

***Strengths-based perspectives of culturally responsive secondary school leaving
experiences: Stories of past Pasifika students***

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Abstract

One of the most important principles of institution transformation is that of offering inclusive programmes in terms of content, language, assessment and pedagogy, coupled with high expectations on the part of the teachers and the learners (Blackmore, 2006). Therefore, in order to enhance understanding in this space in Aotearoa New Zealand, this study utilised comparative individual case study research, semi-structured interviews and a focus group interaction with a representative of each of the Samoan, Cook Islands, Tongan and Niuean groups who have successfully transitioned from secondary to tertiary education institutions. Using an interpretive, qualitative research approach and Pacific research principles, incorporating student voice and reflective perspectives of secondary school experiences, the study aimed to critically explore the pedagogical, structural, curriculum, relational and pastoral factors that explain positive Pasifika educational achievement levels in secondary institutions, facilitating successful transitions into tertiary education in New Zealand.

The focus group interactions and recommendations have led to the identification and development of hybrid models that may endorse more effective and supportive learning environments for learners at the secondary level, thus contributing to the development of more effective learning pathways, support and outcomes for all Pasifika students.

A number of recommendations arose from this inquiry. Pasifika students in the secondary school environment engage more fully and respond more appropriately when the quality of the relationships they enjoy with their teachers include a respectful acknowledgement of themselves as unique cultural persons. This research in addition highlighted the importance of the need for educational leaders and teachers to critically reflect on their personal principles and views including the value of student voice and how these may form a critical part of the process towards developing culturally suitable and sensitive learning environs and practices for all students from diverse cultural groups.

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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 explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma or a university or other institution of higher learning.

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CHAPTER ONE - Introduction

The research context

With 21st century migration continuing to accelerate, the population composition of New Zealand and particularly the Auckland Region is becoming increasingly complex, comprising multiple diverse physical, ethnic, cultural and social communities, with the Pasifika¹ population alone expected to grow from 0.34 million in 2013 to a projected 0.48 million in 2025 (Stats NZ, 2017). Diversity in student population not only signifies their dissimilar ethnicity, but also diverse thinking, learning levels and styles, languages, beliefs, values, and talents (Blackmore, 2006). In recent times successive national Education Review Office (ERO) reports, reports from the New Zealand Government agency which evaluates and reports on the education and care of children and young people in schools, The Education Review Office (2015), have highlighted the challenges of providing opportunities for Pasifika students in order that the negative achievement, retention and transition rates for Pasifika school leavers may be halted and reversed.

This has enormous implications for education, presenting unforeseen challenges to communities, schools, their Boards of Trustees and educational leaders alike, who have traditionally and historically offered a British-based education accentuating the creation of excess wealth that boosts increased engagement in the global economy (Mayeda, Keil, Dutton & Futa-Helu, 2014), and driven further by neoliberal policies, market forces and values. Although Pasifika people are not tangata whenua², the first people of the land or Māori in New Zealand, they are accorded the status of nga iwi o te moana nui a kiwa - people of the Pacific Ocean (Nakhid, 2003) and include the following groups: Samoan, Cook Islands, Tongan and Niuean, amongst others.

Statistics released in 2017 indicate that Pasifika peoples, although making good progress in many aspects of education, are generally under-represented in tertiary education institutions making up 4.4 percent of all university students despite representing 7.5 percent of New Zealand's population (Ministry of Education, 2017b). In addition 2017 participation rates for Pasifika students aged 18 to 24 years indicate that 22 % participated in non-degree study and 17 % in degree study. A considerable body of research has surveyed the challenges that Pasifika students encounter in

¹ Pasifika is a term used to describe people living in New Zealand who identify with the Pacific islands because of heritage. Pasifika peoples does not refer to a single ethnic or cultural group, but is a collective term used to include a wide range of inhabitants of the South Pacific region.

² Tangata whenua is a Māori term of the indigenous peoples of New Zealand and literally means "people of the land"

secondary and tertiary education institutions across New Zealand. A new joint report from the Productivity Commission and Auckland University of Technology (AUT) acknowledged that the three leading factors contributing significantly to the lesser ranks of bachelor's degree study, among Māori and Pasifika, were prior performance in school, socio-economic status and parents' educational attainment, with the “largest contributing factor being prior school performance” (Meehan, Pacheco & Pushon, 2017, p. 6).

The research rationale

The motivation and justification for my study has emanated from a set of dual influences: a personal and a professional perspective. Firstly, as a senior leader in a multi-ethnic school in Aotearoa New Zealand, and having previously held senior management positions in very diverse indigenous schools in South Africa, I have always aspired to lead in a culturally responsive manner utilising a social justice lens. This, in order to benefit those diverse learners who may not have been served equitably in terms of access, resourcing, language provision and suitable pedagogical and curriculum delivery. To this end I continue to endeavour to explore and create new systems and direction that may deliver equitable, just and fair outcomes for all learners in settings where inequalities are to be found.

Secondly, from a professional perspective, there is sufficient evidence in Aotearoa New Zealand Ministry of Education and other educational research that emphasise how culturally appropriate approaches may be used to respond aptly to the contemporary achievement discrepancies in secondary schools, particularly with regards to the challenge of raising Māori and Pasifika educational outcomes. For example, in the Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession, released by the New Zealand Teachers Council earlier in 2017, it is mentioned that “respecting the diversity of the heritage, Language, identity and culture of all learners” (p. 10) and “respecting the diversity of the heritage, Language, identity and culture of families and whanau” (p. 14) will be inherent in the commitment of all teachers to learners, families and whānau³.

I currently hold the position of Deputy Principal at a large South Auckland senior school with a population that is predominantly Pasifika and Māori, characterised by approximately 50 % Samoan, 25 % Tongan, 12 % each Cook Islands Māori and Māori and 1 % other. Diversity in student mix not

³ Whanau is a term used to describe an extended family or community of related families who dwell together in the same area

only signifies their ethnicity but also diverse thinking, learning levels and styles, languages, beliefs, values, and talents. The challenge presented to an educational leader at any level of secondary institution in New Zealand is one of not just accommodating the diversity, but utilising it as an opportunity to learn more about each other's cultures. In turn this will strengthen relationships between the school, students, whanau, church and the community, and possibly forge new ground in terms of curriculum offerings and public / private partnerships that will uplift the community by providing employment opportunities to the vulnerable youth.

It is an ideal that all students derive benefit from being in a culturally inclusive classroom (Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman, 2007) which may include ethnically receptive pedagogy and integrates their cultural principles, views and practices so that their learning experiences may be more appropriate, real and engaging (Gay, 2002). Most research in the field of the promotion of culturally responsive learning environments tends to be adult-centric and the voices of students and learners appear to be silent. As a result, a number of studies make recommendations for supplementary student and community voice to be given consideration in order to further enhance the creation of culturally-safe and ethnically supportive schools; schools that are inclusive environments for Pasifika students and indeed all students (Anae, 2010; Tuafuti, 2010).

The New Zealand Ministry of Education's Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017⁴ (Ministry of Education, 2012) is aimed at improving Pasifika learners' input, engagement and educational success from early learning through to tertiary education and includes a goal to see "Five out five Pasifika learners, secure in their identities, languages and cultures and contributing fully to Aotearoa New Zealand's social, cultural and economic wellbeing" (p. 3). It also intends to boost the level of determination and pace in delivering change more quickly, in maintainable and cooperative ways between parents and educators, community groups, training providers and partner agencies. The Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017 (Ministry of Education 2012) suggests that ideally functioning collectively guarantees that undertakings that are mandatory to raise accomplishment also respond to the identities, languages, values and cultures of the different Pasifika groupings. Further to this, the plan attempts to place Pasifika students, their parents, families and societies at the core of the education system, where they may petition for improved outcomes for their communities.

⁴ A key objective of the Pasifika Education Plan, PEP, is to develop strategies to assist in the construction of sustainable environments for robust, lively and successful Pasifika communities

A further challenge faced by the general Pākehā⁵, governing leadership in schools, is that leaders intentionally or perhaps unintentionally, due to a lack of understanding, cluster together and categorise diverse cultural groups, namely the immigrants from Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, by for example, constructing a homogeneous view of Pasifika as “one culture”, without acknowledgment of the diversity of language, historical links, culture and different ways of doing things. In so doing leaders are in danger of not only missing out on an opportunity to learn about the differing aspects of each of the individual Pacific island cultures, but may also continue to deny the prospective partnerships for consultative opportunities, consensus decision-making and the potential for creating a prospective bilingual, bi-literate and bicultural curriculum (Kepa & Manu’atu, 2006).

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2012) in advocating for improved outcomes for Pasifika students generally does not include individual cultural group data or specific references to assist school leaders in acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of the Pacific groups. In fact, the plan itself, in terms of the goals, targets and actions sector wide, appears to homogenise the Pasifika cultures, and appears to neglect the need to provide detailed and culturally specific guidelines to educational leaders in order to action its vision. Kepa and Manu’atu (2006) therefore advocate for the delineation of the various Pasifika immigrants so that the migrants’ education may be scrutinised at a micro-level. This may support the disclosure of the individual precise histories, systems and policies of authority relevant to each of these different groups so that they may become shared.

The challenge therefore for educational leaders is to explore and discover ways in which they may modify their perspectives by selecting transformation and change, deliberately considering the multiplicity of diverse voices inherent in institutions and the promotion of strengths-based models (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2013). I therefore believe that this is a crucial and justified consideration for leadership in any school in Aotearoa. I contend this should include a commitment to working towards a bicultural arrangement or partnership, a combination or hybridity of new cultural forms based on a respect for difference (Blackmore, 2006) with regard to Māori, Pākehā, Europeans, Pasifika, Asian, and all other groups, based on the same articles, which are Ko te Tuarua (Protection),

⁵ Pākehā is a Māori language term for non - Māori for New Zealanders who are of “European descent”

Ko te Tuatoru (Participation) and Ko te Tuahi (Partnership), as outlined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi⁶/ The Treaty of Waitangi (Wilson, 2002).

As a result of the challenges reflected above, this research was designed to explore the culturally responsive and unique pedagogical, structural, curriculum, relational and pastoral features, as defined by past Pasifika secondary school students who contribute to and encourage positive educational achievement levels in secondary institutions, facilitating successful transitions into tertiary education in New Zealand.

The following questions guided the research:

1. What are the key components of *culturally responsive* education service provision for Pasifika students in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2. What were the experiences from the perspective of Pasifika students, currently engaged in post-secondary education, who have left school?
3. What practices in Pasifika student majority secondary schools support the transition of Pasifika students to tertiary education?

The investigation was positioned within an interpretivist paradigm and used semi-structured interviews and a single focus group interaction to explore the key components of culturally responsive strategies in secondary schools as perceived and experienced by four mature tertiary students who had transitioned successfully from secondary schools in Auckland to degree courses at local universities. After identification of the most important aspects which affected educational outcomes of Pasifika students I wished to explore and develop a multicultural framework which would be central to school organisation, school-community associations, pedagogy, sets of courses and pathways and assessment.

In this manner, school and curriculum leaders, students and Pasifika communities may be able to utilise their shared history and culture as a point of departure, for example the sharing, engaging with and understanding of their cultural creation stories, the waka passages from Raiatea and the

⁶ Tiriti o Waitangi is New Zealand's founding document – a treaty signed on 6 February 1840 by representatives of the British Crown and various Māori chiefs from the North Island of New Zealand, with the intention of enabling the British settlers and the Māori people to dwell together under a common set of agreements and understandings

Cook Islands across the Pacific Ocean to New Zealand, their similar kapa-haka choreography, in order to develop and support improved achievement and outcomes for all students.

I made use of a cultural advisory group who made recommendations and guided the process throughout. Culturally responsive Pasifika principles such as talanoa⁷ were adopted and utilised.

The structure of this dissertation

Following this chapter, Chapter Two defines, analyses and synthesises appropriate literature to systematically appraise the focus of the study and to identify strategic factors that contribute to successful outcomes. Those discussed in the chapter are Pedagogy, Leading Pasifika for Diversity, Curriculum and Pathways Opportunities, Contextualised Resources, Relationships and Cultural Capital, Cultural, Religious and Spiritual Artefacts and Symbols, Pastoral Care Structures and the Role of the Community and Church, Student Voice, Curriculum Delivery and Teacher Directed Learning and Connections.

Chapter Three outlines the inquiry design and includes the methodology, methods, data collection and analysis, supplemented with the ethical deliberations and conditions selected and practised in the study. These include the use of a qualitative approach utilising semi-structured interviews and mini case studies in order to collect data for each of the four participants and the subsequent usage of a focus group interaction of the same participants in order to discuss possible strategies and recommendations for school leaders. Ethical considerations included the use of the talanoa protocol as advised by the Cultural Leaders.

Chapter Four describes and presents the stories, perceptions and interpretations of the individual student participants, recounting and synthesising their personal experiences through recall. The chapter is structured so that each participants' "lived realities" regarding student teacher relationships, academic pathways offered, curriculum delivery and pedagogy employed by the teachers, the contextualisation of tasks, topics and assessment, the provision of artefacts and culturally appropriate experiences are presented.

⁷ Talanoa is a Tongan term meaning to converse or conduct a dialogue. It encompasses four elements or attributes which all serve to enrich the conversations. These are: Ofa / Love, Mafana / Warmth, Malie / Humour and Faka'apa'apa / Respect

Chapter Five offers a critical analysis and clarification of the study discoveries and links the findings to current research. The chapter is structured around the identified theme of “connections” or “connectedness”, incorporating the acquisition of cultural capital on the part of educators and respect and appreciation for diversity, one-on-one respectful relationships and a commitment to challenge students to extend themselves in terms of achievement and future study and career goals. In addition the provision, recognition and acknowledgement of the importance of cultural and religious artefacts, the importance of engaging interactions in the teaching and learning process and the provision of safe cultural spaces enabling students to collectively support each other in their learning journey are included.

Finally Chapter Six concludes by summarising the outcomes of the focus group interactions as presented by the participants and outlines recommendations for future research and practical consideration.

CHAPTER TWO – Literature review

In order to seek additional perspectives and guidance for possible research questions and recommendations, this chapter includes a critical review of various research papers and literature. The following themes underpin this chapter: bicultural and multicultural inquiry and pedagogy, student and whanau voice in the establishment of curriculum and pathway opportunities, relationships between students and educators, the use of cultural artefacts such as physical symbols, architecture, clothes and buildings and the importance of culturally supportive pastoral care structures when resourcing schools. The chapter begins with a focus on culturally responsive leadership due to the expectation that at the heart of educational leadership in New Zealand schools is the notion that with an increased focus on collaboration and team work, together with the creation of inclusive learning environments for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, improved educational and social outcomes for all young people may emanate (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Leading Pasifika for Diversity

While immigration is a major contributor to 21st century heterogeneous populations, ethnicity is just one component as the migrants bring with them a much wider range of multiplicity that demands that leaders earnestly contemplate an eclectic array of concerns when handling diversity. Cardno (2012) in her research, *Managing effective relationships in education*, argues that equal opportunities, equity, equality, social justice, language, culture, religion, beliefs and values, inclusion and discrimination, directly and indirectly, are factors that all contribute to the connection between those who lead and those who follow.

The challenge with diversity, as a principle, as outlined by Gunter (2006), is that over centuries Western society has attached positive or negative connotations and classifications to various categories of humanity by bequeathing rights and legitimacy to include particular individuals. This, according to Gunter (2006) provides them with control and supremacy, whilst excluding others on the basis of the self-same dissimilarities. This is supported by Lumby and Morrison (2010), who contend that for a period of time theorists in education have stayed indifferent to issues of uniqueness and diversity, but advocate that the interdependence between how diversity is hypothesised and how this transmits to leadership power arrangements should now take centre

stage in research. Coleman (2012) alludes to the application of stereotyping, both positively and negatively, which likens being 'aryanic', male, heterosexual, middle class and middle aged as the dominant 'insider' definition. All other groupings are categorised as 'outsiders', and members may, as a result, become exempt from being considered for promotion if the dominant group develops the tendency to 'gate keep' (Morgan et al., as cited in Coleman, 2012).

By utilising a forward and backward mapping strategy, Hohepa and Robson (2008) synthesise eight leadership dimensions effective in lifting various outcomes for diverse students in Aotearoa New Zealand, which resonate with Māori conceptions of leadership and self-determination. The eight dimensions include: establishing goals and expectations, resourcing strategically, planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, promoting and participating in teacher learning and development, ensuring an orderly and supportive environment, creating educationally powerful connections, engaging in constructive problem talk, selecting, developing and using smart tools, and when viewed through a relationship and organisational lens provide leaders with valuable tools to exercise their headship.

However the analytics Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) used to inform the above list is based on school improvement research studies that can be amiss in taking a critical perspective in terms of race. Critical race theory encompasses a collection of principles including how race functions in society and how ethnic disparity continues to be perpetuated by predictable power relations (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Critical race theory aims to examine traditional methods of how to engage with diverse groups and to reinvent leadership practice in educational institutions so that transformation and democratic leadership for social justice may be promoted (Aleman, as cited in Santamaria & Santamaria, 2013). It is suggested that by viewing current inequities in education through a critical race theory lens that the appropriate response actions will assist leaders to find answers to the challenges of diversity in institutions.

Santamaria and Santamaria (2013) advocate an applied critical leadership framework which combines transformational leadership principles which shall then enable leaders to role model and generate critical pedagogical practice, all viewed through a critical race theory lens. This means leaders may make decisions benefitting all members of the diverse populations at their sites. In this way leaders become aware of the influence their race, power and traditional values "colour" their views, drowning out the voices of their constituents. The alternative is that they seek to consult

widely with their constituents so that they may address educational issues, inequities and challenges by using a strengths-based model, resulting in improved academic outcomes for all learners. The principles of this framework resonate with Scheurich and Young (1997) who allude to the challenge of the presence of “racially biased ways of knowing” (p. 1) in educational research.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Leaders and teachers who are ethnically receptive have an extended cultural outlook and understanding that permits them to appreciate learners’ cultural competencies and to be acquainted with the ethics and principles that they bring to the education experience (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally responsive pedagogy includes utilising strategies to maximise academic achievement, the provision of suitable contextualised course or curriculum offerings, affirmation and recognition of prior cultural learning practices and a holistic focus on the whole learner (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It incorporates teachers familiarising themselves with a variety of cultural learning styles (Lindsey, Roberts & Campbell Jones, 2005), recognising and acknowledging a multitude of cultural behaviours, attitudes and values, oral traditions and talents and the introduction and assimilation of these strategies into the classroom and learning experiences for the students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Developing cultural awareness and sensitivity among teachers is a multifaceted and enduring progression (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and has been found to be influenced by multiple factors, mostly established prior to teachers entering the profession. These may include interactions with persons from differing cultural groupings (Burton, 2015) and personal experiences of racial discrimination, education systems and travel (Smith, Moallem & Sherrill, 1997). Sleeter (2001) found that teachers who, through personal experience, had developed encouraging approaches towards peoples of other cultures were more likely to embrace multicultural milieus and to respond favourably towards the diverse needs of their students.

Ladson-Billings (2001) in a research study conducted with African American students discovered that students valued teachers who appreciated them as culturally unique individuals, stimulated them to openly discuss and share their perceptions and experiences and paid attention to their responses. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy (2009) suggest that culturally responsive pedagogies should identify and affirm encouraging and compassionate relationships in successful

teaching and learning interactions. It is therefore suggested that leaders and teachers need to develop and demonstrate a caring for and empathy towards their students, acknowledge their strengths and respect and promote their cultural capital. In so doing teachers will commit to meeting the needs of all learners by raising expectations and their academic achievement (Bishop et al., 2009; Gay, 2002).

In the development of an applied critical leadership framework Santamaria and Santamaria (2012) seek to align and overlap where necessary the principles of transformational leadership, critical pedagogy and critical race theory. Applied transformational leadership seeks to empower individuals in an institution, thus enabling them to contribute value-added skills, intellectual capacity and energies as successful and motivated participants (Burns, as cited in Santamaria and Santamaria, 2012). This is while the institution as a whole meets the needs of its clientele, the learners and their communities. Transformational leaders are then expected to act as role models and model desired behaviours required of their followers in order to stimulate and empower them to participate in the decision-making processes, thus surpassing their own self-regard for the good of the establishment (Bass et al., as cited in Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012).

Further to this, in order for institutional change to be effected it is imperative that leaders and teachers develop the ethical determination, the resolve, assurances and talents to be able to respond appropriately and to develop and action transformational undertakings (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2013). It is argued that as a result of increased domination by the majority culture(s), some minority cultural groups may experience organisational inequities and power disparities in institutions, which if not disrupted will result in an assimilation and dilution of their cultural strengths and voices (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2013). Neito (2002) suggests that this may include a restructuring of relationships so that instead of a transfer of knowledge, a dialogical process occurs, whilst Bishop et al., (2009) suggests that respectful non-dominating and symbiotic interactions ensure that the power of the authority is collective.

Critical pedagogy focuses on the development of new and relevant knowledge and learning processes, produced via constructive dialogue among all learning community members, as it is contextualised by their personal experiences, precise needs and social milieus (Giroux, as cited in Santamaria & Santamaria, 2013). In this manner the emancipatory procedure of inviting and allowing societies to make choices that influence their world further raises the critical awareness of

the participants (Freire, as cited in Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012). This is further supported by Kepa and Manu'atu (2006) who advocate that consultation processes involving individual Pasifika groups, may allow for the inclusion of concepts such as “respect for and use of the diverse Pasifika languages, warm social relationships, emotions, feelings, passions, gods, spirits and ancestors, and bringing together narratives of pain and suffering in a context of love and hope” (p. 4). It thus becomes necessary for educational leaders to seek student perspectives and community input when considering curriculum and pathway opportunities for their students and the selection, delivery and presentation of suitable contextualised resources and material.

Curriculum and Pathway Opportunities

Perhaps one of the most important principles in the transformation of an institution is that of participation, involving inclusive programme offerings in terms of content, language and assessment, practices and pedagogies, coupled with high expectations on the part of the teachers and high aspirations on the part of the learners (Blackmore, 2006). The Youth Guarantee initiative and the Vocational Pathways programme, introduced into New Zealand schools towards the end of 2013, provide new ways, choices and places for students to achieve NCEA Level 2, and assists students to see how their learning and achievement is valued in the real world by aligning their education with specific sector related standards in six industries. The initiatives ensure collaboration and an alignment of goals for schools, tertiary providers, employers, iwi and communities and heavily subsidised or fees-free places in Trades and Service Academies are guaranteed for young people who display the correct attitude and aptitude for the workplace. These may include opportunities for students to be prepared and groomed for the work place in a variety of industries earmarked for expansion, for example Scaffolding, Construction and Infrastructure and Engineering (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

NCEA – The National Certificate of Educational Achievement, a standards-based curriculum offering diversity in the selection of subject topic selection introduced in 2002, has stimulated the expansion of a more substantial and more overt metacognitive slant to teaching. The increased variety of content material indicates that schools can and do mould course content more carefully to suit and match student requirements, contexts and career needs. Right across the educational band educational authorities and leaders are finding standards to be more inspiring and more gratifying and students who are capable of generating more achievement than School Certificate enabled

them to do. Research has shown that the introduction of Merit and Excellence Certificate Endorsements has served to motivate students at all levels to strive for Merit and Excellence grades (Walkey, McClure, Meyer & Weir, 2013). This unique system serves to cater for all manner of needs, challenges, cultures, languages and diverse interests of New Zealand youth, thus equipping individuals with the digital tools, temperament and skills to succeed in a global economy. It also enables students to utilise their local cultural knowledge and their newly developed skills to access labour markets in order to support economic goals, and to add value to the many challenges facing New Zealand and The Pacific Islands in the 21st century, such as the issue of climate change and its impact in the Pacific.

The NCEA system is flexible and allows for student choice, even within traditional courses, providing a wider range of opportunities for students to reflect their competence and skill levels, utilising a variety of standards within the curriculum offerings, all accredited by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2015). This includes primarily traditional school based offerings, such as English, Languages, Mathematics, the Sciences and the Humanities, along with a multitude of Industry Trade Organisation curricula, such as the BCITO (Building and Construction ITO) and subjects such as Horticulture, Travel and Tourism, Early Childhood Education, Sport and Recreation amongst others. In addition Samoan and Cook Islands Māori language have offered achievement standards for a while now, and have recently been joined by Lea Faka-Tonga at Level 3, thus enabling Pasifika students to further develop a deeper understanding of their culture through their language and to simultaneously qualify for university entrance.

Contextualised Resources

The acknowledgement and verification of students' identities acknowledged and requested in the New Zealand National Curriculum reveals the aims of culturally responsive education. The manner in which teachers acknowledge and appreciate the unique identities of the students in their classrooms, and consequently select suitable content and resources for their educational programmes, has noteworthy repercussions for their students (Siteine, 2010). Subsequently, there is one area of curriculum development and delivery that requires urgent and immediate attention, and that is in the area of contextualised textbooks, resources, tasks and assessment material for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Only recently has the Ministry of Education begun

providing leaders and teachers with authentic material that goes some way to providing familiar and contextualised learning experiences for students, and these assessment exemplars have been trialled and presented at Best Practice Workshops in recent years. However, this can be seen to be only dealing with the end product (assessment), when in fact the learning experiences, progressions and pedagogy the students endure in the classroom, when engaging with mainly Western theoretical learning material, are in need of a complete overhaul.

Ladson-Billings (1995) in her work with African American students indicates how important it is to make instruction and the acquisition of knowledge pertinent and receptive to the languages, literacies and cultural practices of students across groupings of variance and disparity. Her work emphasises the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy and a teaching practice that unequivocally employs enquiries of justness and enhanced access to educational opportunities for marginalised minorities. She acknowledges three foremost areas of the approaches of effective teachers: academic success which incorporates scholarly progress that students experience as an outcome of classroom instruction and learning experiences, the development of cultural capabilities, and enabling students to analyse and evaluate the existing societal environment in which they find themselves.

Paris (2012) acknowledges the work of Ladson-Billings but seeks to extend the philosophy of culturally relevant pedagogy to offer a culturally sustaining pedagogy which would seek to propagate, nurture, embrace and sustain cultural pluralism. This approach is further supported by Moll and Gonzalez (1994) who recognise “Funds of knowledge” and emphasize the importance of traditionally accrued and ethnically advanced forms of information and skills indispensable for the health and safety and engagement of students. Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Tejeda (1999) extended the concept of the use of various cultural activities and practices by suggesting the creation of a forward thinking “third space” which incorporates and aligns both the cultural values and the contemporary essentials of student lives in their new educational settings. This would thus enable students to access and engage with their learning without diminishing either the dominant or marginal values, and would encourage them to develop critical perspectives of policy, societal norms and programmes which impact on their community and learning environment (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Relationships and Cultural Capital

Education in general is concerned with dynamic societal and communal relationships, where the stress is about how the leader is coupled with others in their own and the other's learning, and as a result is an inclusive, all-encompassing and cohesive relationship practice (Gunter, 2006). In more recent years the emphasis in education has progressed from the principle of teaching to the more progressive notion of learning, whereby the student is recognised as an active and engaged participant in the process. This process takes into consideration their points of view, talents, imagination, sensitivities and cultural background (Starratt, as cited in Gunter, 2006).

When faced with issues of equality, equity and transformation in educational institutions it is important that leaders in the field do not assume that compliance with external legislation and human rights charters is sufficient. In addition leaders should focus more diligently on a way of abstracting human beings and their potential around aptitudes and that the learning and life opportunities of individual students should be linked with broader shared societal purposes (Gunter, 2006). This is supported by Hohepa and Robson (2008) who advocate using students' personal and ethnic familiarities in order to advance teaching and learning. It is therefore incumbent upon leaders to be made aware, to a far greater degree than previously, of the challenging aspects of disadvantage arising when variance is exposed in societal exchanges, and to springboard diversity matters from the fringe to the heart of discussion (Lumby & Morrison, 2010).

In New Zealand it is vital that school leaders should take a leading role in the facilitation and establishment of an open channel of communication between students, parents, whanau, iwi and community agencies that support the learning of Pasifika and Māori students, as part of their responsibilities. The Education Act (1989) states broad expectations for Māori, and the National Education Guidelines (NEG's) 1, 2, and 9 and the National Administration guidelines (NAG'S) 1 (e) and 2 (c) describe legislative requirements in relation to Māori. While schools endeavour to educate all educators, students and support staff about the Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi), it becomes the responsibility of the leaders to consider the three principles associated with Te Tiriti o Waitangi articles. These principles are Ko te tuatahi (Partnership), Ko te Tuarua (Protection) and Ko te tuatoru (Participation).

Waitere (2008) in a discussion of the importance of cultural leadership emphasises that biculturalism is interpersonal and that those relationships are multi-layered and complex, and that in essence biculturalism is not in opposition to multiculturalism. Further to this she advocates for a “walking backwards into the future” approach (p. 37) which will enable leaders to plait together a future for all students, by taking cognisance of the antiquity of people, valuing their ancestors as dynamic contributors who shaped the world and by safeguarding a two-way flow of knowledge. In addition she advocates that cultural “leadership is not only a call to action, but rather it is a call to relationship”, encompassing the threads of potential, purpose and praxis (p. 12).

Possibly the most significant and appropriate proposal, in my view, on the development of multi-ethnic education in Aotearoa was put forward by Sullivan (1994), in the formulation of a Māori / Tauīwi Partnership. This arrangement grants the rights of tangata whenua and also embraces and recognises all non-Pākehā New Zealanders, such as the Dutch, Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan, Niuean, Chinese, other Asian and Indian and those of any other descent in this important bicultural partnership. This view, which I support, responds appropriately to the increasingly diverse nature of an emerging multi-ethnic Pacific migrant population in Aotearoa, allowing us to re-define who we are and what our connections with the broader world may look like, yet continues to uphold the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The theme, I believe, which arises out of the first article: Ko te Tuatahi (Partnership) of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, focuses on the development of relationships between all partners in the educational process, namely teachers, students, whanau, iwi and hapu. Any future research, therefore, involving the scoping of the effects of a variety of factors that affect Māori and Pasifika student achievement in the domain of bicultural agreements, should include the concepts of whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (ethos of care) and kotahitanga (unity and bonding) as outlined by Macfarlane et al., (2007). Both Macfarlane et al., (2007) and Bishop et al. (2009) focused on the establishment of relationships and whanaungatanga in a Māori context, based on common interests and respect for cultural capital and trust in order to improve academic outcomes for Māori students. This is not only the case in terms of their findings but also appears as a significant aspect in terms of research methodology, especially in the area of qualitative inquiry. This view is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) who advocate that when conducting interpretive research practice those relationships between researchers and their research participants enable both

parties to share work space where the theories of empowerment, social justice and ethics may occur.

Cultural, Religious and Spiritual Artefacts and Symbols

In their paper, *Māori and Educational Leadership: Tu Rangatira*, Hohepa and Robson (2008) placed sensitivity to diversity and the needs of numerous audiences at the forefront of their leadership dimensions. This is supported by Santamaria and Santamaria (2012) who in their definition of critical pedagogy emphasised the reorganisation of customary associations in learning communities where original knowledge is co-constructed through important discourse and engagement. Research indicates that to a large degree the cultural development of students and their families from the Pacific Islands is influenced by ideology and environmental factors that include the opinions of family members, community groups, church groups, teachers, students, lecturers, politicians and their economic circumstances (Ministry of Education, 2012). Furthermore Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley and Shepherd (2012) affirm that being cognisant of the community desires and the necessities and interests of the students, parents and caregivers can enrich the manner in which leaders and teachers work within their educational environment.

The Ministry of Education (2012) indicates that the Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017 sought to take into account the protocols, approaches, principles and understanding that are faka-Tonga (the Tongan way), faka Tokelau (the Tokelau way), faka-Niue (the Niue way), akano’anga Kūki Āirani (the Cook Islands way), vaka-Viti (the Fijian way) and fa’asamoa⁸ (the Samoan way). Nieto (2002) goes further to suggest that being culturally responsive in a school environment should pervade every aspect of that setting and should include the provision of suitable artefacts, resources and building design.

Culture is a multifaceted conception consisting of several meanings and classifications but is universally used to describe a configuration of tenets, principles, customs and behaviours collectively owned by a particular set of persons that differentiate it from other clusters of people. The culture of fa’asamoa is possibly one of the most influential factors in the life and mind set of Samoan communities and an understanding of fa’asamoa, as experienced in New Zealand, provides important information for educational leaders and teachers alike (Meleisea, as cited in Aiono, 1996).

⁸ Fa’a is a Samoan prefix that translated means ‘the ways of’ or ‘to do’ or ‘to implement’

Aiono (1996) in a definition of fa'asamoa indicates that the current fa'asamoa culture was established when the Tongan Missionaries converted the Samoans to Christianity and includes decision-making, cultural beliefs, behaviours and discipline based on a foundation of respect for family protocols and others points of view, traditions, respect and obedience (Tupuola, 1999). This understanding of fa'asamoa included the basic tenet that God is the controller and creator of humanity and that He is key to the understanding of fa'asamoa which includes characteristics such as love, patience and humility (Aiono, 1996).

Student Voice

Delpit (as cited in Ritchie & Rau, 2006) quotes an Alaskan educator who said, "In order to teach you, I must know you" (p.182). Ritchie and Rau (2006) in their findings, campaign for the building of bridges and the development of listening and dialogue skills so that horizontal, and not vertical, reciprocal relationships of mutual trust and care can emerge. It has been found that educators who display this intrinsic quality of honouring the rights of minorities, and open themselves up to receive more knowledge (Ritchie & Rau, 2006) are able to successfully gain the respect and trust of a myriad of diverse cultural groups, no matter where they are placed in the world.

Bishop et al., (2009) emphasise the power of the use of student voice, both when conducting research and in the findings of numerous researchers, as it allows for an opportunity for students and educators to talk with each other in a non-confrontational and non-threatening way. Hedges (as cited in Jenkin, 2005) also advocates for the inclusion of student voice in research that affects them, indicating that this is a mounting tendency in new research. Macfarlane et al., (2007) also advocates for kotahitanga (or unity) whereby decision making by consensus through open discussion can lead to the transfer of tikanga values such as progressing, working and staying together. I believe that it is vital that students feel a part of the learning journey and are able to articulate their experiences (both positive and negative). In doing so, that they need to be offered choices in a learning school environment, so that they can develop problem solving skills which will support their decision making in later life.

One of the major findings in Bishop et al. (2006) scoping exercise was that there were striking dissimilarities between the portrayals and clarifications of students lived actualities and those of their teachers. It appeared that educators in the main believed that Māori students were just less

interested and less engaged in their educational achievement due to the fact that they came from economically inferior backgrounds, whilst the students and parents acknowledged a number of operational and ethnic relationship obstacles that restricted their progress.

I concur with this finding and do believe that it is imperative that when conducting research that the participants and the researcher should engage in open and constructive dialogue, sharing, respectfully, similar and opposing views and work collaboratively to solve those issues where tension may occur. Some of the ways identified by Ritchie and Rau (2006) involve the use of storytelling, art and drama, thereby allowing a space for student voice, but simultaneously integrating cultural capital and tikanga.

Curriculum delivery and teacher directed learning

Lipine (2010) and Tamati (2011) indicate that rote learning was widely used by missionaries in Samoa and the Pacific Islands as a useful learning approach, and that it emphasised learning through reiteration and the use of memory and simulation. This method has cultural significance and is still widely used in Samoan churches and schools as a means of sharing their faith, religious lessons and instructions. With rote learning accentuating listening and observing and a link to fa'asmoa, a number of Samoan students are still relatively comfortable with this type of pedagogy, which incorporates the teacher-centred approach. It must however be noted that the missionaries did also encourage a number of other approaches which are favoured today, such as collaborative learning, assimilation and one-on-one tutoring (Lipine, 2010). Although approximately half the students were successful under the teacher-centred approach (Tamati, 2011), in 1980 the National Education System of Samoa made a number of recommendations to advance the learning needs of the students. The recommendations included a move to a student-centred approach and taking cognisance of student perspectives and an emphasis on the use of student voice (Aiono, 1996). This approach can be aligned with the collaborative classroom climate or *awhinatia* (helping process) now advocated in New Zealand where individual dignity is greatly respected and where teachers promote the students ability to learn (Macfarlane et al., 2007).

Connections

Anae (2010) focuses on the significance of equal and mutual associations and emphasises the importance of the Samoan tenet “*teu le va*” through which students often feel a connection to their

environment and are more comfortable in surroundings that “value, cherish and nurture the *va*, the relationship” (p. 2) their cultural norms, values, understanding and language. Therefore it is advocated that as a leader it is imperative to learn the cultural ethnicity of each colleague, student and all whanau members in the school, so that all communication, both oral and written, for example emails, newsletters and assembly greetings, may be prefaced with the correct greeting(s), such as *kia ora*, *malo e lelei*, *talofa lava*, *kia orana* and amongst others.

The third article of the Treaty of Waitangi: *Ko te Tuatoru* (Participation) guarantees to Māori and all cultures who fall under the jurisdiction of the Crown, including Pasifika students, equality of opportunity and outcomes, and may be offered in institutions by way of curriculum offerings, language opportunities, planned cultural exchanges and specific contextualised pedagogy (Bishop & Graham as cited in Wilson, 2002).

The literature review highlighted that previous research on factors that positively support Pasifika secondary students to succeed in tertiary institutions has not included to a large extent the voices of the students themselves. This research dissertation has been designed to further investigate from students’ perspectives the factors that support them to achieve at secondary school and transition successfully to tertiary education. The following chapter will outline the research design and shall include the methodology, methods, data collection and analysis techniques that were selected and applied to investigate the research questions.

CHAPTER THREE - Methodology

In this dissertation, participants were provided with multiple opportunities to share and narrate their secondary school experiences, stories, accounts and understanding of reality, as they may have experienced it, initially through the use of semi-structured interviews and eventually collaboratively in a focus group environment. The perceptions of the participants have thus been created through their unique interpretation of and interaction with the learning environment, according to their individual cultural values, consciousness and experiences. This intention lent itself to a qualitative approach to the understanding of the information shared by the participants.

Interpretivism and qualitative research

Qualitative research endeavours to secure qualities that can be used to understand and clarify perceptions and behaviours (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). In addition qualitative research includes numerous and varied data collection methods, comprising a revealing approach to the subject material. As a result qualitative researchers tend to observe and capture responses and perceptions in their natural environment, endeavouring to make sense of, or understand, experiences in terms of the connotations people attach to them (Hughes, 2014). Commonly mentioned features of qualitative research comprise face-to-face research accompanied by true-to-life locations, an emphasis on culturally detailed depiction and the appreciation of participants' points of view or implications. Babchuk and Badiie (2010) indicate that the following considerations may also be included in qualitative research:

the researcher as the primary data collection instrument, inductive data analysis, a concern with process, an emergent and flexible design, non-random, purposeful sample selection, and a holistic understanding achieved through collection and analysis of multiple sources of data and perspectives. (p. 3).

Further to this, qualitative research is based around a philosophical foundation which is largely interpretive in nature, in the sense it is concerned with how the societal sphere is construed, assumed, lived or created, based on systems of information collection and generation which are elastic and sensitive to the environmental setting in which the information is collected (Mason, as cited in Hughes, 2014).

Interpretivism is just one of many approaches utilised by qualitative researchers to make sense of how societal actuality is created (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Interpretive practice includes both the 'hows' and the 'whats' of societal authenticity and emphasises the full intricacy of anthropological wisdom as the circumstances develop (Kaplan & Maxwell, as cited in Myers, 1997). It also makes allowance for multiple realities whereby each and every member of society has their own story to tell, and as a result the acceptance that there is no one real truth.

In order to find meaning in an action or event, or to acknowledge that one comprehends what a certain deed means, entails that one interpret in a specific manner what the participants are undertaking. Interpretivism requires that the enquirer or researcher comprehend the connotations that establish that achievement and then infer in a particular manner what the participants are conveying, seemingly portraying a privileged understanding of the participants characterisations of their circumstances (Outhwaite, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

This research is therefore positioned as an interpretative approach as I was predominantly interested in peoples' interpretation of their past lived experiences and reality. As a researcher I was intent on making sense of the perceived reality and circumstances of the participants as viewed through their multiple and unique lenses. Further to this the meanings that the participants have attached to their experiences provide further understanding of the complex context of the culturally responsive education environment and serve to offer recommendations for future implementation.

Ethical and Cultural responsibility and research design

The research undertaken was based on the assumption that there is no one way of interpreting, understanding and experiencing culturally responsive reality and that multiple insights or truths of contexts are relative and exist as uniquely experienced, perceived and interpreted by the individual participants themselves.

In addition to this, as the Deputy Principal in a predominantly Pasifika South Auckland school, I wanted to further my understanding and experience of Pasifika and interpretive research practices to explore my cultural prejudice, principles, experiences and assumptions as a European/Pākehā researcher, prior to commencing the research. Wilson (2001) describes an interpretive approach as being one that is "a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that go together to guide your actions as to how you're going to go about doing your research" (p. 175).

This interpretive approach incorporates its own set of morals and ethics and judgment of which research is worthy of doing and of how it can be of assistance to the subjects of the research and thus the world. With this in mind the focus group discussion was designed as a partnership, with myself as an engaged and associated witness, to capture suggestions and recommendations from both the participants and the primary researcher in terms of future implementation of ideas and proposals (Titchen & Hobson, 2004).

In the preliminary phases and during the research progression I consulted with four Cultural Leaders regarding the appropriate conventions and sensitivities I should be aware of when working with students from a variety of different Pasifika nations. Following the early development and design of the structure of the research, I sought guidance from the various Cultural Leaders who emphasised the principles of talanoa, respect and acceptance. Thus the design and practice of the research, the interviews and focus group discussions were adapted in order to take into consideration the talanoa principles and suggestions made following the consultation process with the appropriate Pasifika Cultural Leaders.

Talanoa has its place in the phenomenological research family through which research focuses on understanding, appreciating and sense-making of the significance and importance that events and occasions have for participants (Paton, as cited in Vaiioleti, 2006). Thus, talanoa, allows for a personal sharing where the participants story their truths and ambitions, encouraging wholesome, tangible and trustworthy evidence to be available for Pacific research (Vaiioleti, 2006).

Methods and Participant Selection

In order to study and capture the perceptions of the participants I elected to utilise two methods of data collection: Semi-structured interviews and a focus group interaction. The design was linear and sequential and commenced initially with semi-structured face-to-face interviews, conducted individually by the researcher with each participant. In order to secure their personal stories and responses a set of eight questions (see Appendix A), was provided prior to the interviews, with a focus on their personal interpretations of the pedagogical, structural, curriculum, relational and pastoral factors that contributed to their academic success at secondary school and hence positive outcomes at the tertiary level. This was done by the primary researcher listening to and recording

four tertiary (Tongan, Niuean / Samoan, Cook Islands Māori/ Māori / Pākehā and Samoan / Indian) students' perceptions of the culturally responsive practices they experienced in secondary school using the set of eight interview questions. The face-to-face interviews were semi-structured, with each participant and the primary researcher spending approximately thirty-five to forty-five minutes together in each of the interviews.

Through a process of "snowballing" a colleague sourced a group of Pasifika tertiary students (twenty years of age and older) of different Pasifika ethnicities (with three or more years at a tertiary institution) who had attended secondary school in New Zealand. Through an invitation process I recruited a number of tertiary students who fitted the general Pasifika cultural grouping criteria until the required number of four had been reached. Although known to each other in a tertiary setting, the participants had attended a variety of different secondary schools in New Zealand.

Seini is of Tongan descent and was born in Tonga, but emigrated to New Zealand at the age of one. She attended a Catholic secondary school in Auckland and is currently studying at a university in New Zealand.

Sonya is of Niuean and Samoan descent and was born in New Zealand. She attended a Christian faith based school in Auckland city and is currently studying at a university in New Zealand.

Ngaera is of Cook Island Māori / Māori / Pākehā descent, recognising herself as Cook Islands Māori, and was born in New Zealand. She attended two secondary different schools, one predominantly Pākehā and the second predominantly Pasifika. She is in her third year of an Honours degree in Urban Planning at a university in Auckland.

Aya is of Samoan and Fijian Indian descent and was born in Fiji, but arrived in New Zealand aged four. She attended an Islamic school in New Zealand and is currently in her third year at a university in New Zealand.

Following an analysis of the participants' stories, various themes emerged that warranted further investigation. In order to create a suitable environment for the participants to engage collaboratively in constructing their ideal secondary school environment conducive to maximum

learning and positive outcomes, a focus group session was selected as the most suitable method to stimulate debate and interaction between the participants.

All participants were provided with a full and detailed outline of the research topic and study in the form of an information sheet, as seen in Appendix B, and consent was voluntary. In addition they were provided with an opportunity to withdraw at any stage. The participant consent sheet is seen in Appendix C.

Engendering an innovative awareness and understanding of concepts and practises that serve to improve and add value to the lives of the participants and those who wish to read the inquiry, is the crucial intention of research (Smith, 2012). It is therefore hoped that the recommendations emanating from this research will optimistically lead to the provision of ethically supportive and culturally responsive learning experiences for Pasifika secondary school students, which will assist them to successfully transition to tertiary study and future successful careers or work placements. Thus the outcomes have been especially designed to benefit the specific cultural groups represented by the participants and their immediate families, communities and whanau.

A code of ethics insists on protections to guard participants' identities and those of the inquiry localities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this specific inquiry, efforts have been made to ensure that confidentiality has been meticulously observed. In order to assure confidentiality all audio recordings and interview and focus group transcripts have not been disclosed to anyone outside of the research, except for the supervisor and the transcriber, who has signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix D). The privacy of participants was protected by the use of pseudonyms and by generalising the social area from which they have been selected (Christians, 2005). The participants were provided with an opportunity to request a support person, to attend the interview and focus group sessions if so desired. All cultural and other diversities were respected according to the guidelines laid out by the Cultural Leaders and the participants themselves.

Recordings of the interview questions as shown in Appendix A and participants' responses were done in private in the form of one-to-one, participant to researcher interactions, in semi-structured interviews, followed by a focus group session one month later. These recordings were then transcribed by a private transcriber unknown to the participants who signed a confidentiality

agreement. Following this all audio files on a memory stick, and hard copies of transcripts will be stored for a period of six years in secure storage secured by the supervisor.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews between the researcher and participant allow for a focus on the perceived significances of the participants' everyday lived world from their unique perspectives, and may include both a realistic and a sense level (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). This type of interview process is flexible with an emphasis on how the participant frames and understands past issues, patterns of behaviour and events, and thus provides insights into how the participant views the world (Bryman, 2008; Punch, 2009). Utilising a set of questions to guide the interaction, information is assembled during the interface between the researcher and the participant, facilitating a mutual stimulus towards each other (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Due to the flexible and expansive nature of semi-structured interviews it is plausible for individual participants themselves to raise supplementary and corresponding issues which may then be permitted as part of a refinement process and presented to later participants for their interpretation and analysis (Bryman, 2008).

Focus Groups

The use of focus groups is just one method that provides an opportunity for the researcher to conduct group discussions where the dependence is on the interaction within the group based on themes and questions provided by the researcher. The researcher then positions herself as a moderator in the process (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Focus groups may be used as an investigative instrument by a researcher who is then able to prompt for an array of opinions from the participants, who have been exposed to particular real experiences, by means of a sole conference process (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). In addition, this allows the researcher to analyse thoughts in a group setting, chiefly how they are established and advanced and in what way and why participants agree to and / or discard others' ideas and perceptions.

Focus group sessions encourage interactions between the participants that encourage dialogue and debate and probe beliefs, ethics and insights in depth, which would be less available without the interaction found in the group (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). This spontaneous approach encourages participants to share their opinions honestly and openly and provides the researcher the opportunity to expose aspects of and responses to the research questions that may have been unnoticed prior (Greenbaum, as cited in Tolich & Davison, 1999).

In order to inspire the participants to share their perspectives openly and without fear, with myself and each other, I made use of two primary and open-ended questions designed to encourage participation, engagement and constructive debate in addition to conversation starters. The questions and conversation starters were derived as a result of analysis that took place during the initial data collection utilising the semi-structured interviews (Gibbs, 2002). This ensured the participants, although all known to each other, were provided with the time and liberty to express their differing viewpoints openly at the commencement of the focus group session, thus allowing me to probe further (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014).

The focus group questions were:

1. What should schools be doing differently in order to enhance the learning environment for Pasifika learners? (and included conversation starters around teachers knowing the culture of the participants, relationships, teacher personal characteristics / respect, teaching methods / pedagogy, school resources / buildings / cultural artefacts, cultural events / cultural groups / cultural leaders / PolyFest / language weeks , subjects / vocational pathways / language, religious / Church connection(s))
2. What should schools be doing differently in order to better prepare Pasifika learners for success in tertiary institutions?

Data Analysis

This was done by the primary researcher listening to and recording four tertiary (Samoan /Niuean, Tongan, Cook Islands Māori / Māori, and Samoan / Fijian Indian) students' perceptions of the culturally responsive practices they experienced in secondary school using a set of eight interview questions. The face-to-face interviews were semi-structured, with each participant and the primary researcher spending approximately thirty-five minutes together in each of the interviews.

As the research is sequential in design, initial themes identified during the face-to-face interviews informed subsequent discussion topics during the focus group interaction planned which followed. The recordings were translated by a transcriber who signed a confidentiality agreement. Audio recordings of the face-to-face interviews with participants and the focus group interactions were transcribed and made available to the participants for verification.

The method of analysing meaning utilised in this research is the process of breaking down the text and the identification of key words relating to categories or codes (Miles, Huberman & Saldanha, 2014). The categories or codes assigned are used to provide additional meaning, significance and structure to the descriptive stories shared by the participants (Miles et al., 2014). In order to underpin the collaborative, reflective and interpretative nature of the semi-structured interview responses and the focus group interaction in terms of the co-construction of recommendations, a simple colour coding process categorising the responses was developed and is shown in Appendices E and F. In the categorisation of the data, much of the text was retained and allocated a classification according to themes, categories or sub-groupings, some of which overlapped. In most cases responses from the focus group interaction supported and enhanced the individual semi-structured interview case study stories. Themes and categories that emerged from the coding are outlined in the findings and analysis chapter.

Validity

One method of facilitating the validity of qualitative research is to utilise a method of triangulation, preferred in social science study, through a cross verification from two or more sources, allowing the researcher to explain more fully the intricacy of anthropological activities and perceptions of their environments by studying the secondary school experiences of the participants from more than one vantage point (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In this study two research methods were combined, namely semi-structured interviews with each participant and a focus group session with all participants, in order to provide a more thorough, authentic and stable picture of the various scenarios experienced (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). This methodological triangulation process thus served the purpose of minimising potential limitations in the research due to the position of the researcher in the process, the potential for bias in the transcription and interpretation and served to strengthen the validity of the individual accounts and various other aspects of the research (Gibbs, 2002). Further to this participants were provided with their specific meeting and conference transcripts, the initial themes identified and draft copies of the findings shared.

Potential benefits and outcomes

One of the purposes of the focus group session was to allow for the participants to reflect on their secondary experiences and to offer recommendations for future consideration and inquiry that may

be of use to educational researchers, leaders, teachers, the community, parents and students alike. In the categorisation of the positive recommendations, as seen in Appendix F, again much of the text was retained and allocated a classification according to themes. In most cases responses from the focus group interaction supported, validated and enhanced the earlier perceptions as shared by the participants in their semi-structured interviews. Themes and categories that emerged from the coding are outlined in the findings and conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR - Findings

This chapter presents the personal accounts and perspectives of Seini, Sonya, Ngaera and Aya of their personal secondary school experiences, taking into account their private recollections, emotions and perceptions of the unique pedagogical, structural, curriculum, relational and pastoral features that have influenced their success and tertiary study choices. Each section within the chapter restates each participant's response to the questions in Appendix A.

Seini

Personal background:

Seini indicated that she is currently in her third year of studies at a tertiary institution in Auckland. She is Tongan born, and is full Tongan, having immigrated to New Zealand at the age of one. Both her mother and father completed their secondary education in Tonga and then immigrated to New Zealand in the 1980's. Her mother is an educational professional with a Masters' degree in Education and both her parents are and have been very supportive of her education choices. The family speak both English and Tongan language at home and she attended a number of Auckland schools which were predominantly Pasifika. The final secondary school she attended was a school with a special Christian character.

School experiences:

Seini felt it was very important for her that her teachers "know something about me and my culture", as that would have ensured that they generated an environment in which she felt sufficiently "comfortable to learn" and would have created a bond between teacher and student. In addition it would have created opportunities for Seini and teachers to engage both and in and outside the narrow confines of a classroom. She personally preferred teachers who were respectful of her, of her culture and spoke in softer tones which would result in her respecting "theirs back".

Seini valued the additional tuition that was offered at school, including lunch break and after school sessions, and particularly "one-on-one" interactions which were very helpful. Teachers who included "videos, activities or games" and endeavoured to "balance out the teacher speaking and the engagement of students" created a "very good learning environment" for her and ensured that "everyone is included in class".

Seini grew up in a religious family, and although not Catholic, felt that it was very important to her to be surrounded by religious artefacts which included statues, photos, paintings, altars and other items that symbolised the Church. Prayers were conducted at the start and end of every day and a school chapel was available next door for student and class group use before, during and after school. Although her school population was predominantly made up of Pasifika students, there were very few if any “cultural artefacts”, but the presence of religious artefacts more than made up for the “lack of cultural stuff”. Seini did indicate however that a number of students at her school were not Catholic or religious and in fact were “really negative towards a lot of things” and that it “brought the atmosphere down” and that it was “really unnecessary”.

Seini’s school promoted PolyFest involvement every second year, significant Cultural Days and the celebration of Language Weeks, such as Tongan and Samoan Language Week. She indicated that these events were “very important for everyone” because “there was something to look forward to out of the ordinary”, although they were all done outside of school hours but that “even though it happened it still wasn’t too prioritised”. Language Weeks were not really celebrated at her school, except in passing during an Assembly at the beginning of the week, “but there’s nothing really done”. In addition other service groups such as SADD (Students against Drunk Driving), World Vision and Amnesty International promoted activities during Lunch Break and were helpful in raising awareness and engaging the students as well.

Seini was particularly drawn to Statistics and Geography at school and wanted to combine the two subjects in a career, and after much research and obtaining guidance from career advisors, Seini made the decision to study Urban Planning. She also took History and English to Year 13 at school and these subjects assisted her at tertiary level as well. Seini studied Tongan language from Year 9 to Year 11, and then upon receiving advice from her mother, decided to select other subjects in Years 12 and 13, as she could continue her study of Tongan language at home. She did feel however that studying Tongan language at school had benefitted her and created a “foundation” for her to go on to study other subjects.

In terms of the contextualisation of topics and resources, this was limited and mainly occurred in History, with a focus on Pasifika peoples, especially the Samoan people, which she easily related to. However in Geography topics appeared to focus on other areas with very little significance to The

Pacific Islands or New Zealand. She shared that it was not important for tasks, assessments or lessons to be contextualised or related to her culture as long as all Pasifika cultures were respected.

In terms of teaching pedagogy and the delivery of the curriculum, Seini indicated that she did not like group activities at school and still does not like group work preferring “individual” and “teacher-student” or one-on-one engagement.

Other factors:

Seini felt it was very important for her teachers to know her “culturally”, as that would have ensured that they generated an environment in which she felt sufficiently “comfortable to learn. Seini felt that the closeness of the relationships she had with her teachers at school “was just right” and would not have wanted them to be more familiar or to play a role in her life outside of school hours. Her preference was for a teacher who displayed respect not just for her, ‘but towards everyone else as well’.

Recommendations:

From the focus group Seini raised the following suggestions as recommendations. She felt that participation in the Language Weeks, especially “either Tongan or Samoan” would have ‘brought students together more and made students more aware of each other’s cultures. She shared that studying her Tongan cultural language at school “helped a lot”. Seini also shared that she would recommend that prayers and religious events be incorporated into the school curriculum and daily activities as she feels that retaining the religious connections and values you already practise at home is important. She also felt that the provision of cultural meeting place like a Whare / Fale would be a means of bringing “students together more”. Seini indicated that it would be very helpful if schools developed “safe spaces” like a Tuākana⁹ Room where students of different cultures could congregate together and could support each other academically and emotionally to succeed.

⁹ Tuākana in Māori culture refers to the elder brothers (of a male), elder sisters (of a female) or cousins of the same gender from a more senior branch of the family

Sonya

Personal background:

Sonya explained that she is currently in her third year of an Urban Planning degree and attended a private Christian school in central Auckland with a majority Pākehā population. She is New Zealand born and comes from a bicultural home with a Niuean mother and a Samoan father, who both immigrated to New Zealand as adults. Her mother emigrated in the 1980's and her parents met in New Zealand. Both Sonya's parents have post graduate degrees and are currently employed in the education sector in New Zealand.

School experiences:

Sonya indicated that she felt that it was important for her that her teachers did have some knowledge of her cultural background as that would enable them to understand the different ways in she may learn and digest knowledge. As a result she indicated that she had an expectation that they may be able to introduce different teaching styles to match her learning style.

She suggested that a teacher's sense of humour and his / her ability to "handle" her would ensure a better connection and that she therefore found it much easier to engage and learn in that type of environment, especially if it was a "fun" situation. Sonya selected a number of subjects that incorporated "more practical rather than theory" activities, such as Art and Music, as she found that her engagement increased in those lessons and she found them "more interesting", as opposed to a more theoretical delivery of information.

In addition Sonya indicated that cultural artefacts and the display of culturally relevant visual material were not present at her school at all, possibly due to the fact there were a very small number of Pasifika and Māori students. Her school did not provide opportunities for the Pasifika students to participate in PolyFest because it "clashed with something", but did hold special Cultural Day(s) for the students perhaps once a year, such as "fiafia night"¹⁰.

Sonya explained:

My school did not participate in Polyfest. They found that the academic part was more important than that and we did have cultural days, but I feel like it was really controlled. I

¹⁰ The word fiafia is used in the Pacific Islands such as Tonga and Samoa to denote a "celebration".

feel like those cultural days was [sic] the only days that Pacific Island students and Maori students were able to express their culture because other than those two days of the year. She felt that the school and teachers only made an effort to “acknowledge our heritage when it benefitted them”.

In terms of pathways only academic courses were available so the participant selected Geography, which was really important to her, and Music. Sonya indicated that in terms of contextualised assessments and tasks, she was allowed to make her own choices for Music pieces as long as the teacher agreed with the selection. Unfortunately only westernised topics were available in all other subjects and she did not experience any evidence of her own culture. Te Reo Māori language was compulsory in Years Nine and Ten, and students had very little choice in the matter, and it was not their selected cultural language.

In terms of group work, she indicated that she did not think “it’s really for me”, but that due to smaller classes in some subjects she found it was easier to engage with the teachers during “open discussion” and this enabled teachers to become more “approachable” which she “enjoyed”.

Sonya also attended a Catholic school and Religious Education was taught but sometimes in a manner in which the teachers were “aggressive” and “forced religion onto us”. However, she felt that Pacific Islanders at her school did identify with their religion and did “feel a connection with their church” and school and that she did “sometimes” enjoy the Religious Education lessons.

Other factors:

Sonya explained that she connected to a greater degree with teachers who “challenged” her, found it “easy” to learn in that type of teaching environment and wanted “to learn more”. She indicated that this arose from her upbringing which involved a number of “strong women” and any educators who not challenge her sufficiently or did not exhibit that “authority”, she simply did not respect as much. In addition due to her school being a very unfamiliar setting, it took her approximately two years to “get familiar with my school environment”, but subsequently it did eventually become her “second home” and did support her to achieve.

Recommendations:

From the focus group Sonya raised the following suggestions as recommendations. She felt that although Pasifika students were a very small minority in her school she felt “it would have been nice for the teachers to incorporate a little bit more of our culture into our learning or into more events at school” in terms of acknowledgement. She still may have elected not to have participated but would have definitely attended “to go and support my school and for everyone to know that there are PI’s at my school”. She indicated that a simple acknowledgement of the islands of origin of the Pasifika students, like appropriate island flags, would be “nice”. Sonya indicated that schools and career Advisors do need to promote a wider variety of degrees to their students who are of Pasifika backgrounds, so that more students can access less “stereotypical” degrees like Architecture, Urban Planning and not just Physical Education and Health for example.

Sonya experienced “a culture shock” and felt a disconnect and “uncomfortable” with other Pasifika students at university initially, as she was lead to believe that she was not “islander” enough. Incorporating more discussions about culture in class, hosting cultural events and recognising the importance of one’s culture would have assisted her to prepare more thoroughly for and to integrate more easily into university.

Ngaera

Personal background:

Ngaera shared that she is currently studying for an Honours degree at a university in Auckland. She is also New Zealand born with a mother who recognises herself as Cook Island Māori (with a Cook Island Māori father and a Māori mother) and a father who is a mix of Māori and New Zealand Pākehā, but Ngaera stressed that she identifies herself as simply Cook Island Māori. Her father completed a trade qualification and her mother has a partial tertiary qualification. She speaks English at home and attended two different public schools in New Zealand: the first with a population that was predominantly Pākehā, and the second predominantly Pasifika.

School experiences:

Ngaera indicated that she felt that it was important for her that her teachers did have some knowledge of her cultural background as that created “more of a connection” with the teachers, which enabled her to see them as people and to appreciate the relationships she enjoyed with them as “persons”. She recalled having really good relationships with her teachers at both schools she

attended. Ngaera referred to a particular teacher who had displayed an interest in her personally, where she was “going” and the schools she had attended. She found this teacher “real helpful”, mainly because they understood each other and could “joke around with each other”.

In terms of teaching pedagogy Ngaera enjoyed engaging with and being involved with the delivery of the learning material by being asked to “get up and write on the board” and being involved “practically”. She enjoyed less “talking from the teacher” during curriculum delivery, more “laptop work”, “students getting up and speaking and watching videos”. She found this method of teaching very useful and not at all “bad, because everyone was doing it”.

Ngaera elected not to participate in Polyfest in her first secondary school, as it was “a European based type school”, and she did not feel “connected that well”, but she was far more comfortable participating in Polyfest in her “second high school being predominantly Pasifika, like 95 %”. She felt that participation in cultural events, when done “real well” served to stop “the discrimination between each other” due to a “range of different cultures” being celebrated and acknowledged, that it was “helpful and engaging” and served to create “close relationships with each other”. She did derive benefit at both schools having Cultural Leaders, and the only difference was the numbers in the various cultural groups.

In terms of the building design and layout she enjoyed the large window design and “space”, and being able to see other students, which enabled her to “feel comfortable and at ease” and not “contain [sic] as students”. She appreciated the fact and found it “real cool” that some teachers did display posters containing Pasifika patterns and words with which she could identify and assisted her to feel comfortable in her learning environment. Cultural artefacts included a Whare at both schools and the presence of the Pacific Island flags which “made it comfortable and engaging just seeing those things at the school”. Ngaera did not attend church although a large number of students at her school did, but there were no connections at her school with church or religion.

In “late Year 12” Ngaera came across Urban Planning as a career on the CareersNZ website, and appreciated how it “involved Geography and Economics” so therefore selected those two subjects for study in Year 13. She also indicated that she took Fashion Design as a subject at school, and enjoyed the “physical” side of the subject and how it connected her to her cultural heritage, which assisted her to win a university designer T-shirt competition. Ngaera shared that she has not “really

let go” of the Fashion Design aspect yet and is still currently engaged in the subject. In History lessons she recalled learning about the New Zealand Springbok Tour events and enjoyed and valued the connection to her culture. In addition she was able to study Te Reo Māori at her previous school in quite a large class and did actually enjoy it.

Other factors:

Ngaera indicated that she had one teacher who she got to know really well, and that assisted her to “stay on track” with her school work, but she was the “only one”. Generally though, she respected all teachers she came across, not necessarily because of a specific characteristic that they may have exhibited, but because they were instrumental in getting her “on the right track”. In turn she feels that they respected her.

Recommendations:

From the focus group Ngaera raised the following suggestions as recommendations. She emphasised that mutual respect between teachers and learners is important and that teachers who show an interest in and invest in students individually is particularly valued by students.

Ngaera found that if teachers involved their students in lessons through a variety of activities such as through presentations by students, discussion groups and “hands-on” creative design activities then students found learning “fun” and engaging. In addition the inclusion of a Whare, cultural artefacts and Pacific Island flags, of the various countries of origin of the students and their families, ensured she felt connected and comfortable. She felt that the provision of a number of cultural languages from which students could select would serve to assist them access the University Entrance criteria, enabling them to further their studies at a tertiary institution. Ngaera appreciated how teachers who were not of Pasifika heritage made the effort to “know the Pacific Island culture” and she would recommend this as it assists teachers to connect to the students and thus makes it “even more helpful for the kids to connect back to the teacher”.

Aya

Personal development:

Aya shared that she is in her third year of study at a tertiary institution in Auckland and is not New Zealand born, having moved to New Zealand from Fiji in 2000 when she was four years of age. Her

mother is full Samoan and her father Fijian and Fijian Indian and they speak three languages at home: Hindi, Samoan and English. Her parents are both professionals with degrees and are employed in leadership positions in New Zealand industries. She attended a Muslim school in Auckland essentially to learn more about her own religion, access a suitable culturally appropriate curriculum, and to mix with students from a similar culture. Her parents are very supportive of her chosen pathway.

School experiences:

Aya appreciated attending a school where the majority of the teachers had a similar culture to her own, “prioritised” education and shared the same values. She valued those teachers who made the effort to get to know her better, “became a friend first”, attempted to build a relationship with her and dealt appropriately with her needs, culture and behaviour. With regard to her teachers she appreciated those who were “really humble”, shared their “life experiences” and “pushed”, “motivated” and believed in her and ensured she reached her goal in a very challenging and competitive environment.

Aya valued the time teachers spent on revision, assisting students at Lunchtime and after hours by requesting that students email any questions they may have. This reinforced and “repeated the stuff” that had been learned the day before and, along with classroom pedagogy that included illustrations and the use of videos and other multi-media resources, ensured that she retained information and learned more. Senior students were provided access to the computer labs and the school Library and thus spent any spare time mostly doing school work, although new classrooms were being built to accommodate them. Aya also indicated that as she got older “basically group work became less” and independent work was promoted and adopted by the students as “everyone was working for their own selves”.

She also shared that she enjoyed learning about other students’ cultures which were different to hers and that teachers should “make them feel more connected and come together”. Her school did not allow students to participate in PolyFest but did allow for one Cultural Week per year. Aya indicated that in fact the students enjoyed “embracing other cultures more” and wished that her school had recognised the fact and utilised it in a constructive manner, instead of telling them what they “should be concentrating on”.

Aya indicated that she valued the various clubs at the school, particularly for Sports, Drama and Culture, which enabled students to openly share their culture, food and “daily lives” with each other. In essence her school had one large Hall utilised mainly for Assemblies, but very few cultural artefacts as the school curriculum and ethos was dominated by one religion. Aya shared that religious activities were woven into her school day with prayers taking place before school, during Assemblies, between breaks and just before leaving school at the end of the day. She felt that it contributed positively although only if you were practising the religion at home.

Initially she wished to pursue a career in Interior Design but was eventually persuaded by her brother, an Architect, to consider Urban Planning. As a result she enrolled in a Graphics course through correspondence, determined to show her teachers that she could succeed, and also studied Physics, Religious Education, History, Mathematics and English. She felt strongly that female students were still to some extent pushed to pursue the usual gender orientated careers, like Nursing and Medicine, instead of being exposed to new pathways created by technological advances and a changing economy. To a limited degree her History studies included learning about the Samoan culture, although her knowledge of the culture was inadequate, and in Graphics she was provided with opportunities to express her Samoan cultural side through design. The Religious Education lessons focused on Islam only and the only language on offer was Arabic which was compulsory.

Other factors:

Aya did experience strong support from her parents and brother in terms of her academics, selected subjects and tertiary studies pathway. She too related really well to a few teachers in school who knew her growing up, knew her family values and took the initiative to find out how she learned. She keenly sought out these teachers for guidance and they played an active role in her life. Aya felt that all her teachers exhibited positive characteristics but did favour “higher achievers”. She felt that all students would have respected them a little more if they had shown the same interest in all students.

Recommendations:

From the focus group Aya raised the following suggestions as recommendations. She suggested that schools should allow for the acknowledgement of cultural festivals and Language Week celebrations so that students can engage further with their various cultures and learn and share their cultures

with other students. She also valued the contribution learning a language can make but felt that it should not be compulsory and a variety of languages matching the students' cultural backgrounds should be on offer. Aya indicated that she has been able to utilise the Tuākana Room at her university and would recommend that schools develop similar spaces where students can gather, connect with each other and 'share the same ideas and experiences'.

CHAPTER FIVE – Discussion of findings

The ensuing chapter offers a critical enquiry, understanding and clarification emanating from the research outcomes, and aligns them to pertinent literature and other investigations in the arena of Pasifika pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching and learning. It includes a comparative analysis of the case-studies that interprets and synthesises similarities and dissimilarities in the individual participant findings. The chapter is structured according to the coding classifications that have developed from the participants' interpretations and contributions in regards to the semi-structured interview research questions and the focus group interactions.

The overarching theme that emerged, and was echoed by all participants, was the sentiment of “connectedness” and resonance with their secondary study environment which determined the degree to which they were able to develop reciprocal relationships with their teachers and access further understanding of the educational material on offer to them. This is supported by Macfarlane et al., (2007) in their research on the practices that support the creation of culturally-safe learning environments for Māori students “that enable students to be who and what they are”, (p. 65). Macfarlane et al., (2007) emphasise the importance of the acknowledgement that relational and scholarly learning form a symbiotic relationship and co-dependency evident from birth through to one's mature years.

Generally most participants identified an acknowledgement of themselves as valued individuals in terms of feeling “comfortable” and indicated that the following aspects were “helpful” in their learning journey: the importance of respectful, caring relationships and teacher cultural capital, the provision of cultural support and language opportunities, practical and engaging subjects, lessons, tasks and culturally relevant classroom pedagogies and the link and emotional sustenance offered by religious and cultural artefacts and activities.

Connectedness

Respectful and caring relationships

In terms of their personal educational journeys in the secondary school space each of the participants emphasised the importance of the relationships they developed with their teachers. Interestingly both Ngaera and Aya shared that they envisaged a relationship with their teachers that

went above and beyond the accepted version of a teacher – student relationship, as society distinguishes it, in the traditional sense. Both of them suggested that teachers should not be merely teachers but should develop into “friends” or real “people” who display an interest in their students as individuals. They also spoke of this relationship growth as a developmental process between the teacher and the student, where you genuinely “share” with and take an “interest” in each other, and that, given time, will result in a “helpful”, “comfortable” and positive partnership. This is echoed by Hill and Hawk (2000) who emphasise the importance of reciprocity and fairness in relationships. These accounts link to literature about relationships among teachers and students identified by Macfarlane et al., (2007) and which explicitly state that preferably relationships with students should emphasise welcoming each student, creating a special bond and assisting individual students to feel positive about their education, providing constructive advice, treating them equitably and justly and “making it fun”, (p. 70). This is supported by Alton-Lee (2003) who noted that the teacher’s capacity to inspire and encourage students was a substantial factor in inducing effective teaching and learning.

Seini and Sonya valued reciprocity of respect, but felt that as long as all cultures in the classroom were equally respected by the teacher, then they would feel in a position to respect the teacher’s culture in return. They indicated that they were not intent on seeking additional respect or further recognition, but merely equity of admiration, opportunity and acknowledgment. These responses augment potential understanding of earlier studies which support constructivism as a teaching philosophy, whereby discovering and honouring what learners can do, creating a learning atmosphere based on trust and reciprocal relationships, allow students to feel relaxed and comfortable in their learning environment (Macfarlane et al., 2007). Sonya particularly valued “humour” in the development of the teacher – student relationship, including the presence of “fun” in lessons, and indicated that it assisted her to form respectful and closer relationships with her teachers. The importance of humour when engaging with Pasifika students is supported by Hill and Hawk (2000) who also found that the presence of humour served to lessen anxiety levels in students.

Both Aya and Sonya made a point in the focus group activity of referencing those teachers who exhibited ‘tough love’ and challenged them to achieve above and beyond potentially what they had envisaged for themselves. They voiced that they valued and counted on teachers who believed in them, “motivated” them and “pushed” them to achieve, and did not accept less than their best. This view aligns with that of Bishop and Berryman (2010) and Hill and Hawk (2000) who suggest that

teachers and leaders may meet the needs of all learners and communities by raising expectations and thus academic accomplishment. Sonya went one step further and shared that she did not respect teachers who did not challenge her as an individual, as she was accustomed to the influences of strong characters in her aiga¹¹. Ladson-Billings (1995) indicates that culturally aware teachers consider all students to be proficient learners and that it is crucial that teachers emphasise high expectations for scholars of all cultural clusters and assess their students as capable of positive academic outcomes. Aya felt that teachers who challenged and “believed” in her were important partners in the “tough times” during the journey towards her goal of outstanding achievement and attending university, and she needed them in her life in order to realise her and her family’s dreams for her. This view is supported by Santamaria and Santamaria (2014) who propose that academic leaders should “advocate for students, setting high standards for themselves, their teachers and students”, (p. 354) and ought to promote extraordinary academic attainment.

Teacher Cultural Capital

Three of the participants agreed that it was important for teachers to have some understanding and knowledge of their students’ cultural backgrounds because they “learn differently”. Seini shared that in her opinion teacher cultural capital enabled her to form closer bonds with her teachers, which then allowed for further engagement both inside and outside the classroom. This perception is in alignment with Ladson-Billings (1995) who found that culturally responsive pedagogy includes confirmation and appreciation of prior cultural learning practices and a universal focus on the complete learner. Interestingly Seini, Ngaera and Aya all indicated that the most important reason was so that teachers would then be in a position to adapt their pedagogy and ways of engaging with their students, according to their cultural group, which would subsequently enable them to provide appropriate lesson delivery and learning experiences. This was important to the three participants as they all made reference to having different learning styles, methods of absorbing and retaining information and values. This is supported by Gay (2002) who emphasised that culturally responsive instruction uses the ethnic familiarities, perceptions and individualities of culturally dissimilar learners as vehicles for engaging with them more efficiently and successfully.

In the focus group interaction, Sonya made very little reference to the cultural capital of her teachers, except to say that generally her teachers’ cultural awareness was “equally muted” or

¹¹ Aiga is the Samoan word for ‘family’ but differs from the Western sense in that it includes extended family as well.

negligible. This was possibly due to the fact that she attended a school where she was encouraged to fit in with other more dominant cultural groupings, instead of being recognised as a unique cultural individual. Blair (2002) cautions that many teachers have only slight or no awareness or experience of the diverse cultural circumstances of the learners in their care, and are thus not in a position to analytically reflect on their own typecasts and traditional expectations. Sonya did indicate however that she felt it was as important for the teachers to acknowledge and understand her culture as it was for herself to acknowledge her roots.

Engaging Subject Offerings, Lessons, Pedagogy and Practical Experiences

Two of the participants, Seini and Aya, emphasised the value of one-on-one opportunities for engaging with their teachers. They felt that the additional time certain teachers invested in them was particularly “helpful” in developing constructive, collaborative learning relationships and encouraged them to overcome academic challenges they may have been experiencing in understanding or completing work. This is supported by McAllister and Irvine (2002) who note in their research of practicing teachers in the United States, that educators who exhibited empathy towards their students were able to create additional constructive connections and participate in and student centred pedagogy, thus generating sympathetic learning environments. Generally the additional support the students received from their teachers assisted them to revise, retain information, complete assessments on time and maintain responsibility for their learning, by being offered opportunities to ask questions and inquire about their progress either through email or face-to-face encounters. Larrivee (2000) advocated that having “power with” in lieu of “power over” students, began with teacher self-analysis, inquiry and consciousness, and not with the students themselves.

It was interesting to note that in terms of lesson delivery and teaching pedagogy all four participants made mention of the need and desire to be engaged with the lesson material in various ways, other than through the delivery of theory lessons. They appeared to value a balanced approach in terms of the learning activities, such as the inclusion of multi-media, videos, practical work, drawing, games and simulations. Sonya and Ngaera, particularly, preferred more of a practical and “physical” approach and the creation of interesting lessons, which encouraged them to want to learn and listen further. Ngaera went further and suggested that when teachers asked students questions and encouraged them to stand up at the board and share their contributions and answers with the rest

of the class, learning became more relevant, meaningful and engaging. This view is supported by Knight-de-Blois and Poskitt (2016) who in a study asked Samoan teenagers for their input concerning what assisted them to be successful, and the students indicated that encouraging teacher behaviour, interesting and inspiring lessons and teachers valuing the diverse cultures of their students were key for them.

In terms of subject selection and engagement three of the four participants indicated that Geography was a subject that they really enjoyed at secondary school and prepared them more than adequately for university. Ngaera and Sonya found that they were stimulated by and interested in subjects that provided a practical and creative component: Ngaera in Fashion Design and Sonya in Music lessons. These subjects enabled them to engage in a manner that connected them to their culture, built on their prior learning and natural talent and allowed them to feel comfortable and subsequently to excel. Both Ngaera and Aya enjoyed learning History as there were opportunities to learn more about and to connect with Māori and Pasifika culture in a relevant and respectful way. This view aligns with that of Robinson et al., (2010) who affirm that encouraging outcomes are connected with curriculum topics, standards and tasks that access pertinent community and traditional proficiency and resources. Further to this Siteine (2010) acknowledges that when teachers act as cultural mediators they have the capacity, through making familial associations to places of derivation for their students, to confirm and uphold the ethnic distinctiveness of peers and to assist students to recognize that they are dissimilar and to value their own and ethnic differences. Interestingly three of the four participants: Seini (Statistics), Aya (Graphics) and Ngaera (Economics) also valued subjects that included graphics, diagrams and interpretation involving visual stimulation other than text.

Religious / Cultural Connections and Artefacts

In terms of religious and cultural artefacts each participant shared very unique, interesting and contrasting perceptions.

Seini, having grown up in a religious family, valued the presence of religious artefacts in her school as, although she attended a mainly Pasifika school, there were no Pasifika artefacts present. The emphasis was on religious artefacts to draw students closer to their spiritual side rather than their cultural affiliation. This included the presence of altars, statues, photos, paintings and a chapel, and

religious activities and ceremonies formed part of the daily routines and structure. This enabled Seini to feel supported and comfortable in her learning environment and aligned with her values and standards.

Sonya, on the other hand, came from a religious family background and also attended a religious school, but found that the manner in which Religious Education was delivered to the students, in a very rigid format where it was “forced” upon students, almost hindered her development and need for a familiar connection to her learning environment, although she did “sometimes” enjoy Religious Education. The view that the role and principles of the church are intertwined with that of education is referenced by Tupuola (1999) in terms of the Christian tenet of fa’asamoa which includes behaviours, discipline based on obedience and a foundation of respect for church and family conventions. In fact her school displayed no artefacts of cultural significance for their minority Māori and Pasifika students and as a result Sonya shared that it took her almost two years to settle into a safe space where she felt comfortable in her now familiar surroundings. But she did reinforce that once she did relax into her new environment it became particularly important in her life, in terms of the friends and “connections” she did make at school, as she lived quite far away.

Ngaera shared that at her school teachers did make an effort to display items of cultural significance, mostly limited to Pasifika patterns and language posters which she appreciated. But for her the most important aspect of the buildings was the presence of large windows, enabling her to feel “comfortable and at ease” in that the students were not “contained” and limited by the structures. She enjoyed being able to connect with the outside spaces.

Aya attended a religious school, selected for her by her parents, so that she would engage with her culture and religion in New Zealand. Although artefacts representing her religion were in fact not present at the school, the emphasis placed on learning the compulsory language, religious rituals and ceremonies was very entrenched and essentially dictated the structure of the school day and activities. As a result she felt very comfortable in her learning environment as it mirrored her family values and routines.

Language and Cultural Opportunities

Seini and Ngaera both shared that their schools provided opportunities for them to participate in the annual PolyFest event, and that this generated opportunities for them to not only engage with their cultures and peers, but also stimulated excitement, pride and a sense of belonging. Although mostly the rehearsals were conducted after school hours, they enjoyed the camaraderie, the “tight and close relationships” formed and learning about other cultures as well. Siteine (2010) supports the above view shared by the participants in that it is suggested that “ethnic identity was validated through students’ teaching, learning and performing songs and dances from their ethnic groups” (p. 3). Seini was the only student who in the focus group interaction made mention of a Language Week, to celebrate her Tongan Language, but indicated that it was mostly a low key event announced in Assembly at the start of the week, but not reinforced in terms of events or special activities.

On the other hand Aya and Sonya shared with the group that they were not provided with opportunities to share in PolyFest activities at their schools, but were afforded opportunities, perhaps on just one or a couple of days a year at the most, to celebrate their culture. Aya and Sonya’s accounts were consistent with research by Banks (2002) who warned that a curriculum subjugated by Eurocentric principles and ethos may negatively affect students because they may perceive the learning environment to be foreign, intimidating and frightening, with little to offer the student in terms of positive engagement and encouragement. Aya indicated that she really enjoyed the Cultural Days and activities, as although most of the students practised the same religion, in fact they came from very different cultural backgrounds. The activities which promoted and encouraged a sharing of food, cultural rituals and dress codes, enabled the students to get to know each other, and to celebrate similarities and differences.

Sonya, in the focus group, noted that the single annual cultural day or event such as “fiafia night” (covering a maximum of two days) at her school was the only time in the year afforded Māori and Pasifika students to be able to “express their culture”, and therefore it was “very important for them”. She also mentioned that she felt that sometimes the creation of cultural opportunities was “controlled” or manufactured, not for the benefit of the Māori or Pasifika students, but for the benefit of the rest of the students. As a result Sonya indicated that she would definitely have valued the inclusion of more genuine and frequent cultural opportunities and acknowledgement so that

valuable connections could have been made with students of all cultural groupings. This view is echoed by Hill and Hawk (2000) who warn of the effect of only recognising Pasifika students when required to illustrate topics related to their cultural group(s), and that this approach of theorising about Pasifika depictions unfortunately does not affirm or create a sense of identity for the students concerned.

All four participants shared during the focus group interaction that they had been in part able to learn another cultural language at school, albeit under different circumstances. At Seini's school she valued the opportunity afforded her to learn the Tongan language from Year 9, but decided in Year 12 to take another subject to aid her in securing university entrance. She did however benefit enormously from the experience as it provided her with a good grounding and enabled her to connect with her teacher. Seini therefore indicated that she would like to see the inclusion of the Pasifika languages in schools as option subjects. In the recently released *The Code of Professional Responsibility: Examples in Practice* from the New Zealand Teachers Council (2017), point 2.3 Respecting the diversity of the heritage, language, identity and culture of all learners, mention is made of teachers "using opportunities to build on a learner's home language and culture in the learning setting" (p. 13). On the other hand both Sonya and Ngaera had been forced to take Te Reo Māori language at their schools in Year 9 as a compulsory subject, although it was in fact not their language. They felt however, that they both benefitted from the experience as it was the closest they got to learn their cultural languages, but elected not to continue with the language through senior school. Aya shared in the focus group that she attended a school where the learning of Arabic as a language was compulsory from primary school. She indicated that the compulsory nature of the subject only became problematic in senior school when some students struggled to meet the high expectations and results required to do well, and then they questioned the principle of being forced to take the subject when they could be taking other subjects they may have enjoyed more.

In terms of Cultural Leaders, both Seini and Ngaera experienced the provision of staff members who lead each cultural group, and looked after the cultural and pastoral well-being of the students, which they enjoyed. There was no such provision for Cultural Leaders in Sonya's and Aya's schools as the emphasis was placed on religious affiliation and not cultural diversity. In fact Sonya intimated that this became a stumbling block for her later on at university, as she discovered she was ill prepared culturally and not "island" enough to be accepted into her cultural grouping at university.

Chapter Six - Conclusion

Overview of the research

The purpose of this research has been to examine and survey the pedagogical, structural, curriculum, relational and pastoral factors that explain positive Pasifika educational achievement levels in secondary institutions, facilitating successful transitions into tertiary education in New Zealand. The study included four Pasifika students from different cultural groups who attended different secondary schools in New Zealand and used comparative case-study research, semi-structured interview methods and a focus group interview to enquire, capture and document their personal stories and perceptions of their secondary school experiences. The research was steered by three all-encompassing questions:

1. What are the key components of *culturally responsive* education service provision for Pasifika students in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2. What were the experiences from the perspective of Pasifika students, currently engaged in post-secondary education, who have left school?
3. What practices in Pasifika student secondary schools support the transition of Pasifika students to tertiary education?

The findings chapter documents the shared understandings, personal stories and perceptions of Seini, Sonya, Ngaera and Aya as they recalled their secondary education experiences. In addition in the recounting of their insights, the process provided them with an opportunity to reflect on how those unique, individual experiences and elements have influenced, guided and steered them in terms of their educational journey, to where they are today in their tertiary studies: successful, self-managing tertiary students. The participants' unique recollections and collaborative recommendations will provide a rich database of suggestions and ideas for secondary school leaders in terms of further developing culturally responsive leadership. In addition to this their recommended strategies will assist educators, in terms of developing and constructing appropriate relational and supportive pedagogies suitable for all Pasifika students in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In critiquing, equating and synthesising the stories of the four participants, coding themes and categories emerged that established parallels and variances of perceptions and experiences, some of which can be corroborated by previous studies and literature. However some of the themes provide food for thought and offer unique and fresh perspectives of secondary education in Aotearoa New Zealand. This chapter summarises the findings of the research and offers

recommendations made by the participants in terms of how to improve the systems in schools that would enable students to best connect with their cultures and to utilise their cultural capital to further support positive academic outcomes. It then concludes by relating potential limitations and providing proposals for additional research.

In summary, this investigation found that the single largest contributor to the success of secondary school Pasifika students was their ability to connect to their learning environments, influenced largely by the quality of the relationships they experienced with their teachers. This did not only include the attitudes of the teachers towards them, but the quality of the respect displayed, the acknowledgment of students as distinctive cultural entities and the quantity and quality of time the teachers were prepared to devote to supporting the students to reach their goals. Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests that the formation of associations and connections is an indispensable component in the formation of culturally responsive relationships. Significantly this was revealed to be of much more prominence than the sum of cultural capital a teacher may possess. Although the participants alluded to the fact that it may be helpful if teachers were able to greet and address them in the language of their mother tongue and to possibly have more knowledge of their cultures and communities, supported by research by Waniganayake et al. (2012), it was not of primary importance for them.

In addition the acknowledgement of their individual cultures and languages was particularly important and the promotion of cultural events and opportunities to feel connected to their origins, peers and communities rated very highly. This is supported by research by a number of authors who emphasise the value of recognising students' cultural strengths and then developing suitable pedagogy to enhance their learning experiences (Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Gay, 2002). For those who were affiliated to various religions, in the absence of cultural artefacts and contextualised resources, religion played a significant role, assisting the participants to resonate with their learning environments. All the participants shared that the manner in which the material was presented, including the engagement process with the teacher and the material, was of vital importance, especially the inclusion of practical, verbal, action learning, creative and performance based activities. Interestingly, although the participants enjoyed group work and different pedagogies which assisted them to initially engage with the learning material, most indicated that ultimately they felt that in order to achieve they needed to be afforded the time and space to work independently.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Table 1 summarises the responses shared by the participants in terms of the recommendations they would like to contribute to the study.

Table 1: *Recommendations for leadership and teacher practices in Pasifika student secondary schools to support the transition of Pasifika students to tertiary education?*

Theme	Emerging sub-themes and recommendations	Positive responses			
CONNECTIONS		Seini	Sonya	Ngaera	Aya
	Respectful relationships				
	Display respect for each student as an individual	√	√	√	√
	Teacher personal characteristics	√	√		
	Cultural capital	√	√	√	√
	Display an interest in students and motivate for better results	√		√	√
	Practical and engaging subjects, lessons and pedagogies				
	Contextualised resources	√		√	√
	Group work	√		√	
	Practical work	√	√	√	√
	Student voice	√	√	√	√
	Religious / Cultural connections and artefacts	√		√	
	Religious artefacts	√			
	Cultural artefacts eg. Flags	√	√	√	
	Cultural / language opportunities				
	Polyfest participation	√	√	√	√
	Provision of Cultural Days	√	√	√	√
	Participation in Language Weeks	√			
	Cultural language	√		√	√
	Cultural Leaders	√		√	

Overwhelmingly all four participants shared that the most important factor affecting their success at school were teachers who valued and initiated the presence of mutual respect, displayed an interest in them as unique individuals, were fair in their dealings with all students regardless of their cultural affiliation (Santamaria, Santamaria, Webber & Pearson, 2014) and displayed a sense of where the student was aiming in terms of their academic objectives and future pathways. Three of the four participants shared a preference for strong and challenging teachers who expected more from their students and inspired, stimulated and supported them to set their sights higher than anticipated. This aligns with recommendations made by Bishop et al., (2009) and Alton-Lee (2003) who advise that teachers should identify and allow for the strengths of their students and commit to raising their potential and prospects for improved academic achievement through effective teaching. Invariably this would be accompanied by the provision of one-on-one support for students to achieve their goals.

There was broad agreement, although it was not as important as the showing of mutual respect as outlined above, that there was a preference for teachers with cultural capital, who made the effort to get to know and understand the culture of the participants and greeted the students in their own languages. This is corroborated by Siteine (2010) who contests that “the sensitivity and understanding that teachers need to show to their students is more critical in the affirmation of identity than the factual information or celebratory experiences they may engage in within their classroom programmes” (p. 9). This is further supported by Gay (2002) who suggests that teachers should strive to be ethnically sympathetic and have comprehensive cultural resources and understanding that allows them to recognise and utilise learners’ cultural aptitudes. In addition the participants indicated that texts, tasks and assessments did not have to be contextualised as long as everybody’s culture was respected equally. This extension of respect included the recognition of the importance of and provision and resourcing of the cultural languages as options for students, although they did not suggest that the provision should be compulsory.

The participants advocated quite strongly for pedagogy that involved opportunities for sharing their views, student voice and having open and honest discussions with their teachers. This aligns with research conducted by Ladson-Billings (2001) discovered that African American students preferred teachers who listened to them, showed them respect and stimulated them to make input into their learning. Further to this they really enjoyed a fusion of curriculum presentation strategies where a

balance between theoretical and practical delivery was established, assisting them to engage fully with the resource materials. The participants generally enjoyed the creativity afforded them and opportunities to engage more authentically with culturally relevant material and subjects which drew on their cultural capital, enabling them to connect more genuinely, as suggested by Samu (2006).

All four participants indicated that there was a place for group work and discussions as pedagogies for stimulating interest and engaging students, as suggested by Nakhid (2003) who advocates that student motivation is to a large extent linked to the teaching styles of their educators. However, the participants indicated quite strongly that they ultimately preferred independent work situations in terms of readying themselves for assessments and tertiary study. The participants shared that they valued the provision of safe cultural spaces where students from the same cultural group could work collaboratively before, during and after school, such as cultural break-out or study rooms.

The participants valued the provision of religious artefacts, rituals and events that aligned with their religious upbringing, but three of them did caution against the insistence on compulsory participation and school leaders taking a narrow view of how and when they should practice and attend such functions. It was interesting to note that contrary to research by Macfarlane et al., (2007), the provision of cultural artefacts was hardly mentioned or expected, but when prompted they all agreed that the presence of flags representing their islands of origin would be most welcome.

Significantly all four participants indicated that opportunities to participate in, learn more about their various cultural rituals and festivals and to share their cultural capital with others of the same and different cultures, was possibly one of the most important aspects of any extra-curricular programme at school. This enabled them to enhance their cultural capital, connect with their fellow students and communities and to generally celebrate their unique origins with each other. They all emphasised that these events enabled them to experience a sense of belonging to a particular culture, as opposed to a religious group, and encouraged them to take pride in their ethnic identities. This recommendation is supported by Macfarlane et al., (2007) who in his framework, "The Educultural Wheel" (p. 3) endorses that in order to generate Kotahitanga and inclusiveness, the school is encouraged to create activities that may assist students and their wider communities to feel culturally-safe.

Although it was not a focus of this research, each and every one of the participants gave the distinct impression that they had a strong sense that their parents had very high expectations of them regarding their secondary and tertiary academic outcomes. All of the participants experienced family support and encouragement in terms of the goals that they had set themselves, and failure to achieve those goals was never once referenced in the interviews. In summary it was teachers who invested time in them, confronted and challenged them to be the best version of themselves and who set very challenging goals, who were most valued and appreciated.

Limitations of the research

There are a number of limitations that have emerged from the research design and selection of participants that are significant to deliberate upon.

Firstly the research is based on the recollection of stories and insights of participants during their secondary school years who have now been out of school for a minimum of three years. Therefore the possibility exists that their perceived memories may not be as detailed, accurate or as explicit as they may have been at the time. However the focus group interaction involving the use of further guided questions did serve to validate the participants' contributions as part of a triangulation process.

A supplementary limitation that may exist is that I did not have the time to develop a relationship with the participants over a period of time, and as a result the interpretations I have attached to their recounts may not accurately reflect their perceptions. I am aware that due to the fact that I spent a very limited period of time with each participant, the perceptions and views captured and interpreted by myself are really only an interpretation of an interpretation, a single snapshot in time of the participants' perceived realities.

In addition the study has also been developed and piloted through my viewpoint as a predominantly Western European immigrant to New Zealand. Although I sought guidance from four cultural leaders, and have engaged with the participants using the cultural capital I have cultivated over a period of eight years in New Zealand, I am aware that the possibility exists that due to my cultural background I may have misinterpreted participants' contributions and as a result the possibility of

bias may exist. Subsequently my coding protocol, findings, selection of themes and subsequent analysis and personal experience as a Deputy Principal of an Auckland secondary school may have favoured particular participants or Pasifika cultural groups.

In conclusion leaders and teachers considering the transferability of these outcomes to inform their own classroom practice and pedagogies need to be mindful of the fact that this study is limited due to the small number of four Pasifika participants. Although from a variety of Pasifika cultural groups, who have attended urban schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, and have all successfully transferred to universities to study similar degree courses, in the main, all the participants were raised in Aotearoa New Zealand by parents who are professionals. Therefore their perspectives, experiences and lived realities need to be viewed in that light, as they are not recent arrivals in Aotearoa.

Suggestions for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate and critically explore the pedagogical, structural, curriculum, relational and pastoral factors that explain positive Pasifika educational achievement levels in secondary institutions, facilitating successful transitions into tertiary education in New Zealand. Due to restrictive preceding studies that may have partially investigated some of the above aspects, but with limited student voice or delineation of the various Pasifika cultural groupings, additional research is required in this area to enhance further awareness and understanding of the findings and recommendations that have arisen from this research focus.

This may include an inquiry with a focus on parental expectations and views, community support and the role of the Church or other religious influences on a student's selected academic pathway. Research is especially required that investigates the relationships between school leadership, teachers, parents and students, that may best support positive outcomes for students in terms of successfully transitioning from secondary to tertiary levels of study. It is recommended that further enquiry into this topic be conducted through other cultural lenses and methodologies.

In this area of inquiry, utilising student voice to guide and enhance culturally responsive teaching practice, further benefit may be derived from more robust studies involving larger numbers of Pasifika students, whereby the students should be encouraged to assist leaders and staff to develop strategies and experiences which would develop characteristics of social justice, compassion,

understanding and care in teacher and student relationships. This may include exploring particular aspects of practice as outlined in each of the coding categories and themes, how the strategies may be learned and presented in the classroom and how educators and students may benefit from the experiences.

Further to this the study highlighted the importance of the church, spirit and religious artefacts for some of the participants and also recognized that there was little exploration in this area that could assist and direct teachers in this regard.

Final conclusion

This research has acknowledged the significance of the various factors affecting the academic performance of Pasifika students in secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially with regards to their ability to feel connected, comfortable and safe in their learning environments. The study highlights the importance of teacher student relationships and the manner in which teachers seek to engage with their students. Significantly all the participants indicated that the single largest contributor to their success was the quality of the relationships they enjoyed with their teachers: respectful acknowledgement of themselves as unique cultural persons, an awareness of their state of being, the provision of support to assist them to realise their personal goals and the desire to get to know them independently of others with one-on-one assistance when required. Finally, this research recognises the tremendous amount of work that has been and still needs to be done, especially in the area of professional development for teachers who teach Pasifika students. During this period of reflection, strategizing and the development of suitable resources, it is vital that the contribution of student voice be acknowledged as a critical part of the process towards developing culturally appropriate and sensitive learning environments and practices.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questions for Interviews and Focus Group

Indicative Questions for Interviews and Focus Group

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

A. Individual face-to-face Interviews questions:

1. Why is it important to you that your teacher know something about you and your culture when they teach you?
2. What personal characteristics of a teacher ensure you respect them and want to learn more from them?
3. Which teaching methods employed by teachers in your lessons help you learn, understand and retain important information / processes?
4. Which teaching methods utilised by teachers in your lessons help you engage and want to learn more?
5. Which aspects of the school buildings, layout or resources assisted you to feel comfortable in your learning environment?
6. Which aspects of the school organisational structure, communication, cultural events and opportunities, clubs, mentoring opportunities and committees assisted you to feel safe, secure, supported and included in your learning environment?
7. Which aspects / subjects / vocational pathways offered at school served to prepare you for success in your learning and your selected career path?
8. Which aspects / subjects / vocational pathways offered at school built on your prior cultural knowledge and awareness and assisted you to engage in a comfortable and affirmed manner thereby affording you opportunities to contribute and share your understanding and experiences?

B. Sub-Questions for focus group discussion:

1. What should schools be doing differently in order to enhance the learning environment for Pasifika learners?
2. What should schools be doing differently in order to better prepare Pasifika learners for success in tertiary institutions?

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

The logo for AUT (Auckland University of Technology) is displayed in white text on a black rectangular background.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Information Sheet

17 May 2017

Project Title:

Perceptions of culturally responsive practices: Secondary school learning experiences of past students

An Invitation

I invite you to participate in this study, which is being undertaken by Shauna Eldridge. The study will examine the perceptions of past secondary school student experiences (by tertiary students) with special regard to teacher pedagogy and teaching style, relationships, pastoral, cultural and structural support, curriculum and course offerings. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences. This research will contribute to a Master in Educational Leadership qualification.

What is the purpose of this research?

To interpret Pasifika voice through the reflective perspectives of past secondary school students who are now adults and have successfully completed their schooling by achieving the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) to level three. I will examine their accounts of their past experiences of schooling and critically explore with a focus on any pedagogical, structural, curriculum, relational, cultural and pastoral factors that supported their achievement. It is my intention that the research findings, focus group interactions and recommendations may lead to further identification and development of school practices that contribute to raising the engagement and achievement of Pasifika secondary school students. The results of the research may be published in appropriate journals and presented at relevant conferences.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Pasifika students who have successfully transitioned from secondary schooling into tertiary educational institutions are being invited to participate in this study. Prospective participants must also be aged twenty years and over. I shall only be inviting prospective participants who have elected to remain in touch with me upon completion of their secondary schooling.

What will happen in this research?

This research consists of two parts:

Each participant will be initially required to participate in a forty-five minute to one hour interview with the primary researcher during which time a set of eight questions will be asked and responses sought. The questions focus on the relational, pedagogical, cultural, pastoral, structural and curriculum aspects of secondary school experiences in New Zealand.

The second part of the research will involve a focus group during which the four participants (each from a different Pasifika cultural group) will share, discuss and validate common themes that may have arisen during the interviews. Following this, participants will be requested to contribute some recommendations to further enhance the creation of culturally responsive learning environments for Pasifika students. This will be done through a co-analysis and co-construction process with the primary researcher.

What are the discomforts and risks?

I do not anticipate any discomforts or risks for participants in participating in the interviews or focus group discussions. The responses shall remain completely anonymous and there is no ability to identify participants.

What are the benefits?

Benefits to participants: There may potentially be no immediate benefit for the individual research participants beyond assisting in research. However, participating in the interview and focus group discussions, identifying themes and contributing recommendations will serve to assist teachers, Pasifika students and their communities in New Zealand to better provide suitable culturally responsive systems in secondary schools in the future.

Benefit to researchers: The findings of this study will give the researcher an indication of the perceived value and importance of culturally responsive initiatives held by Pasifika secondary school students. The primary researcher will also attain a Master in Educational Leadership qualification.

How will my privacy be protected?

The participants shall remain anonymous through the use of generic identification, for example Participant A, B, C and D. However they may be identified anonymously as part of a specific Pasifika cultural grouping. All outcomes will only refer to aggregated or de-identified responses. The anonymised data will be securely stored on AUT property and will be kept for a period of six years after which it will be destroyed (deleted).

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no financial costs to participating in this research, apart from your time. We expect that the interviews and focus group discussions will take approximately two hours to complete. Petrol vouchers will be made available to reimburse participants for any transport costs incurred.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have two weeks from the date of this email to consider your participation.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to participate in this research then please sign and complete the attached consent form and return it to Shauna Eldridge.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Feedback will be provided to each participant (one month from the completion of the interviews) in the form of an email containing the transcription of the relevant interview session. The final results and recommendations will be available to all participants who would like to review them. A report will be made available and provided to the Undergraduate Board of Studies and Heads of Schools of participating programmes at AUT.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the primary researcher: Shauna Eldridge, [REDACTED]

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH: Kate O'Connor (koconnor@aut.ac.nz, ph. 921 9999 ext. 6038).

Researcher Contact Details:**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Primary researcher Shauna Eldridge [REDACTED]

Appendix C: Participant consent

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TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Consent Form

Project title: Perceptions of culturally responsive practices: Secondary school learning experiences of past students

Project Supervisor: Dr Howard Youngs

Researcher: Ms Shauna Eldridge

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 2 July 2017.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that the 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 interviews and focus group and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I shall receive transcriptions of the interviews and discussions.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed. I understand that while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, the relevant information about myself including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will not be used.
- ☐ 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):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 April 2017

AUTEC Reference number: 16/236

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement (Transcriber)

The logo for AUT (Auckland University of Technology) is displayed in white text on a black rectangular background.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Confidentiality Agreement

For someone transcribing data, e.g. audio-tapes of interviews.

Project title: Perceptions of culturally responsive practices: Secondary school learning experiences of past students

Project Supervisor: *Dr Howard Youngs*

Researcher: *Ms Shauna Eldridge*

- ☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.
- ☐ I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- ☐ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature:

Transcriber's name:

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
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.....
.....

Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Dr Howard Youngs

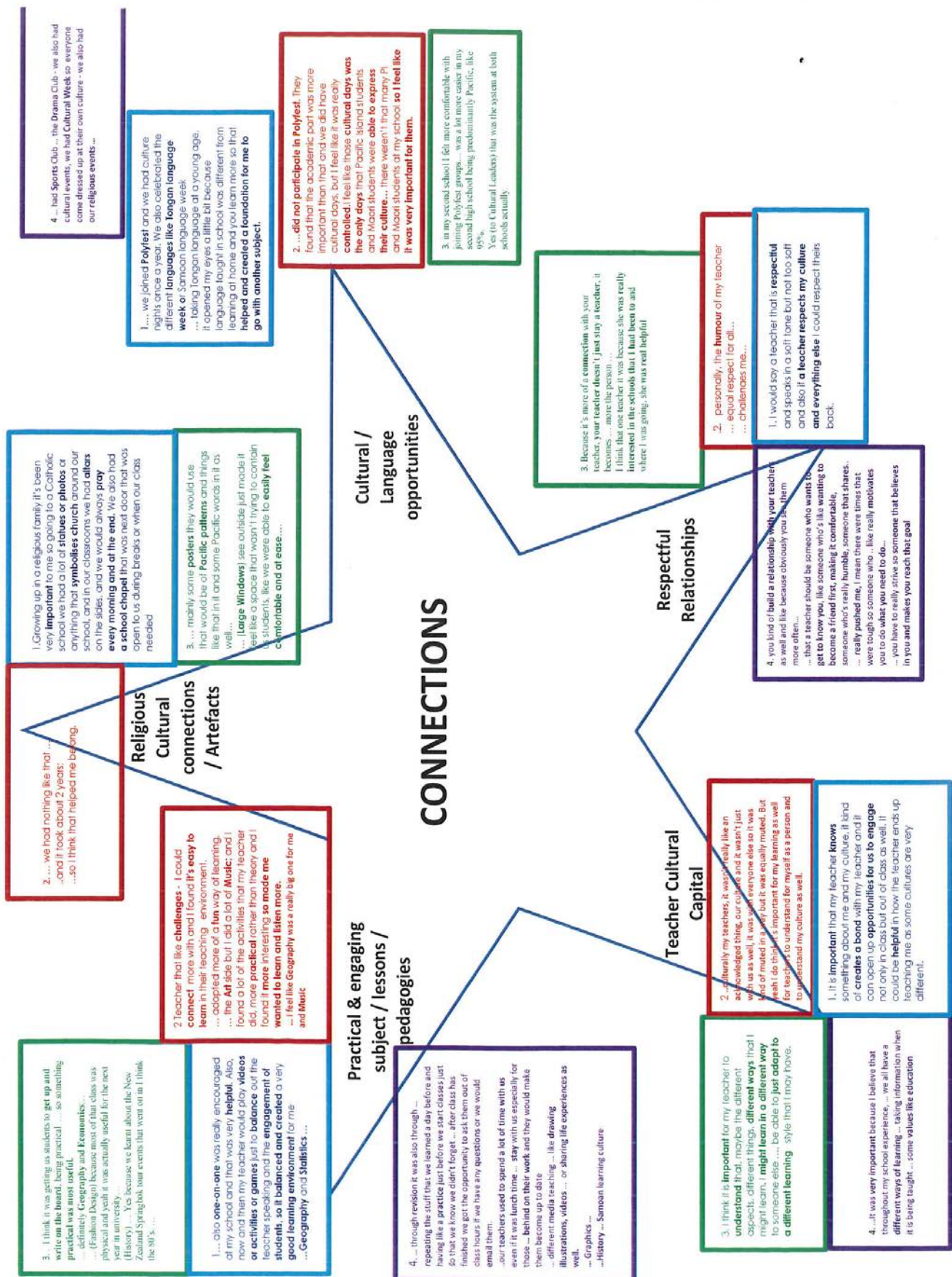
Email: howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz

Ph: 09 921 9999 ext. 9633.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 April 2017 AUTEK Reference number 16/236

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix E: Figure 1 - Findings Coding



Appendix F: Figure 2 - Recommendations Coding

