika (55%) at all levels of study are well below the university average (81%) (Tertiary Education Performance Report, 2014). Findings from a study done in a New Zealand university to investigate the academic success of Māori and Pasifika students in the Bachelor of Health Sciences, Nursing and Pharmacy programmes reported:

> this research demonstrates the impact school results, and socio-demographic factors have on academic outcomes at the tertiary level. Importantly, these factors impact negatively on Māori and Pacific student outcomes to a greater extent than for nMnP [Non-Māori and non-Pacific] students. (Wikaire et al., 2017, p. 322)

The question raised by this present research is, how are other minorities performing? In particular, what happens to domestic South Asian students, who do not receive additional targeted support and who also form an ethnic minority group in the New Zealand university sector? They constituted 4% of domestic students in the university sector in 2016, and 8% at AUT (Ministry of Education, Tertiary Data Warehouse, 2017).

The answer is of interest because, in Chapter 1, in the background on New Zealand tertiary education, I noted the emphasis in Tertiary Education Strategy Priority 3 on providing opportunities for individuals from all backgrounds (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment & Ministry of Education, 2014). Hence the need for this research, in particular, focused on the outcomes for domestic South Asian students, as a response to the strategic priority.

The population of New Zealand is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity. The most recent Census of Population and Dwellings conducted by Statistics New Zealand in 2013

identified 12% of the New Zealand population as Asians, of whom 5% are reported to be South Asians (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). Between the Census of Population and Dwellings in 2006 and 2013, the New Zealand population increased by 5.3%. Population increase in the larger ethnic groupings during the inter-census period was reported to be highest for Asians, with an increase of 33%.

Several scholars (see, for example, Hoffman & Lowitzki, 2005; Strathdee & Engler, 2012; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008) have highlighted the issues ethnic minority students face in gaining access to quality education. As noted earlier, most of the research on ethnic minorities are in English-speaking countries such as the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. The minorities under consideration range from indigenous minorities to people categorised as minorities as a result of being immigrants or refugees (Richter, Chamratrithirong, Niyomsilpa, & Miller, 2012). Some of the reasons for ethnic minority students' under-representation in higher education are racial discrimination, economic hardship, lack of opportunities and inadequate support from higher education institutions (Carter, 2006; Healey & Gunby, 2012; Krahn & Taylor, 2005; Krause, Hartley, James, & McInnis, 2005).

Perspectives on the effectiveness of educational strategies for indigenous student success in completing undergraduate studies done in western countries, including New Zealand, found that financial hardship was a very significant issue:

> Practical support primarily needs to address financial demands of students' academic, literacy, travel, and living costs. Financial hardship had a significant impact on indigenous students' ability to continue in their program of study, most researchers recommended support in the form of scholarships especially to assist with the purchase of books, computers and travel when away from home. (Milne, Creedy, & West, 2016, p. 391)

Under-representation of ethnic minority students in university education has been a challenge in countries in the developed world and in New Zealand. Domestic south Asian students have

been increasing in the New Zealand population, however they are not identified in any New Zealand tertiary education strategy as a minority group and therefore they are not identified to receive additional funding to support them in their university studies. Viewed by experts, financial hardship was a significant contributor for minority students enrolled in undergraduate studies. In the next section, I will look at how minority students are included and welcomed by universities.

2.3.2 Inclusive education

Studies done regarding under-representation of minority groups in university education were discussed in the above section and in this section I will look at the inclusiveness of all groups in university education.

In New Zealand, inclusive education, introduced within the Education Act 1989, which called for the protection of people who have special needs, is not limited to disability (Selvaraj, 2015). This Act was to include all learners and their learning needs. New Zealand's Ministry of Education defines inclusive education as respecting all students' diversity and this, in turn, requires that "students' identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognised and affirmed and their learning needs are addressed" (2019, para. 2).

Initially, the concept of inclusion in New Zealand was in the compulsory schooling sector. Because higher education is not compulsory, the references to inclusion in the act do not extend to include higher education. Therefore, while in the compulsory sector there is a greater emphasis on what inclusion means and how to manage that in the sector, there is minimal application of the concept in the higher education sector. Selvaraj's research on exploring the process New Zealand went through in transitioning to adopt an inclusive practice in compulsory schooling states that "New Zealand's Inclusive Toolkit, [was] promoted through the New Zealand Council of Educational Research. … This initiative is committed to realising a vision of inclusive education for social justice" (2015, p. 97). Investigating students' success in

health programs Curtis et al. (2015) stated that “Tertiary institutions aim to provide high quality teaching and learning that meet the academic needs for an increasingly diverse student body” (p. 486). However, several domestic minority groups of students are not targeted for extra funding or receive additional support. Nevertheless, Nikula’s research on socioeconomic inequalities in Finland and New Zealand identifies that inclusiveness should be the emphasis of tertiary level education and it “should not be affected by ‘ … factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, ethnic origin, immigrant status, place of residence, age, or disability’”(2018, p. 2305).

An analysis of secondary schools by Billot (2008) in relation to school activities carried out, such as facilitating a cultural day, found that “Practices that do not sit well within the culture of the school may be viewed as stand-alone strategies and not reflective of a fully inclusive approach to multi-ethnicity” (p. 95). The conclusion is that it is important to have these cultural practices integrated into the daily school activities rather than annual or special one-off events.

Research on inclusive education in New Zealand is mainly focussed on the compulsory education sector, but increases in diversity of student populations in the tertiary sector need similar examination. Several studies have documented the inclusion of ethnic minorities; however, it is important to factor in the cultural differences and how that impacts on student learning.

While there is a limited amount of empirical research on inclusiveness in universities in New Zealand, inclusiveness in the higher education sector has been theorised and I survey that work briefly in the theoretical literature review in Chapter 3.

2.3.3 Culture and learning approaches of South Asian students

When discussing minority groups and their growth in higher education, it is important to understand that they come from different cultures. Domestic South Asians, as an ethnic group,

are from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to learn about the diversity in minority groups of students. To address these differences, educational institutions should take into account the different races, genders, minorities, religious groups and people with special needs, and the cultural background of their lives (Elhoweris, Parameswaren, & Alsheikh, 2013). Sharing myths and teaching experiences encountered by college staff teaching minority students in the US, Elhoweris, et al. say staff:

> sometimes fail to recognize that they don't teach history, math or reading but they teach [a] student who comes to school as an ethnic being, cultural-being, gender-being, and religious-being. They often overlook the crucial and dynamic relationship between the text and context and often fail to recognize the multiple discourses within which schools operate. (2013, p. 19)

It would be beneficial to students if faculty members in higher education institutions were flexible in integrating the cultural diversity that students bring into their practices, but to do that faculty members need to be trained and oriented to teach racial and cultural discussions (Abdul-Raheem, 2016; Da'as & Zibenberg, 2019). Research done in Oklahoma in the US by Abdul-Raheem (2016) reported that "there is a need for [a] minority faculty in higher education due to the increase in minority high school graduates and higher education enrollees" (p. 54). Minority faculty members in institutions can be ambassadors for advocating for equity and cultural diversity within the organisation. Research conducted by Park and Denson (2009) at the University of California on diversity found that it was "essential for institutions of higher education to continue to recruit and retain a diverse professoriate" (p.432), if they want to break the dominant culture. However, minority faculty members of diverse cultural backgrounds were faced with barriers to promoting cultural diversity within the organisation (Park & Denson, 2009). There might be initial resistance from academic staff

to accept the change and embrace the cultural diversity minority students bring to their institutions. However, explaining the benefits of minority faculty, Abdul-Raheem (2016) says faculty diversity will "lead to increased student success and comfort, minority mentors, minority research, and equity advocacy, and representation from all minority groups" (p. 56).

South Asians as a group of students have different expectations and different ways of approaching learning from other cultural or ethnic groups. To address this, academic staff need to accept, as Hofstede (1986) advocates:

> the focus of the teacher's training should be on learning about his/her own culture: getting intellectually and emotionally accustomed to the fact that in other societies, people learn in different ways. This means taking one step back from one's values and cherished beliefs. (p. 316)

Like other minority ethnic groups, South Asian students are used to one particular way of cultural communication in the classroom. They are less likely to ask questions, debate or express their own views, they respect their teachers (for example, they have been taught to exhibit silence as a sign of respect for teachers) and like to maintain power distance. A survey done by Ward (2006) for the New Zealand Ministry of Education on interpersonal, instituitional and community impacts on international students states that the students from distant cultures such as East and South Asians, Latin Americans and some Southern Europeans "are often unwilling to present opinions in class, avoid confrontation and are unlikely to express overt disagreement with teachers and fellow students" (p. 21).

In this system of learning, there is a limited place for knowledge creation (Goldie, 2016). It is a hierarchically ordered process where students are taught to respect and honour their elders, parents, and teachers (Hofstede, 2001, 2011; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). They are brought up to be dependent on their seniors for direction and guidance. Some of the domestic South Asian students in universities have done their secondary education in their home countries.

Even when they come to New Zealand, they may well have a change from a teacher-centered learning approach at school but not in the family and the mosque. They have been trained to accept a particular teacher-centred learning approach, one that lacks critical thinking, research, and independent communication skills (Badger & Roberts, 2005; Smith, 2001). They do not know how to thrive in an environment based on independent learning skills. As Loh and Teo (2017) identify:

> research and studies [which seem to] indicate that Asian students tend to be dependent learners relying on their teachers to provide content materials in contrast to countries they choose to pursue their education that encourage more independent learning. (p. 194)

It is important to distinguish the different ways of learning ethic minority students adopt in educational instituitions by learning about students' cultural diversity. Also, it is important to increase minority faculty staff and empower them to educate other faculty members about the students' diversity needs. Academic staff need to be aware that South Asian students can be less verbally active in class and tend to follow instructions. Therefore it is important to observe them closely to early identify any signs of withdrawal.

2.3.4 Students 'at risk'

Several studies have documented the importance of identifying students who are already having issues or who might not be able to perform in their academic work. Higher education institutions around the world widely use risk management for students. Some higher education institutions are using student data to identify students' academic performance and their chances of not completing the course. Methods used to identify such students, often described as 'at-risk' students, employ student administrative data and range from individual monitoring to complex predictive models (Elbadrawy et al., 2016; Wolff, Zdrahal, Herrmannova, Kuzilek, & Hlosta, 2014).

Predictive modelling using artificial intelligence is powerful; however, there are also warnings from experts about the pitfalls of using these methods in making ethical decisions. In an article which explored, "How will artificial intelligence change admissions?" published in University World News, Dennis (2018) warned:

> While computers excel at accumulating knowledge, computation and pattern recognition, they cannot replace human administrators. The data is only as good as the data sources. And we should remember that students are more than just data sets. Overreliance on AI research and applicability in the recruitment and retention of students is neither a wise nor creative administrative decision. (para. 22)

By contrast, a research report published by Bichsel (2012) of EDUCAUSE Centre for Applied Research in the US, to gauge the current use of analytics to find students who are at risk, found that there is a trend for higher education institutions to invest in data analytics as it helps to achieve cost savings and in getting better outcomes for students. The real challenge is the high cost of setting up a data analytics systems.

Another study on compulsory school experiences carried out in the US raised concerns relating to privacy issues. Some of the vulnerable students (for example, LGBTQ, disabled, homeless, racial/ethnic minorities, and/or poor young people) may fear the risk of victimisation and may not wish their institutions to monitor them using big data. Once these vulnerable students, who are already socially and emotionally stressed, know their activities are being monitored, they withdraw from school (Watson & Christensen, 2017).

There are drawbacks in using so-called 'big data' for identifying students at risk. One concern is resource allocation. Following a study on the possibility of using university administrative data to find students who may be academically at risk in a large public university in the USA, the authors reported that:

> research is essential because while there is growing evidence of the factors that determine retention, there is no concrete evidence on whether institutional retention efforts can reduce attrition and whether these efforts are cost effective from an institutional or social perspective. (Singell & Waddell, 2010, p. 570)

In some American universities, predicting student performance is done by integrating students' demographic data with the monitoring of student's activities such as accessing of online resources, submitting of course work, ongoing assessments, accessing of support services, etc. A study conducted in American universities by six researchers found that early risk identification using personalised information was useful for predicting students' performace (Elbadrawy et al., 2016). In such processes, information collected during the students' course of study is analyised using methods of predictive modelling. These results were shared with student support teams who contact students and support them so that assessments can be completed and handed in on time, and the student can pass their course of study. Research at the UK's Open University by Jakub Kuzilek et al. (2014) on analysing at-risk students stated:

> Early detection of students at risk of failure allows the university to execute timely interventions, to help the students to stay on track. Analysis and summary results of courses can also be a valuable resource for the course teams to identify problematic milestones and make improvements for future course presentations. (p. 1)

The first-year courses are critical for monitoring activities such as handing assessments in on time, attending tutorials, accessing online teaching and learning systems, etc. For second- and final-year students, the emphasis is on improving the grades of students rather than retaining them. Historical data in higher education had shown that, during the first year, students have a higher risk of failing and exiting the course, and predictive modelling for risk assessment helps to provide the support the student needs (Wolff et al., 2014).

Jia and Maloney (2015) in their study of data from a large public university in New Zealand, explained that:

> Predictive Risk Models (PRMs) have been developed to improve our understanding of the factors that place students at risk of adverse outcomes early in their university careers. In addition, these PRMs could be used by universities to develop effective, low-cost tools for identifying students at risk of adverse outcomes and to provide early interventions for students that are most likely struggle at university. (p. 147).

One of the issues in risk identification via student analytics is the use of group-based risk levels based on ethnicity or gender. Institutions do this with good intentions, wishing to assist students based on the behaviors of groups of students in the past (Scholes, 2016). However, some students did not wish to be grouped based on statistics and wanted to be treated individually. In a New Zealand study on the grounds of a violation of ethical consideration and discrimination, Scholes raised concerns over, "the issues of transparency, consent, choice, accountability, privacy and security of data" (2016, p. 953).There is also danger that this type of analysis may lead to the marginalising and stereotyping of students based on group characteristics.

A study conducted by the New Zealand Government's Education Review Office reported on schools' responses to students at-risk who were not achieving academically in the secondary sector in the areas of literacy and numeracy. The study found that most schools were good at identifying at risk students but "the ways in which schools addressed specific student needs, and monitored, reviewed and reported on the progress and impact of their provision require further work" and "only six schools identified through regular education reviews [that] had demonstrated effective practices in supporting students at risk of not achieving" (Education Review Office, 2008, pp. 1, 27).

Higher education institutions in New Zealand are equipped to collect and analyse sophisticated data on student activities. By using data analytics, they have started developing ways to identify students at-risk of academically under-achieving so that they can target student support services (Scholes, 2016). Risk identification by higher education institutions is intended to provide support so that students get identified and early interventions are in place. Cao and Maloney's(2017) study using individual data on the first year of New Zealand university study found:

> lower course completion rates and letter grades for Māori, Pasifika, and Asian students compared to their European counterparts. Using up to three self-reported ethnic identities, we tested whether or not our results were sensitive to alternative ways of defining ethnicity. (pp. 585-586)

The authors went on to state that

> such large unexplained differences in outcomes for minority groups are a challenge for university officials and public policymakers intent on eliminating ethnic differences in higher academic achievement. … This could eventually lead to a set of appropriate interventions at university or early stages of life designed to overcome these barriers and eliminate these ethnic gaps in university outcomes. (pp. 585-586)

The University of Auckland in New Zealand has a different method of providing individual undergraduate students with an academic ranking. This ranking is based on students' performance at the end of each semester and is categorised as "Good, At Academic Risk, Academic Restriction", categorising students to reflect on their studies of the immediate past semester and to guide students to appropriate support services where they can get help (University of Auckland, 2019).

The Centre of Social Data Analytics in the School of Economics at AUT conducts research on predictive risk modelling to identify students at risk of poor university outcomes (Auckand University of Technology, 2017). This may help to identify minority students who are not doing well academically.

Risk identification is good to target fostering student success rather than targeting students based on their identification using gender or ethnicity. Otherwise, students may be identified as at risk who are doing well, and there are students who are not identified because their gender or ethnicity exclude them from services.

In the above section, I have looked at risk identification, targeting, risk mitigation, and risk aversion of ethnic minority students by using predictive risk identification methods.

Section 2.3 identified challenges for minority education, in terms of welcoming minority students, creating a sense of belonging, and integrating minority cultures so that they will feel part of the wider student body. Culture and learning styles and early identification and mitigation of students at risk was discussed. Perspectives on accessing university education for domestic minority education will follow in section 2.4.

2.4 Access

Education for domestic students is funded by the New Zealand government. Statistics show that some ethnic groups participate in university studies more than others. These trends are not unique to New Zealand, they are similar to other western countries such as Australia, the UK, and the US. University participation rates are low for certain ethnic groups in university or tertiary studies.

Access to university education is a pathway for a significant number of students from the domestic population. Universities conduct several programs to educate students in high schools about their future opportunities for studies at the university. It also provides students

information about career pathways. These activities include feeder programmes, school visits, inviting high school students to visit the university and awarding scholarships to high achievers. Secondary schools also provide career advice to students via designated staff in schools.

Widening access to higher education has been a universal policy adopted by many western countries, to give equal access to all including the under-representated groups, to address social justice (Evans, Rees, Taylor, & Wright, 2019; Hoare & Johnston, 2010). Access and participation in university education for disadvantaged minority groups is a challenge around the world (Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; Reay, 2018; Stone, 2017; Walker & Fongwa, 2017). Boni and Walker (2016) in their book on universities and global human development identify the consequences of "policies affecting the global North, leading to a decline in public investment in education, jeopardising access to college for people with fewer resources" (p. 5). There are significant hurdles that relate to access and participation in higher education for ethnic minority students, including selection, admission, feeder programmes, financial issues, preparation, and class attendance.

Research carried out in the USA showed that there is a key role that university and other higher educational institutions play in increasing the participation of ethnic minority students. These are programmes that are carried out in partnership with feeder schools by higher education institutions to make the transition from the feeder schools as seamless as possible and to provide support services to help students adjust to the new environment (Officer, Grim, Medina, Bringle, & Foreman, 2013). The transitional services provided by feeder schools and higher education institutions in the form of both financial and non-financial resources assist students by making their journey positive and encouraging. However, ethnic minority students' under-representation in science-related areas is a growing concern globally. This under-representation is in the progress of students from feeder institutions to undergraduate

and graduate levels of study in university. Many institutions have developed science support programmes in high schools. A study carried out in the USA by Chemers, Zurbriggen, Syed, Goza, and Bearman (2011), on the role of efficacy and identity in science career commitment among under-represented ethnic minority students, showed it is important that there are targeted programmes offered by faculty and staff to increase ethnic minority student participation in higher education.

Research done by Childs, Hanson, Carnegie-Douglas, and Archbold (2017) states that a number of studies done in the UK, US, and Canada to evaluate the effects of access initiatives for under-represented students in post-secondary education(PSE) have found that there are multiple factors that influence participation in access initiatives by students. These are "family income, family history of post-secondary education, participation, geographical location, and race" (p. 73). The researchers wrote that one of the difficulties of targeting access initiatives in Canada for under-represented groups is the absence of information available. So, to evaluate the effectiveness of access initiatives, it is important to collect longitudinal demographic data of participating students (Childs et al., 2017).

An impact evaluation published in the UK (Tazzyman, Bowes, Moreton, Madriaga, & Mccaig, 2018) on the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) included capacity building. A key finding showed that parents are a key to the decisions that young people make about their career. This decision influences the experience of the student in higher education (HE). Their research found that "parents of disadvantaged students are more likely to be debt-averse and to question the value of HE" (p. 79). One of the recommendations of the report was to educate parents about the benefits of HE and the support available so that they can understand the cost and benefits of the programme.

NCOP's projects, carried out in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire in the UK, targeted young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minority groups, and underrepresented men

from disadvantaged backgrounds (Hanson, 2018). The projects proved successful by using mentors to lift the General Certificate of Secondary Education results and create interest among under represented groups to enter Higher Education (Hanson, 2018).

An increase in tuition fees up to GBP 3,000 (pounds) per year in 2006/07 for universities and colleges in the UK has raised concerns about fair access to higher education institutions (Dearden, Fitzsimons, & Wyness, 2011). Even after their applications were presented to the universities by the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS), students from state schools in the UK with low-level entry qualifications were declined entry to a degree-level study to elite universiities by the universities' decision-making processes. These students were declined because of lower level entry qualifications. However this process would appear to be flawed. This is illustrated by Hoare and Johnston (2011) who conducted a case study in one university and found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds in state schools who were given admission, under a widening participation programme, did as well as their counterparts from elite schools with better entry level qualifications.

Boliver's (2016) research that analysed admissions data found that ethnic minorities with comparable entry level qualification to European applications were being rejected at the prestigious Russell Group of universities in the UK. Some of the possible reasons given by the selection panel for rejection of ethnic minority applications were on the grounds that the majority of applications were made for oversubscribed courses and selections were made to have a fair ethnically representative student body. The study concluded that further research is necessary to drill down to find reasons minority populations are being rejected.

The work carried out by Cahalan (2015), in conjunction with an international project to widen participation in higher education in Norway, Australia, Ireland, and the Netherlands, found that secondary school graduates had experienced overall growth in post-secondary education. However each country had issues in post-secondary education for equity groups.

> although the countries have very different education system histories and differing degrees of what might be called educational equity, they each struggled with similar postsecondary access, completion, and funding challenges. (pp. 43 & 44)

During the past 20 years, the OECD (2014) reported that public funding had declined for higher education institutions, and prevented "disadvantaged students from accessing higher education" (p. 12). Most studies and international reports from OECD member countries suggested that finance is the driving force for widening access and participation of minority groups in higher education. OECD report findings suggest that it is not only tuition fees that are an obstacle:

> the existence of strong student support is most critical to fostering access to higher education. Other research suggests that assessing the performance of a financial model should focus not only on its impact on access, but also on whether it supports student success. (p.12)

A recent project that was carried out to investigate a pathway programme for disadvantaged student groups in Australia found that "Indigenous people remain extremely under-represented in Australian higher education" (Pitman et al., 2017, p. 235). This is despite the enabling programme designed as a pathway for Indigenous Australian students to access undergraduate studies in universities. The students may require scaffolding and additional support when they get enrolled in higher education institutions. However, this research was limited to access and did not report on the follow up of students who get into higher education using this pathway.

Previous research done in New Zealand has shown that it is important to build and maintain relationships using feeder programs and pathways with schools to increase access to university (Curtis et al., 2017; Hopwood, Hay, & Dyment, 2016). Universities are actively engaged in conducting bridging or foundation programmes, generally referred to as increasing

participation, and not widening participation (Gibson et al., 2016). This program is also an avenue of access for students from minority ethnic groups. Quantitative research by Curtis et al. (2017), in Auckland, New Zealand on the predictive effects of academic outcomes from bridging/foundation programmes, found the programme to be successful. “Further challenges remain for degree programmes to explore how they can change to better support indigenous and ethnic minority student success within their first year of tertiary study when they are enrolled in the university” (Curtis et al., 2017, p. 163).

Career advice or education is an important avenue to address access or pathways to university education. This advice is currently provided by secondary schools to educate students about the world of work, occupations, and life-skills so that they can make informed decisions about subjects to choose (Yates & Bruce, 2017). Promotion in accessing university education using career advice also needs to incorporate lifelong learning skills in their programs that are essential to equip them to the changing world (Yates & Bruce, 2017). The world of work is constantly changing so it is important for students to learn transferable skills. While this study is based on the practices at secondary schools in New Zealand, there is potential to extend this to include other key stakeholders such as the universities who provide students with career advice. It is important to provide coherent and comprehensive career advice that will help to address the needs of all students, including ethnic minority groups, to choose their career options. Discussing the inadequacy of the current model Yates and Bruce (2017) argue;

> career education in New Zealand schools compel an examination of the literature in an attempt to recommend a framework for the future delivery of effective and inclusive career education in secondary schools….[there is limited research in this area and recommended]… future research, as students are the receivers of career education, their perspective on what they need would be invaluable. (pp. 63 & 69)

Rocca (2010), in reviewing previous research conducted on participation inside college classrooms in the US, has shown that “a supportive climate has repeatedly been shown to increase participation” (p. 205). This review is interesting because it has examined the past 50 years of research in this field and presented findings that showed the reasons students do or do not participate in class. Findings presented include: having small class sizes, organising group activities in class, students participation in crediting grades towards their participation, making provision for participating in activies during class times, the pairing of younger and older students, ensuring no advantage is taken of that power imbalance between the teacher and student, using words of encouragement in class etc. The review showed that, “College students are influenced by instructor communication patterns, providing further evidence of the importance of the instructor’s role in facilitating student participation” (p. 207).

A Starpath research project is facilitated by the University of Auckland, working in partnership with New Zealand secondary schools, aimed at achieving equitable outcomes for students who are under-represented in tertiary study (Webber et al., 2018). The project is designed to help Māori and Pasifika students from low-decile secondary schools to gain University Entrance (UE), which will allow them to do degree level study in university. The research approach is driven by providing timely data from the Starpath team to secondary schools so that students are monitored for student achievement. Starpath phase three (2016-2017) findings reported positive experiences of students, whānau, and teachers from participating secondary schools (Webber et al., 2018). However, The Starpath project is limited to Māori and Pasifika students as underrepresented groups and does not cover other ethnic minority ethnic groups.

A different study conducted in New Zealand to diagnose characteristics that affect students’ pathways into university showed that Pakeha students were more likely to gain UE and highest Grade Point Average(GPA) scores during their first year of university (Shulruf, Hattie, & Tumen, 2008b). This study also showed that ethnicity and age are contributing factors that reflect on

students' pathways into the university. However, it also concluded that targeted interventions on demographic characteristics should be at the individual and not institutional level.

There is no provision made in New Zealand by the TEC to increase the participation of students from ethnic minority groups into university education, to match the demographic mix of the population. Disadvantaged ethnic minority students are among those denied access for not meeting the entry level criteria for tertiary education because of their low National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) scores.[2]

Using newly linked administrative data from an Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) that links micro level data on individuals using different administrative sources from a national level, researchers have investigated the reasons for ethnic disparities in bachelor's degree participation, retention and completion in New Zealand (Meehan, Pacheco, & Pushon, 2017). This is the first New Zealand research on a population cohort, "born between 1990 and 1994 from school through to young adulthood to assess the relative contributions of prior academic performance, socioeconomic status, and parental education to these gaps" (p. iv). Research findings of Meehan et al. (2017) suggest that there are gaps for Māori and Pasifika in bachelor's degree participation, retention and completion compared to Europeans. However, Asians had much higher rates than Europeans. The authors conclude that:

> our results suggest that ethnic-based policies aimed at encouraging entrance to bachelor's degrees are likely to have a limited effect if used in isolation. Rather, our findings highlight the need for policy intervention earlier in the education system to help lift the NCEA performance of Māori and Pasifika, and in doing so improve the

[2] NCEA is the official secondary school qualification in New Zealand. It was phased in between 2002 and 2004, replacing three previous secondary school qualifications. Other forms of qualification which permit entry into tertiary education in New Zealand include the international high school certificates such as International Baccalaureate and the University of Cambridge International Exam.

> likelihood of their participation in higher education qualifications, such as Bachelor's degrees. (p. 33)

However, the research findings do not break down other ethnic minority groups within the larger Asian group, to explore their performance.

Recent work by researchers on educational theory and practice has questioned the ontological shifts of transformation between the student's culture and educational institutions. Ferrare and Apple (2015) have suggested it is important to address the shortcomings of our schools, colleges, and universities and begin to construct new ways:

> to evaluate schools based on the extent to which they foster integrated social and cultural arrangements. These evaluations do not have to serve as substitutes for individual learning objectives. They do, however pave the way for what we might call 'relational evaluations', and a robust critical field theory attuned to local social structures, meanings and experiences can serve as a powerful heuristic toward this end. (p. 55)

While conducting evaluations it is important to look at all programs and or interventions that are responsible to make changes. Students do not come in and acquire a set of cultural values. They arrive with their social and environmental conditioning. So the tools that need to be used should be democratically selected.

In this section, I have looked at widening participation levels in university education between domestic minority students and university average, as a major component of the government education policy in New Zealand. There is a need to increase not only the numbers of young people entering university education, but also the proportion of underrepresented groups, including those families with low incomes, people with disabilities and targeted ethnic minorities. In this way it is hoped inequalities can be redressed. Once students are enrolled in

the university programs it is important to support them, especially during their first year. The next section will discuss the research and literature on student engagement.

2.5 Engagement

Research has shown that engaging students in the learning process increases their motivation and encourages them to use their critical thinking in ways that help them to improve their learning skills. This has implications for various stakeholders in teaching, management and policy contexts (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015; Johnson, 2015). Student engagement is important for the success of the student's journey in their tertiary education. However, engagement is more complex than the involvement and participation within and outside a classroom, that sits in the domain of student learning (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). This encompasses everything that is under the umbrella of learning; it is comprehensive, but it needs to be precise and more focused.

Students' engagement in their academic learning has shown that it influences the student to do well in their studies. Research by Balwant, Birdi, Stephan, and Topakas (2018) in the UK shows that "student engagement is a mechanism in the relationship between transformational instructor-leadership and academic performance" (p. 10). When students are engaged in their learning, they start to absorb more information, which will help them to retain knowledge, engage fully in the study module, and actively participate in a critical thinking process.

This section has discussed the literature on the importance of engaging students to increase their learning and help them to be motivated. Next, I discuss the research on student support.

2.6 Support

Support has become a buzzword in tertiary education. Universities are extending the range of services to support students to achieve their academic and personal goals. The support extended to students can be divided into learning and pastoral support. Learning support is

divided into academic or non-academic support. Pastoral support is the assistance students get on personal or professional matters that will help them perform better academically. Students also receive financial support from their governments, such as the payment of their fees and living expenses during their period of study. The most recent government support for university students in New Zealand was 'fees-free study' for tertiary students who started their academic study in 2018 or subsequent years (Ministry of Social Development, 2018).

Several universities are investing in data analytics to identify particular students at risk of struggling academically and other pastoral issues; it is also equally important that universities make timely support available when students have academic or pastoral needs (Tinto, 2017a). Struggling students need to know where they can seek support before they lose interest in their studies. Often, when they are struggling, a student wants to ask someone about getting help, and they want to ask someone who they can trust. To create that trust, it is important to make them feel that they are welcome in the university and that they belong to the university (Tinto, 2017a). This trust also may arise from peer support, as Hammond and Powell (2017) described peer advisors discussing their own personal experience to resolve students' questions or concerns and "establish camaraderie and credibility by providing information to address simpler needs first (e.g., orientation, parking, food, social events), which lays the groundwork for more personal conversations in the future" (p. 32). If students are to be made to feel their university is inclusive and that they are welcomed, this atmosphere should be there from the first time they come into the university. Recent work in New Zealand by Zepke (2015) on student engagement research explains that "students who do not feel they belong are more likely to be disengaged" (p. 1313). Disengagement can lead to student withdrawal.

In 2011, research conducted in the US found that early intervention by support staff in higher education institutions is important to support students who are potentially at risk (Menzies & Lane, 2011). There are two types of interventions to manage when a student is at risk,

academic or behavioural (or a combination of the two). These two types of interventions can use self-regulation strategies or functional-based assessment approaches which require the use of additional resources but have demonstrated improved outcomes for students (Menzies & Lane, 2011). Longitudinal research with 7,134 student participants was conducted during the period 2001 to 2005 in a metropolitan New Zealand university's bachelor's degree programme. The research found that, when based on individual or group factors such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic and study-related factors at students' entry level, positive and appropriate interventions targeting at-risk students in the first year proved to be successful in passing papers at tertiary level (Tumen, Shulruf, & Hattie, 2008).

In a study designed to determine the characteristics that were deemed most important about undergraduate peer-mentoring in a Texas university, Douglass, Smith, and Smith (2013) found that there were close links between peer mentoring and undergraduate success. This research showed that the benefits of mentoring are enhanced when students are mentored by students who have previously taken the same course (Douglass et al., 2013). A review of studies done in Illinois on mentoring programmes also has shown that there is a benefit to both the mentors and their protégés during the mentoring process (Gershenfeld, 2014). Mentors and mentoring are discussed further in section 2.10, below.

Many universities and higher education colleges provide support for first-year students before the beginning of their first semester to ensure a stronger sense of belonging. A sense of belonging is a good first predictor for a student to ensure their commitment to the institution and is a way of creating an atmosphere that bonds students to the academic environment. The research carried out with American first-year college students by Hausmann et al. (2007) found that a programme they ran for first-year students helped the students to build a strong sense of belonging before the beginning of their formal academic programme of study. Other research on first-year programmes operated by universities and colleges demonstrated the

importance of orientating students before they start their formal academic study, and that this helps to bridge them into their studies and allows them to integrate and settle well into their academic journey (Oh, Patterson, Fa'alogo, & Henley, 2013; Tumen et al., 2008).

This concludes the review of the literature on support. The literature discusses the importance of student support and its role for ethnic minority students in universities. In section 2.7, I discuss theories and research related to student retention.

2.7 Retention

First-year students withdrawing from study is an important challenge faced by many higher education institutions around the world. This issue is more serious for many ethnic minority students in New Zealand, as their retention rate after the first year is lower than the average (Zepke et al., 2005). To try to address this problem, many higher education institutions offer additional support to first-year students to retain them in their study. However, the smooth transition directly from high school to university is not always possible. Some students take time off from study after high school before they transition to tertiary level studies (Engler, 2010). In New Zealand, sometimes they are enrolled in more than one institution to do courses, or even take courses while they are in high school. Many studies undertaken in New Zealand confirm that Māori and Pasifika students are more likely to drop out of a bachelor's degree and are less likely to complete and progress to higher levels of study than other groups (Kovačić, 2010; Van der Meer, 2011; Tumen et al., 2008). Similar studies in other developed countries have also shown that minority students had lower retention rates and took a longer time to graduate (Arcidiacono, Aucejo, & Hotz, 2016; Mountford-Zimdars, Sanders, Jones, Sabri, & Moore, 2015; Norton, Norton, & Cakitaki, 2016).

Student retention has two sides. That is, it can be understood from both students' and institutions' standpoints. Institutions would like to retain students as long as they can, but the student, on the other hand, wants to complete the qualification, irrespective of the institution

in which they are enrolled. The institution wants to increase the student population, and the student's interest is in persistence and completing the qualification (Tinto, 2017a).

While a student's decision to depart from a programme may be based on other factors such as "finances, family obligations, and work" (Tinto, 2017b, p. 264), it is important for institutions to understand how students are motivated. Two models have suggested to administrators and faculty that social contact with students and their institution is required to increase retention in higher education (Astin, 1984; Pascarella, 1980; Tinto, 1987, 1993; Weidman, 1989). They are Tinto's (1975) student integration model and Bean's (1985) model of student departure. Both these models are seminal models that are used to demonstrate that students' persistence and success come about as a result of a student fitting into the institution (Alberto F. Cabrera, Castañeda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992). These models are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Alberto F. Cabrera and Hengstler (1990) tested both these models using American college data sets and found that a "more comprehensive understanding of the persistence process can be achieved when combining the two major theories of college persistence [which are] the Student Integration Model and the Student Attrition Model" (p. 160). It should be noted that this test was conducted with data for Hispanics, whites, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans, but could also be conducted for other minority groups. In other contexts, other differences might emerge. More recent research done on student persistence by Metz (2004) highlighted the importance of including work on other minorities in the persistence literature.

As noted earlier, institutions have a keen interest in student retention, and this is not just a matter of reputation. It is important to discuss the financial benefits of retaining students, and therefore I do this in the following section.

2.7.1 Using cost benefit analysis to analyse the value of retention

Cost benefit analysis (CBA) is an analytical procedure generally carried out to assess the benefit of an investment in a selected activity or project. It is an evaluation tool that has been used for many years by governments, businesses and military organisations and, more recently, it has been used in social areas such as education. The valuing of social capital in education is important because it is likely to contribute to an organisation's value in forms of physical, intellectual, and human capital (Cordes, 2017; Gilead, 2014).

A study conducted by Belfield and Levin (2007) in a high school in California reported that, by investing in a student who was otherwise likely to drop out and enabling that student to graduate, California's taxpayers gain US$169,000 as taxpayer credits in social costs. These benefits for taxpayers included, in addition to savings in programme costs, reduced social costs in areas such as crime, health, and welfare benefits. The study showed that for every dollar invested; there is a 3.5 times gain.

There have been several studies conducted in the US to calculate the CBA in additional investment for retaining students. Gallard, Albritton, and Morgan (2010) reported on a project focused on Hispanic students at Seminole State College in Florida that invested in enhancing its tutorial services. The research reported that enhancing the tutorial programmes had a significant impact on students' outcomes. The results of the investment resulted in a 15.5% increase in completion rates and a return on investment as high as 272% (Gallard et al., 2010, p. 16).

An enrolment management report on private and public colleges in the US published by Marthers, Herrup, and Steele (2015) argued that enrolment offices in many institutions focused on input and that the cost of students lost through the pipeline remains an issue. In the US, research done by R. N. Levitz (2018) reported that the median cost of recruiting a new student in a private instituition costs US$2,357 and for public colleges it costs US$536 in 2017.

Declining numbers of high school graduates and intense competition mean these costs will rise. For an enrolment process to be strategic, the authors suggest, it has to be in line with the return on investment. That is, those enrolled should be able to successfully complete. If the attrition rates are high, the cost of replacement will be high. As Marthers et al. (2015) stated:

> if a college of 2,000 undergraduates loses half of its enrolled freshmen en route to graduation, then instead of requiring a 500-student first-year class, that college (to replace the expected attrition of students) must enroll 50 percent more than 500 students — in other words, 750 students each year. Operating in such a way is not efficient, even if the college is able to enroll 750 students each year. (p. 4)

It always costs more to attract new customers to a business. A study by Leigh and Marshall (2001) about the sales strategy performance of the sales function in a US modern organization found that the cost of getting a new customer as opposed to the cost of retaining an existing customer can be as high as five to seven times. Results on recruiting undergraduate students in four-year colleges and universities in 2017 demonstrated that the costs of recruiting a new student versus the costs of transferring a student already in the pipeline are as high as 8:1 in private institutions and 18:1 in public institution for the domestic student (Levitz, 2018). Using these calculations and assuming that one in every eight students in private and one in 18 students in public colleges who drop out can be retained, the authors argued this will cover and justify the costs of the retention effort and that it makes financial sense to do this as retention generates a significant increase in revenues from fees. The retention effort might include support programmes, mentors, financial aid, strategies for student success, etc.

There are no comparable data for New Zealand available on the CBA comparing recruiting a new student versus retaining an existing student. Therefore, I have used the Official Information Act (2019), to request key stakeholders to provide any such information. Further information is contained in the methodology chapter.

This concludes section 2.7 on studies focused on student retention. It has shown the importance of persistence for student retention in university. Discussions on the costs of retaining a student versus the cost of recruiting a student have shown the financial value to institutions of student retention. In section 2.8 the discussion turns to the topic of completion.

2.8 Completion

Definitions of success in education and the data used in this thesis are focused on measuring course completion.

Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles, and Wilson (2009), who researched the educational attainment of minority ethnic groups in state primary and compulsory secondary schools in England, showed that the average educational attainment of ethnic minority groups was higher than their white[3] counterparts. Since secondary schools are the main pathway for students' entry into university or college education, these findings stood at odds with ethnic minority students' lower completion rates in higher education in the UK. However, the study shows that the secondary school student group and the higher educational student group are not directly comparable (Burgess et al., 2009).

There are many studies of minority students' completion rates in higher/tertiary education and the factors which may determine the outcomes observed. Despite the high level of participation of ethnic minority groups in England, Connor, Tyers, Modood, and Hillage (2004) from the Department of Education and Skills found ethnic minority students in higher education were less likely to complete than white students. Integration is just one of the challenges that ethnic minority students face in higher education. However it is difficult to distinguish differences regarding gender, age, socio-economic profiles, religious affiliation, and

[3] In the UK the term 'White British' is used, not 'European' or 'Pakeha'

generational profiles. The study by Connor et al. (2004) highlighted specific issues, identified as concerns for minority ethnic students over whites, as follows:

- staff support: lack of, or not as much, as they would like or expected; and
- isolation/lack of cultural diversity: both lack of staff as role models/mentors and lack of others with similar cultural/economic backgrounds (p. 71).

A study on minority student success was carried out in the US in four institutions, namely two research universities, one comprehensive university and one community college; of these, three were rural, and one was urban. The study showed the impact practitioners had on students of colour and their success (Museus & Neville, 2012). Researchers examined the data from the perspective of Asian American, Black, and Latino undergraduates and found successful students worked with practitioners who shared the following characteristics: "[They] (a) Share common ground with those students, (b) provide holistic support for those students, (c) humanize the educational experience, and (d) provide proactive support for those students" (Museus & Neville, 2012, p. 436).

New Zealand's university education operates on a 'performance-based funding model' (Tertiary Education Commission, 2019a). This model is a popular policy strategy internationally and requires universities to monitor their activities against performance goals and report on them (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001). Institutional practices and student outcomes are thus closely correlated to performance-based funding. However, as Hillman, Tandberg, and Fryar (2015) stated, based on their research in the US:

> Improving retention rates may sound like a straightforward and immediately attainable performance goal, but it can take a significant amount of campus resources including professional development and additional programming efforts to build the capacity for this change. Without this capacity, it is difficult to also improve longer term goals such as … degree completion. (p. 515)

Research carried out in seven tertiary institutions in New Zealand found that students' outcomes improved by teachers accommodating diversity in their teaching practices. The strategies employed towards this end included using examples from other cultures to explain concepts (Zepke & Leach, 2007). Other research on tertiary teaching in New Zealand indicated that interventions outside lecture settings helped Māori and Pasifika students to succeed in degree-level studies (Airini et al., 2011). A study conducted in New Zealand by Cao and Maloney (2017) using individual-level data to report on ethnic differences of first-year university students showed "lower course completion rates and letter grades for Māori, Pasifika, and Asian students compared to their European counterparts" (pp. 585-586). The research suggested some of the things that can be done to eliminate these differences include improving the high school academic preparation of these students and enrolling minority students in high decile schools.

This concludes section 2.8, which began with the definition of completion used by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, which showed the importance for students to achieve a positive outcome at the end of their study. Some of the crucial learning from the studies reported in this section include the importance of support and risk-mitigation.

In the next two sections I discuss specific issues that are relevant to ethnic minority education. These topics are language issues, covered in section 2.9; and mentoring, covered in section 2.10.

2.9 Use of language

In the context of this research and many of the studies cited on ethnic minority students in higher education, the English language is the medium of instruction. It is often a second language for ethnic minority students, and therefore language becomes an issue for these students. Some university courses in which students who use English as a second language are

enrolled require them to take an English proficiency test with the achievement of a minimum score, in addition to their university entrance requirement.

The need for a certain level of English language proficiency for minority students in higher education contexts means the teaching of English as a second language is a relevant concern. If student retention and completion requires engagement, the socio-cultural dimension of language use become significant. Berns (2013), a sociolinguist, addressed the teaching of English as a second language in classroom settings. His definition of communicative competency for people who speak English as a second language requires the use of language for socio-cultural purposes. Therefore, a teaching methodology and style to meet learners' needs in reading and writing must address this requirement. Discussing the education of English language teachers, Savignon (2018) wrote that:

> For language teaching to represent true change not only in theory but also in classroom practice, a reform of goals, materials, and assessment is insufficient. Attention needs to focus on increased opportunities for both pre-service and in-service teachers to experience and practice ways of integrating communicative experiences into their lessons for beginning and advanced learners alike. (p. 6)

The language proficiency of the teachers themselves is also an issue. A study conducted in Vietnam by Van Canh and Renandya (2017) on English language teachers' English proficiency and classroom language use stated that:

> Having an advanced level of proficiency would support teachers in their job and enable them to use the target language fluently and confidently in the classroom, to serve as good language models, to select and adapt teaching materials for more effective use, and to give appropriate feedback on students' oral and written work. (p. 79)

A study carried out in Australia found that the learning of English will be more effective if attention is given to teaching English vocabulary for students who are foreign language

learners rather than the most traditional ways of learning grammar, translation, and audiolingual work (Moskovsky, Jiang, Libert, & Fagan, 2015).

Given the difficulties in acquiring mastery of English as a second language, as outlined above, day-to-day academic practices also prove to be a challenge for many minority students in English language based higher education. Academic writing and the practices of citation, referencing and acknowledgment are areas of concern for undergraduate students in universities. Some undergraduate students in higher education also have problems with plagiarism (quoting from or paraphrasing a source without acknowledging the original work). Therefore it is important to train students to cite all information obtained from a source irrespective of whether the work is taken as a direct quote or paraphrased. This skill is even more challenging for students who use English as a second language. In a US study of the experience of undergraduate students with English as second language in citing academic work, Lee, Hitchcock, and Elliott Casal (2018) found that:

> One of the most important activities in which teachers could engage learners is helping them notice various citation forms, functions, and stance types in models of exemplary student writing and their own writing. Teachers could involve students in tasks using the frameworks presented in this study [English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students' assessed for writing first-year writing] to raise their awareness of the choices. (p. 10)

The study suggested that teachers who teach students for whom English is their second language could expose them to various forms of citations and train them to analyse them critically. They could also organise class activities where students can practice synthesising multiple sources and, in so doing, they can find their critical voice in analysing these sources.

This aspect of academic literacy is a skill taught in universities, and it is important for students to learn the skills of integrating source material into academic writing. A synthesis of the research published on academic literacy asserted that:

> writing from sources: is difficult and complex but develops strategically and progressively during academic studies; is influenced by students' knowledge and experience; may differ by students' language, cultural, work, and educational backgrounds; varies by task conditions and types of texts written and read; and can usefully be assisted by instruction. Although each of these claims may seem self-evident, their particular aspects, realizations, elements, and complexities have just recently been verified by the range of empirical evidence synthesized here and are only starting to be understood in ways that can inform education and learning. (Cumming, Lai, & Cho, 2016, p. 52)

This research suggests that lecturers need to be much more aware of the complexities around writing from sources, and that it is not a minor or simple technical skill.

Students whose first language is not English also face the broader challenge of writing academic material. English language proficiency is an issue that is being addressed in many western universities as it impacts on the academic achievement of those who use English as a second language. Language learning is inextricably linked to discipline-specific learning. Language learning is a significant topic of debate in the Australian higher education sector since universities' "responsibility includes the provision of adequate resourcing for English language support throughout students' programs of study, an area that has rarely been funded adequately" (Benzie, 2010, p. 447).

Flipped teaching is a new mode of teaching that may be of assistance in meeting students' language needs. It is an electronic learning concept, a form of blended learning approach that combines classroom lectures with homework on a technological platform. It is done by transforming the traditional face-to-face lectures to PowerPoint presentations and online videos. A study by Hung (2015) to examine the impact of flipped teaching on student learning noted that one of the aims of flipped learning is "to engage students in pre-class study to enhance involvement in class, and ultimately to achieve more satisfying learning outcomes" (p. 92). The study found that "one of the benefits often cited for flip teaching is that students in the flipped classroom are given more opportunities to develop higher order thinking under

teacher guidance and with peer support as needed" (p. 82). Flipped teaching is found to be useful and beneficial for minority students who struggle with understanding classroom instruction because of foreign accents, since this method allows "learners to preview and review the content based on their needs and at their own pace, such as looking up words, studying unfamiliar concepts, and reading additional resources" (p. 93). In this way, students for whom English is not the first language may be able to take more time to engage with content-specific material than the usual pace of lecture or classroom based teaching can permit.

This section on the use of language has highlighted the importance of providing English learning support for students for whom English is their second language. Some of the studies reviewed have suggested that there are two types of difficulties in language use, they are around referencing and English proficiency. The discussion has also considered the benefits of having online learning tools. In the next section I will discuss mentors and mentoring for minority students.

2.10 Mentors and mentoring

The origin of the word mentor dates back to ancient Greece, where the son of Odysseus in Homer's epic story had a tutor named Mentor (Jacobi, 1991). The word mentor is thus used to refer to a trusted counsellor or guide. Mentors in various settings play different roles and have many different responsibilities.

A student's first year of university is challenging. They try hard to adapt to the new study culture and environment, but the adjustment to a university mode of study during the short orientation period can be demanding. Teaching staff who are already finding it hard to keep up with their teaching and research commitments are unable to help the growing numbers of new students with diverse backgrounds, who struggle with the challenge to meet all of their needs (Gershenfeld, 2014). Thus the mentoring of their peers by senior students has become a

widespread practice in higher education (Gershenfeld, 2014). Also, recent evidence suggests that achievement of peer mentoring would be preferable, for minority groups (Long et al., 2018).

A study carried out in the UK in higher education which was designed to bridge the gap between the theory, practice, and evaluation of peer mentoring schemes found that:

> Peer mentoring can aid a potentially stressful transition to university by acting in two ways. Firstly peer mentors can help in the adaptation and integration into the new environment, which will lead to higher retention rates (integration mediates the relationship between mentoring and intention to persist). Secondly peer mentors may buffer the possible negative effects during the transition to higher education (the moderating effects of mentoring). (Collings, Swanson, & Watkins, 2014, p. 930)

More specifically, the authors of this study discussed how mentoring helps the alignment between social and academic integration and persistence that is referred to by Tinto (1975) as a major contributor to student retention. In his theory of integration, Tinto stated that one of the causes of the decision of a student to depart from a university is the student's isolation and disassociation at academic and social levels. As Jacobi (1991) noted, "mentoring has long been associated with the apprentice model of graduate education, [but], it is increasingly looked to today as a retention and enrichment strategy for undergraduate education" (p. 505).

Peer mentoring can help bridge the gap which occurs in the transition from high school to university. Some students find the transition to be very stressful and feel lonely because it is a move from a supervised and guided environment in high school, to an independent and self-managed environment at a college or university. Egege and Kutieleh (2015) explained that peer mentoring could help in transition and retention since "the function of a peer mentor within the context of a transition initiative … is about helping the commencing student settle in to university life by reducing their anxiety and familiarising them with their new environment" (p. 275). It is always empowering to engage in conversation with someone who has already

‘been there and done that’: in most cases, the mentor would have previously been a mentee and had the same life experience.

A longitudinal study conducted by Heirdsfield, Walker, and Walsh (2008) in an Australian TAFE (technical and further education) college showed positive results for both mentors and mentees. Some of the benefits reported in the findings were an increase in students’ sense of belonging, a positive experience in students transitioning in to university, guidance, and support from senior students, avenues to making social connections with other students, learning about other resources available for support and also, for some students, it helped them to release the stress they were experiencing (Heirdsfield et al., 2008). A five-year review of studies published from 2008 to 2012 conducted by Gershenfeld (2014) on mentoring in undergraduate programmes in the USA and abroad further reported the positive outcomes. However, a note of caution was also sounded:

> In an era of increasingly constrained resources and strategic challenges in higher education, evidence-based research will be even more important. Effective mentoring programs have a potential to play valuable roles in higher education, but this potential can only be realized through improvements in research and practice. (Gershenfeld, 2014, p. 387)

For a mentoring programme to be an effective initiative for retaining students, clear boundaries need to be laid out. These will ensure that the peer mentoring programme is cost-effective, delivers on its purpose, and also is useful for the institution (Egege & Kutieleh, 2015). A considerable amount of literature has been published on the importance of maintaining clear boundaries when mentoring. An Australian study by Egege and Kutileh (2015), for example, suggested that for a comprehensive evaluation of mentoring it is important to collect information on “how mentors are recruited, their access to and type of training, frequency and duration of contact with mentees and expectations of what mentors should address with

mentees" (p. 275). Such detailed information will help to get buy-in from university authorities to fund a mentoring programme.

A common approach for recruiting student mentors is to recruit those who have previously done the same paper or course to mentor their juniors in that class. A study of a successful peer mentoring programme organised by staff and senior students at a UK university showed that this approach helped new students to engage in their field of study and helped to retain them in their course:

> introduction of a PM [peer mentoring] scheme within Biomedical Science contributes to lower student attrition rates, encourages a sense of well-being and enhances further student engagement with their chosen course of study. (Foy & Keane, 2018, p. 740)

Another report reviewing the impact of equity initiatives in 34 Australian universities and nine international institutions endorsed the effectiveness of peer mentors for minority students in particular:

> Mentors and role models can have a significant impact on access and success across all stages of the student life-cycle. Developing student engagement through mentoring takes time, appropriate training and incentives for mentors. (Bennet, 2015, p. 9)

A student partnership project trial at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia, was reported by Kek et al. (2017). This project partnered senior students with junior students outside the formal learning space, via a closed Facebook group, with support being provided by academic staff who remained outside the Facebook group. Evaluation of the trial project showed that this form of peer mentoring was successful in a number of ways, benefitting the junior students, their mentors and the academic staff involved. The junior students received timely support, and gained the confidence to ask questions, which helped them to integrate into the university both academically and socially. For the senior students, their role helped them to build their leadership skills and gain self-confidence, and reinforced their relationship with academic staff. Academic staff benefited from the learning they gained from senior

students through feedback on their own teaching practice, which helped them to plan their support activities to target and benefit new students.

Similarly, in New Zealand, a study undertaken in a health programme in a tertiary institution reported that 40 students in a mentoring programme had a positive experience in their transition from secondary to tertiary studies:

> The transition from secondary school to a tertiary education environment posed some challenges for participants. Mentorship was seen as an avenue to help support and guide personal and professional goals. Effective mentoring will increase student engagement in their studies, thereby improving motivation to achieve their health career goals. (R. Crawford, Monson, & Searle, 2016, p. 435)

Finally, it is also important to note that research has shown that mentoring by students of the same ethnicity as their mentees was a better fit and proved successful. A US study by Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintron (2007) reported the factors that influenced a minority group's success and confirmed the performance of peer-mentoring and its effectiveness when done by another student of the same ethnicity. The findings from this study are consistent with previous research that found positive results in pairing students from the same-ethnicity for mentoring. Shotton et al. (2007) reported that "minority students often seek mentors from their own racial or ethnic groups and struggle to relate and learn from mentors from different groups" (p. 97).

This section has looked at mentors and mentoring. Some of the key issues that emerge from the research on mentoring are that students found that it was a useful and successful mode of learning and that research has also shown mentoring is very effective when done by a student of the same ethnicity as the mentee.

2.11 Chapter summary

Identifying minorities in a student population is a complex issue. In some countries (e.g., Canada) the term "visible minority" (Krahn & Taylor, 2005, p. 405) is used so that any student

who is non-white or non-Caucasian is in this group (Krahn & Taylor, 2005). In other countries, nationality or citizenship are used instead. In the New Zealand education system, there is no universally accepted definition for an ethnic minority student. For reporting purposes, TEC uses seven broad groupings: Māori, Pasifika, Asian, European, MELAA, people with disabilities, and 'other'.

Low participation rates are reported for ethnic minority students in countries such as the US, Australia, Canada, and the UK. In New Zealand, university entrance is based on students' NCEA scores. Some of the ethnic minority students are from low socio-economic areas (low-decile schools), and their NCEA scores are low, which means they miss out on getting university places. Minorities who do obtain university places show lower than average rates of retention and completion. Thus, in this chapter I have explored related literature research data on ethnic minority students' access, engagement, support, retention and completion in universities. I have also discussed specific research into two further relevant issues, the use of language and the provision of mentoring services. The next chapter examines the key theoretical literature on the central issues that emerge from the studies reviewed in the present chapter, namely: silencing, inclusivity, and theories of student achievement.

Chapter 3 Review of Theoretical Literature

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework that is applied to this case study research. First, the chapter looks at the concept of silence and the ways in which it is used in different disciplines. It provides an overview of relevant literature and studies that have examined the meaning of silence.

Silence can be observed when people are being lower in position; but this silence can also be masked in the name of inclusion, when people are in fear of their voices being heard as they are part of the minority voice, or when they are institutionally or culturally silenced. As has been seen in Chapter 2, the dynamics of higher education environments may impose silencing, which may in turn play a part in the ongoing disparities in outcomes for minority students that are so extensively documented.

Secondly, this chapter looks at theories and models of student achievement. As has been described in Chapter 2, concepts of access, engagement, and retention are critical concepts used in the literature. Tinto (1975), Bean (1985) and others have made efforts to theorise engagement, retention and success of students, and using their models assist in making sense of the literature reported in Chapter 2.

Theories of silence, and the spiral of silence in particular, and theories of student academic achievement provide useful analytical tools for my discussion of the findings of this research in the later chapters of this thesis.

3.2 Theories of silence

The word silence has different meanings depending on how the word is used. The literal meaning of silence is to be quiet or be soundless. Chosen or imposed, silence is a result of a form of power, whether it is used positively or negatively. Positively, people can ask others to

be quiet by asking them to be silent, to observe commemorative moments, as in ANZAC Day ceremonies, or to remember someone who has died. Prayer is frequently silent. Silence can also be used in a negative sense; people can silence others by threatening to keep them quiet, to prevent from saying something that others do not want to hear. As Elzenberg (as cited in Kobiercycki, 2018, p. 82) wrote, from birth, a human "sinks in silence", until they hear "the voices of deep life". Kobiercycki (2018) stated:

> Silence can be described as: 1) an anthropological-theological function (helps identification or divine-human projection), 2) a communicative-interpersonal function (preventive measures for speech in the community-loneliness relation) 3) an ethical-aesthetic function (it supports or weakens the semantic functions of words) 4) economical-ontological function (deontologizes or ontologizes silence and thinking) 5) a creative function – helps to communicate serious issues (limits or rejects the talk of unserious matters). It is the condition, the mask or the symbol of truth. (p. 79)

The anthropological-theological function of silence is the relationship between God and the human. So human submission to the divinity of god can be shown in the form of silence. Francis Bacon believed that "silence is the virtue of fools" (Ferguson, 2013). Another saying suggests: "Talk is silver, silence is gold". Those who are silent agree with Polish poet Wacław Potocki who wrote: "To be silent – that's the middle road/By taking it, I won't offend neither man [sic] nor God" (Kobiercycki, 2018).

The communicative-interpersonal function of silence refers to silence in human communication (Sills, 2014). Silence can impact positively or negatively, depending on how it is used in communication. Interpersonal communication can take place in two forms, verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication is carried out using language in written or non-written form. Nonverbal communication refers to the ways people communicate messages using means other than language and characters. Silence is also a form of non-verbal behaviour. Silence is also interpreted as being as powerful as speech, as stated in an African proverb, "Silence is also speech."(Wang, 2009, p. 158).

Ethical-aesthetic silence refers to ways of expressing silence using gestures and artistic movements, for example mime as a theatrical medium of expression through body motions without use of speech (Kiliç, 2018). The idea is not limited to artists and artistic work; meaning can be expressed in everyday discourse just by making gestures.

The relationship between silence and language is clearly expressed in its economical-ontological function. It links silence as an "active performance of arts that employ gestures" (Agich, 1995, p. 222). As Dauenhauer (1982), says, this relationship is considered to be the "interplay of man [sic] and the world" (p. 219). In his work, he also shows that such deep silence gives insight into humans, their world and their being. Silence has a stronger emphasis in preference to speech when it is used for verbal expression in certain situations (Dauenhauer, 1982). For example, instead of talking, we stop using words and also it enables people to come closer.

Finally, the creative function of silence "can perform highly significant communicative functions" (Jensen, 1973, p. 249). Here it is also considered to serve as a linkage between both positive and negative aspects of silence by using hand and facial expressions to communicate.

Silence has been a topic of discussion for over 50 years, since Swiss philosopher Max Picard published *The World of Silence* (1952), which framed the ontological meaning from language or religious perspectives. More recently, Frank Farmer, a Bakhtinian philosopher, wrote about *Saying and Silence* (2001) and addressed silence in classrooms. A study conducted by Robin Patric Clair in 1998, titled "Organizing Silence", investigated how marginalised groups are silenced by dominant groups.

The following section explores the evolution of research on interpretation of silence over time and looks in particular at the literature on how silence is interpreted in classrooms.

3.2.1 Silence from past to present

In general knowledge, silence is thought to be the opposite of speech. However, philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Ludwig Wittgenstein have claimed that silence is not about the absence of speech. More than half a century ago, Max Picard (1952) in his book *The World of Silence*, on various forms of silences, wrote, "When language ceases, silence begins. But it does begin because language ceases" (p. 15). This statement makes the case for silence to be understood positively and emphasises the magnitude of silence in the absence of language. Bateson (as cited in Aronson, 1987) makes a similar point in situations where silence is not empty but carries a message. The theoretical discourse of silence is also associated with feminism during the late 1960s that was derived, in the context of pedagogy, "from research examining the reasons for women's silence in traditional classrooms" (Adams, 2007, p. 38). However, with the increasing diversity in higher education, this line of research has been extended to include other marginalised groups in the research of silence.

Some past research on silence was predominately focused on the human aspects of silence and oriented toward its negative attributes (i.e., the pedagogy of the oppressed, the spiral of silence (see later in the chapter), organisational silence, etc.). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the work of Paulo Freire, who wrote about education as a liberating of practice (Freire & Freire, 2004). His work was around raising consciousness in the institutions to change the culture and for people to come out of oppression through education. Organisational silence is observed in many organisations when leaders verbalize new ideas, and the organisational culture sends an implicit and even at times explicit signals that their employees should remain silent (Vakola, 2005). So when negative feedback or suggestions come from people who are in the lower-level of the organisation, it is viewed by their supervisors as being less accurate and less legitimate, in order to protect their own power and credibility. However, the current research on silence is on its unintentional nature, that is to say, silence that does not arise from malicious

circumstances, and is not exclusively a result of human-to-human interaction. Silence sometimes is found to be unintentional or as a result of being ignored, in situations where people could only be mindful of so many things at any given time, or where they were focused on a single task, or simply were not interested in unrelated information. Silence, therefore, does not appear to be understood negatively in some instances: keeping quiet is a useful attribute and has been addressed as a positive way of getting things done.

3.2.2 Silence in student research

A classroom is not only an important site for learning, it is also a place where communication takes place. So it is important to address the function of voice and silence in eurocentric institutions where marginalised students are trying to understand how to manage their levels of engagement in the classroom. In many Western, English-speaking institutions, participation is a requirement of students' learning and also forms part of their final grade. Active participation in the form of oral communication or talking is an expectation such that, for example, "U.S. classroom culture … continues to value speaking as a form of classroom engagement" (Hao, 2010, p. 290). For those students who do not use English as their native language, this is a challenge and this expectation is disadvantaging them.

Dale Spender, a famous feminist, wrote that women "have inherited a history of silences and interruptions [that] indicates the extent to which men have written—and falsified—the records" (1991, p.182) and described the way in which women are silenced. She explained that teachers treated boys differently in classrooms and girls' voices was not heard. Males occupied sounds and space in the classrooms. Documenting the silences, she also wrote:

> We began documenting our absences, by formulating feminist critique of the so-called bias which manifested itself in many levels of knowledge … and where women did not appear it was because those same spectators-for variety of reasons-did not see them as a central part of the human landscape. (1980, p. 14).

Many researchers who research non-English speaking students and minority students advocate against talking as the only form of active participation in the classroom. For instance, Marlina (2009) argued that talking should be "critically challenged … as the only form of active participation" (p. 242). A number of researchers such as Marlina have been challenging the binary view of silence in a classroom, advocating that the positive side of silence "can mean engagement in thought, not lack of ideas" (p. 236).

Hao's (2011) view of silence is that it can take different forms, from a lack of interest to students rebelling, and so it is important to understand how silence is performed, "There are multiple performances of silence that should be taken into account in order to acknowledge different bodies and ideologies, which allows us not to reduce silence simply to a negative attribute in education" (p. 271).

Canagarajah (1999) and Marlina (2009) have also added the dimension of cultural differences to their conceptualisation of silence. They say that in Western institutions, everything is taught in English and favours the native speakers and silences the others. As Canagarajah (1999) argued, "Since everything that is taught already comes with values and ideologies that have implications for students' social and ethical lives, teaching is always problematic. … knowledge of the dominant groups is imposed through the institutions" (pp. 16 & 18). This is endorsed by Marlina (2009) who stated that the Western and English-speaking epistemologies are contributors to students' silence in the classroom.

It is important that the voices of all students, regardless of their background, are included in the classroom setting. As Pang, Rivera, and Mora (1999) maintained, "teachers must integrate cultural knowledge, ways of knowing, nonverbal communication styles, languages, analogies, and community into all aspects of schools" (p. 27). Some educational instructors have argued that the inaction in learning of students with English as second language is because of their culture and Marlina (2009) says that this behaviour reinforces an inferiority complex on

students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Treating all the students as if they came from the dominant majority group, or could adopt the practices of the dominant group, regardless of the diversity among the students, can cause this outcome. It is treating everyone as if they were from the majority.

3.2.3 Silence in the classroom

Silence is viewed negatively in typical classroom settings. Students displaying signs of silence are interpreted as "timid, fearful or disengaged" (Ollin, 2008). Silence is highly important in communication, and the absence of speech signifies that there is something else lacking; however, it does not feature strongly in academic writing on education (Ollin, 2008).

In the classroom, silence is interpreted through understandings of, and associations between, personal characteristics and cultural perspectives that are formed by teachers (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). These practices can be interpreted differently depending on the background of the practicing individual. In the context of a Western cultural orientation, silence in the classroom may be interpreted differently by teachers, depending on cultural viewpoints. In most Western institutions, the talk in the classroom takes precedence and cannot be challenged and there is an expectation that one must contribute to classroom discussions (MacKinnon, 1999; Philips, 1983; Stubbs, 1975).

Nonetheless, in the traditional classroom, the teacher talks and the learner is expected to remain silent and gain knowledge, and can only talk when directed by the teacher. However, in more adult learning environments teachers may encourage learners to engage in classroom discussions. That is understood to be the way to keep adult learners engaged in the subject (Salisbury & Murcott, 1992). But there are other viewpoints. Bruneau's(1973) theoretical work on 'slow-time' and 'fast-time' in teaching and learning environments has informed debates in terms of allowing students be silent in 'slow-time' so that they could have time to think, absorb and reflect (Claxton, 2006).

Tolman and Honzik's (1930) theory of 'behavioural silence' stated that vocalisation and learning are not connected. Vocalisation through personal interactions has a social element, but that is not linked to what is being taught. So, in this context, being social in the classroom may not work for people who want to be silent. It is important to take into account the different types and uses of silences when initiating learning activities.

Helen Lees (2012), in her book on the *Value of Silence in Schools,* identified two types of silence: weak and strong silence. This book is an investigation of silence as a pedagogical tool that can enhance democratic and reflective practice in teaching. Strong silence is used for students to carry out further thinking and to help their work. Weak silence is the type of silence which is used to impose a teacher's authority and retain control over class. This will lead to cover-ups and also a lack of transparency. The understanding of silence in schools should not be limited to students' ability to switch off their brains.

Other studies show that power relations in the educational setting are used for silencing. Hilsdon (1996) demonstrated how teachers in a Botswana secondary school used to exert power on students by using silence. Edwards and Redfern (1992) showed how silencing has been used on minority children and languages in mainstream educational settings in Britain and Canada. Another study by Kramarae and Treichler (1990, as cited in Jaworski & Sachdev, 1998) demonstrated how male students dominated classroom discussions and silenced female students in class.

In summary, some types of negative silence used in the classroom can be interpreted as ways to disadvantage and marginalise students. However, there are other forms of silence in classrooms that are positively viewed and enable students to have time to think more critically. So, using silence as a withdrawal tool for students is undesirable and will not help students to succeed, while other types of silencing can be strategic and helpful as a communicative resource in class.

3.2.4 Meaning of and reasons for students' silence

Depending on each individual student, the reasons for, and meanings of, silence for each case can be different. There is increasing concern among instructors to know the reason behind students' silence and lack of participation. Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) stated that "boredom, lack of knowledge, general habits of passivity, cultural norms, … fear of being embarrassed" (p. 48) are some reasons why students are silent in the classroom (p.48). Chesebro and McCroskey (2002) further explained that some students are too shy to speak. They argue that "approximately 40 percent of college students consider themselves to be shy" (p. 25). There are also published studies that indicate that speaking in class can cause high levels of anxiety for marginalised students (Howard, 2015).

A study conducted by Yanqui, Della and Izumi (2005) in a Canadian university showed that the silence/reticence of East Asian international students in a Western/English classroom setting reflected two barriers to participation. They are the "language competence and cultural differences from mainstream and English proficiency for academic listening and oral presentation" that had labelled these students as "as passive recipients and quiet learners, appearing reluctant to adopt active roles in classroom discussion" (p. 288). The findings of this study suggested that these students can be changed if there is "the agency and potential to resist the dominant classroom ideology/knowledge that may marginalize indigenous knowledge and preclude a more inclusive learning environment" (p. 308).

Research published by Joo and Nori (2007), in response to the issue of silent Asian students in classes, stated that "students have shown that these groups have different learning styles and method compared to western students. Unlike the western culture, these Asian students are less active in participation during the learning activities in class" (p. 6). The study reported that the main factors that lead to this silence are cultural background, language problems or the environment that lecturers created in class.

A recent study published by MacDonald (2019) on institutional silencing and racism in New Zealand schooling reported:

> Silencing is an entrenched part of the state schooling enterprise that ensures settler-colonial education continues to operate in ways that best serve white interests, without appearing to be racially biased. The silencing process functions through emphasising historically-sanitised notions of cultural and ethnic inclusion, while concurrently deleting or obscuring painful aspects of colonisation and their consequences in the present. (p. 41)

Institutional silencing may be understood as an ongoing series of actions or norms that work in the New Zealand education system that is institutionally racist (MacDonald 2019). The research indicates New Zealand secondary school institutional structures operate in complex ways that silence racial critique. These processes happen every day in the teaching practices that silence and disadvantage minorities. The findings of the research show that classrooms are highly racialised spaces.

3.2.5 Institutional silencing

Research in the United States and Britain on the institutional silencing of minority groups has been undertaken in terms of the racial colour-blindness, or "whiteness-as-policy" that informs policy design in the name of being fair and equitable, but results in racial disparities that impact upon cultural and ethnic groups (Leonardo, 2009). Some policies are framed in the name of support for diverse learners that disadvantage black people but benefit whites (Gillborn, 2006).

Studies done in New Zealand and Australia by Siteine (2017) and Vass (2015) to examine the interpretation of policies designed to support indigenous students found that white teachers were not understanding how culture, ethnicity, and affirming students can generate academic success. It was identified that many of the policies, curriculum and pedagogy in institutions were contradicting government policy. The policy that was formed to protect the interest of

minority students is actually legitimising and empowering white interests in schools over others (Siteine, 2017; Vass, 2015).

3.2.6 Spiral of silence theory

Previous work reported in section 3.2 has focused on silence because many minority students may be reticent in the classroom (Farmer, 2001). This can be because of their culture as they feel that their voice may not be heard. There is a particular theory that I want to look at, the spiral of silence theory, which provides some useful insights into how silences are perpetuated. The reason for discussing the spiral of silence theory is that it is relevant to minority students who are often reluctant to speak up in their classrooms. German political scientist Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann first developed the spiral of silence theory in 1974. It arose from her attempt to explain how public opinion evolved, which began while wondering why the German people supported broad political positions during the 1930s and 1940s that led to national defeat, humiliation, and ruin. In her theory, shown diagrammatically in Figure 3.1, below, she described a "quasi-statistical ability" that allows people to sense the majority opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; 1993, p. 25). The theory suggests that people are influenced to align with the majority, even if they have a different opinion, because of the fear of being humiliated or rejected by the larger group.

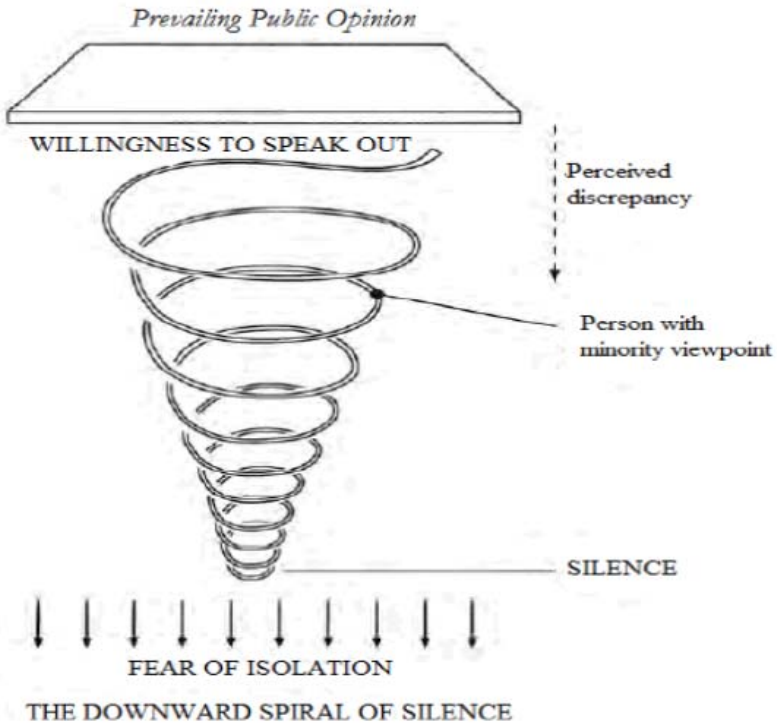
Silence does not start happening at the university. A student's experience of earlier events in their life have exposed them to aspects of silence, some of which have been mentioned above. These can be connotations of silence during worship and also in the cultural context of classrooms prior to coming into the university. So, students come to the university from a pathway of silence, whether it be regarded as positive or negative; however, when they enter the spiral, then students may start heading in a negative direction.

The nature of the university classroom environment may create or heighten fear of participation whereby the theory of Noelle-Neumann can be used to understand the

marginalisation, fear of isolation, and avoidance behaviour which can be experienced by minority students. Some students are willing to speak up in the class to ask questions, make a comment, or seek clarification. Usually, they are the younger students, Pākehā students and male students that Noelle-Neumann and Petersen (2004) refer to in their theory as people of higher social class. Minority students may sometimes fear that they will be humiliated in the classroom if they ask a question when they do not understand something. The question they want to ask may not even make much sense when English is their second language (Moy & Scheufele, 2000; Shulman & Levine, 2012).

The fear and intimidation that exists in the classroom may cause minority students to withdraw further and further, causing a downward spiral as described in Noelle-Neumann's theory. These students are likely to keep to themselves and avoid participating in the class. Universities are institutions that are meant to allow individuals to express their views freely and where people should be able to make their own decisions. But the spiral of silence theory suggests this is not always the case. The theory of the spiral of silence can be applied to understand how, at university, minority students can be prevented from voicing their opinion, and why they might not feel able to fight for their rights and stand up for who they are in their classroom.

Figure 3-1. Spiral of silence model



Note: Image from Noelle-Neumann (1993), p. 378.

The degree of isolation is further deepened for members of invisible minorities such as students with refugee backgrounds, and LGBTQIA+ students, as F. Bowen and Blackmon (2003) argued when discussing the workplace context:

> We propose a second, vertical 'spiral of silence' may develop through processes at a more micro level within the workgroup and organization. This second spiral begins with the inability to fully express one's personal identity within the workgroup because of a negative climate of opinion towards a particular aspect of one's identity. (p. 1393)

If refugee background students do not wish to identify themselves because of their own experience of bullying, their isolation may be worsened.

In a higher education institution, it is important that the diverse identities of the students are respected and welcomed. However, it may be that unless the institution knows about these minority views or is aware of minority identities, it is hard to address them. Debating the difficulty of creating a classroom with an open climate, Ehrlich and Colby (2004) noted that:

> Lack of awareness can happen at any point on the political spectrum. Even faculty who want to encourage open debate by drawing out students with minority opinions are sometimes unclear about how best to make a really persuasive case for a view they don't hold. This makes it hard for them to guide students who are struggling to articulate that position. (p. 38)

Sometimes students may fear that if they share their opinion or political view in a written assignment, they could be penalised or marked down. Students should not have a fear that their written work can be marked down for not conforming to the majority view: "For this and other reasons (which concern good teaching more broadly), it is essential to make assessment criteria explicit and to provide as much feedback as possible based on those criteria" (Ehrlich & Colby, 2004, p. 39).

A recent study examined the fear and intimidation experienced by Tibetan refugees who were living in Nepal. The research tested the model of the spiral of silence among this group of Tibetan refugees by asking them to open up to Nepalese press to express their anger before and after the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990 (Aryal, 2013). The findings showed that the refugees' behaviour initially reflected the model: when the minority community was in isolation, they remained silent. After building up feelings of anger within themselves over time, they started releasing these feelings in mass demonstrations, challenging the spiral of silence theory. This phenomenon Aryal (2013) called the spiral of violence:

> Fear of isolation of minority community force them to remain almost silent as model minority stereotype (even in existing press) and such behavior compels them to express their voices through series of protest after certain time frame (period), and it comes with spiral of violence form; which affects: media, society and the minority community themselves. [sic] (Aryal, 2013, p. 13)

The spiral of silence theory shows that marginalisation leads to silencing and its perpetuation in a spiral movement. The final section on silencing looks at some experiences of the process of silencing and considers how people have been responding to silencing.

3.2.7 Responding to silencing

This discussion records how some of the experiences or processes of silencing demonstrate the effect silencing has on minority groups. A valuable insight into the lived experience of the silencing of minorities comes from Tomy Adeyemi, a Nigerian-American author and writing coach, who has spoken in an interview about her own story of complete invisibility. She talked about the facts and fiction of a child growing up in the narrative absence of role models, of being completely invisible. Growing without seeing herself limited the opportunities she saw for herself. She asked:

> Why aren't there more of us? I was passionate and militant about representation. Picture … a little white girl in a toy store. She sees rows and rows of dolls all of them were black and she is looking at them and she is kind of confused, she doesn't understand … and for me that was the quickest representation of the world that a lot of people from marginalised identities are trying to change. We want every girl to look up and see every doll. That's part of how you change the world. You started with seeing yourself and start with other people seeing yourself. (Radio New Zealand, 2019)

The research and commentary on silencing made me look for the voice of domestic South Asian students in the international literature on policies and strategies for higher education. No research linked directly to the situation of domestic South Asian students was identified, but some feminist collective models provide important insights into uneven power relations and the gendered contexts of university policies and environments:

> As feminists who have commitments to antiracism and social justice, we have no nostalgia for a university that excludes women and people of color. Our call to support slow scholarship[4] is part of the struggle for accessible higher education and for the decolonization of knowledge, in which experimentation, creativity, different epistemologies, and dissidence are all valued and encouraged. … This means that slow

[4] Alternatives to the fast-paced, metric-oriented neoliberal university through enabling students to take a number of years to complete degree, beyond the regulated or expected time frames.

> scholarship cannot just be about making individual lives better, but must also be about re-making the university. (Mountz et al., 2015, p. 1254)

This notion of slow scholarship is significant for minority staff and students in universities. Recent studies on the 'fast' pace of work in neoliberal universities called for faculty/institutional changes on the one hand and for making changes and flexibility in studying time. Shahjahan (2018), reviewing four books on the subject in *Cultural Politics of Education,* noted "how time operates across various scales, from the global policy level (i.e., knowledge economy), to the institutional level, and the individual body level (i.e. faculty or students)" (p. 9) and that this observation had helped him to reflect on himself as an academic. For staff, he calls for the slow scholarship that will help minority faculty staff members by taking the pressure off them being part of the 'rat race'. For students, Shahjahan's call is about universities that will give financial freedom by adapting to lifelong learning.

It is important for minority groups to be part of the policy and strategic direction of their institution, and this can only mean better learning can take place in an inclusive environment where minority students find that they are part of the wider student body and are valued. Moriña (2017) stated that:

> Inclusive education can be defined as an educational approach proposing schools in which all the students can participate, and all are treated like valuable school members. It is an educational philosophy and practice that aims to improve the learning and active participation of all the students in a common educational context. (p. 3)

In such an environment, inclusive education is a way of overcoming silencing and marginalisation. Inclusive education is not simply a nice idea; it needs to be implemented because of the many problems that come with students being marginalised and not being visible or heard. Theories of inclusive education are examined as part of the next section on student achievement theories.

3.3 Student achievement theories

Over the past 40 years, educational researchers have proposed theoretical models reflecting the learning variables that lead to student's educational outcomes (Bean, 1985; Tinto, 1975; Terenzini, 1982). My study investigates environments both inside and outside the classroom that influence student achievement by examining theories regarding the academic achievement of students. I begin by examining theories of inclusive education.

3.3.1 Inclusive education

Inclusive education was introduced as an approach to serve students with disabilities and special educational needs in schools with other students (Blecker & Boakes, 2010; Chireshe, 2013; Porter, 2008). This definition started narrowly and broadened over time to address all learners with any obstacle in learning to be included (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spanagou, 2010; Cigman, 2007; Mitchell, 2005). Inclusive education has been discussed among theorists for the last 20 years, and there has been a lack of consensus on its conceptual definition.

As Florian (2008) and Hornby (2012) stated, the roots of inclusive education had been drawn using two elements – social and educational inclusion – and these are synonymous. In their interpretation, social inclusion is about bringing students with diverse backgrounds into mainstream schools. Their view of educational inclusion is addressing the learning needs of the diversity of students and eliminating their barriers to success.

The international definition used by UNESCO (2005) is that inclusion is "A process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning … reducing exclusion within and from education" (p. 13). This definition of inclusion is designed to ensure that there is no area for exclusion and ensure that every learner's needs are accommodated. It recognises that the learners come with different

needs and abilities and providers should respond to and cater for the diverse needs of learners.

Inclusion is about reforming the process of provision; it addresses equal participation and achievement for all students and conforms to the 'Education for All' movement of UNESCO (2005). According to Ainscow (1999, p. 15) and UNESCO (2005, p. 15), there are four key elements that support inclusive practice. These are: (a) inclusion is a process; (b) inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers to learning and achievement; (c) inclusion is about the presence, participation, and achievement of all students; and, (d) inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, or underachievement.

Inclusion as a process refers to addressing the diversity of the learners as an ongoing process and means that the providers need to keep abreast of these changes and must be equipped to address them as they develop (UNESCO, 2005). The second element is that the educators should be equipped to problem solve (Ainscow, 1999). Through systems and processes, they should collect collate and analyse information to diagnose the barriers to learners both inside and outside of their learning environment so that these learners can reach their potential and not fall through the cracks (Ainscow, 1999).

Attendance, participation and achievement are understood in terms of enhancing the learner's experiences and outcomes of learning, and are not limited to pass rates. These understandings would include observation and auditing of the learning process to ensure that the learning process of students is an enabler of the instruction process for teachers. The last element of inclusive practice, according to Ainscow (1999, p. 15) and UNESCO (2005, p. 15), refers to the identifying of at-risk students because of marginalisation, exclusion and underachievement, and means they are monitored, and risks are mitigated.

Equity and parity in education has been widely discussed and people who advocate for inclusive education have not provided answers on some of the concerns. Artiles and Kozleski (2007) stated that inclusive educators have no answers to the questions of "Who benefits from inclusive education?" "Where are these students included?" And "What are the consequences of who benefits and where inclusion is enacted?" (p.352). There are growing gaps in data related to marginalised groups of students in education in the developed world. Therefore, these questions on equity should be examined on society's grounds of culture and history. Inclusion in education discusses including everyone into the majority culture of the provider. Graham and Slee (2008) questioned inclusion by asking, "When we talk of including, into what do we seek to include?" (p.277). Their argument was the sort of inclusion described earlier in this section, which values inclusivity for all students regardless of their differences in ability, gender, socioeconomic status, race, religion, in fact privileges the majority culture of students and neglects the diversity and learning needs of students.

The practice of inclusive education undertaken by many providers gives a higher emphasis to access as a way of including students without giving due recognition to their unique differences. This can create problems of assimilation, increase resistance and reduce learning opportunities for some students. However, by giving due recognition to students' cultural practices and valuing their diversity, there can be a positive outcome for all learners (Waitoller, 2010). Inclusive education that does this is showing that it is capable of achieving exclusive outcomes for minority students. Nonetheless, it is also important to look into inclusive education using a lens of equity and social justice (Artiles, Harris-Murri, & Rostenberg, 2006). The design of inclusive education for diverse students will be a challenge until under-served groups are given a springboard up to the same level as other students before putting them onto a level playing field and before putting them into inclusive education domain. The experiences of marginalised students are thus extremely important for inclusive education scholarship.

The practices and systems of universities need to reflect the constantly changing demographic composition of the student population. Education systems globally have undergone many transformations and continue to address student diversity as a major challenge (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). An increase in the minority student population requires universities to design systems and processes in the context of learning to promote the academic success of all students. Transforming the education system in response to the needs of diverse populations requires institutions to create an inclusive learning environment that responds to the needs of all students.

While there are good intentions in inclusiveness and the desire not to exclude anyone is a indeed a good intention, some of the literature (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Waitoller, 2010; Graham and Slee, 2008) points to the fact that generalised 'inclusive' student services do not always work. Thus, there are these two views about the effectiveness of inclusive education and generalised support versus targeted support, and my research will be able to demonstrate whether it is the generalised support or the targeted support that domestic South Asian students require to succeed.

3.3.2 Tinto and Bean's theories of motivation and attrition

Tinto's (2017) theory of motivation and persistence has three factors: self-efficacy, a sense of belonging, and perception of the curriculum. Self-efficacy relates to the ability to succeed (Stebleton, Soria, & Huesman Jr., 2014); a sense of belonging is about the student's engagement with their colleagues, faculty, staff, and administrators (Hausmann et al., 2007); and perception of the curriculum is related to a critical consciousness that the student assigns to the material being studied irrespective of the sense of belonging (Zepke, 2015).

It is important for institutions to understand how students are motivated. A student's decision to depart from a programme may be based on other factors such as "finances, family obligations, and work" (Tinto, 2017b, p. 264). Two models have suggested to administrators

and faculty that social contact with students and their institution is required to increase retention in higher education (Astin, 1984; Pascarella, 1980; Tinto, 1987, 1993; Weidman, 1989). They are Tinto's (1975) student integration model and Bean's (1985) model of student departure. Both these models are seminal models that are used to demonstrate that students' persistence and success come about as a result of a student fitting into the institution (Alberto F. Cabrera, Castañeda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992).

Tinto's first model of attrition addressed what takes place between students and institutions regarding the personal characteristics of the student that can result in student attrition. The model falls short in that it does not take into account the external factors, such as social integration and the role of finance that influence this outcome (Tinto, 1975). In this model, a student dropping out from higher education is an indicator of the student's lack of social and academic integration (Duarte, Ramos-Pires, & Gonçalves, 2014). This does not help an institution's leadership and management to engage in evidence-based decision making, because there might be other cultural contexts to factor into reasons for students' attrition (Duarte et al., 2014).

3.3.3 Terenzini's model of student involvement

Balwant's (2018) definition of student engagement refers to "highly activated and pleasurable emotional, behavioural, and cognitive involvement in academic activities" (p. 399). This definition has three components: emotional, behavioural, and cognitive. Balwant translates emotional engagement as feelings or excitement, behavioural engagement as on-task participation reflected in students' actions and energy, and cognitive engagement as focused and high concentration that deals with the learning side of the student (Balwant, 2018).

Terenzini (1982) developed the first model of student involvement which identified the direct and indirect effects of students' interactions with faculty and peers within and outside the classroom that influence students' success. The critique of this model includes a concern that it

does not give due recognition to the social mainstreaming of minority students. Ethnic minority students who enter traditional colleges and universities experience difficulty in fitting into an institution's culture and are confused by mainstream identity (Ro, Terenzini, & Yin, 2013). Terenzini's model of student engagement also falls short of addressing the challenges faced by other minority groups such as women, people with disabilities, and rainbow students (Ro et al., 2013).

3.3.4 Ogbu and Simon's Cultural and Ecological Theory

In a study of minority education in the US and other societies using cultural and ecological theory, Ogbu and Simons (1998) exposed the need to place great emphasis on the role of non-school community forces on the levels of success of ethnic minority students, and how their behaviour at school affects their performance. However, Ogbu and Simons' theory fails to provide an educational strategy for teaching these groups of students.

3.4 Chapter summary

Examining the literature about student success suggests that it will be most appropriate for my study to conduct a single case study using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Using quantitative data and reviewing documents will enable me to see the trends in institutional thinking, and interviewing key informants and conducting focus group sessions will surface the perspectives of staff and students. The justification of the methodology and design for this research is discussed in the next chapter, chapter 4, research methodology and methods.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

In this research, I have studied the experiences of a group of domestic South Asian minority students, part of a student cohort which is growing in size at AUT. The reason for selecting domestic students from South Asian countries is that they are not a particular focus of attention for the institution because they do not attract additional funding (as covered in the environmental scan), and they do not pay full international student tuition fees (Tertiary Education Commission, 2019b). Therefore, they do not receive any of the additional targeted support that the university has for students who are TEC funded included in independent initiatives categories.

The main question my research asks is: What measures have been successful in improving outcomes for domestic South Asian undergraduate students at AUT? To answer the question, this research took a case study approach with a focus on AUT. I have reviewed internal AUT documents to gather data and to establish understandings of policies, strategies and operational activities for South Asian students. In addition, the document review helped me to understand the coverage of South Asian students in the AUT media. I also scanned the AUT website for information published on any programmes and activities supporting this cohort to succeed at the university. Key informant interviews with academic and non-academic staff at AUT enabled me to understand the primary and support services provided for students. Focus groups of South Asian students articulated their experiences of their study at the university. In short, my research on this group of minority students required me to look at the full picture that demonstrated the existing practice of student support carried out by the university, its faculties, schools and other departments.

Also, for this research, a comprehensive longitudinal study of the participation and qualification completion statistics of domestic undergraduate South Asian students at AUT was

carried out. This quantitative analysis was done using the past ten years of student administrative data in AUT.

In this chapter, I explain why I am using a case study approach to this research. Then, I discuss the research methodology, design and methods employed to carry out the study. Finally, I conclude by discussing the safety protocols used to safeguard the participants and the robustness of procedures employed to conduct the research. First of all, however, it is important to examine my research paradigm to position myself as a researcher and to clarify what I believe about the phenomenon of domestic South Asian undergraduate students.

4.2 Selection of methodology

4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the existence and nature of human beings. It is a lens which we use to question ourselves, our existence as individuals as well as the societies we live in. In research, we are trying to understand and unpack such questions (Mol, 1999).

The way I see things can be completely different from how others view them. It is also important to understand how others see things. The ontological understanding of reality has two branches, realism and relativism, which can be regarded as opposites of each other. In a realist ontology, it is believed that truth can be measured objectively, and applies to all situations. In a relativist ontology, on the other hand, it is believed that there is no single reality and that there are multiple realities created in the human consciousness. Explaining these concepts further, Furlong, Marsh, and Ercan (2002)

> distinguish between two broad ontological positions: foundationalism, more commonly seen as objectivism or realism, which posits a 'real' world, 'out there,' independent of our knowledge of it; and anti-foundationalism, more commonly seen as constructivism or relativism, which treats the world as always socially constructed. (p. 178)

The question of what it means to be a human being leads to different responses from different perspectives. From a western perspective, the notion of an individual is of a person who is responsible for their actions and determines their future. For a South Asian the notion of an individual also includes their family. The connection between the individual and family is a very strong bond. A decision about going to university and what is to be studied is determined by the father or mother because the child's education is an investment by the family. The family may also play an important role in selecting a partner suitable for marriage, which is also known as an arranged marriage.

I have gone through this experience, bringing my wife and three children from the Maldives and sending them to New Zealand universities. The decision to send my children to university to do their undergraduate studies was made by my wife and me for my family. They had to do part-time work to contribute to the family earnings. My children had to juggle work, study, religious and cultural duties when they were studying. These elements of their familial bonds are important factors impinging on the success of South Asian students

Thus, I argue, values can have impacts on domestic South Asian students' university experience. Universities are western institutions, and their culture is influenced by traditions from Europe and North America that are highly individualistic. People who are from non-western cultures may find it difficult to assume the primacy of the ontological focus and the individual, to a greater or lesser extent. These different ontologies will impact on their success.

My own family experiences give me an insight into the complexity of the situation and the ontological questions that are not simply around my participants' experiences: they are also reflective of my own situation as well. As a researcher, as a father and as a student, I need to work with an ontological position that can capture all of these differences. I constantly get switched between these worldviews as I move between the different roles in my life; sometimes I do not know which hat I am wearing and at other times I have to wear all of them.

Therefore, I have to consider both realist and relativist ontologies in this research so that I can be flexible. As Rendón, Jalomo, and Nora (2000) noted:

> One of the assumptions scholars have made is that individuals should disassociate themselves from their native cultural realities in order to assimilate into college life. The assumption made is that an individual's values and beliefs rooted in his or her cultural background must be abandoned to successfully incorporate the values and beliefs not only of the instituition but of the majority population upon which they are based. (p. 132)

In taking an ontological position for my research, I am doing it not just for the participants but the passion I have to have South Asian students succeed, and to help break a silence, and to suggest remedies.

Epistemology enquires into how we know what we know and is driven by ontological beliefs. The next section looks into this topic.

4.2.2 Epistemology

It is important to link meanings of reality to what we imply when we say we know something. Epistemology asks: How do we know what we know? And since there are different ontologies, there are different theories of knowledge.

We spend a lot of time and effort in gaining knowledge, so epistemology also relates to how research is done, to how new knowledge is acquired (Crotty, 1998). The real question is therefore about the production of knowledge and how we claim it: how we know things 'factually' or 'experientially' or 'culturally'. Epistemology is about acquiring knowledge and understanding the extent to which our worlds can be known. Thus, it is concerned with the nature of truth and certainty; for philosophers, the relationship between knowledge and truth is complex and disputed, however the knowledge may not be true in all cases.

Epistemology is an important area of philosophy in education and social science research. Educators, constantly question knowledge and are concerned about analysing that knowledge.

Research, is concerned with what needs to be researched and how that contributes to knowledge. Therefore, the reliability of the research and ways to minimise the bias of our judgments when carrying out research are constantly discussed by educators (Thanyer-Bacon, 2013).

Research is about the process of including others to test what we know. That process of including others to know what we know is true means, as Thanyer-Bacon (2013) said, "we learn how we can reform education, but we also learn that we need each other to help us in this process" (p. 26).

The two ways in which knowledge can be acquired are a priori and a posteriori. A priori (non-empirical) or rational knowledge is acquired separately from one's own experience (Horrigan, 2007). A posteriori or empirical knowledge is gained through experience and what one knows based on logic or reasoning.

Since epistemology is about knowledge and the unknown, it raises the question of how we are going to get knowledge as inquirers. In this research, I have assumed that some of the knowledge I am seeking is situated within a specified group, and the way knowledge can be gained is through interactions between the researcher and the participants. My own background and experience cannot be separated from the inquiry because my personal views and life and experiences have brought me to my research question.

In summary, the epistemological assumption underpinning this research is that knowledge is learned from the experiences of the researched, I want to uncover the reality of domestic South Asian students' experience at AUT.

Ontology and epistemology guide any research that is conducted, and the manner in which they combine to do so can be understood more clearly through the notion of the research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This notion is considered in the next section.

4.2.3 Research paradigm

How the researcher views the world affects the entire research process – from conceptualising the problem to collecting and analysing data to interpreting the findings (Merriam, 1988). A research paradigm concerns the nature of research and how research will be conducted to fill a knowledge gap or to solve a problem (Crotty, 1998). This idea of a paradigm is based on three principles: ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2000). The two main paradigms used in social research are positivism and interpretivism. The worldviews and paradigms that inform these two positions are different. Positivists believe knowledge is obtained by discovery whereas interpretivists argues that knowledge is a social or intellectual creation (Candy, 1991; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Positivist theory was developed by Auguste Comte as a way to understand the scientific approach to conducting social research (Beck, 1979). Positivists believe that the only way that knowledge can be acquired is through scientific methods, in other words through observation and measurement (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Positivists employ scientific methods to analyse the world objectively and reliably (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). Positivists disregard metaphysical principles; the only thing they regard as significant is what they see and observe. If there is a phenomenon then, for positivists, it can be directly measured for example speed, temperature, time etc..

The main critique of positivism is that it ignores social phenomena. Positivists say that the ways societies are structured and the ways individuals interact with each other in social settings can only be studied using scientific methods and empirical observation. Interpretivists, in contrast, refer to knowledge rather than objects. They subscribe to a philosophy that deals with individuals making meaning of things through learning (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995), or two or more people providing meaning to things, recognising that meaning and, by doing so, gaining knowledge of and about it. Interpretivists believe that learning is an incremental

process and new knowledge is built on ideas about current or past knowledge. Social interpretivists, on the other hand, believe knowledge is a co-creation by people interacting with their environment (Brooks, 1999; Galbin, 2014). Things around us are not real until and unless we give meaning to them. The critique of interpretivism is that reasoning is more accurate and freer from error when facts are measured using the scientific method.

In positivist research, data are examined in the context of some pre-formulated hypothesis and the data is subject to verification procedures so that the original hypothesis will be either confirmed or rejected (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). However, since the social world is composed of meanings and interpretations, which result in meaningful relationships (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995), positivist notions of rationality, objectivity, and truth (Carr & Kemmis, 2003) cannot be meaningful to the investigator who seeks meaning and understanding of a phenomenon. For what is missing from positivist explanations is a demonstration of how the action in question is accounted for by the person or persons involved (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

As Carr and Kemmis (2003) put it, in the context of educational research: “The positivist idea that knowledge has a purely instrumental value in solving educational problems and the consequent tendency to see all educational issues as technical in character needs to be firmly resisted” (p. 29). However, I should emphasise that there are merits in taking a positivist approach for carrying out my research because the objective quantitative data on enrolment and success that I have collected in phase one of my work provide important context to my research.

On the other hand, in stark contrast to ideas about objective quantitative data, interpretivist research is deliberately open-ended, prepared to change direction or take a developmental view and to accept the possibility of using a variety of sources of data (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Interpretivists argue that the key features of human social life that individuals routinely

interpret and use to make sense of their world mean that the investigation of the social world must relate these interpretations to the natural everyday situations in which people live (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

Thus, the interpretivist paradigm portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and ever-changing (Glesne & Webb, 1993) and an interpretivist researcher generally uses qualitative methods of inquiry to investigate this reality. Qualitative inquiry is inductive – focusing on process, understanding, and interpretation rather than deduction and experimentation (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative researchers in education, in particular, are more concerned about producing adequate descriptions of educational contexts and analyses which highlight and explain the social processes that shape and influence education. In defining the suitability of qualitative inquiry for educational research, Merriam (2009) summarised the view as follows: "the focus is on understanding the meaning of experience, the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection and analysis, the process is inductive, and rich description characterizes the end product" (p. 19).

The open-ended nature of phases two, three and four of the present study demands a comprehensive strategy of data collection and analysis that ensures that the findings are rigorous. I identified that qualitative inquiry would the best approach I could employ to ensure the rigour of my study. Qualitative inquiry often employs a variety of data collection methods. The use of multiple data collection contributes to the trustworthiness of data, and the triangulation that results in such an approach enriches description and explanation and increases confidence in research findings (Glesne & Webb, 1993).

In summary, this study is directed towards facilitating reflection on and a more informed approach to the shortcomings in domestic South Asian students' rates of success in tertiary education, in order to contribute to some solutions. I aim to develop a practical understanding of what would or would not work in a tertiary education system for this cohort of South Asian

undergraduate students. As I have begun to signal in this section, this research has several phases. The first phase of the project involves some statistical work. Phases two, three and four, of the project, are the qualitative research phases involving document analysis, interviews and focus groups. Therefore, as I am using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, my work reflects both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. For that reason, the choice of the research approach must be consistent with both the positivist paradigm and the interpretivist paradigm, and also with the ontologies and epistemologies that underpin those two paradigms. These considerations are addressed in the next section on my choice of research approach.

4.2.4 Research approaches

When I started researching methodology, the most challenging issue I faced was trying to arrive at the distinction between methodology and methods. After extensive reading, I have managed to get clarity on these two concepts (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Robson, 2011). The methodology is about philosophical practices and procedures that are used to conduct research on a phenomenon; and methods are the tools that will be used to carry out the research (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014). The methodology is also about interpreting knowledge based on the ontological and epistemological assumptions made in the research. As Reich (2009) noted, methodology raises questions such as: “How is research planned and executed? How are theories created and tested? How are tests interpreted?” (p. 265).

In the present study, I am taking a case study approach because it allows me to uncover different ways of being (ontological positions) and many ways of knowing (epistemological positions). It is important that the case study creates the space needed because South Asian students in a western institution are caught between two different worldviews. My research has to be able to capture this.

All research methodologies have their strengths and weaknesses; however, selecting the methodology or research approach that is most appropriate for the research in question is an important decision. The results of a case study allow the researcher to understand complex units in real-life phenomena such as those experienced by an individual, group or organisation. Yin (2009) described a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth" (p. 18), which "allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 18). A case study can also be designed and conducted as a single case study, or multiple case studies, depending on the nature of the investigation. Because real life is complex, especially so regarding the context for my research with the different worldviews of the university and the students, a case study approach is appropriate for understanding a phenomenon where complex social issues are present. It is an approach that untangles complex social issues in ways that make it possible to separate a phenomenon from the context and bring out its meaning in the research discussion. The complexity of my study is suited to using a case study approach as my methodology.

4.2.5 Case study

A case study allows an in-depth investigation of a social phenomenon. It is an intensive investigation of a particular unit under consideration. It is commonly used in fields such as psychology, education, sociology, anthropology, and economics, and aims at obtaining a complete picture of a social phenomenon by collecting data using multiple sources via qualitative and quantitative methods.

The case study approach has been commonly used in educational research (Yin, 2009), in similar situations where there are various questions about diversity issues. For example, a study conducted in Australia on university transition, and the challenges faced by first-year culturally and linguistically diverse students in an Australian regional university, used the case study as a methodology (Kong et al., 2016). Ballantyne, Madden, and Todd (2009) also used

case study methodology in a study of the challenges of attracting and accommodating students of diverse demographic backgrounds in an Australian university. Therefore, case study has been selected as appropriate to investigate the enrolments and educational outcomes of the South Asian ethnic minority group of students at AUT.

A case study approach as a method of analysis is used to examine an institution, process or phenomenon within a specific period. It is a comprehensive inquiry into a 'case' and its particular activities that are under investigation. The case is the subject of inquiry, with the study unfolding its history to understand trends with greater certainty (Yin, 2009).

Another reason for using a case study approach in this research is that it allowed me as a researcher to obtain information about the case under investigation using multiple methods of data collection (Yin, 2009). By using multiple methods, the case study allowed me to capture the different ontologies and epistemologies that are present in this research context. To understand a case, it is essential to be flexible enough to be able to identify the context and other conditions that are related to the case. Thus, the evidence gathered in case study research can come from multiple sources and the research can be determined by a descriptive question such as 'what' or an explanatory question such as 'how' or 'why.' A case study applied to real-world problems also uses systematic data collection and analysis procedures. Thus, many scholars agree that, for researchers using multiple sources of data, the case study methodology is a creative approach that helps to connect the different research paradigms in a meaningful way (Luck, Jackson, & Usher, 2006; Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2009).

4.2.6 Decision to use case study approach

Overall, as explained in the previous section, one of the main advantages of the case study is that the data collected are of high quality and provide detailed information on the subject. Furthermore, case study research also gives flexibility in cases where there are small samples. The approach has significant strengths when using both quantitative and qualitative methods

(Zainal, 2007). To address my research question, I needed to get different perspectives from different types of data, and that is best done by a case study design. Philosophically, case study design is flexible and adaptable to both positivist and interpretivist ways of thinking, which is important because that gave me a fully rounded view and also allowed me to incorporate different worldviews from participants. The words of Jónasdóttir, Hand, Misener, and Polgar (2018) also encouraged me to choose a case study that would help me to capture the different research paradigms, ontologies, and epistemologies that were involved because of the complexity of my research:

> Case study methodology offers a creative and flexible way to get a deep understanding of human complexities in context, using various means to collect data. It is important to keep in mind that certain aspects are essential in case study research, but other aspects are more flexible and depend on paradigmatic perspectives, preferences of the researcher, and other considerations. (p. 396)

The reason for using the case study approach is that it allowed me to carry out comprehensive and in-depth investigations into the range of issues across a number of different areas of study. The versatile nature of the case study approach allowed me to go into the full depth of the research question.

In summary, then, a case study approach using multiple methods of data collection techniques to acquire a variety of data was adopted because it allowed me the best opportunity to answer my research question. The case study in this thesis is a single case study of AUT.

4.3 Research design

A research design maps how a study will be carried out. It is about developing the intrinsic parts of the research, regarding groups to be included in the study, sampling, coverage and the practicalities of carrying out the research. In this case study I have used five phases of data collection:

- statistical analysis of student data for the past ten years,
- document analysis,
- key informant interviews of i) academic and ii) non-academic staff,
- student focus groups, and
- OIA inquiry.

The methods used for data collection in this research were those that, at the start of the project, I felt would be most likely to produce the data needed to gain an understanding of the experiences of domestic South Asians enrolled in a bachelor's degree in a university, and also to make effective use of the time available (Glesne & Webb, 1993). The qualitative aspects of the study dictated adopting interviews, focus groups, and document analysis as characteristic of qualitative inquiry and Official Information Act (OIA) inquiries later in this thesis (Merriam, 2002). Thus, as a qualitative researcher, I have drawn on a combination of techniques to collect research data rather than a single technique since the more sources that are tapped for understanding, the more believable are the findings (Glesne & Webb, 1993).

There is no subjective element in the quantitative data. There might be second or third generation New Zealanders with South Asian heritage who attend AUT but have not identified their ethnicity as Asian and from one of the eight countries in South Asia. So there is a degree of complexity in this data, but I would argue that it is a factual complexity that reflects the choices people make.

As the study involved the investigation of events that had already happened, I also chose to review documents as one of the primary means of data collection. In the fieldwork, I have used key informant interviews and focus groups that generated subjective data and also contributed factual information, and these proved to be crucial parts of the whole story. Familiarity with the context of a study allows the investigator to gain a deeper understanding. The implications of this research support the view held by Birksted (1976) that context is of crucial importance since "the apparent deficiency of data can be given contextual meaning, and secondly, the research enterprise itself can be seen as formative context to data" (p. 34).

This study involved multiple methods of data collection. Triangulation involves the incorporation of multiple data sources, and theoretical perspectives to increase confidence in research findings (Glesne & Webb, 1993, p. 24). This approach strengthened the development of emerging themes and inquiry and assisted the research findings to be accurate and convincing (Yin, 2009).

4.3.1 Quantitative research

For this study it was important to find out characteristics of the domestic South Asian population living in New Zealand using information collected by Statistics New Zealand from the New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings. Census data for 2001, 2006 and 2013 were analysed to find out about the South Asian population in New Zealand. South Asian as an ethnic category was not reported in any of the census results. Therefore, I have had to use data on the Statistics New Zealand website to find the South Asian population using the people who identify as being from the eight countries that form the South Asian region. It was also important to find out about South Asians in the Auckland region since my research was on South Asian students at AUT and therefore the catchment area for students was, largely, the Auckland region. This data again was accessed from the Statistics New Zealand website.

Education data was sought for South Asian students studying in New Zealand universities from Education Counts, which is published by the Ministry of Education[5]. Education Counts provides educational statistics for the New Zealand tertiary sector, and is publicly available. Statistics on tertiary students were used to find out about the composition of South Asian students in universities and their achievement. Education Counts also does not provide the ethnic breakdown at the South Asian ethnic level. Educational statistics published provide a breakdown by major ethnic groups, by sub-sectors and by qualification. Longitudinal data is available for ten-year periods.

Data on students' enrolment and qualification completion were sourced from AUT. AUT also reports publicly on broad ethnic groupings, and data for South Asian students were not available. It was important for my research to identify the cohort of South Asian students enrolled in AUT and their qualification rates over ten years, as this would show South Asian students' levels of participation and their patterns of qualification completion.

Therefore, as the first phase of this study I analysed quantitative data for the following three groups:

1. Ethnic minority peoples in Auckland and New Zealand

   This data was sourced from Statistics New Zealand information on previous censuses. Census data for 2003, 2006 and 2013 are available on the Statistics New Zealand website. They include demographic data for the New Zealand population. These statistics can be viewed for the population by age, sex, and ethnicity. They were downloaded and the data analysed using the Microsoft Excel pivot tool. A detailed explanation of data extraction and analysis can be found in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

2. Tertiary students enrolled in New Zealand universities

[5] Education Counts is an online tool used by New Zealand's Ministry of Education to publish educational data about New Zealand on student population, engagement and achievement https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education.

Tertiary education data on participation and success New Zealand-wide was sourced from the Education Counts website. Data included information on participation rates for bachelors' programmes and eight-year qualification completion rates for bachelor's degrees for New Zealand universities. This data was downloaded and analysed using the Microsoft Excel pivot tool. A detailed explanation of data extraction and analysis can be found in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

3. Students enrolled in AUT programmes

   Data on domestic South Asian students' enrolment and success at AUT was sourced from the Students' Data Warehouse that is connected to the ARION system. ARION is a student management data repository maintained by AUT. It holds comprehensive information on all student from enrolment through to graduation. Data sourced for my research were student enrolment and graduation by year, programme and ethnicity. Data were extracted using Microsoft Excel and analysed using Microsoft Excel pivot tool. Data were analysed for student enrolment and graduation by year, programme and ethnicity. A detailed explanation of data extraction and analysis can be found in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

4.3.2 Qualitative research

4.3.2.1 Doing research using multiple methods

Doing research using both quantitative and qualitative data is about putting together people's lives as well as the numbers and statistics of the occurrences in their lives. It combines statistical trends and peoples' experiences.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data is useful to study large populations efficiently. The disadvantage is we do not listen to them, and their voices are not heard. Qualitative data collection surfaces information and listens to participants' views and experiences, and, as it is interpretive, it cannot be used

to make inferences. It relies on the researcher's interpretation. The purpose of the qualitative inquiry is to build understanding from participants' perspectives.

4.3.2.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is a process of reviewing or evaluating documents systematically. Documents are in printed or digital form and, in this process, the reader aims to grasp their deeper meaning and gain an in-depth understanding by interpreting them (G. A. Bowen, 2009). As McMillan (2015) indicated, the intent of document analysis is to provide "rich descriptions and a complete understanding of the setting and to accurately reflect the complexity of human emotions, thinking, and behavior" (p. 85).

In the second phase of this study, both government and AUT documents were analysed. Government documents accessed and analysed included publicly available printed and digital material from the Ministry of Education, Education Counts and Immigration New Zealand. AUT corporate documents accessed included Strategic Plans, Annual Reports, Year Books, Codes of Practice, Investment Plans, and Insight Alumni Magazine issues.

Documents from the Ministry of Education and Education Counts were examined to review:

1. Policy documents on supporting domestic South Asian students in the tertiary sector.
2. Documents reporting on minority students' educational participation and outcomes for the university sector.
3. Print and digital media for published information on minority students.

Documents from Immigration New Zealand were examined for:

1. Policy documents about refugees and migrants arriving in New Zealand.
2. Print and digital media information on refugees and migrants.

Documents from AUT were examined in order to obtain:

1. Policy documents on supporting minority students enrolled in undergraduate courses.

2. Corporate documents reporting on minority students' educational outcomes.
3. Operational documents on the university structure and the functioning of faculties and other services.
4. An understanding of current equity practices, functions and operations, and their outcomes.
5. Print and digital media information on minority students and staff and, more specifically, information about South Asians at the university.

The reference period of documentation reviewed was between the end of 2007 to the end of 2017, a period of 10 years, depending on availability and accessibility. To get as comprehensive a coverage as possible, I extended the search to include documents from AuSM (Auckland Student Movement at AUT)[6], the AUT students' union.

In studying the texts I used computer-based search strategies to find occurrences of relevant words and then examined the texts where those words occurred to see if anything useful appeared.

These searches excluded images and focused purely on the text. The reason to focus on text-based materials only and not deal with images was because of the highly subjective nature of image analysis and personal responses to images .

As a final point, it is important to note that the document analysis process also aided me in developing questions for key informants and student focus groups.

4.3.2.3 Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews are a common mode of data collection for a case study, as they enable the researcher to collect rich, detailed information on the topic under investigation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Some of the threads to be followed in later focus group discussions stemmed from key informant interviews.

[6] From 2018 known as AUT Students' Association, AUTSA.

In the third phase of the study, I conducted in-depth key informant interviews with staff who are key people in providing academic and non-academic support to South Asian students. The participants in my key informant interviews were academic and non-academic staff at AUT who support domestic South Asian students enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes. The staff were regularly associating with the students and were an integral part of their success.

I used semi-structured face-to-face interviews to collect data from these key informants for my thesis. They were chosen purposefully so that there was a good spread across faculties and services and gender at AUT.

Method of selection

I used purposeful sampling to select the staff to be interviewed because it was important to identify those staff who were engaged in providing services to domestic South Asian students. According to Patton (2015), a purposeful sampling method allows information-rich individuals related to the study to be chosen, to enable the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the case being studied. Purposeful sampling is a method of sampling where the researcher uses existing knowledge to select the people most appropriate for the study (Merriam, 2002).

Next, I used the snowball sampling technique to recruit additional participants for key informant interviews. The snowball sampling method is a referral recruitment method used to locate hard-to-reach populations to carry out research (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Snowball sampling is also used where there are no proper administrative or written records to identify the research population. It is a multistage process where the initial source identifies recruits, then they help to identify possible participants and this goes on like a snowball gathering snow as it rolls downhill (Wasserman, Bender, Kalsbeek, Suchindran, & Mouw, 2005). It is a non-probability sampling method, and there are the chances of any participant getting selected, and the researcher has the discretion to select or not select a participant based on the recommendation. There are disadvantages in using snowball sampling as it is not possible to

calculate the sampling error using a scientific method and making inferences about the wider population.

The reason for using a snowball sampling technique in this study was that I had to make sure staff participants in my study were people who were providing additional support services for South Asian students. So some of these participants were identified by other participants in the research. Another criterion I used was to recruit academic and non-academic staff from disciplines or fields of study that have a high concentration of South Asian student enrolments in undergraduate degrees.

To carry out the recruitment, first I put together a list of names of staff who were working in areas providing additional support to students. This was based on my knowledge as a staff member who supported the equity strategy across the university and had information about staff and their colleagues who are helping students above and beyond their usual work. The list of names included staff who are engaged in supporting equity groups in faculties, learning support and other student support services. I also tried to include as many South Asian staff as possible, but this was done by identification from their appearance. There were complexities in this process. As per appearance, it is hard to distinguish those staff who were Fijian Indian from those who were South Asian. There was no other way of identifying South Asian staff through official channels, because the university does not hold information on staff ethnicity.

Next, I drafted an invitation and sent it to all the staff on the list, with participant information and consent forms as attachments, and 50% of them were quick to respond stating that they were eager and happy to be part of the research. The rest did not respond at all, so after four weeks I followed them up with further emails and phone calls. It was also surprising that a third of the non-respondents were staff who were visibly identified as South Asians.

After a follow-up email and phone calls, I found some of the reasons why there was no response from staff who were identified as South Asians. Half of the South Asian staff I

contacted said that they did not see a reason to do this research as South Asian students did not have any problems, and they were doing academically well. Two of the South Asian staff said that there were challenges for South Asian students, but they did not have time to be part of my research. Two South Asian staff members declined the invitation but gave no reason for doing so.

Therefore, in consultation with my supervisors, I decided to extend the invitation to include more staff. I included those staff members who were engaged in supporting students enrolled in disciplines or fields of study with high concentrations of undergraduate South Asian students. Using the snowball approach I also extended the invitation to include staff who were recommended by those staff who were already part of my study. Every effort was made to have an equal split of academic and non-academic staff.

I kept on amending the list of staff to be invited by adding new staff who met the criteria for my research. Communications were also sent to these staff members by email with participant information and consent forms. Ultimately, I was happy about the level of response I received and continued with my interviews.

Setting up key informant interviews

I set up interview appointments across three weeks in November and early December 2017. I wanted to complete key informant interviews with both academic and non-academic staff before they went on Christmas break. The interviews were conducted using an individual semi-structured interview format. The reason for having a semi-structured interview format was that the same questions would be asked of all participants. This helped me to form themes when analysing the responses from the participants.

Carrying out key informant interviews

I made appointments with 17 staff and went to their offices, as they had nominated, for all except two of the interviews. These two informants came to my office for their interview.

Before starting the interview, I briefed them about my research and asked them if they had any questions about the participant information sheet. Then I asked them to sign the consent forms and also asked them for their permission to record the interview on two Dictaphones. I used two devices for the recording of the interview so that, if anything happened to one, I would always have a backup. I also explained to the participants their right to withdraw from the interview and also that their confidentiality and anonymity would be protected.

All interviews were structured similarly; however, the semi-structured format also gave participants opportunities to express freely and at length their views and their observations on any other areas that they felt were relevant to the subject in question. Naturally, there were times when they went off on tangents so that I had to remind them about the topic in question in a polite way. Most of the interviews took 45 minutes to an hour, but some of them went over time.

At the beginning of the interview, I asked participants to introduce themselves and asked them about their background and their experience. My questions were structured around student support, and whether the support resulted in a positive or negative outcome towards students' degree completion. I asked the participants what their experiences were in supporting South Asian students and whether their faculties, schools or departments measured outcomes of programmes for South Asian success in any way. Another question asked if they saw any ways that AUT could improve support for minority undergraduate students enrolled in the university. Some of the other areas I was interested to know about from participants were: the relationship between faculties and other student support services in the university; whether they had resources at their disposal; and where would they like such resources to be invested in expanding student support services.

After the first two interviews, I realised that the participants potentially felt that they were being framed and blamed. Their answers were protective and defensive, trying to prove that it

is not their problem but the students'. Therefore, in consultation with my supervisors, I added a question to find out what kind of challenges minority students, especially South Asian students, bring to their classes. This change in the question suddenly allowed participants to express themselves more freely and engage in the interview. At the end of the interview, participants were given the opportunity to add anything they would like in supporting or addressing the challenges they face from South Asian students enrolled in undergraduate programmes at AUT.

I did not take many notes during the interviews as I was observing participants' reactions and behaviour, aspects that cannot be captured in the recordings. I found that the moment I started writing, I lost eye contact and disengaged from the participant. Also, by observing, I managed to gauge the level of engagement of the participant, and this helped me as a guide to navigating the interview. However, at the end of each interview, I noted my observations in a journal for future reference.

Of the 17 key informants interviewed for my research, nine (53%) were academic staff and eight (47%) non-academic staff; out of all interviewees ten (60%) were from faculties, and seven (40%) were from other student support services. They were all staff employed at AUT. I also managed to get a good representation from academic staff from the disciplines or fields of study where a high concentration of South Asian students were enrolled.

Of participants interviewed from the student services division, one (15%) were academic staff and six (85%) were non-academic staff whereas, among the participants from the faculties, seven (70%) were academic staff and three (30%) were non-academic staff. Figure 3.1, below, shows the proportion of academic and non-academic staff by faculty and division.

The distribution shows that six (67%) of non-academic staff were from student services and three (33%) were from faculties, while one (12%) academic staff were from student services,

this being a learning centre staff. Table 4.1 also shows the split between academic and non-academic staff within each of the faculties.

Table 4.1 Key informant interview participants by faculty and division

Faculty/ Division	Academic	Non-academic	Total
Faculty of Design & Creative Technologies	3		3
Faculty of Business & Law	1	1	2
Faculty of Culture & Society	2	2	4
Faculty of Health & Environmental Sciences	1		1
Student Services Division	1	6	7
Total	8	9	17

Table 4.2 shows the percentage distribution of participants by the field of study.

Table 4.2 Distribution of key informant interview participants by discipline or field of study

Field of study	Academic	Non-academic	Total
Accounting	1		1
Computing	1		1
Education	1		1
Engineering	1		1
Learning Support	1	1	2
Maths	1		1
Occupational Therapy	1		1
Social Sciences	1		1
Student Support		6	6
Student Admin		2	2
Total	8	9	17

Transcribing interviews

The audio files from the two Dictaphones were saved on my computer and laptop. I listened to them to check the clarity of the recording and also that the whole interview was captured in the recording. Then I deleted one, keeping the better recording of the two.

I started transcribing my interviews only after concluding all my interviews because I had back-to-back interviews scheduled on my calendar before staff went on their Christmas break. The

transcription exercise was a challenge because there were areas where participants had repeated some of the issues, but I tried to capture participants' responses accurately. The first four interviews were transcribed by me so that I became familiar with the process and the material. This also made me realise the complexities of ways in which participants responded to the semi-structured questions.

Later I advertised for a person to do transcription using Student Job Search. I received responses from five people. Out of the applicants I shortlisted two, based on their previous experience in transcribing, and signed contracts and confidentiality agreements with them. I gave them one interview each, and when they were returned, I checked for the accuracy and time taken for transcription. I decided to use one transcriber based on their accuracy and the time taken for transcription. Transcription took 14 days as agreed. However, once these interviews were transcribed I went through the transcripts to ensure that the transcriber had captured the interview accurately, as they were still fresh in my memory.

4.3.2.4 Focus groups

Focus groups consisted of domestic South Asian students enrolled in a bachelor's degree who have identified and ticked their country of origin as one of the eight countries in South Asia. Priority was given to students who had completed at least a semester of study and not more than two years of study.

A focus group is a method of capturing data that allows participants to form a collective with regard to an area of research (Hartas, 2015; Morgan, 1997). It is also a platform where discussion can be freely carried out by the researcher and participants. The role of the researcher in a focus group is to facilitate the session, and allow the participants to engage with the topic.

The reason for choosing focus groups for students was that it gave them the autonomy and courage to share their views freely when they were with their peers, rather than in an

interview process where they would have been on their own. I wanted the students to tell me about their own experiences of accessing academic and non-academic services provided by the university. I asked them: as minority students do you feel you are supported and do support services help you to pass your programme of study? As minority students do you feel that you are accepted and visible?

The reason for organising two focus groups was to have one group for females and the other group as mixed. My experience as a South Asian means I am aware that there may be female students who may not feel comfortable in a focus group with males. I also explained to the focus group participants that they did not have to answer a question that they were not comfortable with. Since I had two focus groups, I again had a semi-structured format of asking questions and opening threads for discussions, to allow the data collected from the two groups to be analysed as one set.

Participant recruitment process

To recruit focus group participants, as stated in my ethics application, I prepared a notice inviting South Asian students doing undergraduate studies to contact me by phone or email. These notices were posted on noticeboards in all public places accessed by students in all three campuses of AUT. I also communicated with AuSM to enquire about publishing this notice in *Debate* magazine, a free weekly student magazine published by AuSM. AuSM's response to my request was that I would have to pay commercial advertisement rates to get the notice published and they emailed me the rates. They were very expensive and, given that my request involved a research project about a minority student group's welfare, I was not convinced that it should be charged a commercial advertising rate. So, after further communications, AuSM agreed to have my notice posted on their Facebook page. That was a good outcome as the Facebook page is a social media channel that is frequently accessed by students.

I communicated with the Student Services Administration of AUT to request to have the notice on the university webpage. There was a hostile response to this request, saying that they cannot post anything on the webpage targeting a specific minority group of students. I was not very happy with the outcome so had further communication and finally, they agreed to post the notice on the Student Digital Workspace (SDW) as an exception. I was not satisfied with their reasoning on refusing to post my notice. It was another hurdle faced by all students. It would be good if the university had a website where researchers could recruit students.

To get the message across to students, I went to lectures and talked about my research. This was made possible by two lecturers who are my colleagues and who allowed me to do a presentation before their lecture. After the presentation, I responded to questions from students. It was important to get the message to all corners of the university so that students were able to participate. I did not see any direct recruitment from these classes. The positive thing is that the news of my research would have been communicated to their peers.

Method of selection

I used a snowball sampling method to select students for focus groups (see the explanation of this technique in section 3.3.2.3, under "Method of selection"). The reason for using the snowball method was that the population of students in the specified cohort in the overall student body was small, and I had to make sure that the students could be identified accurately so that they were selected for the focus group.

The advantage of snowball sampling is that it made it possible for me to find participants required for research. It was initially difficult to identify South Asian students who met the criteria for selection to the focus group. Some participants who participated in my research were hard to identify by visible indicators just by going out on campus.

Past experience

My previous experience in conducting focus groups became very helpful in conducting my research in 2016. I was a member of the AUT equity and diversity research group which researched equity and diversity issues, and I conducted focus group interviews as part of this research. This was done in AUT conducting staff focus groups in the different campuses on research on equity and diversity-related topics. From my experience, I was aware of the challenges in moderating focus groups. There are participants who speak at length and others who keep silent. There are members in the focus group who jump in and dominate discussions. I found that the skills I had learned from previous focus groups helped me to put processes in place to avoid those pitfalls.

Convening focus groups

The two focus groups were convened at AUT's City Campus because it was a central point that allowed students from different campuses to come together. Those students who travelled from other campuses were given AUT return shuttle tickets to attend the focus group. Six students confirmed for the first focus group and five attended. Seven confirmed for the second, and five participated.

I set up the interview room with a jug of water and glasses and made sure the temperature and the ambiance were right. I made sure that both my Dictaphones were working by testing them before the sessions. When participants came into the room, I greeted them and then introduced myself, and I allowed two to five minutes for any latecomers. I started with a brief introduction to my PhD, the purpose of the research and their contribution to it. I checked with the participants to see that they had all completed the participant information sheets and consent forms and that they had read them and asked if they had any questions. I also made extra copies of participant information sheets and consent forms, for those who did not have them. It took ten minutes to complete all forms and get their signatures.

I made clear to the focus group participants that the discussion would be confidential and they could freely voice their opinions. Also, I asked for their permission to record the focus group session using the two Dictaphones and explained the reason for having two devices, in case of any technical problem, as a backup. I talked to them about the ground rules of how the focus group would be conducted and also that the semi-structured questions would guide discussions. Then I invited participants to introduce themselves, by telling everyone their name, country, and field of study and year of study; that also helped as an ice-breaker at the beginning of the session.

Focus groups are assisted by having one participant discussing a topic and others joining in, which is useful in obtaining several perspectives on the topic under discussion (Gibbs, 1997). Ideas raised in discussions are a further lead to participants reflecting on their own experiences and following additional threads in their story. Data collected from focus groups are helpful for a researcher to understand the participants' situation in the context of other findings of the research (Rabiee, 2004).

I had to be aware of some of the limitations in focus group research. Not all participants equally engage in discussions and some divert the topic into other discussions (Algozzine & Hancock, 2016). However, the ground rules helped to overcome this. Under these rules the group operated by going clockwise around the table in the discussion of each topic, so each person had the opportunity to speak.

Transcribing focus group discussions

The audio files recorded during the focus group sessions were saved on my computer and laptop. As with the interviews, I went through and listened to them to make sure all the discussions were recorded. Next, I deleted one recording and kept the clearer one.

Transcription of the focus group discussion tapes was done by me. These transcriptions were very time-consuming as I had to make sure that all conversations were captured and also

identify who said what. These focus groups were over an hour long. It took me 12 hours to transcribe one recording.

4.3.2.5 Official Information Act

In 1982 the New Zealand government passed the Official Information Act (OIA). The intention of the act was that it "allows people to request official information held by Ministers and specified government agencies. It contains rules for how such requests should be handled, and provides a right to complain to the Ombudsman in certain situations" (Ombudsman, 2019, p. 4). Under this act any New Zealander can request at anytime information from a government agency, which is not otherwise publicly available. This includes all government agencies, including ministries, intelligence agencies, hospitals, universities, schools, crown entities, and state-owned enterprises. The agency must make a decision and respond in 20 working days after receiving the request. One of the reasons why I chose to use this is not only to request information not otherwise publicly available, but also to confirm that nothing is there.

I targeted the key agencies which manage all stakeholders to provide any such information in their possession, including requests to those who manage tertiary funding (Ministry of Education and Tertiary Education Commission), and those who regulate the tertiary sector (The Treasury and Universities New Zealand). I also sent requests to selected universities (Victoria University of Wellington and Auckland University of Technology). My supervisor advised that Victoria University of Wellington's first Equity Pro Vice Chancellor had asked for this information more than twenty years ago. AUT was an obvious choice as my case study.

I expected that if any cost benefit analysis had been conducted at New Zealand university level, the targets might claim that the research was commercially sensitive and refuse to release material. This reply would not be available for the government agencies.

4.4 Analysis of data

Students' data recorded and managed on the AUT student database are stored in a Structured Query Language (SQL) format used for manipulating and querying data in relational databases. This is linked to Microsoft Excel to run queries and for offloading data dumps. Students' data that were used in my research were obtained by accessing the tabular model using the Microsoft Excel table connector and connecting to the SQL Server Analysis Cube, then importing data into Microsoft Excel and using the 'pivot table' tool. A pivot is a tool in Microsoft Excel that helps to analyse large sets of data. The pivot table helped to summarise, analyse, and present the data that related to domestic South Asian students' participation and qualification completion.

The New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings is managed and published by Statistics New Zealand. On the Statistics New Zealand website is a web-based tool called the 'table builder' that allows a researcher to select a base table and then use different variables to dissect the data to view the desired combination of data sets. I used this web-based data service and downloaded data in Microsoft Excel format and used Microsoft Excel's pivot tool (as explained as above) to analyse and tabulate the data for my research.

Qualitative data analysis was done using computer-assisted data analysis software called NVivo 11 produced by QSR International. This software was used to analyse key informant interviews and focus group discussions. NVivo is used by many researchers to analyse textual data from interviews and focus groups (Saldaña, 2015; Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016). First of all I wanted find out how the the process of coding and visualisation using a software as NVivo will help me to navigate into the depth of my research. After completing

training workshops and researching books published on NVivo by Bazeley and Jackson (2013) and Saldaña (2013), I was confident in using NVivo to code and draw themes using nodes.

Qualitative data were analysed and managed using the following steps. All the transcriptions for all interviews and focus group discussions were saved in Microsoft Word documents using standard paragraph formatting; these were imported to NVivo 11 and saved. Second nodes or empty containers were created. Nodes were labeled and descriptions were given for identification. Sotiriadou, Brouwers, and Le (2014) explained that, by using NVivo, "the data analysis process can be enhanced in various ways" and that this software "can speed up the analysis process markedly, making it easier for researchers to experiment with different codes, test different hypotheses about relationships and draw diagrams of emerging theories" (p. 231).

The initial analyses of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions were done using the auto-coding technique provided by Nvivo 11 plus software (Kafi, Liu, & Lang, 2017). After performing auto-coding, cluster analysis was used to identify the themes emerging from data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). I also ran queries to find specific words and analyse phrases from theme nodes to establish the relationships between themes. Text search queries were performed to search for other content in the interviews and discussions to highlight the text around the selected phrase.

4.5 Ethics

My first ethics application was submitted to AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 4 September 2017 and I received their first decision on 20 October 2017 asking for resubmission after meeting the conditions they outlined in the response. The conditions were relating to ensuring robust confidentiality and anonymity of student data and minor revisions to the participant information sheet. After providing the requested evidence, my ethics application number 17/319 was approved for three years on 1 December 2017 (see Appendix A).

The ethics application process helped me to critically examine my research process. My initial reaction after seeing the questions was that they were too detailed and unnecessary. After attempting to respond to the questions in the ethics applications, I realised that this step was important because it prepared me for any unforeseen issues that I may have encountered during my fieldwork. I am glad that I did this exercise before my fieldwork. It gave me more confidence in conducting my research.

4.5.1 Ethical considerations

In conducting this research, I made sure ethical and research protocols were followed. Being a domestic South Asian, a student, and a former staff member of AUT, I considered myself to be an insider as a researcher and this research was considered to be insider research. As a South Asian, I had an understanding of the culture of the participants in this research. As a staff member of AUT, I had the knowledge about my case study and its operations. Some of the staff interviewed were my former colleagues and they were comfortable to open up freely to share their views about my research (Smyth & Holian, 2008). However, I was also aware that the familiarity with the research question may also lead to problems of objectivity, (DeLyser, 2001; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002) because of my own assumptions. Being an insider or outsider, the researcher has to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages and should take ethical considerations into account and be transparent about possible bias (Unluer, 2012). I have taken the utmost care to conduct this research professionally and reflectively to manage any personal bias. The research was conducted with human participants and therefore permission was obtained from AUTEC (see section 3.5) for recruiting participants, recording and gathering data and securing data.

Rigorous methods were applied to make sure that the participation in the research was voluntary. As a token of gratitude, a koha was given to the students who participated in focus groups. Focus group participants were not told about a koha beforehand, to ensure students

who participated in this research were doing so out of interest in and concern about the research in question.

4.5.2 Informed consent

All participants interviewed as key informant interviewees and participants of focus groups were sent an information sheet explaining the research and seeking their participation in the research. When they showed interest in participation, a confirmation invitation was extended and a consent form was sent by email (Appendix B). They were given the opportunity to ask any questions for clarification about my research. Permission was also sought to record the interview. At the beginning of an interview or focus group, all participants were given the opportunity to discuss the research, hard copies of the participant information sheet and consent form were made available at this time. It was made clear that all participants could, at any point of time during the interview or focus group discussions, withdraw and request the deletion of the recordings. I also made sure each participant had signed the consent form before the interview or focus group began.

4.5.3 Participants' confidentiality and anonymity

Information and data collected for this research from participants were obtained in confidence and assurances were given to the participants that their anonymity would be protected. Because of the nature of the organisation, every effort was made to ensure that their identity was protected in any reports, presentations or publications that may emerge from this research. All copies of data, including consent forms, would be securely stored at AUT for six years and all voice recordings were deleted from Dictaphones. Access to this data was limited to the researcher, two supervisors, and two people who transcribed the interviews. The transcribers were required to sign confidentiality agreements separately and these agreements are held with other secure documents.

4.6 Researcher positioning

The positioning of the researcher has been theorised with different definitions in educational research. Many questions have been raised about whether an outsider can research a social research topic without being familiar about the background in the way that an insider is familiar with it. The argument about being an insider or outsider has much to do with how we view, translate and interpret what gets researched (Crossley, Arthur, & McNess, 2015). What is more important here is, as Hellawell (2006) to "be more one of empathetic, rather than spatial, closeness or distance" (p. 489). So the emphasis is on the empathy, the sincerity and integrity of the research carried out. The value of the insider or outsider perspective is dependent on the area of research. As Crossley et al. (2015) stated: "Research may require us to distance ourselves and yet at the same time to become immersed. We are neither complete observers nor complete participants, but often working in the 'third space' in between" (p. 34).

4.7 Chapter summary

The selection of the methodology, methods and analytical techniques, and the ethics approval process, were all important parts of efforts to answer my research question about domestic South Asian students' success at AUT. Answering my research question using multiple methods also required an understanding of both positivist and interpretivist paradigms, and the different ontologies and epistemologies that go with them.

The next chapter presents the quantitative data collected about the case study.

Chapter 5 Quantitative Data: Findings

5.1 Introduction

As described in the “Research Design“ section in Chapter 3, the quantitative data that were used in this research were obtained from the New Zealand Census published by Statistics New Zealand, Ministry of Education data on the Education Counts website, Immigration New Zealand data and students’ administrative data from AUT’s Data Warehouse. Methods used to extract and analyse data from these datasets in this research are discussed in Chapter 3.

Extracting quantitative data for South Asians was complex because none of the sources specifically reported on domestic South Asians as a group. Reporting done by Statistics New Zealand, Education Counts and AUT reporting had consistency in reporting ethnicity at the broadest level. All three sources had reported for European, Māori, Pasifika, Asian and ‘Other’. Ethnicity is a self-nominated field where respondents are free to make a choice. For my research, I was interested to disaggregate Asian data to view South Asians within that group. Data from AUT and Statistics New Zealand had the facility to download the data and analyse at South Asian level, although the two sources required me to use different ways to disaggregate the data.

4.2 Data extraction

5.2.1 Census data

Statistics New Zealand reports statistics about different ethnic groups of people living in New Zealand and to that end it periodically conducts a census of the population. The last census was conducted in 2018, although this data was not available at the time this data analysis was conducted. The last data set that was available was for the New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 2013.

Population data that is used in my research are from 2001, 2006 and 2013 population and housing censuses. I have used census data for these three consecutive censuses to understand the population growth and trends for South Asian people living in Auckland and in New Zealand. The data is published on the Statistics New Zealand website on a web-based platform called Table Builder. Procedures used for obtaining data are detailed in Chapter 3.

The census data enumerates people using multiple ethnicities so that a single person can nominate themselves to more than one ethnicity. As noted above, census population data reports on four broad ethnic groupings and also the fifth category 'Other'. However, the web-based Table Builder allows me to view data at the next levels of ethnicity. Starting from Asian as the broad grouping category, I have extracted the next level of ethnic grouping to reflect the population from South Asian countries.

Detailed ethnic groupings data were extracted for six ethnic groups in South Asia. They were Afghani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani and Sri Lankan. The only two ethnic groups that were not reported in detail were Bhutanese and the Maldivians. Bhutan and Maldives are the two smallest countries, in population size, of South Asia. New Zealand populations with Bhutanese and Maldivian ethnicity are very small so are not recorded but that is not to say that the populations are zero.

5.2.2 Ministry of Education data

The Ministry of Education, through its Education Counts website, provides information on educational statistics for the education sector in New Zealand. It provides snapshot information and also longitudinal data for all sectors and sub-sectors in education.

Participation data for students were available with a breakdown of a range of demographic characteristics, fields of study and providers. Data on participation were based on student head counts. Education Counts also provides statistics on retention and achievement of students in tertiary education. Qualification completion data were provided in eight-year

cycles for each cohort of students. The qualification completion rate is defined as a cumulative percentage of students who successfully completed a qualification at the same level.

These data were available on the Education Counts website in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The ethnic breakdown of the data was only at the four major ethnic groups, European, Māori, Pasifika, and Asian, and also the fifth category 'Other'. Students are counted for each ethnic group they identify with. Education Counts did not report data by domestic students' country of origin. The reporting was in the form of standardised regular reports; extracts of data were not available for micro-level reporting. Therefore, all sector data and national reporting on students presented in this thesis are at the level of the four broad ethnic groups plus the category 'Other.' Procedures used for obtaining data are detailed in Chapter 3.

5.2.3 Immigration New Zealand data

To reflect on the growth of the domestic South Asian population in New Zealand, it is important to reflect on their origins. Information on refugee arrivals indicates that some of the countries of South Asia are among the countries where refugees come to New Zealand. The New Zealand Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy is implemented and managed by New Zealand Immigration.

Annual data are reported for people who are granted residence in New Zealand by their country of origin by headcounts. Refugee arrival data was available by their country of departure and for each year. Information published on arrivals of refugees was by head counts. Immigration New Zealand do not provide this information on Excel spreadsheets to prevent a breach of individual private information.

Methods used for data collation and analysis are detailed in Chapter 3.

5.2.4 AUT student data

AUT collects demographic information about students at the time of enrolment. The dataset includes information such as age, ethnicity and entrance qualification. The data are entered into and stored in a student database called ARION during the application process. There are other data sources such as library usage and scholarships. Data captured at AUT in different systems are brought together and stored in the AUT Data Warehouse.

Data that were used in my research were sought from the AUT Data Warehouse. They include data from student enrolment to completion with breakdowns by ethnicity and qualification. However, there were limitations on the availability of data in terms of detailed ethnic breakdowns.

Official reporting of students' data was done at a four broad ethnic levels for domestic students. They were Asian, Māori, New Zealand European/Pākehā, Pasifika plus the category 'Other.' The data available from AUT did not go further than these four broad ethnic groupings in the ethnicity variable. For my research on domestic South Asian students, I had to carry out a two-step process.

The option the AUT data gave me was the 'country of origin' variable. The method used to extract South Asian students' data for AUT was to apply a 'domestic' filter as the first step and then apply the 'country of origin' filter and select the eight countries in South Asia. Within the domestic category, I could have chosen to filter them by Asian ethnicity before filtering them by country of origin. I avoided this because there are students who do not wish to call themselves Asian and who had chosen 'Other' as the broad ethnic group and identified that they were from one of the eight countries in South Asia. Therefore, every domestic student who had identified one of the eight countries in South Asia as their country of origin were included in my group of students. These country groups of students were small, and therefore every effort was made to capture them in my study.

The method by which the data is extracted was detailed in Chapter 3.

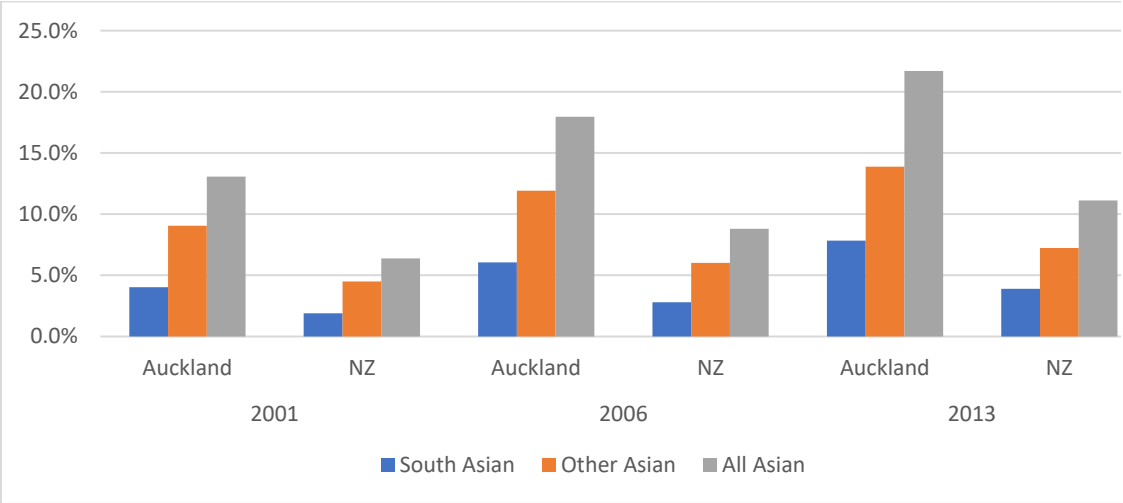
5.3 Results

Data used in this research had been obtained from the various administrative sources as explained above. The numbers acquired from the data sources were collected in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and analysed using pivot analysis (see the "Research Design" section in Chapter 3). Further analysis was done using Microsoft Excel and results were checked for accuracy against the reporting of these figures in official publications. Students' data was checked against figures reported by AUT in Annual Reports for aggregate qualification completion data and student enrolment headcounts. Therefore, it is unlikely there are any errors. No further statistical analysis was done.

5.4 Population data

Census data is used to show the population movements in South Asian numbers across 2001, 2006 and 2013 Censuses.

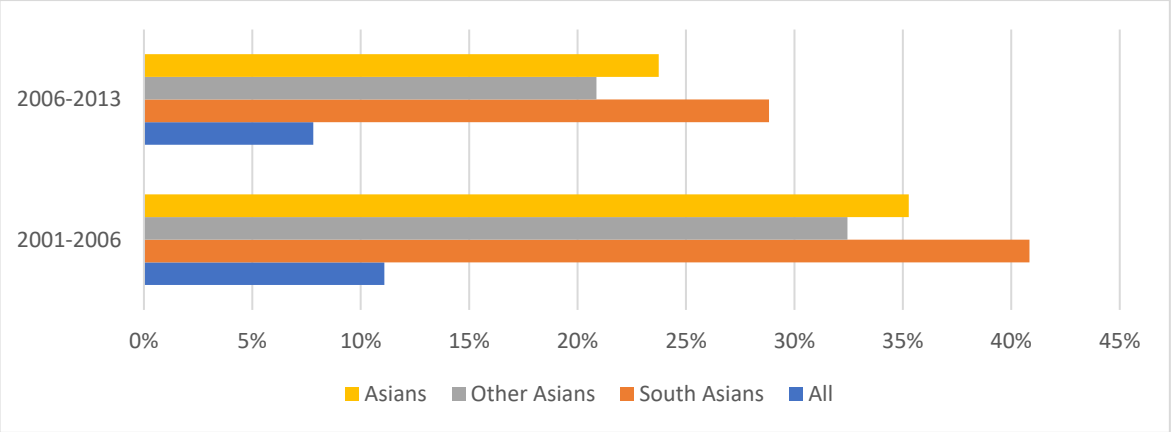
Figure 5-1 Asian population distribution in 2001, 2006 and 2013 censuses, as a percentage of the Auckland and NZ total population



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Figure 5.1 shows 11% of the total population in 2013 of New Zealand were Asians, of whom 4% were South Asians. However, these percentages indicate that there were more South Asians living in Auckland compared to the whole of New Zealand. In Auckland, 8% of the total population were South Asians which is twice the South Asian population percentage in the rest of New Zealand.

Figure 5-2 Inter-census growth in Asian population in Auckland from 2001 to 2006 and from 2006 to 2013



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Figure 5.2 shows the increase in the population from South Asian countries in the periods between the three censuses. South Asians in Auckland had a 50% growth from the 2001 to the 2013 census. The total Asians ethnic group in Auckland grew only by 41% in the same period. South Asians in Auckland composed 44% of all Asians in the region in the 2001 census, and that increased to 56% of all Asians in the Auckland region in the 2013 census.

Asian population growth in Auckland in percentage terms during the two inter-census periods shows that the population from South Asian countries had the highest growth, exceeding other Asians and also Asians as a combined group (as seen on figure 4.2). This growth in the population of people from South Asian countries in Auckland translates to an increase in the number of South Asian students enrolled in educational institutions in Auckland.

Table 5.1 shows the population dynamics of South Asians in 2006 and 2013 Censuses. The censuses provided the breakdown of Asians to specific (disaggregated to next level) ethnicities. Population data from the 2013 Census shows that about 85% of the total South Asians in New Zealand were Indians followed by 6% Sri Lankans and the other six ethnicities had a share of 9%. During the inter-census period from 2006 to 2013, as noted previously, the population of all the South Asian ethnicities grew in total by 24%. In the 2013 census, Indians were 7% of the total Auckland population, that is about a third of the total Asian population in Auckland. Asians in 2013 Census accounted for 11% of the total population of New Zealand and 22% of Auckland population, of which 30% of Asians living in New Zealand were Indians and 32% of the Asians in Auckland were Indians.

Table 5.1. Asian population characteristics in 2006 and 2013 censuses

	2006		2013		Inter-Census Growth		Proportion of Pop^{n} 2013	
Ethnicity	NZ	Auckland	NZ	Auckland	NZ	Auckland	NZ	Auckland
Total Pop^{n}	4027947	1304961	4242048	1415550	5.0%	7.8%		
Asian	354552	234279	471708	307233	24.8%	23.7%	11.1%	21.7%
Afghani	2538	1839	3414	2421	25.7%	24.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Bangladeshi	1488	990	1623	1092	8.3%	9.3%	0.0%	0.1%
Indian	97443	69315	143520	97878	32.1%	29.2%	3.4%	6.9%
Nepalese	654	339	1590	531	58.9%	36.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Pakistani	2049	1521	3261	2253	37.2%	32.5%	0.1%	0.2%
Sri Lankan[7]	7833	4722	10581	6393	26.0%	26.1%	0.2%	0.5%
Other Asian[8]	3432	2235	4935	3204	30.5%	30.2%	0.1%	0.2%

Source: Statistics New Zealand

[7] Sri Lankan ethnicity includes Sri Lankan not further defined (nfd) and those who were enumerated as Sinhalese as well

[8] Other Asians were included to cover for Bhutanese and Maldivians who are not in the breakdown of Asian ethnicity grouping in the Census, they also will include Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan etc. that were not there in the countries listed under Asian

5.4.1 Immigration New Zealand statistics

5.4.1.1 Migrants

Information on people who were granted resident permits is published by Immigration New Zealand. The number of people from South Asian countries who were granted residence in New Zealand under different categories has doubled over the past ten years 2007/2008-2016/2017 (New Zealand Immigration, 2018).

Table 5.2. Residence permits issued for people from South Asian countries 2007/08–2016/17

Country	2007/08	2016/17	Proportion in 2016/2017	% change since2007/2008
Afghanistan	107	193	0.4%	80%
Bhutan				
Bangladesh	49	126	0.3%	157%
India	3293	7476	15.7%	127%
Nepal	70	200	0.4%	186%
Maldives				
Pakistan	147	618	1.3%	320%
Sri Lanka	347	724	1.5%	109%
Other countries	42064	38347	80.4%	-9%

Source: New Zealand Immigration

As shown in Table 5.2, the number of people from South Asian countries granted residence accounts for 20 percent of total residents' permits issued by New Zealand Immigration in 2016/2017. Out of the total number of migrants, 65% of the migrants from South Asian countries were issued resident permits under skilled and business areas and the rest of the migrants who came to New Zealand from South Asian countries were given resident permits under family reunion or international or humanitarian categories such as refugees in 2016/2017 (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, 2016-2017). There were only 159 residence permits issued for people who migrated under the category of work, and these were all Indians.

5.4.1.2 Refugees

Refugee quota statistics are published by year of arrival and country. Table 5.3 shows the percentage share of refugees coming to New Zealand from South Asian countries during the last ten years.

As shown in Table 5.3, six countries of South Asia contribute to the share of refugees who come to New Zealand. There were no refugees reported from Bangladesh or the Maldives. The total number of refugee arrivals during the period 2010–2018 was 7085.

Table 5.3 Refugee arrivals from South Asian countries 2010–2018

Country	2010	2018	Proportion in 2018	% change since 2010
Afghanistan	614	669	9.4%	9%
Bhutan	624	800	11.3%	28%
Bangladesh				
India	3	3		
Nepal	20	26	0.4%	30%
Maldives				
Pakistan	87	87	1.2%	1%
Sri Lanka	261	274	3.9%	5%
Other countries	4767	5226	73.8%	10%

Source: New Zealand Immigration

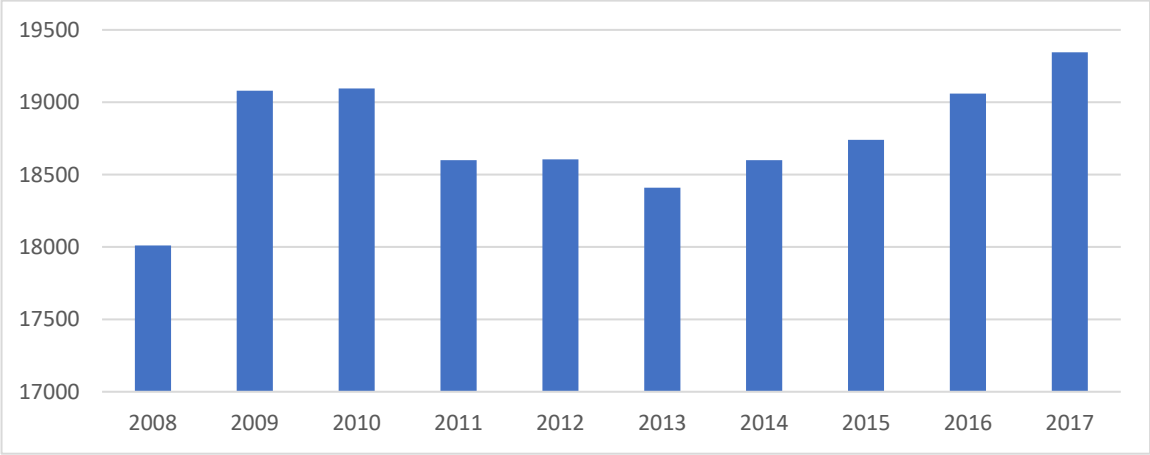
Over a quarter of total refugees who arrive in New Zealand come from six countries in South Asia, and 20% came from two specific South Asian countries, Afghanistan and Bhutan.

5.5 Student data

5.5.1 Participation – Education Counts

Statistics published relating to domestic Asian students shows those studying for bachelor's degrees in New Zealand universities grew by 4.3% over ten years from 2008 to 2017. This is illustrated in Figure 5.3. Student numbers increased from 2013 to 2017. However, these statistics do not permit disaggregating domestic South Asian students' contribution to this growth.

Figure 5-3. Domestic Asian students' bachelor's degree participation in NZ universities 2008–2017



Source: Ministry of Education/Education Counts

Data in Table 5.4 shows that high proportions of Māori and Pasifika students are enrolled in bachelor's programmes. Those proportions were above the enrolment average for the general population and percentages trended upwards over the years. Enrolments of Asians and Europeans were following similar trends as the university average. These data cannot be disaggregated to study South Asians as a group.

Table 5.4 Proportions of domestic students enrolled in bachelor's degrees in universities by ethnic group 2008–2017

Ethnicity	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
European	67%	67%	67%	66%	66%	66%	67%	66%	65%	66%
Māori	68%	69%	70%	69%	69%	70%	70%	70%	70%	71%
Pasifika	69%	69%	70%	71%	72%	73%	74%	74%	73%	74%
Asian	65%	64%	64%	65%	67%	68%	69%	68%	68%	67%
Other	61%	61%	60%	61%	62%	62%	62%	60%	60%	60%
All	66%	65%	66%	65%	66%	66%	67%	66%	66%	66%

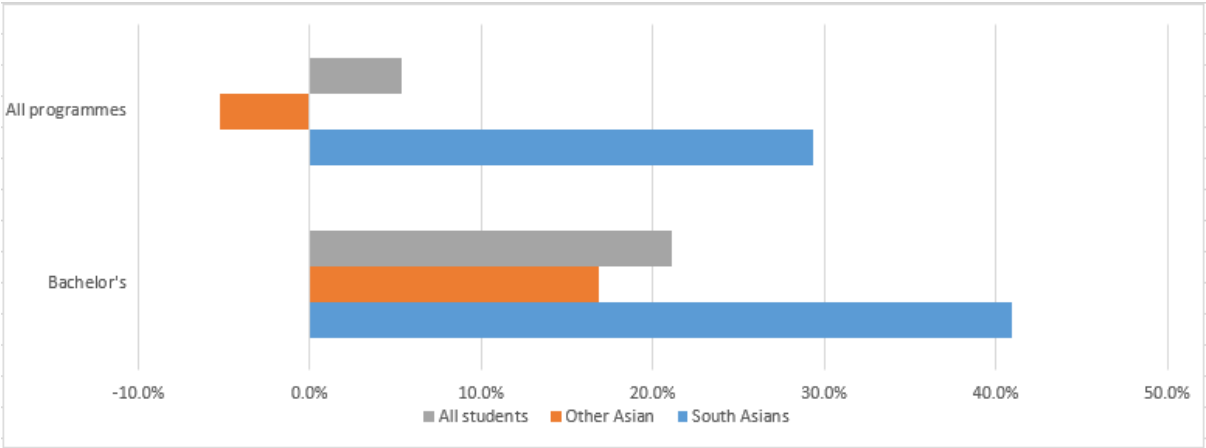
Source: Ministry of Education/Education Counts

5.5.2 Participation – AUT

AUT's comprehensive data on student enrolment for the past ten academic years was analysed. The data is for the period from 2009 to 2018 for domestic students, disaggregated by their country of origin and then combined to form the South Asian data.

The number of South Asian students studying in bachelor's programmes has increased significantly over the ten years examined. Figure 5.4 shows that domestic South Asian student enrolment numbers had an increase of 41% from 2009 to 2018 in bachelor's programmes. The increase in enrolment numbers for other Asian students in the bachelor's programmes was lower at 17% over the same period.

Figure 5-4. Growth in domestic student enrolment in bachelor's and all programmes at AUT 2009–2018



Source: Auckland University of Technology

The growth for all domestic students was 21%. The graph in Figure 4.4 shows that the overall growth of South Asian students in all programmes was 29%. For other Asian students, the numbers have declined and recorded a negative growth of 5%.

AUT's student enrolment data shows that South Asians had a surge in enrolment over the ten years in both bachelor's programmes and all programmes.

However, drilling down further to address my research question regarding domestic South Asian participation in bachelor's degrees, the dissection of the data shows that the overall numbers of students have increased, and the proportion of those participating in bachelor's degrees has also increased. What has happened is that when participation by domestic South Asian students is compared to participation by other Asian students or all students, it can be seen that gaps in participation have widened over the years 2009–2018. This suggests that growth in South Asian student participation has happened in lower level programmes (certificate/diplomas) or postgraduate programmes, or both.

The data that reveals this situation is presented in Table 5.5. The participation rate calculation was done for three groups of domestic students: students from South Asia, students from other Asian countries excluding South Asians, and all domestic students. This represents the number of students in each group (All/Other Asian/South Asian) enrolled in a bachelor's degree as a percentage of the total number of students (All/Other Asian/South Asian) enrolled in all levels of study at the university (pre-degree, bachelor's and postgraduate). This measure is important as it shows the trends in rates of enrolment over the years.

Table 5.5 Bachelor's degree enrolments as a proportion of all enrolments for South Asians, other Asians and all students at AUT 2008–2017

Year		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Head counts	All	11827	13110	13406	14133	14541	14867	14784	14768	14560	14326
	Other Asian	2971	3183	3232	3327	3370	3475	3462	3504	3514	3471
	South Asian	171	216	237	265	267	273	264	258	253	241
Proortion of Students %	All	52.8%	56.6%	60.0%	62.2%	63.4%	64.8%	63.4%	62.8%	62.1%	60.7%
	Other Asian	51.0%	53.7%	58.7%	61.9%	64.0%	68.3%	66.5%	67.8%	64.6%	62.9%
	South Asian	37.7%	37.9%	41.7%	43.5%	45.1%	47.5%	46.2%	44.9%	42.2%	41.1%
Gaps	SA to Asian	-13.3%	-15.8%	-17.0%	-18.4%	-18.9%	-20.8%	-20.3%	-22.9%	-22.4%	-21.9%
	SA to ALL	-15.0%	-18.7%	-18.4%	-18.7%	-18.3%	-17.3%	-17.1%	-17.9%	-19.9%	-19.6%

Source: Auckland University of Technology

Table 5.5 also shows the gaps between the participation rates of South Asian students in bachelor's programmes and all students have widened across the years. Also, gaps have

widened in the participation rates for South Asian students compared to other Asian students enrolled. It shows that South Asians student enrolments in bachelor's degrees as a proportion of total enrolments have not increased over the years at the same rate as for other students. Despite the growth of students' numbers, the level of participation of South Asian students in bachelor's programmes as a proportion is far behind other groups of students.

Table 5.6 Enrolment of students from South Asian countries at AUT in 2018

Country	All Programs		Bachelors	
	Headcount 2018	Percentage 2018	Headcount 2018	Percentage 2018
Afghanistan	31	5%	10	4%
Bangladesh	8	1%	2	1%
India	407	69%	173	71%
Maldives	4	1%	2	1%
Nepal	15	3%	11	5%
Pakistan	59	10%	14	6%
Sri Lanka	63	11%	30	12%
All	587	100%	242	100%

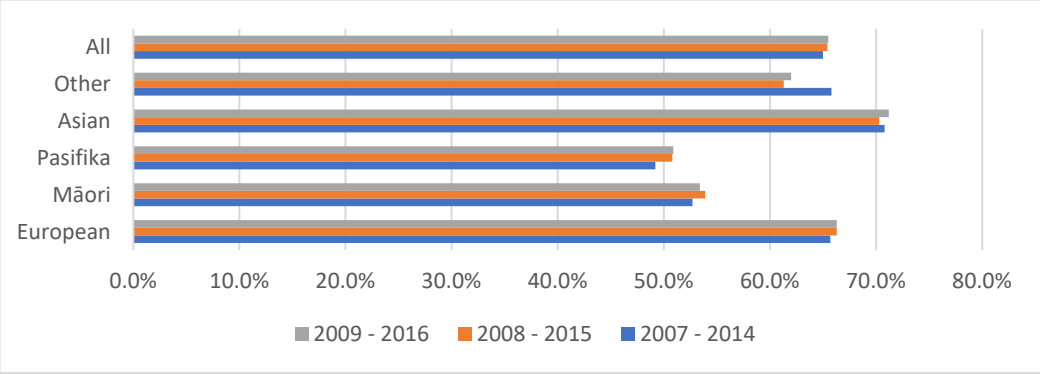
Source: Auckland University of Technology

In Table 5.6 I have looked at the AUT student data to view the participation rates of South Asian students in bachelor's programmes by the individual eight South Asian countries in AUT for 2018. These individual data for some countries listed are small, and therefore participation rates for individual countries at AUT should be read in terms of the student head counts. Bhutan had only one student enrolled in 2016 and none in 2017 and therefore does not appear on the above table.

5.5.3 Completion – Education Counts

Education Counts reports on qualification completion rates for universities. They are reported on an eight-year cycle for a bachelor's degree. That is the maximum time allowed for a student to complete a qualification in which they are enrolled. This reporting was done at the broad ethnic level.

Figure 5-5 Eight-year bachelor's degree completion rates 2007–2016



Source: Ministry of Education/Education Counts

This data was reported by the Ministry of Education in Education Counts for the eight-year qualification completion rate for the periods 2007-2014, 2008-2015 and 2009-2016 (Education Counts, 2018a). Figure 5.5 indicates that 66% of all students enrolling in 2009 had completed their bachelor's qualification by 2016 (i.e., after eight years).

Table 5.7 Bachelor's degree completion rates for domestic students at universities by number of years of study in the period 2007–2016

Year started	% of domestic students completing a qualification at bachelors level									
	After 1 year	After 2 years	After 3 years	After 4 years	After 5 years	After 6 years	After 7 years	After 8 years	After 9 years	After 10 years
2007	2%	4%	26%	47%	58%	63%	64%	65%	65%	66%
2008	2%	4%	25%	47%	58%	63%	65%	65%	66%	
2009	1%	3%	25%	47%	58%	63%	65%	66%		
2010	2%	3%	26%	49%	60%	64%	66%			
2011	2%	3%	28%	51%	62%	67%				
2012	2%	4%	28%	51%	61%					
2013	2%	3%	28%	49%						
2014	1%	3%	26%							
2015	1%	2%								
2016	1%									

Source: Ministry of Education/Education Counts

Data in Table 5.7 records the progress of domestic students who are enrolled in a bachelor's programme in a university to qualification completion. These are cumulative percentages and the data shows the time students took to successfully complete their programme of study. This is published by the Ministry of Education, and the data was last updated in September 2017 (Education Count, 2018). The data indicates that, for students who are enrolled in a bachelor's programme in universities, a quarter of students complete their qualification after three years of study, and half of the students complete their qualification after four years.

The Ministry of Education also publishes qualification completion data for bachelor's degrees by major ethnic groups for the whole tertiary education sector nationwide. This data is not reported at the level disaggregated to South Asian students or by sub-sector to illustrate the performance of students in universities. Data in Table 5.8 shows that, for students enrolled in 2009, Europeans had the highest qualification completion rates up to and including four years of study. However, after four years, Asian completion rates start increasing compared to others, suggesting that there is a significant number of part-time Asian students. It is also important to note that, for the small ethnicity cohorts of Māori and Pasifika, after eight years, half of the students enrolled in a bachelor's degree have not completed their qualification.

Table 5.8 Bachelor's degree eight-year completion rates for domestic students by ethnic group for the cohort enrolled in 2009

Ethnicity	% of domestic students completing a qualification at bachelors level							
	After 1 year	After 2 years	After 3 years	After 4 years	After 5 years	After 6 years	After 7 years	After 8 years
All	2%	5%	26%	46%	56%	60%	62%	62%
Asian	1%	5%	24%	47%	60%	66%	68%	68%
European	2%	5%	28%	49%	58%	62%	63%	64%
Māori	3%	6%	23%	37%	44%	48%	49%	50%
Pasifika	2%	5%	17%	32%	41%	47%	49%	50%
Other	1%	3%	21%	41%	52%	58%	60%	60%

Source: Ministry of Education/Education Counts

Table 5.8 shows that there are considerable variations in completion rates according to ethnicity data published by Education Counts. Bachelor's degree completion rates varying

between 50% and 68% after eight years of enrolment in a bachelor's degree indicate a significant ethnicity-dependent variation. As has been discussed earlier, the category Asian is not very useful because it aggregates many different ethnicities. Given that the ethnicity seems to be significantly associated with completion rates when Māori and Pasifika are compared to European and Asian, it appears to be important to disaggregate the Asian data.

However, there is no point in presenting any further analysis of the large set of data available from Education Counts because it is not going to give any insights into South Asian students' completion rates. Tertiary sector data, more specifically university data on students is only available at the aggregate level. There are data gaps that make it difficult to examine micro-level targets such as domestic South Asian student enrolment and completion.

5.5.4 Completion - AUT

Table 5.9 shows gaps in completion rates for South Asian students and other Asian students at AUT, and the gaps in completion rates between South Asian students and all domestic students. The table also shows these gaps in completion rates for the ten years from 2008 to 2017.

For most years, gaps are negative, from the South Asian student point of view, except in 2012 and 2014 for all programmes and 2012 and 2015 for bachelor's programme.

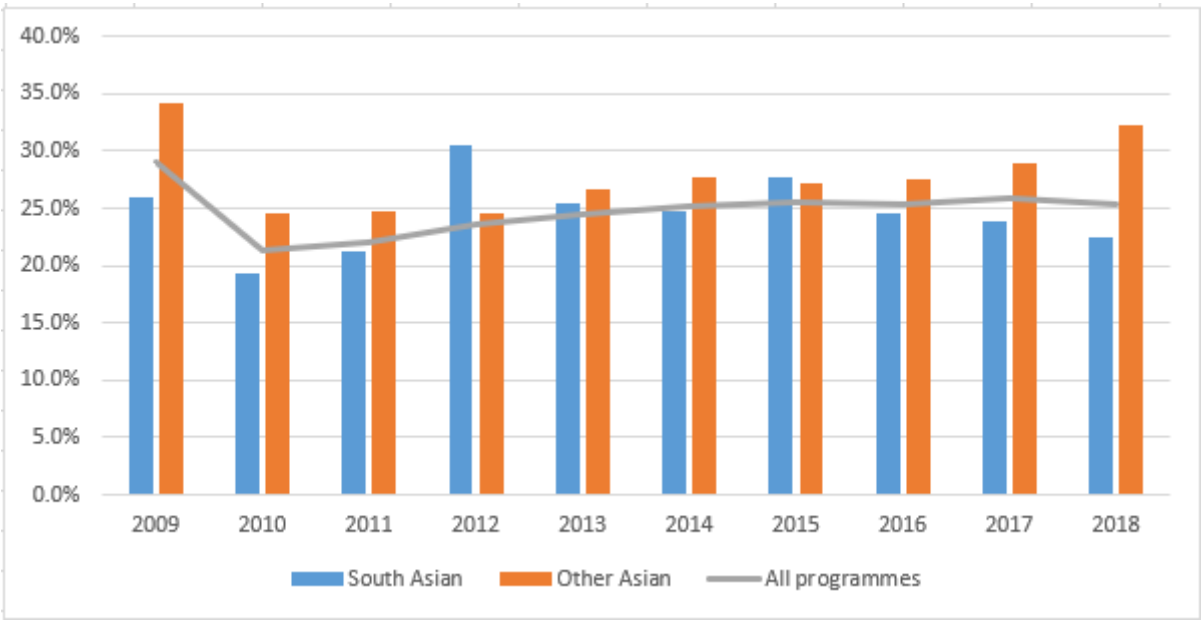
Table 5.9 Gap analysis of completion rates for bachelor's programmes for South Asian students at AUT 2009-2017

Year			2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
STUDENT HEADCOUNTS	Degree Completed	South Asian	40	39	47	77	65	65	71	62	60	54
		Other Asian	960	743	762	782	859	929	916	945	1003	1111
		All	3355	2755	2918	3283	3524	3699	3737	3715	3753	3626
	Enrolled	South Asian	154	202	221	253	255	263	256	253	252	241
		Other Asian	2816	3041	3107	3197	3237	3360	3385	3445	3489	3452
		All	11581	12875	13207	13936	14347	14708	14682	14691	14524	14300
COMPLETION RATE	Completion Rate	South Asian	26.0%	19.3%	21.3%	30.4%	25.5%	24.7%	27.7%	24.5%	23.8%	22.4%
		Other Asian	34.1%	24.4%	24.5%	24.5%	26.5%	27.6%	27.1%	27.4%	28.7%	32.2%
		All	29.0%	21.4%	22.1%	23.6%	24.6%	25.1%	25.5%	25.3%	25.8%	25.4%
	Gaps	SA to OA	-8.1%	-5.1%	-3.3%	6.0%	-1.0%	-2.9%	0.7%	-2.9%	-4.9%	-9.8%
		SA to ALL	-3.0%	-2.1%	-0.8%	6.9%	0.9%	-0.4%	2.3%	-0.8%	-2.0%	-3.0%

Source: Auckland University of Technology

Overall, completion rates for bachelor's and all programmes generally show that South Asian students are not performing at the same level as all domestic students or other domestic Asian students.

Figure 5-6 Completion rates of bachelor's degree students at AUT 2009–2018



Source: Auckland University of Technology

The 10 years of data in Figure 5.6 shows that South Asians students' bachelor's degree completions were lower than all domestic students and other Asian students, except in one year. It is also important to note that the completion rates of other Asian students are above the rates for all domestic students.

5.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have examined the data available from various sources that provide information about domestic South Asian students. I started by looking at the New Zealand population dynamics to find out the composition and growth of the South Asian population across three censuses. Complexities in the definitions used in reporting on South Asians as an ethnic group are an issue in this data.

One of the main sources of domestic South Asians in New Zealand is migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers. Data from New Zealand Immigration and New Zealand Ministry of Business and Employment was studied and analysed in regard to refugees and resident permits to look at the impact they had on domestic South Asian population growth.

The next layer of analysis was the AUT student data. I have looked at the sources of student data and also the limitations on the available data from the Ministry of Education and universities on domestic South Asian students. There were no common definitions used in grouping South Asian students and it was challenging to make comparisons. Longitudinal data on domestic South Asian students at AUT were analysed for participation and completion over a period of ten years.

In the next chapter I look at the documents available from various sources to examine the reporting on South Asian students in printed, electronic and online media. It is hoped that this documented evidence will help to add to the partial picture provided by the numerical data that has been presented in this chapter.

Chapter 6 Document Analysis

6.1 Introduction

The second phase of my research was the document analysis. It was important to review documents for the policies, strategies, and operational procedures relevant to the experience of domestic South Asian students at AUT in documents from both AUT and other relevant organisations. Also, it was important to view past and present publications on different media platforms and to scan the landscape to provide for any evidence relevant to my research. Thus, the aim of the document analysis was to:

- check any published documents that might display information on South Asian students
- check whether there are any strategies or policies published to support South Asian students, and
- To check how much content is visible pertaining to South Asian students in digital media associated with the focus of the case study, AUT.

This chapter presents the findings and the next section outlines the objectives of this document analysis. Then the chapter describes the process and the tools that were used to carry out the analysis. The types of documents reviewed are then outlined and, finally, the findings of the exercise are presented.

6.2 Objectives

As discussed in Chapter 3, in the document analysis I first examined the Ministry of Education website for policy, procedure, and reporting. This was done by performing a search using key words that relate to the South Asian student. Then I searched the tertiary area of the Education Counts website for reports or statistics on domestic South Asian students. Later I

searched the Immigration New Zealand website to find out about the share of South Asians in refugee arrivals to New Zealand over the years.

I searched the AUT website for policy documents following the same procedure. I went through the official reporting part of the AUT website using the web-based search engine to look for reporting on statistics about South Asian students. After that, I searched the general university website to check for any results for words used to designate domestic South Asian students. Finally, a search was carried out on the Auckland University of Technology Student Association (AUTSA) website, specifically on their online weekly magazine Debate, for reporting and publicity about South Asian students.

The examination of these documents was to understand the magnitude of reporting and media coverage given to domestic South Asian students. Most importantly, the documents would provide information regarding government policies and operational practices in universities to support minority groups, more specifically domestic South Asian students enrolled in undergraduate programmes. If there was any material of any consequence available from the various sources, and published by them, which was found through this search process, it is reported in the following sections.

As discussed previously, I did not carry out any image analysis. However, I have reproduced some images from the various documents and websites to put into perspective the exposure of South Asian students in the documents analysed.

6.3 Search process

All documents were web-based, and therefore I was able to use web-based search engines to search for documents or materials published. The search terms I have used to identify whether the text has any relevance to South Asian students were:

Afghanistan, Afghani (or Afghans), Asia, Asians, Bangladesh, Bangladeshi, Bhutan, Bhutanese, India, Indian, Maldives, Maldivian, Nepal, Nepalese, Pakistan, Pakistani, SAARC (abbreviation for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), South Asia, South Asians, Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan.

6.4 Documents reviewed

The sources of documents that were reviewed were from the Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission, Immigration New Zealand and the Auckland University of Technology. In the findings section of this chapter details will be given regarding what I discovered from these sources.

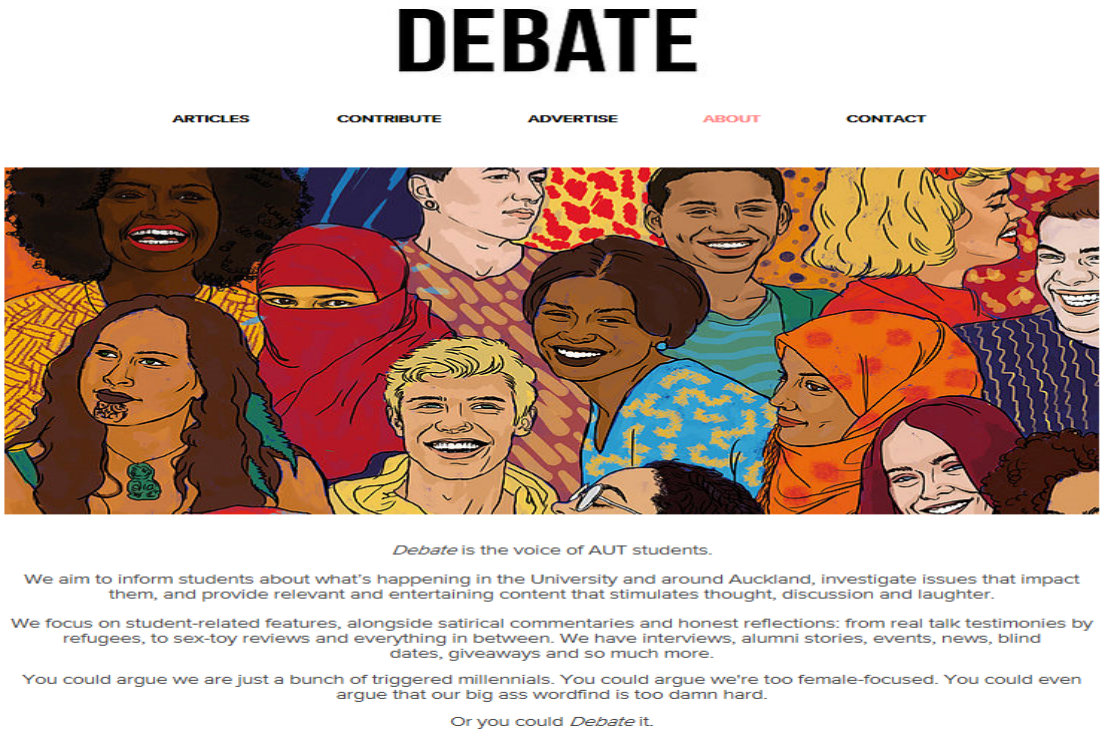
After doing a complete search of New Zealand's Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019, I found that the strategy did not mention domestic South Asians. Surprisingly, I found that the 25-page document did not mention domestic Asians either.

I searched to find out whether any of the New Zealand universities had support for domestic South Asian students identified as a target group, including AUT. None of the universities had identified domestic South Asian students as a specific target group. For example, Victoria University of Wellington had included in their equity and diversity strategy men or women in professions or disciplines where they are under-represented and students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds and men, women and gender diverse people who face barriers to access and success were listed by the University of Auckland as target groups.

Inside AUT Magazine, a quarterly publication available both online and in print, was searched across issues for three years from 2015 to 2017. There was no news or reporting relating to domestic South Asian students. Issues of Insight, AUT's alumni magazine, published from 2013 to 2017 were searched for content relating to domestic South Asian students. None of the issues during this period contained anything relevant to this research.

The AUT student association AUTSA publishes Debate magazine to inform students about what is happening around the university, to address issues of concern for students and also to keep students entertained. This magazine is published weekly during semesters and in printed form as well as online. The online copies of the magazine were searched for the period 2015 to mid 2018.

Figure 6-1 AUT Student Magazine, Debate, home page



Note: Image from https://www.debatemag.com/about

Source: Auckland University of Technology

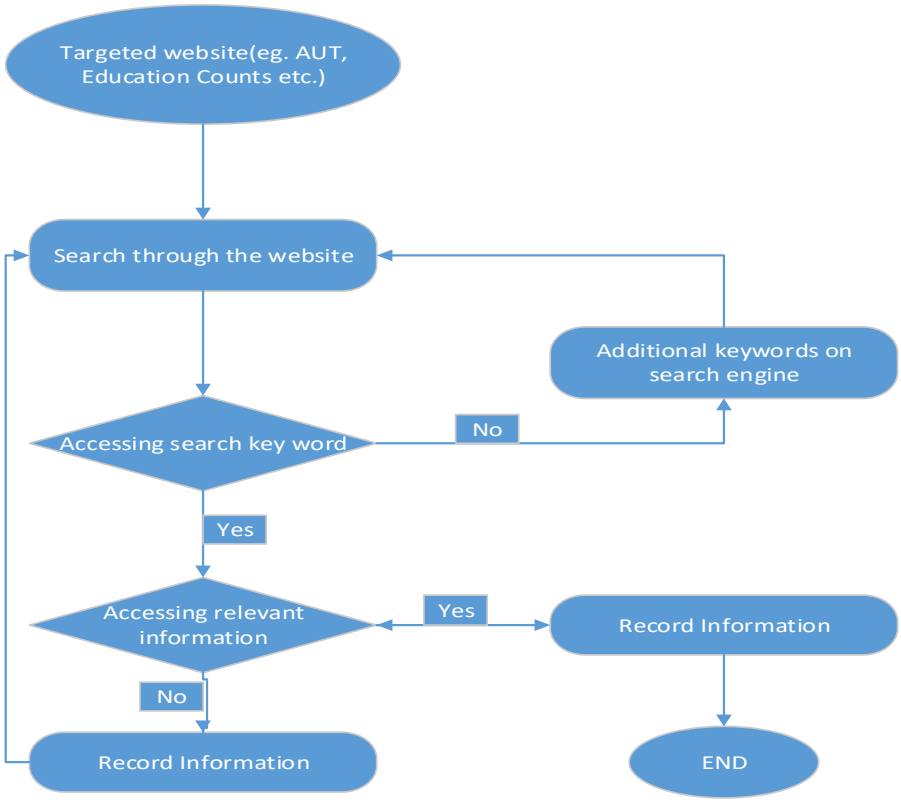
6.5 Methods used for data analysis

The software packages that were used for accessing and tabulating of documents

- Adobe Acrobat Professional was used for viewing published documents and converting them to PDF format. In Adobe PDF format it was possible to run queries to search for chosen words or phrases. Using the 'find' command, the documents were searched, and word counts compiled.

- Microsoft One Note was used to capture published material. One Note was used to keep the captured media and organise it on a Microsoft Word document. It helped to gather screen clippings and analyse them for discussion.

Figure 6-2 Flowchart showing the procedure conducted for website searches



The steps set out in the flowchart in Figure 6.2 were followed methodically. First, the home page of the targeted website was opened for the search engine. Second, the identification words designed to find information regarding South Asian students were entered one at a time. After the search for each word was completed by the website search engine, results were displayed on the screen. The frequency statistics were extracted to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet file and tabulated to show which documents on the website contained maximum counts of words used to refer to South Asian students.

The search engines listed out ten results on each page. Each of these results was a link that took the user to the relevant page on the website where the search word was found. Following

this procedure, the linked pages on the website were displayed. The pages were checked for their relevance to South Asian students. If they were relevant, the text was extracted using One Note and inserted into a Microsoft Word document and saved. The cycle was repeated until all word searches were completed.

6.6 Findings

6.6.1 Government documents

6.6.1.1 Ministry of Education

I examined documents related to the New Zealand Ministry of Education's website section for 16+ years Further Education, which covers tertiary administration, policies and strategies, funding, and directions for university education. These documents assisted me in understanding the policies that govern the universities' function in providing education.

The importance of achieving results for learners was emphasised in the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019. Specifically, it calls on the education system to aim at the delivery of positive outcomes, stipulating that if:

> Everyone in the sector – teachers, teaching institutions, government agencies, industry, and iwi – approaches their work with a focus on achieving the best results they can for students, they will make the right decisions. Our tertiary education system will then achieve its objective of providing all New Zealanders, from all backgrounds, with the opportunity to realise their potential to succeed in their careers and in other areas of their lives. (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment & Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 24)

The strategy also accepts the diversity of the student population and calls on providers to:

> recognise the diverse needs of their communities and have appropriate mechanisms for meeting these needs. For example, many TEOs have strong equity plans to promote the achievement of particular groups such as learners from low-socio-economic backgrounds, people with disabilities, and refugee and migrant learners. … Government expects that activity of this kind will continue to be built upon so that all

> learners experience an inclusive tertiary education system that supports achievement and therefore improves outcomes from study. (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment & Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 12)

However, the strategy made no specific mention of domestic Asian or South Asian students, or any other ethnicities.

The Ministry of Education website was searched for government policy targeted at domestic South Asian students' university education. I searched the website using the words 'South Asia' and obtained only two results. One of them was related to additional relief teacher funding for sports and culture. The second result was found in one of the ten regional updates from the directors of education.

The search for the word 'Asia' linked to four different pages with Asia being mentioned eight times, as shown in Table 6.1. The first page was about Budget 2018, in relation to the reprioritising of the Prime Minister's Scholarship for Asia. The second was listed under the heading "School-to-school exchange programme", in reference to The Asia New Zealand sister school programmes. Thirdly, 'Asia' was listed under the heading, "Additional relief teacher funding for sports and cultural leave" where it states that the ministry grants additional relief teacher funding when they travel for sports and cultural purpose to the Asian region, and stipulates the number of days they are eligible to apply for leave. The last listing was found in a dicussion by one of the directors of education of his Master's research on the induction of expatriate teachers in international schools across South-East Asia.

Table 6.1 Results of searches on the Ministry of Education website about using terms relevant to South Asia

Search words	SAARC	South-Asia	South-Asian	Asia	Asian	Afghanistan	Afghani	Bhutan	Bhutanese	Bangladesh	Bangladeshi	India	Indian	Nepal	Nepalese	Maldives	Maldivian	Pakistan	Pakistani	Sri Lanka	Sri lankan
Count				8	9	2	1	1	1			2	1	3	2			1			

Source: Ministry of Education

As seen in Table 6.1, the word 'Asian' resulted in the listing of eight pages a total of nine times. Five of the eight pages listed were about Asian language learning at school. The sixth was a listing about a South Asian Trust in Canterbury focused on workshops conducted with victims of family offending for international and domestic students. Next was a report of participation rates for Early Childhood Education (ECE) for Waikato, with a specific table for Asian participation. In the final result of the search, the Early Learning Regional News, December 2016, listed Fendalton Asian Plunket Playgroup as a playgroup recertified as a quality provider for pre-school children.

Results relating to individual countries appeared between zero and three times. Most of the results related to information on refugees. There was no information on the website about strategies or projects to support South Asian undergraduate students in universities.

6.6.1.2 Education Counts

As shown in Table 6.2, the greatest number of hits on the Education Counts website were for the words 'Asia' followed by 'Indian'. They relate to the reporting on students by broad ethnic or country groupings. This would have been useful if the data were to be disaggregated further to show the different minority groups within the major Asian group.

The words 'Asian' and 'Indian' that had the greatest number of hits were related to international students or news which was focused on individual countries. There were few reports looking at the domestic Asian students as a group. There were no results from South Asian search words that related to bachelor's degree study, that is, the area of my research.

Table 6.2 Results of searches on the Education Counts website about using terms relevant to South Asia

Search words	Publications	File Format			
		XLS	Doc	PDF	Total
SAARC					
South-Asia	8		6	8	14
South-Asian					
Asia	60	17	99	212	328
Asian	1455	291	666	1203	2160
Afghanistan		6	1	2	9
Afghans					
Bhutan		12	4	1	17
Bhutanese	1		1	1	2
Bangladesh	7	16	17	27	60
Bangladeshi	4	1	7	9	17
India	18	19	44	121	184
Indian	29	88	253	316	657
Nepal	1	16	4	8	28
Nepalese		3		1	4
Maldives		16	3	8	27
Maldivian					
Pakistan	4	16	10	17	43
Pakistani	1	1	3	3	7
Sri Lanka	4	17	15	29	61
Sri lankan		13	87	95	195

Source: Ministry of Education/Education Counts

6.6.1.3 Immigration New Zealand

As discussed in Chapter 2, the countries for which refugee quotas are issued by Immigration New Zealand include the countries of South Asia. When the refugees are in New Zealand, they spend their first six weeks at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre in Mangere, Auckland. AUT has a role in providing English language support to refugees in the Centre, and therefore some of the domestic South Asian students at AUT could have come to New Zealand under this programme. Therefore I have also searched the Immigration New Zealand website. Table 6.3 shows the number of hits for the searches carried out.

None of the searches showed policy directives or procedural issues for South Asians. There were very few hits for the South Asian countries or their peoples. The only results were about individual highlights or individual countries. The terms ‘Asia’ and ‘Asians’ appeared frequently on the website and also in the Settlement ACTIONZ. This is a quarterly e-mail newsletter

published by Immigration New Zealand to update news, information, and examples of best practice to settlement communities.

Table 6.3 Results of searches on the Immigration New Zealand Immigration website using terms relevant to South Asia

Search words	Website	ACTIONZ 2018		
		March, Issue 11	June, Issue 12	September, Issue 13
SAARC				
South-Asia	10			
South-Asian	6			
Asia	10	54	11	
Asian	10	44	4	6
Afghanistan	8			
Afghans/Afghani	1			
Bhutan	8			
Bhutanese				
Bangladesh	6			
Bangladeshi	3			
India	39	2		1
Indian	24	2		2
Nepal	9		2	
Nepalese	1			
Maldives	2			
Maldivian				
Pakistan	11			
Pakistani	1			
Sri Lanka	19		1	
Sri lankan		1		

Source: New Zealand Immigration

I managed to search for the last three issues of Settlement ACTIONZ in 2018, that is issue numbers 11, 12 and 13, which were only available on PDF format. In issue 11 India was mentioned twice. The first result was an item about a Queen's Service Medal awarded to an Indian man in recognition of his services to the Indian community. The second addressed a collaboration with the Indian film industry. The term 'Indian' gave two results; both of them were about Fijian Indians which is outside the scope of this research. The term 'Sri Lankan' had one result for another item on a Queen's Service Medal awarded to a person for his services to the Sri Lankan community.

The search of the June issue featured results for 'Sri Lankan' and 'Nepalese' from interviews as part of a series of nationwide consultations with migrant professionals that was carried out in Christchurch. The search of the issue for September gave a result for 'India' that featured in an article by a National Manager of Australia's Welcoming Cities programme that stated that the two top source countries for migrants were India and China. The two 'Indian' hits were about Fijian Indians and, again, that is outside the research scope.

6.6.2 AUT University

6.6.2.1 AUT official publications

AUT's leadership and vision webpage had links to the Vice-Chancellor's updates, AUT Council, facts and figures, and official AUT publications. The results of searches on these pages and documents are shown in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 . Results of searches of official AUT publications using South Asia

Search words	AUT Official Publications			
	Strategic Plan (AUT Directions) to 2025	AUT Profile 2017	Investment Plan 2017-2018	Insight AUT Alumni Megazine 2018
SAARC				
South-Asia				
South-Asian				
Asia	1	8	2	5
Asian			3	1
Afghanistan				
Afghans/Afghani				
Bhutan				
Bhutanese				
Bangladesh				
Bangladeshi				
India				2
Indian				
Nepal				
Nepalese				
Maldives				
Maldivian				
Pakistan				
Pakistani				
Sri Lanka				
Sri lankan				

Source: Auckland University of Technology

AUT's official publication pages were searched using all the search words for South Asians. There were only two hits for India. I decided to search for the word "equal." This led me to the Equal Opportunities Policy. This is Council Policy No: 05 that was adopted on 23 March 1992 and amended in February 2006. The policy covers both Equal Employment Policy and Equal Educational Policy. The Equal Opportunity policy states:

> The Auckland University of Technology (the University) is to take positive steps to provide equal access to its educational programmes regardless of race, colour, sex, national origin or ancestry, religion, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or physical or emotional handicap …
>
> The University will demonstrate Equal Employment Opportunity(EEO) by equity of outcome … and The University is committed to the provision of Equal Educational Opportunities (EEdO) …
>
> The University opposes all forms of unfair discrimination. It recognises the value of diversity and will seek to provide equity of outcome for all people whatever their gender, ethnic origin or special need. (P. K1 &K2)

Following that lead, I searched the website to see whether Auckand University of Technology (2018a) had a diversity policy or plan. I came across AUT's Diversity Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2016 that was put together in support of the AUT equal opportunities policy. The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan again outlines broad principles. The first one was a general outline of success in the context of the policy and that it should be anti-discriminatory. This was followed by specifying certain groups that were identified with measurable targets. AUT is commited to diversity and extends to all staff and students , there were a set of diversity groups identified that required urgent action they were:

- Māori students and staff.
- Pasifika students and staff
- Women in areas where they are under-represented
- Students and staff with disabilities, and

- LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer) (p. 5)

It is interesting to note that minority ethnic groups were not identified as a target action group. The only explanation I can draw from this is that there is no government funding.

The strategy also calls for transparency and monitoring. So there is the possibility that if South Asian students or any other minority groups were identified, they would be monitored and supported. This highlights the importance of micro-level reporting and analysis to identify areas where challenges to this diversity strategy exist.

Based on the findings presented in Chapter 5 that show almost 25% of refugee arrivals had come from the South Asian region over the past ten years, I was interested to look at AUT's response to refugees in their diversity strategy since, as I have noted previously, some of AUT's domestic students who are South Asian could have been refugee arrivals. Also, AUT has a partnership in refugee re-settlement programmes conducted by Immigration New Zealand. However, refugees were not identified as one of the target groups in the diversity strategy.

6.6.2.2 AUT facts and figures

I searched the AUT website for facts and figures relating to South Asian students by looking at annual reports, available in PDF form for the ten years from 2008 to 2017.

As shown in Table 6.5, searches of the ten annual reports delivered few relevant results. The terms 'India' and 'Indians' were picked up from the 'international students' area, and the terms 'Asia' and 'Asians' were from the reporting of statistics by broad ethnic groupings. Other than that, there were only two results.

Table 6.5 Results of searches on AUT annual reports using terms relevant to South Asia

Search words	ANNUAL REPORTS									
	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
SAARC										
South-Asia										
South-Asian										
Asia	5	2	5	2	4	4	5	4	2	2
Asian	1	1	3	1	2	4	2	5	4	5
Afghanistan										
Afghans/Afghani										
Bhutan										
Bhutanese										
Bangladesh										
Bangladeshi										
India	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	4
Indian		3								
Nepal	1									
Nepalese										
Maldives										
Maldivian										
Pakistan										
Pakistani										
Sri Lanka						1				
Sri lankan										

Source: Auckland University of Technology

One was about the opening of the AUT Indonesia Centre as a way of strengthening the relationship between Asia and the other was about the establishment of the AUT Asia Connect Student Committee and hosting three events to promote student engagement with Asia.

6.6.2.3 AUT general website

Table 6.6 shows the number of results for South Asian search terms on the AUT general website. Like the previous searches, it can be seen that most of the South Asian reporting is masked by Asia and Asian. Individual countries and nationality results were mainly about the staff, research, international students and international events. They did not refer to domestic South Asian students. There is an increased number of counts on India or Indian. Some of them refer to Fijian Indians who, just to reiterate, are not part of the scope of this research.

Table 6.6 Results of searches on the AUT general website using terms relevant to South Asia

Search words	All Results	Number of Hits			
		Courses	Staff	News	Events
SAARC					
South-Asia	8		1		
South-Asian	22				
Asia	670	13	142	60	2
Asian	573	7	86	20	
Afghanistan	19		1	5	
Afghans/Afghani	5			1	
Bhutan	12		1	1	
Bhutanese	4		2		
Bangladesh	58		14		
Bangladeshi	3				
India	305		45	12	
Indian	190		26	17	
Nepal	33	1	7	3	
Nepalese	2			2	
Maldives	15		1	1	
Maldivian	1				
Pakistan	67		10	2	
Pakistani	12		2		
Sri Lanka	61		11	4	
Sri lankan	15		2		

Source: Auckland University of Technology

6.6.2.4 Student publication: Debate magazine

Debate magazine is the platform where students can have their say. I conducted a search on Debate magazines for the period from 2015 to mid-2018 to see how much coverage was given to domestic South Asian students.

In Debate magazine issue 5 for 2017, published on May 1, and labelled "Diversity," the letter from the editor, Julie Cleaver, said:

> At the age of six, I didn't know the difference between a brown person or an Asian person, the same way I still don't know the difference between turquoise and teal (apparently teal is greener). The fact is, I was colour blind, and the only reason I, or any of us, know about race and ethnicity is that we were taught it. (p. 4)

It was interesting to find that this issue of Debate magazine appeared with the word 'Diversity' on the cover. I thought at first there would be coverage about South Asian students as seen in table 5. Surprisingly, the word 'Asian' was mentioned only once, in the editor's letter, where she had written about the distinction between a brown person and an Asian person. Using the other search terms for South Asia, I found a single result. This was for Sri Lanka, in an international PhD student's account of growing up in Sri Lanka and attending a Buddhist school. Following that, issue 6, 2017, had six results Sri Lanka in one article "Addressing the elephant in the room," critiquing the gifting of an elephant by Sri Lanka to New Zealand.

Figure 6-3 Debate magazine cover for issue 5, May 1, 2017

Note: Image from https://www.debatemag.com/home/

Source: Auckland University of Technology

Debate magazine issue 10 for 2017, published on July 30, had an interesting title, "Being Asian in Aotearoa." In the editor's letter, Janie, who had stepped in for six months while editor Julie was away, said:

> This issue looks at what it means to be Asian in Aotearoa, here and now. And while we've barely scraped the surface, I hope that beginning with this issue; Debate can provide more of a voice for our beautiful and diverse Asian population that makes up a quarter of the student body. (p. 4)

That issue had 24 hits on 'Asians' and 34 hits on 'Indian' and 'Indians,' as seen in Table 6.7. The editor's letter was encouraging capitalising on a group that represents about a quarter share of

AUT's student's body. Also, she said that with that issue there would be a voice for Asians in Debate magazine.

Table 6.7 Results for searches on Debate magazine using terms relevant to South Asia

Year	2017											2018								
Issue No	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
SAARC																				
South-Asia																				
South-Asian																				
Asia					3							3			1	1			1	
Asian	1					24			1			1				1			4	1
Afghanistan																				
Afghans																				
Bhutan																				
Bhutanese																				
Bangladesh																				
Bangladeshi																				
India				5	1	4						1					1			
Indian			1	1		30								1						
Nepal						2														
Nepalese																				
Maldives																				
Maldivian																				
Pakistan																				
Pakistani																				
Sri Lanka	1	6																		
Sri lankan																				

Source: Auckland University of Technology

A student's voice was raised on the subject of racism in this issue. The student expressed their experience under the heading "Listen up: Not so casual racism" and described:

> The sort of comments that are meant to be interpreted as compliments: The woman who praises my lack of foreign accent; the co-worker who gushes about my "good English"; the lecturer who repeatedly asks, If I can follow what she's saying. They are just being nice and expect me to smile and thank them. (p. 21)

In addition, in this issue, there were two articles by Indian students, one being the message from a Student Representative Council member, who happens to be an Indian international student. The second was an interview with an Indian student, who is a marketing intern, talking about Auckland's burgeoning Indian theatre. Other than that, there were stories about and accounts of students from other parts of Asia.

Following the appearance of this issue, I was certain that more coverage would be given in *Debate* to Asian students in general, as per the editor's letter. However, I found that there was only a single result or no results in my searches of the five subsequent issues of Debate for 2017. And until issue 10 of 2017, no prominence had been given previously to Asian students by Debate magazine. Some of the search results recorded appeared in advertisements.

6.7. Chapter summary

This chapter has examined a variety of different sources of information that were reviewed in the document analysis, and the coverage of domestic South Asian students was revealed. After reviewing the documents on government policies and reporting, university's policy and reporting, general university media and student publications, I found that there was no obvious content on domestic South Asian students. Now and then the university has tried to address a slightly more diverse group of people than usual but, still, South Asians were missing.

The university has a strategic interest in diversity groups, as documented above. While there are certain comments that ethnicity should not be a barrier to success, etc., it appears that South Asians specifically are missing. Smaller minority groups such as South Asians within large groups such as Asians are not distinguished from each other.

The next chapter starts with the fieldwork analysis of Key Informant Interviews.

Chapter 7 Key Informant Interviews: Findings and Interpretations

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the key informant interviews conducted in the third phase of my research. Key informant interviews were employed to obtain the views of academic and non-academic staff from within AUT's Schools and from teams outside the Schools.

The interviews obtained the perspectives of seven academic staff and three non-academic staff from the Schools, and one academic and six non-academic staff from areas of services for students that are available outside the Schools. These key informants interviews were conducted between November 2017 and February 2018. I used a semi-structured schedule to conduct all 17 interviews. However, these questions were constantly revised and revisited for use of terminology and interpretation, depending on the staff member and area of service. There were times I had to probe with additional questions or comments to clarify my understanding.

Details of the services, both academic and non-academic, that are made available to support students are explained in chapter 1 in the research context section. It is also important to note that during the interviews staff constantly referred to these services. The re-structuring and re-organising of services outside Schools offered to students since 2012 is reflected in the interview discussions with staff.

To preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, the quotes are referenced by a masked identity. An academic staff member is indicated by 'Acad-(followed by a numeral),' and a non-academic staff member is indicated by 'Allied-(followed by a numeral).' Multiple quotes on the same point are sometimes combined into a single paragraph, and in these cases multiple

interviewees are acknowledged as the source. Five key themes emerged from my interviewee responses.

This chapter is divided into seven sections. These sections are based on themes identified from the interviews Following this introduction, section 6.2 examines the current AUT infrastructure available to support minority students. Section 6.3 looks at the critical importance of funding for support services and financial support for students themselves. In section 6.4, participants make the point that, for domestic South Asians to be successful in their undergraduate studies, they need to be supported academically. In section 6.5 it is noted that there are parallel services of academic and pastoral support being offered by Schools as well as by student services. The challenges facing these services are also addressed as well as the working relationship of the services in AUT's Faculties and Schools on the one hand and the Student Services Division and Library on the other. Section 6.6 outlines the role of student learning support and its role in minority student success during university study. Section 6.7 provides a summary of the chapter.

7.2 University policies around academic and non-academic support for domestic South Asian students

In my research I wanted to find out about the university's policy on providing the services that are available to domestic South Asian students. I interpreted key informants' responses on the importance of services to support students to be successful. In terms of student success, most of the staff suggested that academic support was important. There are routine academic services that are offered to support all students in their studies, but they are limited. The large class sizes mean any targeted support for domestic students is driven by policy and funding. New Zealand universities are publicly funded institutions, and any added service requires a financial allocation. This drew my attention to institutional policies as a theme within the

interview data, and the next section examines AUT's strategy and funding for minority students' success based on the participants' experiences.

7.2.1 Targeted funding for minority students

Finance is a driver for funding of resources to provide additional academic support for a targeted group of students. Currently, AUT receives the New Zealand government's targeted funding to improve access, participation, and performance for three underperforming equity groups identified by the Ministry of Education, namely Māori, Pasifika and students with disabilities. This funding is given to provide extra support for these targeted groups of students by helping to cover the costs of providing the additional academic activities that are required to enable these students to succeed. Funding has been the primary driver that helps Schools to set up additional activities that keep students engaged in their studies; for example non-academic staff from a School said that they organise, [AUT] "study boot camps for Māori and Pasifika students during weekends" (Allied. 1).

In contrast, for some other minority groups, there is a need for additional academic support but it is not available. The students may be from low-decile schools and get enrolled in programmes by barely meeting entry-level criteria, but "Minorities groups like South Asians do not receive additional funding [and] do not get targeted support" (Acad. 4)

However, after AUT made changes to its equity funding and stopped providing funding to Schools, the Schools stopped providing additional support services even to Māori and Pasifika students. As a result, "domestic Māori and Pasifka students started withdrawing from the programmes in our School" (Acad. 1).

When reflecting on institutional policy and funding, the participants noted that changes in allocation of funding for services led to a review and restructuring of existing routine services that were offered to all students for academic support outside the Schools, and that new ways of providing support have been implemented:

> Just last year we've had a useful review undertaken, and as a result of that, it was decided that the one-to-one appointments are not sustainable and we've been discouraged from doing one-to-one consultations with students. (Acad. 7)

As changes are made to services to support students, staff are the first to react. Their day-to-day routines get affected, and some activities that had been performed by them get side-lined. Staff are quick to respond as they can see the impact of the changes on their students:

> Funding and resourcing this year replaced two programme leaders: one who's supposed to do admin and the other pastoral support. No-one offered to fill the [pastoral] support position this year because there were no resources and time. One programme leader is trying to do the whole lot. (Acad. 6)

7.2.2 Reporting on minority students

All funding received by New Zealand universities is monitored, and institutions are required to report against their set targets. Similarly, equity funding provided by the Ministry of Education to universities to support Māori, Pasifika, and students with disabilities requires AUT to monitor and report against the targeted funding they receive (Tertiary Education Commission, 2019a)

Reporting on equity groups of students has been done since 2011 by AUT. The targeted equity groups (Māori and Pasifika) who received additional support using equity funding, that is no longer available, had demonstrated huge improvements:

> Indigenous students in equity groups who have received additional[targeted] support are doing Master's and PhDs – there's been a huge improvement in their progress. I would say larger gains have been made amongst those groups. (Acad.3)

The increase of student numbers in AUT over the years has resulted in the exponential growth of class sizes. The monitoring of individual students in classes is a challenge for academic staff members. The monitoring of specific minority groups can only be possible by providing student data to academic staff in the Schools to help them to identify students by ethnicity:

> If student progress reports are provided well in advance, we can support them. We only know when they don't attend classes and don't complete the programme as statistics. We get these much later, and it is too late to mitigate risks. (Acad-2)

During the interview, academic staff of a School shared the benefit of accessing individual student data proactively:

> I provided one-to-one support because I get information of students early and manage to identify risk and support them. As a lecturer who knows who they are and follows them through the three years, it's rewarding watching them walk across the stage after completing their qualification. (Acad-6)

If other minority groups need to be monitored, one academic staff member noted that it is important to identify those students and examine their past performance. She said diagnostic data can help to improve students' outcomes in a class:

> Currently, the School doesn't have policies to monitor other groups of minority students [except those who are targeted]… micro-level reporting will be helpful regarding lecture delivery. (Acad-7)

A similar view came from another academic staff member from a School, who noted:

> Certainly, we need to be told students' details, who needs support based on their past performance. Now it is considered a privacy thing, and this information is not made available to us. (Acad-7)

Lack of reporting was identified as an issue by most participants during the interviews. They felt that if micro-level reporting is done, all student issues can be identified and the need for support substantiated with evidence:

> In the absence of reporting on minority groups except for the equity groups, everything that goes around is anecdotal. (Acad-5)

Most of the key informants felt it was important to obtain comprehensive and accurate data about minority groups' enrolment and their outcomes over time.

7.2.3 University strategy and its impact on minority student support

Minority student cohorts have been growing in size at AUT over the years, as seen in the quantitative data presented in Chapter 4. Non-academic staff providing services to support students felt that in the absence of reporting on minority students' outcomes, it is difficult to know much about their progress. Some participants were saying that they do not have records, therefore they do not know, for example, the number of students with refugee backgrounds. They felt that they are a particularly vulnerable group of students with the background of their families leaving homes in fear of violence and persecution. They are also part of the cohort of domestic students:

> A few years ago, 19 percent of our [domestic] South Asian students in AUT were from refugee backgrounds. But they're not considered a minority group and not reflected in our diversity strategy. (Acad-4 & Allied 5)

Many key informants interviewed felt that students enrolled in the university need to be supported until completion. Providing services to support students should not be universal, it should be needs-based, they said. Staff felt that these needs vary from student to student and also can vary from one group to another depending on their cultural, religious or socio-economic values. An academic staff member from a School voiced strongly that a university's strategy and policy should address this:

> Whether it's any of the targeted groups like Māori or Pasifika, or refugee background, a South Asian student that needs support should be entitled to it. Education is a right, succeeding in that education should also be a right. (Acad-3)

When reflecting on some of the policy changes made by AUT, several participants noted that recent restructuring has impacted by reducing the number of ethnic minority staff, who had been going out of their way to offer help to students. This has resulted in additional work for those staff who remain and are willing to provide continued support:

> Redundancies have been targeted at ethnic staff; few staff members are remaining who belong to ethnic minority group … those of us who want to provide services to support students are stretched out. (Allied-9)

Staff were convinced that knowing the identity and background of students and who they are is essential for providing support. They perceived that knowing about the cultural or religious differences of students, which may prevent them from taking up the regular services offered, can help them to provide alternative methods of support. However, given the limited range of targeted support, staff felt that many students are invisible or misrepresented.

There was also some reflection from both academic and non-academic staff on why such an investment of support for various minority groups would be worthwhile from a university's strategy and marketing point of view. They felt that the success of minority students would be a positive representation of the institution and would act to spread goodwill in minority communities, thus marketing the university:

> There is value in the university investing on the success of minority groups because their own experiences, sharing with their friends, relatives, and community, will help to advertise AUT as the university of choice to minority groups of students. (Acad-5)

7.2.4 Summary

Participants discussed the university's policies around supporting domestic minority students to be successful. Three points were highlighted in the discussions: funding for minority students (6.2.1); reporting to monitor minority students' success (6.2.2); and how the university's strategy impacts on minority students enrolled (6.2.3). Both academic and non-academic staff in Schools and outside Schools voiced their concern about the decrease in targeted support for minority groups. They felt that the university has to identify minority groups who are under-performing by using a finer level of reporting proactively. Based on such reports, strategies can be developed in a timely way to help the university to fund activities

and services to provide support to students where it is required. Staff also voiced their concerns over the decrease in numbers of ethnic minority staff members.

7.3 Financial support for both services for students and for students themselves

Following from the comments provided by key informants that support services are essential to help minority students' to succeed, finance appears to be the driver of the level of support possible. Activities or services that are offered to students both in Schools and outside Schools, including both academic and non-academic services, rely heavily on the funding received for such work. Furthermore, many minority students themselves struggle financially.

The key informants discussed the allocation of financial resources for both the academic and the non-academic services that are required for students. Both academic and non-academic staff considered how the restructuring has affected the provision of financial support to students.

7.3.1 Funding for minority student support

Funding is the driver of the level of academic support from Schools to students. Staff participating in the key informant interviews translated students' needs to the university's policies and strategy. Non-academic staff outside the Schools discussed the importance of providing peer mentoring service to students to succeed:

> Funding played an important role in hiring high achieving students as peer mentors and support to those students who are at risk of failing. (Allied-2)

Academic staff in the key informant interviews noted that the university in the past provided additional funding to Schools over and above their regular budgets, but it was to be used only for the targeted groups that are identified:

> The university identifies their target groups of students for support based on the additional targeted funding they receive from government for priority groups. (Acad-4)

7.3.2 Minority students require financial support

School-based academic staff discussed students' financial situations and how that impacted on their academic performance. It appeared that some of these students are desperate when they have to make decisions about continuing their studies because of financial constraints:

> Some students for instance who live in South Auckland[9] find [it] hard to get into university – they are caring for sick parents or caring for other siblings. So we can try helping them actually to come here. (Acad-2)

One academic staff member also emphasised the importance of giving time to study. She said some students try to work long hours in employment and engage in full-time study at the same time. The financial hardships such students are trying to manage do not help them succeed:

> I noticed minority students go through financial stress. Some have part-time jobs, and it is hard to be a student and work 40 hours and succeed, so they require financial assistance to free them up for study. (Acad-1)

7.3.3 Additional support required for minority students to handle financial pressures

When asked the question regarding student financial issues, most participants said it is complex and depends on the personal situation of each student. Some non-academic staff members said that sometimes there are financial expectations from family, and there are occasions where staff have to communicate with family to make them understand the student's needs and also help students to communicate with their parents:

> It is also important for minority students' families to know that students require time to study. So that families are aware to free them [for study] and do not bank on them for financial gains. (Allied- 6)

[9] South Auckland is used here as a shorthand that refers to lower income, larger families, etc

> We teach students how to negotiate with their parents, explain to them that they cannot work as they have exams and assignments that are due. (Allied-5)

Staff members say that some of the issues minority students face can make students feel helpless. When staff realise that there is something wrong, then they have to find a way for the student to open up and share it. One non-academic staff member described one such occasion:

> I have spoken to the parents of the student after listening to the conversation after getting my students' consent. Initially, they resist for cultural reasons, but on many occasions, I manage to make the parents understand and able to bring them on board. Because these are cases where the student is about to drop from the programme because the student does not get time to study. (Allied-4)

7.3.4 Summary

All key informants agreed that financial support is an area students struggle with and it would be helpful if it were prioritised for students at AUT. Minority student groups need targeted funding and academic staff members in Schools perceived that when targeted support is made available those groups do benefit. Academic staff in Schools identified from their past experience that the targeted support for Māori and Pasifika students worked. It needed to be reinstated and should be extended to other groups as well. Emphasis was put by participants on the point that financial allocation links directly to the funding of services (6.3.1); financial support is required for domestic minority student groups (6.3.2); and minority students require additional support to successfully handle financial pressures (6.3.3).

7.4 Academic support is essential for student success

It is one thing for students to enrol in a university programme and attend classes, but it is quite another for them to have a positive journey and be successful. Some participants were aware of and accepted that domestic South Asian students who form a minority group were vulnerable and needed additional academic support to be successful. However, some staff

believed that there were no problems for domestic South Asian students because they are not identified by the university as an official category within the domains of equity or diversity.

The various participants who took part in my study had different perspectives, the staff who were interviewed range from academic staff from different disciplines to professional staff from School and student support services. Most people shared the belief that academic support is essential and is not merely 'nice to have' for South Asian students. I have picked up quotes from participants in the study to illustrate this point.

My themes draw out shared concerns that demonstrate the essential need for academic support. These quotes refer to each participant telling a particular story, and together these stories show there is a number of different issues that relate to domestic South Asian students who are New Zealand born, to new migrants, and to students with refugee backgrounds.

7.4.1 Students require and respond to academic support

Of the seven academic staff from Schools interviewed, three made personal offers of academic support to their students. They see that academic support is essential for students to be successful. Some academic staff have an open-door policy and they said they welcome students seeking academic support when required. Four out of the nine academic staff said:

> As academic staff members, we feel that it is our responsibility to encourage students to come and see us … we welcome the students they come and discuss their problems; when students do not come to classes, we email them. (Acad-2, 3, 4 and 5)

One academic staff member said that having small tutorial groups with other students in the same situation worked as a vehicle to support minority students:

> Having tutorial groups or having contact with them and finding out about their assignments is important. (Acad-3)

Non-academic staff said that, at first, some students are wary of asking lecturers for assistance, and come to the support staff and ask questions about their studies. Staff explained

saying that these inquiries get forwarded to lecturers, they found that reinforces a direct relationship between lecturer and student:

> When the teaching staff member reaches out, the students feel more confident, and that's why by their third year at least they will ask the lecturer rather than come and ask us. (Allied-2)

There are other academic staff who take a more neutral stance and say that academic support is a general requirement and that all students should have access to it. They explained that students are enrolled at AUT after meeting the university's entry criteria, so the institution has a responsibility to be equipped to support them. Academic support is essential:

> Systems and processes in an institution should be designed to accommodate all students including minority groups. Minority students' characteristics aren't accounted for or accommodated by the institution. (Acad-3)

Some people had a slightly different view, but it all revolved around the same point:

> I try and make myself available and make clear my expectations. … So, when students see your effort, then they put the effort in themselves to succeed. (Acad-1)

Although all staff members specifically indicated that academic support is integral to student success, they had different ways of addressing the type of academic support:

> Support you give them is not to make them fit into the process, but to make them aware of it and how to work in their way so they can meet the criteria necessary to be successful in an institution. (Acad-3)

Discussing the stress students go through, some academic staff expressed their sympathy and their helplessness:

> It's a pity that finance has a devastating impact on students because they miss out on academic support which is essential for their success. (Acad-1)

On the other hand, some academic staff who work in the Schools have a different view about student academic support. They see that, for students to be successful, academic support has to be offered in Schools and not outside of Schools:

> Academic support for students to be successful should sit with the Faculty [School] and should work closely with lecturers. (Allied-2)

7.4.2 Schools and other services working together providing support

The relationship between Schools and other support services was a strong theme in the majority of my key informant interviews. I asked both academic and non-academic interviewees about working together to support students. But it seems there is no real agreement among participants on how the whole package of academic and non-academic services for student should work. One academic staff member said:

> To be successful students need academic support from both the School and student support services. (Acad-2)

There are challenges in respect of these services depending on whether the services were offered by support services outside the School or by the School itself. Some academic staff in Schools worked more closely with support services than others. One School academic staff member spoke highly of a combined strategy that works between the services for students inside and outside schools:

> Māori, Pasifika, and Chinese have learning villages set up in Schools, [in] partnership with student support; they are good and successful working models for students and should be extended to include other minority groups. (Acad-6)

Another academic staff member spoke about making targeted support more effective with more groups needed for academic services to be provided outside the School. The staff member had a strong view that these services were working well and could roll over to include other minority students:

> The School employs support people to help equity groups, Māori and Pasifika, that proves successful. It will be helpful for Schools to invest in setting up similar structures for other minority students. (Acad-5)

Staff in areas providing services for students outside Schools play an important role in helping students feel socially and academically welcome. A non-academic staff member working outside the Schools said that there are a number of programmes that are organised as services to support the integration of students and enhance their university experience:

> Social and cultural isolation affects students' academic success and retention. … [To] make students feel socially connected, staff in student support play key roles to enhance students' wellbeing that will increase their success rates. (Allied-5)

Some academic staff held a different view, arguing that for students' academic support to be effective it should be set up in the School rather than outside the School:

> Students enrol in papers that are offered by the School, so rather than going somewhere else really foreign to them, all their academic help should be situated and offered by School staff. (Acad-2)

A non-academic staff member from outside the Schools described her relationship with Schools when working to identify and manage papers with high failure rates. These diagnostics assists Schools to identify students at risk and provide additional support:

> Working in supporting with Schools it's much more relational; I work with a group of lecturers looking at failing papers supporting those students who are at risk. (Allied-4)

Often with these positive experiences, there were also some negative comments from academic staff in Schools about non-academic staff in Schools providing services to students:

> There's a problem with student support; that is why students are not using it. If professional staff offered by Schools are useful, students will grab it. … It is important to have functioning services rather than an equity office or someone there in the Schools removed from students. (Acad-2)

I asked the academic staff located outside Schools about how useful the academic services were that they offered to the students. Some academic staff outside Schools were concerned about this issue and questioned whether these services are being used for the purposes they were set up for, whether students are getting maximum benefit from these services and whether resources are not being wasted because "there is no coherence, we don't tell each other, it is just working in silos and competing" (Allied-7).

7.4.3 Peer support enhances academic success for students

Peer support is designed so that senior students in their specific subject areas provide specialised tutorials in one-to-one sessions. This is a service provided for all students by AUT's Learning Communities, within the Student Services Division. This division has general peer mentoring support for all students and language-specific support for Chinese students. Students need to book an appointment to see the peer mentors and seek this academic support.

Most of the academic and non-academic staff see value in peer mentor learning. For example, most staff interviewed both in Schools and staff from other areas that provide services for students said that

> "students learn among themselves and through their peers by explaining things, peer support is organised, so that second-year students support first year and third-year students supports the second year, and we have seen the difference in their performance" (Acad-1, 3, 4 & 6).

However, there were contrasting views about the setting up of peer groups. Despite recognising the value of peer mentoring when organising peer groups there are some important things to take into consideration. This was demonstrated by an academic staff member from a School saying that for peer mentors to function well it is important to have

students from the same ethnic group, otherwise “students may find it difficult to mix and to network” (Acad-5).

Alongside the benefits of support was a sense of caution raised by one participant since, if the peer mentoring service were to extend targeted additional support to minority students, there would be costs involved in paying for mentors because the funding does not come from the School budgets. Staff believed in the value of the service but stated that:

> Specialised peer mentoring for target groups can only be possible with additional funding. (Acad-3)

Along with the benefits of group work and students supporting each other, there are also some negative issues that were highlighted by another academic staff member from a School, who commented:

> one of the problems with group work is if you’ve got strong students in a group they unite [and] get separated and often the weaker students, because of language, will be left out. These weaker students will support one another and drag each other down. (Acad-6)

Similarly, this participant also cautioned on the possible dangers of peer learning groups if they are not properly managed by saying:

> Students have a place to go and sit together, and they do support one another, but if they are weak students, they will plagiarise off one another. (Acad-6)

7.4.4 Language ability is important to student academic success

In this section, I address language issues raised by key informants as an important area for academic success for minority students. Language ability, including both everyday English language and academic literacy, was highlighted by many participants. Some of the participants stated that students had the academic ability, but they lacked the English language ability needed to help them to succeed. One of the academic staff members from

outside the Schools described his encounter in dealing with students trying to cope with the challenge of academic English:

> We help students to understand the academic writing context and the expectations in an English medium university that are perhaps different from what they might have experienced. (Allied-7)

An academic staff member from a School spoke about guiding students to access services to improve their language for academic study:

> The first thing I did was to brief them on language and referencing support services that are offered at AUT and how students can access them. (Acad-4)

Another academic staff member showed their concern for students on this issue:

> So I have a great deal of sympathy and empathy for students. When English is not your first language you try to wade through the difficult academic language in the unfamiliar genre of the journal article, for example. (Allied-7)

7.4.5 Summary

For the key informants, the importance of academic support was agreed upon. However, there were different thoughts that were shared by staff in regard to some of their own experiences of these services. Within the theme of academic support being essential for students to be successful, four key topics came through from the participants of this research: the emphasis on the point that students require and respond to academic support (6.4.1); the importance of academic and support services working together in providing support (6.4.2); peer support enhancing academic success for students (6.4.3); and language ability being important for student academic success (6.4.4). Nonetheless, there was a variety of views encountered within the group of 16 academic and non-academic staff of AUT. In particular, there were some differences in views on how this essential academic support can be achieved.

7.5 Student support services are essential for minority student success

In this section I look at the responses of key informants' interviews on the importance of providing services to support minority students. Academic and non-academic staff shared their views and reflections on different types of student support that are available to students.

Despite recognising that support services are essential, the types of support and how they were provided was contested. This was clear from the responses about the provision of services and the relationships between academic staff and non-academic staff.

7.5.1 Working relationships

To effectively support students, a good working relationship between Schools and other services outside Schools is crucial for student success. This was demonstrated by views from academic staff in Schools talking about the partnership and open dialogue that are important for students to get the help required for them to succeed:

> Student support [outside Schools] should work more closely with academics if they were to be effective. Email communication about a student's need, in mid-semester, may be too late, and we have to work proactively and collaboratively. (Acad-2 & 6)

A non-academic staff member from a School perceived things differently. This staff member believed that, irrespective of the kind of support, academic or non-academic, for it to be most beneficial to students, it should be provided from Schools:

> I find that people who are closest to the student are in the student environment, not so much the support services [outside Schools] – they are three steps back. … It might be a School administrator or their lecturer. (Allied-4)

The dissatisfaction of academic staff in Schools with other services provided by staff outside Schools was a common theme that came across quite frequently in the key informant responses. Academic staff stated that:

> Student feedback says that student services [that are provided outside the Schools] are inadequate. (Acad-3)

7.5.2 Clear demarcation between academic and non-academic services

Although there is a clear distinction between academic and pastoral support, some participants indicated that there is a blurring of these boundaries. So, having these services separated and the boundaries clearly drawn between them – and made known to students – is very important. Some academic staff stated that they do not want to know what non-academic services are offered by student services outside Schools. They prefer students to explore non-academic services offered outside Schools by themselves and use them as they saw fit. One staff member shared his views about the distinction between services and how students should seek them:

> If you [student] have personal issues or psychological problems don't come to me [academic staff member] but if it is a study issue, I can help you. (Acad-1)

There are non-academic staff members from Schools who distance themselves from other services that are provided for students outside the Schools. One non-academic staff member from a School commented:

> The only thing we can do at the School level is telling them [students] about their academic services that we offer [in the School], but we can't force them. (Allied-1)

Some of the academic staff responses to the services that were available to students outside Schools were positive. However rapid change in the services provided to students outside the School (as explained in the Context section in Chapter 1) has meant that academic staff in Schools had difficulty keeping abreast of what is being offered. Therefore, academic staff in Schools explained the difficulty in referring students to other services offered outside the School:

> We do not know about student services [outside the School] available in the university, and it is good for us [academic staff] to know the student services so that we can make referrals. (Acad-1)

> As teaching staff, we work frontline and meet students regularly so, if we know clearly what support services that are there in Student Support, we can guide them. (Acad-6)

7.5.3 Communication is essential for services to be functional

Despite some academic staff being critical of non-academic services, they found that it is beneficial for the university to offer these services to students. In this instance, academic staff said that students needed to know about the service for it to be useful and effective. Most key informant academic and non-academic staff were positive about providing services to students outside Schools to assist students; however, there should be a good line of communication between academic staff in Schools and other staff who are providing services to students outside Schools. One academic staff member from a School shared her view:

> Previously we know [to] whom we can make referrals and communicate. Now when I send them to see learning advisor, they come back and tell me we have to book and there are no available slots for the next couple of weeks. (Acad-3)

This indicated that academic staff had not been informed of changes that have happened in other services offered to students outside the Schools. Non-academic staff in the Schools were critical of the relationship and communication between them and the services offered outside Schools for students:

> To be brutally frank the relationship is not working … because all we do is tell them these are the problems. However, there is no working relationship to say this is what you do and this is what we do and this is how we can work collaboratively. (Allied-1)

A similar comment was shared by an academic staff member in a School:

> I guess more integration in the sense of greater awareness on what's being on offer [is needed] so that we could channel the students. (Acad-1)

7.5.4 Summary

This was the third theme of the five major themes from the key informant interviews. Academic staff in Schools perceived that the other services for students that are offered outside School should be made known to students more effectively. Policies and shifts in practices around equity funding and the changes that had happened in the services, like the Learning Advisors and the way Learning Advisors operate, should be made clear to the academic staff members. This theme captures participants' discussion on the important role of services for students outside the School during their study, highlighting the relationship with Schools (6.4.1); making a clear distinction about their different services to students (6.4.2); and commenting on the Student Services Division and the Library's communication with the Schools about their support (6.4.3). The role of the student services offered by the Student Services Division and the Library was interpreted differently by various members of staff.

7.6 Student learning advisors' role in student success

The objective of Student Learning Advisors (SLAs) is to provide guidance on how to write academic assignments and coursework (e.g., essays) to achieve better grades, and also to help students adjusting to the university's academic culture. SLAs play a critical role especially in assisting students whose first language is not English. There has been a substantial restructuring of these services to students in the past seven years which has been explained in the context section in Chapter 1 of this thesis. As noted in that context section, SLAs are now placed within the organisational framework of the AUT Library.

Academic staff in Schools who were interviewed had different experiences in referring students to the services of SLAs. Some academic staff see value and had positive experiences, while some other academic staff commented it could have been better.

7.6.1 Experiences in working with SLAs

In light of the role of SLAs, it is not surprising that some participants felt very strongly about their role in student success. Students who seek their advice made good progress and were academically stronger:

> I found the student was quite an intelligent student. The only problem was the language, which was causing the problem. I sent the student to SLA and student completed successfully. (Acad-2)
>
> [Students who had] regular meetings with the learning support staff last year got help with two assignments; they did tutorial sessions and [this] was very useful for students. (Acad-6)

7.6.2 SLAs' roles

The view of some of the academic staff members from Schools is that the service of the SLAs is limited to the role of assisting students in proof reading and the use of English. Through conversations with some members of the academic staff, it was clear they felt that SLAs could not assist students with academic content. As one teaching staff member said: "they can help with English language issues but when it comes to a t-test[10] SLAs cannot help students" (Acad-6).

After the restructuring of SLAs, some members of the academic staff in Schools were concerned about the SLAs' role:

> All teaching staff should know who they should send their students to get academic help. SLAs are important for student's academic success. The fact is, I don't know who they are now. Earlier I knew who would assist with my paper. (Acad-3)

A member of the academic staff in a School also agreed that proof reading is not the role of the SLAs:

[10] A test used as a hypothesis testing tool, which allows testing of statistical assumption.

> One of the things that strikes me is that's misusing SLA as free proof reading for an English as a second language student. Student learning advisors don't do that, and I get that. (Acad-4)

It is clear that the SLA's roles were misunderstood by some academic staff in the Schools, who perceived that SLA's role is limited to proof reading assignments and offering English language assistance. There were comments in defence of SLAs that came from a non-academic staff member outside the Schools regarding how some students see the SLAs' support:

> There is a certain stigma associated with seeing a learning advisor; it is a flawed understanding and fundamentally misguided because learning advisors work with any student and help to bring a positive attitude and a sense of wanting to learn and willingness to engage. (Allied-7)

7.6.3 Summary

Students were using the services of SLAs in their academic work. Some academic staff in Schools suggested that they lacked the assistance of SLAs in helping their students who are having difficulty. Some found that SLAs were incapable of helping students with their academic content.

This is the final theme of the five major themes identified from the key informant interviews. This theme focused on the SLAs' roles in student academic success. Points highlighted in the theme are teaching staff members' reflections on their experience in working with SLAs (6.6.1); and concerns and confusion about the roles SLAs play in supporting students' work (6.6.2).

7.7 Chapter summary

This is the first of the two qualitative findings chapters. In this chapter, I have looked at the findings obtained from conversations with the 16 academic and professional staff members from Schools and other areas that offer services to students who were the key informant interviewees of my research. For academic and non-academic staff members in this case study,

the process started with reflecting on their own work and also other services which are provided to minority students in their academic journey at AUT. Five main themes emerge from key informant interviews for minority students' academic success, underlining the importance of academic support for students to be successful (6.1); the university's policies that support domestic South Asian students in being academically successful (6.2); the need for financial support to provide additional services and to free up students to study and be successful (6.3); Student Services' role in minority student success (6.4); and the role SLAs play in supporting students academically (6.5).

This concludes the key informant interview chapter. In the next chapter, I discuss the student focus group sessions from my case study.

Chapter 8 Student Focus Groups: Findings and Interpretation

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the focus groups conducted in the fourth phase of my research.

The preceding chapter presented research findings from the key informant interviews conducted with academic and non-academic staff at AUT regarding domestic South Asian student success in undergraduate studies in AUT. This chapter presents the findings of the focus groups conducted in the fourth phase of my research. Two focus groups with a total of nine students were conducted using a common semi-structured question schedule between May 2018 and July 2018. The focus groups consisted of domestic South Asian students studying in undergraduate degrees at AUT between 2017 and 2018. The reason for conducting two focus groups was to have one dedicated focus group for female students, as some students culturally may find it inappropriate to discuss their views freely and openly in a mixed gender focus group. The other group comprised mixed gender participants. The focus groups had a balanced spread of fields of study and also a good representation of the various countries in South Asia.

The following sections cover the main themes which emerged from my focus groups' discussions, which were identified by performing cluster analysis on NVivo. This process is explained in Chapter 3. Relevant quotes from the participants are provided throughout the chapter. To preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, the quotes are referenced by a masked identity. Each participant is referred to as 'Part-(followed by a numeral)' from participant one to nine. Multiple quotes on the same point are sometimes combined into a single paragraph, and in these cases multiple participants are acknowledged.
In the two finding chapters 'research participants ' are referred to as key informants and 'student participants' refers to students in the focus group.

I used a semi structured question schedule to conduct the two focus groups (see Appendix). The main reason for having a similar questionnaire for each group was to allow me to merge the data. I began each focus group by telling my own story, and by taking this approach I found that student participants felt that I was not a stranger and that I was living the same experience as them.

There are three main themes, with the first, the performance of academic work; the second, theme is feeling valued and accepted in the university, and the final theme looks at the support available from student services.

8.2 Performance of academic work

Students' transition from secondary school to university is a big step. It is a move from a guided study approach to an independent study environment. The university provides orientation for all students at the beginning of each semester. These orientations introduce students to different university services, although the introductions are brief. South Asian domestic students who enrol at university come with different entry-level backgrounds ranging from New Zealand high school, to overseas schooling, to mature student entry. They also vary from New Zealand-born citizens to new migrants and students with refugee backgrounds, although all qualify as domestic students. As domestic students they do not have to do English language tests such as IELTS. However, given their diverse backgrounds, many of them need appropriate support to help them perform well and be successful in their studies.

The different students who participated in my focus groups raised their concerns about being aware of and gaining clear directions on the academic requirements and expectations for university undergraduate study. Some students acknowledged that it is a huge step from school to university and that they needed to work hard to succeed. However, areas such as language proficiency, academic honesty, integrity and the use of the American Psychological

Association (APA) referencing style[11] are foreign to some participants. Nonetheless, in the first few weeks of a semester, students in most papers are required to submit a written assessment that carries a weighting towards passing the paper.

The following sub-sections contain selected quotes from focus group participants which illustrate these points.

8.2.1 The expectation of referencing and paraphrasing

All nine participants shared their concerns over expectations of academic honesty, the use of APA referencing and the paraphrasing of academic work. Students may not have learned these skills in their previous schooling and were expected to demonstrate them in their first written piece of work, often due after just four weeks of their course:

> Just coming new to university was a cultural shock. To learn about something new as referencing and paraphrasing was challenging. The only place to get training was to enrol in the library workshops, and these workshops were generic workshops and not subject specific. Enrolling in one of these workshops and trying to complete the first written coursework was not easy. (Part-2, 3 & 9)

The sense of cultural shock comes through clearly, as does the sense of frustration, which was indicated by some student participants, that these workshops were not conducted by staff who are aware of minority student needs. Students with English as their second language were struggling to keep up with the speed of the presentations. Some student participants wanted teachers to explain rather than reading from the presentation slides. Students wanted to have hands on experience:

> Sitting in the workshop was not helping me to learn referencing and paraphrasing, I got enrolled in a second workshop during the year and experienced the same. It would

[11] APA is a style of referencing for citing or documenting the sources of quotes, theories, ideas, illustrations and diagrams that most students have to use in their assignments at AUT.

> have been useful to have some time at the end of the workshop so that we can practice, but we ran out of time. (Part-2, 4 & 5)

On a more positive note, students valued peer mentors who were students from senior years who had done these same papers in previous semesters. They knew the material, one student observed, and since they had lived the experience, they could understand the difficulties new students were going through. They were more patient and used examples that were easy to understand. Some of the mentors were also students from the same cultural background:

> Until I came across experience with a peer mentor, I did not know how helpful that could be. It was one-to-one tuition, they explain to you, have patience, listen to you, make you try some examples. The challenge was in making an appointment. I was fortunate to have a South Asian mentor, that made things even much simpler because the mentor understood my difficulties fully. (Part-8)

Some of the participants were not aware of a peer mentoring service. They were interested to know more about this service. One of the participants said that "it would have been useful to know about peer mentoring early; that could have saved me from failing the first assignment" (Part-7).

Students expressed the view that lecturers need to be clear about the expectations of the course and what they need to do as students to be successful. Some students found surprises in their papers:

> It was only in week seven that I came to know that I was required to watch videos at home [flipped lessons] and come prepared to the lecture. No one in the class knew that – we were all puzzled. Lecturer never said anything about that until he realised that none of us had accessed it and were not ready to answer any questions. He only found that when none of us knew the definition of capitalism that was part of the pre-lecture slides. (Part-1)

Reflecting on this story, another student participant suggested that “it will be really helpful if lecturers can go through the outline and detail about the paper in the first lecture of a semester” (Part-2).

8.2.2 Understanding accent and language was difficult

Many students in the focus groups voiced their concerns about difficulties in understanding the lecturers. This problem can depend on how a person speaks rather than what they say, because of their unfamiliar accents. Some of their lecturers were not native English speakers:

> we had problems in understanding some of our lecturers and tutors, they talk fast, and some of them had strange accents, so we were lost. (Part-8)

However, there were also concerns raised by participants who said that they were expected to use academic language in their coursework, but lecturers did not guide them as to what these words meant. English was the participants’ second language, so they had difficulty expressing their ideas, and perceived they were penalised accordingly. Some of the student participants indicated that as they became aware that the use of academic language was essential for them to be successful, “we started to look for people to be proof readers to look at the work before submission” (Part-4, 7 & 9).

The majority of the student participants agreed on the sentiment regarding lecturers who had unfamiliar accents and that some of them even had difficulty answering questions in class. They said that it was not specific to themselves as students; even native English-speaking students were experiencing the same problems in some classes:

> I had one lecturer who spoke very strongly in her accent, like a Philippines accent, it is so hard to understand. Even reading out from the text book it is hard to get her point across to us. (Part-2)

> In my current class, we have one lecturer, from Germany and he has got this deep accent. So, when he does not get his point across to students, he gets frustrated. (Part-5)

> I took a summer school paper last year. The lecturer's accent was so terrible, and I only relied on the PowerPoint. I requested him to email me the full script saying that we cannot hear him properly. (Part-1)

> We have lectures every Tuesday and Friday followed by an online test, based on the lectures, so when we do not understand anything, it is very difficult to do the test very well. (Part-6)

Another example related to the difficulty of following the lecture. Most student participants had a strong view about the accent of lectures:

> Most of our lecturers are foreign lecturers, new to the country, have strange accents and no local knowledge and find it hard to explain, so for us clarity becomes challenging. (Part-9)

> We had a class of about 150 students [and] had a lecturer who had difficulty in explaining. We were not clear, and we had to do an online test based on the content of lecturer, so most of us depended on the Power Point. (Part-8)

During the focus group discussions, some student participants raised concerns about the cultural issues that prevented them from expressing their opinions or asking for help, which means they just kept silent:

> We are brought up and trained to respect our teachers and learn from them by memorising the content. We usually think in our language and then translate to English. This applies to academic writing and referencing too. Therefore, we can't talk about our issues. (Part-5)

> From childhood, we are taught to read, memorise and then pass. In university we are asked to be critical, voice our opinion, but it is hard because of our upbringing. (Part-7)

One student suggested that "it will be useful to have special additional classes for English as second language students taught by people who understand our difficulties" (Part-1).

Part of the problem of not being able to follow academic language and understand accents is inadequate preparation for university studies given to students before the transition from high school:

> Orientation given in the beginning is too short and does not equip you for a transition from high school to university. (Part-3)

Student participants raised concerns about language difficulties, not understanding the lecture and having language issues. Some academic staff lacked the clarity in delivery of lectures and students found it hard to follow. Some students raised concerns about cultural issues that prevented them from expressing their opinion or asking questions, which meant they just kept silent. On one occasion Part- 4 recalls how excluded he felt when "in the tutorial I was trying to ask the lecturer a question that I did not understand something, but he did not have eye contact with me and I felt ignored and I just remained silent".

8.2.3 Teaching and support staff singing the same song

Seeking support outside the schools can sometimes be difficult and the fact that it was not the best experience was the concern of some of the student participants. Some students shared their own stories:

> Some lecturers are not happy when we tell them we use help from learning advisors [SLAs]. They feel that they get challenged or are being critiqued, so it is not helpful. (Part-7)

> I had been getting advice from a learning advisor and was suggested to go and see the lecturer because there was a problem in the assignment. The lecturer was not happy and said that it is clear and so I was caught between the two. (Part-3)

Students' experiences with peer mentors came out in most discussions. Since the general mentoring programme is open to all students, and the number of peer mentors is limited, students need to use an online booking system. However, once a student got an appointment, it turned out to be always a positive experience:

> I found peer mentors very useful by helping to show previous assignments, but that is not the same as lecturer support. You go to workshops or to mentors but they are also limited in what they can help with. (Part-2)

A participant described another student who went to an SLA to seek help with an assignment, they said that:

> he did not get a good mark for the assignment and after inquiring he found that he was marked down because the lecturer and the learning advisor had differing opinions. (Part-8)

Student participants described the difficulties they had in accessing support services outside the Schools. Academic staff in the Schools had limited access to the students after class. Despite getting the support of SLAs, student participants found that it was not helpful. Because some academic staff were not happy about following the directions that resulted from the assistance from SLAs. However, throughout these discussions with students, it appeared to be that student participants were happy with SLA's and peer mentor assistance.

8.2.4 Summary

The different views expressed by the two focus groups, of nine students at AUT, shared similar themes. Students in the focus groups found that SLA's and the peer mentoring service was useful and helped them in their studies. However, approaching academic staff inside and outside the class was highlighted as an issue. Following foreign accents of academic staff was also identified as a challenge. Most students in the focus groups identified support in referencing, paraphrasing and English language support. Other services to support students in their academic work were limited and difficult to access and there were suggestions for improvements (eg. library courses).

Within the theme of the performance of academic work, three key topics came through, highlighting the importance of referencing and paraphrasing of academic work (7.2.1); difficulties in following some lecturers because of their unfamiliar accent (7.2.2); synchronising services in terms of the content by the support and the academic staff (7.2.3).

8.3 Feeling valued and accepted in the university

In this section, I look at students' interpretation of their acceptance as a minority group in the university. Participants shared their experiences of being inside lecture theatres and elsewhere in the university. These discussions ranged from personal issues in terms of how they are valued, and to study-related issues that impact on their academic success. Discussions focussed on accepting them for who they are and recognising them as a group.

8.3.1 Acknowledging diversity

Focus groups' participants discussed their perceived invisibility in the institution. They felt as though they were grouped as Asians and not as South Asians. The university has a diversity strategy, but only selected groups are identified as equity groups. Students encounter the word 'diversity' on the university's website frequently, but only with reference to these targeted groups. Furthermore, unless they are part of some diversity events also:

> At the time of enrolment we are required to tick a box about our ethnicity; options given are broad, and I feel that I do not represent any one of the options provided. Asian is too broad, and then I do not feel like I am 'other' as well. (Part-1)
>
> Chinese have a Chinese Centre. I came to know they offer academic support to students and when I contacted them, they said it is for Chinese speaking students only. (Part-6)
>
> I come across banners on campus during festive seasons such as Christmas, Lantern Festival, etc., [but] festivals sacred to us like Diwali, Eid we do not see them. (Part-2)

In one case a student went to a support class with a Pasifika student, and the student said that "he was asked to leave because it was meant for a different group of students" (Part-4). Reflecting on this comment, another student noted that:

> The support services that we can go to is for all students, and we feel we are back to classroom situation where we cannot raise our problems because we are a minority. (Part-3)

Students were concerned, they felt that no one encouraged them or created a space where this group was and listened to. Students in the focus groups said that their Chinese and Pasifika colleagues have additional support services to help them with their studies, but that because they are not one of the targeted groups, that they are prevented from using them.

8.3.2 Empathy for our issues

Student participants voiced concern over the lack of support from university services when situations arise for students who have their own family or extended family responsibilities that become a priority in addition to their studies. Most of these issues identified are common to other minority groups, and they were raised as serious concerns during focus group discussions with students in this research. They described events that they have witnessed or had described to them by close associates:

> A colleague of mine had a sick child who could not be taken to day-care that day. Moreover, the lecturer in the class refused her entry; all students felt sorry. (Part-5)

Students didn't understand that in fact this would be exactly same for any person, and interpreted it in a framework of expectations that it was yet another incident

> As a female student, I struggled to do assignments and looking after my own family. Because I had reading and coursework for four subjects in a semester, I was not comfortable and made sacrifices to put aside time for studies. (Part-8)

It was argued that lecturers do not understand the difficulties that minority students go through, therefore, "Lecturers find it difficult to accept and be sympathetic too because they do not encounter them" (Part-3). These examples are not unique to minority students.

One student spoke about her close friend who experienced a death in the family and who had to leave immediately. She applied for an extension for her assignment but "her application was declined saying that it wasn't health related" (Part-7).

The examples given by students about the female student or the baby are not specific to the minority student example, it happens to everybody. The student participants who discuss

these issues may not have understood the rationale of these decisions but in the aftermath of any of these events they feel that they are being singled out. There are provisions for some minority groups because they either have been declared to be an equity group or they are part of the majority, but the South Asian minority misses out.

8.3.3 Clarity and familiar examples

Using examples and stories that are familiar to the students can make it easier for them to learn, students claimed. Discussions on this point were centred on using concepts and examples which students can easily relate to, and how this can help them to learn and understand faster. When asked for examples, some students gave the following instances:

> When looking at [referencing] a book where it is not easy to find first or surnames, a person who is more accustomed to what we know taking the tutorial would make things easier. (Part-4)
>
> It will be helpful if lecturers explain the terms they use. Breaking it down to what the words mean will help us understand. (Part-7)

The choice of examples given in lectures was raised by student participants. It is an advantage to to be familiar with examples, so students can connect with and understand concepts or ideas, rather than using an example that is outside of their own experience. South Asian examples would make a difference. Another example is in referencing, because the first name in a lot of cultures is the family name and the second name is the given name. This reverses the APA referencing style. The other issue student participants raised was about clarity of academic language in terms of including examples that reflect the diversity of the classroom.

8.3.4 Summary

Often in the two focus groups of domestic South Asian students, participants confirmed that AUT does not identify them as a separate minority group, and that they would like to be valued and accepted for who they are. Students feel marginalised when they are in and around the university, as a minority group. The three main areas discussed were: the university

acknowledging who they are as a group (7.3.1); staff being empathetic about their circumstances (7.3.2), and teaching staff using examples that are inclusive of minority groups from different geographical regions (7.3.3). These focus group discussions reflected their concerns about integrating into the university culture.

8.4 Support from services to students

Some participants had difficulty in getting support from services to students outside their school. There were issues around accessing these services, and students did not seem to know how to seek these services. Some of these specialised services were targeted support for a specific group of students. Sometimes, when students came to know about a service from their friends and colleagues, they would find that they were not eligible as they are South Asians, and the service was just for Māori, Pasifika or Chinese students.

Student participants were expecting staff who work in these services to be helpful and compassionate. As domestic South Asian students, they are already juggling with academic, family and cultural issues. From their perspective, they would like support staff to be more empathetic to their needs as well. These issues identified are not specific to domestic South Asian students; they are issues generic to all students. But being a minority group, domestic South Asian students are hit harder by these challenges and barriers than some other groups.

8.4.1 Complexity of services

The first point of call for any student is enrolment. All communication about enrolment is channeled through the Student Hub. Most participants found that their experience with the Student Hub could be improved. Most services are online, but if students encounter any issues, they have to contact the Student Hub personally. Some participants were questioning Student Hub staff knowledge and their understanding of the services they require:

> I wanted to enrol in papers for the semester. I had online issues, so I went to see the Student Hub, I got more confused, and finally, I had to go to the School. (Part-2)

> I was sent from the School to the Student Hub to sort out my paper enrolment, and Student Hub referred me back to the School, it was a waste of my time and no solution. (Part-4)

In another encounter, the participant had difficulty in communicating with the staff member from the Student Hub. The participant went to the Student Hub to change a paper enrolment, but the staff member at the hub had difficulty in understanding the process, so the student had to go back to the School. A School administrator said that this was straightforward and made the change:

> It was frustrating; usually, you can do it online, but since I required an approval the School asked me to go to the Student Hub. I went there, got my token and waited an hour to see a staff member; finally, I was told that this could not be done because I did not meet the pre-requisite. I told the staff member the School sent me here, so he said that the School could not do it, so finally I gave up and went back to school. (Part-3)

A different experience was shared by a student in one of the focus groups who was seeking help and could have missed an opportunity and taken a paper unnecessarily:

> In one of my physiotherapy papers I want to get an exemption and the Chinese staff member at the Student Hub said it is already closed, and due date had passed for an application. The next week my classmate from South America told me that she had got an exemption for her paper and gave me the email address of the faculty member to communicate. The faculty member replied that Friday is the last day and I can apply. So I had two days only. [I] went back to the Student Hub again, and this time it was a Kiwi lady, and she explained to me everything, she was good and encouraging. (Part-8)

As noted earlier in the chapter, student focus groups discussed referencing and Endnote (referencing software) workshops for students during semesters conducted by the AUT Library to help with essays and ongoing course assessments. Students need to enroll to attend these workshops. Sometimes it was very hard to book, because of timing and availability. One of the participants struggled to attend a referencing workshop:

> I tried a couple of times to get a booking, they were booked, and the only availability was on a day that I am not going to be on campus. I wonder if they can put them online. (Part-1)

From some of the accounts, domestic South Asian students had issues seeking support services with SLAs. The SLA appointment booking was a popular issue discussed by many participants in both focus groups:

> I was asked by my lecturer to see a Learning Advisor to help me with my written assignment. I tried making a booking, and they were all booked out for weeks ahead. There was no way I can see a Learning Advisor before the assignment is due. (Part-4)
>
> I think there are only six Learning Advisors for all the twenty-three thousand students enrolled, so I am not surprised by that outcome. (Part-3)
>
> After the first appointment, with the Learning Advisor, I wanted to see him again, and he said that you have to book another appointment; I wanted to book, and nothing was available. (Part-7)

All participants had issues with making appointments with SLAs. They said that they could not see them unless they made one-to-one appointments. Some of them said that, finally, they went to see a peer mentor:

> I was happy that I went to a peer mentor, there was no way I can make an appointment to see a Learning Advisor, so the peer mentor did the same paper the previous year and was very helpful. (Part-6)

8.4.2 Scholarships and other resources for minority students

Themes relating to financial contraints came out strongly in the focus groups, which directly reveals that the participants felt that they had been impacted one way or another by financial issues. Most of these issues are common to all students; however domestic South Asians feel the brunt, with all the other challenges that they face. Some of the participants had families, and others had obligations to their parents and other social obligations which put them under

financial stress. For some participants, the fact that South Asians are a minority group means that they would benefit from targeted support that would help them to be successful:

> As a minority community group to be successful, we need services aimed towards us. Scholarships, academic, non-academic support: for example, woman-to-woman type of support, or parental support, because some students are parents while studying. So, there are issues facing us that definitely can be reached out, and that may assist us. I know that there is a Chinese Centre and different student groups, but there is no South Asian Centre. (Part-7)

Specific scholarships are given to Māori and Pasifika students. Participants felt that there should be scholarships for other minority groups as well. Many participants indicated that, as a domestic minority group from South Asia, they felt they should also have scholarships and financial resources to assist them in their academic journey. In addition, some domestic South Asian students are students from refugee backgrounds, and they need support:

> A colleague of mine from Afghanistan, a recent refugee migrant, had to withdraw from her studies at AUT because she could not cope with the financial stress. She went to the Student Hub but could not get support. (Part-5)

On a similar note, another participant compared services at AUT to services offered elsewhere that help minority students:

> Auckland University has the Indian Association set up by students themselves and students get help from them in their language, but we do not have that sort of platform in AUT. (Part-1)

8.4.3 Summary

Student Services was the third theme identified as arising from the student focus groups, reflecting their discussions about the services that they received from Student Support. Participants in the student focus group perceived that some services for students were not very helpful. The students felt that it lacks professionalism. The three points highlighted were

accessing and using support services (7.4.1); financial support while they are studying (7.4.2). Support services were revealed as an important element for students to succeed academically.

8.4 Chapter summary

This is the final of my findings chapters. In this chapter, I have reported the themes that emerged from the student focus groups reflecting on their experiences of their undergraduate studies at AUT. When considering the challenges, there were three major themes that emerged: performance of academic work, feeling valued and accepted in the university; and support from student services. Some sub-themes which came out of the main themes were, in particular, about lecturers' clarity in delivery of lectures; knowing about the required expectations in terms of assignment or course work; and accessibility of academic support to help the students to succeed. There were discussions regarding accepting South Asian as a diversity group and embracing them as part of the student community. Student participants in the focus groups also discussed the difficulty in accessing certain other services available to some students. Overall, this chapter showed that these domestic South Asian students faced clear challenges and issues that ran through their undergraduate study at AUT.

Focus groups' students described academic staff not using references that were part of their reference frame in class. Therefore, it was hard for them to follow and was not persuasive. The students had difficulty in following lectures because of unfamiliar and sometimes difficult accents used by foreign academic staff who are lecturing. Therefore, they started using other online media like Blackboard to try and understand what is taught in class, but some of these materials were not updated. Yet as time passed, students were also faced with the challenge in using the English language, APA referencing and in paraphrasing of their written work. Students did not have the courage to ask, as they felt that it might sound foolish and may look stupid in class for not asking the right question. Additionally, students also did not know where to get extra support, as the central support services were overloaded and students had to wait

in long queues to seek their services, which meant they would not be able to meet deadlines. When students experience these challenges, they are likely not to respond and remain silent.

South Asian students are habitually reserved and silent. Therefore, academic staff need to be aware of this issue and be active in addressing it. Thus, if staff have not made them feel welcomed and invited, students come into the class and remain silent.

This concludes the finding chapters. In chapter 8, I discuss the findings based on the findings from the literature and both quantitative and qualitative data findings.

Chapter 9 Discussion

9.1 Introduction

The main aim of this research was to investigate success in university study for domestic South Asian students enrolled in bachelor's degrees. South Asian students as a minority group have been under-reported in the education literature, and their performance in university education has been masked by their inclusion in reporting on Asian students as a broad ethnic grouping. Therefore, I designed a case study inquiry at AUT to investigate South Asian students' university performance using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The scope and findings of this research focus on the staff and students of AUT. However, the findings are a significant contribution to the literature on minority students' performance in university education more broadly.

The four preceding chapters contain the findings of this research based on (i) various quantitative datasets relating to the New Zealand population, to tertiary education in New Zealand in general, and student enrolment and completion at AUT; (ii) internal and external publications of AUT; (iii) the learnings of academic staff, obtained from key informant interviews; and (iv) the experiences of domestic South Asian students during their university study, obtained from focus groups. In this discussion chapter, I am bringing together five main themes based on the issues that have emerged from the synthesis of these four sets of findings and the relevant literature.

9.2 South Asian population in New Zealand

9.2.1 Who is Asian?

There is much discussion in the literature and among study participants around the category 'Asian' and the various other categories within it, one of them being South Asian (Rasanathan, Craig, & Perkins, 2004). The term 'Asian' in New Zealand refers to people from East, South, and

South-East Asia but excludes people from the Middle East, Russia, and parts of Central Asia (McKinnon, 1996). In New Zealand, all government authorities, including Statistics New Zealand, the Ministry of Education and each university. use the term Asian loosely and put all the people from the continent of Asia into this one category. This completely submerges their diversity. As Rasanathan, Ameratunga, and Tse (2006) explained, the definition of Asian is thus:

> A grouping in New Zealand [which] is very heterogeneous as it includes half the peoples of the World. Beyond this diversity in ethnicity, the Asian grouping differs along many other axes, including settlement history, socioeconomic status, English language ability, and acculturation. (p. 2)

Having a broad definition of an ethnic group and labeling a substantial and diverse group of the New Zealand population as Asian has been unhelpful and misleading. It skews averages across diverse ethnic groupings and has no meaning as a generalisation about a group of people in the population. For example, a large group of Korean students may be doing very well, and a small group of Pakistani students may not be performing very well. However, since they both fall into the category Asian and are submerged within it, it will not reflect accurately on the Pakistani students' performance. It would in fact show the opposite to the actual results (Banks & Banks, 2004; Grund & Przemeck, 2011; United Nations Human Rights , 2012).

A report published by the Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand on challenges for Asian health in New Zealand raised concerns about the misrepresentation of reporting of Asians as a single category, stating that "Stereotypes and the 'averaging effect' may have boosted the health status of Asians in New Zealand beyond reality; camouflaging important differences in health status between ethnic groups" (A. Wong, 2015, p. 4).

I believe parallel issues exist in the education sector. The category Asian is too broad, and it may be that many different peoples' cultures and problems are being ignored by only looking at this category. More specifically, in the context of this study, putting South Asians into one

basket together with all Asians does not reflect their uniqueness. Therefore, it is important to carry out a finer-grained analysis of student-related information.

9.2.2 Who is South Asian?

The first challenge I had in my study was defining the population for my research. As noted above, reporting done by Statistics New Zealand on the population of New Zealand, education statistics reported by the Ministry of Education, statistics reported by New Zealand Immigration on refugees, and participation and completion rates reported by AUT, do not report South Asian as a separate ethnic category. The South Asian population is grouped into the category 'Asian.'

Even if we consider using South Asian as a separate group, we must recognise that it includes a wide range of ethnicities. Nonetheless, South Asians are a significant population sharing a similar history, culturally identical, racially distinct, and geographically grouped (Bose & Jalal, 2018).

This definition is significant because it sets the boundaries for the origins of any people who are 'domestic South Asians' in New Zealand. The definition that has been used and outlined in Chapter 1 embraces the eight member states of SAARC: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. My decision to use this grouping for the South Asian definition was determined before proceeding with any other part of my research process. Reflecting on this choice after completing the analysis, it can be seen as a robust decision; it has not had any negative consequences for the research, and I have used this definition throughout. South Asia is a grouping that reflects self-determination, where the member nations decided on who it represents; it was not determined by an external organisation or western academics/statisticians.

9.2.3 South Asians in Auckland/New Zealand

Population data was accessed from Statistics New Zealand and analysed, as explained in Chapter 5. The analysis identifies significant growth in the number of people from Asia and South Asia, as witnessed in the New Zealand population in the 2013 Population and Housing Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). Auckland is the most populous and diverse city in New Zealand and home to most of the South Asians living in New Zealand. The South Asian population, which as of 2013 comprised 8% of Auckland's total population (as discussed in Chapter 5), includes South Asians born in New Zealand, immigrants and refugees.

The research found that inter-census growth between the three censuses of 2001, 2006 and 2013 places South Asians as a minority group with the largest growth in numbers, and this growth exceeds all other ethnic groups in the wider Asian group. This group is now a substantial proportion of the Auckland region's population, and they will be enrolling in universities for tertiary education, further contributing to participation rates. Thus, the South Asian community is a significant stakeholder in the education system in the Auckland region. This finding resonated with previous research (Slee, 2012) that has shown that inclusive education practice is important for minority students to thrive. This group is not a handful of international students who come and go; it is a significant permanent base in the population, and the education of this group raises questions about diversity and serving the people of the region. The last census was facilitated in 2018, but the data is not yet available, for various reasons which are outside the scope of this thesis; the data will be released in 23 September 2019 (Statistics New Zealand, 2019).

My question is, therefore, "is this voice being heard?" Objectively, in its own right, this population is important and ought to have a voice in the context of education (Cahalan, 2015) or be acknowledged as a significant stakeholder in education in New Zealand. Later on in this chapter, I return to this question.

9.2.4 South Asians as migrants

As discussed in Chapter 5, some people from South Asian countries come to New Zealand as migrants and refugees. Migrants and those who arrive as refugees are given permanent residency and later apply for citizenship (O'Rourke, 2011). Therefore, the domestic South Asian student population also includes refugees and migrants who have recently arrived in New Zealand. The findings of this research (as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5) indicated that these students currently are not identified through university systems.

Furthermore, the findings of this research also showed that AUT plays a significant role in the educational programme for refugee arrivals conducted at AUT's Centre for Refugee Education. The dilemma here is once the refugees are enrolled, AUT does not have dedicated support for refugee background students (O'Rourke, 2011). Given the historical background of refugees, it is important to provide additional support for refugee students currently enrolled in AUT (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

The most important support for refugee-background students is the academic support that they need to bridge the gap between the university entrance level and the home-country qualification that they have at enrolment; indeed, as noted previously, they may have no prior formal qualification at all. I concur with Baker et al. (2018), who suggested that refugee-background students need additional academic and pastoral support for them to be successful. This view further accords with New Zealand research published by Sampson, Marlowe, de Haan, and Bartley (2016), which described the complexities that refugee-background students face in acculturation into society.

Findings in the document analysis chapter (Chapter 6) showed that the AUT website makes no reference to refugees except for the AUT Centre for Refugee Education. There is no information on the AUT website or printed documentation for refugee students to guide them to access AUT support services. In contrast, by searching the websites of the University of

Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, I found these institutions had website links for refugee-background students guiding them through a step-by-step process to seek support to be successful. This aspect of the findings supports the notion that there is an absence of targeted support for refugees at AUT. There is also no targeted support from New Zealand's Ministry of Education which disadvantages refugees for university education (O'Rourke, 2011).

In the absence of government support, it is hard to see any impetus for the tertiary providers to put support structures in place to assist refugee background students. Indeed, the research found that there are no data available or reporting undertaken about refugee background students enrolled in university programmes at AUT. So we do not know the number of refugee background students enrolled in AUT, nor do we know anything about their outcomes. There was a plea in 2011 from refugee background students for them to be included in the equity funding provided by the government (Tertiary Education Union [TEU], 2011). However, so far, there has been no provision made. The TEU (2011), in their campaign for equity support for refugee students publicised on World Refugee Day 2011, noted the:

> lack of equity recognition, which makes it impossible for refugee-background students to access any of the special measures afforded to officially-recognized equity groups, such as scholarships, tutoring, mentoring and the provision of cultural liaison staff. (para. 7)

The plea for refugee background students to be recognised as an equity group came in conjunction with the New Zealand government's removal of Refugee Study Grants that helped refugees into tertiary studies.

At the time of writing, in 2019, refugee background students are not part of an equity targeted group in New Zealand, and therefore do not get access to any special grants. There are no data available on the participation or completion of refugee background students, which makes it harder to justify funding and also means that refugee background students are made invisible. However, if New Zealand accepts refugees, their families' numbers will grow over time. If there

is no support for refugee background students to be successful, their families and communities will be left behind.

9.2.5 Summary

In summarising this section on the South Asian population in New Zealand, it is important to emphasise the following points. At the time when authorities first started reporting on the category Asian, it was sufficient because the Asian population in New Zealand was small and not as diverse as today. However, in 2013 (the last Census), 8% of the total population in New Zealand are Asians. The predictions are that their numbers are going to increase. Statistics New Zealand reports that the Asian population in New Zealand is projected to be 1.2 to 1.4 million in 2038 (Dunstan, 2017). Having meaningful and representative data to highlight real concerns and challenges among this group in the population requires a more fine-grained analysis. The category Asian is no longer sufficient, as it does not reflect the diversity of Asia. Therefore, it is important to obtain more detailed data at the country of origin level.

National level data for domestic South Asian students was not available because Ministry of Education and Tertiary Education Commission reporting is done for Asians as a single ethnic group and these agencies do not report on Asians' country of origin to allow data to be aggregated for South Asians (or any other regional grouping). So it is important to have data reported by country of origin so that domestic South Asian students' performance can be monitored made for the tertiary sector in New Zealand.

The findings of this research indicated that AUT student data shows that some students who have identified their country of origin as one of the eight countries in South Asia, identified themselves as Other rather, than Asian as their ethnicity. This means that some domestic South Asian students do not fall into the category Asian. This demonstrates another inadequacy of the category 'Asian'.

The reason for having data with the breakdown by national or country level is that, for the first or second generation after migration, people sometimes identify themselves by their country background rather than associating themselves with ethnicity. This is done based on their family ties and cultural attachments to place rather than ethnicity. The other reason for recording data on a country level is that it will make it possible to aggregate data at a regional level, but if the data are recorded and reported by ethnicity, it will not be possible to re-group them so that, for example, grouping Fijian Indian people becomes problematic. The other advantage of having data as a sub-set, is to describe a level of differentiation that is more accurate than Asian.

In this thesis, this sub-sector level analysis has been attempted. It has proven difficult because of the challenges in obtaining a robust data set. Nonetheless, I hope that the analysis discussed in the following sections 9.3 and 9.4 provides some clear pointers and demonstrates the need for this more fine-grained data collection and analysis at institutional and New Zealand national levels.

9.3 Participation rate of South Asian students

The review of the literature on participation showed that there is an increase in participation rates for minority students at universities internationally. As suggested by some studies (e.g., Chemers et al., 2011; Connor et al., 2004; Frumkin & Koutsoubou, 2013), there is an under-representation of minority students in science-related areas at undergraduate and graduate levels. The finding also concurred with previous studies in New Zealand (Shulruf, Hattie, & Tumen, 2008a; Strathdee, 2013), which have suggested that minority students are disadvantaged because of the high entry criteria.

The number of domestic South Asian students at AUT has increased from 2007 to 2018. The small amount of evidence that it was possible to extract from the student database ARION at

AUT shows there are disparities in participation when domestic South Asian students are compared to other Asians and all students.

9.3.1 Enrolment of South Asian students at AUT

Examining each year's data for bachelor's degree enrolments from 2007 to 2018 indicates that the gaps in participation rates have widened (as documented in Chapter 5). The gaps between the participation rates of South Asian students and other Asian students and all students in the undergraduate programmes have increased from 2007 to 2018. Other Asian students had a similar level or better level of participation in bachelor's degree programmes when compared with all students in the university. This aspect of the findings echoed much of the previous research (Madjar et al., 2010; Posselt, Jaquette, Bielby, & Bastedo, 2012; Strathdee, 2013) showing the barriers of accessing higher education faced by some minority groups.

The difficulty in extracting this data for 2007 to 2018 from AUT should be noted. Some of the difficulty was in separating data from the Asian category to identify South Asians. These complexities arose from the fact that not all students who were South Asians have identified Asian as their ethnicity at the time of enrolment. Therefore, given the limited data available, I have to be cautious in drawing conclusions.

For example, in relation to the available data on enrolments, possible interpretations are that lower participation rates at bachelor's degree level can be attributed to higher participation in lower level programmes and the concentration of enrolments in postgraduate programmes. It may be that, in comparison to other groups, a higher proportion of those South Asian students who enroll in the university may have come with an existing university degree and therefore enrolled at postgraduate level. This aspect of the research findings was not featured in previous research to any great extent (e.g., Posselt et al., 2012).

AUT works hard to increase student enrolments in bachelor's level programmes. Because most of the bachelor's degree programmes are of three to four years' duration, from a revenue-

generating point of view, it is in the interest of the university to enroll and retain students in degree programmes. The bachelor's degree is also a stepping stone to higher levels of study, so it is also in the interest of AUT to retain these students.

In reflecting on the AUT Direction to 2025 of 'having great graduates' as the university's mission, Auckand University of Technology (2018b) Investment Plan 2019-2020 benchmark signalled a need to be:

> Engaging with industry to ensure our graduates have the skills and abilities needed to be exceptional employees and successful entrepreneurs. AUT has arguably the most advanced work-integrated learning programme of all New Zealand universities, with more than 90% of bachelors graduates completing some form of placement or internship during their degree. (p. 21)

The increasing gaps between the participation rates of domestic South Asian students and other Asians and all students in bachelor's degree mean that South Asian students will not get to participate at the same rate as other groups in the placements or internships as mentioned as in AUT's Direction to 2025 mission statement.

9.3.2 Prioritising South Asians as a target group

During document analysis that was carried out as part of this research, I reviewed AUT's annual reports for ten years, the latest published and publicly available being for 2017. AUT's Annual Report states Impact 3 as being "wider participation and success in education" (2017, p. 21) but did not include domestic South Asian students as a target group. The most recent document that is publicly available on AUT's future direction is AUT's Directions to 2025, as mentioned in the previous section. Domestic South Asian students were not reported as a target group in this document. As discussed in my findings in Chapter 5, in its Diversity Strategy and Action Plan AUT fails to identify domestic South Asian students as a target group. This is despite the growth in population and student participation that has been discussed in Chapter 4.

It may be that, in the absence of micro-level reporting, AUT is not aware of the increasing gaps between the participation rates of South Asian students and other Asian students and all students in the undergraduate programmes, as presented in my quantitative data analysis in Chapter 5. The conclusion one must draw from this evidence is that the university needs to break down its data to be able view it at a level where they can manage and report on small minority groups so problems are recognisable as they start to emerge, and can be responded accordingly. For example, without further action, South Asian students will not get to participate in university placements and will not be able to obtain gainful employment at the same rate as other students.

Evidence presented in Chapters 7 and 8 on the challenges students face in particular, and also from what the staff had been saying, is that as well as participation rates, the issue is also about participation in the sense of feeling valued and accepted. It is also important for South Asian students to feel included as a minority group at the institution so that they have a sense of belonging and are part of the institution. In Tinto's (2006) vocabulary, this is known as participation and student engagement. So, based on the quantitative data and the qualitative data from the students' focus group discussions and the staff interviews, it appears that targeted support is the way to address the problems domestic South Asian students are encountering.

Despite the difficulty in obtaining data on domestic South Asian student participation at AUT, the evidence indicates that the university could consider taking positive action on increasing the number of domestic South Asian students so that the proportion of students in bachelor's degree programmes reflects the growth of the South Asian population in the Auckland region.

In addition, as mentioned in the previous section, the research findings have shown that data is not available from TEC at the detailed level of domestic South Asian students for national level comparison; data is only available for the category 'Asian'. It is important to generate

more fine-grained data at a national level to be able to observe the trends in participation of South Asian students as a minority group across New Zealand.

9.3.3 Summary

AUT needs to look at participation rates for minority groups in the population. The evidence in this thesis shows that participation rates for domestic South Asian students in bachelor's degrees as well as all programmes has increased between 2009 to 2018; however, the numbers are relatively small. As discussed in the quantitative data analysis in Chapter 5, the numbers of South Asian students in bachelor's programmes have doubled during the ten years compared to growth in the numbers of all students.

9.4 South Asian students' Bachelor's degree completion

9.4.1 Bachelor's degree completion for all New Zealand universities

The data for eight-year qualification completion for bachelor's degrees in New Zealand universities, as reported by the Ministry of Education and presented in Chapter 5, shows that about 60% of students complete after five years of degree enrolment. For Māori and Pasifika students, Bachelor's degree completion was 20% lower than the average for all students.

Bachelor's degree completion rates for all New Zealand universities are not available for domestic South Asian students. South Asians are merged into the category Asians and reported as a larger group, as discussed above. Therefore, it is not possible to examine Asian minority groups' completion rates. Similarly, data was not available in finer detail to view for domestic South Asian students' eight-year bachelor's degree completion rates across New Zealand universities. This confirms other New Zealand research by Cao and Maloney (2017) who noted "there has been relatively little analysis of [other] ethnic differences [reported] in university outcomes in New Zealand" (p. 567).

9.4.2 Bachelor's degree completion at AUT

Data was not available in sufficient detail to make it possible to view domestic South Asian students' eight-year bachelor's degree completion rates at AUT. Therefore, bachelor's degree completion rates for AUT were calculated by single years; the method that was used to calculate completion rates is explained in Chapter 4.

Longitudinal data for ten years was presented in Chapter 5 shows that for all ten years except for one year, bachelor's degree completion rates for South Asian students were below the university average for all students. Further analysis was done to compare the gaps in completion rates for South Asian students to other Asians. Other Asians also had higher completion rates than South Asian students. According to previous research done in the USA by Kena et al. (2014), Asians had a higher completion rate than the university average for all students; at AUT it was also found that all Asians had a higher completion rate than the university average. However, part of the problem is that people expect all Asians within this broad group to be above the university average. Some of the academic staff in the key informant interviews said that in the absence of data, it is very difficult to know that domestic South Asians have lower level completion rates. The category Asians includes all students who are from the countries of the continent of Asia. So, the question is why is it that one might expect that some minority groups within this broad Asian group might have a different result, ie, not have a higher completion rate than the average or not have a higher completion rate than the Asian average. The available data does not tell us anything about the spread within the different groups of Asian peoples. What I have done in this thesis is to take one group, South Asian, to open up this category encompassing all Asians to show that while clearly, a substantial number are performing at very high levels because the average is higher within this category Asian, South Asian as a group is not performing at the same levels as all Asians or, indeed, at university average level. This is observed for most years in the data I have presented, where South Asian students' completion rates are below average (as discussed in

Chapter 5). This has not been demonstrated previously at AUT or elsewhere in New Zealand. I am also not aware of any other research that has demonstrated this internationally for institutions in the English-speaking countries. This is the first time the student performance of South Asian students has been examined.

9.4.3 Future data collection strategy

More robust data collection would be necessary to establish the gaps between the qualification completion rates of domestic South Asian students and other student groups. But these results on completions would only be seen after three or four years of data collection. Even if the data collection starts in 2020, beginning with enrolment data, those students will not begin to graduate until 2023 and 2024. This is data for one single cohort of students, so there is an extremely long lead-in time to obtaining a longitudinal data set. In order to see the trends in completion rates it would take a decade. A future data collection strategy is needed, but we cannot wait for another ten years to see trends and then take action; that would mean that ten years' worth of students will have gone through New Zealand universities who would have benefitted from targeted support if it had been available. Therefore, while I believe the universities must look to collect data for high quality information, I also believe that targeted interventions need to begin now, not in ten years.

9.4.4 Summary

Completion is an end point, and discussion of this topic is a data-driven discussion. It takes us back to the motivation to collect data and make a sub sector level analysis. There is no data available at a country of origin level to compare completion rates for domestic South Asian students with others. The Ministry of Education reports on eight-year qualification completion rates, but they are reported for Asians as a whole. In the absence of data at the country level, it is difficult to draw any conclusions.

Therefore, it is important for AUT to report at a much more detailed level of analysis rather than putting all Asians into one category. Similarly, the Ministry of Education needs sub sector level in ethnicity for reporting on domestic student completion. With more detailed data, it will be possible to observe trends in domestic South Asian students' completion rates.

Tthe two preceding sections discussed the issues that were identified by the analysis of quantitative data on student participation and completion were discussed. In the next section, section 9.5, I consider the findings that emerged from the analysis of key informant interviews and student focus groups in regard to four academic and academic support issues, and in the subsequent section, section 9.6, I discuss three institutional issues.

9.5 Academic and academic support issues

In this section, the qualitative findings of the research which highlight the need for academic support for domestic South Asian students from both university Schools and Student Support services are discussed. The issues discussed in this section are 1) language issues; 2) academic skills issues; 3) need for more coherent student support systems; and 4) need for targeted South Asian peer mentoring.

9.5.1 Language issues

Some of the academic difficulties experienced by domestic South Asian students were attributed to language related issues. Different aspects of language related issues were raised by both students and staff, from clarity of speech to use of unfamiliar academic vocabulary.

Findings from interviews with the academic and non-academic staff of AUT in this research revealed that it is essential to have language support for domestic South Asian students as part of broader academic support. Although some students can be articulate in English, it is often a particular form of colloquial English. The academic staff view has been that students' English was adequate for them to take up tertiary level study. However, some staff had a different

view as they found that students' understanding of everyday English was not a sufficient requirement for minority students to be successful when English is their second language.

Interestingly, a similar observation arose from the students' perspective. The research findings from students' focus groups revealed that it is important for academic staff to have good proficiency in the English language. Students complained about teachers having difficulty in the delivery of the lectures because of their accent or command of the English language; also the lecturing speed of lecturers made it hard to follow the lectures. This draws attention to some previous research that was published showing that teachers having a good command of language and good teaching skills helps the students in learning the language, such as a study conducted in Vietnam by Van Canh and Renandya (2017) where good role model teachers helped students to improve their use of language. Thus students who may struggle with academic English need high quality teaching; however, if both student and staff struggle to communicate clearly in English, the students will not improve their academic English skills. Programme leaders need to consider this when allocating teaching staff, especially to first-year papers.

Following on from their concerns about the language proficiency of students, staff interviewed in this study raised the importance of having language support for students. This aspect of the findings also resonated with the point made in the previous paragraph that suggested that it is important to have lecturers with a good command of English and skills in the delivery of their classes; however, to create an atmosphere where students can learn language skills, Savignon (2018) reported academic staff has having suggested the benefit of having a well-resourced language learning centre.

This research findings also indicated a general awareness of students' inability to follow lecture room instructions. Research by Hung (2015) on flipped teaching that transforms classroom learning onto a digital technology platform may indicate another good solution to the

challenges South Asian students reported. There will be advantages for minority students who use English as a second language when a lecture or other material is on a digital online platform since students can play and replay the material until they can understand the content and follow the lecture, unlike what is possible in a typical 'live' classroom situation.

The clarity of speech and use of academic language have been highlighted as important issues by students. Some of these issues are about performance of academic work by students, and some of it relates to the awareness or training that teaching staff have received around working in a diverse classroom or diverse institution. This connects with the claim that "Academic English is never anyone's mother tongue" (Huang, 2013, p. 17) and means that if, in a globalised world, we have lecturers and students from non-English speaking backgrounds who are learning and teaching in an English-medium institution, there are associated issues to manage (Huang, 2013). The experiences of students and staff, as discussed earlier in the section, bring them all together in the context of a globalised world, so the concept of a globalised university where communities of students and academics from all over the world meet, is undoubtedly a very positive concept, but there are practical issues for minority students in such an institution.

Academic staff say that students have language problems and students are saying academic staff have language problems; this may be something particular to AUT as a new university recruiting heavily from overseas. But if the institution is addressing this challenge with only a handful of learning advisors and inadequate resources, the struggle of minority groups does not come as a surprise.

My findings are in agreement with the literature on the use of language discussed in section 2.9. The literature suggests that additional language support should be provided to most effectively address the situation.

9.5.2 Academic skills issues

Students who participated in this study found referencing and paraphrasing extremely challenging. It is important for the student to know how to place others' work into their own and acknowledge those sources. As suggested by previous studies (Cumming et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2018; Ministry of Social Development, July 2008), without students possessing this knowhow, there is a danger of their work being found to be plagiarised and the student being penalised. The research findings presented in this thesis concurred with the research reported by Cumming et al. (2016), who found that it is a challenge for students to write academically.

In particular, it is critical for students at AUT to familiarise themselves with the APA referencing system. The research findings reported that there are three different avenues where AUT students can access assistance in referencing and paraphrasing: firstly, attending library workshops on referencing; secondly, seeking help from SLAs; and finally, seeking assistance from peer mentors. The SLA and peer mentor appointments can be made through an online booking system.For library workshops, students need to register using the AUT Library booking system. However, there are three different booking systems all operating differently, which is creating a barrier to students to accessing the services. The students are lost in the process of seeking help, and the bureaucratic nature and complexity of booking systems prevent students from using the system or, more importantly, from obtaining the assistance they need.

Students in the focus groups reported that making online bookings with SLAs was complex. Students have to join long queues to get a booking with SLA, and one of the students said that "the first available slot with a Learning Advisor was after the deadline of my assignment." Students were dissatisfied with the APA referencing workshops offered by the library. As discussed in Chapter 8, some students perceived that the tutors in the workshops lacked teaching experience because they were reading directly from PowerPoint presentation slides. Students found that it was better to access the slides and go through them by themselves

rather than attending workshops. The majority of the students in the focus groups also wanted to have hands-on practice sessions during the workshop so that they could bring their work and practice. In the absence of time to practice their work in the library workshops, students found that the peer mentors as a source of academic skills training was invaluable.

These issues of APA referencing and SLA booking complexities are experienced by all students and not just students who are members of minority groups , but since South Asian students have identified these issues, this makes them more complex. Perhaps this also points to a South Asian Centre being needed, as culturally appropriate services can best assist this group, as is the case for Māori, Pasifika and Chinese.

The demand for one-to-one and class tuition in developing academic study skills such as referencing or paraphrasing can be addressed by additional resourcing, to permit running enough workshops, and having sufficient support staff to meet demand. It is also important for those who develop these workshops to have an awareness of the diversity in the classroom, to know how to work with diverse students and allow extra time for students to have hands-on practice sessions at the end of workshops. Otherwise, the lack of adequate support in other service areas creates additional demand from students for peer mentors to provide academic skills support.

Linking my analysis to the theoretical literature on inclusive education in section 3.3.1 there is a danger of AUT's good intentions on generic student services leading to a model which actually privileges the dominant majority. As it is mentioned in the literature "giving due recognition to students' cultural practices and valuing their diversity, there can be a positive outcome for all learners (Waitoller, 2010)."

9.5.3 Need for more coherent student support systems

In general terms, in relation to student support, the research finding from staff interviews showed that some academic staff would go to any lengths to help students and support them.

These staff have an open-door policy, whereby students can come and see them anytime. On the other hand, some academic staff make a clear distinction between academic support and pastoral support, and prefer to leave pastoral care to people they regard as 'experts' in such matters.

Academic staff need sufficient office contact hours and must communicate them to students, along with information about their preferred method of contact. If lecturers want to leave some services to other support services, it should be communicated clearly, and students must know what is available to them and from whom. Some academic staff do not know what is available as extra support, illustrating that they are out of touch with support services outside their own schools. This becomes a problem for students, especially when they feel they are already in a crisis situation.

Interviews with key informants suggested that there were serious relational problems between schools and student support services at AUT, and some academic staff complained about the services that were offered outside the schools. This aspect of the findings raises concerns about the impact of such problems on the level of student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004) that might, therefore, impact on student success. Some academic staff were not happy with the recently introduced model of student support, a one-stop shop model (explained in Chapter 1, section 1.3.5), and felt the former system was working well (as shown in Chapter 1, section 1.3.3). Overall, academic staff in this study were not clear about the activities and services that were organised by the Student Services Division and the Library to support students.

Interestingly, findings from students in the focus groups showed students were also concerned about the relationship between schools and student support services. Lecturers were not certain that the SLAs could assist students in their written work as they believed SLAs lacked subject-specific knowledge. However, there seemed to be a lack of clarity among lecturers on

exactly what the role of SLAs was intended to be; for example, one participant seemed unaware of the mathematician on the SLA team who could assist students with statistical knowledge. Furthermore, depending on the particular school involved, there may be no working relationship between the SLAs and academic staff; sometimes, students from these schools are placed in an ambiguous position by receiving conflicting messages from lecturers and SLAs and end up confused or may even find themselves penalised in their assignment grades. Through these experiences, students noticed the breakdown in the relationship between student support and schools, especially with regard to the clarity of service access. This issue should not be transferred to students but dealt with professionally through staff avenues.

These are elements of a larger issue here too, around academic staff and non-academic staff working successfully with students of diverse backgrounds. The students' point of view is that there is no targeted support for South Asian students. One way to address this could be for AUT to put more resourcing into the general support services and make it more widely and easily accessible.

It is also important to evaluate student services to ensure the level of user satisfaction. An American study carried out in Illinois by Boyce (2015), found that 'secret shopping' or 'mystery shopping' is an important non-obtrusive method to asses user experience. Secret shopping is used by libraries around the world to obtain information about their level of service. New Zealand public libraries also found that mystery shopping is a valuable tool to evaluate their level of customer service (Calvert, 2005). AUT could use secret shopping to evaluate student support services, to ensure that it adds value to the student experience during their undergraduate study.

9.5.4 Need for targeted South Asian peer mentoring

The students in the focus groups in this study commented that peer mentoring is a very successful method of delivering academic assistance. The findings of interviews with staff also largely endorsed peer mentoring as a successful method of academic support. As discussed in Chapter 2, Collings et al. (2014) found that the peer mentoring programmes of two UK universities helped students in the stressful transition from secondary school to university and highlighted the importance of making friends when coming into a new institution since it is a huge stepping stone for most students. Peer mentoring is particularly crucial during the first year of university studies. The findings of this study also align with Egege and Kutieleh (2015); Gershenfeld (2014) who endorsed peer mentoring as a good intervention tool for the support of student persistence in terms of Tinto (1975) theory of student integration. A review of equity initiatives in Australia (discussed in Chapter 2) also endorsed mentoring as a successful academic support tool for minority students.

It is important to develop peer mentors professionally by methods of ongoing learning. Some of the academic staff in this study highlighted the importance of peer mentors being managed by their school. First-time mentors need to be oriented and trained so that they are aware of the challenges within the mentoring process.

Mentorship has benefits for both mentors and mentees. It contributes to a culture of success and builds awareness of resources. It provides students with a way of acclimatising to the university environment and building relationships, and also provides them with academic support in their studies. Mentorship also helps to improve self-confidence, as good mentors help to instill confidence in their mentee and to improve their interpersonal communication. Research findings from students in the focus groups showed they felt that mentoring by a student of similar ethnicity to the mentee increases the chances of success. This was

consistent with Shotton et al. (2007), who endorsed the notion that students of the same ethnicity can provide the best peer mentoring.

In summary, then, students and staff in this study have revealed the benefits of peer mentoring, and the research discussed in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 also endorsed peer mentoring as a helpful strategy in supporting students to be successful. The findings presented in this thesis suggest that students of the same ethnicity can provide the best peer mentoring. The Learning Communities team, which runs the academic peer mentor programme at AUT, have listed a limited number of peer mentors on their web page. In recruiting mentors, they generally look for straight-A grades, high achieving students recommended by schools or students who volunteer for the role. These peer mentors get paid, generally for four hours work per week in the semester. AUT could encourage more students to be mentors so that a larger team of mentors from a much wider spread of ethnic backgrounds can support AUT's diverse student body; however, this development needs financial commitment from senior management.

9.6 Institutional issues

Following on from the previous section which highlighted the need for academic support for domestic South Asian students to be successful, the present section will address three broader institutional issues: silencing; AUT's strategy and policy for South Asian students; and financial support and being accepted as part of the wider student body.

9.6.1 Silencing

The research findings on silence among domestic South Asian students aligns with Noelle-Neumann (1993) theory of the spiral of silence, which describes situations which arise where one opinion reflects the interest of the majority, and the minority has a different viewpoint. Majority interests threaten the minority's viewpoint and the fear of isolation or humiliation

keeps the minority in deep silence (Moy & Scheufele, 2000; Shulman & Levine, 2012). Silence could be observed in different situations in this study, as I want to illustrate in this section.

The absence of reporting on South Asian students in the documents reviewed in Chapter 6 was an interesting finding that showed the dominance of the majority view on minority students. As discussed in the document analysis, in one of the issues in the students' magazine, *Debate*, the editor addressed the growing Asian community and raised concerns about the magazine's coverage of Asian issues. The editor also called for more representation of Asian voices in following issues of *Debate* but, in the subsequent issues, there was hardly any mention of Asians at all. This phenomenon aligns with the theory of silence where the dominant view is visible and represented in a variety of documents, while the minority perspective is unnoticed. This finding also concurs with Fung and Scheufele (2014), who wrote that "minority views are perceived as increasingly weak, and their supporters eventually fall silent, establishing the majority view as a social norm" (p. 134).

The spiral of silence exacerbates this cultural reluctance to speak out and causes minority students to feel ignored. Students experience their invisibility and continue to remain silent. South Asian students are a growing cohort of students in AUT, and the academic needs documented in this thesis should be addressed by the university. Therefore the university needs to create an inclusive environment that makes domestic South Asian students feel welcomed, seeks their views, hears their concerns, recognises their needs, and provides them with the support they need to achieve their academic potential.

9.6.2 Student and staff reactions

One of the difficulties in this study was in getting South Asian staff to participate in the key informant interviews. As discussed in Chapter 4, after repeated attempts to recruit were unsuccessful, finally I had to make a variation in the research design to be able to include staff who were teaching domestic South Asian students. The findings resonated with previous

research (e.g., F. Bowen & Blackmon, 2003), which also had shown that lecturers who are from minority ethnic backgrounds are marginalised, and are reluctant to speak out. There was considerable difficulty in recruiting partcipants to the study. Exorbitant costs, and refusal to advertise in some web areas to recruit partcipants, and not knowing the most appropriate place to advertise, were all obstacles to recruitment. It would be beneficial for researchers if the university creates a platform on which research being conducted, and people seeking partcipants, could be displayed.

The data presented in this thesis showed that South Asian students' participation and completion rates at AUT were lower than for all students on average. While the university has not addressed this, it is a concern because domestic South Asians are a growing part of the Auckland population and the university's student community. As part of their concerns about domestic South Asian students' academic performance, both student and staff participants in this study discussed the need for additional academic support for domestic South Asian students. However, domestic South Asian students are not a target group, so they do not get any of the additional Ministry of Education equity funding discussed in Chapter 6. As I described in Chapter 1, section 1.2.1, culturally, South Asian people are brought up to be obedient and not to speak unless they are invited to do so. The findings of a study done by Shariff (2009) about the fastest growing immigrant population in Canada endorses that, "South Asian culture is one in which family obligation and loyalty, as well as self-sacrifice and obedience toward one's elders, are paramount" (p. 35). So, despite facing the issues documented in this thesis, these students remain silent.

9.6.3 University's strategy and policy in relation to South Asian students

By reviewing policies for funding university education for equity groups in New Zealand, this research has identified that there is no policy or funding from the Ministry of Education for South Asian students. As discussed in Chapter 1, TEC's Priority 3 provides a policy statement

that encompasses all students. However, the funding of equity groups that are covered by the Ministry of Education (discussed in Chapter 6) is limited to Māori, Pasifika, and students with disabilities. This means that the AUT's schools do not receive additional funding to provide the targeted academic support that students require to be successful. Some of the financial issues identified in Chapter 8 by domestic South Asian students may be common to all students. But, as a minority group, domestic South Asian students remain invisible and silent as discussed above.

Since the Ministry of Education has identified Māori and Pasifika as equity groups and domestic South Asians do not get extra funding for universities to provide additional support, schools do not provide additional support services. The university needs to have a strategy to deal with the funding gap so that the school are able to provide services to domestic south Asian students. Currently, there is funding for a Chinese Centre, since Chinese are not an equity group identified by the Ministry of Education; therefore, the university has demonstrated that it is possible to make arrangements to support other minority groups.

9.6.4 Financial support and being accommodated as part of the wider student body

Issues of funding involve funding for services by AUT and funding for students for financial security. The social and financial cost to South Asian students, such as repeating papers and exiting without completion, is substantial. The financial debt that South Asian students take on for a three-year bachelor's degree at AUT is NZ$19,740 (Auckand University of Technology, 2019b). Key informant interviews in my study raised major concerns over the financial stress that students go through during their time at university. The financial sacrifices made by some minority students were detailed by academic staff (as discussed in Chapter 7). These ranged from sleeping in parks to sharing books, the challenges faced by their families in supporting them financially, and the impact on their personal lives that follows from this. Another important finding that emerged from key informant interviews was that minority students

were combining full-time work with full-time study, a practice that does not allow them time to study properly. Overall, it was evident from the data in Chapter 8 that domestic South Asian students experienced difficulties in juggling personal and family responsibilities and meeting university deadlines. As a result, as discussed in Chapter 5, students were not coping and not completing their programmes; if this continues, they will exit the university. Therefore, the university needs to provide financial assistance, beyond the general university services, so that domestic South Asian students can apply for it in times of hardship; and the university could also have designated scholarship to support them in their university studies.

Findings from key informant interviews with the staff (discussed in Chapter 7) suggested that domestic South Asian students need additional academic support to be successful. This finding also fits with the literature on additional support for minority students discussed in Chapter 2. A general observation that emerged from Chapter 8 is that AUT has Māori Student Support, Pasifika Student Support, and an AUT Chinese Centre where students can go for specialised support. These units have people of the particular ethnic background who provide support as mentors, and a dedicated team of staff from that ethnic background as well. The general AUT peer mentoring service available to all students as part of the student support services requires the student to make an online appointment, and the student gets paired up with a mentor depending on availability, not ethnicity. This service is also includes pastoral support from the same ethnic/cultural background, not just academic support: it is a more wrap-around service. Working consistently with people of their own ethnicity as peer mentors, would make it easier for students to communicate with their mentor, and better academic and non-academic outcomes are likely to be achieved.

Providing any additional support, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, requires the university to commit funding. The evidence obtained from the small sample in this study suggests that domestic South Asian students are vulnerable to the vagaries of a fragmented institutional

infrastructure and inadequate resourcing. A commitment by senior management to the proper resourcing of support services therefore appears to be a key first step in addressing the concerns raised in this thesis.

9.6.6 Cost Benefit Analysis: retention v. new enrolments

In early 2019, I sent out OIA inquiries to the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, The Treasury, Universities New Zealand, Victoria University of Wellington and Auckland University of Technology. The request was to find out if they had information on cost benefit study of student retention. All replies were similar for example Treasury replied "They do not hold information within scope of your request. Accordingly, I decline your request for information under 18(e)" and AUT replied "AUT does not undertake cost benefit analysis of attracting versus retaining students". There was no evidence that the New Zealand tertiary sector had conducted a CBA on retaining students compared with new recruitment, such as the studies in the US. Of course the university will claim it does not have the resources that would support better investment in South Asian students.

If we are guided by the CBA work conducted in the US, and if AUT were to conduct some simple cost comparisions, it is highly probable that the result would show that investment in retention was far better value for money that investment in recruitment of new students. Since recruitment is highly commercially competitive, large public affairs budgets go unchallenged. Failure to conduct this CBA approach is a derogation of duty in a government agency, a university, whose core business is evidence and rigorous analysis.

9.6.5 Summary

At AUT, South Asians are subsumed as part of the group of Asian students. Even Asian students as a broader category are being marginalised, as evidenced by the attention given in one issue of the Debate magazine and the silence observed in many other places. In every other issue of

Debate magazine or the Insight magazine and the other official documents of the institution, the dominant view is visible, and the minority perspective is just not there.

There are two things to note from the evidence presented here about the visibility of South Asian students. The first is about the silencing of Asian voices; among them are South Asian voices, which are also silenced. The second issue is the majority view on minority students as being 'just' minorities, and that it is easier to put them all into one category. AUT cannot do that for Māori because they are the tangata whenua, the indigenous people, and will not tolerate such an approach; similarly Pasifika will not tolerate being treated in that way. Furthermore, the university receives additional funding for Māori and Pasifika. But everybody else who is regarded as a minority is put into one basket that is Asians or another basket called Others. That, apparently, is the majority view of minority students. However, in statistical terms South Asians are invisible, so the existence of this minority is kept hidden, and the voices of this minority, actually the voices of the larger South Asian community, are silent. It appears that institutional actors are not aware of what is happening, and if they continue on the basis that nothing is happening it leads to marginalisation and silencing. The evidence in this research shows that some thing is happening. Lack of interest or indifference displayed by institutional actors may lead one to define the situation as a restriction of rights and to intervene, to make positive change happen. It would be beneficial if the institution were to provide services by resourcing properly the people who provide professional development, by raising awareness of the role that they play, by displaying the ability to value every individual they encounter and being welcoming.

Even if staff have to give a negative answer to an individual, it should be done more professionally. Student focus group discussions suggested that the overall impression received by South Asian students from a number of situations means they feel less than welcome in a

variety of ways, instead of feeling valued and welcomed by the people providing services in AUT. These issues came up number of times in group discussions.

9.7 Chapter summary

Based on the findings obtained in my research, in this chapter, I have presented my interpretation that domestic South Asian students are not recognised as a minority group of students at AUT. This cannot be due to lack of knowledge in senior management at the university, so I can only conclude that there is a degree of indifference towards certain minorities at AUT. TEC requires AUT to target additional support to equity groups, namely Māori, Pasifika, and students with disabilities. However, AUT also has set up infrastructure to provide targeted support to Chinese, who are not part of an equity group identified by TEC.

The question which now arises is where this indifference leads. For domestic minority students, it can lead to struggling in their studies and, for some, failing and exiting, and ultimately, this brings us back to the point of my thesis. The way that AUT is set up, the way it functions, and the assumptions and attitudes that those in the senior management hold, implicitly take the university in a certain direction. That is the direction that they understand, which is dominated by Pākehā culture and tradition. It would be beneficial if AUT, as an institution, reflects on its own actions. It is those actions that determine who and what has visibility, and who and what is invisible; who and what is heard, and who and what is silenced.

The findings of this thesis can inform AUT's senior leadership based on a number of issues these findings raise. They may not have known, and they may want to know about invisible and silenced minorities. AUT's corporate documents suggest that a lot of work goes into planning and that there is an extensive process of anticipating the future and developing methods to mitigate the effects of future events and shocks to the university. One present and future event worthy of these planners' attention is the changing demographic profile of the student body. In Chapter 6 of this thesis, it is documented that the numbers of South Asian

people in Auckland have been growing during the recent inter-census periods. Similarly, data on participation shows that, while the numbers are small, domestic South Asian student numbers are growing.

Findings also point towards the outcome of this situation. The mis-representation or non-representation of domestic South Asian students both socially and academically means that some students may feel excluded and withdrawn. This disengagement can lead to students failing and exiting from the university, as described in the student engagement theory of Tinto (2017). Completion data presented in this thesis shows that there are gaps in completion between domestic South Asians and the all-student university average.

This situation can be improved by implementing targeted interventions and support, as discussed earlier. This could include providing South Asian peer mentors; setting up a South Asian Centre (along the lines of AUT's Chinese Centre) to support South Asian students; putting more emphasis on professional development for academic staff teaching diverse students; and on professional development for non-academic staff working with a diverse community of students. These actions should not merely be documented in the form of policy but put into practice. Such support could be funded by a budget redistribution to invest in retention, making savings on recruitment. It is also important to have more diverse representation on the university council, other boards and committees; and a student diversity-centred focus.

If AUT could change these things around, the benefits would be considerable. As one academic staff member said, the best form of marketing is successful graduates who have great experiences. It has got to be a reality – not just something seen on billboards or on the back of buses. AUT had always advertised that it wants to be the university of choice for Māori, but it can be the university of choice for all students. There is no reason why it cannot be both of these things.

Growing numbers of South Asian students during the inter-census periods, and data on university participation, show that domestic South Asian student numbers are growing, but completion data shows that there are gaps between the performance of these students and others. If the management is planning and future proofing the university (the documents suggests it is) they need to be looking at the demographics of the region that is served. Future proofing of the university in the context of this thesis would mean serving the South Asian population effectively. The present situation is that this population is not properly served; the outcome is the students are becoming silenced and withdrawn, and as indicated by the student engagement theory of Tinto (1982), a lack of engagement leads to students failing and exiting the university.

In the final chapter, I reflect on my methodology, then I offer my recommendations based on the findings. I also highlight suggestions for future studies and conclude the chapter with a reflection on my research journey.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

The main question that was set out in this research was: 'What measures have been successful in improving outcomes for undergraduate domestic South Asian students at AUT?'

To address the question, in Chapters 2-4, I have examined the literature relating to minority students' success in higher/tertiary education and also described the methodology that I used to carry out the research. In Chapters 5-6, I reported a quantitative analysis of secondary data and reviewed all relevant documents. In Chapters 7-8, staff from AUT reflected on their own experiences in supporting minority student success at AUT and I also reported on the experiences of the stakeholders, namely domestic South Asian students who participated in the focus group discussions. In Chapter 9, I presented a discussion of the main research findings.

I begin this chapter addressing the strengths and limitations of the design of this research. Then I summarise the main findings that emerged from the research and their significance. I set out my recommendations for future research and recommendations for stakeholders, and conclude the thesis by reflecting on my research process.

10.1 Strengths and limitations of the research design

I have discussed the detailed design and implementation of my study in Chapter 4 of this thesis. In relation to the methods I have used to carry out this research, it is important to reflect on the strengths and limitations of the research, so that other researchers who wish to carry out similar research may, where necessary and where possible, improve upon the methods used here. The main strength of my methodological choice is in using a single case study, using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. That allowed me to go indepth into the case by identifying longitudinal data trends and triangulating this information with staff and students' own voices and also by examining documentation.

The focus group method was a valuable method of data collection that helped students to open up and share their views more freely with their own voices. However, one of the limitations was the small size of the focus groups. To give a good representation of the experiences and views of domestic students from the different countries of South Asia, more focus groups with representatives of all South Asian countries would improve the rigour of the findings. It would also allow a more detailed analysis of the students' views, given that their voices were so important to the research. Six of the eight countries in South Asia are also countries where refugees who have settled in New Zealand originate from, and it would be valuable to explore refugees' experiences and views because their experiences will be different from those who have migrated by different means (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

The sample size for the key informant interviews was adequate for this qualitative part of the study. However, it would have been better if there were more members of the staff interviewed who were from South Asian countries. A balanced group of staff that represents the countries in South Asia would add more diversity to the research. As discussed in Chapter 9, one of the reasons that South Asian staff declined to participate may have been that they did not want to speak out, so it may be that if they were offered an anonymous online survey, they may feel more free to respond and to give their opinions. I only knew of this concern because of my own personal familiarity with certain individuals who did not wish to participate.

Similarly, another limitation relates to the research being a single case study because it does not make a comparison with another university in New Zealand. It would be useful to replicate this research at another university so that parallel findings can be drawn, and comparisons made.

Finally, as has been discussed at length in the thesis, the major difficulty encountered in this research was obtaining secondary data on the participation and completion rates of South

Asian students from AUT and the Ministry of Education, and more specific South Asian data from Immigration New Zealand and from Statistics New Zealand.

Despite these limitations, this research has addressed the issues around domestic South Asian student participation and completion at AUT. The next section will outline the findings and the significance of this research.

10.2 Main outcomes of this research

The thesis has shown the importance of recognising South Asian people as a minority group and not integrated into the main category Asian. It has also shown that while Asians had a high participation and completion rate in bachelor's degree programmes at AUT, students' participation and completion rates continue to show gaps between domestic South Asian students and all-student university averages.

Another major problem that was identified in this research is the dysfunctional relationship/ interaction between schools and the other services that are provided for students outside the schools.

The marginalisation and exclusion of South Asian students is a main finding of this thesis. A dimension of this marginalisation is the failure of AUT to collect more detailed data and the apparent indifference to the complexity of the Asian student group this appears to represent. Dealing with student data collection at a more detailed and disaggregated level would mean that a more fine-grained analysis on participation and completion rates, etc., would be possible. This in turn, would permit a more nuanced response from the university to the needs of various minorities currently hidden in large heterogenous categories like Asian and 'Other'.

The thesis reveals the need to address the circumstances of domestic South Asian students in a more proactive way. The academic staff need more professional development to be able to effectively teach students from diverse backgrounds. Setting up a centre for South Asian

students, like the Chinese Centre which already operates at AUT, would make it possible to provide much more effective academic and non-academic support for a significant yet marginalised section of the student population.

Support from SLAs and peer mentors of South Asian backgrounds, who understand South Asian students' cultural needs, could be a further part of this strategy. There were some reservations raised about informal study groups by academic staff in the key informants interviews stating that if the study groups are not properly managed it can be a bad influence on students. Peer mentor programmes undoubtedly need good oversight, but the knowledge of how to do this already exists in the Learning Communities team at AUT. Boosting funding efforts to recruit more diverse peer mentors as part of the Learning Communities team would also help to to increase the numbers of students of different ethnic groups as peer mentors.

The study also has showed that the student participants in focus group were expressing concerns about feelings of being excluded while some of the academic staff in key informant interviews talked about what could be done to be more inclusive. The spiral of silence theory used in this thesis is accurately aligned to the feelings of exclusion and lack of inclusion experienced by domestic South Asian students. In order for the students' needs to be addressed, there could be more done to include them in funding rounds, support structures and the provision of student financial assistance such as scholarships and hardship funds. This would make domestic South Asian students to be more and help them to be successful and improve their outcomes in AUT.

As an incidental part of this research on educational policy and practice in New Zealand, this thesis has been able consider the experiences of refugee background students. The refugee background student experience is an area which could be taken much more seriously by the university and the tertiary sector more generally.

10.3 Significance of the research

This research has provided a study of a key group of ethnic minority students that AUT has not prioritised as an emerging group in the domestic student population. It has identified the gaps in reporting on domestic South Asian students at AUT and nationally. Additionally, document analysis has shown the lack of representation of domestic South Asian students at AUT and the absence of a specific strategy and policy in relation to this growing student group. Also, as a case study, this research has provided an opportunity for staff and domestic South Asian students of AUT to share their reflections on their experiences of domestic South Asian students in bachelor's degree programmes at AUT. As a result, the study addresses a gap in the literature by identifying South Asian student experiences at a specific New Zealand university.

These research findings are indicative but not conclusive because, being a single case study, it is not possible to make any comparison with other institutions, nor any wider generalisations. This research nevertheless has made a significant contribution to enriching the understanding of the domestic South Asian students' experiences at AUT.

As I was concluding work on my thesis a terrible event happened in New Zealand and I want to introduce this into my thesis, even though it is very recent, because it is incredibly significant. I am referring to the deadly terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, which took place on March 15, 2019. The comments that were made after the mosque attack, by Muslim women's groups, refugee groups and scholars, held a mirror up to what my participants were telling me. The remarks were very consistent across a number of sources and spoke to the experiences recounted by my participants.

In the aftermath of the attacks, an interview was given by Guled Mire, speaker, community activist and writer about New Zealand refugees communities. Speaking to the One News host

in on Television New Zealand's Breakfast Programme, he shared his own experiences of facing racism on a daily basis:

> I think it's time that we stop living in denial about the very form of racism that has existed in this country for such a long time, it's nothing new to us. I hope from here onwards we can start to recognise this. … I would like to see it actually come out of the mouths of people that are in positions of power because right now we need people to talk about it for what it is. (One News Now, 2019).

The extent of the everyday racism Guld Mire was referring to was revealed in research conducted by Yogeeswaran et al. (2019) to identify who people consider to be a New Zealander, and to analyse people's thoughts about national identity and attitudes towards Muslims and diversity. It was reported that in the survey carried out in 2015, 35% of the participants stated that to be a true New Zealander one has to have European or Māori ancestry. This result was not surprising as 80.3% of the study sample were New Zealand Europeans.

Wetherell (2019) from the University of Auckland agreed "as a Pākehā person" that the increase in this sort of hatred is a result of "our complicity, our silences, failures and histories of entitlement, the things we haven't done" (p. 6).

In a National Remembrance Service in Christchurch following the mosque attack, Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens) performed a song that included the following lyrics: "Now I've been crying lately, Thinkin' about the world as it is. Why must we go on hating, Why can't we live in bliss?" (Stuff, 2019, p. para. 1). These words, echoing in New Zealand society, remind me of the neglect of minority communities within the larger community and the need to have them included in society. Fergusen (2019) interviewed Anjun Rahman, a spokesperson for the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand, who called for a start to the difficult conversations about what minority groups within the country have been facing and also to have a national

strategy of inclusion that has targeted services for the support of minority communities like those that exist for other equity groups that are already identified and supported by the New Zealand Government. Guled Mire and Anjum Rahman have explained well how the daily experience of – and fear of – racism against Muslim people which existed before the attacks just did not seemed to be believed outside the Muslim community. It was only after the attack that Pākehā people were shocked into realising that racism and white supremacism is widespread in New Zealand, and a daily fact of life for all minority communities. And, as in the wider society, so it is true in tertiary educational institutions also: frank discussion about the realities faced by minorities, inclusiveness and support are essential responses to the problems that currently exist.

10.4 Recommendations for future research

As a single case study, this research has established a solid foundation of knowledge on the experiences of domestic South Asian students enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes at AUT. It has contributed to theory and practice and has, therefore, opened opportunities up for future research. First, it is recommended that further studies be carried out to understand domestic South Asian student experiences. Future qualitative research could consider having more student focus groups with the representation of domestic students from all the various countries of South Asia. Including the experiences of refugee background domestic South Asian students would be an important additional avenue along which to extend this research. Future research may also consider involving staff from South Asian backgrounds (who were identified in this research but did not want to participate), even if it were only through an online survey component.

Second, it is important that future research aligns with the practices of the present research. This research indicated the complexity of defining domestic South Asian students. It is important for further research to be consistent with the definition used for domestic South

Asian students in this study. For this research it was difficult to obtain secondary data on domestic South Asian student participation and successful completion. Therefore, in the absence of more detailed data sets, it would be critical to disaggregate the data using the same methods identified in this research.

Finally, multiple case studies involving other universities could provide a broader cross-institutional comparison of the findings on this research topic which have been reported in this thesis.

10.5 Recommendations for practice

Based on the findings of this study, I would like to make recommendations that could enhance domestic South Asian students' experiences in universities in New Zealand. These recommendations are not only for universities: they would be applicable for planning by the Ministry of Education since some of the broad educational policies of the Ministry are drivers of strategies and actions for academic support for domestic South Asian students in individual institutions. These practical recommendations may also apply to other countries also facing challenges in providing higher/tertiary education to domestic minority students.

The recommendations are as follows:

For the institution (AUT):

1. Implement more rigorous and detailed methods of data collection and reporting to be able to view data, for minority groups.
2. Identify gaps in participation and completion rates for different minority groups.
3. Provide additional targeted support for minority students who are not already covered.
4. Establish a South Asian Centre like the Chinese Centre at AUT.

5. Implement affirmative recruiting practice in recruiting academic and allied staff.
6. Academic staff teaching first year degree students to use international examples
7. Carry out a cost/benefit analysis to evaluate the cost of recruiting a student over retaining an existing student.
8. Use a secret process shopping to evaluate and improve the student experience.
9. Have dedicated space on the university website where researchers can adverstise to recruit particpants for research.

For Central Government Agencies

1- Report first year retention rates at a disaggregate level to allow data to be dissected for minority groups.
2- Report and monitor on national level participation and completion rates for different minority groups
3- Provide additional funding for other minority groups beyond the existing equity groups.
4- Carry out a cost benefit analysis to evaluate the cost of recruiting a student over retaining an existing student.
5- Make provision for slow learning or lifelong learning at undergraduate level.

10.6 Final reflections

This thesis is a reflection of my own journey as a domestic South Asian student who has studied at AUT, first as a part-time student and later in my PhD journey. As a South Asian family member (father and husband) who migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2002, I have experienced sharing everyday living with my family, consisting of my wife and three children who have completed their undergraduate degrees at AUT. Each of their stories has helped me relate to and understand the experience of a domestic South Asian student at AUT.

This thesis is also aligned with working at AUT as a domestic South Asian staff member for 13 years. My first job was in the equity area, supporting two of the targeted equity groups of AUT, Māori and Pasifika students, to succeed in their tertiary education. Later, I worked in AUT's Strategy and Planning Division, reporting on student success. In my close working relationship with equity staff, including both academic staff and support staff in the different schools at AUT, I have heard the stories of success and the challenges that staff have shared about their work in supporting minority groups of students at AUT. Later, my role at AUT as Planning Analyst working on student analytics allowed me to work on student data, which opened my eyes to the potential within such information resources. Following on from this awareness came the desire to explore further the minority students' experiences at AUT. This opened up the opportunity for research with my academic and non-academic colleagues in the different schools at AUT. These studies have been presented at conferences and published in journals and have received interesting peer reviews from fellow workers from other parts of the world who are pursuing the same mission. In a globalised, networked world, these researchers were interested in my work and enlightened me considerably.

Yet, with all my experiences of being a minority person myself and having experienced the multiple roles I have described, I did not know how to navigate contemporary society. From this came the desire to understand other people's experiences of being marginalised.

My thesis project began looking at the wide literature on minority students' experiences and their position in their communities. Perhaps this thesis gave me the opportunity to articulate my own position, based on my findings obtained from staff and students in respect of their experiences and the evidence documented here.

A big part of my PhD experience is the realisation of the growth and change that has happened for me as a person. It is not what I have learnt, it is how I have learnt it, the journey and the tenacity it takes and also having learned to think more analytically.

This journey has opened me up as a researcher and has developed me as a person in the process. As a final outcome of this stage of my journey, I hope this research will help in creating recognition and building a better future for domestic South Asian students studying as a marginalised group in Aotearoa New Zealand's universities.

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Appendix A: AUT Ethics Committee Approval

AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

1 December 2017

Marilyn Waring
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Marilyn

Re Ethics Application: **17/319 What measures could be used to improve educational outcomes for domestic undergraduate South Asian students at Auckland University of Technology**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 1 December 2020.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Amend the Information Sheet to include advice of the single gender focus groups.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: arasheed@aut.ac.nz; Jennie Billot

Appendix B: Particpant Information Sheet (Key Informant Interviews)

Participant Information Sheet

Key Informant Interview

Date Information Sheet Produced:

22 August 2017

Project Title

What measures could be used to improve educational outcomes for domestic undergraduate South Asian students at Auckland University of Technology?

An Invitation

Kia Ora/ Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to read this information about my research. My name is Ali Rasheed and I am a Ph.D. student at AUT. My supervisors are Professor Marilyn Waring and Associate Professor Jennie Billot.

What is the purpose of this research?

Please accept this as an invitation to participate in this research. This information sheet is for your perusal and covers relevant information you may need with regards to what will be required for this research. Research is carried out as a part of a Ph.D. study in order to find out how to improve educational outcomes for domestic undergraduate South Asian students. The results of the research will be published in my Ph.D. thesis and other publications. This invitation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the process.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were identified from AUT staff address book on AUT website about your name and position and are invited to participate in this research because you fall into one of the following categories:

1. AUT academic staff, currently teaching students.
2. Non-academic (professional staff) and equity support staff in faculties who are engaged in student support.
3. Student learning advisor who provides additional support to students in their academic journey.
4. Staff from student services who are responsible and discharging duties of student support.
5. Student Mentor

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would like to participate in this research please contact me at the details below. You will also need to complete and sign a consent form:

Contact the researcher, Ali Rasheed, at:

Email: arasheed@aut.ac.nz

Phone: +64 275500111

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw

from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

This research will include an interview. The interview questions are attached. However, the interview is open to follow up questions for further clarification. The interviews will take from forty-five minutes to an hour, and they will take place in premises based on the decision of the researcher and the participant.

What are the discomforts and risks?

No discomforts or risks are anticipated in this research.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of the research include:

It is envisaged that by identifying effective measures taken by initiatives, can be implemented more broadly across minority students to improve student completion rates. While the research outcomes cannot be predicted it is hoped that by identifying these initiatives and the broader implementation minority students such as South Asians will benefit from this. I hope as a participant you will find it beneficial to talk about your experience so your views can be known.

The study will also be an opportunity to reflect on the observations I made during 15 years working at AUT supporting Māori and Pacific student's success. Also, will reflect on experiences of four of my family members who completed bachelor's degree at AUT. This research also will help me to complete my Ph.D. **studies at AUT.**

How will my privacy be protected?

Your identity, will remain confidential, and will not be shared with the readers of the publications unless you choose to be identified. H All attempts to mask individual identify will be made and all measures will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of each participant; measures will include (but are not limited to the following),

- Names, addresses, occupation, ethnicity, residence, age (and any other key identifiable characteristic) will not be used in any publication.

The recordings and transcripts of the interviews will only be accessible to the following:

1. The researcher: Ali Rasheed
2. The primary supervisor: Professor Marilyn Waring
3. The secondary supervisor: Associate Professor Jennie Billot

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no monetary costs associated with being involved in this research. All that is required is your time.

We will require approximately 45-60 minutes for the interview and if necessary, a further 30 minutes, if required, for any clarification of the data collected.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have 10 days to respond to this invitation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

We will send you 1-2 page summary of any data gathered during the interview process for your clarification, confirmation or correction to verify the transcript of the interview before the data is analysed from the researcher via email.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified to project supervisor Professor Marilyn Waring email: marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz, phone: 921-9669, or to the researcher, Ali Rasheed email: ali.rasheed@aut.ac.nz, phone: 027-5500111.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Kate O'Connor kate.oconnor@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

a. Name: Ali Rasheed

b. Email: arasheed@aut.ac.nz

c. Phone: 0064-275500111

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

a. Name: Marilyn Waring

b. Email: Marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz,

c. Phone: 0064-921-9661:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEC Reference number *type the reference number*.

Appendix C: Particpant Information Sheet (Focus Goup)

Participant Information Sheet

Focus Group

Date Information Sheet Produced:

23 August 2017

Project Title

What measures could be used to improve educational outcomes for domestic undergraduate South Asian students at Auckland University of Technology?

An Invitation

Nômoshkar/ Ayubowan/As-Salam-u-Alaikum/ Kuzo Zangpo La. Thank you for taking the time to read this information about my research. My name is Ali Rasheed and I am a Ph.D. student at AUT. My supervisors are Professor Marilyn Waring and Associate Professor Jennie Billot.

What is the purpose of this research?

Please accept this as an invitation to participate in this research. This information sheet is for your perusal and covers relevant information you may need with regards to what will be required for this research. Research is carried out as a part of a Ph.D. study in order to find out how to improve educational outcomes for domestic undergraduate Asian students from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The results of the research will be published in my Ph.D. thesis and other publications. This invitation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the process.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were invited to participate in this research because you have responded to the flyer placed in student area and because you fall under one of the following categories:

1. You are a domestic student currently enrolled in a Bachelor's degree at AUT
2. You have declared your ethnicity as Asian at the time of enrolment in your application form.
3. You have also declared in your enrolment application form that your country of origin is from one of the eight South Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would like to participate in this research please contact me at the details below. You will also need to complete and sign a consent form:

Contact the researcher, Ali Rasheed, at:

Email: arasheed@aut.ac.nz

Phone: +64 275500111

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You may wish not to take part in any questions that you think it is not appropriate. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data

that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

This research will be to participate in a focus group of 08-10 students. The focus group will take from one hour to one hour thirty minutes depending on group discussions and they will take place in premises of one of the three campuses decided by the researcher and the participant.

What are the discomforts and risks?

No discomforts or risks are anticipated in this research.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of the research include:

It is envisaged that by identifying your own experiences of your academic journey at AUT will help to identify the types of academic and support services that minority students require to increase completion rates. I hope as a participant you will find it beneficial to talk about your experience so your views of success can be known.

The study will also be an opportunity to reflect on the observations I made during 15 years working at AUT supporting Māori and Pacific student's success. Also, will reflect on experiences of four of my family members who completed bachelor's degree at AUT. This research also will help me to complete my Ph.D. studies at AUT.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your identity, will remain confidential, and will not be shared with the readers of the publications. All attempts to mask individual identify will be made and all measures will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of each participant; measures will include (but are not limited to the following),

- Names, addresses, occupation, ethnicity, residence, age (and any other key identifiable characteristic) will not be used in any publication.

It is also important as part of the focus group that participants needs to respect confidentiality of what happens in the focus group

The recordings and transcripts of the interviews will only be accessible to the following:

1. The researcher: Ali Rasheed
2. The primary supervisor: Professor Marilyn Waring
3. The secondary supervisor: Associate Professor Jennie Billot

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no monetary costs associated with being involved in this research. All that is required is your time.

We will require approximately 45-60 minutes for the interview and if necessary, a further 30 minutes, if required, for any clarification of the data collected.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have 10 days to respond to this invitation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

We will send you 1-2 page summary of any data gathered during the focus group for your clarification, confirmation or correction to verify the transcript of the focus group before the data is analysed from the researcher via email.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified to project supervisor Professor Marilyn Waring email: marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz, phone: 921-9669, or to the researcher, Ali Rasheed email: ali.rasheed@aut.ac.nz, phone: 027-5500111.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Kate O'Connor kate.oconnor@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

a. Name: Ali Rasheed

b. Email: arasheed@aut.ac.nz

c. Phone: 0064-275500111

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

a. Name: Marilyn Waring

b. Email: Marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz,

c. Phone: 0064-921-9661:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEC Reference number *type the reference number*.

Appendix D: Consent Form (Key Informant Interviews)

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: ***What measures could be used to improve educational outcomes for domestic undergraduate South Asian students at Auckland University of Technology?***

Project Supervisor: ***Professor Marilyn Waring***

Researcher: ***Ali Rasheed***

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 22 August 2017.
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.
- ○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEC Reference number type the AUTEC reference number 17/319 dated 20 October 2017.

Appendix E: Consent Form (Focus Groups)

Consent Form

For use when focus groups are involved.

Project title: ***What measures could be used to improve educational outcomes for domestic undergraduate South Asian students at Auckland University of Technology?***

Project Supervisor: ***Professor Marilyn Waring***

Researcher: ***Ali Rasheed***

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 22 August 2017.
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.
- ○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEC Reference number type the AUTEC reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.