Fa’aalogo i le o le fanau
A qualitative study of the ways in which students of Samoan background experience their education within the University of Canterbury

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by
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I dedicate this research to:

my parents, Ngaire Gwendoline McAlpine (nee Barnett) and Archiebold McAlpine (now deceased), who fostered my love of reading and encouraged learning

and

my parents-in-law, Fa'ālili Petelo (nee Tokuma) and Leatuavao Fatuaiga Faitoatasi Leleimalefaga Petelo (both now deceased), who paved the way for my experiences in the Samoan culture.
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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which students of Samoan background experience their education within the University of Canterbury. The focus is on two interconnected concerns: firstly the significance and effects of discourses in the act of constitution and subjectification of these students, and secondly, the constitutive effects of power relations that institutional policies and discursive practices produce and reproduce, in the university.

In particular, I engage with feminist poststructuralist theory to explore how acts of constituting and being constituted shape these participants' experiences, including the ways in which they resist discursive practices that constitute them as the Other. I also use this theoretical framework to attend to the interconnectedness of race, ethnicity, gender, class and culture.

A further key facet of this research centres on methodological issues which arise from undertaking qualitative research, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. These include issues of theoretical position, the politics of positionality, and the contradictions and complexities of fieldwork.

The findings highlight the ways in which dominant discourses and discursive practices constitute these participants as students and position them in multiple ways, within their inter-relationships of family, church community and the university. In the academy, the discourses of equal opportunity and equity have normalised the exclusive nature of the university rather than encouraging an inclusive institution. The experiences of the participants illustrate the exclusive and isolating effects of power relations, processes of normalisation, regimes of truth and power-knowledge.
The four themes of collectivity, resistance, choice, and the "ivory tower" draw our attention to the possibilities for disrupting and reconfiguring dominant and interwoven discourses that have shaped these participants lives. Additionally, the concept of intersectionality moves the analysis beyond the politics of difference. Finally, although this thesis recommends that the University of Canterbury implement some practical initiatives, it proposes that the University move beyond the "barriers" approach to create a more inclusive academy, which acknowledges its role within the Pacific.
Introduction

Educational sites are subject to discourse but are also centrally involved in the propagation and selective dissemination of discourses, the 'social appropriation' of discourses. Educational institutions control the access of individuals to various kinds of discourse. (Ball, 1990a, p. 3)

To learn to see not only what we do but also what structures what we do, to deconstruct how ideological and institutional power play in our own practices, to recognize the partiality and open-endedness of our own efforts, all of this is to examine the discourses within which we are caught. (Lather, 1989, p. 20, cited in Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 213)

Both the preceding statements draw attention to the significance of discourse in this exploration of the experiences of a number of Samoan students as they studied at the University of Canterbury. The Samoan title of this thesis, Fa'algogo i le o o fanau, means listen to what the young people are saying. However, I am well aware that in this cross-cultural study, these participants’ stories are (re)told and (re)presented through my eyes. Nevertheless, I have chosen to use this symbolic title for a number of reasons, the foremost being that a Samoan elder gifted it as his contribution to my thesis. Furthermore, in this thesis, the fanau mentioned in this title is the group of
Samoan students, who have consented to participate in this study. This title symbolises these Samoan participants as both a family of students and members of the bigger family of the Samoan community. It also gives prominence to their experiences as students, which otherwise might not be taken notice of or acknowledged. This title sanctions and gives a blessing to what each person has to say, regardless of age, gender, status or any other culturally constituted distinctions.

Although any of the individual experiences of these particular participants may be similar to those of other students on the campus or in other educational institutions, it is not my intention to make generalisations or comparisons with other students and institutions. Nevertheless, it is important for the reader to appreciate the constitutive effects of the intersections of many discursive practices, which at the same time are interconnected with the processes of racialization and ethnic, gender, class and cultural differences. This thesis requires readings that do not give prominence to any one problematic or dimension. Instead, it necessitates a wider reading, which allows for an understanding of the constituting nature of systems of power, as well as the social locations of agentic and mutual constitutions.

This introductory chapter begins by locating and contextualising the nature of tertiary education for Samoan students within the wider collective. I proceed to a historical overview, detail the purpose of the study, and present a literature overview. Next, I explore initiatives in Pacific tertiary education throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand, after which I specifically focus my thoughts on equity, equal opportunities and the University of Canterbury. I finish with my research questions and contextual locations of the various chapters and myself, as a researcher.

**Pacific peoples’ participation in tertiary education**

Despite an increase in the number of Pacific students enrolled in New Zealand tertiary institutions over recent years, the participation rate in formal tertiary education is still relatively low. The 1995 Education Trends report highlighted the
fact that at all levels of education “the outcomes of Pacific Island students remain significantly lower than for other students. Fewer Pacific Islands students gain qualifications, and those who do gain qualifications, gain them at a lower level than other students” (Little & Morris, 1995, p. 1). Later reports from the Ministry of Education (1996b, 2001b, 2001c, 2002e) and the Ministry for Pacific Island Affairs (1999, 2001) continue to highlight the small percentages of peoples of Pacific Island origin who attend university. The 2002 Census report Pacific Progress (Statistics New Zealand & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2002), and the latest report out from the Ministry for Education (Anae, Anderson, Benseman, & Coxon, 2002) both detail that this picture still has not altered to any significant degree.

The Little & Norris Education Trends Report (1995) detailed the educational statistics for 1994. The report stated that only 3% of all students in formal tertiary education were of Pacific Island origin. Furthermore, from the total number of 1993 school leavers only 7% of Pacific Island students went on to university, compared to 21% of other students. In addition, the report stated that only 1.8% of students who completed their university qualifications in 1994 were of Pacific Island origin.

In the early twenty-first century, the figures are still similar (Ministry of Education, 2001c; Tertiary Education Advisory Council, 2001b). In 2000, Pacific peoples made up 4.5% of the total tertiary student population. However, while 51% of all enrolments at tertiary institutions were either at degree or at post-graduate level, only 37% of Pacific students were at degree or post-graduate level. Furthermore, Pacific school leavers are less likely to go directly on to tertiary education than other learners. In 2000, the proportion of Pacific students who went from school to university was 1 in 8, compared to 1 in 4 for all school leavers. Once at university, Pacific tertiary learners are concentrated in some disciplines, and thinly represented in others including science, mathematics, and agriculture. Also a disproportionately high number of Pacific learners are enrolled in Private Training Establishments (PTEs). Pacific school leavers are nearly 50% more likely to enrol in
programmes funded by Skill New Zealand than school leavers overall. Although the latest Pacific Progress report from the 2001 Census highlights small but significant gains in education for Pacific adults, these gains are still smaller in comparison to all New Zealand adults. For example, while the number of Pacific peoples holding degrees has increased from 1.4% to 3.9%, the percentage of all New Zealand adults holding degrees is 11.8% (Statistics New Zealand, 2002).

More recent research (Anae et al., 2002, p. 46–47) into Pacific peoples’ experiences of tertiary education in New Zealand included the following points: the majority of Pacific tertiary students have attended low decile schools; generally Pacific students enter tertiary education with low entry qualifications; a high proportion of Pacific students enroll in low level qualifications; the majority of Pacific tertiary students are in the Auckland region; Pacific students are more likely to be mature-age than the total student population; about one third of Pacific student graduates are at degree level and one tenth at postgraduate level; while actual numbers in tertiary institutions have increased over the years, numbers relative to total enrolments has not. There are still major disparities to be addressed.

In order to gain an insight into how the lack of participation and academic achievement at university by Pacific students collectively has evolved, it is necessary to consider several interconnecting historical contexts: firstly, the history of migration along with the social, educational, economic and political marginalisation of Pacific peoples, and secondly, the issues surrounding multiethnic-multicultural educational policies in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

An historical overview

There are now a number of publications, reports and studies that describe and discuss the historical journeys of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand society. These include recent work by Anae (1998a), Coxon and Mara (2000), and Macpherson, Spoonley and Anae (2001). In this thesis, I will present only a very
brief overview of these accounts, with a particular emphasis upon the historical relationship with the field of education.

The 1950s and 60s was an era of economic expansion in New Zealand. The consequent shortages of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the New Zealand labour force meant that employers looked to the Pacific Islands for a source of cheap labour. Consequently many Polynesian immigrants came to New Zealand from various Pacific Islands, a situation Challis (1973) termed “The Second Migration” (p. 44). Not only did these immigrants desire paid employment, they also believed that their children would have access to greater educational opportunities in New Zealand (Krishnan, Schoeffel & Warren, 1994; Mara, Foliaki & Coxon, 1994). However, over the following decades up to and including the 90s, the ever increasing marginalisation of these diverse ethnic groups has become apparent. Dunstall (1988) writes that by the late 1960s Pacific Island people (along with Māori) were “forming a new ‘underclass’—a stratum characterized by poorly paid employment, little job security, and small prospects of career advancement” (p. 409). This was perpetuated by the continuing high representation of Pacific Islanders in semi skilled and unskilled sections of the work force (Krishnan et al., 1994; Ongley, 1991). New Zealand’s economic downturn in the 1980s exacerbated the situation and resulted in: high unemployment for Pacific Islands peoples, particularly for youth; increased numbers on income support payments; of those in employment the highest number remained in semi-skilled or unskilled positions; and a continued concentration in low socio-economic suburban housing areas (Loomis, 1991; Macpherson, 1996; Mara et al., 1994; Ongley, 1996; Spoonley, 1994). Krishnan et al. (1994) posited that other factors such as “... stereotypical perceptions, racial discrimination and exclusionary practices” (p. 24) also contributed to the continued marginalisation of the Pacific Island peoples.

Aotearoa/New Zealand’s educational institutions also maintain this marginalisation. Theorists such as Bell and Carpenter (1994) and Nash (1994)
asserted that Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction is reflected in the structures and practices of New Zealand's schools, and consequently the education system is posited as operating to the advantage of those who possess what Bourdieu terms "cultural capital". The evidence suggests that compulsory schooling within New Zealand serves to reproduce existing social class structures, and that the compulsory educational experiences of students of Pacific Island origins illustrate this theoretical stance (Harker, 1990a; Jones, 1991; Ongley, 1991). In the late 1980s the Royal Commission on Social Policy stated that:

Currently we have a situation where minority groups are recognised only for their disadvantage or deprivation in assimilationist terms. In effect this protects and privileges the majority English status. (1988, Vol III, Part 2, p. 235)

By the mid-1990s, the statistical evidence in the field of educational attainment and qualifications was still illustrative of an environment that served to disadvantage minority groups (Little & Norris, 1995; Ministry of Education, 1996b). As Mara (1995) lamented in her overview of Pacific Island Educational Policy in New Zealand from the 1970s, there was still no comprehensive education policy for "Pacific Island" peoples.

The historical, social, political, educational, and economic factors that have seen the marginalisation of Pacific peoples, should be read in conjunction with various discourses pertaining to multiethnic-multicultural education. In Aotearoa/New Zealand it could be argued that the major thrust of the multiethnic-multicultural reform movement has been focused on the development of biculturalism (Irwin, 1989; Sullivan, 1993). Within this framework, Māori may well see bicultural initiatives as a counter-hegemonic response to colonialism, particularly the renewed ongoing debate about the Treaty of Waitangi (Pearson, 1996). The development of bicultural models of education constituted a crucial part of this response, and have been established in opposition to the predominant monocultural models that are supported and sustained by the assimilationist and integrationist policies of successive New Zealand governments (Irwin, 1989; Loomis, 1991; Peters
& Marshall, 1989, cited in Sullivan, 1993; Smith & Smith, 1996; Sullivan 1993). In more recent years postcolonial theorists such as Irwin (1999), Johnston (1997, 1999) and McMurchy-Pilkington (2001) critique notions of bicultural education and education policy for Māori. In turn, they suggest that while on one hand the last decade in particular has seen substantial educational policy reform, on the other hand this policy reform has continued to marginalize Māori people under the guise of bicultural education. As Linda Tuhiiwi Smith (1999) points out:

Discussions around the concept of intelligence, on discipline, or on factors that contribute to achievement depend heavily on notions about the Other. The organization of school knowledge, the hidden curriculum and the representation of difference in texts and school practices all contain discourses which have serious implications for indigenous students as well as for other minority groups. (p. 11)

Although recognition is given to these arguments, this research project does not seek to dispute the place of biculturalism or bicultural models of education within New Zealand. Instead, it acknowledges that the development of biculturalism and bicultural models of education has arisen within a society that mainly still continues to operate according to monocultural models of education. This situation has in turn affected the educational experiences of a number of minority ethnic groups. In 1989 Irwin argued that a consequence of the continuing rejection of biculturalism and the consistent predominance of monoculturalism was that multiculturalism remained in a “precarious” state (p. 15).

In the mid-1990s, there was little evidence of progress towards multietnic-multicultural education, and any documented initiatives focused mainly upon early childhood or compulsory education (Donn & Schick, 1995; Ministry of Education, 1996a; Royal Commission on Social policy, 1988). Mara et al. argued in 1994 that the education of “Pacific Island” students was “in a state of crisis” (p. 209). This predicament was illustrated in many ways including: the lack of a comprehensive “Pacific Island” education policy, continuing low levels of participation in tertiary institutions in New Zealand, and the little recognition of the very different needs,
interests and identities of people from different backgrounds. The 2001 Census statistics illustrated only a small gain in education sectors. In their recent overview of education policy for Pacific peoples, Coxon and Mara (2000) concluded that while there have been significant changes in the last decade, there was no evaluation to see if any of these policy changes were in fact producing improved educational achievement (p. 180).

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this research is to throw light on the ways in which students of Samoan background experience their education within the University of Canterbury. This broad aim necessitated two approaches. One was to explore the ways these students constituted themselves and found themselves being constituted, along with examining the power relations within the discourses that they experienced. The other was to examine and critique how institutional policies and discursive practices produce and reproduce power relations within the academy, along with their constitutive effects, and to document ways in which the students responded to these institutional policies and practices.

**A Literature overview**

Since the late 1990s there has been an increase in the number of studies and publications concerning tertiary participation for Pacific peoples culminating in the two latest comprehensive reports from the Ministry of Education: *Literature Review on Pacific Education Issues* (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wende-Samu, & Finau, 2002) and *Pacific Peoples and Tertiary Education: Issues of Participation* (Anae et al., 2002). As both these reports provide a detailed review of the literature pertinent to this area, I do not intend in this thesis to reproduce their content. Instead I will include significant aspects of these reviews, assess other studies that are not mentioned in either of these reports, and raise issues or concerns that arise from all the documented literature available thus far.
Given the purposes and nature of this thesis, it is crucial to observe from the outset that within the current available literature, there is still not a single study specifically concerning university students of Samoan background in New Zealand, which includes New Zealand born students. Nonetheless, there is now an emerging body of relevant literature located in three broad areas: statistical information, reports, articles, studies, and books regarding either Samoans or Pacific peoples in New Zealand; Pacific peoples, including Pacific scholarship students, at various educational institutions in New Zealand; and thirdly, Pacific educational policy in New Zealand and Samoa.

Collectivity
Before discussing the relevant literature in more detail, I believe that comment is required on the overall direction of the available research, specifically in relation to the collective nature of this research. The practice of collective naming of a group, which consists of different nations, is very common; it is however problematic for any inquiry concerning ethnic minorities within Aotearoa/New Zealand. The institutional practice of using the term “Pacific Island” and its derivatives is still widespread and renders invisible each of the separate nations within the Pacific. These expressions omit or pay little regard to the crucial differences between the various ethnic groups whose origins lie in the Pacific, or the differences within each specific ethnic group (Mara et al., 1994; Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1988; Spoonley, 2001). Moreover Krishnan et al. (1994) argue that analysing the Pacific population as a “homogeneous entity” tends to reinforce the stereotypical view of “Pacific Island” people. Blanket terms like these are used indiscriminately to describe and categorise people—whether they are from Polynesia, Melanesia or Micronesia; whether they are New Zealand born or not—and provide no acknowledgment of individual ethnic identity. Krishnan et al. (1994) also question when, or if at all, the term “Pacific Islanders” will cease to include first and second generation born Aotearoa/New Zealanders whose families originally came from Pacific Islands.
Similarly, Coxon et al. (2002) state that within formal institutions other terms such as "Pacific Nations", "Pacific Peoples", "Pasifika" or "Pasifeka" have been used to describe this collective grouping (p. 10). However, it is encouraging to note that the more recent literature acknowledges this collective term; including an indication of the inclusive nature of the term, and a description is usually given of the composition of the collective. Nevertheless the problematic remains: through the use of a collective term the Western, metropolitan islands such as New Zealand and Australia are set apart from their smaller "developing" Third World island neighbours. By adopting these terms to mean others, New Zealand does not seem to classify itself as a Pacific Island.

Furthermore, this generalization has consequences for this research project. Firstly, statistical data, official records and information have often been collated and presented under the general term Pacific Island/ers, or any of the others mentioned. As a consequence, the data collected is often only partly accurate when applied to one specific group. Secondly, the available literature is only partially relevant as it is mainly centred on studies and reports encompassing all Pacific peoples, which include people from Samoan background. Thirdly, due to the variety of terms used in the literature this thesis also utilises a variety of terms depending on the situation and the reference. My own preference, like Coxon et al. (2002), is to use the term "Pacific" whenever I need to make a collective reference that includes peoples from more than one Pacific Nation (see also Note 1).

**Experiences at university**

The majority of earlier studies concerning Pacific students' experiences at university focused on overseas Pacific scholarship students in general, that is students awarded scholarships (usually by the New Zealand Government) to come to New Zealand institutions for their formal education with a view to returning to their island nations on completion of their studies. These studies examine overseas Pacific Island students' problems, experiences and academic achievements. Furneaux (1973) and
Maysuria (1993) document Pacific Island students' experiences while they were studying at the Universities of Auckland and Canterbury respectively. Maysuria's statistical analysis of the academic performance of all overseas Pacific Island students at the University of Canterbury during the years 1982–1991 showed that only 23% of all those enrolled during this period graduated. Furneaux had initially alluded to this in the follow up to her study, which found that there was a high failure rate of students in their first and second year of study. Guy (1981) analyses the academic performance of all Samoan scholarship students in New Zealand, although she does focus upon university students. Guy's findings differ from the others in that after analysing the statistical evidence for the years 1962–1977, she concludes that the possibility of Western Samoan university scholarship students graduating is similar to that of their New Zealand contemporaries. The differences in these findings highlight the need for more up to date research, and research with specific ethnic groups rather than collective studies.

Mike Field undertook a more recent study in 1997, on behalf of Lincoln International Limited. This study investigated the factors influencing the academic performance of Samoan New Zealand Official Development Assistance (NZODA) scholarship tertiary students while they were studying overseas (that is in New Zealand and in Fiji), and he compared these results with an earlier study of 1995 (cited in Field, 1997). Field used both a qualitative and a quantitative analysis of statistical and interview data. This 1997 report details that the Samoan NZODA scholarship students studying in New Zealand tertiary institutions were doing quite well overall, and an improvement in grades attained had occurred since the 1995 analysis. These findings were partly attributed to their experiences and academic preparation at University Preparatory Year (UPY) at the National University of Samoa (NUS). However, other problems mentioned by the students included racism, culture shock, a reluctance to approach Palagi academic and support staff, a difficulty in linking Palagi ideas to Samoan ideas, peer pressure, and high
workloads. Unfortunately, he did not provide an analysis of individual tertiary institutions.

Two other studies by Tofi, Flett, and Timutimu-Thorpe (1996) and Beaver and Tuck (1998) also involved Pacific students born overseas, although not necessarily scholarship students. Tofi et al.'s study of 61 Pacific students from various nations identified the most common problems as ‘worrying about your courses’, ‘high workloads’ and ‘feelings of stress’ (p. 54), and suggested that contact with intending students, as well as initial orientation and ongoing support programmes, are important for successful experiences at university. While Beaver and Tuck's study involved predominantly Pakeha and Asian students, they did include a number of Samoan and Tongan overseas students. In relation to their findings for the Pacific students, they identified common sources of anxiety, ratings of high and low competencies, and ratings of strategies for personal learning. However there was little reference to the Pacific students in their discussion.

There are only a few studies that most probably included New Zealand born and/or raised Pacific students at university, although these studies did not state where participants were born or raised. There was a 1989 report written by the Pacific Island Students' Academic Achievement Collective (PISAAC) at the University of Auckland and Worth's study, also in 1989 (cited in Coxon et al., 2002 and Anae et al., 2002). The first report's aim was to help teachers better understand Pacific Island students’ backgrounds and behaviour, so their teachers could help guide their students to higher achievement. The second study by Worth, also at the University of Auckland, investigated demographic and motivational characteristics of a large group of students. She compared the experiences of Pacific women as students with those of non-Pacific women. Coxon et al. (2002) concluded that “what characterized this comparison was dissimilarity on almost every variable” (p. 130). Both of these studies are quite limited in their application to wider sociological concerns.
Anae and Su'a'li'i' undertook a survey in 1996, that explored Pacific students' uses of student services at the University of Auckland, including services specifically for Pacific students. Their findings highlighted the fact that existing services need to be integrated and consolidated, and either enhanced and extended, or reviewed and restructured. A pertinent recommendation stated that provision for departmental Pacific tutors/tutorials and liaison tutors was to be encouraged within departments with large numbers of Pacific students.

The most recent research published is that by Anae et al. (2002). This research, contracted by the Ministry of Education, explores the experiences of a selection of Pacific peoples in three areas: those tertiary students who were successful, tertiary students who were partial achievers, and people who were non-participants within any tertiary institution. The authors also sought the views from a range of community members, including family members of potential students. The report describes many perceived barriers to tertiary study, and although the authors acknowledge that there are many stories of students who have experienced success at tertiary institution, they also acknowledge that there are a large number for whom this is not the case. They conclude, “this speaks to the failure of the tertiary sector to address the issues of Pacific participation systematically and effectively” (p. 133). They believe their research “highlights the continuation of inequity of participation in tertiary education” (p. 135). The report also describes, as case studies, three programmes that they feel “are working extremely well for our Pacific students in the tertiary sector” (p. 136).

This last piece of research was driven by a Ministerial requirement to look at the education patterns and removal of barriers for Pacific peoples. The project had a prescribed purpose, a stated budget and a timeline of 15 months. Subsequently, as with all research, the research findings need to be read within the context that the research was conducted. One limitation of this research is that no participants or institutions from the South Island were included. Another is the collective nature of
the research, both with regard to individual participants, and individual institutions. Still another is the lack of in-depth deliberation or reflection on the wider discursive practices affecting the interfaces between the students and their institutions, and then society at large. Nevertheless, the research does provide a sound base from which to further explore the complexities surrounding Pacific tertiary students in New Zealand in general, and individual ethnic groupings in particular.

Further research within the tertiary sector

Coxon et al. (2002) and Anae et al. (2002) also review other studies or projects specifically pertaining to tertiary students. These are grouped into studies of access and barriers to participation (AC Neilsen-MRL, 1997; Bell, 1998; Coxon, Anae, Suali’i, Samu, & Tanielu, 1997 cited in Anae et al., 2002; Ma’ani, 2000), and those focused on attitudes to education (Anae, 1998a; Fusitu’a, 1992; Utumapu, 1992). Further, they note that while there had been no studies published relevant to Polytechnics, a small number focused on the Colleges of Education and PTE’s. While my focus in this thesis is on the university sector, aspects from a number of studies from both these latter areas of research are relevant. Each of these studies, Dickie (1997, 2000) and Mara, Tuhipa, Falisima and Greenwood (1996) within the Teacher Training sector, and Pasikale (1996) and Pasikale and Yaw (1998) within the Private Training Establishments sector, contributes towards our understanding of students’ experiences.

Pasikale (1996) explores the experiences of Pacific learners in Training Opportunities Programmes (TOP), while Pasikale and Yaw (1998) explore the effectiveness of five PTEs that have a Pacific focus. Their relevance for this study lies in the qualitative nature of both research projects, alongside the attention they give to Pacific Islands learning, barriers to learning, as well as identifying “elements of teaching and learning that contribute to successful outcomes for Pacific Islands learners” (Pasikale & Yaw, 1998, p. 106). In a similar vein, Dickie (1997, 2000) and Mara et al. (1996) explore the experiences of Pacific teacher trainees in primary pre-
service programmes, focusing on barriers to learning and factors for success. Each study has signaled that similar factors contribute to Pacific student achievement during the course of their training. These factors can be categorized into three areas, 'home and community', 'institution based', and 'the impact of wider policies' (Anae et al., 2002, p. 21). While one should not generalize findings across institutions, either between sectors or within sectors, nonetheless the findings from these studies can contribute towards understanding the wider issues for Pacific students within the field of education.

Consideration of theoretical underpinnings

Consciously or unconsciously, much of the available research concerning tertiary Pacific students appears be grounded predominantly upon a deficit model as a means of explaining student failure at tertiary level. The focus is upon the students' problems such as socio-cultural adjustment, students' behaviour, academic performance and cultural differences. They include AC Neilsen-MRL (1997), Beaver and Tuck (1998), Fa’afoi and Fletcher (2001), French (1992), Furneaux (1973), Guy (1981), Maysuria (1993), Moles (2001), Pacific Island Students' Academic Achievement Collective (1989), Worth (1989 cited in Coxon et al., 2002 and Anae et al., 2002) amongst others. The implication is that failure is a personal problem for individual Pacific students who attend any New Zealand educational institution, and that their problems will be solved through the development of interventions and support systems. There was no attempt in these studies to address the issues raised by the students at any more than a surface or superficial level. These approaches can be viewed as ameliorative, in that they are symbolic of institutional policies that attempt to address disparities through adjustment of individuals' behaviours alone. The circular nature of these discourses maintains the status quo.

However, there are now a number of studies that examine, or at least highlight, sociological perspectives which provide a deeper understanding of how students of
Samoan and/or Pacific background experience their education. These include Anae (1998a, 2001), Anae et al. (2002), Dickie (1997, 2000), Mara et al. (1996), Pasikale (1996), Pasikale and Yaw (1998), Tofi, et al. (1996). Other notable studies include an influential study by Alison Jones (1986, 1991) who gives an insight into the ways in which secondary schooling contributes to social reproduction for Pacific Island students. As Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) wrote in her review of Jones' book *At School I've Go A Chance* "this is a story that needed telling, ...the myth of equal education is tested and found wanting" (p. 10). Jones's work, I believe, initiated new ways of researching and writing in this field, concerning Pacific peoples in New Zealand.

Another is Utumapu's (1992) examination of the attitudes of Samoan families in New Zealand to education. She favours a cultural reproduction model in explaining the lack of success for Samoan students in New Zealand and argues that it is the system that is failing the students. Mara’s (1995) theoretical study on education policy also discusses the theories of hegemony and cultural reproduction and the importance of these to the development of policy for "Pacific Island" students. Lastly, although Tiatia’s (1998) research focused upon the role of the Church she did pay attention to the educational experiences of her participants. She too suggests that reproduction theory provides a logical explanation for the relationship between educational institutions and social and cultural inequalities. One major limitation to her work, I believe, is that she constructs a binary opposition between Palagi and Pacific cultures. My summation of all these studies is that their approach offers a tantalising freshness in the process of understanding the discursive practices that undermine educational achievement for students of Samoan background.

**Other relevant research**

I acknowledge that thus far my main source of literature has come from the corpus of New Zealand literature concerning Pacific peoples. There is however, in the field
of adult and community education, a significant body of literature about participation in education, to which I will also make reference. My reason for drawing on this literature is that a number of authors examine issues of participation in post-compulsory education from sociological perspectives that challenge deficit model assumptions. For example, Crowther (2000) challenges the dominant discourse of participation in education, which he believes "systematically reinforces one particular view about the relationship between life and learning" (p. 479). He suggests that, as part of our rethinking of the 'the problem of participation', we need to understand how this 'regime of truth' continues to flourish. Tobias (2001, 2002) also challenges positivist understandings of what it means to a 'participant' or 'non participant' in education. The focus for his forthcoming book (Tobias, 2002) is the experiences of those who have had little or no formal post compulsory education. This work examines a range of factors that shape both the extent and nature of participation by adults in all forms of learning and education, and explores influences of gender, family and schools, class, and change events, amongst others.

In addition, there are a further three studies that I feel are particularly pertinent to my doctoral research, those of Allen (1997), Sparks (1995, 1998), and Weil (1989). Susan Weil (1989) undertook a multi-site qualitative research study over a period of five years in England. She was investigating the perspectives of adults who had returned to higher or continuing education. She organized the key issues that emerged from her study around "the conceptual formulation of disjunction and integration in lifelong learning" (p. 112). She refers to disjunction as generally "a sense of feeling at odds with oneself as a learner learning in a particular set of circumstances" (p. 112). Integration is generally perceived as the opposite of this. She deals with such themes as recognizing and respecting differences, 'unlearning not to speak', the notion of personal stance in teaching and learning, and learning in relation to what has been experienced before, to previous knowledge. Weil argues that adults' stories give "the clues as to the kinds of issues we need to address if we
are to ensure that wider access remains concerned with more and different students ... and quality for all" (p. 143).

In her doctoral thesis (1995) and subsequent paper (1998), Sparks explored with 30 Chicano/as (Mexican-Americans), issues of nonparticipation in adult basic education or English Literacy programmes. Many of the themes she identified have also been identified in New Zealand Pacific literature including: little or no recognition of native language and history, lack of effective learning environment, lack of respect for cultural identity. Her other themes such as invisibility, exclusion and inferior status are raised in my thesis as well. She challenges the common acceptance of deficit theory to explain issues of nonparticipation and instead writes "by focusing upon the failings of individuals rather than social structures, maintenance of the status quo is ensured" (1998, p. 245). She found that individuals in this study used strategies of resistance and production to counter a social system often closed to them.

From 1989–1993, Allen (1997) undertook an ethnographic longitudinal study with black students as they progressed through a higher educational institution in the West-Midlands in England. The key issues he highlighted were racism, representation and the curriculum, staffing, black informal networks, employment destinations, and a black construct of accessibility (p. 182). Allen suggested that there is not only the simple question of gaining "equal access to existing educational power structures, but ultimately to find ways of transforming them so they become blacker in culture, blacker in ethos and blacker in understanding; the 'Ivory Tower' must come down" (p. 188).

**Ethical issues raised**

Some important ethical issues have been raised within the reviewed literature. Firstly, Mara's study (1995) highlights the need for cultural awareness when considering methodological aspects. Her original plan was to undertake individual
interviews, but as students were not prepared to do this, she needed to negotiate interviews in pairs. Anae et al. (2002) also address the need for “appropriate ‘Pacific’ cultural protocols and processes [to be] embedded in the research design” (p. 3). Secondly, there is another concern about appropriate methodology. After Tofi et al. (1996) had undertaken a quantitative study, they suggested that for future research a qualitative approach might be better, as a quantitative methodology “tends to strip away much meaningful context” (p. 57). This suggests that this is especially significant when participating in research within cultures based on oral traditions. A third issue concerns the need for researchers to make explicit their positioning within the research. This is particularly important in cross-cultural research. An example of this is provided in Alison Jones’ book (1991). In this work, issues of her positionings as a cross-cultural researcher are made very clear. This model is valuable for other researchers in similar situations, as it highlights the need for reflexivity so that the researcher does not act, consciously or unconsciously, as an agent of social reproduction. I will address these ethical concerns, amongst others, in the methodological chapter.

Initiatives in Pacific tertiary education

In juxtaposition with the previously mentioned discursive historical contexts, it is also necessary to consider more recent governmental policies and strategies that aim to increase rates of participation and academic achievement in education for Pacific peoples, as well as developments and relative practices pertaining to equality and equity at the University of Canterbury.

There have been a number of recent governmental developments in Pacific education policies and strategies. Throughout the 1990s, many sectors in the community as well as various Ministries had become concerned with educational statistics for Pacific peoples. This resulted in issues being raised and discussed in a variety of locations, including the 1996 National Symposium Pacific Islands Learning: The answers are within us, The Pacific Island Educators’ Conference in
1999, Pacific Vision International Conference 1999, and many annual New Zealand Association for Research in Education conferences. At the same time, the ongoing development of the Pacific arm within the Ministry of Education, as well as the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, has also resulted in a greater emphasis in many areas of Pacific education, particularly early childhood and compulsory schooling (initially see Pacific Directions Report, Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). However, it is only in more recent years that there has been an upsurge in the call for an examination of the tertiary sector.

It could be argued that the Ministry of Education published its first major document, which specifically addressed education for Pacific peoples, in the 1990s; this was the Ministry’s Pacific education strategy titled Ko e Ako ‘a e Kakai Pasifika (Ministry of Education, 1996c). One of its goals for tertiary education was to support, develop and implement initiatives in order to increase participation in training and tertiary study. In 1999, the Pacific Directions Report (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999) also stated its support for this strategy. However, although this 1999 report acknowledged the low numbers of Pacific students enrolled at tertiary institutions, it did not detail any initiatives to begin to address this concern. A later development was the Closing the Gaps policy from the Labour Government. In their 2000 budget $3.5 million was set aside to fund equity issues in tertiary education and $100 000 was set aside to research barriers to participation of Pacific peoples in tertiary education (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs Newsletter, 2000; see also Ministry of Education 2001a).

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs also undertook an extensive nationwide consultative process with Pacific communities and produced regional documents, each entitled Building a shared vision for our community in 2001. The section on education in their Christchurch Programme of Action states a number of long term goals for the tertiary sector, including increasing the number of Pacific peoples participating in post-compulsory education and increasing the proportion of Pacific
graduates (2001, pp. 2.6, 2.49–2.61). The Ministry of Education’s *Pasifika Education Plan* released in 2001 also focuses on the tertiary sector, with an aim of “increasing participation and achievement, improving retention and encouraging higher levels of study” (2001c, p. 5; see also Statistics New Zealand & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2002, *Pacific Progress Report*, and Ministry of Education, 2002e, *Tertiary Education Strategy 2002/07*). One outcome of this plan is the recent release of the report entitled *Pacific Peoples and Tertiary Education: Issues of Participation* (Anae et al., 2002) by the Ministry. A further initiative is the planned production of a tertiary Pasifika resource that will provide relevant information in an accessible and culturally appropriate format (Anon. handout at Forum, 2002).

Lastly, there are three government initiatives for comment in this section (Pacific Island Affairs Newsletter, 2002). The first of these are the 3rd and 4th Tertiary Education Advisory Commission’s (TEAC, 2001a; 2001b) reports, which detail Pacific peoples’ priorities in tertiary education. I concur with the article in the Pacific Island Affairs newsletter that this is a major achievement considering the first and second report paid little attention to Pacific peoples. As TEAC states in its 4th report:

> Reducing disparities and building capability and capacity in tertiary education for Māori and Pacific learners is a crucial element in any attempt to improve equity in the system. (2001, p. xiv)

Secondly, the Government’s 2002 Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2002e) also details how the government proposes to address the issues for Pacific peoples, as described in the 4th TEAC report, and it is hoped that there is Pacific voice on the new Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). Additionally, two of the Ministry’s other reports (2002a, 2002c) stipulate particular strategies that focus the needs of Pacific peoples, and provide specific objectives for the tertiary sector. Thirdly, is the also important Cabinet directive that the charters and profiles of all tertiary institutions must be responsive to Pacific peoples. These latest achievements are significant as they finally prioritise Pacific peoples educational needs and aspirations within the tertiary sector.
Equal opportunities, equity and the University of Canterbury

In both New Zealand and international literature, much has been written about equality and equity in all forms of educational institutions (see Adams, Clark, O’Neill, Openshaw, & Waitere-Ang, 2000; Bailey, 1999; Brooks & Mackinnon, 2001; Brown, Halsey, Lauder, & Wells, 1997; Codd, Harker, & Nash, 1985; Coxon, Jenkins, Marshall, & Massey, 1994; Jones, McCulloch, Marshall, Smith, & Smith, 1990; Jones, Marshall, Matthews, Smith, & Smith, 1995; Nash, 1997; Neal, 1998; Olsson & Matthews, 1997; Roman & Eyre, 1997; Troyan, 1987, 1993; Williams, 1997; Woodward & Ross, 2000). Throughout this thesis, reference is made to these authors and others who attend to these, or particular aspects of these issues.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the development of equal opportunities policy stems from the historical statement by Peter Fraser, the Minister of Education in 1939, who wrote:

Every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he lives in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers. (quoted from the Currie Report, 1962, p. 11, cited in Nash, 1997, p. 127) (exclusive language in the original)

This benchmark statement, despite its limitations, has served to underpin and perpetuate many myths about access and participation in educational institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand, particularly in compulsory schooling. The “myth of equality” has determined that the development of schooling in the twentieth century was “justified and promoted as a key means of increasing equality in society” (Jones et al., 1990, pp. 21–53). Successive Aotearoa/New Zealand governments have been committed to “equality of provision; equality of opportunity; equality of common curriculum; and equality of geographical provision” (Nash, 1997, p. 130).

In the 1970s, the concept of equality of opportunity was seen as being outmoded and subsequently was replaced by equity; a term which was seen to provide for more equitable outcomes and based on the principle of fairness (Jones et
al., 1995). However, the meaning of equity changes according to the ideological view of the role of education in society (Quinlivan, 2002). According to Brown et al., (1997) equality of opportunity was redefined in the latter part of the twentieth century as equity:

This seems to mean something more akin to the right of the individual to a sound compulsory education with ever-rising standards, so that individuals can compete in the global labour market. (p. 22)

They argue that this particular version of equity signals that based on the desire to reduce social disadvantage, the government retreated from its intervention in the regulation of the competition for credentials. Although Brown et al. (1997) do point out that at the same time, equity is used in a more radical sense by those desiring culturally autonomous schools who are articulating a politics of difference and different systems of schooling and qualifications.

Haig-Brown (1997) argues that the distinction between equality and equity is that the former “emphasizes measurement” and the latter “emphasizes fairness and justice” (p. 237). She quotes from Smith (1987, pp. 9–10 cited in Haig-Brown, 1997) who writes:

The concept of equity refers to situations which are considered just, and should not be confused with equality. ... The crucial question is that of the circumstances in which a specific degree of inequality may be considered (in)equitable or (un)just.” (p. 237) [Italics in original]

Along with all universities in New Zealand, the University of Canterbury has an equal opportunities policy. As a result of the 1988 State Sector Act, the university appointed an Equal Employment Opportunities Co-ordinator, and on 6th July 1988, the University of Canterbury’s Council adopted its Equal Opportunities Policy Statement, which committed the University to providing for equal opportunity in both education and employment. Its aim was “to enable people to pursue and develop their studies and careers without being affected by matters which are irrelevant to the requirements of those studies and careers.” This policy statement
also claimed that, "the university is committed to monitoring its progress towards equality of opportunity" (University of Canterbury, 1993, p. 11).

It is not my intention in this thesis to discuss in-depth the attempts that the University of Canterbury made during the 1980s and 1990s to address its policy, as my focus is on the current situation. Nevertheless, it may be noted that the University did make some relevant moves in the late 80s in response to the contestable equity fund set up by the government. This included introducing a New Start programme, with an "aim of increasing significantly the enrolment of adults from some of the above [under-represented] groups at the university" (Tobias, 1990, p. 5). The Centre for Continuing Education continued to offer this programme for over 18 years. However, according to Tobias, the focus on many aspects of equity and equality policy diminished in the 1990s for a number of reasons. These included lack of support and increasing pressures within the university arising out of policies pursued by a conservative government (personal communication, January 28, 2003).

More recently, as part of a university wide strategic plan, a new emphasis was sought and in May 2000 expressions of interest were called for from those seeking membership of a new Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Advisory team. This initiative was seen to be a more effective way to achieve the more specific goals stated in the University Charter and Plan, *The Canterbury Way Forward: vision, goals and objectives* (1999), which was reworked and reproduced as *The Canterbury Way Forward: University Plan 2000: vision, goals and objectives* (and to be reviewed in March–April 2003). This *University Plan 2000* restates its commitment to equality of opportunity in employment and education, and details five objectives, the first one being:

Objective 9.1 Equality of opportunity

To implement policies which ensure equality of opportunity for all persons irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religious or philosophical belief, physical condition or economic condition, and which encourage participation by any under-represented groups. (p. 11)
Three of the subsequent four stated objectives, 9.2–9.5 are directed specifically and only towards gender issues. While Objective 9.3 is general, its specific focus is also on gender:

Objective 9.3 Removal of barriers to participation

To identify and eliminate institutional barriers, including all aspects of policies and procedures that cause or perpetuate gender inequalities with respect to employment and education at this University.

To complement this plan, the University of Canterbury’s *Statement of Objectives 2002–2004* (2001b) details a number of objectives for its student population. Objective 1.12 “Improved access by under-represented groups” (p. 11) and Objective 7.4 “Māori and Pacific students” (p. 27) are both intended to improve access and enrolment for Pacific students. Both these objectives aim to increase the percentage of “Pacific Island” students from 1.7% in 2000 to 2% in 2004. Objective 8.3 “Equality of employment opportunity” (p. 31) also aims to increase the percentage of “Pacific Island” staff, from 0.4% in 2000 to 2.5% in 2004. In order for the University to improve access and enrolment for Pacific students, it intends “to support the work of the Equal Educational Opportunity Committee” (EEdO) (p. 11).

In 2000, the EEdO Committee was established. Dr John Freeman-Moir, a senior lecturer in the Department of Education and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, initiated this committee. He saw a genuine need for this committee in the university as the university’s original aim to monitor the progress towards equality in education had not occurred, in spite of any rhetoric to the contrary (personal communication, July 25, 2002). Its terms of reference include developing, recommending and monitoring EEdO policies and programmes for students that are “consistent with the University's charter, plan and statutory obligations under the Education Act 1990” (University of Canterbury, 2002, Terms of Reference, No. 1). In 2001, committee members implemented their first programme, which had an aim of improving successful participation by the members of under-represented groups at the university. The establishment of this committee is a positive step within a tertiary
environment that had paid little attention to improving the educational opportunities for these particular groups.

In November 2001, expressions of interest were requested from members of both the general and academic staff from those who wished to participate in a planned Equity and Diversity Committee. The purpose of the committee was to "advise the Vice-Chancellor on matters relating to equity and diversity with regard to staffing matters" (K Watkins, personal communication, November 6, 2001). This committee had its first meeting early in 2002. This development can only be viewed positively considering the current situation in which there are still very few Pacific staff members, especially academic Pacific staff. In addition, women are still under-represented at both professorial and senior management levels as well as on key committees within the university (University of Canterbury, Statement of Objectives, 2001b).

With specific reference to Pacific students, the University of Canterbury's Statement of Objectives 2002–2004, states that it intends to increase the retention and completion rates as well as increasing enrolment of Pacific students, and it will "appoint a Pasifika Liaison Officers [sic]" (p. 27). Late in 2001, a Pacific Island Liaison Officer was appointed only because funding via a special governmental supplementary grant was made available to the university. A recommendation was made from a selection of students and staff to the University that this funding be used for such a position. For a number of years, former staff from the Macmillan Brown Centre as well as students had been requesting that such a position be established. The university never responded positively to these requests until this Government funding surfaced. Finally, in December 2002, this position was made a continuing full-time position.
Samoan student population at the University of Canterbury

The number of enrolled Samoan students at the University of Canterbury has remained relatively static over the last few years with very small increases in actual numbers. In 1995, there were a total of 85 Samoan students, which included 3 Samoan international students. This represented 0.7% of all students. A 0.2% rise in 1996 remained unchanged for 1997 (in 1996 an increase to 103 students, inclusive of 9 international students, and in 1997 an increase to 104 students, inclusive of 8 international students). A further 0.1% rise in 1998 had not altered by 2000 (in 1998 there were 118 students, inclusive of 8 international students, in 1999 there were 114 students, inclusive of 8 international students, and in 2000 there were 111 students inclusive of 7 international students). This very slight upward trend was similar for the total Pacific student population, rising from 171 or 1.5% of the student population in 1995, to 199 or 1.7% of the total student population in 2000. While the number of Samoan international students had risen from 3 in 1995 to 9 in 1996, by 2000 it had dropped back to 7. However in 2001, there was a 0.1% decrease in Samoan students and another 0.1% decrease in 2002 (in 2001 there were 105 students, 9 being international students, and in 2002 there were 94 Samoan students, 10 being international students). Similarly, there was a decrease in the total number of Pacific students in these years. In comparison, there was a slight increase in the total number of all students for those years.

Samoan student population figures also show patterns in relation to gender, pre-entry qualifications, and levels of study. From 1995, more Samoan female students attended the University of Canterbury, apart from 2000 and 2002 where the numbers were equal (excluding Samoan international students). The trend for Samoan international students is different. Samoan female international students numbers were greater than males in 2000 and 2001 only, and in 2002 the numbers were equal. Another notable observation is that pre-entry qualifications for Samoan students are generally lower than those of the total student population. Consistently for the years 1995–2000, the highest pre-entry qualification for Samoan students was University
Entrance (UE) (not the pre-1986 UE but that gained from those who sat Bursary but got UE). In 2001, there were equal numbers of students with Higher School Certificate or UE. However, in 2002, for the first time there were equal numbers of students with UE or B Bursary. Whereas in the same period, 1995–2002, the highest pre-entry qualification for the total student population was A bursary.

The numbers of undergraduate and postgraduate students at University of Canterbury indicate another imbalance for Samoan students. The percentage of total Samoan students who are postgraduate is consistently a lot lower than the total student population, and the percentage of total Samoan students who are undergraduates is consistently higher than the total student population. In 1995, there were 6 (7.3%) Samoan postgraduate students, 10 (10.6%) in 1996, 10 (10.4%) in 1997, 12 (10.9%) in 1998, 14 (13.2%) in 1999, 12 (11.5%) in 2000, 10 (10.4%) in 2001 and 5 (6.0%) in 2002. In comparison, in 1995, 1723 (15.0%) of the total student population were postgraduates, and by 2002, 1934 (16.1%) were postgraduates. While the total number of all postgraduates has increased during this time, there has been a slight decrease in numbers in 2001 and 2002. However, both the numbers and percentages of Samoan postgraduate students have been more erratic, with the large decrease in 2002 particularly notable. The reverse trend is obviously similar for undergraduate students. While the actual numbers of undergraduate Samoan students had increased from 76 (92.7%) in 1995 to 98 (89.1%) in 1998, it dropped to 79 (94.0%) in 2002. Whereas for the total student population the numbers have increased from 9735 (85.0%) in 1995 to 10606 (84.6%) in 1998, to 10076 (83.9%) in 2002. The pre-entry and level of study statistics for Samoan students at the University of Canterbury are similar to those patterns found in Anae et al. (2002).

An examination of the type of subjects taken by Samoan students for the years 1995–2002 also presents a particular trend. At the postgraduate level, the most common subjects for Samoan students were Education, Pacific Studies or Social
Work. Whereas, for the total student population the most common subjects chosen were Education, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Management, and Psychology. And obviously, with the much smaller numbers of postgraduate Samoan students, there was approximately one quarter of the range of subjects chosen by the total student population. At undergraduate level, this trend was slightly different. Samoan students most commonly enrolled in the subject areas of Accounting, Finance and Information Systems, Education, Law, Management, and Sociology. In comparison, while the total student population exhibited a more even enrolment for subjects, the most common were Accounting, Finance and Information Systems, Education, Law, Management, and Psychology. For both groups there has been an increase in numbers taking Computer Science over the latter years.

Additionally, these trends for subjects studied show gender differences within the Samoan student population. At postgraduate level, Education and Social Work were the most common areas of study for women, whereas Pacific Studies and Political Science were the most common areas for men. At undergraduate level, women studied more in areas of Law, Education, Accountancy, Sociology, and English, whilst men featured more predominantly in Management, Law, Civil Engineering, Economics and Sociology.

Within the Samoan student population, subject choice by Samoan international students is not as diverse as for the total Samoan student population. In the years 1995–2002, there was only one Samoan international postgraduate student, who studied in Electrical Engineering. The undergraduate Samoan international students studied mainly in the areas of Engineering, Sciences (including computer), Accounting, Economics, Forestry, and Education. There are probable explanations for this lack of diversity in subject choice. Firstly, these choices are possibly a reflection of the NZODA regulations that specify which subject areas may be selected by NZODA sponsored students for study in New Zealand (some subject areas, including Law and Medicine, must be undertaken at the University of the
South Pacific). Secondly, there is a competitive environment in Samoa for these scholarships which, according to NUS student comments, do not seem to be awarded as frequently to Social Sciences applicants. However, the low numbers of students attending the University of Canterbury is not necessarily a reflection of these regulations, but perhaps indicates that students may not consider the University of Canterbury as a viable option. In 2000, on one of my visits to the National University of Samoa (NUS), the co-ordinator of the University Preparatory Year (UPY) stated that he had not received any contact or marketing material from the University of Canterbury for the following year. All other universities from New Zealand had contacted him either by phone or in person and had provided written material about what their universities could offer prospective students. It is poignant that the University of Canterbury had not seen fit to do the same. Therefore, in his opinion most students from that year would not consider this university as a place for study.

Research questions

A central purpose of critical theory is to transform unequal social relations (Coxon, Massey & Marshall, 1994, p. 12), and critical theory in education questions and challenges unequal relations in educational institutions (Kanpol, 1994, p. 30). As Tobias (2000, p. 29) writes “critical educational theory rests ... on a critical view of existing society, arguing that the society is both exploitative and oppressive, but is also capable of being changed,” and critical forms of education attempt to minimise power differentials. Postmodernism and poststructuralism, and in particular feminist uptakes of these traditions, are also concerned with power relations. Grant and Sachs (1995) suggest that “the role of the postmodern critic is to contest hegemonic discourses,” in order to investigate how “power and power relations are played out among various groups, whether they be gender, ethnic, cultural or sexual identities” (pp. 91–92). Kanpol (1994) also argues that critical postmodernism is about understanding that the relations of class, race and gender will always be different and changing for any individual, “always in flux.”
Nevertheless, according to Yeatman (1994b), it was through feminist theorizing that the politics of voice and representation were introduced into postmodernism, where "feminism and postmodernism can be understood as in a relationship of reciprocal interpellation," (p. 13) in which both embrace the politics of difference. Furthermore, Weedon (1987) posits that social meanings are produced within social institutions and practices, and the individuals within these institutions are agents of change who may either serve or challenge existing power relations. Therefore, a feminist poststructuralism needs to pay full attention to the "social and institutional context of sexuality in order to address the power relations of everyday life" (Weedon, 1987, p. 25). For students of Samoan background, issues of class, race, ethnicity and gender are interwoven with and affect their educational experiences and outcomes. In view of this, this thesis addresses the following research questions:

- In what ways do students of Samoan background define, describe and interpret their experiences at the University of Canterbury?
- How do these students see themselves as both being constituted by others as well as constituting themselves?
- In these students' experiences, what power relations do discursive practices produce and reproduce in this academy, and what are their constitutive effects?
- What discourses of possibility disrupt acts of constitution and discursive positionings?

It is intended that through this study Samoan students may further understand the system, the structures and discourses that continue to reinforce educational disparities and that this will benefit any of their resistance and change initiatives. I also hope that this study will challenge the University as an agency of social reproduction to assess and change its own practices and structures, in order to improve the educational outcomes for students of Pacific origin. Finally as a mother, wife and friend of students who have been and are presently disadvantaged in our educational system, I hope that my personal contribution via this study will yield
some insights into how these students can initiate changes for themselves. I hope to strengthen a belief that educational qualifications are not reserved for others while they, whether they be Samoans, Tongans, Cook Islanders, Māori or any minority ethnic group, are left with few, if any, formal qualifications.

Contextual locations

This introductory chapter sets the stage for the thesis by providing a historical overview of Pacific peoples experiences in Aotearoa/New Zealand as well as a review of relevant literature. I then focused more specifically on the statistical picture for both Pacific and particularly Samoan students who have attended the University of Canterbury, and detailed the research questions. I now conclude this chapter by situating the following chapters and finish by locating my positioning as a cross-cultural researcher.

Chapter two outlines the theoretical framework that underpins the analysis in this thesis. I engage with theoretical understandings that attend to social structures and human agency. I draw predominantly on feminist poststructuralist theory to inform and support my analysis of the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender and culture within the constitutive effects of power relations, which the academy’s institutional policies and practices produce and reproduce. I also acknowledge my own theoretical journey and draw upon other theoretical understandings that have influenced my analysis and writing.

In chapter three, I address methodological questions that arise from undertaking qualitative research, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. I discuss three methodological theoretical positionings that inform my research as well as taking a closer look at the politics of positionality. The final section of this chapter details the contradictions and complexities of fieldwork.
I (re)present the research findings in two sections. The first section consists of chapters four and five, while the second section consists of chapters six and seven. Throughout all the findings chapters, I attempt to interconnect both the overt and covert processes of racialization, and gender, ethnic, class, and cultural differences.

Chapter four focuses on how these participants' subjectivities as Samoan students are shaped by multiple contradictory discursive practices. In particular, I explore power relations and processes of normalisation that constitute their shades of being, and suggest that while agentic choice is constituted from contradictory discursive practices, individuals are able to analyse these practices and rewrite the script.

Chapter five continues with the constitutive effects of discourse and subjectification. I draw attention to and deconstruct discursive practices that simultaneously socially constitute and multiply position these participants as students within their inter-relationships of family, church community and the university.

Both chapters six and seven particularly focus on the interfaces between these students and the University of Canterbury and explore processes of normalisation within discursive practices in the institution. Chapter six disrupts assumptions within discourses of equity and equal opportunities and exposes discursive practices and relations of power that offer these students certain positionings, particularly isolation, invisibility and exclusion, which have been both taken up and resisted, sometimes simultaneously.

The last findings chapter, chapter seven, continues to address power relations and constitutive processes through deconstructing knowledge construction and meaning, and the normalisation of acceptable knowledge and culture. I problematise regimes of truth that reproduce the “right” knowledge and culture, and processes of
normalisation that attempt to assimilate and integrate rather than accommodate and acknowledge differences.

I present the discussion chapter, chapter eight, in four themes that emerged from and are interwoven throughout the previous findings chapters. Each of these themes disrupts and reconfigures discursive practices and discourses that shape these participants' subjectivities as Samoan students.

The final chapter explores the notion of intersectionality as a way to move beyond the politics of difference in order to be able to study both the historical constructions of groups as well as the relationships among and within groups. Intersectionality also allows for an analysis that attends to the interconnectedness of race, ethnicity, gender, class and culture. I then focus on the implications of my findings for the University of Canterbury, and suggest some initial, practical initiatives that could be implemented. However, I also propose some more challenging initiatives necessary to change the exclusive nature of the "ivory tower."

**Locating my journey / myself**

*Why did I choose to undertake this particular cross-cultural research project?*

As this is a cross-cultural study, I believe it is crucial to situate and locate myself within the context of this research. My ongoing motivation for this Doctoral research has been my own life experiences, particularly as a white New Zealand woman married to a Samoan. I have experienced over 31 years of living within a bi-cultural marriage, in New Zealand and in Samoa. Many of the discourses that have influenced my decisions, my life’s journeys, and myself have been sustained within each of these cultures.

As I have written elsewhere (Petelo, 1997), in the early years of my life before I met my husband, I had no comprehension of how people are discriminated against on grounds of skin colour, race or ethnicity. As a young person, I had no concept of
the discursive practices of Othering or being Othered; that is, constituting others and ourselves through the ways in which we act and use our everyday talk to speak ourselves and each other into existence, and the ways in which we speak of and for others while occluding ourselves (Davies, 1994; Fine, 1994). My naivety was abruptly disrupted after my husband and I had become engaged, when an uncle of whom I was very fond cut off all forms of contact with my family and myself. We encountered many other discriminatory practices in the 1970s (and beyond), including our experiences of flat hunting: often flats were available when I rang on the telephone, only to be told a short time later when my husband and myself arrived to view the places that they had been taken.

Since this awakening of my consciousness, I have been acutely aware of the struggles that members of my immediate family, extended family and friends have faced throughout their formal education and in their chosen careers. I have observed and been told about a multitude of covert and overt racist practices within educational institutions, in various workplaces and in the wider New Zealand community. I have learnt that discrimination on grounds of race exists in many forms and has no boundaries: being present in all types of situations and places. Discriminatory practices from the past, as well as those that continue today, have brought mixed emotions including laughter, tears, frustrations, hurt, both within our individual lives in the community or workplace, and in our lives as spouses and parents. These occurrences have also not been confined to New Zealand alone. They have included (although not limited to): being spoken to in very slow, stilted tones, waiting a long time for service in a variety of settings or getting no service at all, service people talking to me and ignoring my husband, telephone calls to a former employer of my husband informing the department that one of their cars had been stolen and was being driven by a dark person (when in fact he was driving it as an employee), being spoken to in an offensive tone or manner. In a recent illustration, a shop assistant directed us to the cheapest range of the goods we wished to purchase, even though my husband had specifically asked for another brand which was of
better quality but more expensive. The list is endless, some actions being more insidious than others, others more overt. Some incidents we can openly talk about and acknowledge, others are better left unstated for reasons of self preservation. Each incident has the potential to reinforce stereotypes and maintain marginality, and collectively they categorise, and normalise individuals into certain ways of being and knowing.

The challenge for me has always been: why does this happen and what can I do to make a difference? This research project has emerged from these personal challenges, and in a sense, is a form of resistance to the situations that can be a daily occurrence to many people within New Zealand. I cannot separate these personal experiences from my research. The experiences that members of my family, our friends and I have faced, and continue to face, both within educational institutions and the wider community, underpin and are continually present throughout my research. Later in the methodology chapter, I will explore further my positionings and the related implications as they affect considerations of method and cross-cultural research.

I have decided to finish this introductory chapter with two personal vignettes, which highlight the inescapable dilemmas that my husband and I have faced as parents of secondary school pupils in the late 1990s. I would hope that now we are in the twenty-first century attitudes may have changed, but I am not sure that I can allow myself to be that optimistic considering my historical journey. I acknowledge that personal experiences such as these are indicative of positionings that I bring to this research.

Seen as invisible

We, my husband and I, sat down on the chairs opposite one of our daughter's teachers, during the course of a parent/teacher evening. What transpired was something short of mind-numbing. As the teacher introduced herself, I noted that her
entire focus was directed towards me. Immediately my neck bristled, so I decided to specifically watch to see when she would address or turn her attention in the direction of my husband. For the entire interview of approximately 5 minutes, she did not once look at my husband or direct any comments towards him. Later, my husband and I decided to challenge this scenario and raised it with another staff member of the school. The resulting investigation revealed that the particular teacher concerned only directed her comments to me because she did not think that my husband spoke English. She could not offer any other explanation as to why she had rendered my husband invisible. What chance do her pupils, like our daughter, have of succeeding in her classroom, if that is her attitude in dealing with a parent from another culture?

A protest
Towards the latter part of a school year, our 15 year old son walked out of a religious education class after some of the boys in his class insisted on telling “Māori” jokes. After the first joke the teacher turned to the only two brown skinned class members, both of Samoan background, and asked them, “How do you feel about this?” as if it was their problem. Neither of them answered her question. The other class members continued with more “Māori” joke telling. Subsequently the two brown skinned boys left in protest, saying that they did not have to put up with that behaviour. Later that day the teacher remonstrated with our son saying, “Don't you ever walk out of my class again!” Thus, he was seen as the problem, not the racist innuendos. My son, and hence I myself, and people of colour are still Othered, are still positioned problematically on the outer within our educational institutions (reprinted from Petelo, 1997).

Notes

1 I acknowledge the problematic nature of the collective term “student” and the normalisation processes that this implies. For the purpose of this thesis, I use
"student" as a general term to mean any person who is attending an educational institution for the purpose of study, whether full-time or part-time, and regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity etc. However, I do not intend "student" to be read as a fixed unitary essence, but instead suggest that student subjectivities are constituted, are always subject to discourse. This thesis serves to disrupt, to open for inspection the assumptions made when we hear or read the term "student" and in particular "Pacific student" or "Samoan student."

This is also the case for other collective terms such as "Pacific", "minorities", "whites", "blacks", "Palagi" that categorise and define groups in certain ways. "Minority" is problematic because it sets a group on the outer of the mainstream and marginalizes people (see Anderson & Collins, 1998, p.xiii). I do not intend in this thesis to explore in depth all of the collective terms used in the literature or by the participants. I wish to state, though, that I use these terms with an understanding of the need to deconstruct collectivity and the hope that this thesis attempts to disrupt these taken for granted meanings.

The practice of using parenthesis signifies the problematic nature of the word. This practice is more commonly used in feminist and feminist poststructuralist writing. "It stems from the feminist linguistics area arising from works by Sassure, Derrida, Kristeva, Lacan, Irigaray amongst others. Kristeva argues that there needs to be practices of writing, which are themselves revolutionary, analogous to sexual and political transformation, and that their existence symbolises the possibility of transforming society. Toril Moi (1985) writes that ‘abrupt shifts, ellipses, breaks and apparent lack of logical construction is a kind of writing in which the rhythms of the body and the unconscious have managed to break through the strict rational defences of conventional social meaning’ (p. 11).” (E. Rathgen, personal communication, September, 2002). I take the use of parentheses as a practice to mean that the word is not to be taken at face value, it is to problematise the word, to deconstruct and open it up to further possibilities and meanings. My use of parentheses in words such as (re)fections can be justified for the effect of 'shock' or attention.
I use the term ‘Pacific’ in this thesis to refer to a collective group of peoples living in New Zealand who have migrated from various Pacific Islands, or who continue to live in one of the Pacific Islands, or who identify with any Pacific Island/s because of ancestry or heritage. The term ‘Pacific’ or ‘Pacific peoples’ does not refer to a single ethnicity, nationality or culture, but is used to encompass a diverse range of peoples from the South Pacific region. I note that while the Ministries of Education and Pacific Island Affairs also use Pacific peoples, I acknowledge that more recently the Ministry of Education has adopted the term Pasifika peoples (see pamphlet titled Pasifika Education: Pasifika Advisory Group, Ministry of Education, 2002b).


For overseas reviews, both Courtney (1992) and McGivney (1993) provide a good synopsis of this field. The Fourth Sector by Benseman, Findsen and Scott (1996) provides a succinct picture and analysis of adult and community education, within New Zealand.

In early 2001, as a result of a hui on campus in November 2000 to discuss the supplementary grant money for “Pacific Islands” and Maori students that has been allocated to the university from the current Labour Government, the Macmillan Brown Centre again made a request to the university to fund a part-time Liaison person. Although the University had put a cap on employing new staff due to its financial situation, this position was able to be appointed because the university was not financing it. Finally, in early October 2001 the position for a Liaison person was advertised, although the money had been in the university for well over six months. This position was initially for a six month contract, which was renewed for a further six months before finally being advertised as a continuing position.
Weaving a theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to present the theoretical positionings that underlie my thesis. I believe it is crucial to engage with theoretical frameworks that address the intersections between social structures and human agency. This enables us to explore and understand the experiences of these participants in ways that do not rely heavily on a positivist or constructionist epistemology that, intentionally or not, embraces deficit and/or structural functionalist social theories, and which avoids extremes of relativism. My argument is that within my (re)telling of the participants' stories, there exists a complex interplay of power and knowledge. This requires an analysis that should incorporate interwoven issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender and culture, in both micro and macro positionings. In order to inform my theoretical positionings, I interact with postfoundationalist epistemology, and in particular feminist epistemology that is present within postmodernist and poststructuralist forms of thought. Yeatman (1994a; see also Luke & Gore, 1992) writes that:

There is an emergent postfoundationalist epistemology which is oriented in terms of the premise that knowledge-claims are irresolvably multiple, and comprise historically specified fields of contested claims. As knowledge, these claims have no more status than the historicity of their discursive positioning. (p. 197)
Lennon and Whitford (1994) conceptualize feminist epistemology in the following terms:

Feminist epistemology is neither the specification of a female way of knowing (there is no such thing) nor simply the articulation of female subjectivity which reveals itself to be diverse, contradictory and at least partially discursively constructed through patriarchal oppositions. Feminist epistemology consists rather in attention to epistemological concerns arising out of feminist projects, which prompt reflection on the nature of knowledge and our methods for attaining it. (p. 13)

They continue by arguing that the recognition of difference in feminist theorizing presents an epistemological challenge that "needs a dialectical solution." This would encompass taking into account power, conflict, and competing interests, as well as accepting "the necessity for the self to change in the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge." They also believe that feminism's greatest epistemological insight has been the connections made between knowledge and power, in that the legitimation of knowledge is "intimately tied to networks of domination and exclusion" (p. 1).

Audi (1998, p. 728) states that feminist epistemologists have "emphasized the social and cultural situatedness of knowers and their interdependence." These epistemological positionings inform my theoretical understandings.

The theoretical assumptions underpinning my analysis draw mainly upon poststructuralist theory, and in particular feminist poststructuralist theory, as well as other postmodern writers (including those within adult education and those writing about race and ethnicity). However, I also acknowledge my earlier educational nurturing within feminist, critical, Marxist and socialist theory, and therefore, I intend to draw upon this sphere of influence where it may be aligned with poststructuralist tenets. This chapter offers possibilities to change our lenses as we view the issues for the students in this study from theoretical understandings, which as yet are uncommon within the growing dialogue about Pacific peoples' education in New Zealand.
The terms *postmodern* and *poststructural*, and their derivatives, are often conflated and used interchangeably within the literature. My purpose in this chapter is not to offer an in-depth juxtapositional critique of these terms (for diverse critiques see Crotty, 1998; Docherty, 1993; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Nicholson & Seidman, 1995; Peters, 1996, 1998; Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Seidman, 1994; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997; Usher & Edwards, 1994; Waugh, 1992; Weedon, 1987, 1999; Yeatman, 1994a, 1994b), but instead to briefly state why I have based this thesis in poststructuralism and present its principles that are utilized in this study.

I situate poststructuralist theory within postmodernism, which as a term is “itself complex and contested” (Weedon, 1997, p. 170). Postmodernism has been used to describe developments in many spheres of human endeavour including architecture, philosophy, social sciences, arts, fashion, and literature (Crotty, 1998; Weedon, 1999). Rather than trying to state a clear-cut definition of postmodernism, it is more appropriate to offer perspectives from various writers. Usher and Edwards (1994) view it as “an umbrella term under whose broad cover can be encompassed at one and the same time a condition, a set of practices, a cultural discourse, an attitude and a mode of analysis” (p. 7). Lather (1991) at times uses postmodernism “to mean the larger cultural shifts of a post-industrial, post-colonial era” (p. 4). In their discussion on feminism and postmodernism, Fraser and Nicholson (1988/1989) draw on Lyotard (1979/1984) to theorise the postmodern condition as one in which “‘grand narratives’ of legitimation are no longer credible” (p. 86). Lyotard’s (1979/1984) argument is that:

> The question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation. (p. 37)

Furthermore he believes:

> We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives—we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse. (p. 60)
Fraser and Nicholson (1988/1989) summarise Lyotard’s grand narratives as the:

overarching philosophies of history like the Enlightenment story of the gradual but steady progress of reason and freedom, Hegel’s dialectic of the Spirit coming to know itself, and most importantly, Marx’s drama of the forward march of human productive capacities via class conflict culminating in proletarian revolution. (p. 86)

Hence, while acknowledging that these perceptions of postmodernism are varied, what is specifically pertinent for this thesis are the postmodernist and feminist debates of Western thought. These debates include: the critique of the metanarratives, the general universalizing theories of liberalism, Marxism, philosophy and science; challenges to the notion and privileged status of a reasoning subject through the notion of subjectivity; and the decentring of singular, centralized notions of power (Lather, 1991; Middleton, 1993; Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Weedon, 1997).

The term poststructuralism also has been contested. It has been seen as difficult to conceptualise (Ropers-Huilman, 1998). Poststructuralist thought challenges structuralist theory and its assumptions and arguments (Cherryholmes, 1988). Lather (1991), who in her writing often uses postmodernism and poststructuralism interchangeably, at times uses poststructuralism to denote “the working out of those cultural shifts [of a post-industrial, post-colonial era] within the arenas of academic theory” (p. 4). Similarly, St. Pierre & Pillow (2000) argue their case for using poststructuralist theory:

Poststructuralism ... does not assume that humanism is an error that must be replaced.... It does not offer an alternative, successor regime of truth.... Rather it offers critiques and methods for examining the functions and effects of any structure or grid of regularity that we put into place, including those poststructuralism itself might create. (p. 6)

Thus, poststructuralism offers a way of “conceptualizing the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness which focuses on how power is exercised, and on the possibilities of change” (Weedon, 1987, p. 19).
Just as Weedon (1987) drew on those “poststructuralist developments in the theory of language, subjectivity and power for knowledge production” (p. 10), which would serve feminist interests, I draw on those same poststructuralist developments to provide a useful framework through which we can understand the mechanisms of power in our society. Like Weedon, I use a feminist poststructuralist framework to “address subjectivity, discourse and power in an attempt to show that we need not take established meanings, values and power relations for granted” (Weedon, 1987, p. 174). Furthermore within this framework, I concur with Weedon’s argument that categories such as race, gender, and class can still be used in social and cultural analysis but only if their meaning is plural, as well as being historically and socially specific.

The term poststructuralism also does not have one fixed meaning. Both Weedon (1987, 1999) and Ropers-Huilman (1998) assert there are many “strands” or “forms” of poststructuralism, but as Weedon (1987) argues, “not all forms are necessarily productive for feminism” (p. 21). The two I have chosen to draw on to theorize the production of meaning in this thesis are Derridian theory, which focuses upon the relationship between texts, and Foucauldian theory, which focuses upon historically specific discursive relations and practices.

The sections which follow explore the features of poststructuralism with which I engage. These features enable us to analyse discursive practices, by attending to questions such as: How are discursive practices structured? What power relations do discursive practices produce and reproduce? Where are their resistances? Where might we search for places open to challenge and transformation? (Weedon, 1987). I then discuss poststructuralist understandings in relationship to the intersections of identity, difference, race, ethnicity and racialization. This chapter finishes with a brief discussion on whether it is possible to align poststructuralism with the ideas of theorists’ Gramsci and Bourdieu, particularly in relation to their concepts of
hegemony and social reproduction. I suggest that these latter theories still have concepts to offer this analysis.

**Language and Deconstruction**

The central focus of any poststructural analysis is that of language. In poststructuralism, an analysis of language is the basis for understanding how social relations are conceived and how they work, whereby subjectivity, meanings and categories are constituted (Scott, 1988; Orner, 1992; Weedon, 1987, 1991, 1997). St. Pierre (2000) points out that "the poststructural understanding of language troubles the idea that language mirrors the world" (p. 481). Thus, language is perceived as constituting our world rather than reflecting the way that it is; meaning is seen as constituted in language and it is not fixed by the person who speaks it (Weedon, 1987). Weedon asserts that "meaning and consciousness do not exist outside of language," (p. 32) and claims that for feminist poststructuralism:

> It is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitutes us as conscious thinking subjects and enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it. (p. 32)

Weedon (1987) states that the feminist poststructuralism she supports takes much from Althusserian Marxist discourse, which also holds that language enables us to give meaning to the world in which we live. The difference is that Althusserian Marxism sees all forms of social power under capitalism as deriving ultimately from capitalism itself and the relationship between capitalism and labour. Whereas feminist poststructuralism allows for other forms of power relations such as gender or race and does not subordinate any analysis to another. In her argument, the position of the subject using language is integral both to the way that language is structured and to the structure of the subjectivity which it constitutes. Weedon (1987) summarizes her rationale by stating:

> Language and the range of subject positions which it offers always exists in historically specific discourses which inhere in social institutions and practices and can be organized analytically in discursive fields. (p. 35)
Feminists, and others, have used poststructural critiques of language, "to make visible how language operates to produce very real, material, and damaging structures to the world" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 481). In particular they, and I, have drawn in part upon Derrida’s (1967/1976) critique of language where he introduced the concept of différence, to explain how meaning can always be disputed because the meaning of language changes depending on its social context. Derrida (1973) described the term difference as, "the movement by which language ... becomes 'historically' constituted as a fabric of differences" (p. 141), and argues that meaning can never be fixed; it must always be deferred. From Derrida’s perspective concepts (signifiers) are not fixed, and sound or written images (signifiers), "which have an identity only in their difference from one another, are subject to an endless process of deferral" (Weedon, 1987, p. 25).

Furthermore, Derrida (1967/1976) argues that the concept of deconstruction allows an analysis of the operations of differences in texts, that is "the ways in which meanings are made to work" (Scott, 1988, p. 37). According to Derrida, deconstruction aims to:

Dismantle [déconstruire] the metaphysical and rhetorical structures that are at work in [the text], not in order to reject or discard them, but to reinscribe them in another way. (Derrida, quoted in Spivak, 1976, p. lxxv)

Deconstruction rejects humanist discourses and their conceptions of language and subjectivity, such as unitary subjectivity, and instead insists, "meaning is not only plural but constantly deferred in the never-ending webs of textuality in which all texts are located" (Weedon, 1987, p. 163; see also Rutherford, 1990).

Deconstruction is not about tearing down but rebuilding; deconstruction looks at how a structure has been produced, constructed and held together. It is an affirmative practice and not "a destructive, negative or nihilistic practice" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 482). Derrida’s (1967/1976) rationale is that the Western philosophical tradition is based on hierarchical binary oppositions such as identity/difference, knowledge/wisdom, man/woman, unity/diversity, white/black, equality/inequality,
where the first term is accorded supremacy over the second, which is defined negatively, and also where the first term depends on and gets its meaning from the second. These fixed oppositions conceal the many ways in which each is interdependent, deriving their meaning from their established contrast.

Thus, through paying particular attention to oppositional thinking, deconstruction focuses on how meaning is produced within discourse. (Elizabeth, 1997; Lather, 1991; Ormer, 1992). If we accept Derrida’s suggestion that these binary oppositions do in fact operate to provide insights into the way that meaning is constructed, then we need to, in his term, “deconstruct” them to examine the processes they embody rather than taking any binary at face value. As a tool of analysis, deconstruction enables us to look at meanings of terms such as “Pacific Islander,” Samoan student, coloured, New Zealand Born, identity, and knowledge, and unpack how their fixed meanings have been contextually constituted and dependent on their preceding historical locations.

Deconstruction has been useful for feminism, and I, similarly, have found it useful for this thesis “as it offers a method of decentering the hierarchical oppositions which underpin gender, race and class oppression” (Weedon, 1987, p. 165). St. Pierre (2000) reinforces how deconstruction is a powerful tool, as it helps us to critique structures in ways that facilitate a constant rewriting of the world and ourselves. However, Weedon argues that much deconstructive analysis “fails to attend to questions of social context, particular interests and power” (p. 165). These particular forms of deconstructionist analyses do not meet feminist needs. Rather she argues that as social meanings are produced within social institutions and practices, and the individuals within these institutions are agents of change who may either serve or challenge existing power relations, a feminist poststructuralism “must pay full attention to the social and institutional context of sexuality in order to address the power relations of everyday life” (Weedon, 1987, p. 25).
In conclusion, the poststructural critique of language, which suggests that meanings of words and texts are not fixed, enables us to ask different questions as we seek different possibilities for analysing how we see the world we live in. As Scott (1988) recommends, the following types of questions need to be asked by poststructuralist feminists:

How, in what specific contexts, among which specific communities of people, and by what textual and social processes has meaning been acquired? More generally the questions are: How do meanings change? How have some meanings emerged as normative and others have been eclipsed or disappeared? What do these processes reveal about how power is constituted and operates? (p. 35)

Furthermore, Weedon (1987) believes that feminist poststructuralists do not employ deconstruction on its own, as they must be concerned with power, and therefore they also look to “the historically and socially specific discursive production of conflicting and competing messages” (p. 86). For the purposes of this thesis, deconstruction is used in a complementary way to the writing of Foucault, who has made a major contribution to our understanding of subjectification and how we see “what we understand by ‘being human’ has shifted radically over the ages” (Davies, 1997, p. 272).

**Discourse**

The way we think about how language operates to produce the world has changed as a result of Michael Foucault’s work on discourse. Foucault claimed that his goal was to make sense of subjectification, of “how human beings are made subjects... in the processes which shift the meaning of being a subject over time” (Davies, 1997, p. 273). In his works on mental illness, punishment and sexuality respectively, Foucault (1961/65, 1976/78, 1975/1979) examines how discourses have been historically produced (see also Cherryholmes, 1988; St. Pierre, 2000).

Discourse is critical to poststructuralism because it allows a study of the organised and regulated, as well as the regulating and constituting functions of
language (Bové, 1995; St. Pierre, 2000). However, according to poststructuralist theorists such as Bové (1995), St. Pierre (2000) and Derrida (1967/1974), poststructuralism is not about asking essentializing questions such as ‘what is the meaning of discourse?’ Instead it is concerned with different questions such as “How does discourse function? Where is it to be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social effects? How does it exist?” (Bové, 1995, p. 54).

Weedon (1987) describes discourses in Foucauldian theory as “ways of constituting knowledge, together with social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them” (p. 108). Scott (1988) maintains that “discourse is not a language or a text but a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs” (p. 35). Crowther (2000) states that discourses construct both what we know and the extent and limits of what we know:

> They constitute the language, assumptions, ways of thinking, problems and practices which are regarded as appropriate and legitimate…. Discourses generate a ‘way of knowing’ which frame our knowledge and understanding, and at the same time, they also exclude other ways in which we can know a subject. (p. 480)

St. Pierre (2000) writes that discourse has rules that allow some people to be subjects and others to be objects:

> Who gets to speak? Who is spoken? Discourse can never be just linguistic since it organises a way of thinking into a way of acting in the world. (p. 485)

Therefore discourses are exclusionary because they allow some people to speak and silence others, they perpetuate power inequalities by defining what is going on in the world in ways that serve the interests of those with power (Usher & Edwards, 1994).

In relation to universities, Usher and Edwards (1994) claim that discourses are central to the production of subjectivity. This can be seen in the discourse of the
University that situates students as learners receiving a dominating body of knowledge:

The discourse of the University highlights the position of learners in a formal education environment. In this discourse learners are in the position of receivers of a system or body of knowledge which is dominating and totalised. (p. 76)

Similarly, Williams argues that the discourse of access legitimates selectivity into universities; universities are the ‘custodians of selection’ (Salter and Tapper, 1994, cited in Williams, 1997, p. 27). Bloland (1995) writes that a deconstruction of the hierarchical discourses in the university is to:

point out the hidden contradictions, inconsistencies, and ambiguities within academia, to show just how much hierarchy is based on what looks like arbitrary exclusions, and to illuminate how much they serve to put other ideas and people on the margin or exclude them entirely. (p. 527)

Grant (1993) also writes that the liberal humanist discourse of studenthood is dominant in the university “because of its articulation to the other power/knowledge discourses ... in its articulation of the values and beliefs of the hegemonic group in society” (pp. 16–17). She argues that some students are privileged because of their alignment with this, which maintains the university as a discursive site of struggle; the university is not a ‘level playing field.’

Poststructuralist feminists believe that subjectivity is realized in the discursive practices of everyday life (Weedon, 1987). Again they draw on Foucault (1969/1972) who explained discursive practices as:

a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function. (p. 117)

From his studies on historical practices Foucault proposes “that social and political institutions and discursive practices are mutually productive and reproductive” (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 33). In a later work, he restates his explanation of discursive practices:

Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing. They are embodied in technical processes, in situations, in patterns for general behaviour, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical
forms which, at once, impose and maintain them. (Foucault, 1970/1977, p. 200)

To conclude, discourse and its related discursive practices, are viewed as “a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity” (Weedon, 1987, p. 21). Furthermore, how we live and give meaning to our lives “depends on the range and social power of existing discourses, our access to them and the political strength of the interests which they represent” (Weedon, 1987, p. 47). In this thesis, I understand discourse to be a historically, socially, and institutionally specific formation of “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 49). Additionally, the strands of feminist poststructuralism that I adhere to, draw on the tools of Derrida’s theory of deconstruction and Foucauldian models of discourse and power in order to undertake detailed examinations of the workings of power. Moreover, I now use these tools to examine the opportunities for resistance to that power, initially at a localized level, which then needs to be located within broader strategies of power (Weedon, 1987, pp. 41 & 126).

**Power, normalisation and resistance**

In the previous discussion, I noted that discourses constitute meaning and social relationships, and are not neutral. On one hand they frame what we know, yet simultaneously they can exclude what we could know. People are also positioned in discourse in unequal ways, for example lecturer/student, New Zealander/Pacific Islander” (Ball, 1990a; Crowther, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000; Usher & Edwards, 1994; Weedon, 1987). However, as Weedon (1987) argues, discourses are not just simple opposing relations of power or powerlessness, instead, in Foucault’s terms, they are “tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations” (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 101). She explains that force relations are “relations of power which take specific forms in particular societies, organised, for example, through relations of class, race, gender, religion and age” (p. 110). The field of force relations can
include social institutions, which “are the site of discursive conflict over how subjectivities and social relations should be constituted and social control exercised” (p. 110).

Foucault’s conceptualisation of power has been integral to a poststructural re-inscription of power and resistance (St. Pierre, 2000). Foucault’s theory is that power exists in relations; he very seldom uses the word power but usually speaks of relations of power, or power relations (Foucault 1980, 1975/1979; 1984/1997b; 1982/2000). Foucault (1984/1997b) explains his theory of power relations as:

When I speak of relations of power, I mean that in human relationships … power is always present: I mean a relationship in which one person tries to control the conduct of another… These power relations are mobile, reversible and unstable…. In order for power relations to come into play, there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides…. This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance there would be no power relation at all. (pp. 291–292)

Foucault argues that power is neither inherently negative nor is it considered as belonging to an individual; instead power is productive, producing reality, and can be “found in the effects of liberty as well as in the effects of domination” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 491). Hence, we need to actualize analyses of power relations in order that we can learn what is being produced: “reversible strategic games or the states of domination that people ordinarily call ‘power’” (p. 491). The types of questions we need to ask for such analyses are those suggested by Ropers-Huilman (1998):

What are the aims and objectives of existing power relations? What are the points of resistance to those power relations? What are the points or sources through which power is currently being exercised? What are power relations producing? (p. 6)

A particular type of power that I refer to in this thesis is that of modern disciplinary power, as described by Foucault in Discipline and Punish (1975/1979), with its effects of normalisation. Here Foucault uses the architectural figure of the panopticon to illustrate how power functions through practices of observation and surveillance, through a normalising gaze or a self-monitoring. Foucault uses the
panopticon to argue that, “power develops through ‘normalisation’, through defining what is usual and habitual and to be expected, as opposed to the deviant and exceptional” (Wetherall & Potter, 1992, p. 84). He elaborates this image of the panopticon to describe many modern disciplinary panopticisms; the mechanisms, practices, technologies and institutions, which maintain the surveillance of people such as the school, examinations, the army, the state, the workshop and the minute disciplines of everyday life (see also Foucault, 1980; St. Pierre, 2000). His argument is that the modern “disciplinary society” (Foucault, 1975/1979, p. 209) has “become increasingly colonized by disciplinary power that proliferates and is diffused into every aspect of human life” (St. Pierre, 2000, pp. 491–492).

Education theorists, in their analyses of forms of social control, have also drawn on Foucault’s notion of normalisation (see Ball, 1990a; Dixon, 2001; Marshall, 1996; Quinlivan, 2001; Usher & Edwards, 1994; Wetherall & Potter, 1992). Usher and Edwards (1994, p. 102) contend that in education the ever increasing processes of examination and documentation categorise (a discipline mechanism through observation), and as such normalise at the same time, creating boundaries and exclusions. This normalisation imposes homogeneity. Foucault (1975/1979) describes the examination as a normalising gaze, as “a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility though which one differentiates them and judges them” (p. 184). Dixon (2001) also explores the notion of the normalising gaze in her suggestion that “the professional discourse of developmental psychology positions children who are seen as having behaviour problems” (p. 110). Her argument is that the children reflect what they see; those who are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) actually develop ADHD, as they identify themselves with the label they are given and behave accordingly. Additionally, in Quinlivan’s (2001) research with queer students in a Secondary School, the discursive normalisation of heterosexuality is problematised, rather than focusing upon the needs of a disadvantaged group. She claims that:
Placing the emphasis on an exploration of how heterosexuality is constructed as normal means that queers can no longer be framed as politely requiring tolerance for their ‘abnormal’ sexuality from ‘normal’ heterosexuals. (Quinlivan, 2000, p. 8)

In summary, Foucault’s argument is that people observe, organise and perceive themselves according to their interpretation of cultural norms. Their normalising gaze is an internal personal discourse, which in Foucault’s view acts as a form of self control. This Foucauldian perspective supports a view that students are normalised into a way of being, into ways of behaving and interacting. In this thesis, I utilize a poststructural analysis to problematise the discursive practices of normalisation by exploring the different ways in which these students experience their normalising gaze of what it is to be a student within the University of Canterbury.

However, disciplinary power and the processes of normalisation can present a rather bleak picture, which St. Pierre (2000) posits is offset by a poststructural description of resistance (see also Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1987). This description is drawn from Foucault’s theory of power and resistance. Foucault (1980) theorizes that “there are no relations of power without resistances” and consequently this resistance “exists ... by being in the same place as power” (p. 142), or as Usher & Edwards (1994) write, “resistance is immanent in power” (p. 99). Similarly, Clegg (1989) writes:

Power and resistance stand in a relationship to each other. One rarely has one without the other... .Excessive politeness in dealing with one to whom one is subject may well ironicize resistance. Working to rule may not produce overt conflict with a superior ... but it may well be an effective form of resistance. (p. 208)

According to Foucault (1982/1997a), because we can never be outside relations of power, there are always possibilities of changing situations. As he states:

You see, if there was no resistance , there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you’re not doing what you want. (p. 167)
And:

It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination that, by definition, are means of escape (1982/2000, p. 347).

Resistance for Foucault (1976/1978) does include organised political movements, but is more usually found in smaller "mobile and transitory points of resistance" (p. 96). St. Pierre (2000) believes that this contrasts with the view in humanism, which theorizes resistance to domination as being:

practiced by self-contained, autonomous individuals in response to an oppressive force from the outside, a force that challenges both the natural and political liberty of the individual. In this sense, resistance is thought to be an act of negation that nullifies or counteracts an infringement of rights (p. 489).

She argues instead that resistance is both an effect of a relation of power and is not a unitary concept, but that there are a "multiplicity of resistances" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 492). Moreover, resistance produces discourse and subjectivities, which in turn can be utilized to challenge "those discourses which legitimate domination, exploitation and subjection by the powerful" (Elizabeth, 1997, p. 24).

Grant (1993) also drew on Foucault’s understanding of power relations. In her study of university students’ subjectivities, she identified a resistant student subjectivity, which in all cases never “disrupted the glassy calm of studenthood in a public or political way” (p. 118). She explained that although the students in her study often simultaneously resisted and accommodated discourses, they did not overtly challenge the dominant discourse of studenthood.

Similarly, Elizabeth (1997) argues resistance, which often begins with a critique of institutions and practices, allows “acts of refusal” where individuals refuse to accept ascribed definitions by those in power (see also hooks, 1984). She describes different ways in which resistance to the exercise of power can arise. One way is that the contradictory subject gives rise to tension, which enables the possibility of resisting certain “renditions” of the self. Another form of resistance may use one
discourse against another to permit inclusion. Or resistance can entail a taking up and a reversing of the rules of contrast that are contained within a discourse in order to contest the meanings previously attributed to these distinctions. In this case, difference becomes a resource that enables resistance to take place. Finally, she suggests resistance occurs when individuals manipulate discursive elements to bring about new discourse.

A poststructural framework, therefore, enables one to investigate the many forms of response to constituting practices, including accepting, or collaborating, or challenging or resisting. In this project, both the participants and I disrupt the notion of resistance and demonstrate that established meanings, values and relations of power support certain interests and maintain domination in the institution.

**Power-knowledge and regimes of truth**

I also refer to another “crucial tenet” of poststructuralism; the conceptualisation of knowledge, and the inscription of meaning and truth (Ropers-Huilman, 1998, p. 6; St. Pierre, 2000). Poststructuralist theory conceptualises knowledge as partial and political, where legitimised knowledge can change in relation to the social context and the existing power relations in that given context, and where “legitimised knowledge that certain discourses support is able to be articulated and deconstructed.” (Ropers-Huilman, 1998, p. 6). Again, this stance draws on Foucault’s writings:

> Power and knowledge directly imply one another: there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (Foucault, 1975/1979, p. 27).

Foucault is arguing that knowledge does not reflect power relations, instead it “is immanent in them” (Ball, 1990b, p. 17). As Davies (2002) explains, power relations presuppose knowledge and knowledge presupposes relations of power. Foucault coined the term power-knowledge to suggest that knowledge and power are both part of the same process, where “power is very much implicated in the production of
knowledge” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 496; see also Kenway, 1990). Power is implicated in what can be said and who can say it. This notion of power-knowledge is in contrast to the liberal-humanist paradigm in which knowledge is seen as separate from power: where “knowledge is a (disinterested) search for truth which power gets in the way of and distorts” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 85).

Discourse is the key concept Foucault uses “to designate the conjunction of power and knowledge (Kenway, 1990, p. 173). Discourses constitute power-knowledge formations as they are not neutral. People are also positioned in discourse in unequal ways. In Kenway’s (1990) discussion on Foucault’s work on power-knowledge and discourse, she writes:

In discussing how different disciplines are constituted, he shows that knowledge can fix meaning, representation and reason; that the very organising of the discourse can be an exercise of power, controlling, and restraining what can be said as well as the right to speak. (p. 173)

Discourses are part of systems of possibility that create knowledge. Discourses embrace both meaning and social relationships, and constitute subjectivities and power relations (Ball, 1990b; Hall, 1997/2001a; Kenway, 1990; St. Pierre, 2000; Usher & Edwards, 1994). St. Pierre (2000) writes that poststructural theories of discourse “allow us to understand how knowledge, truth, and subjects are produced in language and cultural practice as well as how they might be reconfigured” (p. 486). Foucauldian theory argues that “power/knowledge lies in discourse, and the discursive practices through which ‘regimes of truth’ are constructed,” as discourse provides the means for determining whether statements are true, as well as enabling truth-claims to be made (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 89).

The regimes of truth to which Foucault refers, are powerful discourses, such as those of medicine or psychiatry. Knowledge is considered powerful when it claims to be stating the ‘truth,’ when it represents the ‘real’ world, where truth is the basis for emancipation and progress, and “that such knowledge is only possible in the
absence of power.” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 85). Foucault (1980) theorises that truth is always in power and each cannot be separated from one another:

‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A ‘régime’ of truth.... It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power ... but of detaching the power from truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time. (p. 133)

This theory claims that regimes of truth exist in each society which accepts certain discourses as true. It is through these discourses that statements can be considered as true or false, and accordingly sanctioned through both the status of those who are deemed to be speaking the truth and the methods considered valuable in acquiring the truth. Foucault does not deny the existence of truth, but redefines it. He writes “I believe too much in truth not to suppose that there are different truths and different ways of speaking the truth” (Foucault, 1984/1988, p. 51 cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 498).

St. Pierre (2000) believes that poststructural feminists have used Foucault’s theory of truth and power “in their work of identifying ‘regimes of truth’ that operate to subjugate women and other marginalized groups” (p. 499). Poststructural feminists have explored the discourses and power relations that have produced certain truths and knowledge about women that are accepted as natural, such as that women are emotional, are ineffective leaders, and are natural mothers. Marshall (1996) discusses Foucault’s work on power-knowledge in relation to education, noting that “the power/knowledge which is his [Foucault’s] concern is the underlying power/knowledge or set of conditions that permit and legitimate certain particular claims to truth” (p. 93).

Marshall (1996) also relates power-knowledge back to processes of normalisation, where power-knowledge is exercised in power relations in education systems to produce normalized individuals. He highlights how Foucault thought that
teaching in the universities was "manipulative and normalising, it transmitted knowledge which was obsolete and academic" (p. 156). In the following passage, Marshall draws attention to the ways in which, in 1971, Foucault saw universities as excluding students:

First they are 'put outside of society, on a campus.' There they are 'transmitted a knowledge traditional in nature, obsolete, academic and not directly tied to the needs and problems of today.' The outcome of this exclusion is the neutralisation of the students. They are "rendered safe, ineffective, socially and politically ineffective." At the end of a specific time they can be reincluded and absorbed" (Foucault, 1971 cited in Marshall, 1996, p. 155)

Bloland (1995) writes in similar fashion, stating that Foucault's view of knowledge as surveillance and discipline is in contrast to the "modernist view that knowledge is emancipating and liberating"; this "flies totally in the face" of traditional understandings of universities which "preach freedom, liberty and emancipation through knowledge" (p. 532).

Usher and Edwards (1994) though, remind us that Foucault also argues that power is not simply a negative force, but in fact "circulates" in the form of a chain and is produced in social transactions (p. 89; also see Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Therefore, power-knowledge "brings forth active 'subjects' who better 'understand' their own subjectivity yet who in this very process subject themselves to forms of power" (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 89). For instance, in education, a discourse of "Pacific Island students" has developed where these students are deemed to have certain characteristics and positionings that have in more recent years become the subject of educational research. This in turn constitutes or produces the "truth" about those subjects who are categorised under this discourse. However, the relationship of power-knowledge can facilitate an awareness and understanding of their individual subjectivities, which can enable those same students to resist and reconstitute themselves within other discourses.
A poststructural critique of power, knowledge and truth requires ongoing questioning about the production of knowledge and what counts as truth (St. Pierre, 2000). Ropers-Huilman (1998) suggests that any attempts we make to “establish objective truths and timeless realities will be at best partial and at worst dangerous” (p. 7). Again, I draw on the types of methodological questions that she asserts will aid in the analyses of knowledge and meaning:

What are the power relations that enable certain knowledge to be accepted and validated within a given discourse? What are the resistances to existing knowledges? What knowledge is most readily validated? (p. 7)

Subjectivity and Agency

A poststructuralist consideration of subjectivity and subject enables us to rethink humanist discourses that inscribed the individual as having an essence which is unique, fixed, rational and self-motivated. (Davies, 1994, 1997; Jones, 1997; Orner, 1992; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1987). Weedon (1987) argues that the terms subjectivity and agency “mark a crucial break with humanist conceptions of the individual which are still central to Western philosophy and political and social organization” (p. 32). The term subject questions the notion of a totally conscious self and encourages us to rethink how we are both constituted and constitute ourselves. The notion of subjectivity captures the experiences of being a person, and can be described as:

That combination of conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions that make up our sense of ourselves, our relation to the world and our ability to act in that world…. (T)he concept of subjectivity can capture the notion of people as intentional subjects—actors in the world—and at the same time as subject to forces beyond their conscious control (Crowley & Himmelweit, 1992, p. 7).

Weedon (1987) writes that poststructuralism theorises subjectivity “as a site of disunity and conflict, central to the process of political change and to preserving the status quo” (p. 21).

In their exploration of subjectivity, many poststructural feminists have been influenced by the work of Foucault. According to his theory, subjectivity implies
being a subject, as well as being subjected, and that subject positions are made available through discourses (Foucault, 1969/1972, 1980). As Elisabeth (1997) aptly states:

The acquisition of subjectivity implies both being a subject, an individual who is empowered to act, and being subjected, an individual whose actions are defined for them by the terms of their discourse from which their status as subjects is derived. (p. 40)

Feminist poststructuralists have used poststructural analyses to “make intelligible how ‘women’ have been produced within humanism’s grids of regularity and normalcy in order to open up and rework that concept” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 505). St. Pierre maintains that subjectivity is produced socially, and that many poststructural feminists in education have found that the poststructural subject is one that is readily available for rewriting.

Accordingly, as poststructural subjects, we are constituted and constitute ourselves through discursive practices, the meaningful actions of others as well as ourselves, of different discourses. Both M & H Court (1998), who also draw on theorists Weedon and Davies, reiterate that an individual’s subjectivity “is socially constituted within discourse through varying subject positions that are made available for [the individual] to ‘take up’” (p. 128). One’s subjectivity is always understood as being in process and contradictory, it is multiple and fragmented, and changes or alters as a person is shaped by new discourses. It is the particular ways in which people give meanings to themselves, others and the world, and is “largely the product of discursive networks which organize and systematize social and cultural practice” (Davies & Banks, 1995, p. 46). Furthermore, choice is constitutive in that we can only ever speak ourselves into existence through the available discourses (Davies, 1991, 1993; Elizabeth, 1997; Weedon, 1987).

Butler (1990) also had stated in her earlier work that it is discourse (or discursive injunctions) which form meanings and possibilities in any culture, and it
is discourses that take on and produce the subject. She provides the following example:

The ... injunction to be a given gender takes place through discursive routes: to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker.... The convergence of such discursive injunctions produces the possibility of a complex reconfiguration. (p. 145)

In keeping with this argument, the injunction to be a Samoan student may have taken place through discursive routes such as: to be a 'good' Samoan daughter / son, to be a successful sports person, to be bilingual, to be shy and respectful, to be a role model, amongst other subject positionings. Thus subjectivity consists of competing and conflicting ways of being and knowing the world. As Jones (1997) affirms, a subject is never fixed but is always becoming or being within ongoing discursive practices. Thus the process of subjectification contains the continuous tension between both becoming a speaking, agentic subject and at the same time being subjected to inherent meanings in the discourses through which one becomes a subject (Davies, 1993).

As previously detailed in chapter one, much of the literature surrounding tertiary education for Pacific peoples has centred on aspects of socialisation, which have offered social reproduction or deficit theory as explanations for their identities and experiences (see AC Neilsen, 1997; Beaver & Tuck, 1998; Fa’afou & Fletcher, 2001; French, 1992; Furneaux, 1973; Guy, 1981; Maysuria, 1993; Moles, 2001; PISAAC, 1989). In these accounts subjectivity is generally not made problematic. Instead this corpus has centred around accounts in which the individual is seen as being reproduced into existing class structures. This body of literature has assumed the humanist version of a unitary rational actor: a person has choices that are based on rational thought; a society’s norms are internalised and become part of the individual; a person has identity which is understood as arising from socialization; stories are versions of events that occur in the 'real' world (Davies, 1991).
On the other hand, Jones (1997) argues that poststructuralist conceptions of the subject appeal to many scholars of education, as they offer a way of speaking about people “as constructions of social order” as well as “constructing agents or actors.” Here subjectivity offers possibilities for getting away from a dualist agency or structure framework. Similarly, this thesis draws on poststructuralist theory because its theoretical understandings have made it possible to: rethink the subject as a construction; presume that identity is created within effects of relations and societal codes; to open up the possibility of the subject being continually reconstructed and reconfigured (St. Pierre, 2000).

To develop this line of thought further, I have drawn again on Foucault’s (1969/1972, 1980, 1983/1984) conception of power where he theorises that “power exists within and among discourse and practice, and the subject is subjected to the effects of that power” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 503). This implies that there are different positions of power within discursive positionings, and individuals can become powerful or powerless depending on how their subjectivity is constituted (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 5). Therefore, the significant questions are “who gets to be a subject in a particular discourse, in a particular set of practices? Who is allowed a subject position and who is not? Who is subjected?” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 503). Furthermore, it is discourse and social practice that create categories, which in turn “function to create and justify social organization and exclusion.” (Flax, 1993, p. 36 cited in St. Pierre, 2000). In addition, individuals can resist discourses and cultural practice that normalise and inscribe certain effects by moving to other discourses where different statements are possible. Agency is possible through a subject’s own constitution by taking up available discourses, as well as being “forced into subjectivity by those same discourses and practices” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 502).

In their discussion on the subject of poststructuralism, Davies (1991, 1997) and Jones (1997) highlight the continuing debate about agency and the poststructuralist subject. Jones appears to favour the theoretical stance that agency is a humanist
concept and as such cannot exist in the poststructuralist paradigm. Jones (1997) disagrees with Davies' position on agency, arguing that Davies' belief that subjects are both constituted and constitutive enables us to "have our cake and eat it too" (p. 266). In contrast to Jones, Davies (1991, 1997) and Davies and Harré (1990) argue that a strength of poststructuralism is that it recognises the constituting effects of discourse and discursive practices as well as agentic choice; "it is in the constitutive force of discourse that agency lies" (Davies, 1997, p. 272).

Other theorists (Butler, 1992/1995; Flax, 1992; Lather, 1991; St. Pierre, 2000) also advocate an agentic poststructural subject. St. Pierre (2000) states "agency seems to lie in the subject’s ability to code and recode its identity within discursive formations and cultural practices" (p. 504). She puts forward the view that agency and the subject are continually reconfigured and renamed. Similarly, Butler (1992/1995) believes that the constitution and reconstitution of subjects means that the subject is open to new formations, or reconfigurations, and agency is to be found in such junctures where discourse is renewed. Furthermore, Flax (1992), Lather (1991) and Elizabeth (1997) argue that agency is possible and necessary in the postmodern, where its fixed unitary form can be re-conceptualised. As Elizabeth (1997) summarises, the postmodern concept of agency is that of "active negotiation within shifting contexts of constraint" (p. 20).

Nevertheless, Elizabeth (1997) reminds us that the uptake of subjectivities, which support the status quo, is both more readily available and actively encouraged by those who will benefit from them. This results in the continuation of more powerful discourses. We can, however, resist discourses to produce new discourses and new subjectivities, because we are produced across a range of conflicting discourses and continually reposition ourselves.

This understanding of the twofold nature of subjection is central to how we may make sense of the constitutive effect of discourse and how we can move beyond the
forces that shape us. This understanding of agency, that we can make choices within the discursive practices that we encounter, is important for my analysis of the complex and conflicting experiences of the participants in this research. As Davies (2000) states:

The power feminists have found in poststructuralist theorizing is precisely in its opening up of possibilities for undermining the inevitability of particular oppressive forms of subjection. They have done this by making the constitutive force of discourse visible and thus revisable. By making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter, they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse they have to disrupt those of its effects they wish to resist. (p. 180)

Filtering reflections of identity, difference, intersectionality

While the previous section addressed the notions of subjectivity, subject position, subjectification and the speaking subject as conceptual tools to develop and explore our understanding of how we become who we are, this section will briefly discuss the relevant theoretical positionings of identity, identity politics and difference for this research. Poststructuralist theory, with its critiques of meaning, identity and difference, has had a major impact on traditional approaches to difference, and “difference has become a key concept in political, social and cultural theory” (Weedon, 1999, p. 1).

Poststructuralism has made possible new understandings of the processes through which each of us becomes, and continues to become, a person, and includes how we see and choose our identities. The concept of identity is different from that of subjectivity, and according to Davies (1993) most theories of identity focus on the interaction between the individual and others, attribute much of each person’s emerging self to the power of others, and are central to modernist thinking. Hence, the notion of identity focuses upon the “unitary non-contradictory selves” that are prevalent in humanist discourses, whereas subjectivity focuses instead on the
“shifting fragmented, multi-faceted and contradictory nature of our experiences” (Davies, 1994, p. 3). In humanist discourses for example, identifying our self as male or female, white or black, child or adult, amongst many other binaries is generally understood as a fundamental fact of the real world. However poststructuralism enables us to view these identities as something that “we have learned to see as natural” (Davies, 1993, p. 7). This theoretical perspective suggests the need to deconstruct identity as a term and see how we can move beyond the notion of a single identity, or even a multiple of single identities.

Identity and Identity Politics

There exists a relatively recent and evolving corpus of research which addresses issues of identity for Pacific peoples in New Zealand. This includes work by Anae (1998a), Matthes (1998) and Tupuola (1998a, 1998b, 1999), and the recent publication *Tangata O Te Moana Nui* (Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001) (for perspectives on ethnicity see also Fleras & Spoonley, 1999; Spoonley, Macpherson, & Pearson, 1991, 1996). In addition, for an international perspective on identity and ethnicity in the Pacific see Linnekin and Poyer (1990). These authors have established a sound base on which to consider identity issues and concerns for peoples of the Pacific. In order to build on this body of knowledge, I am offering, in this thesis, a way to unpack further the ways through which individuals make sense of how they see themselves as being constituted, as well as constituting themselves in the world around them.

In light of this evolving body of Pacific research, it is necessary to summarise briefly the relevance and place of identity, identity politics and the politics of difference for this study. The positional thinking of a shared identity does not acknowledge different experiences relating to class, race, gender, or ethnicity. hooks (1990, 1995), amongst other feminist writers, challenges the single notion of identity; she argues that identity is not of a singular and fixed nature, but instead is a constantly changing multiplicity, marked by the subject positions that constitute the
person. In similar vein, Hall (1990) states that diaspora identities are continually producing and reproducing themselves through transformation and difference. Brah's (1996) discussion of diaspora and identity reiterates Hall's views; Brah theorises that identities are inscribed through "experiences, subjectivities and social relations." She argues, "identities are marked by the multiplicity of subject positions that constitute the subject" (p. 123).

Arising from the debates about identity and "against the hegemony of privileged white women within feminism" (Maher & Tereault, 1994, p. 223), identity politics focuses on the oppressions of specific groups of people, such as blacks, lesbians, Native Americans, Pacific peoples, which are located in specific historical contexts (for critiques of identity politics see Calhoun, 1994; de Castell & Bryson, 1997; Du Plessis & Alice, 1998; Gunew & Yeatman, 1993; hooks, 1990, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Lather, 1991; Mirza, 1997; Nicholson & Seidman, 1995; Weedon, 1999). Identity politics is a movement for the articulation of group membership. bell hooks (1990) wrote that for black people identity politics has been important as it both enables and constrains, and identity is seen as a stage in the liberation process wherein one constructs radical black subjectivity. However, she also states "that assertions of identity that bring complexity and variety to constructions of black subjectivity are often negated by conservative policing forces" (p. 20). These conservative policing forces occur when some black people dismiss differences amongst blacks, by labelling some black and others not. Or when white people endeavour to keep the static notions of black identity by constructing African-American culture in ways that they, as white people, might move in or feel comfortable in. She argues that "black folks" are able to move away from narrow notions of black identity if the following theoretical perspective is accepted:

If we combine the concept of identity politics with a conception of the subject as positionality, we can conceive of the subject as nonessentialised and emergent from a historical experience. (Alcoff, 1988, cited in hooks, 1990, p. 20)
While identity politics can give marginalised groups a sense of solidarity and a positive identity, one major problem is a tendency to define identity in fixed ways that do not allow for differences within and among the particular group of people (hooks, 1990; Lorde, 1984; Mirza, 1997). The notion of an identity or even multiple identities can still imply a unitary stable condition and therefore remains problematic.

However, Haug (1987, cited in Lather, 1991, p. 36) claims that postmodernism enables the central categories of race, class, gender and sexual orientation within identity politics to be continually produced in new ways within different and competing discourses. She affirms that these categories are viewed in ways that are more fluid and drifting than those perceived by reproduction theorists. Thus, the notion of identity can shift according to changes in context. For example, instead of the notion of a real woman’s self, which exists within a male dominated sphere, a postmodernist feminism posits that women’s selves are indeed both fragmentary and shifting. Weedon (1999) writes that a poststructuralist analysis “assumes that identity in Western cultures is not something given, it is rather a precarious effect of difference. The relations of difference involved are historically and socially specific, and they change” (p. 104). Here difference is always a relationship, which is usually a hierarchical one, for example men define themselves in relation to women, whiteness is defined in relation to blackness, New Zealand European in relation to its colonised and postcolonial Others.

Therefore, postmodern and poststructuralist critiques of essentialism which both challenge static notions of identity and notions of universality can embrace new possibilities for understanding how constructions of self and assertions of agency occur. This does not mean that historical experiences of peoples are dismissed but instead that multiple experiences of identity are recognised where some privileged voices do not deny voice to others while simultaneously re-inscribing notions of a fixed authentic identity (hooks, 1990, pp. 28–29).
Politics of Difference

Weedon (1999), in her theorizing the politics of difference, suggests that although identity politics was seen as one way of explaining the question of differences between women, feminists have increasingly turned to postmodern theories of subjectivity, meaning and power in their quests to avoid meanings of difference that are fixed. These theories are ways of understanding subjectivity and identity as discursively produced, multiple and changeable. As Mizra (1997) claims, "postmodern theory has allowed the celebration of difference, the recognition of otherness, the presence of multiple and changeable subjectivities" (p. 19).

The concept of difference is therefore a "key tenet within poststructural discourses" (Ropers-Huilman, 1998, p. 8). A poststructuralist approach to the concept of difference seeks to address the relations between a variety of differences and power, as well as addressing the dualisms that exist in Western thought through deconstructing the binary oppositions of difference (Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Scott, 1988). Feminist poststructural thinking about the politics of difference (Du Plessis & Alice, 1998; Gunew & Yeatman, 1993; hooks, 1990, 1994b, 1995; Scott, 1988; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Weedon, 1987, 1999) allows us to see that differences are not binary or absolute, but are discursively produced. This means, "differences are constructed by complex and continual interactions that occur between languages, knowledges, and power constructions of diverse groups" (Ropers-Huilman, 1998, p. 118). Furthermore, when differences involve power relations, including those within issues of class, race and gender, they become important as political issues.

Feminist black writers, both in Britain and America, have had a major impact on the politics of difference. hooks (1990) states that:

Radical black subjectivity can be recognised by others without ongoing political resistance only in a context where white people and Third World elites are not trying to maintain cultural hegemony, insisting that we be as they want us to be. (p. 21)
She suggests that such contexts are still rare for black women. She insists that black women can only centre those who oppress them, and claim their right to black subjectivity, through insisting that they determine how they will be and “not rely on colonizing responses” to determine their legitimacy (p. 22). hooks (1990) further suggests though that “radical postmodernist practice” (p. 25), which is powerfully conceptualised as a politics of difference, needs to include the voices of those who are marginalised, oppressed and exploited. However, she reminds us there is a difference between the marginality imposed by oppressive structures and the marginality chosen as a site of resistance. Additionally she believes that one cannot separate this from the politics of racism. Postmodernist theorizing often still omits “black folk.”

The experience of racism is usually shared across differences for black women and women of colour, and this “social marking of difference is part of everyday life” (Weedon, 1999, p. 165). Black feminist writers, such as Collins (2000), hooks (1990, 1994b, 1995) and Mirza (1997), challenge the relationship between postmodern theory and the reality of black women’s lives, as they believe black women still remain subject to discrimination and exclusion. On the other hand, these same writers have contested assumptions and stereotypes in their ongoing resistance to negative reflections of black women’s difference. They recognise that postmodern theory is a useful tool in the deconstruction of hierarchies and enables “one to theorize and imagine how difference, identity and subjectivity might be realized otherwise in non-oppressive forms” (Weedon, 1999, p. 172). As hooks (1990) writes, the poststructuralist critique of subjectivity can be liberating for ethnic groupings:

Postmodern critiques of essentialism which challenge notions of universality and stable determined identity within mass culture and mass consciousness can open up new possibilities for the construction of self and the assertion of agency. (p. 28)
Within New Zealand’s literature, Johnston’s (1998) thoughts on theorising difference for Māori women highlight the concentration of specific discussions that theorise the Other. She points out that the Other do not belong to the dominant group in society and are excluded because of their differences, and the Other are positioned in opposition to what is considered ‘normal’. This happens within the contexts of racism and colonialism (see also Spoonley, Macpherson, Pearson, 1996). Like hooks (1992) and Hall (1990), Johnston argues that groups, such as Māori or indeed Samoan, “are subjected to a process of cultural power which ‘normalises’ one group and subsequently differences the other group” (p. 30). She claims that Māori are challenging the dominant discourses which marginalise and Other. Johnston refers to other Māori writers of similar persuasion, including Linda Tuhiwi Smith (1997) whose discussion on Māori academics addresses this notion of being Othered in the academy, as she and other Māori academics resist traditional institutional practices and structures. Similarly, in this thesis I give recognition to the complex ways that differences, in both the institution and the wider community, can be understood and opened to re-evaluation.

**Intersectionality**

A number of writers have offered theoretical positions as a way to move forward beyond the politics of differences. St. Pierre (2000) suggests that “moving beyond difference (with its assumed question, difference from what?) to the conceptual terrain of intersectionality creates new conceptual space” (p. 66). In her view, intersectionality removes the implicit normative centre that is present in both “oppositional difference and reconstructive postmodern tolerance for difference” (p. 66) and instead offers a conceptual framework for studying both the historically complex constructions of groups as well as the relationships among the groups. Thus, an acknowledgement can be given to the historical realities of various groupings such as Black women, Māori, Samoan, while at the same time recognising the complexities that operate within those terms.
Other feminist writers also concur with this notion of intersectionality. May and Ferri (2002) believe that through simultaneously focusing on multiple aspects of knowledge, identity and power, intersectionality offers:

A more fruitful exploration of the paradoxes of subjection and agency while also allowing further appreciation of the productive and liberatory possibilities of multiplicity, porosity, and ambiguity. (p. 146)

An analysis grounded in intersectionality is able to account for the complex, multiple and often contradictory acts of constitution and subject formation. It allows for an understanding "of how the interconnectedness of different forms of oppression affects their own lives as women of color (Kim, 2001, p. 108).

Malveaux (2002) argues that intersectionality challenges the limited tools of analysis that have usually been used to "define our living," where explanations and understandings have drawn on one or two factors such as class or gender, whereas "four or five factors might influence our space." She writes:

We can't chart analysis from a vantage point of race or gender without looking at ways they intersect. We can't look at class without understanding that class matters differently for different people. (p. 27)

Furthermore, Bograd (1999) argues that intersectionality suggests that no dimension, such as racial or gender inequality, is privileged over another.

In similar vein, Sefa Dei (1999), a theorist of race and ethnicity, perceives that an interlocking analysis "is a political, constructive, and most importantly, transformative framework that exposes how subject locations are secured by the dominant power and articulated through the disempowerment of the subordinated" (p. 29). In other words, he suggests we examine the linkages between material forces and social ideologies to determine the ways in which difference and social change are produced. He believes that all oppression must be fought together, in order that any one oppression can be successfully resisted.

For the purposes of this thesis, I also use the notion of intersectionality because it allows for the "postmodern legitimation of ongoing projects of oppressed groups
to decentralise power, deconstruct Western metanarratives and rethink differences” (St. Pierre, 2001, p. 66) while simultaneously legitimating efforts to understand race, class and gender. Intersectionality makes possible an opportunity for understanding further the constituting nature of systems of oppression, as well as the social locations created by mutual constitutions.

Filtering reflections of race, ethnicity, and racialization

In addition, my theoretical understandings are also informed by theorists whose concerns with issues of race and ethnicity focus on poststructural and postmodern theoretical frames to make available new possibilities for understanding questions of race and ethnicity (hooks, 1900, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Mac an Ghaill, 1999; Rattansi, 1994, 1995; Silvermann and Yuval-Davis, 1999; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). According to Rattansi (1995), Wetherell & Potter’s (1992) discourse analysis of racism, issues of social structure, power relations, and ideology in New Zealand, provides an example of a postmodern analysis of racism. They explore the justification and rationalisation of colonial history as well as present day situations, which continue to disadvantage Māori. Their analysis demonstrates how the discourse of Pakeha New Zealanders legitimates the normalisation of inequality in New Zealand.

More recent New Zealand authors including Bishop and Glynn (1999) and those in the collection of essays edited by Du Plessis and Alice (1998) further this debate particularly in relation to Māori and Pacific peoples in this country. Bishop and Glynn’s focus on educational practices argues that current educational policies and practices are still within a framework of colonialism. They offer a model informed by:

An internal critique of current practices and assumptions which is often termed post-modernism and post-structuralism … [that] … seeks to investigate what might constitute the development and implementation of culturally relevant educational policies and practices within a context of cultural diversity. (1990, pp. 13–14)
Various authors in Du Plessis and Alice both construct and deconstruct similarities and differences amongst women including those of various ethnicities. It includes a chapter by Tupuola in which various voices of young Samoan women negotiate the meaning of fa’aSamoan both in Samoa and in New Zealand.

A number of international writers also offer useful theoretical insights. Sefa Dei (1999) reconceptualises anti-racism through an examination of the intersections between race and social difference. He maintains that although skin colour continues to be “an important marker of privilege and punishment” (p. 27), the processes of racialization are significant when other markers such as language, culture or religion also become the basis for different and unequal treatment. Rattansi (1994, 1995) also argues that the formation of ethnic identities can be seen in some instances as part of a process of racialization, particularly in relation to unitary conceptions of blackness or “the black struggle.” Rattansi (1995) and Mac an Ghaill (1999) agree that the postmodern take on institutional racism views institutionalised racism not as a monolithic smooth reproductive machine but as an internally contradictory set of processes that are embedded in power relations within institutions. Mac an Ghaill suggests that the new politics of cultural difference has meant that a critical investigation is occurring of the ways in which

shifting ‘common sense’ institutional definitions of racialized inclusions and exclusions are affirmed and legitimated within social institutions and cultural arenas, where symbolic systems and material practices systemically privilege dominant social groups. (p. 13)

He emphasizes that differentialist theorists believe that racism is not as simple as reading the black/white binary structure as victims and oppressors. Instead “differentialism explores such issues as the limits of the way that racial identity categories are portrayed in terms of black and white social groups, how to make sense of the interconnectedness between multiple relations of power, such as gender, sexuality and disability, and the making of subjective identities” (pp. 12–13).
According to Mac an Ghaill, Keith (1993, cited in Mac an Ghaill, 1999) presents a coherent understanding of race and racialization from a differentialist perspective, while still acknowledging relations of domination and subordination. Keith believes the notion of racialization is a way of explaining the racial divisions in society:

The generation of racial divisions in society is most easily grasped by use of the notion of racialization, which stresses both the reality of the group formation process as well as the social construction of differences between the racial collective identities so formed. The process of racialization is also of particular significance because it is one of the principal means through which subordination is produced and reproduced in an unjust society. (p. 68)

Mac an Ghail further points out that attempts have been made to gain a greater understanding of the complex issues of racialization, including the reclaiming of culture which resulted in the acknowledgement of a wide range of contemporary racisms. He remarks, however, that little progress has been made to develop perspectives that move beyond the problem of a continuing exclusive focus on people who are not white, in that many researchers still do not move beyond the white/black dualism. Moreover, Mac an Ghail observes that it has mainly been feminist theorists who have troubled and disrupted the notion of whiteness (see Brah, 1992, 1996, 2000; Fine, Weis, Powell & Wong, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993, 1997; hooks, 1992, 1995).

**Theoretical intersections**

In this thesis, I use poststructuralist theories as other ways of examining "any commonplace situation, any ordinary event or process, in order to think differently about that occurrence—to open up what seems 'natural' to other possibilities" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479). I, like St. Pierre, argue that poststructuralism, as a response to humanism, troubles its dominance. However, "it cannot escape humanism, since as a response to humanism, it must always be implicated in the problematic it addresses" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479). Nevertheless, other writers argue that aspects of poststructuralism can be aligned with other theoretical positionings. I draw on these
writers to acknowledge my own theoretical journey and make clear the aspects of other theoretical positionings that inform this thesis.

Fraser (1997a) critiques the merits of feminist critical theory and feminist poststructuralism, advocating a reconciliation between both and prepares "the ground for their fruitful integration in feminist theorizing" (p. 208). In another publication, Fraser (1997b) aligns herself more with discourse theory arising from writers such as Foucault, Gramsci, and Bourdieu than from those arising from critiques of structuralism, such as Derrida. In her connection with those former writers, she subscribes to their views that "a conception of discourse is useful...both for understanding social groups and for coming to grips with the closely related issue of sociocultural hegemony" (p. 381).

Kaufmann (2000) explores a relationship between postmodernism and critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy and multicultural education in adult education. He professes that a strategic postmodern lens of analysis "may enable adult educators to construct alternative understandings of some modernist referents around which counter-hegemonic pedagogies pivot" (pp. 430–431). He believes that a critical dialogue between these counter-hegemonic pedagogies is possible by looking at the commonalities within their discourses. In turn, this increases the liberatory possibilities of counter-hegemonic practices while at the same time maintaining difference. Thus, each theoretical construct continues to inform each other, rather than being totally dismissive of each other. For example, he sites the notion of agency and Foucault’s notion of power relations, and suggests that a postmodern lens allows a broader sense of agency and enables "greater parameters of agency as every movement has the propensity to disrupt as well as reproduce hegemony" (p. 445). The aim of his argument was to attempt to produce an equitable adult pedagogy through utilizing the intersections of counter-hegemonic theories as seen through a postmodern lens.
Additionally, Mac an Ghaill (1999), in his book on contemporary racisms and ethnicities, also likes to think that a way forward is to draw on both differentialist and materialist positions as “social and cultural analytical tools in exploring multiculturalism and anti-racism in local institutional sites” (p. 132). He holds that differentialist theorists, “the new politics of cultural difference,” have argued for the need to look beyond the “structure of the black-white dualism as the overarching explanation,” whereas materialist theorists highlight “a conceptual framework that speaks of social reproduction of racist ideologies, state regulation of immigration, institutional mechanisms of racial exclusion and hegemonic capital” (pp. 131–132). He makes an argument for holding on to the “productive tension” between the two. He begins by exploring the changing nature of policy making in the suggested shift from racial inequality to social exclusion, and reasons there is a need to revisit “decentred cultural forms of class analysis” in order to:

Give a critical edge to discussion employing discursively produced ‘common-sense’ constructs—such as choice, effectiveness and standards—alongside the more recently developed notion of social inclusion, in relation to access by minority ethnic communities to scarce public resources and public spaces. (p. 135)

Furthermore revisiting a class analysis will make visible and refute the ideological claims that the market place is a neutral mechanism that allows the best distribution of goods and resources, and can best deliver high-quality services for all consumers.

In a similar way, but from within a different discourse, bell hooks (2000) passionately argues that it is time that class was talked about, as “women of all ages and black men are rapidly becoming the poorest of the poor” (p. viii). She insists that while feminists have acknowledged the “interlocking systems of race, gender, and class” for a number of years before men began to talk about them together, what is still lacking is a “collective public discourse that puts the three together in ways that illuminate for everyone how our nation [United States of America] is organized and what our class politics really are” (p. 8). She believes that the silence on class needs to be broken before it is too late.
Olssen (1999) also presents a critique of the theorists, Foucault and Gramsci. He establishes that Foucault, like Marxist theorists, “wants to change the world, not simply our idea of it, and illustrates this “through the arm of critique” (p. 136). Olssen summarises Foucault’s aim of critique as one that identifies and exposes “the unrecognised forms of power in people’s lives,” even though his critical theory does reject the Marxist concept of ideology and the Freudo-Marxist of repression (p. 114). He believes that together “Foucault and Gramsci present a more powerful perspective on social structure,” than if they are considered separately (p. 110). A result of drawing on both theorists is that they “provide for a general theory of domination which ... takes all social, economic and political practices as transitory and all intellectual and discursive formations as inseparably connected to power and social relations” (p. 110).

In this thesis, it is useful to revisit the relationship between poststructuralism and Marxist and Socialist theory in relation to hegemony, cultural reproduction and relations of power. One criticism of poststructuralism is that it mainly focuses on deconstruction, discourses and power relations in micro, localized domains and does little for analysing the structures of practices (Fraser & Nicholson, 1988/1989; Olssen, 1996). Fraser claims that while Foucault dismisses the totalising Marxist ideology in favour of addressing the everyday practices of life, Foucault maintained a link with a critical theory of society:

Foucault unpacks the presupposition of grand theorizing and addresses the plurality of forces, practices and regimes of power that exist within society. As such, he subjects the micro-politics of everyday life to scrutiny, often seeming to dissolve macro concerns into an analytic concentration of micro-practices. (p. 26)

In addition, Smart (1994) claims that Foucault’s work “opened up the question of hegemony” firstly through his concept of relations of power and the “regimes of truth through which forms of social cohesion are constituted” (p. 218), as well as through suggesting that resistance to relations of power enables the potential for addressing situations of hegemony. Smart alleges that Foucault’s work “constitutes a
major contribution to the development of both a critical understanding of, and a challenge to, prevailing social, economic, and cultural forms of hegemony (p. 219).

Kenway (1990), utilises both Foucault and Gramsci in her analysis of the discursive politics of the New Right. Her aim was not to synthesize their work but instead to demonstrate how their work could be combined in a useful way for her analysis. Kenway used both their works to complement each other, because she felt that Foucault was not helpful when it came to “the matter of inter-discursivity or on the relationship between discourses and broad intersecting social structures of dominance” (p. 176). The inter-discursivity she referred to is evident in Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, where:

Social groups and movements all seek to absorb and appropriate elements of other’s discourse … [which] is seen as possible due to a belief that a common nucleus of meaning may produce connotative differences depending upon the discursive ensemble into which it is inserted. (p. 179)

Nonetheless, Kenway highlights one point of convergence in the work of Gramsci and Foucault. She writes that they both perceive power to “exist as a relationship at all points in the social totality” (p. 180). Foucault’s power and Gramsci’s hegemony are both viewed as complex, diffuse and not simply operating from the top down. She describes Foucault’s thoughts on the hegemonic effects of power relations as being:

A consequence of the multiplicity of micro-powers – the ‘proliferation of discourses’ that produces consent. Each discourse has its effects in the construction of subjectivity and each exists in a complex matrix of intersection and connotation. (p. 181)

She also understands Gramsci’s conception of hegemony to:

Suggest a ‘proliferation of discourses’ which involve us as subjects in the most ‘spontaneous’, ‘unnoticed’, ‘natural’ and ‘obvious’ areas of our existence. (p. 181)

Thus, through combining both theorists’ work, she was able to explore the power of the New Right discourse in education.
Within the New Zealand corpus of educational theorizing, Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, habitus, and cultural and social reproduction have been offered within class analyses in relation to compulsory education and its role in the reproduction of inequalities (see, Adams et al., 2000; Carpenter, 2001; Dale, 2000; Harker, 1990a, 1990b; Hughes & Lauder, 1991; Lauder & Hughes, 1990; Lauder et al., 1999; Nash, 1994, 1997; Ongley, 1991; Rata, 2001). In the field of tertiary education, recent explanations have focused on New Right Policies and Human Capital Theory with their user pays philosophy and an emphasis on individualism, private education and a changing shift in what counts as knowledge (see Codd, 1997; Fitzsimons, 1997; Peters, 1997; Stephens, 1997). I argue that poststructuralism, with its theoretical understandings of deconstruction, discourse and relations of power, can draw upon the above discourses in a complementary approach to explore existing power relations in macro societal positionings, particularly in analyses concerning class.

In summary, this chapter provides a succinct synopsis of the theoretical framework that underlies and informs this thesis. I consider that these positionings allow for an engagement with the intersections of social structure and human agency. These understandings have also highlighted the need to attend to issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender and culture in the exploration of relations of power in micro and macro positionings. I suggest that a useful way forward is to attend to these concerns by exploring the notion of intersectionality. In this research, I use a feminist poststructuralist framework that draws on Derridian and Foucauldian theory to explore the production of meaning. I argue that a feminist poststructuralist analysis best serves this thesis, particularly as it allows for agency, the centring of marginalised groups, as well as giving attention to issues of race, gender, class, and ethnicity, without subordinating any one in relation to another. However, at the same time I acknowledge that aspects of other theoretical understandings complement this analysis, particularly in relation to hegemony and cultural reproduction. The following chapter further explores theoretical perspectives in relation to
methodological concerns, and describes the methods that were undertaken throughout the research, including the fieldwork, the analysis and the writing of this research.

Notes

1 Many writers use this notion of the "Other" (see Bhabha, 1990; Fine, 1994; Hall, 2001b; hooks, 1990; Johnston, 1998; Petelo, 1997; Young, 1992). hooks (1990) writes that a discourse of the "Other" was constructed between the colonisers and the colonised; she states, "I am waiting for them to stop speaking about the 'Other,' to stop even describing how important it is to be able to speak about difference.... Often this speech about the 'Other' annihilates, erases ..." (p. 151). Bhabha (1990) describes the "familiar alignment of colonial subjects—Black/White, Self/Other ..." (p. 183). Young (1992) states, "social groups who identify one another as different typically have conceived that difference as Otherness.... While the privileged group is defined as active human subject, inferiorised social groups are objectified, susbstantialised, reduced to a nature or essence" (p. 13).
Methodology: The Politics and Rituals of Research

Methodological theoretical positionings

I describe this thesis as qualitative research, which particularly draws on three different methodological understandings to inform, direct and aid the politics and rituals of research.\(^1\) Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that qualitative research operates in a complex historical field, however, they offer this generic definition:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices form the world.... Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalist approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. (p. 3)

In general, methodology might be described as a theoretical discussion of the ways in which the research is conducted, and includes a discussion of the theory of
methodology, all fieldwork and research processes including the writing. Elizabeth (1997) describes methodology as:

The theoretical discussions of the way research should be conducted, including the way in which our research practices are shaped by our ontologies or theories of the social world. (p. 52)

In particular reference to qualitative methodology, Taylor and Bogdan (1998) write that:

Qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour.... It is a way of approaching the empirical world. (p. 7)

In addition, they point out, the theoretical perspective/s of qualitative researchers determine what they study, how they study, and how they interpret. Nevertheless, according to Lincoln and Denzin (2000), qualitative researchers have:

A steady but changing commitment ... to study human experience from the ground up, from the point of interacting individuals who, together and alone, make and live histories that have been handed down to them from the ghosts of the past. (p. 1063)

I have chosen a qualitative methodology in order to understand the ways that the participants make sense of different experiences in their lives while they are at university. I wanted to focus upon participant perspectives and to make sure that their perspectives were presented as accurately as possible (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 32). This focus is based upon "the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) also point out that qualitative researchers need to "empathize and identify with the people they study in order to understand how these people see things" (p. 7). However, it is also important to note that in the process of doing qualitative research, there is interplay between researchers and participants as neither comes to the research as neutral individuals.

In this thesis, I draw on three different methodological understandings to inform my study: that of symbolic interactionism, feminist poststructuralism and Samoan
methodology. I have not drawn on these in a linear or a hierarchical fashion, with one building on the other. Instead I have found it useful to align my messiness with the statement from McWilliam, Lather and Morgan (1997), who claim that if we work from the “assumption that the ‘self’ is multiple, partial and fluid” then “as feminist poststructuralist researchers, we are ‘condemned’ to locating our work in a range of places simultaneously.” In their view, it is not about remaking a “large and coherent picture” but looking at the “discontinuities and conflicting imperatives within our work” (p. 12). While at many times these positionings grate and do not sit comfortably together, I hope that they will effectively situate the different understandings that I have brought with me throughout this research journey.

Symbolic interactionism

As I began this research, my leanings and understandings were inclined towards symbolic interactionism, where according to Taylor and Bogdan (1998) “the symbolic interactionist places primary importance on the social meanings people attach to their world around them” (p. 11) [italics in original]. Although this theoretical perspective originated from George Herbert Mead, Crotty (1998) argues that Blumer has been most influential in the impact of this thought in sociology. Blumer (1969) proposes three basic premises for symbolic interactionism. Firstly that “human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them.” Secondly, “that the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises, out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows.” Thirdly, “that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he [sic] encounters” (p. 2). Thus from this perspective:

All organizations, cultures, and groups consist of actors who are involved in a constant process of interpreting the world around them. (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 12)

However, as I began to further read about and reflect on postmodernism, feminism and poststructuralism my thinking about these theoretical assumptions
changed. I had difficulty reconciling the lack of attention to language, power relations, and discourses. Symbolic interactionism also does not pay attention to positionings including race, ethnic, class, gender. I was wary of reconstituting the "Other" within a framework that did not account for or acknowledge the authority of the participants as well as the researcher. While I was interested in how my participants described and interpreted their experiences, I was also interested in the constitutive effects of language and discourse, as well as the importance of understanding relations of power within relationships between language, social institutions and individuals. Over the course of many months, my emphasis shifted to focus upon feminist poststructuralism.

**Feminist poststructuralism**

As I have previously outlined in chapter two, feminist poststructuralism is centred within postmodernism, which "challenges the authority of science and examines the ideological underpinnings behind what we call scientific" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 15). Postmodernism influenced the ways qualitative researchers thought about the nature of interpretation and the position of the researcher as an interpreter (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). Qualitative researchers, including feminist poststructuralists, who situate their work in this different conceptual framework challenge the idea that the world is "directly knowable," and insist:

That all social relations are influenced by power relations that must be accounted for in analysing informants' interpretations of their situations.... They maintain that all research is informed by some theoretical understanding of human and social behaviour.... [and] emphasise the importance of qualitative methods in portraying the intersection of social structure and human agency. (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 41)

Chapter two has focused in detail on feminist poststructuralist theoretical understandings, which centre language and meaning through attending to discourses and relations of power. In relation to methodological understandings, it offers "different ways of looking at and beyond the obvious and puts different sorts of questions on the agenda for change" (Ball, 1994, p. 2). Feminist poststructuralism
offers new ways of working, embraces complexity and contradiction, and according to Gavey (1989) "surpasses theories that offer single-cause deterministic explanations of patriarchy and gender relations" (p. 472). Its intention for researchers is to challenge taken for granted assumptions and identify discourses, to include multiple voices and perspectives, to engage in self reflexivity, to offer multiple and multilevel stories, and to allow for inconsistent and incomplete outcomes (O'Connor, 2001, p. 154).

In a feminist poststructuralist approach, accounts of experiences are viewed differently. Experience has "no inherent essential meaning," rather accounts of experience are constituted in language (Elizabeth, 1997; Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987, p. 34, p. 85). This suggests, "the meanings we give to our experiences are dependent on the discursive resources that we bring to this task and are, therefore, potentially open to reinterpretation" (Elizabeth, 1997, p. 54). This does not imply that experience ceases to exist or has less importance. Experience still remains a central focus, however the ways we understand and express experience are "inscribed" in discourse (Lather, 1991, p. 90). The implications of this for feminist poststructuralist researchers is that "if language as discourse is the vehicle through which experience is given meaning ... reconfigured as a discursive event," then the accounts participants give of their experiences form the basis of our analytic practices (Elizabeth, 1997, p. 54). Therefore, Elizabeth continues, the emphasis for researchers is on the political consequences of meanings that participants 'choose' to make from within a number of possible meanings. Feminist poststructuralism allows empirical researchers to focus on the constitution of social practices and cultural patterns and processes of subjectification (Señergaard, 2002). I now turn to the third methodological understanding that has informed my thinking and research processes.
Samoan methodology

As this is cross-cultural research, I have also drawn upon and paid attention to the emerging corpus of Samoan and Pacific epistemological and methodological writings. Initially, the only relevant publication that drew attention to appropriate Samoan methodological issues for research with Samoan people was that by Tupuola (1993), *Raising Research Consciousness the Fa’aSamoan Way*. This publication reinforced concerns of my own, as well as a number of feminist, feminist poststructuralist and cross-cultural authors, which I had been reading. I used Tupuola’s writing to further guide my own thinking and understandings, in order that I would undertake research, which is sensitive to “other culture’s world views and communication styles” (Tupuola, 1993, p. 175). In her desire “to minimise exploitation and ongoing ethnocentrism,” Tupuola designed a methodology that revolved around fa’aSamoan values (Tupuola, 1993, p. 180; 1999). In particular, she drew upon collaboration, dialogue which reflects oral and collective communication styles, fa’aaloalo (respect), consensus, flexibility and self-reflexivity, because they were “elements which reflected and acknowledged the communication style of Samoan people and the nature of fa’aSamoan” (1993, p. 182).

Another author I consulted in the early stages of this research was Pasikale (1996). While her research covered a number of different Pacific ethnic groups, she also discussed the need for methodology that is sensitive to other cultures’ understandings. She argued that research with Pacific peoples must be committed to methodological considerations that include "issues of ownership, relationships and epistemology" (p. 22). Her message was similar to that espoused by Tupuola (1993), who asserts that the world of Western academia needs also to “acknowledge ‘other’ cultures’ perception of scholarship and knowledge” (p. 175). In later publications, other authors have further explored these types of concerns.

Throughout this thesis, I have woven into my representations and discussions, methodological issues that these and other Samoan and Pacific researchers, as well
as Maori researchers have raised (see Anae, 1998a; 1998b; Anae et al., 2001; Bishop, 1994; Bishop & Glyn, 1999; Cram, 2001; Irwin, 1994; Mara, 1999; Pasikale, 1996; Smith, 1997, 1999; Silipa, forthcoming; Tamasese, Peteru, & Waldegrave, 1997; Tupuola, 1993, 1998a, 1999). While I will not repeat or pre-empt these discussions here, I direct the reader's attention to their importance in considering the politics and rituals of research, and in particular cross-cultural research. I have incorporated or tried to address, as much as I am able, aspects of Samoan methodology in this study. The following section draws attention to a number of these in respect to various positionings of both the participants and the researcher, while the last section in this chapter raises issues in relation to methods.

**Politics of Positionality**

This section explores the politics of positionality and, more specifically, some issues of positionality that have been particularly relevant for this research. There have been a number of methodological and ethical considerations that have arisen out of my doctoral research that are particularly relevant to cross cultural research (see also Sparks, 2002). While I have previously discussed some of these issues (Petelo, 1997; Wilson, Petelo, Hulston, & Dunnachie-McNatty, 1999), I wish to reiterate them in this thesis, as well as addressing further relevant concerns. I have chosen to present them before my discussion on work in the field, as I believe it is important for the reader to be able to contextualise, situate and locate these issues before reading how the research developed. This is not to say that I had 'sorted' these issues at the beginning of the research process, but I would like to acknowledge that my reflections on these did not occur at the end of the fieldwork, instead they were an ongoing part of the entire thesis. I have chosen to present these issues under the broader heading of positionality, as each relates to and interweaves with the relationships between the participants and the researcher.
As I have previously written, the concept of positionality as a methodological consideration has not been a part of traditional social science preoccupied as it is with notions of objectivity that require researchers to be impersonal and unbiased in their conduct of research. This ideology supposedly enabled researchers to be more authoritative as they saw themselves as distanced from personal influence (Fine, 1994; Rhoads, 1997). However recent epistemological explorations by feminists, post modernists and critical theorists have argued that knowledge is “created through social processes, such as research, and that these processes are both subjective and political” (Rhoads, 1997, p. 10). As Maher & Tetreault (1993) state “postmodern feminist thinkers have seen knowledge as valid when it comes from an acknowledgment of the knower's specific position in any context as defined by gender, race, class and other variables” (p. 28). Therefore, the identities of the researcher contribute to the findings and to the representations of those participating in the research (see also Petelo, 1997, p. 2).

Positionality refers to the social position of the knower, and is both fluid and contextual. As Maher and Tetreault (1994) write, the concept of positionality acknowledges, “people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analysed and changed” (p. 164). It considers the diverse nature of the relationships between the participants and the researcher, and positionality enables a deconstruction of both our understanding of the production of knowledge and how we come to an understanding of knowledge (Rhodes, 1997; Tisdell, 1998).

In light of this concept of positionality, as a researcher I needed to attend to the diverse relationships between the participants and myself. As Taylor and Bogdan (1998) write, in order to address the differences between the various theoretical perspectives that exist in research today, it is useful to consider three questions:

What is the relationship between the observer and the observed? Whose side are we on? Who cares about the research? (p. 18)
In this section, I wish to particularly focus on the relationship between the observer and the observed, the researcher and the participants, and revisit several considerations and implications for this thesis.

**Representations: speaking for whom?**

There are inherent dangers within any cross-cultural research, and particularly within research where researcher presence and power relations are not stated (Wolf, 1996). It is therefore important for researchers engaged in cross-cultural research to clarify their own goals, intentions and purposes. Questions that a cross-cultural researcher needs to ask include, Why do I want to undertake this research? Who is this research going to benefit? How is this research going to benefit the participants? (Bishop, 1994; see also Sparks, 2002; Troyna, 1993). The fact that I am undertaking a doctoral thesis and should benefit in the future from this research, by virtue of obtaining a degree and possible increased career opportunities, is undeniable. However, by making my other motives visible, and through attending to politics of positionality, reciprocity and making sure the participants are not harmed in any way, I hope that this research will attend to the power relations within discursive practices of research.

Drawing on concerns of Maori researchers, Bishop and Glynn (1999) wrote:

> Whose story of social reality is depicted? Traditionally, educational practices (such as research and pedagogy) have misrepresented, by means of simplification and commodification of Maori knowledge for consumption by the colonisers and have denied the authenticity of Maori experiences, explanations and voices. (p. 56)

While Anae et al. (2001) have briefly raised the issues of intellectual property, collective ownership of knowledge and the ethical and cultural implications of this, in their latest publication for the Ministry of Education, they have not addressed in any detail the power relations between the researcher and the researched. They say:

> The issue of collective ownership of knowledge places a type of check and balance system on the interviewer and interviewee, whereby the knowledge imparted is given with the understanding that ethical and other cultural concerns will be addressed and adhered to (Anae et al., 2001, p. 41).
As I have previously indicated, Pacific researchers have advocated that much research “on” Pacific participants has not always resulted in benefits for those being researched (Pasikale, 1996; Tupuola, 1993). Researchers in this field should make explicit existing power relations and negotiate relationships between the researcher and the participants that reflect the interests of all concerned. I believe there needs to be further dialogue about how to deconstruct traditional research practices focusing “on” Pacific peoples and related issues of representation, as well as how to embrace issues of collective ownership and the implications of “ethical and cultural concerns” for researchers.

I suggest that researchers need to also draw on Maori, feminist and feminist poststructuralist authors, including: Bishop and Glynn (1999), Matahaere-Atariki (1998), Smith (1999), Fine (1994), hooks (1990), Mohanty (1991, 1997), Roman and Eyre (1997), St Pierre and Pillow (2000), Wolf (1996), in order to further reflect on how much qualitative research has reproduced a “colonising discourse of the ‘Other’” (Fine, 1994, p. 70). The discursive nature of Othering has been discussed by a number of authors (see also note 1 in chapter two).

bell hooks (1994a) explores this understanding of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and says “it is not just important what we speak about but how and why we speak” (p. 151). She posits that often Others' stories are rewritten in the voice of the researcher. While the Other is at the centre of the retelling, the researcher is still the authority and the coloniser. Consequently rather than getting to know the Other, or giving voice to the Other, we need to listen to the “plural voices of those Othered, as constructors and agents of knowledge” (Fine, 1994, p. 75). Fine argues that narratives should allow us to hear the voices of participants and researchers who confront and analyse the very structures, ideologies, contexts and practices that perpetuate all forms of domination. The discursive practice of Othering is particularly pertinent to research across cultures as in this environment there is always the danger of reinforcing the hegemony of
dominant groups (Bishop, 1994; Chung, 1989; Fine, 1994). For the people of Samoa, their Othering is illustrated in the works of such researchers as Freeman (1983) and Mead (1963) (see also Foerstel & Gilliam, 1992). (see also Petelo, 1997, p. 3)

Michelle Fine (1994) suggests that as researchers we need to understand and examine the relationships between our participants and ourselves, and re-examine the multiple contexts in which we are situated. Her model of reworking the hyphen between the Self and the Other challenges the traditional research process, and requires that occasions are created:

for both researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, ‘happening between’, within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence. (p.72)

This means that in this study I have needed to pay attention to how I constitute Others, how I am constituted by Others and how I can resist Othering by being reflexive and engaging with the contradictions in the research. I have asked, How does the context of any given situation with my participants shape the knowledge conveyed and received?

Finally, researching in a cross-cultural situation can also bring with it unacceptable expectations from the researcher’s own ethnic group, when it comes to speaking ‘for and about’ participants in research. In the earlier stages of this research process I was asked by a peer to speak ‘about’ Pacific students at university, to a committee on campus, who were all from the dominant ethnic group. It was also suggested that I organise a Pacific student to attend with me and speak as well; in hindsight to make it more authentic perhaps. We were given a loose mandate, and we duly prepared and presented our thoughts, with no questioning of the power relations within the request. We had earlier voiced discomfort to each other about speaking so generally on behalf of a collective minority, and this feeling was reinforced at the conclusion of our presentation, when we were informed that our topic was not relevant to that particular committee. As students we had been
positioned within a process of racialization, where not only were we expected to speak for a collective, but what we had to say was also dismissed as irrelevant. This experience was one both of us had previously encountered in different forms, and was one we decided we would not participate in again. This experience reinforced our understanding of dominant power relations and subordinate positions within the university. Crossing borders and representing others always requires a researcher to address positionality and acknowledge differences and discursive practices of Othering.

Therefore, as a researcher, it is my responsibility to represent these students’ experiences and ‘tales from the field’, with respect and dignity and in such a way that I will not do them any harm (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hulston, 2000). I need to acknowledge my own positionings throughout the research process, and to situate myself within the text. It is important in this project that I adhere to Tupuola’s (1993) assertion that the relationship between the researcher and the participants must centre around fa’aaloalo (respect).

Feminists and poststructuralists have sought to decentre and demystify the ethnographer, and to continually deconstruct, reposition and reshape our relationships and ourselves with the participants according to the context in which we are located (Maher & Tetreault, 1993). However, I also concur with Wolf (1996), who writes:

Despite important efforts to experiment with strategies of representation and authorship, the basic power differences and the distribution of benefits from research remain the same. Few practical changes that have been attempted translate into radically transforming the researcher’s privileged position. While more theorizing on these contradictions is needed, perhaps an acknowledgement of their irreconcilability is also necessary. (p. 34)

**Insider/outside/outside within**

Feminist standpoint theory argues, “one’s positionality as a woman is crucial to gaining knowledge and understanding of other women” (Wolf, 1996, p. 13). In this
way of thinking, one can only know and research a socially constituted world from within, or as an insider. According to Wolf (1996) and Harding (1991 cited in Wolf, 1996), if we take feminist standpoint theory further:

It could be argued that "only those who are of a particular race or ethnic group can study or understand others in a similar situation, or that only women of color or lesbian can generate antiracist or antihomophobic insights. (p. 13)

This insider / outsider debate has been of concern for many ethnographers (Zavella, 1996); some insider researchers claim to have a more privileged and balanced view, and some outsider researchers believe their neutrality grants them greater objectivity and role flexibility (Wolf, 1996). There have also been a number of insider researchers who have written about the problems of their insider positionality, particularly in reference to what Collins (1991) termed the "outsider within" (see Beoku-Betts, 1994; Collins, 1991; Hsiung, 1996; Stephenson & Greer, 1981; Williams, 1996; Zavella, 1996). According to Wolf, this topic continues to raise considerable feeling, and encourages some researchers whilst discouraging others. However, she believes that the perspectives of feminist theorists have "encouraged us to think in terms of multiple perspectives and multiple subjectivities, of forging collaborations and alliances and juxtaposing different viewpoints" (p. 15). She particularly cited Haraway’s (1991 cited in Wolf, 1996) ‘politics and epistemology of location’ (p. 14), which is based on situating, locating, positioning, and allows for a multiplicity of viewpoints.

I agree with Zavella (1996), who states that "we are almost always simultaneously insiders and outsiders" (p. 141) and should discuss what this means for our particular research projects. Moreover, the power relations between researcher and participants are not static but encompass shifting, multiple positionings, which are constantly being reconstituted and renegotiated (Bradford, Ditcher, & Roberston, 1999; Wolf, 1996). My following reflections on insider/outsider positionings have previously been written elsewhere (Petelo, 1997),
but I have included those reflections again in this thesis to illustrate the reflexive focus I have undertaken in this study.

The participants and I came to this research as both insiders and outsiders. We were all students within the same institution, and we had all experienced a degree of understanding of the Samoan culture, though some a lot more than others. As I began this project, I asked myself a number of questions including: Would my experiences within the Samoan community over the many years be to my advantage and enhance rapport (Olsen, 1994)? Would I hear the “racial-ethnic positioning” in our conversations (DeVault, 1995)? Would our shared positionings as students enhance or restrict the research? Would my age, gender, and ethnicity mean that in some instances the data gathered would be limited?

My background proved to be important when I discussed this research with prospective participants. My personal experiences and family situation provided some insider positionings which established my personal integrity and credibility. Prospective participants, who did not personally know me, wanted to know who I was, my relationship with Samoan people, and the reasons why I felt this research was important. It was only once this was established that the students approached other students to also participate. The overwhelming authority that has enabled me, as also an outsider, to undertake this research has come from the participants themselves at various stages of the data gathering process. Examples are as follows:

"You are Sina's mum."
"I don’t see a palagi."
"You are Pelenato's wife."
"You have lived in Samoa."
"You join in the Association, come to the Siva's, you are part of us."

Already having an established relationship with a number of participants was extremely helpful for this process, and without their encouragement and cooperation this research project would not have proceeded so easily.
At the same time, a particular problem of being an insider was that participants made assumptions about my understandings. Some of their comments assumed that my understanding was the same as theirs: “You understand what I mean,” or “You know the Samoan way,” or “Well you understand the fa’aSamoa.” Although some of these comments appeal to my sense of feeling Samoan, of being part of my Samoan family, my understandings as a palagi are different to the participants’ understandings and knowledge. It was similar for comments about being a student, or a student with children. I needed to remind myself that it was their understandings which needed to be made explicit, not my own. This necessitated a continual reassessment of my own assumptions. It would be so very easy to again colonise the Other, to represent my understandings while speaking for or about them.

On the other hand, being an outsider had some positive advantages. As one group discussed, my ethnicity and my age meant that they felt comfortable in talking to me, whereas they would not have felt comfortable if I were Samoan:

Anna: If you were someone like my mum I don’t think I would be comfortable at all talking about this sort of stuff. Just being able to open up, I don’t think I’d want to open up about these sort of things, so I think being a palagi is helpful.

Sina: Some of us are quite uncomfortable when it comes to talking to older Samoan members. We are brought up with this generation gap in the culture, and any grievances that you do have you are made to think that you are just feeling sorry for yourself. You know your emotions do not really count. You give us the freedom to talk about things.

Folo: And it’s also your age for me, as I would not respect a younger person.

This particular group said they felt very comfortable with me because I was both an insider and an outsider; one complemented the other.

Lal (1996) suggests that by focusing on positioning and the politics and epistemologies of location, researchers can move from an insider/outsider binary to “a more productive engagement with the relationships with those whom we study” (p. 200). She is not suggesting that researchers discard debates about
insider/outsider/‘outsider within’ positionings, instead she argues that each person lives in contradictory locations. It is in questioning, “where and how we are located,” that we will move beyond the binary and enable a re-examination of the hyphen between Self-Other (Fine, 1994). It will help us to “work against inscribing the Other.”

Constituting the researcher

The power relations in any relationship are not static, they shift and are recreated in discursive practices (Davies and Harré, 1990/2001; Weedon, 1987). I now wish to explore power relations and the constituting of the researcher by the participants. Kondo (1986) argues that participants are subjects who are also able to constitute the researcher in a number of ways, as participants are not passive objects for study. I, too, argue that participants can place the researcher in positions that may not be agreeable to the researcher. The questions I have asked throughout the research are: How do the participants position me? How would I like the participants to position me?

As a researcher, shaped in part by feminist theory, I have subscribed to the notion of positioning myself beneath or alongside the participants. I have endeavoured to follow the views of feminist theorists such as Oakley (1981) and Finch (1984) who propose a non-hierarchical, sensitive relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, thus advocating an interactive, reciprocal approach to interviewing (see also Petelo, 1997, p. 6).

However, imposing my leanings for feminist process brought a “cultural imperialism” (Hale, 1991, p. 125). Initially, I wanted to attend to what Oakley (1981, p. 44) termed a “transition to friendship,” and expected that I would make new friendships with all my participants. While I have developed an ongoing friendship with a number of the participants and keep in regular contact, with others I have a
friendly relationship and only see them occasionally. There are also a few with whom I have not been able to keep in contact.

As Patai (1991) points out the solidarity of a similar identity does not necessarily bring with it a reciprocal relationship within the research process even after “having rejected the objectification of research subjects construed as ‘Others’” (p. 144). The balance of power is fluid and lies at times with the participants who bring their own agendas and positionality to the research (Cotterill, 1992; Ribbons, 1989). (see also Petelo, 1997, p. 7)

Furthermore, there have been instances in this research where I cannot be placed alongside or beneath the participants, because I am a palagi, a mature woman and married to a Samoan. Being placed in a position as an elder with the respect this holds within Samoan culture has never rested easily with me. While on one hand I appreciate being acknowledged as part of a Samoan family, my palagi upbringing has always found such instances difficult. The issue for me as a researcher is that I have no right to try to change this; I must respect my participants’ ways of knowing.

My age, gender and ethnicity have meant that this research has limitations in some aspects of the data gathered. It has affected the topics that I have been able to discuss with some participants. I believe being a mature woman was problematic at times, and served to particularly limit any in-depth discussion of gender positionings with the younger males. These participants raised certain topics only in the form of cursory comments, including the effects of social and personal relationships, gender expectations within the home, or sexual harassment for males. Even when prompted further, the discussion would be shifted on to another topic. This has meant that any discussions on gender in the chapters have mainly concerned women. The important consideration for this research is that I acknowledge this situation.
Additionally, there are other players in the research process who can exert their own constituting and powerful positionings (Hsiung, 1996; Petelo, 1996). An unspoken discursive injunction within academia and the wider community is that of "good / acceptable / scientific" research. Throughout this research, I have been unexpectedly positioned and constituted as the Other. I argue there exists discourse that acts to position researchers according to their methodological and epistemological understandings and practices, as well as their chosen fields of study. The most common questions that I have been asked as a researcher are, What are you studying or what is your topic? Or What is your degree and in what department? A positive and interested response to my explanation allows further discussion and a sense of acceptance and interest. However, the power relations in other discursive responses have at times left me with my own sense of disjunction:

On a number of occasions, there has been an outpouring of stereotypical views. It seems that some people have views about Pacific Islanders, which are usually concerned with a negative lack of success; their opinions are that it is the fault of either the student, the parents, the Church, violence in the home, crime, truancy, or gambling. The people are deficit. These comments have come from a variety of people including those who are acquaintances to people whom I have met only once. A further common response has been "Well that is an interesting topic." Then the conversation immediately changes direction. ... When this response happens to come from an academic, it somehow feels worse. One instance took place at a Graduation gathering I attended. After explaining my topic to a male university lecturer who is not a social scientist, I was asked "How many questionnaires are you doing?" When I said that I was using a qualitative methodology and conducting interviews he did not reply but switched the conversation onto another topic. (Petelo, 1997, p. 8)

On more recent occasions in conversations about my research, colleagues and acquaintances in the university have made comments like, "things must be better for Samoans now that more Asians are in the university, and more services are made available for them," or "the university mustn’t dumb down its courses to cater for those who can’t speak English properly."

I found that acknowledging the relations of power and the possibilities for resistance in these types of encounters was necessary to enable me to disrupt the
assumptions of stereotypical collectivity and the discursive injunction of the "right" research. In the earlier stages of my research, these encounters left me feeling rather alienated and as if my research was not quite "up there," as in having acceptable knowledge.

As I reflected more on my feminist poststructuralist understandings, I realised that a resistance to these incidents was to view them positively, as my research challenged those discursive practices of Othering. Furthermore, my decision to undertake this area of study, my choice of theoretical underpinnings, my method and the way I have chosen to present the participants' experiences can also be read as acts of refusal; a refusal of the norm, a refusal to accept the status quo, a refusal to be all-consumed by mainstream academia. In relation to self and positionality, the politics of positionality have encouraged researchers to place a greater emphasis on reflexivity that involves "the 'self' as both 'object' and 'subject' and the 'other' as 'observed' and observer"" (Karim, 1993 cited in Wolf, 1996, p. 34). Although Patai (1994) argues that self-reflexivity does not change realities, it does allow a better understanding of the role and relationships between the researcher and the researched. The politics of positionality does allow researchers to locate themselves in their research, and to make more explicit the various discourses that shape their participants, themselves and their interactions.

The ethnographic mill: relationships and data

In a previous paper (Wilson et al., 1999), I raised and discussed the question, What counts as data? I reflected upon this question in relation to the emotional hard work that I experienced in my research. I would like to draw on this initial paper and further discuss my ethical concerns. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) define qualitative data in the following way:

The term *data* refers to the rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying; they are the particulars that form the basis of analysis. Data include materials the people doing the study actively record, such as interview transcripts and participant observation field notes. Data
also include what others have created and the researcher finds, such as
diaries, photographs, official documents, and newspaper articles. (p. 107)

Judith Stacey (1988), in her now classic work *Can there be a feminist
ethnography?* writes that all the experiences and tales from the field that participants
share with the researcher are data:
The lives, loves, and tragedies that fieldwork informants share with a
researcher are ultimately data, grist for the ethnographic mill, a mill that
has a truly grinding power. (p. 23)

However, the politics of positionality and an awareness of the power relations
in the researcher and participant relationships enable us to rethink the concept of
data. St. Pierre (1997) writes that qualitative researchers who “are fond of
poststructuralist critiques search for strategies that might enable them to produce
different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently.” In her paper, she attends
to how she thought about *data* differently, and how “different kinds of data … might
produce different knowledge in qualitative research in education” (p. 175). St. Pierre
troubles the traditional qualitative methodological understanding of data. She
discusses her concept of *transgressive data*, which includes emotional data, dream
data, sensual data and response data, to open up the ways in which we can think
about our data differently.

In my research, I also, have been troubled about the nature of data (Wilson et
al., 1999). I originally understood data to be that as described by Bogdan and Biklen.
However, as I became more involved with many of my participants in a variety of
situations, I became increasingly concerned as to what constituted data. Were the
times the participants and I chatted in the corridors or cafes about their university
work counted as data? What should / would I do with the insights I gained from
other Samoan students who were not participating in the research interviews but who
discussed with me their concerns with their university work, or how a family
commitment meant that they were behind with an assignment? What was I going to
do with the comments from the two students who attended interviews and participated in group discussions as support people and not formal participants? Was the personal joy and pride I felt when any of these students succeeded in their academic endeavours data?

To try to find answers to these types of questions, I refer to what St. Pierre (1997) terms response data. Response data according to St. Pierre, arises from the interaction researchers have, and must have, with Others who are not those being researched. She suggests each researcher will collect response data from different possibilities. I read authors’ work on emotional data (Casey, 1995; Kleinman & Copp, 1993; Jaggar, 1989; Jones, 1991; Middleton, 1993, 1996; St. Pierre, 1997). I collected response data from my dissertation supervisors, members of a qualitative research group, participants at conferences, student and staff colleagues, friends I walk with, amongst others. These interactions provided many different responses. Some said, “you cannot ignore it, it is all data,” another wrote:

This discussion is rather alarming ethically. If all conversations etc. can become ‘data’ I wouldn’t talk with this writer in the staff room! However I suspect that her definition of ‘data’ is the problem here (Personal communication, 2000).

I kept returning to St. Pierre’s argument that data is a taken-for-granted notion, and the possibilities for disruption and reconfiguration. I cannot accept that as a researcher I can ignore certain reflections and interactions because they are not ‘official’ data. I cannot ignore or put aside examples of response data or emotional data. I understand that this research has evolved from multiple life experiences and discursive practices before it became a research project. I acknowledge that the discursive injunctions I bring to the research are also reflected in the research process, as well as the data gathered in the interviews and participant observations. I cannot believe that in my relationships with the participants I can switch from being a researcher to not being a researcher, depending upon the situations in which we are
located. Furthermore, I would not consider it ethical to write about data as if it is objectively gathered, detached and untainted by our emotions and interactions.

I am drawn to the understanding that transgressive data enables us to take seriously the thought that data means more than that signified in traditional qualitative research. However, a troubling of data also brings with it ethical re-inscription (St. Pierre, 1997). As St. Pierre suggests it is the relation between the researcher and those who provide response data that usually escapes scrutiny. Although St Pierre argues that ethics “explodes anew in every circumstance” (p. 176), I believe the ethical principle of not causing participants harm (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 53) must also extend to all those with whom I come into contact with as part of this study; it must extend to those who have provided response data in any form. Nevertheless, whilst Taylor and Bogdan (1998) make the point that “there are no hard and fast rules in the realm of ethics” (p. 37), in all my ethical decision-making, the focus and concern has been my participants. My major concern has been focused on how decisions of mine will affect them as individuals; individuals who share parts of themselves with me and indirectly with the many others who may eventually read my dissertation. Discerning what counts as data has been part of the “ethnographic mill,” that mixes and refines the complexities of fieldwork in research. I now turn my attention to other aspects of being in the field, and consider further the complex nature of fieldwork in the following section.

Complexities of fieldwork

This section focuses further on the politics of fieldwork and discusses the contradictions and complexities of working in the field. I have used an ethnographic approach to fieldwork, in order to understand how the participants constitute their world. As Tedlock (2000) writes of ethnography:

A key assumption has been that by entering into firsthand interaction with people in their everyday lives, ethnographers can reach a better
understanding of the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of their subjects than they can by using any other methods. (p. 470)

However, the postmodern challenge to ethnography has meant that ethnographic researchers are not simply observers and reporters, rather their ‘tales from the field’ demand that researchers become more self-reflexive and explicit about their roles in the research processes as well their roles as authors in their representations of peoples’ lives (Vidich and Lyman, 2000, p. 61). The ethnographic text is “fashioned out of the researcher’s engagement with the world studied” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 373). There is no one ethnographic method, however, for ethnographers to find social and cultural understandings, they must be “aware of the sources of the ideas that motivate them and are willing to confront them—with all that such a confrontation entails (Vidich and Lyman, 2000, p. 62). The following discussions serve to contextualise and locate the fieldwork, as well as highlight my constant reflexive processes. Furthermore, I have not specifically identified a section on ethical considerations, but have interwoven my ethical concerns and their implications throughout this chapter, to mirror the research process rather than highlighting ethical concerns at the end.

**Entering the field: Negotiating access**

This study focuses upon the experiences of twenty-two Samoan students who were studying at the University of Canterbury during 1997.² My initial concerns about gaining access to a cross-section of Samoan students at the University of Canterbury, particularly because of my own ethnicity and age, and partly because of the small numbers of enrolments, proved unfounded. I had originally planned for a smaller group of participants, but when more students offered to take part, I made a decision to accept as many as came forward because I did not wish to be disrespectful or exclude anyone. The only predetermined criteria were that prospective participants were enrolled students at the university and they identified with their Samoan background. Initially, I approached eight students using my existing networks within and outside the University, and I gave them a copy of the information sheet outlining
the research (Appendix A). In turn, I asked each of those eight students to recommend others who may wish to be included. I supplied the original eight students with extra copies of the information sheet to hand to other students. Each student who recommended someone else approached that person on my behalf before I contacted them myself.

I also talked about my research at the Samoan Students’ Association, of which I was a member, and again asked for interested volunteers. I believe that my membership of this association was an important factor in people determining my credibility. I was supportive of an organisation to which many Samoan students belong or feel an affiliation. Nevertheless, and perhaps even more importantly, gaining access to the participants had been many months in the making. Both before I had enrolled in this degree and while I wrote the research proposal, I had discussed the concept of this research with both younger and mature Samoan students whom I knew, my immediate family, and other elders in my extended Samoan family. This research was given its title by an elder matai within my extended family, whose support for the project and whose opinion I valued. I had been encouraged to undertake this research from all with whom I spoke.

Furthermore, in order to avoid exploitation and ethnocentrism in this cross-cultural research project, I used fieldwork methods that considered the culture of the participants and encompassed fa’aSamoa values. I drew on the writing of Tupuola (1993), who states the research process needs to be one that emphasises dialogue, self-reflexivity, flexibility, collaboration and consensus (p. 182). This enables a more accurate interpretation of the participants’ experiences. In keeping with this philosophical directive, I negotiated with the participants throughout the initial stages of the research process (and beyond), and consensus agreement determined the final framework for data collection. Intending participants determined how they wanted to be interviewed, individually, or with someone else, or within a group. If individuals wished to be interviewed with someone else, they were given the option
of arranging their own group or letting me arrange it. Many participants arranged to
meet with other students that they personally knew. I interviewed five people
individually, six people in pairs, one group of three and two groups of four. Other
issues for negotiation included where and how often each group met, whether or not
the interviews included a meal or prayer, whether both Samoan and English would
be used and the implications of using both, and whether the interviews would be
taped.

At the beginning of the first year in the field, my palagi background and my
demands as a doctoral student, were at cross-purposes with the slowly evolving
research processes. I was enthusiastic to begin interviewing, which however did not
in fact begin according to my timeline. What I learnt was that these participants
needed to respond in their own time; that is they wanted to know: Who was I? Why
did I want to do the research? They placed their own timeframe on beginning the
interviews. Consequently, my first interview did not occur until April 1997, and only
after it, as well as another interview, had been postponed once; by which time I was
thinking that nothing was going to happen at all. I needed to remind myself that this
negotiation process was crucial to the future of research. An important factor in
establishing a reciprocal and trustworthy relationship between the participants and
myself, has been allowing the process to unfold according to the understandings of
the participants rather than an imposition from the researcher.

**Participants: issues of anonymity and confidentiality**

Over the 1997 academic year and into early 1998 twenty-two Samoan students
participated in this research project while they were studying at the University of
Canterbury. From the outset of this project, and as I have previously detailed (Petelo,
1997), I continually reflected on the issue of anonymity and confidentiality. These
issues are problematic when the total number of Samoan students at the University
of Canterbury is so small. I kept returning to the question: How could I describe the
participants in this section of the methodology chapter? After also consulting with
peers and supervisors, I finally came to the decision that I could not offer anything more than a general description of the participants, rather than more detailed biographies or descriptions. I made this decision in keeping with my methodological philosophies, my agenda of anonymity and confidentiality, and the ethical practice of doing the participants no harm. I discussed issues of anonymity and confidentiality with each individual before we began interviewing and assured them that they would not be identified to anyone else either orally or in the written thesis, and that pseudonyms would be used for names and any places that might identify them. We agreed that exceptions would be references to University of Canterbury and its related structures, the National University of Samoa and its related structures as well as references to NZODA scholarships. While there were a small number of participants who were not concerned if they were identifiable, I have used pseudonyms for all concerned, which I used in all written documents from the outset, including all field notes and transcriptions.

In spite of this, at times participants asked me who else was in the study: “Was Diane or Leni or ... taking part?” When I restated that I could not divulge names because of our agreement of anonymity and confidentiality some individuals were surprised, and others stated that it was a good thing. As Iulia said: “It’s good, as everyone knows too much about everyone else.” We also discussed confidentiality within the group interviews and agreed that whatever was said in these situations remained with the group members and personal comments or experiences would not be repeated by group members or attributed to any group member outside of the interview, apart from what was written by me. I feel that decisions such as these were crucial for the ongoing commitment by participants to this study, as this gave them the environment to share their experiences with the knowledge of anonymity and confidentiality. Moreover, embodied within this is the issue of trust; that I as a researcher will actually do what I say I intend to. As noted by Tupaola (1993, 1998a) the relationship between the researcher and the participants must centre on trust and fa’aaloalo, respect.
Therefore, the following general description of the student participants is brief and limited to subsequent presentations in the findings chapters. The twenty-two participants comprised fourteen female and eight male students. Eighteen were undergraduate students, two of whom were in their first year, and four were postgraduate students. Seven had been born and raised in Samoa, whereas nine had been born and raised in New Zealand. The others had been either born in New Zealand and raised in Samoa, or born in Samoa and raised in New Zealand, or born in New Zealand and raised in another island in the Pacific. Seven students had come over to New Zealand for study purposes and a number of those were on a NZODA scholarship. Six had attended a University Preparatory Year programme. There were a number of participants who had begun studying after spending time in the workforce, and all but two are younger than me. English was a second language for fourteen of the participants.

**Sourcing the data**

My study involved sourcing data using a variety of strategies, particularly in-depth qualitative interviews, participant observations, and accessing and analysing written documents. This stage of the fieldwork was mainly undertaken over a period of fourteen months. However, throughout the length of the research, participant observations and document analysis continued as new procedures or developments occurred within the university’s practices and structures.

**In-depth interviews**

The main source of data collection was from the thirty-three taped in-depth qualitative interviews with the twenty-two students. I chose qualitative interviewing to “gather descriptive data in the participants’ own words” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 96), and with an awareness of the oral and collective nature of the Samoan culture. I had originally favoured focus group interviews where the emphasis is upon communal discussion and interaction rather than upon the individual, as I thought this would provide a more secure, familiar environment for the intended participants.
I also thought that the group environment would enable me to gain greater insights than I might otherwise, due to my own positionings as a cross-cultural researcher and a student peer. As Morgan and Kruegar (1993) argue, the focus group is a valuable method for people who have “historically had limited power and influence” (p. 15). However, as I also favoured negotiation at all stages of the research process, the participants themselves organised both individual and / or group structures. The outcome was that I facilitated 20 individual interviews as well as thirteen group interviews, consisting of two, three or four participants. The five people who chose individual interviews were each interviewed two or three times. The other participants each participated in two group or paired interviews, and some in additional individual interviews after the group interviews were completed. These, I am sure, only took place because of the rapport that we had developed.

I gave ethical priority to informed consent (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 49). At the commencement of everybody’s first interview, I offered each participant the option of signing a written consent form (Appendix B) or giving oral consent. I had previously gained permission from the University of Canterbury’s Human Ethics Committee to offer oral consent in keeping with the traditional oral nature of the Samoan culture. Samoan cultural traditions demand that oral negotiation and consensus agreement should be fundamental to any activity involving people of Samoan ethnicity (Tupuola, 1993). This oral agreement has within it the concept of implicit and expected trust traditionally honoured between the parties. Subsequently, consent proved to be a valuable opening topic for discussion in the initial interviews. All of the participants, bar one, gave written consent after discussion about participating in the research and the nature of the research process, and about oral and written consent. I recorded the oral consent on tape.

The interviews took place in a number of situations: either in my room at the university, or other rooms in the university or in participants’ homes. Some were during the day and some in the evening. Through my understanding and experiences
of Samoan custom, at each initial interview I provided food, usually in the form of cakes and biscuits and drinks. Additionally, for the first interviews I brought a gift of food for the participants to keep. However, the mature students discouraged this practice, they said it was not expected because I was also a student, and something to eat during the interview was enough. Some participants told me not to bring anything to eat at all for subsequent interviews. In these instances, I respected their advice and wishes, however it was usual practice for me to provide refreshments during the interviews. During one of the group interviews, held at one participants’ house, we shared a meal of Samoan food. This was a very social occasion over a period of three hours. Another individual interview began in the student café over coffee, for an hour, then we went to a quiet room for the taped part of the interview, which also lasted an hour. In addition, although the option was made available to everyone, only a small number of the more mature students began or ended the interviews with a prayer. My attention “to Pacific principles of reciprocity, love and respect” (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu and Finau, 2001, p. 41) has been an important part of the research process, and was a small tangible recognition of the participants’ time given and their knowledge shared (see also Lather, 1991, 1993; Morton, MacGibbon & Harrison, 1999).

Each interview continued for at least an hour, and was taped and later transcribed. A number of transcriptions were returned to the participants for verification, other participants did not wish to be part of that process. Other participants shifted away from Canterbury and I was not able to keep in contact with them all. A number of participants returned to Samoa, and I met with some of these participants on my visits there. On these occasions, I was able to discuss further the transcripts, any emerging themes and the research progress. I also wrote detailed memos after each interview or personal contact (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

After the initial, and in some instances lengthy, discussion on consent, the first interviews each began with a small number of open-ended questions and the topics
for later discussion emerged from these questions. However, in one group situation the participants did not know each other so we began with a short individual introduction. The questions I had prepared to begin the interviews were:

How would you like to give consent, orally or written?

Why did you decide to come to the University of Canterbury?

How do you remember your first contact with the university?

Tell me about some of your social activities at university.

My reflections on the ideas and thoughts expressed in the first interviews directed the questions in the subsequent interviews, such as: What do you understand the term 'New Zealand born' to mean? I was also able to probe and cross check about ideas or comments that others made in their interviews. For example: How did you decide to take the papers you have studied at university? or Tell me about your involvement in the Samoan Association, or What do you see is the role of the Samoan Association? Each interview was different although the topics the participants raised for discussion were often similar. The questions in the later interviews were more focused than the earlier interviews, however the aim of the interviews was always to listen, and to obtain thick description about these participants’ experiences in their own words (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The number of interviews and the timing of the interviews also took place around their student commitments and examinations, and their holiday breaks.

**Observations as a participant**

I also participated in activities both on the campus and in the wider community attended by many of the participants. I did this to obtain further rich descriptive data by observing, listening to conversations and interacting with participants in a variety of situations (Hulston, 2000). Those observations on the campus were mainly related to the activities and meetings of the Samoan Association, plus seminars or related activities for Pacific peoples such as opening of art exhibitions, and observing in public places like cafes and bars. In addition, I participated in student meetings and
hui related to Pacific concerns at the university. Off campus, I attended sivas and other celebrations including a wedding, and graduation celebrations. After each of these observations, I wrote thick descriptive notes, which also were a valuable account of peoples’ experiences. I continued my involvement in many of these activities after the interviews had finished and throughout the research process. I saw this as an aspect of reciprocity, in that I could give my time and interests back to the Samoan student community.

Documents and university staff

Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Bailey (1996) and others, have discussed the use of official documents as a source of data in qualitative research, as they can provide another form of rich description. I accessed a number of university documents and contacted a small selection of university staff to verify and make clear policies and structures that exist within the University. The types of policy documents I drew on included documents such as those relating to equal opportunity policy, and those relating to the visions, goals and objectives of the university. Others included the Enrolment Handbook for students, and Internet sites for information about various student services. Additionally, I sourced from Registry the statistical information for Samoan students relevant to the University of Canterbury. As well, I spoke with university staff in their professional capacity, to ascertain the official functions of specific roles or committees or support services in the University. These points of contact were achieved through short focused questions usually on the telephone. I also drew on relevant emails sent to all staff of the university. This type of data provided both a current and historical context for these students’ experiences.

University Preparatory Year

Furthermore, as this study progressed it became apparent to me that an important factor in some of the participants’ experiences was their participation in the UPY, offered by the NUS. Although my own experiences as a teacher in a Government High School in Samoa had given me some understanding of educational institutions
and practices in Samoa, these experiences were some years ago and not at tertiary level. With the aid of a Claude McCarthy Fellowship grant, I went to Samoa for three weeks in March 1998. My aim was to gain an understanding of the University Preparatory Year that is offered to seventh form students, which prepares them for tertiary study, and to meet with participants who had returned to Samoa on completion of their studies in New Zealand.

During my time at the NUS, I interviewed the programme’s acting co-ordinator, three lecturers and the counsellor in their professional capacity, and undertook three focus group interviews with nine students. The interviews ranged from one to two hours in length. In addition, I undertook participant observations in a variety of lectures, a seminar, and in the university environment in general including the cafe and the library where I talked informally to other lecturers, administration staff and students. I also spent time writing extensive field notes. I transcribed the interviews on my return to New Zealand. This part of the research strengthens the data already gathered as I gained further valuable insights into the background experiences of the participants in my research, and a deeper understanding of the relevance of this Preparatory Year for students coming to New Zealand to study. The background experiences of these participants are detailed in a summary of this visit, Appendix C.

Data analysis
A feature of qualitative research is that data analysis is an ongoing process. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) argue that some analysis in the field “is an ongoing part of data collection” and leaves a researcher “in good stead to do the final analysis after you leave the field” (p. 154). My analysis in the field included writing and rereading extensive field notes, which also contained observer comments. I used the interview transcriptions to generate further questions to take to the following interviews, where I could clarify or ask a participant to further explain a comment. I wrote analytical memos on hunches or speculations about themes I thought I was emerging, and used these preliminary thoughts in the form of questions for topics in subsequent
interviews. This type of analysis continued throughout the interviews and participant observations and to a lesser extent once the interviews were completed. Furthermore, because I continued to collect smaller amounts of relevant data throughout the course of this thesis, I constantly wrote observer comments and reflective memos, of which some aspects were included in the final written document. The last memo I wrote about a university practice was less than two months before submitting this thesis.

However, the data analysis was more intensive once I had completed the formal interviewing. To commence this intensive analysis, I immersed myself in the data by reading and rereading the transcripts, the field notes, observer comments and memos. I also began to play the tapes again, mainly in the car while travelling to university, as I found this kept me in touch with the participants as people and not just words on a page. I continued to listen to the tapes right up to the time I submitted the thesis. Data analysis at this stage involved adhering to Bogdan and Biklen’s suggestion of coding families in order to develop coding categories to organise my data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Dey, 1993). I began with the coding families: setting/context, definition of the situation codes, perspective held by subjects, subjects ways of thinking about people and objects, process codes, event codes, strategy codes, relationship and social structure codes, and methods codes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 167–172). Each family contained a number of coding categories, for example, the ‘setting/context family’ contained the coding categories of official documents, descriptions of student services, description of university, official aims of services, amongst others. Whereas the coding family ‘perspectives held by subjects’ allowed me to consider the coding categories: New Zealand born, brownies, the university as culturally unfriendly, and others. The ‘methods code’ consisted more of observer comments than anything else but did include categories such as informed consent, outsider researcher, cross-cultural considerations, researcher emotions, is this data?
I sorted and organised all the data into coding families and categories by setting up word files on the computer, and copying and pasting from the original transcripts, memos, observer comments and field notes into these specific word files. At the same time, I was also able to include as much of the data before and after the selected coded category as I wished. I did this as I found it helpful in my thinking to keep the coded selection of text in context. Much of the data was included in more than one file. I also was able to write comments and memos in different colours throughout the files. I was able to collapse, expand or separate these coding categories files as further analysis took place. I always kept a copy of each file, so that I had a traceable route throughout the analytical processes. I began with a large number of categories under each of the coding families. I wrote analytical memos and discussed categories with my peers in a qualitative research group as well as my supervisors as a way to collapse the categories into themes.

However, as my theoretical thinking developed, I also changed the way I thought about my coding categories, and began to alter my thinking about the way I was organising the data into themes. I had shifted my theoretical perspective to be more inclusive of a feminist poststructuralist approach; I reassessed the themes and thought more about discourse analysis. I was struggling with the range of categories and found that each category contained many different views and experiences; opposite views and shades in between. This data was not as clear-cut as I naively expected. I reflected on the theoretical perspectives from feminist poststructuralist writers such as Davies (1993, 1994), Elizabeth (1997), St Pierre (1997, 2000), Weedon (1987, 1991, 1997) who attend to discourses and discursive practices as a way of analysing research. I re-looked at my coding categories and the tentative themes I had, for example, family, church, identities, academic work, and instead asked myself such questions as What discourses are shaping these participants’ experiences? How were these students constituted as the Other? How did they constitute themselves? What discourses were available to the students? How did these participants make sense of their student experiences?
Discourse analysis is not a homogeneous method, rather it is "a set of methods that have been used by workers with different theories of language in a variety of ways" (Gavey, 1989, p. 466). My use stems from the Foucauldian definition of discourse as described in chapter two; although I particularly draw on both Gavey's (1989) and Elizabeth's (1997) use of discourse analysis in their respective research. In Gavey's research, discourse analysis was used to analyse interview texts to discern how discourses position women in relation to men within hetero-sexual relationships. Elizabeth used discourse analysis to focus "more explicitly on people's active management of their discursive locations, as they engage in the task of self representation and relational negotiation" (p. 28). I have used discourse analysis to explore how Samoan students both constituted themselves and were constituted by others, as well as how they reacted to and negotiated those acts of constitution. As Weedon (1987) writes, "feminist poststructuralism is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it" (p. 41).

In discourse analysis, texts are examined to consider ways in which those discourses that are available within the "social, cultural, and historical context of the author" (Gavey, 1989, p. 465), constitute meanings, contradictions, and inconsistencies (Elizabeth, 1997; Weedon, 1987). While feminist poststructuralist researchers such as Gavey, Elizabeth and Weedon have been concerned with the implications of these meanings for gendered power relations, I have also explored the implications of these meanings for other relations of power including those found in Samoan student positionings. This use of discourse analysis is different from other approaches of discourse analysis (see Wetherall, Taylor & Yates, 2001). As Elizabeth (1997) states:

This type of analysis moves beyond the boundaries of a particular text to a consideration of the social consequences of constituting reality through the discourse in that text. ... Discourse analysis involves a double commentary on the social: it identifies and names discourses, which are by definition social products, and it analyses these discourses in terms of the effect they have on social power relations. (p. 29)
With this change of focus in mind, I needed to rework and reorganise what I had already coded. To begin, I reorganised my categories and files into two areas; one relevant to structures and practices within the university, and one more focused on experiences, which overlapped with those outside the university. I re-immersed myself in the texts and the tape recordings. This change in focus and reworking the data was a lengthy process, however, I felt more comfortable as I could see possibilities for presenting the complex and shifting nature of these participants’ experiences, and I became more at ease with listening and reading about participants’ contradictory opinions within the same interview. The emphasis now was on not only the meanings or interpretations they gave to their experiences but also the language that participants used to constitute their own, and others’, understandings.

For example, I noticed when participants used the collective term “Pacific Islander,” or PI, as a form of solidarity or endearment, or the times they used it as a term of exclusion. I asked other types of questions while reading the data, including: Why were some students speaking about how they chose a particular degree, while at the same time stating they would like to study something else? When did students use ‘we’ to mean Samoan students and when did they use ‘we’ to mean students in general? Why did some people talk about how they reacted to certain situations, while at the same time not challenging anyone in an official capacity? In what instances did students talk about feeling supported? I reworked the data under various headings, which I later collapsed to include discourses of choice, of “Pacific Islander”, of expectations, as well as headings such as invisibility, having the right knowledge, exclusion, and financial support. I finally presented the data in four findings chapters where each chapter explores a number of discursive practices and discourses.

Finally, in order to discuss recurring and interwoven reflections that spanned the findings chapters, I returned to the concept of themes as a way of organising the
discussion chapter. I chose four themes; collectivity, resistance, choice and the ivory
tower, to further explore acts of constitution and to consider possibilities for
changing the discursive practices that these participants experienced.

Politics of Writing

Writing is an essential part of qualitative research, and commences at the beginning
of the research process (Bailey, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Richardson, 1994;
Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). As Richardson (1990) states:

Writing is not simply a true representation of an objective reality, out there,
waiting to be seen. Instead, through literacy and rhetorical devices, writing
creates a particular view of reality. (p. 9)

This means writing transforms data into prose but is not simply a telling of the
research at the end of the process, but instead is “a way of “knowing”, a method of
“discovery and analysis” (Richardson, 1994, p. 516). Furthermore, Britzman
(1995/2000) argues that writing ethnography is about:

Constructing particular versions of truth, questioning how regimes of truth
become neutralized as knowledge, and thus pushing the sensibilities of
readers in new directions. (p. 38)

However, it is important to acknowledge that the writing process in qualitative
research is as much about how and what the researcher writes, as about the
participants’ narratives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Richardson, 1994). As Lincoln and
Denzin (1994) state:

There is the sure and certain knowledge that all texts are socially,
historically, politically and culturally located. We, like the texts we write,
can never be transcendent. (p. 582)

Britzman (1995/2000) also contends an ethnographic narrative must acknowledge
differences within and among participants’ experiences, how these experiences are
told and what structures the telling and the retelling. Furthermore, she states that in
poststructuralist versions of writing authors must admit “how [their] own telling is
partial and governed by the discourses of [their] time and place” (p. 32).
Therefore as an author I need to constantly question what and whose stories I was choosing to tell, and what I was choosing to leave out. I have attempted to be reflexive in my writing and posit both the participants and myself in the thesis. At the same time, I have also attended to issues of confidentiality and anonymity by writing the thesis in such a way that it does not provide identifying details about the participants. I have also attempted to use a style of writing that is accessible while adhering to the academic requirements for a doctoral thesis.

The incongruity of writing a concluding summary for a chapter on methodology and method, and situating it towards the beginning of the thesis is “grist for the ethnographic mill” (Stacey, 1988, p. 23). I have found it emotionally hard work presenting a methodological chapter, which appeases my need to: be clear about my methodological understandings and background, consider implications of positionality, attend to the complexities of work in the field and, at the same time, problematise assumptions of the politics and rituals of research, which continue beyond the writing of the thesis into any future readings of this work. Poststructuralists try to problematise language and use it differently in order to encounter “different research methodologies, and different representations of research” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 186). I acknowledge that this methodological chapter does adhere to a more traditional qualitative research presentation. However, I believe its content enables further debate and future presentations of the theoretical, pedagogical, and ethical considerations that researchers, and those who teach about research, constantly reflect on, as they participate in educational research in a postmodern world.

Notes

1 The phrase “ritual of research,” was used by Karen Nairn (1994) in her master’s thesis.
Permission to undertake this research was granted by the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Canterbury.

I use "anonymity" with an understanding that the participants will remain anonymous to everyone else apart from, myself. I used pseudonyms in all transcriptions, memos, analytical writing and oral discussions.
Findings: Section One—A mirror upon a mirror upon a mirror: (Re)flections upon acts of constituting and being constituted

The challenge is to find ways of catching ourselves in the act of constituting and being constituted and to find ways to attend to the power of discursive practices as we use them to make lives and worlds. (Davies, 1994, p. 122)

I have chosen to present the findings of this thesis in two sections, both of which contain two chapters. Section one contains chapters four and five, which focus on constitutive effects of discourses in the act of shaping subjectivities. In section two, chapter six and seven examine the discourses of equality and equity. The deconstruction of discourses in section two is specifically centred within the University of Canterbury.

The following two chapters, four and five, explore how discursive practices are used to underpin disparities and undermine the concepts of difference and choice. This is appreciated through understandings of deconstruction and processes of subjectification. Their location within this specific tertiary environment is acknowledged by attending to how acts of constituting and being constituted are played out and reflected in the lives of these participants while they are university students. Just as one reflection in a room of mirrors is never the only one available or
seen, my (re)presentation of these participants’ narratives, insights, and discernment, will explore how each individual was describing, interpreting, analysing and/or challenging both the constituting and the constitution of their own individual subjectivities, and their collective national identities. Through my analysis of their experiences, I will examine how these participants have a sense of their own agency as they take up multiple and contradictory discourses, as well as their (and my) critiques of the structural and institutional constraints in which they are embodied.
Constitutive processes: shades of being

In this first chapter of the research findings, my (re)presentations of the conversations and shared insights of these students of Samoan background have captured acts of constituting and being constituted, particularly as seen in the normalising power of the term “Pacific Islander” within New Zealand society. However, their subjectification has also been shaped by other contradictory discursive practices within other discourses. The reflexive gaze of both the participants and myself in (re)lating practices within each of the discourses of collectivity, categorisation and labelling, and choice focuses on who is a “Pacific Islander” or a Samoan, the constitutive effects of colour, and the choice to use and/or embrace the Samoan language and traditional culture. These participants’ experiences will illustrate how as individuals we meet and interact with a multiplicity of discourses in the acts of shaping both ourselves and what we see (Davies, 1997). I acknowledge that other researchers have previously presented aspects of the first two sections of this chapter (see Anae, 1998a, 2001; Tupuola, 1998a). However, the relevance of deconstructing these particular discursive
practices within the university setting emerged from the participants' resistance to notions of collective labelling and their desire for recognition of differences whether between ethnic groupings or within one ethnic group. Their experiences further support those previously documented, as well as offering alternative views.

"We are ... lumped under the label Pacific Islanders"—Who is a "Pacific Islander"?

An awareness of the constitutive power of discourse in shaping their own subjectivities was illustrated in the way numerous participants talked about the practice of collective group naming through the use of the term "Pacific Islander". The general consensus of these participants was that this term mainly refers to people from the South Pacific and includes people who come from or whose backgrounds are from Tonga, Samoa, Tokelau, Niue, Fiji, the Cook Islands and other smaller nations such as Kiribati. However, some saw the term as including people from wider Polynesia, and a few also understood it to embrace all peoples of the Pacific including those people from Micronesia and Melanesia. The term was seen to exclude any Palagi. As well, New Zealand as a country was not usually considered a "Pacific Island" nation.

According to most of the participants, the terms "Pacific Island" or "Pacific Islander" imply a certain homogeneity, and both are still used within the university community as well as in the wider New Zealand society, for example in the media and in government departments. While many of these participants said they acknowledged the term "Pacific Islander," it still remained problematic for them. Comments ranged from that by Niko who said, "we are [all] lumped under the label Pacific Islanders," to Luisa who said very emphatically, "I think what really brasses me off the most with my Palagi friends is the fact that they think "Islanders" are all the same." These participants believe that the picture Palagi generally have of people from different Pacific nations is that they are all the same. No one in this research
project accepted this view; they all rejected the homogenising assumptions underlying this term.

Participants thought that being constituted as a “Pacific Islander” was problematic for a variety of reasons. One reason relates to the implication of having to take responsibility for all negative as well as positive stereotypes that occur when a collective categorisation is predominantly used. Niko saw this attitude as a common one in the university environment. He explained, “When a Pacific Islander does something bad in the university then all the Samoans and others are collectively condemned by the situation.” Similarly, Tasi and Scott, spoke about the prevalence of this attitude within the wider community:

Scott: Like if they robbed a place then you feel like embarrassed with what they did, but if they’re like a sports person, like popular, then you kind of feel proud.

Tasi: Like when they do really embarrassing stuff, when they commit crimes and stuff.

Scott: It’s not that I don’t want to be identified as a Pacific Islander, its just being ashamed of what they did.

Tasi: And it reflects on all of us.

The above conversation highlights the contradictory positions individual participants held when they saw themselves as being othered, while at the same time constituting themselves through being taken up in the discursive practice of collective group naming that is imposed upon them. They could at the same time both like and dislike the term “Pacific Islander.”

Other students also spoke about the stereotypical images of a “Pacific Islander.” These stereotypes were mentioned particularly in conversations about sport, the media, and when participants talked about their social interactions in places like nightclubs. They described incidents both within and outside their university related activities. Sami depicted the way in which the term “Pacific Islander” may be used in a derogatory sense:
We were talking about rugby and there were some guys, they had a game on that day, and we asked them 'how was your game?' because most of the team-mates were mostly Samoan and Tongans. And they said 'all those ... Islanders, they were playing really rough.' And then I said 'who?' 'All those Pacific Islanders you know, it's a Pacific Islanders team.' All the others guys were laughing, so I asked one of my friends 'what are they laughing about?' He said, 'when they say Pacific Island team that means that they are rough players.'

Nonetheless, the participants believed that the sporting arena was one in which Palagi generally saw Pacific peoples as being successful. Some students used sport to gain success and recognition within the student body, and used their success as a way to meet other students. Others felt demeaned by this stereotypical portrayal, particularly if they themselves did not participate in sport, and especially if they did not play rugby or league. Luisa told her 'rags to riches story.' On one occasion when she was taking part in her regular peer study group, her Palagi friends pointed to Jonah Lomu (a New Zealand rugby hero) as a "Pacific Islander" who had been able to "make the grade," and his success was an example for others to emulate:

Because she [a peer] says 'oh no hasn't Jonah Lomu in the All Blacks and you know sporting personalities, done wonders for us'. And I went 'who's us?' And she goes 'for you Pacific Islanders.' ... So I said 'Do you think he should be recognised even more than any other All Black?' ... And they were all going 'no, its because he is a minority, and he is from a lower class.'

Luisa reacted to this conversation because she believed that her peers were reinforcing the myth that all Pacific people are good at sport, and if one Pacific person can be successful then all Pacific people can be successful. Furthermore, Jonah's achievement is seen to exemplify the idea that class and ethnicity are not barriers to success. Luisa believed these particular Palagi peers thought that all Pacific peoples had a low socio-economic status, but that they could improve themselves if they wanted to.

As a result of this conversation with her student peers in their study group, Luisa questioned her own expectations and perceptions of peoples' attitudes and beliefs, as she had not expected these stereotypical attitudes to be present at
university. This conflicted with her understandings of what should happen in a university, “a place of thought,” and she said that she was sad to encounter people who still thought like that in an environment which she felt should not have supported these stereotypical ways of thinking:

That’s basically what she classes us all as, we are all a minority, and we are all the under privileged ... Yeah and that’s the sad thing about it. That this [university] is a place of thought, and yet you know that people still have those [stereotypical] views.

Those students who had recently come from Samoa to study in New Zealand offered yet another perspective. They queried the origins of the “Pacific Islander” categorization, and said this was neither a term that they had heard previously, nor was it used by themselves to any great extent now they were in New Zealand. They explained that others had imposed this group identification and categorization upon them in New Zealand. Sami commented, “as far as I know we never use it [in Samoa], its only here that I heard about it,” and all these students reiterated this. While it was a term that they now acknowledged referred to a collective group that included them as individuals, it was not a term they necessarily accepted, as detailed by Tavita:

I had heard [in Samoa] just Pacific Islands but not Pacific Islander. I don’t really like that term because to me it ... It puts all the Pacific Islanders in the same group when we are actually quite different. We are actually all quite different people. I’ve never been upset about it but it’s just like when we fill out those forms we want to write down actually where we are from instead of just writing down Pacific Islander because it could mean anything.

All of those students who had come from Samoa to study talked about themselves as Samoans, as in Tasi’s identification of herself, “I’m from Samoa and I’m Samoan.” They would specifically differentiate other ethnicities if referring to people from other Pacific nations. Sami’s explanation as to why this label has become an accepted and normal part of the vocabulary in New Zealand included his awareness of the “Palagi’s” lack of knowledge of different individual ethnic groups:
I think it's easier for them, for the Palagi, because when someone is tanned and, you know, doesn't have the characteristics of the Maori, and then they will say 'oh it's just Islanders' ... and not telling that it may be a Cook Islander or Tongan or Samoa. Because a Tongan and a Samoan, it is very hard to differentiate, you [the Palagi] can't tell the difference.

Sifo, a Samoan born mature student who had lived in New Zealand for many years, agreed with these student. She stated that because the collective term is used in New Zealand she would sometimes use the term “Pacific Island Samoan,” but in the main would still refer to herself as a Samoan.

At the same time, other participants were not as opposed to the term “Pacific Islander.” In the main, these were students who had been raised in Samoa, were fluent in the Samoan language and had come to university as adults, but had lived in New Zealand for some time. They still identified very strongly as being Samoan, and as having come from Samoa. Their perceptions were different in that while they acknowledged the problems associated with the use of the term “Pacific Islander,” they did not have the same negative feelings as some other participants who had come straight from Samoa to study or those raised in New Zealand. Their personalities and relationship with their families in Samoa were still very strong. In particular, three mature students said that being included as a “Pacific Islander” had helped them to increase their understandings of the Maori culture and language; they attributed some of this to the facilities provided by the Education Department specifically for ‘Pacific Island and Maori students’ in that Department. As Malia stated:

What I’ve found at Canterbury [University] being a Pacific Islander, is I feel like closer to Maori. And because of that room they’ve got and because of, my first two papers at university, two Maori and two Education papers ... I go there with Polu to the Education room at the 5th level. I have that feeling of being accepted even though I am a Samoan. Well the room is supposed to be for Pacific Islanders and Maori students.

The point was also made that now the term existed it was useful as a collective identification in certain circumstances, with the proviso that this was only acceptable depending on who was using the term and why the term was being used. Niko's
conversation about using the collective “Pacific Islander” for funding purposes illustrates the importance of understanding the purpose for the collective term:

To say Pacific Islander, it is just a label that the university uses to lump together the minority so that they can be Pacific Islander ... but to be identified you always say you are a Samoan. But Pacific Islander is useful, according to funding, to be lumped all together. It’s because it’s the number of students, because you say Pacific Islander then there is a body ... of people.

He thought that in some instances the benefits of being identified with a larger group could justify the continuing use of the term. What the above statement also highlights is the minority status of people from various Pacific nations attending university, and hence his perceived need for solidarity, particularly for funding purposes.

In a similar vein, Anna also implied that a collective term gave Pacific peoples more power and recognition as a group rather than the individual small groupings:

I prefer the term Pacific Islander to actually singling the islanders out because I always get this feeling ... that we are always singled out and we are a minority.... But the term Pacific Islander sort of groups us together with a whole lot of other groups like the Maori, the Polynesians, and it makes our group even bigger. So I just prefer to be in a larger group ... because you have the European and that’s a large group.

Sina thought that it was “a safe term to use, to include everybody just in case you miss any one out, you know, any Pacific Islander” and that the similarities between the lifestyles was a bond for all Pacific peoples. These instances are illustrations of how individuals, and/or groups within groups, can take up a collective term for themselves, how they can own that term for the benefit of the wider group, even though originally the collectivity implied homogeneity. Here the collective term is taken up and used to advance the positions of various ethnic groupings living within a society that is predominantly New Zealand European. In this situation the term “Pacific Islander” is one that supports solidarity, not one that supports negative discrimination or stereotyping, nor one that seems to deny an individual’s cultural identity.
A group of more mature participants noted that while the collective “Pacific Islands” was used to describe activities that covered a number of ethnic groupings, this did not necessarily imply that a number of different Pacific peoples were present at any specific collective gathering, both within this university or the wider Christchurch community. In their experience, there were usually a predominance of Samoans in such gatherings or meetings. Polu thought that in this university, “Pacific Islander is just a label because we never get together, never have the opportunity to get together with Fijians, Tongans, Tokelauans, Nuiicans.” She commented further that in her experience, “in any community programmes or activities … planned for Pacific Islanders, the majority of the number that are there are always Samoan…. So sort of coming to university it’s still the same isn’t it?” Niko agreed, saying that at this university “any function that is called a Pacific Island function or gathering, the majority would be Samoan students.” In their view, the university reflected the trends in the wider Christchurch community.

Other participants also pointed out how they saw a reflection of wider societal attitudes in this particular institution’s practices. In particular, some of the Samoan students raised in New Zealand, had become personally challenged by their own awareness of how “Pacific Islanders” seemed to be portrayed within their studies as well as in the wider administration section at the university. Sina commented that she used to get rather upset when “Pacific Islander” was used inappropriately in her academic reading when writers should have referred to specific cultural identities, such as Samoan:

I used to get quite offended reading it in literature especially but it is not so much now, but … when I first started doing Education I would read in literature Maori or Pacific Islander … I would have loved to have read Maori or Samoan.

She thought that while more of the literature is referring to Samoans as a separate ethnic grouping, change has only occurred in the minority of her reading. Sina also said she did not like it when forms asked her to state her ethnicity, but only provided the collective grouping of “Pacific Islander”:
But even in ... those forms you fill out and tick what you are, ... it’s Maori and the others, or Pacific islander or other, and I would like to see Samoan in there.

Folo reiterated her concern, and stated that although he was not offended by the term “Pacific Islander,” he did not always want to be part of the larger grouping and wanted to be noticed for who he was; he, too, wanted to be able to claim his own ethnic identity.

Another group of participants highlighted appropriate and inappropriate recognition of difference in a different way. They experienced tutorials or lectures in which they were expected to speak for all peoples from the Pacific, no matter what Pacific nation was being referred to. Mele described her experiences of studying the Pacific, or talking about Pacific nations, where she thought she was expected to know or comment for the collective:

It’s not really a matter of you thinking you should know something, but it’s like an automatic reaction, especially when it’s to do with South Pacific, the islands... And when we touch upon the Pacific they ... reckon you know everything about it and they ask your opinion.

Polu and Malia agreed with her, and suggested that this occurred because they were different from both the lecturer/tutor and their other classmates. Polu then suggested that this difference was marked by their skin colour, which in turn signified a racial categorization:

Polu: I think that I’ve come through a lot of that just because you are different. When anything is discussed in class it’s always like ‘what do you think about that?’ As if like sort of directly knowing that you are definitely ...

Malia: That you are different.

Polu: And that you should know everything about that race, because you are brown and they want you to speak for that race.

Mele: I mean the Pacific, just some assumptions from the tutors, every time we touch upon the Pacific, he looks at me, ‘what do you think?’

While some students found they were expected to speak on behalf of all Pacific peoples, others found they were expected to speak on behalf of all Samoan peoples.
Polu said that she found some lecturers' lack of recognition of differences amongst Samoan people problematic. This included an expectation that she would know everything about Samoa and Samoan cultural traditions:

I don't really know whether most of the lecturers have ever been there, or know that Samoa is not just a tiny little village. It's a couple of islands.... People used to ask me what's Savai'i like? But I've never been there, but I was brought up in Samoa all my life.... They don't have any knowledge at all about the Samoan context and how things are done there.

She thought these lecturers made an assumption that everyone in Samoa would know everybody else and what was happening all over Samoa, because it was a small place.

Luisa reflected on collectivity and difference from another angle. Drawing on her experiences, she suggested that some collective labels are more acceptable than others. This in turn elicits different responses from different sectors of society, usually based upon perceptions of race or ethnicity. She linked group identity with racist implications of who gets to explain what ethnic group they identify with, and who does not get that privilege. In Luisa's view, if someone is called a "European," that person usually gets the opportunity to state what country they come from, but if someone is called a "Pacific Islander," then that is the end of the discussion about ethnic identity:

When someone calls you a European, ... then the next question is 'oh what part of Europe?' But ... you don't get that with Islanders, you get 'oh Pacific Islanders.' You know then they all think they all come from the same place, same customs, same appearance.... I mean if a person was to say to a Fijian 'you're a Pacific Islander' then they probably presume we all look like Fijians, which we don't. Well the next question is not 'What island?' Yeah there's no distinction it's 'you're all one.'

Luisa believes that this is an example of how some groups in New Zealand society have the opportunity of defining and naming their differences, while others are not offered that same opportunity.

To briefly summarise, the discursive nature of collective group naming has had constitutive effects for these participants. My (re)telling of their stories and
conversations makes more explicit some of the ways in which the term “Pacific Islander” is used as a monolithic umbrella, as well as illustrating how participants see themselves as both constituting and being constituted by the use of this term. By deconstructing notions of collectivity, they have highlighted their need for the recognition of difference, while at the same time acknowledging that in certain circumstances a collective identity can be utilized for the benefit of the wider group. These findings need to be juxtaposed with the following subsection, where another ethnic label is discussed.

“Because you are born in New Zealand you are not quite up with the play, you’re different”—Who is Samoan?

Not only did participants see collective labelling as acts of being constituted and othered by non-Samoans, they spoke about the constitutive effects of Samoans labelling Samoans. Many of the participants discussed their conceptualizations of terms such as Samoan, Samoan born, New Zealand born, New Zealand raised, along with other less common variations such as New Zealand born Samoans, Samoan Samoans, Samoan raised, BNZ (born in New Zealand), BWS (born in Western Samoa). Initially, the participants appeared to use each of these terms to place themselves and each other into two categories, that of being a Samoan (implying Samoan born, which is a phrase seldom used) or a New Zealand born (implying a New Zealand born Samoan). However, through listening to individuals voice their own interpretations of these terms, I discerned that there was a multiplicity of understandings among the participants about both these labels and their understandings of the constitutive effects of the various expressions.

This Samoan-New Zealand born binary implies that all Samoans are either one or the other, and that the differences between these two groups are denoted by where the person is born. This creates a division, which is problematic because it is too simplistic and sets up a ‘them and us’ binary instead of encompassing other
possibilities or ways of knowing. As the following conversations and insights will reveal, these participants disrupt this notion, and instead reflect the multiple and at times contradictory understandings of the many and varied backgrounds of those who identify as Samoans. At the same time, they highlight one significant primary difference of identification that does exist within the wider Samoan community. This is the difference between those who are raised in Samoa and those who are raised elsewhere, even though the word ‘born’ is the signifier used. It is the tensions that exist within and between these collective labels that are the focus of these participants’ deconstruction of an illuminating intra-cultural group tension of “who is Samoan?” or “who gets to be called a Samoan?”

One side of the binary is the identification label of ‘Samoan.’ All the participants who were born in Samoa identified themselves as Samoan. Those who were not born in Samoa also identified these particular participants as Samoan. A few of the participants born in Samoa also used the term Samoan to describe those people who had been born in New Zealand but raised in Samoa. This was because of their tacit understanding that ‘Samoan’ people include those who have been raised in Samoa, are familiar with the fa’aSamoa and fluent in the Samoan language. Three of the students who had been born in New Zealand identified themselves as Samoan (and not as New Zealand born Samoans). They had been raised and educated in Samoa (up to at least secondary level), had a living knowledge of the fa’aSamoa and were fluent in the Samoan language. Another who was born in New Zealand but raised in Samoa then went to school in another Island in the Pacific, also identified as Samoan. One participant, who was born in Samoa but had come to New Zealand at an early age and was raised in New Zealand, referred to herself as either a Samoan or a New Zealander, but not a New Zealand born.

On the other side of this binary, the identity ‘New Zealand born’ is widely used to refer to those who have been born and raised in New Zealand. The majority of participants who were born in New Zealand used this term to refer to themselves.
However, they disagreed over whether or not to include those who were born in New Zealand but raised in Samoa, or those who were born in Samoa but raised for most of their life in New Zealand; though none of the participants in these latter situations saw themselves as New Zealand born. As well, this expression ‘New Zealand born’ appears to signify that Samoans born and/or raised in New Zealand are different to other Samoans. There is a spoken dichotomy in that while these participants disrupted this term as an ethnic identification, at the same time they owned this identification for themselves in order to distinguish themselves from those Samoans who were not born and/or raised in New Zealand. I will now explore this dichotomy further through reflections on the relevance of these labels.

The Samoan participants who were raised in New Zealand identified with and used different terms to describe themselves: New Zealand born, New Zealand born Samoan, New Zealand Samoan, Samoan, or New Zealander. Anna and Folo discussed how they see the term New Zealand born as usually meaning born and raised. Anna considered herself as a New Zealand born Samoan, and “would class that as someone born and bred in New Zealand and a Samoan, you know, with Samoan parents.” Though she went on to add that many of her friends who have only one Samoan parent also refer to themselves as New Zealand born Samoans. She also thought it “funny” that she would not call a person born in Samoa a “Samoan from Samoa”:

And it’s funny though, because when I think of Samoans who are born in Samoa I’ll just call them a Samoan…. I wouldn’t say Samoan from Samoa.

Folo agreed with Anna, and added that New Zealand born also meant that the person had a “New Zealand attitude towards things.” He said he meant that the person was not likely to have a strong understanding of or a strong involvement in the traditional Samoan culture:

Well the term New Zealand Born Samoan is just not being born, born in New Zealand, it’s sort of raised in, sort of that New Zealand attitude towards things. I mean, they may not understand or take part in the traditional [Samoan] things, like culture, or speak the language.
However, amongst those raised in New Zealand, there was an array of different personal experiences of things Samoan. Some participants had a limited knowledge of Samoa as a country as they had never been to Samoa or had only visited it once. On the other hand, others frequently visited family in Samoa and spoke fluent Samoan. Overall, New Zealand raised Samoans’ understanding of the Samoan language was better than their spoken fluency.

One participant born in Samoa but raised in New Zealand did not consider herself as being included in this New Zealand born label. Shirley thought this label was a figurative one and she was proud of being born in Samoa, as if it set her apart from those born in New Zealand:

I refer to myself as a New Zealander but I feel as if I have strong connections, more to Samoa than New Zealand.... I feel as though I am Samoan because I was born there, but I wouldn’t now be able to adapt to the culture there, as they are a totally different society.

Folo also spoke about his friends who classed themselves as Samoan because they were born there and were proud of their birthplace, “…just with my friends, they make it known if they are born in Samoa, they still class themselves as Samoan even though they have been raised here [New Zealand].”

Also, no participants who were born in New Zealand but raised in Samoa saw themselves included under the label New Zealand born, as Tavita was adamant in pointing out that:

I am born in New Zealand but I don’t use it for myself. It’s not a term meaning you were born in New Zealand. You could be born in Samoa but I could still call you a New Zealand born if you lived here [New Zealand] most of your life and you don’t really know what is going on in Samoa.

Tavita emphasised that the term New Zealand born is misleading if it is taken literally.

Sami, who was born and raised in Samoa, agreed with the interpretation that a New Zealand born is someone who is raised in New Zealand, no matter their
birthplace. He, too, explained that the distinction was due to peoples’ understandings of the traditional culture and way of life in Samoa rather than the country of birth:

New Zealand born, my own understanding is someone who was born in Samoa but then at one or two months or even less than a year was brought back here and brought up in New Zealand. I call it New Zealand born because there is no learning about Samoa and the culture.

Sami said he did not refer to the students he knew who were born in New Zealand but raised in Samoa, as New Zealand born, “they are all New Zealanders but I don’t call them New Zealand born.” Tasi, another participant born and raised in Samoa, suggested that speaking the language was a factor in the way she understood the different terms:

Like say the New Zealand borns here, ... it’s mostly to do with the culture because most of them don’t really know the culture.... They can’t speak the language either, they can understand it but they can’t speak it.

Thus, the word ‘born’ is metaphorical since in the majority of instances these participants understand it to mean ‘born and/or raised in New Zealand’. It seems, as stated previously, that being raised in Samoa, along with being exposed to the Samoan culture and language in Samoa rather than in New Zealand, determines who is or is not called Samoan and who is or is not called a New Zealand born Samoan.

At the same time, another contradictory subject position evoked persistent dilemmas for a number of the participants with regard to their perceptions of acceptance within or belonging to both the Samoan and New Zealand societies. On one hand, if participants embraced New Zealand ways they were considered not to be true Samoans, yet when they participated in Samoan traditions they were viewed as outsiders because of their place of birth. Iosefo stated he felt “left out” whether he was in Samoan or New Zealand:

And then it comes to the question of where is my home? It’s like I’m a Samoan but I don’t belong in Samoa. That’s how I felt, I didn’t belong there.... This is my home [New Zealand]. But sometimes I feel like I don’t belong here [either]. So being left out in both places. Maybe it’s how a lot of New Zealand born Samoans feel.
Sina challenged her personal experiences of being othered in Samoa. She drew upon her experiences in Samoa of being called a New Zealand born, or a Kiwi, because she was born in New Zealand, even though she was raised in Samoa from an early age:

I grew up in the islands but I grew up with them saying to me I was New Zealand born. Yep I grew up and I knew the culture and all that but I spoke English at the same time, and they always knew that I was born in New Zealand. They used to call me a Kiwi and I used to get offended. And then I came here and people over here are saying that I am a Samoan [even though] I am New Zealand born.

In light of her own experiences she makes a conscious effort now not to use terms to categorize people into groups as she feels that it puts people down.

Similarly, Kim’s and June’s life experiences have left them feeling that they, too, do not belong fully to any one ethnic community. They were both born and raised in New Zealand but are fluent in the Samoan language and have a wide appreciation and knowledge of the fa’aSamoan. They feel Samoan and call themselves Samoan, but are called New Zealand born by those raised in Samoa. June felt more comfortable using the term New Zealand Samoan, however Kim just wanted to be known as a Samoan. They both commented that they had had experiences of being seen as different when they were in Samoa, that they were not true Samoans. June commented that once Samoans find out she and her sister are from New Zealand, they are called New Zealand born with the unspoken implication that they are different:

Sometimes they’ll mistake us for—because we are full Samoan and we know much of the culture—think automatically we were born in Samoa. But when they find out we were born in New Zealand ... they are like ‘oh they are New Zealand born.’... It’s like ‘oh well they are not totally Samoan, they’re New Zealand born sort of thing.

Kim agreed, but also said that sometimes it was complimentary because she was from New Zealand, while on other occasions she was made to feel as if she didn’t belong:

Some people say ... because of the way we [her sister and herself] know our culture, we know our language.... When they find out we are born in New Zealand they are more like ‘oh they are New Zealand born and they
can still do it,’ you know. Sometimes it’s a compliment and sometimes it’s like well, ... you’re not totally Samoan.

Beverly’s experiences of feeling different began in her earlier years when she attended Samoan functions, “because you are born in New Zealand you are not quite up with the play, you’re different.” She said she did not feel fully accepted either in the Samoan community or by her peers in the wider New Zealand community, as her ideals stemmed from both communities:

We’ve got those sort of ideals that we’ve been raised with, so we’re not either.... We’ve still got a lot of the Samoan ideals that our parents have instilled in us as growing up, but because we’ve grown up in New Zealand it’s probably easier for us to relate to the Palagi side of things as well.

In a slightly alternative opinion, Anna and Sina talked about how the term New Zealand born could be used as an excuse for not understanding the traditional ways and the Samoan language, and how both Samoans and New Zealand born sometimes use this as an excuse for not being what others expected. Anna thought that some Samoans used the term to excuse their inability to understand the traditional ways or to “live up to expectations” of those who were raised in Samoan:

It’s using the term [New Zealand born], they use it to defend themselves like ‘but I was born in New Zealand. I’m a New Zealand born so you can’t expect me to live up to your expectations.’

Sina found that when she was in Samoa with her extended family she sometimes used this excuse as a form of self-defence from criticism whenever she did not know the traditional customs and ways of behaving:

But I also use it [New Zealand born] myself like, if I don’t understand something that’s going on, like say starting with the Church or something, I use that excuse ‘oh I’m a New Zealand born Samoan I wouldn’t know.’

On the other hand though, she explained that she felt very bad, “really stink,” when she heard her cousins excuse her lack of knowledge or lack of fluency in Samoan because she was “New Zealand born.” She thinks that within the Samoan community people’s experiences are different and it is difficult being part of both societies. I will explore this latter point further in the following chapter.
Participants also mentioned other situations, practices, attitudes and perceptions that added to the complexities of collective labelling. The first of these was the way in which Kim, June and Luisa all spoke of the differences they noted between the New Zealand born Samoans living in different geographical locations in New Zealand, and in particular between Christchurch and Auckland. They thought that the Christchurch born Samoans had become more assimilated into New Zealand ways than those from Auckland. Kim and June saw the main reason being that Christchurch is seen to operate in a more homogeneous way, compared to Auckland where Samoan was still the first language of many people. It is spoken in the school playground and when students are doing their schoolwork. Moreover, classes can be taken in the Samoan language. In their experience, the majority of students at some schools were Polynesian and many were Samoan. Luisa argued that Samoans in Auckland were more fa'aSamoa minded, in that in her experiences things are done in the Samoan way first. By contrast, she thought that the priority in Christchurch for many Samoans is to fit into the Palagi culture first:

Whereas down here [Christchurch] it's all right to be culturally active but the priority is fitting in.... You fit in with Western shall I say Palagi society first. And then you ... bring out your culture thing afterwards. And I think it's because up there [Auckland] you can be both and it doesn't matter and a lot of the Palagi they encourage it.... I mean it's that sort of attitude, whereas here it's more there is a time and place for your own culture.

There was also a concern with the discursive nature of stereotypical perceptions. Before they had left Samoa, some of the students had been told that New Zealand born students had a negative attitude towards students who came from Samoa to study. Scott had heard these innuendos and was expecting to be looked down upon by the New Zealand born. However, while he found this attitude did not exist within the student population that he associated with, it did exist within the wider Samoan community:

The guys before us said that the New Zealand born Samoans ... look down on people like us, so I always thought that was true. But when I got to know people from the Association [Samoan Association at the University] then I found out that that wasn’t true. The people from the Association
they're really close. So the other New Zealand born Samoans, like the ones you meet in town in the night clubs, they kind of look down on you.

He felt that there was still a difference in attitude in the wider community towards those Samoans who are more fluent in the New Zealand culture and those who are not.

Additionally, Tasi and Scott referred to other terms that are occasionally used to differentiate and label Samoan peoples. These are BWS, born in Western Samoa, and BNZ, born in New Zealand. Both Tasi and Scott heard these terms after arriving in New Zealand and found them rather amusing, as the following conversation denotes:

Tasi: The terms BWS, born in Western Samoa and BNZ, born in New Zealand, when I got here [New Zealand] that's what the Samoans from Samoa told me, when I heard it I just cracked up.

Scott: It was a bit funny because they both stand for Bank of Western Samoa and Bank of New Zealand

Their explanation of these terms focused around the symbolic metaphor of banks; the Samoan Bank is smaller than the New Zealand Bank, and when Samoans living in New Zealand return to Samoa on holiday they are expected to give money to their families and friends in Samoa; the implication is that coming from New Zealand means they are wealthier. However now that the word “Western” has been dropped from the nation of Samoa, the use of this particular label may decline.

Lastly, reference was made to the often-unquestioned position of who is or gets to be called a New Zealander, taking into account the previous discussion on being called a Pacific Islander. Luisa described a conversation about who was a New Zealander that had occurred between herself and a Palagi female student in one of her history classes. Luisa did not see herself as a New Zealander even though she had been born here, partly because her parents both came from Samoa. She believed that to be a New Zealander, a Kiwi, it is necessary to be white or a Maori, as she pointed out to one of her student peers:
I’m not a New Zealander, do I look like a Kiwi to you? Do I look white to you? Do I look like a Maori to you?” and she goes ‘no’ and I said ‘what makes you think … I might be a New Zealand citizen, but you know I’m not a New Zealander…. I just said ‘[I am] Samoan.’

To conclude, these participants have disrupted the notion of a Samoan - New Zealand born binary as an ethnic identity, in that it does not account for their many different, and at times conflicting, subject positions. The term New Zealand born is particularly problematic in the view of these participants, with its implication that born really means raised. Further conflicting subject positions also identified how on one hand some participants owned this term for themselves yet on the other they felt as if they were not accepted as true Samoans. To add to this complexity, the following subsection considers a further discursive practice of collectivity based on skin colour.

“[I] look out for brown faces”—How is colour a constitutive force?

The discursive nature of homogeneity in the form of collective labelling is further explored through the ways that the participants thought about their subjectification, particularly their perceptions of racialization practices and skin colour identification. Anna and Sina talked about their early experiences at university, where they noticed skin colour to be a common form of identification, both by others and themselves. They also noticed the lack of people of colour among university staff as well as within the student population at large. They said that while they were at university they would look for other Samoans, or for anyone with brown skin, to whom they could relate. Both being new to Christchurch when they enrolled, they did not know any other Samoans, and while they spoke about the difficulty of getting to know people in this environment, they also joked about the process they found themselves undertaking:

Sina: We were flatting together, we didn’t know any other Samoans here though…. Its quite hard getting to know those new faces in Canterbury, you just look at each other.
Anna: Who are you?
Sina: Spot you!
Anna: You know, are you Samoan?... Something like that.
Lorraine [interviewer]: So you would look out for ... ?
Anna: Yeah, look out for brown faces. Well I would anyway.

Many other students commented that in their early years at university they had searched lecture theatres for “brown faces” in order to find a seat near these people. Peter’s comment was similar to others, “there were only a couple of Islanders in some of my lectures and we usually sat together.” Mele’s comments were also similar to those of other participants. She highlighted the lack of “Islanders” in her lectures, but if other Samoans or “Islanders” were present, she would make a point of trying to sit beside them, “there is usually no one else, Islanders—brown faces—in my tutorials, but like ... when Malia is there we often sit together.” This was in order “to feel comfortable,” “to feel accepted,” to feel that they “belonged or fitted in,” as here was someone with whom they could relate.

Lose also spoke about not having a sense of belonging in the university environment and she related this to the colour of her skin. She felt like this both in academic activities such as group discussions, as well as in places like the library. She felt she was different because she “was brown,” and that people took more notice of her because of that:

I felt like everyone was looking at me and besides the fact that I was brown ... just going into the library, and I just I felt inferior.... Well because of my colour. Also in discussions, when we had group discussions.

She explained that when she saw “brown faces” she felt more comfortable and at ease, but in the majority of her academic activities she normally saw only “white faces.” In a similar way, Sina talked about having a sense of not belonging, of being different and inferior, and said she was very pleased when she came into contact with another Samoan student:
They are all Europeans, and I was just talking to them in class, a maths
class, and one girl walked in and she was Samoan.... Wow we can talk.
Usually I just feel like I’m down there [pointing to the ground].

Other students including Mele and Iosefo also voiced a sense of difference due
to skin colour. Both these students reiterated that they felt as if they did not really
belong here because there were “so many white faces,” and “at university it is so
very predominantly white.” At times they felt quite alienated from the wider student
population, although Iosefo believed that he found it easier to make friends and
communicate with others around him because he was good at sports and fitted “the
stereotype of an Islander.” However, Mele said her feeling of being left out occurred
mainly in tutorial groups where she felt that she was not able to contribute easily:

I feel a little bit left out, ... especially in a tutorial group. Lectures are all
right cause it’s a bit impersonal ... but within a small group you feel a little
bit left out, lacking confidence.... It’s more intimate, conveying your
thoughts and ideas of what you know. It’s like, that’s where they get you
[laughter].

She jokingly went on to say that in most of her tutorials she was usually “the only
FAIR person [meaning brown],” and when she did talk, “it’s like you feel like
they’re trying to find fault in you, for saying something.” She liked one particular
tutorial because Malia was there also, which made her, “feel more confident because
Malia does the talking [laughter].” In part, Mele’s lack of confidence in talking in
tutorials may be attributed to different perceptions of accepted behaviour within her
cultural traditions. Even if this was the case, it does not account for her claim that
others focused their attention on her because she was different, because she was the
only “brown” person within the group.

Sina also highlighted tutorials as a problematic area. She spoke about her belief
that one tutor treated her differently, “singled me out because I am brown.” In her
eyes, the tutor was drawing upon her views in an attempt to project an unbiased view
whilst providing an open environment for discussion. Instead, she believed that his
actions and comments merely reinforced his biases. For her, the sessions felt like “a
them and me scenario,” where she was on the outer and only brought into the conversation to make a token point:

When I was doing third level History papers I was the only Samoan and only brown person in this tutorial.... They [the tutor and the other students] would be talking you know, and I felt it especially during our slavery topic.... All the issues that came up would be like ... they were talking away and then he would turn to me and ask ‘what do you think?’ You know and I didn’t like being asked. I mean the questions that he was asking, it sounds like he would talk with other Europeans in the class and they would be like yeah, yeah, yeah and then he would turn to me for the other side of the story, well that’s how I felt.

June felt that a few lecturers discriminated against her, particularly when she asked questions and was treated to lengthy explanations, “wasn’t a simple explanation enough?” Of particular concern were the lecturers’ attitudes in her Physics papers. She thought that she was getting more in-depth explanations than other students because, “I am brown.” She felt that the lecturers concerned could have actually checked with her to see if she needed further explanation or not. Their lengthy explanations made her feel as if they thought, “I really did not understand very much at all.”

Being othered via perceptions of skin colour was also stated as having occurred in further areas of university life. Some participants described how they felt discriminated against, on grounds of colour, as they did not fit other peoples’ expectations. Kim spoke about a situation that caused her to state, “this shouldn’t happen at university.” Kim explained that she had to make alternative arrangements to sit a maths test for one of her papers. She phoned the department, gave her surname as Jones, and was told to come in at a specific time. On arrival Kim felt that the reception she received was discriminatory because in her view the attitude and tone of voice of the receptionist implied that someone else was expected, not a brown skinned student who looked “like a street kid,” with a surname of Jones:

They were going ‘yes can I help you?’... ‘I’m here to sit the test, I’m Kim,’ [they said] ‘oh you’re Kim oh O.K. what’s your surname?’ And then I had to give the rest of my details.... But I think they must’ve just assumed over
the phone that I was English and white person or something…. Mind you I did look like a street kid…. Yeah, I know I am brown.

She explained that she felt they were expecting “a white person”, as even though she was expected at that specific time the receptionist did, “like a double take,” and then she had to verify who she was in quite a detailed way. She also stated she had experienced this in other situations outside of the university.

Kim further related how her experiences in the administrative section at the university also had been problematic. Kim was trying to solve her ongoing difficulties with her loans and allowances. However the administrative person with whom she was dealing did not provide her with the information necessary for her to sort out her problems, and Kim had to keep returning to the office many times. The situation for Kim became extremely stressful, which had an effect on her ability to study. As she was both a student and a single parent, monetary difficulties had the potential of placing her in a situation where she was unable to provide the basic necessities for her children. She believed her experiences again were probably related to her colour, as she had heard complaints from other “brown skinned students” about the attitude of this particular person. During this period Kim wondered why she was really bothering to try to stay at university at all.

Luisa’s experience of feeling discriminated by others because of race and colour was more obvious, and again one she had also encountered in various situations throughout her life. She talked about her enrolment experience as a mature student, born and raised in New Zealand. During the process of enrolment a particular staff member spoke very slowly to Luisa, as if she was not able to understand English. Luisa answered, and the woman then replied “oh you speak very good English.” Although Luisa stated that as she gets older she is inclined to dismiss these types of situations just as stereotypical and ignorant, she had remembered this incidence. Speaking about it again reminded her about conversations with other Samoan students where they had discussed how they saw Canterbury University as
being “culturally unfriendly,” This comment will be discussed further in chapter seven.

In an interview with Anna and Sina, the term “brownies” was used. Sina believed Samoans and other Pacific peoples used this term to describe and to refer to each other in a familiar and joking manner. Although she did say that she disliked using the term herself. This colloquialism provides another example of a term that was originally used by others (usually white skinned peoples) as a “put down” or a racist innuendo, which instead has been taken up as a term by those othered and used for themselves, almost as a term of endearment and a way of laughing at and about themselves. Sina explained that the term as used by Samoans is a term that is not derogatory, but is used to signify an identity due to skin colour, and would be seen in comments such as “you know us brownies.” This sense of ownership was aptly illustrated at a Conference for Pacific Island Educators. We, the conference attendees, were entertained by the duo “The Brownies,” who highlighted through comedy the challenges and mis-match of cultural expectations that face students and their parents, who have been brought up in the traditional Samoa ways. It is significant that this duo is well known because of their television performances, and has been able to turn around, for Pacific peoples, discrimination through reference to skin colour. This is not an uncommon practice amongst marginalized groups, the most prominent example being that of the African–American peoples who have claimed “blacks” for their own national identification (see hooks, 1990, 1992, 1994a.)

Even though the law prohibits racial discrimination in any form in New Zealand, the discursive power of colour continues to be seen in the reconstitution of the white/brown binary as experienced both overtly and covertly by these participants, in a variety of incidents and activities within the University of Canterbury and the wider community. However the taking of this binary and turning
it to their advantage highlights the agentic possibilities available in peoples' resistance to discourses and discursive practices.

"The Proper way"—Who ‘chooses’ Gagana Samoa?
The discourse of language *choice* also shaped these participants’ subjectivities. Their descriptions and interpretations of their experiences reflected the constitutive force of language. There has been an attempt among the Samoan diaspora living in New Zealand to preserve fluency in their mother tongue. This language maintenance has occurred for those raised in Samoa, as well as across the generations of those born and raised in New Zealand. It appears to be an intrinsic factor in maintaining a strong national Samoan identity. However, within this diaspora, there is an evolving disparity between those who are able to speak fluent Samoan and those who are not, and between those who have knowledge of and embrace traditional cultural practices and those who do not. In the New Zealand community, there are sections of the Samoan population who do not speak Samoan as their first language, or who do not speak it at all, and who experience limited exposure to traditional cultural practices. In addition, the emergence of a New Zealand Samoan dialect, as the language undergoes change, is giving rise to intra-cultural tension; that is a tension among those who identify as Samoan. Furthermore, language choice and cultural knowledge were also relevant to the university experiences of these participants, and raised questions of whose language and whose cultural ways of knowing are deemed important, and who sees what as important? These latter aspects will be discussed further in chapter seven.

For the specific students who participated in this project, understanding and using the Samoan language was one way in which they were able to identify themselves as belonging to the Samoan ethnic group in New Zealand. Yet, at the same time, use or the lack of use of the Samoan language was a source of frustration and contention. At times there was a distinct tension between those who spoke the Samoan language fluently and those who did not, within various activities related to
their university life as well as in the wider community. This again reinforces and perpetuates the ever-present dilemma and negotiation over who is really Samoan, who is accepted as Samoan and by whom.

All the students interviewed understood at least a minimum amount of spoken Samoan, and all those who could not speak the language fluently were raised in New Zealand, regardless of their birthplace. Those raised in Samoa believed that they possessed the true understanding of the Samoan language and culture, and at times expressed irritation and exasperation with the varying abilities and practices of those who did not share this knowledge. Thus the tension and distinction between the Samoan raised and New Zealand raised is further maintained. The New Zealand raised struggled with a sense of alienation within their national Samoan identities while at the same time trying to discern their own identities and subjectivities within the New Zealand community.

Some students pointed out ways in which they could see the Samoan language changing within an emerging ethnicity for those who are New Zealand raised. In contrast, other students tried to resist these changes: in particular, those students who came from Samoa for the purpose of their study resisted language change. Tasi remarked that the accent of non-fluent Samoan speakers was not right, and implied that one needs the correct accent to speak Samoan properly:

The way that New Zealand born speak ... I think they try to use the New Zealand accent when they speak Samoan and that's why they can't really pronounce the words properly.... It's really annoying at times.

A general comment from the Samoan raised students was that initially it was a new experience to hear the New Zealand raised using a combination of Samoan and English in the same sentence. However, after a period they found themselves doing the same thing, and said this happened through "hanging out" with non-fluent speaking Samoans. Tavita described how he felt when he heard himself doing what he disliked—inserting a Samoan noun or verb into an English sentence:
I'm starting to pick it up too. When we came, and it sounded really bad. I mean it's really normal to them [New Zealand raised]. But then after two ... or three years it started to sound normal to [me] and I start saying it. And every time [I said] it, it's like 'oh man [I] sound like those guys.'

He was making a concerted effort to resist this practice, otherwise he might talk like that on returning to Samoa, and then he would be teased:

But [I'm] trying to make sure that I don't say it when [I] go back to Samoa because it sounds really bad. And your friends, they'll start calling you a Kiwi.

Similarly, Sami referred to the use of "broken Samoan." He said that often by putting a Samoan phrase in a sentence the intended meaning of the phrase was changed, or the pronunciation of the letters changed. This in turn could change the meaning of the word used. Furthermore, in his view, the use in more formal situations of the colloquial everyday pronunciation, where "K" is substituted for "T", and "G" is substituted for "N," was another example where the New Zealand raised did not know how to use the more formal language style correctly. Whereas the Samoan raised spoke the colloquial form of the language in everyday conversation, they all knew when, and how to switch where necessary to the more formal. Tavita reiterated this comment, and stated, "only the Samoans who are really fluent speak with the T."

Luisa, a New Zealand raised, thought that in New Zealand the language change has evolved from younger Samoans. In her opinion, the younger second or third generation New Zealand raised, along with others who have been here a long time, have actualized a dialect more suited for their own needs and situations.

Our generation, us New Zealand born, but also Samoans that have come here, have sort of evolved their own sort of language. The only reason that they only go back to it [formal Samoan language] is when they talk to Ministers, in the Bible, and also in the songs. So that's how they keep it alive—the proper way.... Yeah it's that language that when you are amongst [your friends] that's the slang that has become the only language that we young ones have learnt now.
The main places where she has been taught her limited use of the formal language, "the proper way," have been her experiences within the Church, along with participating in dances and songs within cultural group activities.

Notwithstanding the perceived emergence of a Samoan dialect in New Zealand, most of those participants who were raised in this country talked about a personal sense of loss for their lack of fluency in the spoken Samoan language, along with a limited in-depth understanding of the traditional Samoan culture. Various reasons were expressed for not learning the Samoan language. They included: the students refusing to speak it at home when they were children, their parents speaking to them in English, or their parents speaking to them in Samoan but expecting a reply in English, or their lack of exposure outside of the home to the Samoan language and culture. Some of these participants stated their parents believed it was very important that their children should be able to use the English language correctly for education and future employment purposes, and consequently the emphasis was on the English language with limited expectations of participation in the traditional Samoan culture. This situation occurred where both parents were Samoan as well as where only one parent was Samoan.

Iosefo called his generation "the lost generation" with regard to the use of the Samoan language and culture. When he (along with all the New Zealand raised in this study) were growing up, there were no Samoan language nests, and the educational institutions did not appear to him to value anything about the Samoan culture. When Luisa, too, spoke about being from a generation that cannot speak Samoan she talked about how in her experiences her Samoan culture and school just did not inter-connect at all, "cultural things were kept at home, and ... you only had to do anything cultural with the church groups and all that." The overall perception is that at least some progress has been made for the younger Samoan children today within some sectors of New Zealand society and within some educational institutions, particularly in the North Island. However, participants made a strong
observation that there is still a long way to go if Samoan language maintenance is to be successful within the younger generations of those with Samoan backgrounds who live in New Zealand.

Thus, the loss of language and traditional cultural knowledge has been a concern for all the students interviewed. Some Samoan raised students thought that the New Zealand raised had relinquished their Samoan heritage. This loss of language and cultural traditions therefore acts as a barrier between some Samoan peoples. Tasi and Scott talked about the effect this could have on the social side of their student life at university, highlighting that at times the language spoken could restrict one's social interactions:

Scott: When the Samoans communicate they are more comfortable speaking in Samoan, and when they [non-fluent speakers] want to join in they're more comfortable speaking in English, and then you see the split. The New Zealand born they have their own conversation and laughing and the Samoan speakers they have their own conversation.

Tasi: When we're talking and joking in Samoan they [non-fluent Samoan speakers] just stand there and look at us.... They just stand there while we just talk away. It's mostly socially.

Although all the Samoan raised participants were emphatic that the language needs to be spoken by the Samoan community in New Zealand, they also wished that it could be learned correctly, as it is spoken in Samoa. The inference again was that one is not truly Samoan if one cannot speak the language properly. This underlying intra-cultural tension has continuing implications for the New Zealand raised, as they view themselves as being constituted differently because, more often than not, they chose English as their first language.

As a final comment, in an attempt to explore and understand the questions of who chooses Gagana Samoa, who is a “Pacific Islander” or a Samoan, or how is colour constitutive, my (re)telling of the participants’ experiences illustrates how agentic choice can be contested; in that individual choices are constituted from the
contradictory discursive practices within "discourses that shape perception and desire" (Davies, 1997, p. 279). As Fraser (1997a) posits, if people are capable of being culturally constituted as well as being able to critique these constitutions, then we need to explore how the culturally constituted subject can rewrite the script. This exploration, of how these participants are constituted through discourses, how their choices are constituted through discursive practices, and at the same time how they as individuals are capable of critiquing these practices and rewriting the script, gives rise to a more fruitful understanding of their educational experiences within this tertiary institution. The following chapter will further explore how the students’ conversations deconstruct the inter-relationships between themselves as Samoan students, their families and the Church.

Notes

1 Western Samoa is now called Samoa.
Constitutive processes: discursive possibilities

In this second findings chapter, my (re)flections will further explore the constitutive effects of interwoven discourses that have helped shape these participants' lives. The beginnings of this chapter emerged in the very first interview where one of the mature participants, Sifo, insisted “you must look at our background and include it in your research.” She clarified this by saying that her understandings of her life experiences, and ways of knowing or doing things, were entwined with her experiences at university and each could not be partitioned into separate entities to be dissected separately, but needed to be juxtaposed, to be considered together. The specific discursive practices discussed in this chapter are those within discourses of difference, expectation, subject choice, gender and the Church.

My reflections on their experiences give prominence to the participants’ deconstruction of their relationships within their nuclear and extended families, their church communities and their student life. These experiences provide insights into the many intersections of discourses in their lives as students in the institution and in
the wider community, and the reflections of each in the other, and the possibilities of reconfiguration made available through other choices (Butler, 1990; Davies, 1990, 1997).

"It's like two different worlds"—Images of cultural differences

The above quotation serves to both symbolize and over-simplify the internal struggles faced by participants throughout their period of study at university. Many talked about being in two worlds, the university/Palagi world and their own world of Samoan culture and traditions, including that of their church community. Their view of living in two separate worlds emerged from their experiences within the university and the wider New Zealand society, which they felt were generally in opposition to their cultural experiences and traditions within their family and their church. Even though these students participated in a diversity of groupings and environments, their perception of a binary between their university life/New Zealand society experiences on one side and their home/church experiences on the opposite side surfaced as they began to talk about and understand their experiences of difference. Lose described her feelings of how difficult it is to experience different cultural environments:

You have to live two lives because ... your parents, especially if they are full blooded Samoan, [have] different expectations and ideals for you. And you've got New Zealand society with a whole bunch of other ideals.... And it's like you have to be someone else when you are in two different situations, and it is hard.

Initially, Lose talked about the difficulties of living in two environments, home and New Zealand society. However she went on to claim that certain expectations of her existed in other situations as well, such as the Church, "cause when you go to church you've got to be a good girl, or a good boy." She said she felt more able to talk and laugh with her university friends away from the constraint of home and church, where she could be more her "real self." She explained this "real self" to mean the times when she could act in ways that she wanted to, in order to please herself and to
have “time out of everything, of all the things and images that people have put on [me].”

Other participants discussed differences between the university and family environments. Iosefo talked about his sense of disjunction. He said a consequence of attending university was that the language and “jargon” that he learned to use here at university, along with ‘new’ knowledge gained, was so foreign in his home environment that it gave rise to tension. He had to learn when and where to use certain language and not to challenge the knowledge of his parents, particularly his father. At home, he was not expected to discuss his new ideas or other ways of thinking. He was expected to be the same, to keep all that he was learning to himself and not challenge the structure of family life:

You have to be prepared to be two people because at varsity you are taught all this knowledge. You get home to your parents and they don’t understand.... When you try and tell them, they only see your fiapoko, you know too much, you’re trying to be smarter than they are.... I have had problems, especially last year just trying to tell them ‘dad there is a better way or there is a different way of thinking’. It generates a lot of conflict, which turns my father away, and my mother.

He acknowledged that these differences also existed when he was with his friends, between those who went to university and those who did not, “it’s just like at varsity you talk a certain way and when you are with your [other] friends you talk a certain way. It’s hard because it’s like different worlds.” Whilst he found that being part of different cultures was difficult, Iosefo could not deny his heritage and was now proud to be a Samoan, even though he had not thought that way at all in his earlier years at school.

June spoke about the conflict arising from cross-cultural mis-communication and a lack of awareness of different cultural expectations and rules, when she decided to take time out of her studies to go and look after her grandmother in Samoa. She believed that the Samoan value that places the elderly in a position of priority and importance is very different from the attitudes towards older people in
New Zealand society. A family friend in New Zealand, told her that going to Samoa was "a waste," but she did not view it that way, "I felt more fulfillment from looking after my grandma than I did going to university." However, in New Zealand there was another important consequence of her actions. June did not understand the university system, which allows a student to withdraw from courses by a certain date, if those courses are not going to be completed, "I didn't even know.... I didn't really understand that 'withdraw' thing in the first place." She had had previous problems with her studies, and her earlier experiences with the administration section at university, which handled the loans, meant that she felt she could not go there to sort out her problems. While she said, "they told me to withdraw," she did not understand the consequences of not doing so. She felt that, "I wasn't being believed when I said I had to go to Samoa to look after my grandmother," and decided "the problem had become too difficult to handle." So June left for Samoa without withdrawing. As a consequence, she got E grades on her academic record and both her grade average and self esteem were affected. This incident introduces another discourse, which will be expanded on in chapter seven, about whose knowledge is important.

Those students who had come from overseas to study, also referred to contrasts between their home and university life. They emphasised differences between both geographical environments as well as aspects of social behaviours and expectations. Peter believed that "the first year in New Zealand is really a year of getting to know the New Zealand way of doing things." The younger students in particular talked about their experiences in New Zealand society. This included the need to learn to: adjust to different food, live with colder weather, use more up to date technology, manage greater individual freedom, balance their university work and their social lives, and accept different social behaviours both among their peers and their elders.

Selu initially found that the physical size of the university was difficult to negotiate, "the university is a really big place." He had only previously attended
much smaller institutions in Samoa. He also spoke about differences between his accommodation in the Halls of Residence and his home in Samoa. His first orientation week exposed him to student ways of behaving that he had not previously experienced: “In the orientation week a lot of people were having parties.... They were making a lot of noise, and drinking, and loud speakers and ... it’s different from Samoa.” He explained that in Samoa his parents still had control over many of his actions and decisions, including his social activities, “if you drink like that it’s only for one day because of your parents and extended family.” This example hinted at the different relationships and interactions that generally exist, particularly in Samoa, between Samoan parents and their children, including their adult children.

Sami, a mature student from Samoa, further discussed relationship differences between parents and their adult children in Samoa and in New Zealand. He stated that when younger students came to New Zealand to study they usually lived in flats or Halls of Residence where they had so much more freedom to make their own decisions. One consequence was that most were able to distance themselves more from the immediate influence of family and church. However, on returning to Samoa issues of authority became contentious if they returned to their families, as parents often revoked that freedom:

When they come to university they feel free to do anything, I think, and when they go back to their families, because they are staying with their parents, they have to listen to their parents.... When they go back home it's not their home it's their parents' home, they have to listen and do as they are told. It's a tension for them.

Whilst a number of these students have symbolically described their experiences as ‘living in two worlds,’ this binary does not acknowledge the multiple situations and discourses that these students experienced. It is however, an image, locations of seemingly distinct opposites, through which these particular participants attempted to make sense of what it is to be a Samoan student. In conjunction with this binary, they also explored a number of other discursive possibilities through
discussing, questioning and challenging related discursive practices that continued to shape their experiences as students. The following section reveals the inter-relationship of their *choices* as students within family situations and expectations, and illustrates the constitutive effects of relations of power within family relationships and cultural decrees.

**"Every parent would like to see their children graduate"—Expectations**

The intersections between education and family life permeated many topics of conversation, and the directions taken by most of these students had been influenced by their parents’ strong emphasis on education and particularly on gaining degree qualifications. While they all wished to be successful at their studies, many of the students encountered contradictory and at times incongruous expectations and responsibilities. They acknowledged that the “balancing acts” necessary to accommodate both family and university activities could be simultaneously a source of nourishment and support, and a source of frustration or hindrance for their academic achievements.

Younger students felt an overwhelming parental pressure to attend university. As Kim said, “this is a big dream, this is what every parent would like to see—their children graduate.” Educational qualifications were perceived as one way to attain a better future for both the individuals concerned and in many instances for their extended family, here in New Zealand and in Samoa. Mature students did not experience parental pressure to attend university. Instead they felt pressure to succeed because they had chosen to go to university as mature students, and were aware they could be viewed as role models for both younger and other mature students.
Parental influence on their choices of where to undertake tertiary study is another illustration of the power of discourse. Some younger students viewed their parents’ desire for tertiary qualifications as positive, and they appreciated their support and encouragement. A number of comments were like Shirley’s, “if it wasn’t for my parents’ encouragement I wouldn’t be here.” Others, though, saw it as a source of contention and frustration. In some instances, parents encouraged their children to study at university instead of attending another form of tertiary institution. Such was June’s situation when she was studying for a Bachelor of Commerce degree at university rather than fulfilling her desire to train to be a nurse at Polytechnic. Another student, Kim, was studying Law but she really wanted to attend Teachers’ College and become a primary school teacher. Both these students came to university under parental insistence, and were not happy being at university:

Kim: It’s [parents] keeping me there [university] because I don’t really have a drive to be there. I’m like ‘oh I’ll do that later’…. I reckon if we had actual more motivation or something we would go for it, it would be better. But like at the moment it’s bloody long.

June: Yeah, if it weren’t for my parents I wouldn’t be there because I hate university.

Kim: Can’t stand it, I hate it too.

They felt that gaining a degree would satisfy or fulfil their parents’ needs or dreams. June said that she would, “like [to] cross that stage [at graduation] then maybe they will get off my back.”

However, without the personal motivation to succeed both Kim’s and June’s academic successes at university were minimal, and it had taken a number of years for each of them to make the decision to change and study something that they wanted to. Kim, who had already had a break from university study to care for her own young children, felt that it was time to put both her individual interests and the future of her young family first. Since participating in the interviews she has changed from studying law to begin teacher training. As she explained, she knew her parents still wanted her to “reach for the moon” but she felt now that her moon was in teaching so that is what she finally was going to do. June has also left university
without completing her university degree to take up study in her preferred field of nursing. These decisions by Kim and June may be viewed as significant, as they appear to reflect a resistance to discourse and parental expectations, which has enabled other choices and possibilities.

Lose, who lived in Christchurch, also spoke about her wish to undertake a Physical Education degree at the University of Otago. This was her first choice of study. However her parents, particularly her father, did not want her to go away from home so she attended Canterbury University instead, even though she enrolled at Otago University for a number of years:

I wanted to do a P.E. degree and go to Otago, but my parents didn’t want me to go so I didn’t go... So his [her father] very over protective and he’s had a major, major influence on what I do ... it’s really hard trying to please my parents as well as please myself... There will still be my dad and my mother saying, “What about us, are you not going to look after us?” So family ties are really, really strong and hard for me at the same time. Yeah, cause I wanted to go, I enrolled in Otago every year, every year I got accepted, every year Dad changed his mind.

One reason for both parental and personal motivation for success was the expectation that students would have improved employment prospects in the future. The attainment of educational qualifications was seen as one way through which the financial status of those from lower socio-economic situations could be improved, both for the individual as well as for that of their extended family. Tavita believed that tertiary qualifications could help families in Samoa to improve their status in their communities:

Most families ... want their kids to get educated so that they can go back ... and ... either run the family business or start a family business. It helps the family, helps the family in the future.

Others, particularly those who had been raised in Samoa or who would return there after their university studies, reiterated Tavita’s comments. They believed that acquiring a degree meant that their future employment would be more secure. Those returning to Samoa thought they would be in a better position to obtain employment,
and explained that there was a very competitive employment market in Samoa and a university education was seen as one way to progress in their chosen fields. These participants also considered that a degree indirectly meant that they would be able to fulfil their obligations in the future to their parents and to the fa’aSamoan. Sami explained that there is no state welfare system in Samoa; having paid employment therefore makes it easier to meet their traditional financial commitments:

[There is] no social welfare system over there, and yes most of the families contribute to the fa’alavelaves, the church matters and the church funds…. So I think from getting my degree I will be getting a higher salary and that will help for these fa’alavelave and contributions for the church and bringing up the children.

Many of those students who had been raised in New Zealand or who were Samoan raised but now lived in New Zealand also believed that an improvement in socio-economic status was a realistic outcome of attaining university qualifications. Those who were married and/or had responsibilities for their own children felt that their nuclear and extended family would experience a higher standard of living. Both mature and younger students who had already experienced paid employment saw university qualifications as a way of changing career pathways. Beverly had previously worked for a year after school but decided to come to university “to get a better job”:

I worked for a year but it’s … you come here … because I don’t want to be doing that for the rest of my life. It was an awful job, and you know the only way to get a better job is to come and get a better education.

This type of comment was common, and hopes for future employment prospects were high. It remains to be seen whether these hopes will be realised.

Additionally, participants mentioned that there was a cultural expectation that attaining a university qualification would bring enhanced family status or pride. A few participants thought that achieving a university qualification was a way of maintaining their social status. For those in this situation, family expectations and traditions meant that acquiring a degree was very important, and they felt that
attending university was predictable. These particular students came from families where parents or siblings had already experienced success at tertiary level, usually at university, as detailed in Tasi’s and Scott’s conversation:

Tasi: In my mum’s family ... I feel like you have to carry on the tradition... You have to get a degree and all that.

Scott: In my family it’s a must, yeah ... I really want to finish my degree, and also my parents they didn’t really encourage me, they pushed me to do it.

In spite of Scott’s personal situation, he went on to discuss his belief that success at university raised a person’s status in Samoa, whether they gained employment or not; although he thought that in Samoa one usually was accompanied by the other. His comments about Samoa are a contrast to the situation in New Zealand, where attaining a degree does not necessarily have a consequence of paid employment and does not necessarily affect or alter one’s status in the wider community. Although in New Zealand, once Samoan students have obtained a degree, an increase in status within the Samoan community could still occur.

Luisa discussed her perception of the relevance of gaining a degree and status for Samoans in New Zealand. She commented that a university degree could be invaluable, and usually resulted in an improvement of individual status:

Status means a lot to Samoans. It means more to them than anything and you will find that everything they do is that pride... A lot of things have to do with the ranking system of Samoa. I mean it’s not talked about. It’s very private but it does exist... So if you haven’t got it, you’re always trying to get it. And ... it’s the ones that do well and are not on a, shall we say high status, are the ones that use that degree to bring their status up.

Luisa also mentioned the tension experienced by some Samoans when they held a certain status in their own Samoan community, but in New Zealand society they are seen as a member of a minority grouping with little or no status:

I don’t know whether its partly because we are a minority here. You know because of the class system in Samoa you have certain privileges and then you come into shall we say a white society and you are just another Joe Bloggs.
A lack of recognition or understanding of this cultural aspect of respect and status was problematic in some instances within the university environment, and will be further explored in chapter seven.

Whilst the participants highlighted family expectations of their success as students, they also discussed the inter-relationship between the fa’aSamoa and their study. Again, individual student experiences were varied. However, those students who were in New Zealand for study purposes only, generally said that they did not have to undertake financial and other commitments to their parents and extended family through the fa’aSamoa. This group of students often thought it was advantageous to be living away from home, as they found that their families made no financial demands upon them; the only requirement was that they produced good academic results. One exception was Sami, who was very frugal with his income and sent money to his wife and child, and parents in Samoa, “to help out where I can.”

On the other hand, the situation was not so uncomplicated for those who usually lived in New Zealand. While a few experienced no family demands of any sort, many of these students, both those who were younger and the more mature, felt an unspoken obligation to do what was traditionally expected; to help out with family fa’alavelave, responsibilities and commitments. This added a pressure to their individual student lives, and study commitments needed to be juggled around these nuclear and extended family obligations. Moreover some also worked at part-time employment, while they attended university, to help with the financial side of these commitments as well as supporting themselves financially. Hence, sometimes their university work was relegated to second place as they negotiated their way through their personal situations. As June and Kim both said, they wanted and needed to support their parents and as a consequence missed lectures, and other personal appointments, while attending funerals or other family activities. Their financial giving also resulted in personal financial stress.
Anna, Sina and Folo also found it difficult to set priorities or find a balance between their university requirements and that of their families. Anna stated that she found it hard to “discipline” herself and make time for university work, her partner and her friends:

Just trying to keep the balance of my work and other things as well... I find that things at home affect me as well... At home things aren’t that good and I won’t study or do my work or anything like that.

Sina said that her sister’s sickness and relationship problems impeded her ability to focus on her own studies.

My sister’s sick and she’s having problems with her relationship.... I just want to be there for her. It’s hard just trying to come to work here [at university], and you’re just thinking ‘what she’s doing, how is she?’

Folo’s sense of responsibility to and for his family, whom he describes as his mum, dad, immediate family and close friends, was very high. He said this sense of responsibility meant that if family needs or requests for assistance were made known to him, then this would be undertaken before his university assignments.

Well for me ... my university stuff can’t compare to my family. I mean if my family says do something then I’ll do it ... then I will easily give up my work to go and help them out.

He thought that his parents may not be too happy with his actions, but explained that because he was the eldest in the family he believed there was no other option open to him. There was this tension between his parents’ expectations that he would put study first and his expectations of himself that he would put his parents first:

I wouldn’t tell mum and dad if it was going to bother them.... If they need my help then I would give it to them.... The varsity is always going to be there.... Helping my family ... means a lot more to me than just finishing off my assignment. I know mum and dad wouldn’t feel too good because they always want to push for school first but ... it’s ... my sort of obligation because I’m the oldest in my family and I have to go out of my way in my family to do things without letting my parents worry or bother about anything. I don’t have to tell them things they shouldn’t worry about.

Likewise, Iulia also talked about the responsibilities that she saw younger students had if they lived at home, and the tension this caused them in undertaking their university work. She, like Folo, spoke about the hierarchical structure that some
Samoan families still adhere to, where order of birth dictates responsibilities; the older a child, the more responsibilities she/he has:

Probably going home to a family situation ... you have got to think about the responsibilities that you have got to do as well as your study. But me, as I flat, I just go home and it's up to me what I do. Yeah most of them [other students] would probably be the oldest, if not the seconded oldest, and so the responsibility will be a bit harder.

An anxiety to maintain equilibrium between family responsibilities and university work was particularly strong for many of the more mature students, particularly those responsible for their own children. As students, they still participated in the fa'aSamoa, even though this could result in financial stress. Although these particular students experienced ongoing family encouragement for their academic endeavours, they said they felt pressured as they combined the family needs of their children, parents, extended family, university requirements and/or paid employment. They explained that they felt their grades at times were affected by such things as inconvenient or inflexible time-tableing of tutorials or lectures, deadlines for assignments, or the fact that the number of assignments due around the same time did not necessarily harmonise with family needs and responsibilities.

Nevertheless, a number of students mentioned a positive consequence of the fa'aSamoa. Sami's statement reflects the view of others, when he said that his extended family helped him to achieve his degree by supporting him through prayer. Sami placed a great deal of importance on this support for his wellbeing as a student, as he knew that his extended family were thinking of him while he was far away:

Every time before I leave [Samoa] they [family members] always come together ... and ask the, faifau, paster to come over so we can have a Lotu. And before each one disperses on that night ... they always come and say some encouragement and cheer me up before I leave.... And most of time when I ring home [my family] always say, 'oh some of your cousins, some uncles, came over and they said to sent their regards to you when you ring or when you write a letter.' So I can tell that they are also praying for us when we come over here to study. Depending on individual circumstances, this spiritual support was usually seen by participants as a viable way in which their extended family members were able to
acknowledge their university efforts and attainments. This spiritual aspect of the Samoan culture and the constitutive effects of the church will be further discussed in the following section.

"Church ... studies.... It’s more or less getting your balance"—The question of church

As in most traditional Samoan households, belonging to a church community and regular attendance at church services and related activities was an integral part of the background experiences of all these participants. During their childhood years, parents usually directed participation in these activities, which were an accepted part of family life. In spite of this, by the time they had reached university individuals differed in their participation in religious activities. While the majority of students still attended church on a regular or semi regular basis, others stated that the extent of their church involvement was very limited while they were studying. Often, in these latter instances, living away from the immediate influence of family meant that there was more personal freedom to choose to participate, or not, in the activities of the church. This was the case for both Samoan raised and New Zealand raised students, though it did not equate to disbelief or a rejection of the Church as an institution or its teachings. While some may not have attended church regularly, they still acknowledged the role that the Church plays within the traditional Samoan culture. They would still participate in the formal religious aspects at traditional functions, including those within the Samoan Association at university. Those who still lived at home still often felt pressure from their parents to maintain church attendance, even if only spasmodically.

Accordingly, these students offered different opinions and experiences as they reflected on the role of the Church in their current lives. Many students who still attended church and who continued to participate in various church activities spoke about the need for a constant balance between their roles within the Church, their
families and their university work. However, as previously stated, the boundaries were not always that distinct, as church and family activities were often the same. The following excerpts from an interview with Sina and Anna illustrate individual differences as well as the interaction between their church activities and their university requirements. Anna discussed the compulsory nature of church attendance with her family in her early years, and then went on to say that in recent years her relationship with the Church was important for her. She put her church activities first, which at times resulted in incomplete university assignments on due dates:

If I want to go to something but I've got an [assignment] due ... yeah I would choose to go to the church thing.... And when I'm there I feel a bit guilty, like 'oh no I got this thing I have to hand in tomorrow.'... Yeah I find church is quite important.

Sina also talked about church in her early life, but stressed that her parish in Samoa functioned on a strict timetable, where time was set aside for both church activities and school studies. When she first came to New Zealand, she found it difficult to maintain a balance because she had more freedom to make her own choices. Initially she attended church less often, but as she became more accustomed to life as a student, she chose to attend church regularly. She stated that now her church would always come first as her faith meant she was successful with her university papers:

You can spend more time in church than you do on your studies but it's more or less getting your balance. I can always succeed at my studies because I go to church, so church should come first, before anything else.

Likewise, Lose made choices to place her church activities to the fore. She found that in her first year at university, she was trying to do too much all at once, and time just did not allow for all her commitments. She gave up one of her representative sports and kept her church activities. University took a 'back seat' in her first year:

I wanted to keep my lifestyle but things had to go and in the end university went. I chose my church activities which were more important, and my relationship was new and that was really important too, and I was into my
netball in a big way so that was important too. So university took a back seat in my first year... I tried but it was really disheartening.

On the other hand, she believes that as a young adult her church activities, such as reading the Bible in front of others, had helped her gain confidence to speak in front of others. This in turn gave her a little more confidence to speak out in tutorials. In subsequent years, she decided to compromise more and made her university work a greater priority.

In contrast, Folio’s views were that at his stage of life the Church was not as important to him as it had been in his earlier years of growing up. He said his university work usually took precedence over any church activity. Although he did acknowledge that at times, he would use his university work as an excuse not to go to church:

It is not as important as it used to be when mum and dad use to take us to church all the time. But now that I’m a bit older ... my parents give us that freedom... I didn’t go to church ... I’m starting to go back to church ...

[but] my work would take precedence over my church, so I use it as an excuse as to not go to church.

A few of the more mature students spoke about their financial commitment to the Church, which indirectly placed pressure on their university study. The desire to give financially to their church at times gave rise to feelings of stress, since their student income was usually restricted to either a student loan or a student allowance. Malia describes the effect on her home life, and in turn on her studies. Every so often, her desire to give to the Church was challenged by her own children, who could not understand her wish to support the Church financially when it was a struggle to meet their own commitments as a family. Yet Malia felt this immense need to do as she always had; to be involved and to support church activities both physically and financially, as this had always been an accepted part her upbringing and she could not easily break this tradition:

Sometimes I feel that I don’t want to be involved if I don’t have the money, the contribution towards it [church], and although I am not giving as much... I thought it goes way back you know, yeah it’s part of me.
Because … my kids … they’ll say ‘but we’re struggling,’ and I said ‘well I know that but I still have to give it’ and they’ll say things like ‘do you have to mum?’

Malia went on to say that her involvement in church activities sometimes meant that she did not give as much attention to her studies as she felt she needed to. She found it was difficult at times to say no or not be involved. She believed that her personal circumstances as a solo mother and a full-time student made it very difficult for her to fulfill her own need to continue her role within her church community.

Different societal attitudes towards religious beliefs were occasionally a cause of tension within students’ living arrangements and sporting activities. Initially, some of the students from Samoa who had come to study in New Zealand found that societal attitudes here towards the Church and related activities were very different to their own. Selu’s experiences arose from differences he found amongst his peers in the Halls of Residence, as well as in the practice of playing sport on a Sunday. When he first came to live in New Zealand, he noticed the vast contrast between Sunday life in Samoa and Sunday life in New Zealand. His Sunday life in Samoa centred around attending church services and other related religious activities, and the family to’ona’i, whereas here in Christchurch, he felt quite alienated on Sundays initially, as church attendance was not a customary part of life in his Hall of Residence:

On Sunday in here [university Hall of Residence] most of the people are sleeping and not going to church…. And … the first time there was rugby trial on a Sunday … it’s really, really hard for me to play on that day. Here … it’s like a normal day, but in Samoa you can tell the difference and that is why I don’t play sports on Sunday, I go to church.

Although the first rugby trial had been held on a Sunday, he had attended it even though it was against his beliefs. He said he later realised that he had to make a stand with his rugby commitments and decided not to play on a Sunday again, in order that he could attend church. While his teammates accepted this decision, it was still a difficult decision for him to uphold as it meant that he missed playing for his team at times. However it did not affect his selection for games held on other days.
Nevertheless, the local Samoan church communities were a source of support for the students. Sami said that a Minister from a local Samoan church attempted to help the scholarship students occasionally, perhaps two or three times a year, by asking them around for a meal and offering words of encouragement and support:

In Christchurch I used to go to church on Sunday and the Pastor—the priest —used to call the students to come around [to] his place and have a to'ona'i there. And ... give some encouragement to work hard.... Well once or three times a year he invited us to his place.... Anyway it was helpful.

Sami stated that the local Samoan church communities were also supportive when approached for various fundraising events held by the Samoan Association, in order to raise money for the annual So'otaga.

Thus, while the inter-relationship between the church and the university experiences of these participants vary, the constitutive power of a religious institution has shaped the ways in which they think about themselves, the Church and the fa'aSamoa. However, there was little discussion by participants about church communities offering tangible forms of academic support. This raises a number of questions that the data in this research does not address including: In what other ways could church communities support tertiary students? In what ways can the relationship between the university and church elders/communities be developed or strengthened? The interconnectedness of the Church and Pacific students' academic endeavours needs to be acknowledged and utilised. They all believed in their respective faiths and accepted that the Church and the fa'aSamoa were unconditionally interwoven. They all participated in traditional religious activities, including the opening or closing of student activities or functions with prayer. However, in some instances their relationship with the Church functioned in ways that were adverse to their academic success. For example, their decisions to attend to church commitments before their university studies affected their academic results. I do not wish to propose a hierarchical list of priorities nor argue that people should place more emphasis on their church commitments. Instead, I hope to initiate further discussion of this discourse that both hindered and helped these students' academic
successes. I now wish to address mis-matches in making decisions on subjects to study at university.

"What’s Maori going to do for you? ... what’s music going to do for you?"—Decision making for subject choice

In the introductory chapter, I stated that this university’s statistical information revealed that Samoan students did not choose a wide range of subjects. This section provides insight into how and why some students select the subjects that they study. At the undergraduate level, the academic direction initially taken was often a reflection of family dictates and ideals, particularly influencing the subject choice of those who had come to university straight from their secondary school. While the majority of these participants said the final decision in their selection of degree type and subjects to study was their own, they did listen to and often followed parental advice, even if it was contrary to their own personal wishes. A consequence was that students were often mis-matched with personal interests. They felt this contributed to why their academic grades did not always reflect their academic ability. Kim, June and Lose alluded to this in the previous discussion on choice of tertiary institutions.

The respect that participants had for their parents was often viewed as paramount within their decision-making processes. This respect, traditionally given to Samoan parents by their children, overrode in many instances their personal desires, and parental advice was heeded if the student was personally unsure of what to study. Parental advice appeared to be based upon either the parents own university experiences and career pathways, such as engineering, or parental perceptions that some degrees would produce better employment prospects and monetary rewards, such as law or commerce. Lose would have liked to study Maori and music at Canterbury but didn’t because her parents thought those subjects would not help her gain “employment” at the completion of her degree:

The reason I didn’t study Maori is because of my parents, they just said, ‘what’s Maori going to do for you?’ Like I always thought I wanted to
major in music ... but 'what's music going to do for you?' Yeah that was my reason why I took some of my papers just to please my parents.

In contrast, Tasi found that her mother's support helped her choose her field of study, which was different to what her father advised her to take. As she said:

I thought if I was going to do that [architecture] and I'm not even interested in it I might not even pass. I might not even get that degree.... So I might as well do what I'm interested in and not what he was interested in. He wanted me to do architecture, and it was what I wanted to do at first but then I decided to do zoology.

Kim's and June's experiences illustrated how parental beliefs could stem from a perceived hierarchy of knowledge, which included a perception that some degrees have more status than others and some degrees offered better future financial rewards. For example, becoming a doctor or a lawyer had both a perceived high status as well as better future financial rewards. However, June and Kim said they were not concerned with the monetary rewards, they just wanted to study what they wished:

June: I don't look at the money part ... it's like I don't look at the highest paid job, because like being a doctor would ...

Kim: Would be their [parents] dream really.

June: Yeah, be really good but no thank you. I mean sure I would love to get that much cash but I would like to do what I like.

Decisions about their study pathways seemed doubly problematic where undergraduate students arrived at university with little understanding of what subjects to enroll in or what a subject might entail. These students said that guidance or information from former educational institutions, if it existed at all, was often limited. Josefo stated that when he was at high school, his teachers did not encourage him to contemplate university study:

They [the teachers] didn't push people like me into university. I don't think my school was preparing us for university. I think the whole school system was preparing us for the work force. Just working ... go and seek employment.
The early years at university could be rather a 'hit and miss' affair. Students often experimented with different subjects before they decided on future areas of study in which to major. This was particularly prevalent for students whose family did not understand the university system, and consequently was not able to offer guidance. Lose described how she made her selection of papers not knowing, "half the things I was picking up":

Sociology I didn't know anything about.... Education I wanted to do just because someone at netball, who ... was doing university, said that Education was easy so I just picked it up. And Religious Studies, I had an interest in Religious Studies because of my Christian faith.... And History because I loved History in school and I did well in History in school so I took that. And English because I did well in English at school as well.

She continued that her English choice was not a good one because it was poetry and she did not understand it and, "I ended dropping that class really quickly."

Consequences of both parental pressure and/or a lack of knowledge about degree subjects and structure often resulted in an initial poor pass rate, or the completion of papers that were not pertinent for their final degree. In these situations, it was not until students had made the decision to change their field of study that they began to pass all their papers, and/or to gain grades, which they felt were more satisfactory.

Participants mentioned another aspect of subject selection. Their concern was with the under-representation of Samoan students in various fields of scholarship at the University of Canterbury. (This was in addition to a general concern about the small numbers attending university as a whole). Iulia thought there was a distinct difference between students from Samoa, who mainly studied for Engineering and Forestry degrees, and New Zealand raised students, who studied for Arts, Commerce or Law degrees. She also noticed a gender imbalance. Most of the women she knew were taking Arts related subjects, whereas she knew very few men who were studying in the Arts Faculty. She did not know any New Zealand raised student studying Science or Engineering:
A lot of the boys do Engineering and the girls do Arts. There are only a few that do Commerce, and I don’t know any New Zealand born ... who [are doing] Engineering. And I don’t know anybody here who does Science either, most of them come from Samoa, yeah which is quite strange. Most of the people who come here [university] from here [New Zealand] do Arts and some do Law.... It is not just the girls it’s the guys ... the guys aren’t coming and if they do come they are doing Law or Arts or Commerce they don’t actually do Science or Engineering.

The only participants in this research who had studied in the Engineering and Forestry Schools were those who had attended the University of Canterbury as international students on scholarship, or who had come from Samoa to study but were not scholarship students. While these latter students had been raised in Samoa, they had been born in New Zealand and could attend university as New Zealand citizens. No New Zealand raised participants studied in either of these faculties. The majority of the New Zealand raised participants studied for Law, Arts or Commerce degrees. Only one of the New Zealand raised participants studied for a Science degree, while two of the Samoan raised studied for a degree in Science. A number of the international students said that the Scholarships committee in Samoa selected the University of Canterbury only for those who wanted to study for degrees in Engineering or Forestry, and occasionally in Commerce or Science. Even with this as one explanation, it does not account for the glaring lack of representation for Samoan students across all university departments.

Therefore, what these participants have highlighted yet again is the nature of choice, where choice is a contested notion (Davies, 1997). A constitutive effect of subject choice was the obstruction of participants from access to certain areas of knowledge within the institution. In their choosing, some students were encouraged to participate in certain fields of study but impeded from participation in others. In the next section, I will explore another type of disparity raised by various students throughout the interviews, that of gender differences and the impact upon student experiences.
“They are wanting me to be this good Samoan girl”—Gender: differences and expectations

Previously in the methodological chapter, I wrote that a strength and a limitation of this research arose out of my own gender identity. The effects of this are evident in this section of the findings, where the focus is upon the female students’ experiences. This emphasis has arisen because the male participants did not raise or discuss in-depth specific issues of gender with me, an older woman. While I have already briefly mentioned stereotypical roles and expectations in sport for Samoan men, there were only two other instances where male participants specifically spoke about gender issues. The first one was Peter’s and Tavita’s introduction to the university’s sexual harassment policy, on their arrival from Samoa. In a joint interview, they said they needed to rethink their own actions and beliefs in light of their understanding of this policy but would not elaborate when I asked them to explain their statements. The second instance was Iosefo’s reference to his responsibilities at home, where he said, “I feel sorry for my sister who has a lot more work to do at home than I have. It is much harder for her.” He acknowledged that gender roles in his family were different and very traditional.

In contrast, a number of female students talked about family expectations, responsibilities, and gender differences, which they believed impinged upon their ability to fully participate in their university studies. Lose’s experience of being both the eldest and being female epitomised the different gendered roles that can exist within some of the more traditional Samoan families. Her early years at university were fraught with difficulties between parental expectations and her need to attend to the requirements of her study. At home, she undertook many duties including cleaning the house, doing the family’s laundry and ironing, and cleaning up after other family members. Lose believed that she had been brought up “strictly in the Samoan ways”:

I sometimes get a bit angry and frustrated because you are always having to please your cultural side, especially when you have been brought up strictly
in the Samoan ways. Like every Sunday, my brothers ... would get [up to ]
the table [to eat] before the girls because that was [what] Dad thought was
culture. And having to clean up after them, but yet you have got so many
things to do, and these expectations from your parents.

She felt disadvantaged with the role that her parents expected her to adhere to:

So that is the disadvantage for me because it is the culture, and they [her
parents] are wanting me to be this good Samoan girl.... And you're also
trying to succeed in New Zealand society and university, but sometimes
they do not understand that. I value the experience [of the Samoan culture],
but there is also the negative side.

As a consequence of her parents' expectations, Lose's university work suffered.
In her first year at university, she had to return home from university before dark,
even though her lectures or tutorials were scheduled for the evening. She was not
allowed to stay to work in the library. Her father would not listen to or understand
her explanations that university was different to school. Her wish to have a
boyfriend, against her father's approval, also led to time spent during the day in
places other than lectures. If she challenged her father's demands his reaction was
one of anger. She had learnt from former confrontations not to confront his demands:

Dad always expected me home at a certain time and got really upset when I
didn't get home on time, when it was still daylight—about four—like they
thought that I was going to school.... They don't realise the university
structure or timetables or anything. And so he didn't really believe me
sometimes when I said that I was at the library or something, so it was
really hard.

The consequences for her university study were serious. In her first year, Lose
failed some of her papers. She then dropped out of university for some months after
leaving home. She felt that her younger brothers had none of these restrictions
placed upon them, and stated that when one brother followed her to university he
was immediately able to make his own decisions. When health problems caused her
to return to live with her parents, Lose found their attitude had changed to a certain
extent. Her ability to attend to her studies was markedly improved as fewer
restrictions were placed upon her.
Although Lose gratefully acknowledged that her parents have worked long hours in lower-paid employment to support their children, she still feels that because of different cultural expectations the early years at university were really problematic for her. In her experiences, the Samoan way of life and her university life just did not seem to have any connections at all. Lose’s experiences were not unique or unusual. Other younger women also talked about similar situations: their social life had also been curtailed even when they returned home after flatting, or they also experienced the different family boundaries for their brothers, or they mentioned the imbalance in responsibilities they had within the home. The fact that Lose has now graduated and is employed in the Education arena working with youth from the Pacific community, is one direct outcome of her own difficult experiences as a young woman attending university.

However, the home was not the only place where students experienced limitations based on their gender. Female participants reflected on their experiences in the Samoan university community. Luisa discussed how she challenged the attitudes of some Samoan male students at university. She argued that Samoan women students still have to contend with ingrained Samoan male attitudes that continue to see men as superior to women. She said, “When it comes to our own culture, we have to remember there is still a difference because they’re men and we’re women.” She further highlighted the difficulty of being both coloured and a woman, within a white society. She said that her Samoan male counterparts should have had some understanding of this dilemma. In her experience any challenge she made to her Samoan male student colleagues usually produced a change of topic rather than a change of attitude. She initially thought that education at university would have produced a change in attitudes but had come to realise that educational qualifications alone were not necessarily going to bring about any change:

I was saying to boys in our group, ‘what are your feelings on equality?’ and [they said] ‘oh I’m all for it! I support it but you know, some women have to remember that men are better at some things than they are.’ Then we had this little … debate and they are just going ‘you’re just mad because you’re
a woman.' I said 'no I'm mad because you are supposed to be the educated ones.'

She continued by saying she felt she had to fight a 'double banger'; both the wider white society as well as the males within her own Samoan culture:

Not only are we women fighting against the system that is predominantly white and trying to keep our culture, but we are also fighting against you educated boys, and then you look down at us for the fact that we're women so that's what's peeving me off!

Furthermore, Luisa felt that because she was a woman with brown skin, the prospect of obtaining paid employment at the end of her study was not good:

What's the point of having a degree when because we're Samoan we might not even get a foot in the door ... being coloured, and we have to fight that. And then to have guys that think like our own Samoan boys think, well!

Although she continually confronted and challenged these attitudes, her anger and frustration with these attitudes had not been resolved.

While students such as Luisa and Lose were able to identify and reflect on the impact of their gendered experiences, others spoke about gender differences in less overt ways. There were examples of women without partners being fully responsible for their children, and in some situations extended family members as well, while studying full-time at university and working at part-time employment. Moreover, some were married women who had the major role in the care of their children as well as running the household while studying full-time. In other instances, women found it more difficult to get part-time employment or got paid a lower hourly rate than males for their part-time employment. While these latter examples may be relevant for many women students studying at tertiary institutions, and of course do not apply to all the Samoan women students interviewed, they nevertheless intensified the complex situations and dilemmas that many of these Samoan women students experienced during the course of their studies.

In this chapter, I have explored constitutive processes of discursive practices that shape participants' subjectivities, with particular reference to the interconnections within their family lives, their church communities and the
university. A persistent dilemma for these students has been that often they have been, and still are, portrayed as a multitude of separate entities. These include identities as: a “Pacific Islander”, a Samoan, a woman, a student, a choosing self, a coloured, a church goer, a good sportsperson, and the list could go on. Yet our (mine and their) reflexive gaze (re)lated images of the participants as being both socially constituted and multiply positioned simultaneously within the discursive practices of available discourses (Jones, 1997). Furthermore, these participants are both continually reconstituted as well as reconstituting their interpretations in their take up by discursive injunctions of these many different discourses each time they think or speak. As Davies (1997) argues, “it is in the constitutive force of discourse that agency lies” (p. 272). I will further develop this theoretical stance in the following two findings chapters.

Notes
1 Since the arrival of the missionaries, the Samoan people have embraced Christianity and have incorporated it into their culture. Recent work by Samoan authors have examined the relationship between Christianity and the Samoan culture, and discuss how the Churches’ activities are still interwoven in the day to day lives of many Samoan people. Samoan gatherings usually begin and end with a prayer and / or hymn, led by a religious Minister or Priest where possible. The role of the church within the Samoan society in both Samoa and New Zealand is very evident in traditional customary procedures (Anae, 1998a; Tiatia, 1998) (see also Taule'ale'a'ausumai, 1990, 1994).
2 I have decided not to list the degrees that these participants studied for reasons of confidentiality.
Findings: Section Two—Behind curtained mirrors: (Re)flections upon equity and equal opportunities within the academy

In a sense, the power of normalisation imposes homogeneity; but it individualises by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render differences useful by fitting them to one another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences. (Foucault, 1977, p. 184)

Universities are both the site where reactionary and repressive ideologies and practices are entrenched and, at the same time, the site where progressive, transformative possibilities are born. (Lewis, 1993, p. 145)

Section two contains chapters six and seven, which highlight the extent to which the "normalisation" (Foucault, 1977) of Samoan students is enshrined in the hegemonic discourses of equity and equal opportunities, and sustained within discursive practices within the University of Canterbury. The nature of these contradictory discursive practices reveals the relations of “power-knowledge” (Foucault, 1975/1979, p. 27) within the processes and intersections of racialization and ethnicity, gender, class and cultural differences. While both chapters further explore processes of subjectification, they focus in particular on the interfaces between the
students and the university as an institution. Furthermore, they open pathways for understanding the ways in which these students are “presented with, and inserted into, ideological and discursive positions by practices which locate them in meaning and in regimes of truth” (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 87).

Additionally, these chapters further negate deficit theory models and any remnants of the myth that all Samoan students who fail do so because of their inadequacies. Deficit Theory commonly sees people (particularly those from minority ethnic groups) being constituted by others, and constituting themselves, through processes of normalisation to portray them as deficient and victims. This normalising gaze does not take not into account wider structural influences but focuses the blame on the individual (for critiques in relation to Māori see also McMurchy-Pilkington, 2001; Pihama, 1997; Stewart-Harawira, 1997).

Furthermore, these chapters peer behind the curtained mirror to reflect and make visible how multiple discursive practices can actualise power relations within the academy and constitute the nature of participation for these particular students in this tertiary institution. In addition, these findings highlight how strategies to provide equity and equal opportunities are usually “of an add-on kind” and do not usually attempt to disrupt the discursive practices that exist within the university (Davies, 1994, p. 122). Thus my (re)reflections on their “normalising gaze” (Foucault, 1977, p. 184) further reveals how discourse, context and power relations constitute the ways these participants take themselves up as students in the academy through the possibilities made available to them (Davies, 1994).
Discursive positionings: invisibility and isolation

The first of these two findings chapters explores how we, the participants and I, perceive and/or contest the processes of normalisation, the constituting and being constituted as students at the University of Canterbury. This chapter attempts to make visible discursive practices, which contribute towards sustaining the symbolic 'level playing field' discourses of equity and equal opportunities for all students. My imaging of these students' accounts provides the basis for examining the relations of power-knowledge through exposing the limitations and possibilities of institutional norms, expectations and structures. These participants disrupt the taken for granted discourses of equity and equality and reveal the discursive positionings of isolation and invisibility, particularly through the process of looking behind the façade of a number of standard student support services. They reflect upon areas of peer support, liaison, second language support, the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, International Student Centre support, the Samoan Association and financial support. They also describe strategies, or acts of resistance, in their attempts to alter the boundaries that confine both their and the institution's understandings of what it is to be a student at the University of Canterbury.
“Being there for you”—A reliance on peer support

The practices within an educational institution either facilitate or constrain access to, or participation in, its educational programmes and/or employment positions. These practices, however, may or may not be a realisation of the rhetoric contained in its policy statements. As previously described, for a number of years this university has had policies in place addressing issues of equality and equity. These policies, however, appear to have made little progress in changing the position and situation of Pacific peoples in the university. Throughout the course of this chapter, many instances denote how the practices in this institution have acted to preserve many participants’ feelings of isolation and invisibility. The first of these centres upon issues of equity as students spoke about a lack of role models within the university, which in turn reinforced notions of difference and the normalising picture of the dominant group.

When these interviews were conducted in 1997, there were no academic staff members with a Pacific background in any of these students’ fields of study, to whom they could relate.¹ In addition, within the whole university there were only ten postgraduate students of Samoan background (this number included only one doctoral student).² The lack of role models in the university and the perception that there was no one to approach for support were concerns discussed on many occasions during the interviews. They were seen as critical to questions of retention and participation at this university. One consequence was that most of these students generally used peer support as their main strategy whenever they needed assistance or advice. They felt comfortable using their peers to support one another academically, personally and socially.

Iosefo’s experiences of peer support proved to be academically beneficial. He firmly believed that without the study partnership he had with another Samoan student, he would not have completed his degree successfully. Furthermore, he felt
that her family reinforced the effort that they were both making with their university study.

One of the main reasons why I got through university was that I had a girlfriend ... and we did our work together and we lived a university life, such a different lifestyle, and she supported me and I supported her and I owe her a lot... And I was lucky, very lucky not just that she was at university, but she had a family that had been through [university] like and supported us.

Iosefo felt that his friend’s family was an inspiration to him. He stated that he did not have many role models of people who had succeeded at tertiary education, when he was growing up.

Mele used to feel “a bit lonely” being the only Samoan in most of her tutorials and classes. This meant that she felt a need “to stay ... with my own people, to talk about things in my own language and laugh about things.... Sometimes I feel all cramped up in this Palagi English stuff.” She would visit Niko in his study room to talk and laugh, and to feel comfortable and relaxed. She was able to rely on Niko for information and support, as she said there was no one else to go to. She stated that she felt more at ease, and not as lonely, in the few papers where there were other Samoans in her lectures or tutorials.

Other participants did not get the academic support that they were looking for, either within or outside the institution. Lose, who turned to her friends outside the university, highlighted the possible negative impact of peers and family when they had no personal experience of the demands of tertiary study. Although she expected to get some support from her family and friends, their encouragement to participate in other activities outside the university meant that she did not have enough time for her studies.

Two students also commented that they found the university quite an individualistic place. Selu talked of the difficulty he experienced during his first year of study in New Zealand. While he was able to approach his lecturers, he found
learning to study on his own was problematic. In Samoa, he had been used to studying in groups and/or having the help of family and friends. He found that there was no group work in his subjects at the University of Canterbury, and he had no family or friends who could help him with his university work. He had to learn to rely on his own resources. His understanding of being a student at this university was that he had to work individually on his own, and he found the adjustment difficult. The lack of other Samoan students in his field of study also meant that he did not have the support of other students to whom he could relate, “I just stayed in my room and just worked on my own. I really found it difficult.” The only people he felt he could ask for help were the lecturers, and whilst some lecturers were very helpful others were not, as they did not appear to understand what it was he was asking. He particularly found the written English in some of his textbooks difficult to follow, and preferred those subjects such as Mathematics, in which he did not need to have such expertise in the written English language.

Lose also found that being a student meant that everyone had to work as an individual. She saw that everyone was only concerned with himself or herself and not with how others were coping or achieving. It was a “painful lesson” for her. After a disastrous first year, she came to realise that, if she did indeed want to finish her degree, she had to adapt to the environment of the university, do things for herself and look after her own wellbeing:

In university it’s very individualistic and everyone is for themselves and I’ve learnt that I have to do things by myself, to get somewhere but also that’s really ... its a real painful lesson to me.

Shirley was older than many of the students in her classes, and felt that she had few peers to turn to. She said, “I don’t have many friends, so I just sit there and I get so worried and flustered and think ‘I can’t do this, I’m going to fail’ ... and I feel like giving up.” She was the only student who talked of having her own parents’ help with her academic work, “I had no one else to turn to and if it wasn’t for mum I would have dropped out too.” She felt that no one in the institution really cared
whether she passed her papers or not, and that the institution was quite an “individualistic place.” Shirley also said that she felt lonely because there were no other Samoans in most of her classes.

Occasionally older students became advisors for younger students. Tavita mentioned a previous student who had given him advice about how to study, on a number of occasions. Sami socialised with the younger NZODA students, encouraged them in their studies, and tried to motivate them when necessary. Luisa saw Jhulia take up a role as mentor, in her interactions with other students, as she was always ready to listen and be available for others:

"The fact that she’s very much into cultural activities, and also because she’s one of the older ones there that the other Sas [Samoans] know. And you know she’s really there for you."

Peer support was also important with regard to the use of facilities provided by the university. While these facilities provided formal programmes to familiarise students, many of these students did not participate. Instead, they either learned from friends or did not use the facilities at all. One example is the students’ use of the various libraries. A few had enough confidence to make use of the library tours; some organised to go on a tour with a friend. Others had never been on a tour; some did not use the library at all, and many used it in a restricted fashion. Tasi had not gone on library courses, “because I didn’t have anybody to go with.” Jhulia had attended a library course to learn how to use the databases, but mainly relied on information from friends to clarify and develop her abilities in this area. Beverly acknowledged that although her lecturers and tutors had occasionally provided information about library usage, she had learnt the most from her friends. Shirley went on a library tour but found that she did not retain enough information, so enlisted the help of her mother to revisit aspects of the library and go through the databases again. She explained her feelings about the library staff:

"Some of the library staff are really nice and helpful and that makes you want to go and ask again if you’ve got questions. But other library staff are really horrible and it puts you off asking for help. So mum took me through..."
the library. If it wasn’t for her then I would be lost. And she did that with the databases too because I had no idea how to use that. If she hadn’t done that then I wouldn’t even use it as a resource.

Sami utilised both the Library tours and his classmates; he found both very helpful. He perceived his main problem being access to library books for his course, because there were not enough copies and he was always making requests, especially in his final year. Iulia had only just begun to take books out of the Central library, even though this was not her first year at university. She had usually found the staff helpful but realised: “I’m embarrassed that I don’t know how to use the technology in the library.”

Most participants had used the Information Centre in the Library but found that while most of the staff concerned were very helpful and were able to answer their queries, this did not solve their problem of not knowing how to find the answers themselves. However a number said that while they knew there were “hands on” sessions, which they could attend to learn to use the databases, they would not go by themselves as they did not feel comfortable or confident to do so. Shirley’s suggestion was that more first year papers could use assignments to help students become familiar with the library and databases, especially if undertaken with another student, preferably as part of a tutorial.

A similar situation existed in relation to computer labs and computer services. Tasi had only been to use the computer service once to get her email account and only because a friend went with her and did most of the talking. She had not felt confident enough to go back by herself and did not use her email anymore. Likewise, Beverly had followed her friends to the computer labs, and Iulia’s friends had taught her how to log onto the Mac computers and had taken her to the Mac labs so she had access to all facilities. As only five of these students had access to computers in their homes or flats, it was imperative that the others learn to use the facilities provided by the university. However, the reticence of some students combined with their
reluctance to approach university staff for guidance and help meant that the facilities
were used only where absolutely necessary.

While the use of peer support is probably not confined to Samoan students,
their experiences must be read in conjunction with the lack of role models and a
number of other disparities, some of which are discussed in the following sections.
Furthermore, these students' experiences suggest that access to and the use of
available technology is not the same for everyone. Students' cultural backgrounds
can play a part in the take-up of technology. This also serves as an introduction to
the discursive practices of the knowledge discourse and hints at an understanding of
what and whose knowledge is important within this educational institution, which I
will explore in the following chapter.

"It is really hard to find someone ... you can actually talk
to"—A Pacific liaison person: a legitimate necessity?
The discourse of equality implies that all student members of the institution will
have access to services that treat each person on an equal footing. However, these
students did not view the university's services in such a positive light, particularly as
they did not have access to a liaison person to whom they could relate. Up until the
end of 2001, the University of Canterbury had designated only one liaison position
to assist both Māori and Pacific students. On the surface this decision may have
seemed appropriate considering the small number of enrolled Pacific students, but in
practice this was not meeting Pacific students’ needs. Only a small number of the
students in this research had approached this “Māori and Pacific Island” liaison
person. One student said she found the person “OK,” and the second said she had to
wait a long time and was not very pleased with the discussion, as the person did not
appear to understand her problem, so she did not return.
Other students gave two reasons for their lack of contact. Some did not know of the existence of this service; others did not want to go to a person who they felt did not really understand their concerns and cultural backgrounds. Nearly all of these students thought that the roles of the liaison officer were blurred and that there was a conflict of interest by combining services for both Māori and the Pacific students. They felt that, in many instances, Māori students face different issues and the joint role did not cater for their needs as Pacific students. Some students felt the Pacific students were “tagged on,” or that they were invisible:

Lose: We are really in need of a liaison officer. I would probably prefer a Samoan, the Māori liaison officers I have come across have been pro Māori, and it is hard for Samoan or other minority island groups to get a go because you feel like you are intruding, even invisible.

Beverly: Its almost like you are tagged on.

Many students saw that access to a liaison person, who understood their personal cultural backgrounds, would benefit both the students and the institution. “It is really hard to find someone ... you can actually talk to,” said Iulia. “Yeah and who will understand,” commented Lose, with Shirley adding, “I think you would get more enrolments ... if there was someone to talk to.” The students agreed that they would like to be able to approach someone with an understanding of and empathy with the various backgrounds and cultures of Pacific peoples, and who would be seen to be putting the needs and concerns of the Pacific peoples to the fore. They felt this would have a flow on effect for both recruitment and retention rates within the university. Furthermore, Iulia commented that the liaison person “would need to be visible to the various groups, to the people around.” Her reasoning was that in her experience of talking with other Samoan students they felt quite intimidated in the institution and would not easily go looking for the person.

Shirley also suggested that a Pacific liaison person could use the New Start Course⁴ as a model for dealing with younger students. She had attended this
programme as a mature student and had found it a worthwhile experience. She thought it could be adapted as necessary:

Even if they had someone who took a group of Samoans out of school and showed them around varsity or stayed with them for a month in varsity so that they had specific people who could teach them how to use the library and the computers. They might feel more confident rather than being dropped in at the deep end, or they may not come at all.

Her belief was that supporting the younger students would result in higher retention rates. However, this would also depend on who was doing the supporting and their connection to or understanding of the needs of students from Pacific backgrounds.

In the hope that some time in the future a Pacific liaison person would be appointed, some students commented that the candidates for such a position need to be culturally appropriate. While they did not wish to generalize for all Pacific peoples, there were comments about how age, status, and gender, in particular, can be problematic in the Samoan culture and need to be taken into consideration. Mature students, particularly if they are matai, may have difficulty discussing their concerns with someone who is much younger. As an example of this, most mature students in this research discussed their concerns amongst themselves and not with the younger Samoan students. Some younger students said they had difficulty talking about personal problems with an older Samoan because they are wary of the possible reporting back of any personal information to their families. One student’s mother had told her not to contact another mature student, due to family differences. As previously mentioned in this research project, the younger male participants would not discuss personal issues in depth with me, a mature female. One of the male international students also made it clear that he preferred to contact the male staff member at the International Student Centre.

It would be impossible to find one person appropriate to all these different positionings. Nevertheless, many of these students wanted the university to take into account and acknowledge different cultural expectations and needs if, or when, a liaison person was to be appointed in the future. While I have not attempted to
interview staff members in the university to gauge how conscious the university is of these cultural issues, in the main I can base my understanding of the situation on these participants’ experiences and my own experiences and observations. In the light of this it seems that the university, as an institution, has very little understanding of the cultural issues that these students raised.

“My classmates gave me a lot of advice”—English Language Support

Several students identified a further area where they believed that the university ignored difference, which in turn reinforced feelings of invisibility, isolation and exclusion. While a number of these students used English as a second language, there was virtually no help available if they wished to improve the quality of their written English in their assignments. The Writing and Study Skills Programme (WASS) was the only service provided by the university that they were aware of, but these students saw this as very inadequate given that this service is available to all students on campus\(^5\). A few students attempted to give their drafts to their lecturers to proof read but more often than not, students had to resort to asking friends. Sami thought the biggest hurdle for him was his written English:

> It's really hard to write, you know, trying to put in the grammar and all that. I still have problems with it... I sometimes give it to some of the lecturers but sometimes they refuse it because they are very, very busy. So I just give it to some of my friends, to have a look at.

His first year was the worst but he said his classmates gave, “a lot of advice on writing papers or telling me to go and read this reference as it has got good points.”

Other students had chosen subjects such as mathematics or engineering that did not require many written assignments, particularly essays. Only a few students thought that their tutors or supervisors provided specific help and guidance in this area. In particular, a number of students noted that the Education and Engineering Departments were departments where attempts were made to meet their needs. Scott found that the Engineering department offered guidance with essay and report
writing, which he found very helpful. He did comment however that trying to fit in more classes with the heavy workload of his Engineering degree became too much and he did not attend all of the extra essay writing courses that were available to him. He described how his limitations in writing English affected his study. He said that he took a lot longer than many of his friends, for whom English was their first language, to write his reports, and knew he should attend the courses offered:

I took science because I can’t write in English. So when I came here we had our report to write up and we were doing it in groups. This Palagi girl wrote up the whole page in about 15 minutes But if I wrote that it would take me an hour just to … fill a whole page.

He found it difficult to emerge from the cycle, where his written English ability affected his studies, but his workload combined with the extra time needed to write his assignments meant he did not attend the tuition offered.

More often than not, students felt that their inability to express their ideas in a high standard of English resulted in grades that did not really reflect their academic ability. They were not saying that they expected compensation or special consideration due to having English as a second language; instead they would have a greater sense of self worth and a better chance of achieving according to their abilities if the university had provided an improved service in this area. They could then also be more proactive in helping themselves. They believed that the university largely ignored their particular needs in this area.

"The Centre is used mainly by Palagi and not by many Pacific Island students"—Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies

The Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies was established in 1988 primarily as a research centre. Its funding comes from a bequest that the university administers by way of an advisory board with the Director of the Centre and the Centre’s administrative assistant. It presently offers two postgraduate courses in Pacific
Studies, B.A. Honours and M.A. The terms of the bequest both bind and limit development of the Centre. By virtue of having the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies on campus, there is an implication that the university is attending to the needs of its Pacific students.

However, as the students’ comments illustrate, there appears to be no link or relationship between the Centre and a number of the Samoan students. There was a general lack of in-depth discussion in any interviews concerning undergraduate students’ association with or use of the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies. The main comments made in passing were that a small number of undergraduate students used the Macmillan Brown library to read Samoan newspapers or to access books for assignments. However a few other undergraduate students, like Scott, had not even heard of the Centre and asked me where it was. Others knew about its existence but had never gone there or used the library. The mature students, whose main association with the Centre was a social one, knew about the Centre through their association with the Centre’s postgraduate students. Tasi, an undergraduate student, thought that the Centre could be developed to “encourage more undergraduate students to associate and identify with the Centre.” Others reiterated this view after I questioned them about how they saw the role of the Centre in the university.

Most students who knew about the Centre associated it with postgraduate study in Pacific Studies only and felt it was not relevant to them as undergraduate students or to postgraduates in other disciplines. They thought it did not offer them any support, nor was it a place with which they identified. Some students were aware of the postgraduate study room in the Macmillan Brown Centre and their hope was that the Centre could provide a room, which any Pacific student could use for the purpose of study, and to meet for a cup of coffee and a chat. Niko’s opinion was that “it seems wrong that the Centre is used mainly by Palagi and not by many Pacific
Island students.” He would like to see the Centre cater more for Pacific students at all levels of university study.

Incorporated in these students’ comments about the Macmillan Brown Centre were references to and comparisons with other departmental support rooms. In particular, Shirley compared her experiences in the Law Faculty with those in the Education Department. She stated that the Education Department was making an effort to support their Pacific students. It provided tutoring for Pacific students, and a specific room for Māori and “Pacific Island” Education students to share and use for study and tutoring purposes. On the other hand, she said that while the Law Faculty has a specific room for Māori students (where those students can get extra help), they do not offer the same support to Pacific students. She would have liked to have had access to support in the Law Faculty. She actually paid for a Law tutor for herself from outside of the university, as available tutors were not meeting her needs. Shirley thought that the Macmillan Brown Centre could be a place where students had access to academic support if other departments did not offer it.

Overall the participants’ opinion was that Pacific students would benefit if an area were available, which they could call their own, and where any Pacific student could come to study and meet others from any department in the university. Iulia and Shirley’s comments reflected that made by other students:

Shirley: I only come here [the university] to go to lectures and tutorials and pick up books. I usually take them home and study. But if there’s a room for Pacific Island people then I’d probably stay at varsity.

Iulia: Yeah I probably would too. Sort of like a common room type thing that you can use, that we can call our own.

Furthermore, the low level of both undergraduate and postgraduate Pacific student participation in the Macmillan Brown Centre, whose focus is on the Pacific peoples, seems to be ironic. On one hand, the university can state that it has a Centre for Pacific Studies; on the other hand, these participants highlight the invisibility of Pacific students in the Centre.
"They call it International but we can't go there"—The
International Student Centre

All the students who came from Samoa to study spoke about their experiences in
their dealings with the International Student Centre. The International Student
Centre was (and still is) the focal point for support of international students who
come to study at the University of Canterbury. The Centre is housed on the fringe of
the University and in 1997 had two staff members. It currently has four staff
members. It provides a range of support services including an orientation programme
at the beginning of each semester. The staff's main role throughout the rest of the
year is to work with students to find answers to their queries and concerns, including
accommodation, extra tutoring, health care, banking, and language support. Each of
the four participants who were on NZODA scholarships used this Centre, and their
comments focused upon both positive and negative experiences.

Three of these students found the Centre invaluable during enrolment week,
particularly in their first year of study when they were trying to finalise subjects in
which to enrol. Tasi, like the others, found the enrolment process "very confusing"
in her first year at this university. Her interest was in Marine Biology, but she had no
knowledge of what specific subjects she could or should choose. Hence Tasi spent
her enrolment week "running backwards and forwards between the enrolment block
and the staff at the International Centre," in order to decide what papers to take and
to have her enrolment accepted. She had not seen a prospectus or calendar before
arriving in New Zealand to enrol at university. Tasi found the whole process quite
stressful and wished that she had an insight into subject choice and an understanding
of pre-requisites before the enrolment process began. She said that the staff at the
International Student Centre gave her the support that she needed during this time.

In contrast, Selu's early experiences with the University of Canterbury and in
particular with the International Student Centre were problematic. His first
impressions of this university were of an inhospitable institution and unwelcoming staff. He spoke of his arrival to Christchurch and his introduction to this university as a disheartening experience:

I had been told that I would be looked after when I arrived in Christchurch, that everything would be organised. But no-one even met me at the airport. I couldn’t enrol for three weeks. I had no money. All I wanted to do was go back home.

He had never been to Christchurch or to a university as big as Canterbury. Because of a bureaucratic bungle, no one met him at the airport and his enrolment took three weeks to finalise. He found it difficult to get help as the International Office was closed when he arrived, and often no one was available when he went there in the following weeks. Selu felt lucky that he had travelled to Christchurch with another international student from Samoa, who had accompanied him to the Halls of Residence and helped him find his accommodation. He could not enrol, however, because the International Office in Registry had not received his results from Wellington. This meant that he could not get a student card, access to library borrowing or photocopying. In addition, he had very little money, as he could not be granted his scholarship living expenses until he was verified as an NZODA student. He did not attend the orientation week for international scholarship students because no one informed him that it was on. He felt isolated and bewildered, and believed that “it really affected my university work in the beginning of the year as I tried to cope with things.” During this time, only other Samoan international students offered him support and encouraged him to stay.

Selu also described how he had difficulty accessing the extra tutoring service that is available to NZODA Students. He asked for extra tuition for Economics but no one was forthcoming. After a poor test result, he felt especially desperate and he finally found a tutor for himself. He also felt that, “the staff at the Centre are not really on the side of the students” and would not advocate for student needs; instead “they are standing for the university not for the students.” What he expected the role
of the staff to be and what he experienced as their role were in opposition to each other. The result for him was that he did not have any confidence in the Centre, could not really confide in the staff, and only approached the Centre when absolutely necessary.

On the other hand, others were pleased with their interactions with the International Student Centre and seemed to gain access to all the services they required. Peter appreciated the extra Mathematics tutoring that the Centre arranged. Tasi found the staff helpful whenever she needed the services and especially appreciated the orientation programme, “we had the international students’ orientation programme going on for a whole week and you get to know the place and that was all right.” This programme introduced these students to both the institution and the wider community, and particularly provided an insight into the university’s services available to the students. As Sami affirmed, “there was a lot of assistance given to us, all the ODA [students].”

However, in juxtaposition, the name International Student Centre presented an enigma, as students believed that there were criteria for student eligibility to use the Centre’s services. Scott’s and Tavita’s experiences provide examples of their understandings. Scott came from Samoa to New Zealand to study as a “private student” (a term used by these students to describe those who enrol as New Zealand citizens even though their home was not New Zealand). He said a staff member informed him he was ineligible to use the Centre’s services or join in their orientation activities, because he was not a scholarship student. Consequently he had found enrolment problematic in his first year, even though he did use the help desk during enrolment, and stated that other overseas Samoan students he talked to who enrolled as New Zealand citizens also had this difficulty. The problem was an inability to find anyone with whom he felt comfortable and who understood his particular dilemmas, apart from other Samoan students. This suggests that the policies of the Centre need clarification.
Moreover Tavita, who was on an overseas scholarship at the time but not an NZODA scholarship, was not allowed to use the facilities and services because he was not on the Centre's list. Initially Tavita attended this university on a different scholarship, a "Western Samoan Government Scholarship." After his first year at the university, a staff member of the Centre told him that he was now ineligible for participation in the activities for international students because of the type of scholarship he was on, as "the international students applied to Samoans who were ODA students only." This made him rather upset and he thought that the university did not offer an adequate service to all its international students. He wondered why the Centre was called "International" if some students whose homes were overseas could not utilise the services offered:

They only help ODA students but they don't help international students who are private, or not on ODA scholarship. They call it the International but we can't go there. It would be nice if there was a different international place for us who live overseas and are here to study, because there is quite a few of us.

Both these students considered themselves to be overseas or international student but found themselves without access to any international support services. Their situation was that their home was not in New Zealand; English was not their first language; and the only available support services were the same ones that the majority of the wider student body also accessed. Thus, students such as Scott or Tavita were left to their own devices while having to enter a new institution and adapt to a new society. Scott commented, "being able to be part of the international orientation week would have been helpful." In his eyes, this would have alleviated his feelings of "being left out" while other students from Samoa were eligible for introductory tours around the campus and bus trips to explore the wider community. Although, in practice what tended to happen was that if some international students from Samoa were not 'on the list' and were refused access to these activities, then other international Samoan students who were eligible also chose not to participate. This was because they felt it was inappropriate to participate when other students who had come from Samoa for study purposes were unable to join in.
These students have offered their different expectations and experiences in their dealings with the International Student Centre. They have highlighted power relations within this institutional structure, which has as a tenet the welfare of students who come from overseas to study at this university. They have used this research project as a way of challenging the processes through which this support service constitutes their experiences as International students by discussing its inadequacies and disparities. They feel that while on the one hand aspects of the service were very good, on the other hand aspects of the service were inadequate, and contributed towards their sense of invisibility and isolation within the university. As a form of resistance to their perceptions of the way the service functioned, they walked away from activities they saw as exclusive. For some students the rhetoric did not equate with the reality.

“I can just be myself”—The Samoan Association: acceptable visibility

The Samoan Association at the University of Canterbury was the one group on campus that all students in this research identified with. It was a group with which they had a sense of belonging, they felt comfortable and accepted as Samoans; some felt this was the only place in the University where they felt at ease and accepted for who they were. Although not all the participants were active members at the time these interviews took place, each person was or had been an active member or supporter.

The Samoan Association meets regularly in various rooms in the University of Canterbury Students’ Association building. The number of meetings depends on the various activities arranged during the year. It has an Executive committee, which is elected at its Annual General Meeting. The Association consists mainly of university students, but some past students also attend. For some years, its treasurer has been a
respected Samoan community member who has a personal interest in the welfare of the students and Pacific concerns in general.

The Association was the place in the university where the New Zealand raised students could develop a greater sense of their Samoan heritage, as well as developing their language skills and skills in traditional Samoan activities and customs. Although some Samoan raised students would have preferred all the meetings and discussion to be conducted in Samoan, a compromise saw that both fluent and non-fluent speakers of Samoan could participate. Tavita sympathised with the non-fluent speakers and felt that using both Samoan and English in their meetings “attracts them [non-fluent speakers] more because they understand.... Now there is only a couple of things that we address in Samoan ... mainly thanking people or welcoming them and prayers.” The Samoan raised supported the New Zealand raised by teaching them the language and the culture, as well as encouraging them to take part in traditional roles in cultural activities, such as taking the role of the taupou in performances. However, one criticism from the Samoan raised students was that they did not in fact develop further their own understandings of their cultural traditions, as according to Scott “we know most of it.”

Just as importantly though, the Association also acted as a place where general information about university life was disseminated. The group provided an environment in which problems could be discussed and shared amongst friends who understood or, according to Luisa, who were “on the same wave length.” As Tasi reiterated, “it’s a place where a lot of Samoans can get together and talk in their language and just meet up with everybody.” It was a space where they could have a break from their studies and meet other Samoan students. Luisa said, “often it’s got nothing to do with university work, I can just be myself with my friends.” Sina joined the group mainly “to be with other Samoans,” but also so that she could participate in the So’otaga and meet other students around New Zealand. Anna appreciated the diversity of the group’s members and liked the fact that although
they were all from different backgrounds "there's a common tie there." Luisa summarised the Samoan Association as being a way of bringing together the various students from different parts of the campus who would have no other way of meeting each other as a group:

We are SAs and we are at varsity. I sort of feel you know that in one way we hold on to our culture, cause that's the only thing that links us.

Most participants mentioned this need to be with other Samoans. They highlighted the need to be able to talk to others in their own language, or to be with others who had had similar experiences:

Anna: When I'm by myself I actually try to find other Samoans just to have a conversation or something like that.

Lorraine: Why do you do that?

Folo: Sort of better than breaking the ice I guess, I mean to go to a new group you have to break the ice but when you go to other Samoans you've got something to talk about.

Nevertheless belonging to the Association could at times result in tension and stress for some students. This was due to the conflicting demands of academic study and those required to prepare for the annual So'otaga. The competitive aspect of the So'otaga combined with the related travel expenses necessitated their involvement in a great deal of fundraising and regular practices for the group items. This often placed pressure on the students: on the one hand they wanted to prepare for and participate in the So'otaga, as this interaction with students of other universities was viewed as an important part of their university lives, and on the other they needed to attend to their studies. Sami had opted to be a supporter only, because it was his final year of study and he needed to make a concentrated effort to finish his papers:

I was totally out of it because I knew it was my final year ... and it is a lot of activities to be involved in.... So I decided not to be a member.

Other students also made similar decisions especially if they felt their academic workload was too demanding or part-time employment encroached on their spare
time. However, they would support the Association by attending the fundraising activities, as it was a way of keeping in contact with other Samoan students.

Another positive consequence of the Association participating in the So’otaga is that the wider Samoan community becomes involved in the Association, as parents, other church members, and previous students support the students in their fund raising efforts. Parents can be pleased when their own children take part in these activities with success, which further establishes a sense of individual pride and identity. Luisa’s father was really surprised when she joined, as she had never joined a cultural group before. He was, in her words, “really happy” that she was taking an interest in her cultural traditions.

A number of the more mature students talked about how this Association could develop and expand its activities in other ways, particularly in the organisation of study groups or study skills activities. Sami thought that “an academic or study group could be developed” where students could meet and study together at the library and then have a meal together. The death of a mature postgraduate student, who had in earlier years taken the initiative to organise a similar support group, had been deeply felt by these particular students, but no one had taken on this role since then. While a small number of students did use the facilities provided by the Education Department for Maori and “Pacific Island” students, or the Macmillan Brown postgraduate room, or the International Student Centre, the majority used their peers in the Samoan Association as their main source of support in the University.

However, the Samoan Association at the University of Canterbury holds a contradictory place in the university, as it is both inclusive and exclusive at the same time. On one hand, it can be seen as a positive example of Samoan presence on campus and does provide a visible meeting place for the Samoan students within the institution. On the other hand, it can be seen in a stereotypical light by providing an
acceptable visible sign of Samoan students on campus for the institution. The Association members can represent Samoan students on multicultural International days within the institution, or represent the university on other community occasions such as cultural festivals or information days in the wider community. As such, the Association is the acceptable face for the institution, perpetuating a view, which according to Mele implies that the university is “doing their thing in providing support for us.” It gives the impression that the institution does support its Pacific students and that Pacific students are an important part of the institution by virtue of the presence of Pacific cultural groups. However, the fact that the Samoan Association was the main place and activity where the majority of these students felt the most comfortable disrupts the discourse that the university is a place of equal opportunities. Instead, it indicates that the university still has not attended to other structures and practices that make some members of this ethnic group feel as if they do not belong.

“Even if people have the ability to get to varsity, it’s the poor people that have to get the loans”—Crossing the (in)visible divide: financial support

The contemporary discourses of equal opportunities within New Zealand society embrace issues of participation and retention in tertiary institutions. The 4th TEAC (2001, pp. 76–77) report states its three core aims for student financial support are firstly, to increase participation, secondly to promote overall equity within the tertiary system, and thirdly to target and support particular students. The Commission believes that these aims are “addressed by providing different forms of student financial support.” The report explains:

Student loans are primarily designed to increase participation by spreading the cost of education over time, thus reducing financial constraints on the ability of students to study. Student allowances are intended primarily to address equity issues by providing additional financial support for students from lower-income backgrounds. Scholarships (and similar schemes) are used to support specific types of students. (p. 76)
The Commission, therefore, recommended to the Government that continued availability of student allowances and student loans will promote equity and equality of opportunity in formal tertiary education. In its more recent publication, the Ministry of Education (2002a, pp. 7–8) announced its commitment to supporting access to tertiary education via income support for students and the student loan scheme. A widely accepted precept within this discourse is that a university education is feasible for all members of society who meet the institution’s entry criteria, if they use the available financial allowances correctly. Furthermore, this rhetoric implies that an outcome will be a greater participation and retention in tertiary institutions by people from minority ethnic groupings.

However, this discourse presents rather too simplistic a picture, as the experiences of these particular students illustrate: access to a student allowance or a student loan did not equate to equal opportunities for participation in tertiary education. Other influences affected the financial disparities for most of those participants enrolled at the University of Canterbury as New Zealand citizens. These included: a low socio-economic background, gender inequalities, the lack of availability of student allowances due to parental income limits for the under twenty-fives, a lack of parental ability to provide extra financial support, and the inadequate amount available for living expenses within the student loan scheme (particularly for mature students with families). In turn, this often required that these students undertake part-time employment, and it resulted in high student debt.

This situation affected these students’ participation in and retention at the University of Canterbury, to varying degrees and with varying consequences. In this research project, there were four international scholarship students. Out of the remaining eighteen students, there was only one for whom money was not a concern, in that he had full financial support from his parents who were from the upper socio-economic strata in Samoa. For the other seventeen students, financial concerns and complications were often, if not always, present throughout their years at university.
Furthermore, the students envisaged this situation as ongoing for many years in the form of large student loans to be repaid when, or if, they obtained employment on the completion of their studies. The following section details my understandings of these seventeen students' individual financial positions and experiences.

Financial support was one of the major initial considerations for many of them when they contemplated university study. Their family's low income level meant that parental financial support was usually not a viable option; therefore student loans or allowances were the main form of income, and this was usually supplemented with part-time employment. The younger students, who attended university straight from school, had heard about financial support from the Government mainly through school friends, school careers staff, family members, or university liaison staff who had visited their school. However the mature students often did not have access to this knowledge and frequently relied on information gained from conversations with friends and acquaintances. Malia, who initially only enrolled at university on the insistence of a friend, did not know allowances or loans existed, let alone how to access them. It was her friend who guided her in these areas. In Malia's opinion, it is a lack of knowledge about the university, and/or where to source information combined with reticence, which stops some Samoans from enrolling in tertiary institutions:

I think our people out there really have the intelligence ... it's just they don't know where to go. They are too scared to face the Palagi or the government department... They just kind of hold back.

During the course of their studies, all these seventeen students had accessed student allowances and/or loans. For those who received a student allowance, it was still necessary to supplement this allowance with a student loan. In those situations where the parental income test eliminated the availability of the student allowance, the students borrowed the full amount available to them. For the four students who were able to live at home, their parents were able to give them some indirect financial support either by negotiating a token contribution towards or no
contribution towards the household finances. For some other students, parents offered support by sending food, money or other gifts, or by looking after children during the holidays or when they were sick. Luisa, who was a mature student, commented that normally it is the duty of the adult children to provide for their parents. Instead, the opposite occurred and she received encouragement from her parents to remain at university. Whenever possible they sent her things from time to time:

Like my mother, she’s always like sending parcels, or with anyone that comes to visit, you know clothes. She still thinks I’m eighteen and has to worry, rings up and asks what are you eating, have you got money for bus fare?

In chapter five, I discussed conflict between family expectations and the fa’aSamoa and university life. I highlighted how a belief that it is one’s duty to contribute financially in family fa’alavelave was at times a source of personal stress for some students. I noted that while it was usually the more mature students who were asked for financial contributions towards family or church activities and related fa’alavelave, more often than not the students themselves felt the need and duty to be able to participate in this cultural norm. I described how Malia’s children would challenge her about her financial contributions to the church when they were struggling financially. Other students reiterated these findings. At times Iosefo struggled with his father’s occasional request for money and wished his father had a better understanding of the limitations of his student loan. June and Kim both felt they wanted to give a contribution whenever a parent needed to go to Samoa. Niko and Sifo both gave to family fa’alavelave as often as they could. Polu provided a home for a niece from Samoa who attended school in New Zealand. These students did not ignore their cultural norms, even when personal financial situations were very precarious.

One direct consequence of the low-income level of many of these participants was that although they were all full-time students, most also obtained part-time
employment whenever possible. They acknowledged that this usually resulted in less attention to, and time for, their university studies. Grades were compromised and occasionally papers were failed due to the demands of trying to earn additional income. Shirley’s situation was indicative of others. She compromised her grades so she could maintain her part-time employment of up to 20 hours a week, and confirmed the impact of this stating that “my grades do not reflect my academic ability, only that I could not give enough time to my studies.” A consequence of lower grades meant that scholarships were not attainable. Also, two students who initially began working part-time ended up dropping out of university study and working full-time for a year before returning to continue with their studies. Though as Beverly said, “I’m back here [at university] because I know I don’t want to do that [kind of job] for the rest of my life.”

At the same time, financial pressures proved to be a good motivator for some students to keep working at their studies. If times got a bit stressed for Iosefo, or he found himself lacking the desire to keep at his assignments, his motivation was, “I think about the money, how much the course costs, about the student loan.” Other students used the university’s facilities to their own advantage as one means of stretching their meagre finances. This included helping alleviate the cold of winter by staying as late as possible, all night if they could get away with it, in the warmth of the university’s buildings rather than going to inadequately heated houses or flats. Luisa and Lulua both emphasised that giving up full-time paid employment to attend university made them more focused on their studies, but it did not diminish their constant worry over having enough money to pay the rent or the mortgage.

Those mature students with family responsibilities found they had added financial stresses, and believed they had to sacrifice a lot to attend university. There was little financial leeway for incidents such as sick children or unexpected transport costs. As Malia stated “I am really struggling just running a car, the loan, insurance and petrol.” As a parent who had sole responsibility for her children, the period she
was without a car while attending university was fraught with travel difficulties that at times she felt were insurmountable. Attending to family needs and getting to lectures on time whilst relying on public transport required extremely high organizational skills. Malia also viewed this as a situation where she could not make constructive use of her time.

Kim also found a similar situation extremely stressful when she did not have the financial ability to fix her car and was forced to rely on public transport to drop her children at childcare and school, attend lectures and get to her part-time employment. During one interview, she described how difficult her situation was at that particular time, as her children were sick and her car was not going. She stated that she could cope with dropping her children off at childcare and school, going to paid employment and attending university, as long as “nothing else happens things are fine, but at the moment I’m drowning. When it’s on schedule everything will work out, and then one of them gets sick or the car breaks down!” It was an impossible situation and her university work suffered in that she missed lectures and tutorials. She could not afford to pay for a tutor to help her catch up on missed work, as one department advised her to do, so she felt trapped by her financial circumstances no matter which way she endeavoured to help herself.

Another crucial consequence of inadequate financial resources was reflected in students’ decisions on whether to continue with post-graduate study or not. Financial issues were a major consideration. The majority of these participants said they would have to look for employment, while only three were considering furthering their study with postgraduate degrees. Iosefo summed it up for them all saying “I would like to do a Master’s [degree] but its just the money, that is the only thing that is holding me back.” Their personal financial situations illustrate the fact that there is a direct relationship between student financial resources and the number of postgraduate Pacific students in the University of Canterbury. University education
often was not an easy option to take, and continuing with postgraduate study was not a decision that most could make easily.

Later on in that particular interview with Iosefo, he offered his explanation for the failure of Samoans in the education system in New Zealand. He discussed how he perceived “the capitalist society was keeping people poor by having unfair structures that disadvantaged them [Samoans] more and more, getting thrown to the bottom of the heap.” He posited that Pacific peoples were used in New Zealand as a large pool of labourers, in order that “others at the top of the triangle can get richer.” His was partly a class analysis, where in his view it was impossible for this group of people to move out of the lower socio-economic group because for some people to move up, out of the lower economic strata, others had to move down from the upper economic strata. He believes this has an effect on education, as institutions are then used to regulate educated people into the work force. Furthermore, he believes that by keeping the fees and expenses high and raising the entry standards, the intention is to stop too many people becoming educated through the tertiary system, particularly those from lower socio-economic groups. He said that in his own case the raising of standards for entry to university nearly prevented him from attending. Therefore, in summary his belief is that:

The government raised the price, and then put people on student loans, which makes them dependent on the state. So to me I think it’s just another way to keep poor people poor, you know. And even if people have the ability to get up to varsity, it’s the poor people that have to get the loans.

While his educational experiences and thoughts did not highlight other theoretical perspectives such as ethnic and gender issues, they do provide an insight into how Iosefo saw New Zealand’s societal reproduction in a country in which “the structures are unfair.”

Finally, there was a marked contrast between the financial concerns of the above students and the four international scholarship students. These four students had lesser financial concerns, in that the NZODA Scheme supported them
financially. This meant their scholarship provided for all their fees and university expenses such as field trips, accommodation, travel and living expenses. In general, they stated that the amount they received from their scholarships enabled them to live in what they described was an acceptable lifestyle, although not by any means extravagant. Furthermore, they did not end up with student loans or other debt to pay back, like many of their peers. Instead, employment was guaranteed on their return to Samoa in order to fulfil the requirements of their bond. However, the majority did not have dependants and at times parents offered further financial support. Their most prevalent concerns were that the newer students needed to improve their budgeting skills during the first year of being at university, and the availability of money for extra tutoring if the International Student Centre could not provide for their needs. They felt that they could concentrate more on their studies, as they did not have the financial pressure that they saw in the lives of their other Samoan friends in the university, who Tasi said, “always seemed to be short of money, and having to work in part time jobs.” They were aware of the different financial barriers that their Samoan friends faced in this tertiary institution.

A tenet of poststructuralism is that power is everywhere, operating through everything and in all of us (Ropers-Huilman, 1998). However, aspects of the latest TEAC report, along with rhetoric in the University of Canterbury’s equity and equality policies, portrays the university as a neutral environment; as long as policies or aims and goals are in place, the institution will provide all peoples with the same opportunities for access and academic success. This chapter reveals how these students disrupt the discourses of equity and equal opportunities through highlighting conjunctions of various discursive practices within the university. Their experiences illustrate how they, at times, felt isolated and invisible within the institution, as they experienced situations and practices that reinforced inequalities and inequities. As they sought to make sense of the power relations within the institution, they did resist their positionings through drawing attention to and/or walking away from practices that strengthen and maintain the status quo. The
following chapter further addresses the discursive nature of relations of power-knowledge in constitutive processes, and explores power relations in epistemology, by deconstructing the normalisation of the 'right' knowledge and culture.

Notes

1 The statistics available from the university on staff ethnicity are not comprehensive. Unfortunately they did not have separate statistics for general and academic staff before 2001. The available numbers for Pacific staff are:

   1996 - 4; 1997 - 5; 1998 - 5; 1999 - 3; 2000 - 6

   In 2001 there were 5 General and 2 Academic Pacific staff members.

   In 2002 there were 11 General and 2 Academic Pacific staff members.

2 The number of postgraduate Samoan students has varied:


   The percentage of Samoan students who are postgraduates has always been smaller than the percentage of all students who are postgraduate. For example in 1997, 10.4% of Samoan students were postgraduates compared to 15.38% of all students. And in 2002, 5.95% of Samoan students were postgraduates compared with 16.1% of all students. The figures for 2002 show a disturbing decline in an already inequitable situation.

3 New Start was an introductory and preparatory course for mature students contemplating tertiary study, which is run by the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Canterbury. In 2002, the format of the course was changed and it is now called Succeeding at Tertiary Study.

4 As already noted in the introduction, a liaison person was appointed in 2001, initially for a six month contract. It was heartening to see on the appointment panel a representative from the Pacific community as well as a representative from the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. I view this as one positive way of recognizing the need for a culturally appropriate person in this role.
At the time of submission, there is an enhanced English Language Support Programme based in the Student Services Department of the university. However there is only one member of the university staff in this programme and he has 454 students on his books. Any student with a Non-English speaking background at the University of Canterbury can access his services. While this is an improvement on the situation in 1997, it is still inadequate for the numbers of students on this campus for whom English is not their mother tongue. In 2002, teachers from the English Language Centre have been teaching in the English Language Support Programme run by Student Services.

English Language programmes are also available through the English Language Centre and Foundation Studies, both under the auspices of the Centre for Continuing Education. The Foundation Studies programme is a year’s duration with substantial fees for both international and internal students, and the courses offered at the English Language Centre are mainly courses for international students at pre entry levels to the Foundation Programme and university, and again have substantial fees. However, the English Language Centre does offer an intensive two-week summer course on Academic Writing Skills as an introductory course for academic writing, which is attended by both international and domestic students.

The university statistics on the numbers of students taking Pacific Studies are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Samoan students</th>
<th>Pacific students</th>
<th>All students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1997</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>1998</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1997 University of Canterbury Enrolment Handbook stated that the International Student Centre is a place “where students from overseas (international and recent permanent residents) can seek help, information and social contact” (p. 15). (This quote was the same as that for the years 1995 and 1996.) The 2001 University of Canterbury Enrolment Handbook stated that it “offers a service to all
international students, including those who hold permanent residency" (2001a, p. 12). The University of Canterbury’s 2002 website (http://www.canterbury.ac.nz) states that the International Student Centre “exists as the focal point for support for international students. Our job is to help make your time at Canterbury as smooth as possible.”

In September 2002, The International Student Centre changed its name to International Student Support, because the staff saw that their role was one of support, which includes pastoral care relating to any personal matters, immigration advice, "whanau" support for students being disciplined, and provision of orientation. The staff expressed a wish to work more closely with other university staff by supporting them when they are dealing with issues related to international students. Another reason for their name change was to differentiate more clearly the International Office, which deals with students prior to arrival (marketing, admissions, exchanges) and the International Student Support, which deals with students once they are on campus (J. Pickering, personal communication, September 19, 2002).
Relations of power-knowledge: constitutive effects of exclusion

The relations of power-knowledge "determine whose experiences and whose knowledges become recognized and acted upon" (Ropers-Huilman, 1998, p. 96). With this in mind, discourses of equity and equal opportunities which do not attend to epistemologies of difference, render invisible processes of racialization, and ethnic, cultural, gender and class differences (amongst others) within the academy. In this chapter, these students problematise knowledge construction and meaning, along with the power structures that validate acceptable types of knowledge for this institution. Furthermore, it is important to note that each of the areas discussed needs to be considered both individually and simultaneously. It is in the combinations and intersections of discursive practices that we can consider the ways in which discursive injunctions constitute different subjectivities for diverse peoples.

In the academy, there is an expectation that once students enroll at university they will behave in certain ways, as a homogeneous entity. The implication from this
liberal humanist discourse is that all students bring with them the background and understanding, the cultural capital, required to access the hegemonic knowledge that the university has on offer. While I again acknowledge that some of these participants’ experiences may be similar to other students in the academy, I also restate that I do not intend to generalise or make comparisons with the wider body of students. In this thesis, the focus is on the subject positions of a specific group of Others, the non-traditional students, who are not part of the dominant ethnic group.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the culture of the university did not embrace these participants’ cultural norms and background experiences. This chapter develops further our understandings of those discursive positionings of invisibility, isolation and exclusion. It identifies how participants challenged notions of “having the ‘right’ culture” and “having the ‘right’ knowledge,” by unveiling practices that reproduce the normal. These participants contextualise and negotiate various expressions of difference, through particularly focusing on understanding unspoken workings of academia, respect, inferiority and inadequacy, intimidation, and the Samoan language. I also identify that instead of the academy accommodating these students’ ways of knowing and being, it demands assimilation and integration into a largely mono-cultural institution, which happens to contain multiple ethnic groupings.

“It’s the way we do things”—Exclusionary positionings: whose culture matters?

The first part of this chapter raises concerns about relations of power-knowledge and cultural differences by reflecting upon these students’ interactions with other students and staff of the university. Research/writing elsewhere (Anae, 1998a, 2001; Dickie, 2000, Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998; Figiel, S, 1996a, 1996b; Jones, 1991; Mageo, 1998; Meleisea, 1996; Pasikale, 1996; PISAAC 1989; Tanielu, 2000; Tofi et al. 1996; Tupuola, 1993, 1998a, 1998b) has detailed generally accepted traditional
Samoan cultural traits including: not questioning teachers, respect for elders, little eye contact and lowering oneself in the presence of elders, not interrupting a speaker, (amongst others). Many of these students also mentioned numerous instances of cultural difference, which usually contradicted those mirrored images of student normality in the university. Firstly, I will discuss their understandings of respect and the second part of this section will address other perceptions of the culture of the university.

"You’re always supposed to approach teachers and lecturers with respect"—Implications of respectfulness

A particular injunction within the Samoan culture is that of fa’aaloalo, respect. These participants stated they identified with a culture where automatic respect for elders and those in positions of authority is a normal facet of their daily lives. As Scott stated, “it’s the way we do things.” Their early university experiences confirmed that this cultural trait was not the norm in this institution, and therefore appeared to be irrelevant and not valued. A number of participants spoke about the lack of respect by others, in both their Palagi classmates’ behaviour as well as in some lecturers’ and tutors’ behaviour. In their view, Palagi students did not seem to have the equivalent automatic respect for their lecturers or tutors, and lecturers or tutors did not at times show this respect for their mature students.

It was in their first year at university outside of Samoa that the Samoan raised students realised their values of respect were quite different. Tasi mentioned an incident during a laboratory session where she felt that a demonstrator’s remarks to a mature woman were disrespectful, and that made her feel very “uncomfortable”:

I thought she was being really rude because you know coming from Samoa you respect elders and you always help them out but what I saw back then, that was very rude.

The demonstrator was much younger than the student was, and in Tasi’s eyes, the demonstrator should have been more respectful in her manner of speech, “it wasn’t just the words, it was the way it was said. She put her [the student] down in front of
everyone in the group." The demonstrator had said to the student, "don't you know how to do that? You should be able to do it by now!" Tasi said she should have spoken to the mature student in a different manner.

Similarly, the following conversation between Sina and Anna illustrates how respect for the teaching profession had been an integral aspect of their upbringing. This had an impact upon their relationships within the university:

Sina: Like the Samoan background, you know there is no eye contact between adults and children, and you're always supposed to approach teachers and lecturers with respect, and I find myself doing this.

Anna: It's like my parents have always been saying, 'listen to your teachers, don't argue back to your teachers, respect them, listen to what they've got to say,' and so it's like I put them [lecturers] up there [pointing upwards].

Anna said she very seldom approached her lecturers and would only go to them as a last resort. She would first endeavour to get any information or notes she needed from her friends. Sina explained that as a consequence, "when I go to a lecturer I actually go down lower, I try to lower myself and go 'excuse me sir' and, I won't look at them." She remembers one occasion when she finally got up enough courage to go and see a lecturer. He offered her a seat and a cup of coffee and she almost ran out of the room, as it crossed the boundaries that she was used to. She felt that this made her different from other Palagi students, as they did not appear to have to deal with issues of respect.

Sina continued to explain that she was like a number of her Samoan friends who were not used to approaching lecturers for help. A strategy she and her friends used was to meet over coffee and convince themselves they could actually go and talk to the lecturer concerned:

A lot of us ... we're not used to it, we feel intimidated most of the time ... going to lecturers asking for help... And it takes a few of us staying out there going 'you go, you go, you go!' And then we end up going for a coffee and saying 'nah we can do it, we can do it.' But it takes a lot out of you, you just have to psyche yourself up and go in and see someone.
Sina remembered another occasion when she needed to see a lecturer. She could not convince herself to knock on the door and was walking up and down the corridor practising what she was going to say. The lecturer concerned came out of the office and asked, “Can I help?” The result was Sina got all the help she needed. She also told friends about how approachable this person was so they were able to approach her too. Sina explained, “everyone [her friends] has this like stereotype about a lecturer—untouchable—just don’t ask for help and when you finally break through it’s such a good buzz. It’s such a big thing to actually go to see a lecturer.”

Scott spoke about pedagogical differences at both the Samoan and Canterbury universities. Scott compared his experiences in the Engineering Department at the University of Canterbury with the experiences he had as a student in Samoa. He appreciated the effort made by the Engineering Department to establish a better working relationship between students and staff, mainly through the department’s social functions and the access students had to lecturers if they needed to talk over issues or concerns. He saw the relationship between students and teachers in Samoa as different, students did not talk so openly to their teachers outside of the lecture room because “in Samoa you have that respect, you can’t talk to your teachers like that.” This affected his ability to approach lecturers or tutors in his early years at the University of Canterbury. He said, “In my first year I never went and saw anybody because you never go and see your teachers at home [Samoa] for any problems or anything, so I just asked classmates.” The thought of approaching lecturers was a bit “scary” for him. Scott thought the lecturer would just think he was stupid, “sometimes I get a bit scared. If it’s like a simple thing he might just think, ‘Oh like he’s stupid or something.’” He also saw himself as being very different to his Palagi friends because he could not bring himself to knock on lecturers’ doors. The first time Scott heard Palagi students query the lecturer and shout out in the lecture theatre he was “kind of shocked,” as he knew that “in Samoa you’d probably be thrown out of the room.” His experience was that students in Samoa did not behave like that.
Iosefo also recognized that in his early years, he had "trouble asking for help" and did not like to approach lecturers:

I didn't like to bother lecturers. It was kind of scary at first. I think because of the respect thing. Even through school I'd always sit at the back of the class and not look directly at the teacher, always respect the teacher.

He never approached a tutor or lecturer until he had been at university for a couple of years. As he became more accustomed to the way Palagi students interacted with their tutors and lecturers, he realized he needed to change his behaviour to get the most from his studies in this environment:

I found that you're not going to get very far if you don't get on with the tutor. That's one thing I've learnt at varsity ... having a good relationship with my tutors and lecturers. They've helped me to get through university. I mean they are there use them, you're paying them so go for it.... I've taken on that ideology from just looking at other people.

For him the hardest part was just knocking and opening their doors. Once he made that contact he felt that the people he asked had been very helpful and encouraging.

A few students spoke about their feelings of shyness and the effect this had on their interactions in the university. They explained that their difficulty in approaching lecturers and tutors, and/or speaking up in tutorials was a consequence of both being respectful of elders and speaking English as a second language. Scott thought his shyness was mainly due to his lack of English language fluency. He stated that Samoans, including himself, are not generally shy when speaking in their own language, but having to communicate in English can be a factor in their unwillingness to ask for any form of help or guidance. During his early years at university he was so shy he would not ask anyone for anything. He said, "I used to be so shy that I couldn't even ask if I was lost. I would be so shy I wouldn't ask anyone where the place was I was supposed to be." The longer he stayed at university the more confident he became about talking in English.

Mele also never approached the tutors or lecturers for help. She said that the communication barrier was sometimes her problem, "it's my second language that
leads me to pause a lot and think what to say.” Because of this she hardly ever spoke in tutorials as she felt she could not convey her points succinctly enough. Similarly, even Malia, a mature student, found it difficult to approach lecturers, especially those in senior positions. She felt shy and believed that she might be wasting their time:

It is very hard for me to approach ... because I still have that Samoan shyness in me.... Sometimes I feel ... that I’m asking too much or something.

One way she solved her problem was to ask someone else to go with her to see the tutors.

Others saw a relationship between respectfulness and loneliness. Tavita described his early years at university as being very lonely. He talked about how in his first few years he would not approach anyone for help but would try to do it all on his own. He thought that lecturers were just there to teach and that they did not really care whether their students passed or not:

I always thought that lecturers never cared. They are just here to write on the boards and then give you the test at the end of the year and that’s it. But I didn’t think that they would help you.

It took four years at university and the advice of another mature Samoan student, before Tavita began to approach lecturers. He found that they did not mind answering questions and were helpful. He said it took a long time to discover that he did not have to do his study alone.

In a similar vein, the supervision experiences of one post-graduate student highlight the serious consequences arising from a mismatch of expectations of different cultural norms. Niko’s constant problem with supervision was very disturbing and continually unsettled his progress. Initially he found it very difficult finding supervisors, particularly in his area of study, as there was no one in the university who had specialised in his area of research. The negotiation required to finally obtain semi-suitable supervisors was very stressful for him and took much longer than it should have. Furthermore, after finally arranging supervisors he found
that the standard of supervision was inadequate. Examples of inadequacy included: 
emails and phone calls that were not replied to, difficulty in arranging regular 
meeting times, drafts that were not commented upon for some time and feedback 
that was limited. Furthermore gaining human ethics approval proved to be an 
unnecessarily lengthy process, which prolonged his study.

In October, Niko had handed in his completed ethics forms to one of his 
supervisors, who was to forward the application to the Human Ethics Committee for 
approval. Niko had originally planned to begin his data collection during the 
following February. However, because his supervisor did nothing with the ethics 
forms until after the New Year, Niko could not begin his data collection until months 
after the prearranged time. This compromised his relationship with those at his place 
of research. The result was that Niko felt “devastated,” as if this supervisor did not 
value his research, as if he was somehow inadequate, as if no one really wanted to 
guide him through his thesis. He questioned whether he should stay at the university 
and do the research or whether he should withdraw.

Niko spoke about why he found this process demeaning. He said that because of 
his upbringing and cultural norms he found it difficult to challenge or demand a 
better service. He talked about trying to get “forceful” to get satisfaction, but he 
found that hard to do because of this supervisor’s position within the university. 
After reflecting on his experiences and listening to those of other Samoan students, 
he thought that some lecturers actually used this issue of respect to their own 
advantage:

A lot of senior lecturers, those adults with authority are aware of this 
Samoan culture. And they use it because they know that we will not push 
them or pressure them. And eventually the students will go away and let 
them [lecturers/tutors] do their own work. So they use our culture to their 
own advantage. As in our culture it is bad to bother those in authority.
While a difference in cultural traditions is not given as the explanation for the 
supervisor’s inefficiency and incompetence, Niko is saying that his cultural norms
influenced the way that he was able, or not able, to deal with the problem. He felt trapped in a situation he could not change.

However, the issue of respect was not problematic for a small number of mature students. While these particular students were fluent in English they were not all raised in New Zealand. Polu, had an "outgoing personality" and said she did not feel inhibited by cultural expectations, no matter where she was. Polu had no difficulty asking lecturers for help, and thought that being a mature student was an advantage. She said her life experiences had given her the ability to exist more easily within a variety of cultural environments. Luisa, also found that being a mature student had its benefits, both personally and academically. She felt that as a mature student lecturers and tutors often treated her differently. Rather than seeing her as just another student doing their course, she felt they saw her as an adult who was a student. This she felt was important because it helped her become more at ease to approach her lecturers or tutors for help or advice.

Similarly, Sami who had been a student for a number of years, said he had been able to adjust his behaviour to adapt to the culture of the university. He did point out, however, that in his first year at university he was a bit quiet until he knew more people in his courses. He, along with the other two Pacific students in his lectures, always used to sit at the back of the room together, as they did not want people to be aware of their presence. By the end of his second year he and his two friends felt confident enough to always sit at the front and be "more physically visible in his classes," that otherwise consisted entirely of Palagi students.

Each of these latter students felt that they were able to question and access information, as they needed to. They felt that they were able to fit into the culture of the academy, and if necessary, they were able to change to suit the environment, in order for them to be more successful in their studies. Although these few students' sense of confidence combined with their maturity enabled them to more easily adapt
to the culture of the university, this was not the case for other mature students, and many of the younger ones. The issue is more complex than just maturity and self-confidence, or indeed where one is raised or English fluency.

The constitutive effects of different cultural understandings can thus be seen through the concept of respect. Many of these participants believed that an important aspect of their culture was either not accepted as relevant and therefore ignored, or was used against them by those in positions of authority. They saw that the Palagi students did not behave, feel or think like they did. Consequently, they saw that in order to be more successful in their studies they had to adapt to the university culture, which was more easily achieved by a small number of participants than by the others. The following section continues to explore the impact of cultural differences within academic life, and further highlights how the dominant cultural capital is normalised through power relations within staff and student interactions.

"Canterbury [University] is ... culturally unfriendly"—Knowing the faces [ways] of academia

At face value, perhaps the most overt facets of an institution’s culture can best be seen in the personal interactions and relationships amongst and between staff and students, as well as in the activities it chooses to present to the wider community. In spite of this, simultaneously it is through discursive practices that the hidden curriculum of the university covertly created an environment, which was culturally unfriendly. This section follows the exclusionary positionings of participants as their stories further suggest a university culture that could at best be considered indifferent to cultural differences; a university culture that necessitated a certain cultural capital in order to be successful.

I have previously indicated how the early tertiary experiences proved to be troubling and unpredictable for many of these participants resulting in: low marks, abandoned courses, failed papers, students taking time out from university, and
abilities not being realised. However, their comments often initiated an in-depth discussion on grade levels received and/or their reactions to failed papers. Their explanations for disappointing results were contradictory in that while some students placed the blame for their lacklustre performances on themselves, at other times there was also a disquiet with the unfairness of the university environment and its structures. The following discussion centres upon their awareness that in their early years they did not know the ways of academia.

Iulia’s comments about her continuing low-grade average and her process for passing enough papers to obtain a degree revealed an institutional culture that did not offer her any alternatives. Although she worked very hard, Iulia often blamed herself for her academic situation, and at times believed her apparent inability to change her situation was a reflection of her “own lack of knowledge.” Her answer was to just keep accepting the lower grades and repeating papers until she passed her degree, “if you fail you fail, and then you come back and try it again next year, and hopefully it will be better.” This was her coping strategy, a resistance to failing. On the other hand she was very aware of how lonely a place the institution was for her, and she felt academic support for her was almost non existent.

Other undergraduates spoke in the same vein; they were aware of their low grades or failure rates in their initial years of study, but did not know how to improve them or where to go for advice or help. Lose was the first in her family to attend a university and had not personally known anybody who had previously attended university. She had not really known what to expect or what was required from her in order to get good pass marks, “so it was really hard.” Lose said she initially did not have the skills to write an academic essay:

It wasn’t a good start for me at all you know,... I didn’t know ... ‘what do I do here, or what do I do next, or what kind of essays or stuff.’ I didn’t know how to write and especially not to the ‘how’ of the university standard.
The only information she had received was from a liaison person who had come out to the school and told them about the points system in structuring a degree. Others’ stories were similar. Both Lose and Shirley stated that they “bombed out” in their first year, which proved to be embarrassing for each of them, as they each knew they were capable of better results. Sina’s comment was a familiar one, “I haven’t really gone to anyone. I deal with it [the problem] myself, I just have to.”

Sami’s final year grades demonstrated that he was always capable of success. His early years produced low grades and some papers needed repeating, and he was surprised that there was little help available to him. He originally thought that there would be someone to help him improve his assignments and essays, “but the only one who was giving us encouragement was the ODA adviser. But it was very general towards the students, no special advice for each one of us, or especially those who got low grades like me in the first year.” He talked about how difficult it was not to lose belief in his ability when he would work very hard on a project only to receive low marks, “I felt down on myself”. Sami’s explanation for his results was that he just had to learn the institutional “system” to succeed, as he did not see that the institution was going to change in time to help him. By his last year, he was getting high grades. At this stage, he was “very sure of when to do things, how to do things and how to approach people and especially the lecturers and the supervisors.”

Iosefo also “only started off with the C’s when [he] came from school.” His early assignments produced low marks and he would “just take the mark, not looking at the comments and just throw it in the cupboard.” He worked hard but his marks did not improve. He admitted that he was very reluctant to ask for help throughout his undergraduate degree and in the very early stages “never even thought to ask the tutors.” It was through peer support that he began to question how the system functioned and how he could fit into the system to gain the marks that he knew he was capable of achieving. In particular, he followed the advice of a mature student who had effectively utilised the tutors, and began to make a concentrated effort to
approach his tutors and lecturers for help and advice. The hardest part for him was actually "opening their doors and saying hi." He found though that most of those people he did approach were helpful and were the catalyst in the upward trend of his success. In addition, he found that there was a different relationship between him and his lecturers once he became a postgraduate student. They were more inclined to explain how he could improve his work. As he said, "I felt you could actually have a conversation with them and see their human side." Moreover, as he began to gain top grades for his work, not only did he finally believe that he could compete with the other students, he felt that there was a difference in his class members' attitude towards him.

When I got my first A I thought 'I could do this, you know I can do this.' I figured I belong here now. You know 'I can compete with you other guys.' And when I got the only A in the whole class ... I think I felt like I gained a lot more respect from the other students.

The relations of power-knowledge can easily be seen as these participants spoke about how they had to learn and understand how the university system functioned. The processes of student normalisation ensured that they thought it was normal for them to get low grades or fail. It was their problem if they were in this situation. However, some of these participants stated that as they became aware of how the system worked, usually after a few years at university, they were then able to change their own behaviour to suit the system. The institution did not address its cultural practices to help these students improve their academic achievements.

Similarly, there were further situations where other mechanisms employed by some staff are perceived as exclusionary devices by some students. The following illustrations may, or may not be similar for other students, but nevertheless were seen in this research as another relevant concern in these participants' overall understanding of what it means to be a student. These participants referred to complex hierarchies within the institution, including academic positions, class,
culture, ethnic, and gender, which worked to reinforce their sense of difference and disjunction.

Iulia's experiences left her wondering if things could be done differently in the institution, because she found that some people in the university, "just seem to be rude, not friendly to my way of thinking." Particularly during her initial years at university, there was difficulty in making contact with lecturers out of lecture time in most of the departments in which she studied. When she went to various departments to try to see a lecturer, often the office staff did not know the movements of the academic staff, and she could not source the help she needed. This was not an infrequent occurrence and was very frustrating for her. Although, she stated that she would only return once and then would give up:

Through the departments that I have contact with they [lecturers] aren't there. And you go to the office and the office people aren't aware of their movements either. So there's sort of lack of communication between the two ... and that doesn't help the student.

Iulia found generally that it was hard to access tutors as well, because "they've only got certain days and certain hours that they're available." She also found it difficult to try to make a special time to see them outside of those hours because they never seemed to be available when she tried to contact them. Her tutors did not accommodate to student timetables, so she ended up "muddling along as best [she] could." In most of the departments Iulia studied in, she found that her student needs were not met; she thought the departments "were quite unfriendly." The American Studies Department was the only department that Iulia felt comfortable in. She thought that this department made their students feel welcome, partly due to the staff leaving their doors open; it made a difference to her own attitude and she felt more confident to go and approach lecturers in their offices if necessary. It was also the only department which encouraged her to speak; the tutors specifically asked for feedback during tutorials. She said actually being purposefully encouraged to
contribute her own thoughts made those papers more enjoyable and much more interesting.

Kim found that access to tutors was also just another struggle for her. The tutors were not available at a time appropriate for her, as she endeavoured to fit university around childcare and paid work. She would have liked access to a tutor in the evenings once the children had gone to bed. On more than one occasion she talked about how difficult it was keeping up with her work and finding someone to discuss areas or concepts she did not understand. In her experience while the departments she was studying in did offer tutorials, they did not cater very well for her needs as a mother with children.

Beverly also confirmed that within one of the departments in which she studied, there was quite a difference in attitude among tutors. She thought a few of the tutors were really approachable but in one paper in particular the tutor would not help them because of the way the tutorials were structured. She found this very difficult:

How they can call themselves tutors and be there to help you if they’re not going to help you when you’re struggling with an assignment? And if you’re struggling with an assignment it’s because you don’t understand it. You’re not asking them to give you the answers, just to help you.

She had no one to turn to for help in this particular paper and felt that this situation was not acceptable.

Shirley described how for her “it’s been one extreme or the other.” She had experienced tutors who “think they’re so above you and you’re away down there [pointing to the ground].” On the other hand, she had experienced tutors who were “just so willing to help you to understand everything,” like the ones she came into contact with in the Education Department. These tutors shone above others because of their attitude and their ability to make her feel as if she was achieving. However, her experiences in another department brought issues of ethnicity and class to the fore. She explained that in these particular tutorials she felt very different due to her
ethnicity and her socio-economic background. Unsettling comments were not usually explicit but covert; such as in the way people discussed ethnic and class issues. Shirley said that while the tutors and students were talking about “Others,” meaning minorities, she was one of those being talked about, an “Other.” She felt she could not contribute in tutorials, as she thought that those around her would judge anything she said, because she was an “Other”:

I won’t say anything because they might think you’re dumb, the ethnicity thing and that people think that you cannot learn because you’re from the lower class and that you’re not going anywhere, you always have that in the back of your mind.

Lose, who in the previous chapter highlighted how she felt constituted by colour, reflected further on her feelings of exclusion. Whilst Lose felt that she was “lucky” to be at university, as not many people from her neighbourhood or high school came to university, she also felt that “at the same time it [was] just a struggle to be here.” Lose’s experiences at university illustrate what it is like to feel different, to feel excluded from the student body. It was not so much that anyone actually said that she was different; rather that she observed that other people treated her differently:

Sometimes when I first got here I felt like people were saying ‘what are you doing here?’ Just not so much that people were saying it but I dressed differently, came from Lakeside High School and so I was always dressed in tracksuit pants. And when I came here I felt like everyone was like ... into their labels and their top fashions and I felt like everyone was looking at me and I wasn’t.

Her feeling that she did not belong at university was particularly strong in Lose’s early years. She explained, “I was scared of the tutors, I thought I was taking up too much of their time already, being part of their classes and I felt that if I had to ask any more they would think that I was stupid.” If she was unsure of her opinions she would not contribute to discussions, which meant she usually said nothing in tutorials. There were a number of mature students in her Sociology classes who she thought must know more than she did, so she let them talk and just listened, as she
would do in her own cultural environment. The fact that there were no other Samoans in her tutorials and classes contributed to her sense of disjunction:

It was a real effort to get there and sit in the class and listen because I knew that I wasn’t going to have a part. I was just going to watch everyone, so yeah I did a lot of back seat in the tutorials.

Luisa also noted how other Samoans at this university would talk about how “culturally unfriendly” this university was:

I noticed ... when I actually met the Samoans that are at varsity.... Their feeling of how Canterbury [University] is culturally biased or something, or culturally unfriendly was the term used.

She agreed with their comments, and stated that when she started university she felt as if she was “at the bottom of the very big ladder,” and that the university was “sort of like very official.” She noted how few Samoans were at the university, and many of the people within the institution she had met did not appear to be welcoming or friendly.

Anna explained that her experiences as a postgraduate student were also different from those of an undergraduate. She said she was able to communicate with lecturers on a one-to-one basis more easily and frequently as a postgraduate. She particularly found that her lecturers in the Education Department seemed genuinely interested in her welfare, “even if I was getting behind I’d get calls, ‘how are you going with your work?’” At times, readings were sent to her home. Nevertheless, Anna still found it extremely difficult to ask for help and had to “psyche” herself up every time she needed to talk to someone in a position of responsibility. Her strategy to seek help was, “I actually go to someone who I’m comfortable with even if it’s not the person I’m supposed to go to.” She found a woman lecturer that she could relate to and who was willing to listen and talk with her, so she went to her with all her problems.

Thus within this institution, discursive practices render culture and cultural differences invisible within discourses that continue to perpetuate the ideology that
everyone has equal opportunities in the university. At the same time, their accounts also portray discursive practices that reinforce differences of class, gender and ethnicity. While some students thought the interaction between staff and students was more positive and open than pedagogical practices in Samoan educational institutions, others stated this was only present in a few specific departments, or in a few tutorials. The following section in this chapter further develops the notion of exclusionary positionings for these students by problematising the power relations that reproduce the ‘right’ knowledge and language within this university.

“We’re being pushed down again”—Exclusionary positionings: having the ‘right’ ...

The traditional liberal and liberal-humanist discourses of equity and equal opportunity imply that the curriculum of the university is objective (Bailey, 1999; Grant, 1993). This perception signifies an epistemology that has sustained structural differences and has limited our understanding of the relationship of power-knowledge through privileging some forms of knowledge and ways of knowing over others. Furthermore, this epistemology normalises students by emphasising individual agency in the form of personal choice, and places the success or failure solely upon the individual student. The continued emphasis on this liberal epistemology is seen through these students’ reflections that reveal discursive practices in the academy which reproduce exclusive and excluding forms of knowledge. These reflections focus on their feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and intimidation, and the place of the Samoan language. At the same time they expose racialized, ethnic and gendered ways of knowing that further unveil how these students both position themselves and are positioned by the discursive nature of equity and equality discourses.
“I did not have the right knowledge”—Inadequacy and Inferiority

Sina’s experiences in one of her papers illustrate processes of both normalisation and racialization as she critiqued whose knowledge is accepted within the institution. Her story both positioned the lecturer as the colonising authority and expert who knows it all, as well as offering an example of how knowledge is contested within the institution through her resistance to the images with which she was confronted. The following narrative is from Sina’s perspective, and focuses on a situation that made her feel as if her understanding and knowledge were not relevant.

Sina began her story by explaining that, in her opinion, some of her lecturers were closed to others’ viewpoints. She said that she had withdrawn from a particular paper because she felt that the lecturer’s attitude, language, and understanding of Pacific history negated others’ views of historical events, and in turn herself as a person. On several occasions when Pacific nations were the topic of discussion the lecturer used the word “native,” which she interpreted negatively. She said, “well ‘native’ is derogatory, that makes me get so worked up, it’s really hard trying to talk to him.” Not only would he use the word “native” to describe the people from ethnic groups within the Pacific, he would use the word whilst “looking at me.” This increased her discomfort, as she was the only Pacific student in this paper. After the lectures finished, other students would acknowledge her discomfort and say they too did not like the way he spoke, but would not challenge him in class. She was “amazed” at his attitude in lectures, as he appeared to be “a nice supportive person” in other situations.

She thought, however, that the most unsettling aspect of his behaviour was that, “he expects you to use his info in the essay as well, but when you come from another perspective he does not really take it, he scribbles in your essays.” Sina made her decision to drop this paper after she had failed an essay, which in her view was due to her presentation of an account of Samoan history that differed from his. She drew on indigenous authors for her arguments, “it was based on writers from there, you
know, and people who actually lived there, and their books.” She stated that she had been taught this line of thought when she was studying in Samoa. However, she believed that her ideas were not agreed with in this paper at the University of Canterbury because the lecturer used “another book,” another version of her history:

I come here and they have another book here and when we don’t agree.... Like the German occupation of Samoa, I believe that Germany did a lot for Samoa as opposed to the New Zealand administration, and he [the lecturer] believes otherwise and I back myself up with the sources I have and I quoted from them and he gets really worked up and then I get marked down.

Thus, her normalising gaze not only sees her understanding of the history of her homeland condemned, it diminishes her as a person. The message she takes up is that she is not important, her knowledge is not important, instead the colonisation process of Samoa continues through semantics and a particular view of history. The only way she knew to resist was to withdraw from the paper:

I think ... we are trying to grow, like progress ... and we just feel like we’re being pushed down again.... He’s not supportive. Well, he can think what he likes but he’s not putting me down.

Other participants also highlighted the relations of power-knowledge in the attitudes of other students, as well as in perceptions of what is, or is not, taught at the university. Luisa did not appreciate it when some of her student acquaintances in a study/discussion group said that women in the Samoan culture are subservient. These women had not been to Samoa and had no in-depth appreciation of her culture but were willing to pass judgements on the role of Samoan women:

This particular work group, they all take Feminist Studies whereas I don’t. And I mean I’ve never said that I’m not a feminist but they get angry when I don’t have an opinion. And they sort of ... say ... ‘your culture is subservient anyway.’

Luisa felt they dismissed her culture, which was especially hurtful within an environment that she felt should be more open to differences. As a woman, she felt she was being categorised yet again. Situations like this one had made her more aware of how different she was from some of her friends at university:
I have become more aware how different I am ... with my Pakeha friends. And that in their eyes I will always be the minority, you know, no matter what.

Lose also contested the knowledge taught in the university, and argued that, for the most part, university courses contain knowledge that is relevant for the dominant group and stated, “for me, it’s taken me to take a stage three Education paper to finally find something that we’re studying about, that is about me.” In one of her papers, the students were discussing and reading about education and Maori society, and “we also talked about the minority Island experiences through varsity.” It was this specific paper that made her realise that her experiences and cultural understandings had not been acknowledged at any other point during her studies. All she had learnt about was others’ knowledge, of ideas and understandings based on others’ experiences, views and values.

Her awareness and understanding of her exclusion as a Samoan from the academic knowledge of the academy acted as a catalyst for Lose to begin to challenge and question the reproductive effect of the institution. She believed her own attitude to her studies changed as she was affirmed in her understanding that she, as an individual, was not the problem. She became one of the main speakers in tutorials and developed good relationships with lecturers and tutors. Lose said she then had the confidence necessary to approach tutors and lecturers, and had learnt that they are there to help. She had also been asked to be a tutor herself in her final year so she knew that she had “grown a lot from [her] first year.” Her struggles had not been the result of personal inadequacy but were part of wider issues that the university needed to address. As she became more outspoken, she had a greater sense of her own role in challenging the ways in which marginalised peoples, including those with Pacific backgrounds, are positioned and treated within educational institutions.
Folo also experienced feelings of inadequacy, which had resulted from his belief that he was different from others in his classes. He felt that the knowledge taught belonged to the Palagi and that he was the one who had to keep quiet in class and absorb that knowledge if he was to succeed. On one hand he had taken Mathematics and Computer Sciences as “I’m not a good essay writer,” on the other hand he still felt as if he was inferior because he did not know as much as the Palagi:

I just feel that I don’t know as much as them [Palagi] ... because the technology is theirs and I am coming to learn their technology and their knowledge. And they know more than I do because it’s theirs.

Sina said she could relate to Folo’s comment, and stated that she only spoke out in her History papers when it was about the Pacific nations. When it came to the history of other countries she felt she could not contribute, as it was not “worth saying anything because they [Palagi] are going to find flaws in it because it’s theirs.” Therefore, she remained silent.

Tasi reiterated that she too, felt part of “a minority in this place” and felt different from some of her peers. She said that in her earlier years of education in Samoa, students were “not very vocal back home,” and she saw that Palagi students were far more vocal than she could ever be. At times this could be frustrating, as she listened to them, but she could not contribute in case she “did not have the right knowledge or information to share.” Anna had similar feelings, but believed that through personal contact lecturers could help to change students’ perceptions. She said some of her best days at university were:

when the lecturers have taken me aside and spoken to me because they’re concerned, and you come out feeling more and more motivated and you want to do work.... You feel you are a part of varsity and someone’s looking out for you as opposed to when you first come you think its just you against everyone.

Sami mentioned another instance where he thought institutional practices reinforced the view that Pacific students did not have the ‘right’ knowledge and education. The university did not appear, to him, to be attempting to address the
issue. He discussed the issue of entry criteria for the undergraduate course in the School of Forestry. This topic was important to him, and one that he had also discussed with other prospective students from various parts of the Pacific. He was under the impression that it was difficult for students graduating from other education institutions throughout the Pacific, to meet the criteria to enter the School of Forestry. His suggestion was that the university could run an extra pre-entry year in order to accommodate those students who wish to further their studies in New Zealand:

Add on another extra year for these graduates from the Pacific Islands so that they can come here.... Yeah like an introductory year so they can be prepared ... for the Forestry year degree.

He stated that while he attended the University of Canterbury there were very few students with a Pacific background studying in the School of Forestry. Sami believed more students wanted to come to this university, and would come if the Department would find a way to address this issue. He did not believe that Pacific peoples were incapable of further study; the opportunity was just unavailable to them. He felt that the university was not fulfilling a wider role in the Pacific community through the dissemination and sharing of knowledge; initially by denying access to students from this region through its strict entry criteria, and secondly by not assessing how it could change this situation. The situation is cyclical: if the peoples from the Pacific are not given the opportunity to access and share in current up to date knowledge then this in turn affects their involvement in the development of their own nations. The status quo is maintained.

"Using the 'right' language"—Intimidation

The previous section has disrupted assumptions of the liberal discourse of equality, and illustrated how the curriculum can produce a sense of inadequacy and inferiority for those who are marginalised. However, some students felt more than a sense of inadequacy in relation to the curriculum; they felt intimidated in that they did not have the 'right language' and as such felt excluded from participating in oral situations. In one of Shirley's stage two papers the tutor, who was also a part time
lecturer, would use extremely academic language in such a way that she could not understand the explanations. The result of this was that she felt she did not learn anything from those tutorials:

She uses words that ... like really [difficult] academic words. I ask her to explain it, and she will just explain it in [those] academic words so you don't really understand what she said. So you don't learn anything.

Shirley often thought that she would not be able to complete the paper and struggled to understand many new concepts presented in the course. The result was that she regularly thought she really did not have the academic ability to succeed.

Polu’s experiences illustrate how positionings in the university are at times contradictory. Earlier she had described herself as a mature person with an outgoing personality who was able to ask for help. However, she also felt intimidated as a student, because she did not have the “academic jargon” and language to succeed, “some tutors and other students use all this technical [language] to explain things and I feel quite intimidated.” She wondered if she would gain higher grades and participate in discussions if she had the “right” academic language.

Mele and Malia deliberated about how they felt different in tutorials because they were Samoans. These feelings of difference emerged as they discussed the fact that Palagi students were more often the ones to have the confidence to ask questions, to challenge each other and discuss points. Both felt left out of the tutorials because they did not have the confidence to participate in the discussions. They explained that their lack of confidence was partly due to being a Samoan in a group of Palagi, partly due to their perception that they were not able to express their thoughts clearly or as well as Palagi students, and partly due to their belief that they did not have the right knowledge:

Malia: I feel a little bit left out, like especially in a tutorial group. I am lacking in confidence where it's conveying of thoughts and ideas of what you know. It's like that's where they get you. That's where they analyse your knowledge of the subject.
Mele: Not quite cause the white students usually challenge the question. They don't have to be asked whereas me, the tutor has to drag something out of me.

Niko's opinion was that Samoan students perceive a distinction between those experts with the knowledge (the lecturers and tutors) and those without the knowledge (the students). Therefore for the students "there is the fear of making mistakes and the fear of failure, and the doubt that you have, always have, of making the right choice or saying the right things, using the right language." He believes it is common among "minority students and is a barrier to learning."

Lose explained her feelings of difference and used what she termed a class analysis. Lose said she had "to work hard to understand the language. I felt intimidated." She said that her cultural background was very different to the student culture in the university; the type of dress and spoken language were both areas that particularly illustrated different class backgrounds:

I think it is a class thing ... most PI are working class, there's a culture out there that's different at the university, a student culture that's kind of like a class thing as well. Like the way you dress or the way you speak.... When I came into varsity I would be speaking in my slang.... No-one kind of could understand me in tutorials, once I learnt big massive words and went back to my side of town and started talking they thought I was too good for them.... So it's like different sub cultures.

On another occasion, Lose also talked about difference in terms of her ethnicity. She stated that in her early years at university during group discussions and tutorials, "people looked at me and looked right through me." She believed that she was not smart enough to speak out and "usually took ages" to voice her opinions. Lose remembered one occasion in a group tutorial when she had made a particular effort to speak out. However, as she spoke, another student spoke over her and did not listen to what she had to say. Lose found this very disconcerting and rude. She felt this was very dismissive, which reinforced her feelings of not belonging. She said, "I ended up going home and just thinking again 'people here, you know, just don't,
they don’t feel like I belong here.’ She emphasised that it was very difficult being the only Samoan in tutorials, and it was very challenging “not to be intimidated by students and tutors as well.”

On the other hand, Beverly did not struggle with academic language. She explained that perhaps this was because the high school she attended emphasised academic achievement:

I don’t think I found it too much of a struggle, it may have been because of the school I attended. I felt that I was academically prepared for varsity.

At the same time, she acknowledged that she was quite happy to sit at the back of her lectures and hide. She said that although she was in her second year she still had not asked a tutor a question:

Normally I go and ask other people who are taking the class if I have a question, or I just try and sit there studying it out my self. I have that sort of reservation that I do not like to ask questions in case it is something stupid.

Beverly did recognize that the financial expense of attending university placed a pressure on her to do well, so it was important that she worked at overcoming her fear of contributing in tutorials and/or lectures.

Sina also referred to the difficulty she had of striking up a conversation with Palagi. She found that she was usually the one to initiate a conversation. She went on to describe how she did not like saying anything in tutorials or lectures. Usually by the time she had convinced herself that what she had to say was good enough, it would actually come out all wrong, “I feel like I have to ... grovel to get something across.” Folo made similar comments and explained:

So you are trying to say ... finding the right words, and ‘am I going to be at the same level? Will I be able to speak appropriately to this lecturer?’ I mean sometimes I feel dumb in front of a lecturer, like ... ‘I have to be at his level. Just do I have the words to speak to him in the right manner?’ And that’s what makes me nervous, just intimidation I guess.

Folo’s response was to only go to the tutorials that he enjoyed, where the tutors seemed to respect everyone’s views. One of his lecturers would keep ringing him to
encourage him to finish his work, which he appreciated as it made him feel that someone thought he was important.

Thus, although the university does have an equity and equal opportunities policy, several participants have challenged the discursive practices that produce the unspoken need for acquiring the "right" language. Some participants have provided explanations as to why they felt intimidated by language; others have highlighted the ways in which they have addressed, or resisted their marginalisation. In conjunction with this, participants also drew back the curtain on another way in which the university's hidden curriculum acts to perpetuate what is important knowledge within the university. The following discussion notes the absence of the Samoan language and culture in the university's curriculum and the relevance of this absence within discourses of equality.

"That would've been the first paper I'd have taken"—The Samoan language: questions of the absent presence

The discourses of equity and equality authorise whose voices can be heard and whose voices are silenced, or at the very least, they diminish the authority of those voices (Usher and Edwards, 1994). These Samoan students drew attention to the silencing of their voices by questioning the unavailability of the Samoan language and culture as a subject for study at this university. In chapter four, I discussed the Samoan language as an intra-cultural issue. To expand on that discussion, I now introduce the Samoan language and culture as an inter-cultural concern. Many of these participants emphasized the importance of Samoan language maintenance, and believed that the wider New Zealand community needed to become more aware of the need to keep other languages alive. Furthermore, they believed that the University of Canterbury could play a role in the confrontation of societal attitudes, as a part of an awareness raising process.
The current situation in Christchurch, where most educational institutions still do not provide an opportunity for study of the Samoan language and culture, was deemed unacceptable. This situation was deplored, because as Tasi pointed out, Samoan is part of the curriculum in many educational institutions in the other main cities of New Zealand. Some participants suggested that both primary and secondary schools should teach the basics of the language. Others thought the university was one institution which should further develop Samoan language ability and cultural knowledge; and in particular the Samoan Oratory could be explored. Beverly said she would have “loved the chance to learn it [the Samoan language] at university.” She further commented that “[it] would’ve been the first paper I’d have taken, if they’d had a Samoan language paper, even a cultural paper.” Shirley agreed, as she too knew very little Samoan and like Beverly had had no opportunity to learn it during her schooling. Lose thought “it’d be awesome as I can speak it, but not as fluent as I’d like to.” Iulia reiterated that she “would love to study it, I know just a few words but it is tough going.”

Sami saw the potential for promoting the need for and acceptance of bilingualism in New Zealand, and discussed how in Samoa many people are now bilingual. There the children have Samoan as a first language and learn English at school. He believed that there was no reason why bilingualism could not be achieved in New Zealand, and said, “if they’re doing it in Samoa with English they should be doing it here [in New Zealand] with the Samoan language.” In his view, the problem is not a lack of student willingness to participate in any courses, but instead policy and social dictates that over-ride the needs of smaller ethnic groupings.

Like Sami, others also expressed frustration with the seemingly accepted norm of New Zealand as a monolingual society. The following conversation indicates the way in which the underlying discursive nature of racialized practices still reinforces the dominant status of white western culture and the supremacy of the English language within New Zealand. Tasi and Scott had been debating the pros and cons of
offering the Samoan language as a subject in the university, and discussed who might choose to attend such a course:

Tasi: I guess it depends on the interest of the student, like some students aren’t really keen on learning the culture and the language. Some … just want to be identified as Samoan but don’t really want to learn the culture and language.

Lorraine: Why do you think that is?

Scott: Because they think they don’t need it.

Tasi: They’re brought up in New Zealand in a different culture and [they question] the use of Samoan culture to them if it’s not going be used to benefit them in life.

They argued that because English is the language used predominantly in New Zealand, it has the most value and prestige. Consequently, individuals are more inclined to perceive it as unnecessary and irrelevant to learn and/or maintain their mother tongue. They believed that both the Samoan community and the wider community needed to appreciate the value of Samoan language maintenance. Otherwise over time, the majority of Samoans will be absorbed into the mainstream New Zealand society, and while they might identify as Samoan, they may know or understand very little about the Samoan culture and language.

Several of the participants saw the status of the Samoan culture and language as integral to reaffirming the place of the Samoan community in New Zealand. Many participants thought that through the practice of offering study in the Samoan language and culture, the university would be seen to add a status to the language and culture. This in turn might result in the wider Samoan community gaining a greater sense of place, acceptance and pride within New Zealand society. Sami believed that educational institutions should offer the Samoan language as a matter of course, to benefit both students and parents:

That’s the only idea I can think of to upgrade the speaking of the Samoan language for the students here, especially our Samoan students. I think they [the parents] will … feel great because it’s a chance for them … to bring their children over, and ask them to take that paper, because it’s going help the children. Not only the Samoan language, but some traditional stuff, like how to cope with the family, the Samoan way of living … understanding the language and the culture.
In his view, this would act as a positive reinforcement for parents of the importance of using and teaching Samoan to their children. The younger members of the Samoan community would gain a greater awareness of their language and culture, which in turn would enable them to gain a better sense of who they are. As well, more mature students might be encouraged to come to university where they could further study their own language and culture.

Lose also mentioned the role the university should have in the dissemination of knowledge, and not just certain types of knowledge. She thought it would be good for Samoan students to have their culture and language recognised in the institution:

Like it’s a part of them that is recognised by the university and it’s kind of like a confidence thing, and for the university to recognise the Samoan language it would be a builder for you as a minority.

Others also stressed the benefits to the wider New Zealand community. As Peter noted, “there are Palagi who are interested in learning the Samoan language and culture.” He suggested that a greater understanding and acceptance of the Samoan people would occur in the wider community if people from other ethnicities had the opportunity to learn the Samoan culture and language. He thought it was a way to help racial prejudices begin to dissipate.

Lose wondered whether there was a relationship between the level of non-participation by Samoans at university and the lack of Samoan papers offered by the university. She felt, from her own experience, that part of the problem might be that Samoan secondary students often do not choose to attend university because they feel that there is nothing culturally relevant to them in the institution. Lose’s experience was that she had “come from a background where it’s cultural, you have your culture groups, you have Samoan faces around and you have got something to link to.” She did not find the same environment within this institution. She thought that if the university had offered Samoan papers she would have taken them and that would have helped her to settle into the university and to develop a better learning ethos. From her point of view, the university should provide an opportunity for
students to learn their language at a level that might not be possible in secondary schools or in the home.

Not everyone agreed with the above comments; a small number of participants thought that if people wanted to learn the language and culture then they should go to Samoa. Again, this opinion reinforced the view that the 'proper' language and culture can only be absorbed and learnt by being in Samoa. In addition, Tavita also felt uncomfortable about offering the Samoan language in preference to other languages from the Pacific Nations:

I'm not saying it because I don’t want it to be taught ... because I don't want people to know about our culture. It’s just that ... one reason why is because they are not going to teach Fijian or Tongan.... They’d have to do all the Islands in the Pacific.

He is highlighting the constant appeals from these students to be recognised as a distinct Pacific group. Furthermore, he believed that other Pacific peoples living in New Zealand also deserve to have their own individual language and culture recognised, both in the educational institutions and in the wider New Zealand community.

Sifo and Malia discussed the issues from a pedagogical viewpoint. Although they also argued for the Samoan language and culture to be included in the university’s curriculum, their main concern focused on their perception that there was a lack of qualified teachers of Samoan at this level. Additionally, they both raised a concern about the lack of Samoan teachers and lecturers in any subject throughout all educational institutions. They, amongst others, suggested that the formal Samoan language should be taught as well as the more colloquial everyday spoken form, thus reinforcing and upholding the formal language and status of the Samoan orator and the matai system, and the fa'aSamoan.

To sum up, while there is a sense of language change as those who had been raised in New Zealand adapted the Samoan language to their own needs and oral
abilities, there is also an acknowledgment that the spoken language is being lost by the New Zealand raised community. In addition, the fact that their language and culture is not offered for study purposes at the University of Canterbury reinforced a sense of disjunction. They experienced a dichotomy, on one hand the university is distinguished as a place of high educational value—a place to strive towards and revere, a place in which all people are meant to have equal access and rights. Yet, on the other hand, these students' revealed how their traditional culture and language has little place or recognition within this academy.

In conclusion, this chapter has revealed further relations of power-knowledge through rendering visible these students' exclusionary positionings, problematising 'regimes of truth' as constituted in liberal discourses of equity and equality of opportunity. Their experiences reflect an institution where overt and covert practices and structures constitute whose knowledge and experiences are legitimate, and whose culture and cultural practices are validated as the acceptable norm. In particular, they challenged epistemological understandings through disrupting notions of "right culture" and "right knowledge." Their experiences illustrate discursive injunctions of constituting practices that did not acknowledge their cultural norms or backgrounds, rather their experiences emphasised their invisible, isolated and excluded positionings. The institutionalised practices in the university perpetuate processes of racialization, and in the main, only give lip service to their ethnic, class, gender and cultural differences. These students' experiences also draw attention to the way in which attendance at the University of Canterbury actualises a process of normalisation for these students that attempts to assimilate and integrate them into the dominant western culture.

Notes

1This term “absent presence” is also used by McLeod and Nola (1998) whose chapter in Feminist Thought in Aotearoa New Zealand focuses on the ‘absent
presence’ of the voices of ‘Other’ women in New Zealand literature. The ‘Other’
women they refer to are Maori women, lesbian women and women immigrants who
are not of Anglo-Celtic ethnicity.
Discussion: Weaving the reflections behind the curtained mirror

‘tala tusi’
tell the book
word the spirit of brown
in theory
in creativity
we make our own sound
renown (Selina Tusitala Marsh, 2001, p. 138)

My discussion chapter draws the findings together in four themes that link and interweave throughout the thesis. Within each of the themes, I also make connections to my research questions. As I explore notions of collectivity, resistance, choice, and the ivory tower, I am mindful of the ways in which we can catch ourselves in acts of constituting and being constituted as well as attending to the discursive practices that we use to shape who we are (Davies, 1994). I am also mindful of the power of normalisation whilst acknowledging that universities are places where practices are entrenched as well as where possibilities are born (Foucault, 1977; Lewis, 1993). Within each theme, I consider discourses of possibility that reveal and disrupt acts of constitution, by weaving together the
reflections imaged in the mirror once the curtain is drawn. I begin with revisiting the notion of collectivity, both within the university setting and the wider community.

Revisiting the taken for granted collectivity

A significant feature of this thesis is that it acknowledges and discusses one Pacific ethnic group, within a tertiary institution that is predominantly monocultural in its practices and structures. At the same time, this thesis acknowledges differences within and amongst the individuals who decided to participate in this research. One might ask why this is important. Poststructuralism encourages us to disrupt the discourses that constitute or shape who we are. What I attempt to do in this study is highlight that there are many differences and experiences, which are complex and shifting, between ethnic groups, between the members of an ethnic group and within individual subjectivities. However, I also illustrate that dominant members of a hegemonic society do, in some instances, collectively name and categorise a non-dominant ethnic group as the Other. In these situations, differences and diversities seem forgotten.

As previously presented in chapter two, power relations in processes of normalisation use discourse to position and constitute people in unequal ways, which can include being positioned or positioning oneself within a collective. From a Foucauldian perspective, the modern disciplinary society operates an efficient mechanism of self-discipline to control people by blocking relations of power (St Pierre, 2000, pp. 491–492). As St. Pierre (2000, p. 491) writes “discipline blocks relations of power in that it objectifies and fixes people under its gaze and does not allow them to circulate in unpredictable ways.” This self-monitoring process, defines what is normal and expected.

According to Gore (1995):

Norms differentiate individuals from one another by reference to a minimal threshold, an average to be respected, or as an optimum towards which one must move. (p. 171)
However, processes of normalisation rely on a number of ways to regulate and differentiate, and in the education arena include examinations, grades and the bell-shaped curve for marking distribution amongst others. For the purposes of this discussion, I focus on normalisation and the manifestation of binaries, where a comparison takes place between the normal, superior side of a binary and the other inferior side. The poststructuralist tool of deconstruction allows a disruption of these binaries to expose the ways discourse produces meanings. It is important to remember that deconstruction is not necessarily dismissive or negating but enables a term to be called into question, to be opened up and used in other ways (Butler, 1992/1995, p. 49).

A feminist poststructuralist view on collectivity argues that to talk about a group of people, particularly women, in the collective is exclusionary and normalising. While it may be suggested that conceptualising an ethnic group, as a collective, is not problematic because there is usually a common bond such as language or rituals, I argue that categorising any group can be exclusionary and normalising, and is inter-connected with other constitutions including ethnic, race, culture or class. As Williams (1997) states:

The ideological content of forms of categorization has material effects on the lives of those subject to them, and we need ways of explaining the distinctive consequences of being inserted into key discourses in particular ways. To be positioned as a student, or a consumer, or an employee means something different when interlocked with categorizations around sex, social class, ethnicity or disability for example. (p. 45)

Therefore, all discursive acts of categorisation or collectivity need to pay attention to the constituting role of language and the practices that sustain relations of power, including asking such questions as: Who is doing the categorising? and What are their purposes?

Moreover, this position is not only the domain of feminist poststructuralist theorists. Wetherall and Potter (1992, p. 146) point out that in much experimental research, social categorizations become “a priori given” [emphasis in quote], rather
than something for investigation, and that categorizations are constitutive and reflective. Similarly, Billig (2001) notes that many social psychologists see categorization as crucial for the development of group identity and see it as a universal process. He suggests that categories need to be “studied in their discursive and rhetorical contexts” (p. 218).

A number of writers also see collectivity as a process of racialization. Brah, Hickman & Mac an Ghaill (1999, p. 4), who theorise on race and ethnicity, suggest that “a poststructuralist position involves a deconstruction of the very process whereby the collectivity is constituted and positioned in relation to other groups.” After highlighting the limitations of previous conceptions of racialized or ethnicised identity formations, Brah et al. (1999) and Brah (2000) draw our attention to how poststructural theorists have critiqued explanations of racialized differences and taken-for-granted definitions of ethnic group identities (see Wetherall & Potter, 1992; Hall, 1990, 1992). Furthermore, by theoretically centring on the process instead of focusing on the product, both minority and majority ethnic groups can be seen to be engaged in the constituting and reconstituting of cultural identities.

Hall (1990) also theorises that processes of normalisation are interwoven with issues of culture. With reference to the Caribbean experiences, Hall (1990) writes that:

The ways in which Black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation. Not only ... were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as ‘Other’. Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed, as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet ‘power-knowledge.’ ... It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that ‘knowledge’, not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm. (pp. 225–226)
Although he is discussing a situation outside of New Zealand, it nevertheless is pertinent to the normalisation processes in the experiences of many of the participants in this research.

From yet another theoretical perspective, issues of class are connected to the ways in which individuals are collectively categorised. Langston (1993) states, “class is complex and has different meanings and experiences in different settings,” and there “is a very complex system of class differences and privilege among the working class” (p. 71). Although the focus for her work was working class students, she suggests that both working class students and academics with working class backgrounds are subjected to categorisation in the academy by the way they act and speak, and that contrary to the accepted view, education in the university only “serves to perpetuate dominant values” (p. 71). Hooks (2000) also reminds us that class, through “the miseducation of all underprivileged black groups” determines who gets to be educated in elite settings, including universities (p. 97).

To recapitulate, there are a number of theorists from various fields of expertise concerned with the ways in which individuals’ lives are constituted by collective categorisations and subordination. Although in certain instances, collectivity can help identify patterns and trends through points of commonality such as in a census survey, a discourse of collectivity can also bring discursive silences and hidden agendas within constituting practices from a number of intersecting and interlocking perspectives. Nevertheless, it is a feminist poststructuralist position that enables a deconstruction of the processes in which collectivity is constituted and positioned in relation to other groups.

In this study, one aspect of these participants’ normalising gaze centred upon collectivity and the interplay between notions of identity and difference. While I have previously documented a number of theoretical insights into the binary of identity/difference, in this chapter I argue that deconstructing these terms provides a
complex and shifting interchange of positionings, which bring into play a multiplicity of power relations related to gender, race, ethnicity, class and cultural discourses.

Poststructural thinkers conceptualise identity, difference and equality as being politically and socially problematic (Ropers-Huilman, 1998, p. 118). Identity politics and the politics of difference have arisen through understandings that identity is neither singular nor fixed, and subjectivities are multiple, shifting and contradictory (Davies, 1994). At the same time, numerous debates about issues of equity and equality have not resulted in equitable outcomes for many students who experience inequalities in educational institutions. In this thesis, there are numerous examples of exclusionary and normalising practices. The participants spoke about their coexistence within multiple, contradictory and shifting discourses as they attempted to balance their desire for unity with their recognition of diversity.

The complexities of collective identification and collective Othering, are seen in the participants' discussions around the emergent Pacific and Samoan discourses. A criticism of a shared identity imposed by others was described by those participants who disapproved of categorisation, homogeneity and all encompassing identities for Samoan diaspora in New Zealand, that do not allow for differences between and among groups and individuals. Several participants talked about instances of fixed identity. These included: instances where some participants were labelled New Zealand born; where the term fiapalagi was used to describe those who were being thought to be behaving too much like a Palagi; where existing stereotypes predetermined gendered roles around sport; where the dominant ethnic group maintained static notions of “Pacific Islander” and/or “Pacific Island” student.

On the other hand, and often simultaneously, some participants in this research also described how identity politics was seen in a favourable light in certain situations. This was recognized by Weedon (1999), hooks (1990) and others who
believe that many postmodernist feminists acknowledge that there are at times strategic needs for identity politics, particularly in relation to shared forms of oppression and to achieve political objectives. However, they also propose a discursively produced identity, which is necessarily always contingent and strategic. As a resistance to collectivity, participants in this research noted how some Pacific peoples, including Samoans, had taken up the discourse of “Pacific Islander” and used the collective term for themselves. They recognised that a collective identity has its uses for solidarity, for purposes of obtaining funding, and for national unity especially when they found themselves in a minority situation. In some situations, the term “Pacific Islander” was a common bond for all Pacific peoples. A number of participants indicated that a wider shared identity still had its place for smaller ethnic groupings.

Two other categorising identities were of particular interest, and illustrate the complexities of revisiting collectivity. Several participants noted that their identification by skin colour was not static nor a one-sided connotation. While on one hand their skin colour identification by others was understood as a process of racialization, or being othered, singled out or categorised, on the other hand some participants had taken up and owned this shared identity, and they themselves used such terms as “brownies” or “looking for the brown faces”. This, they suggest, can be a very powerful tool of resistance, that acknowledges a solidarity whilst being constituted as the Other. Similarly, terms such as Samoan or New Zealand born were discussed as being complex and shifting. Participants spoke about the unity in these terms, that as a collective, they evoked a sense of belonging, a common bond, but simultaneously these terms had different meanings not shared by all concerned. The issue with these collective identifications is also concerned with who is doing the categorisation and for what purpose.

In juxtaposition, while participants did not wish to disregard collective identities entirely, they also spoke about the interplay between identifying with the
collective Other, yet being subjected to and constituted by many differing experiences. The politics of difference deconstructs the notion of difference and demands that difference is shifting and complex, rather than a unitary comparison of one thing against another thing. It is also initially important to appreciate that while theorists, especially white middle class feminists, have often talked about the Other, they have often not dealt with the differences in the category of the Other (Singh, cited in Smith, 1995, p 7). Throughout this thesis, examples of differences abound with conflicting subject positions. There was the tension about who calls whom Samoan or New Zealand born, and a variety of ethnic identifications and different understandings of the Samoan language and cultural traditions. There were diverse subject positions in the home, sometimes related to gendered roles, and a variety of parental expectations for their studies. Involvement in the church and related activities varied, and despite often-documented views, several participants did not participate regularly in religious practices while they were studying.

In addition, the binary of international/national Samoan students does not account for the variety of backgrounds, expectations and experiences presented by individuals within each of these collectives. Cultural issues of respect, along with attitudes or expectations towards accessing university staff, whilst very similar for several participants, were not the same for everyone. This implies that shared cultural traditions, such as respect, are also in a constant state of change and can be experienced and thought about differently. The tension or dispute around an emerging Samoan dialect in New Zealand is illustrative of these differences.

As a final comment, any discussion on collectivity, identity and differences can become dangerous territory for a cross-cultural researcher. Speaking for or about Others, as previously discussed in chapter three, is a contested area. With this ethical discourse in mind, I believe that within this research I have been able to explore the possibilities and complex ways that differences can be understood within this educational setting, rather than focusing upon a single or generalised experience or
identity for all Samoan students. Each person's experiences are different, while at the same time they present pictures that interweave in and out of each other's stories. Like Ropers-Huilman (1998), who believes that there can never be a single way of educating for differences, I also suggest that approaches to understanding differences should be always open to re-evaluation. Researchers need to be open to the ways in which people can rewrite the script, that is the ways in which they are constituted and reconstitute themselves (Fraser 1997a). The following three themes in this chapter, further explore the constituting script of the Samoan student within this university.

(Mis)understanding resistance

In the theoretical chapter, I briefly pointed to a feminist poststructural concept of resistance. I would like to develop this understanding further by particularly drawing on the work of poststructuralist writers and the findings of this research. Feminist poststructuralist writers have suggested that discursive practices can be analysed by asking questions about where resistance and possibilities of challenge and transformation might be found, and that poststructuralism has enabled us to disrupt or open up our understanding of resistance. Davies (1990) and Jones (1997) both argue that to live in the modern world, and to take up existing discourses, at times “it is necessary for us to (mis)understand ourselves as the authors and fail to recognise the constitutive force, of the language we speak” (Jones, 1997, p. 268). In light of their argument, I believe it is necessary to think about how we (mis)understand our conventional theoretical constructs of resistance, in order to conceptualise resistance differently.

Freire (1984/1985) talks about resistance in the sense that he believes individuals are capable of gaining a critical understanding of the world and are able to free themselves from domination. Similarly, Coxon et al. (1994) defines resistance theory in education as:
A form of theory in education which does not see social inequalities as being reproduced but sees individuals and/or groups as capable of, and actively resisting power and authority structures, as in Paul Willis's, The Likely Lads. (p. 275)

Paul Willis offers a notion of resistance whereby working class lads were unruly and disruptive as acts of resistance (Willis, 1977). Through the concept of resistance, he used a class analysis to explore the interaction of agency and structure, as well as the ways in which the “lads” both resisted and reproduced hegemonic power. Although the goal of his work was to understand the processes of social reproduction, he did not investigate the possibilities for social change. However, his work has been important in developing concepts of resistance, which emphasise that both structures and individuals are involved in the processes of resistance (Sparks, 1995, p. 30). Quigley (1990, p. 107) argues that resistance theory grew in part in reaction to reproduction theory and “is founded on intentionality and agency,” which is a key to its importance.

Sparks (1995) further explores the concept of resistance and suggests that strategies of resistance are on a continuum, and each strategy is able to be employed either individually or collectively. At one end of the continuum, Sparks uses ‘acts of refusal’ to describe how the participants in her research refused to participate in mainstream education and at the other end ‘creating opportunities to learn’ as ways in which they created self directed learning opportunities. Quigley (1990) and Crowther (2000) who challenge dominant discourses of participation in adult education also suggest that there are resistance strategies to participation in adult education. Crowther (2000) talks about resistance instead of barriers to participation; and with reference to the dominant discourse, which focuses on barriers, he states, “the dominant discourse has difficulty in conceptualising non-participation as a form of resistance” (p. 489) (see also Clegg, 1989). He suggests that instead of thinking about the barriers to education we should look at non-participation as “an implicit ‘culture of resistance’ to mainstream education values” (p. 489). His argument is that disrupting the dominant discourse allows a focus on resistance rather than barriers.
While there are similarities between these critical stances on resistance and poststructuralist stances, the former appear to suggest an emphasis on individual agency and resistance as a discrete entity. For example, Sparks (1995) states that:

A continuum of activities used to resist the dominant discourse of what it means to be part of the undereducated “minority” population supports a view of people as knowing actors who have the power to intervene in life events. (p. 120)

Feminist poststructuralists, on the other hand, endeavour to disrupt concepts of resistance, by drawing on Foucault’s model of discourse and power to explore opportunities for resistance to that power, first at a localised level and then at a broader level (Weedon, 1987). Theorists in this field believe resistance is not “a single unifying concept” to be used to limit our understanding of human actions (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 492). Resistance is not seen as only one particular way of responding to a given situation, and their analyses of resistance are not only concerned with a single positioning, such as that offered by Willis (1977). Instead, these theorists argue that there can be multiple forms of resistances, which also can be contradictory and complex (Elizabeth, 1997; Grant, 1995; Ropers-Huilman, 1998; St. Pierre, 2000). Although power affects the constitution of ourselves, the exercise of that power does not wholly determine who we are, as according to Foucault there is always the possibility for resistance even if it does not result in acts of resistance (Elizabeth, 1997). A poststructural theory of resistance assumes that resistance both negates power and produces discourses. As Elizabeth (1997) writes, “[resistance] produces discourses and subjectivities which can be utilised to contest and struggle against those discourses which legitimate domination, exploitation and subjection by the powerful” (p. 24).

This poststructuralist theoretical position arises from Foucault’s view that resistance and power are always present, one is not outside the other. Foucault’s relations of power always allows for opposition and resistance to its effects. According to Baldwin (2000), this ability for resistance could be termed a “counter-
power,” and additionally, “power will seek to contain and control such resistances, often through the working of hegemony” (p. 258). Furthermore, if there were not constant opportunities for resistance people would act in an obedient manner (Foucault, 1982/1997a). A belief that people are positioned multiply, and often contradictorily, provides the opportunity for resistance (Walkerdine, 1986; Usher & Edwards, 1994). For example, these participants are positioned as students, Samoans, coloureds, women, men, mothers, sons, and inferiors, amongst others. The constitutive effects of discourse can be seen through the networks of their discursive injunctions. However, people are never fixed as subjects because of their multiple readings or positionings. Hence, the multiplicity of positionings provides for instability, which allows for struggle and change to take place; resistance is always possible.

Therefore, contradictory subjectivities can bring contradictory resistances. Resistance can occur as we are taken up by the discourses that shape who and what we are. It is this reconceptualizing of opportunities of resistance that has allowed me to present readings of these students’ experiences, which challenge the single unifying notion of resistance. However, I do not intend to replace one single unifying concept with another but different single unifying concept. Instead, I will explore participants’ practices through various readings of resistance, in light of both poststructuralist and adult education theory. Although I do not intend to imply that all participants in this study participated in all acts of resistance, I wish to recapitulate aspects of the findings in order to explore further the contradictory nature of resistance in its complexities.

One reading of many of these students’ experiences might be that they passively accepted the practices and structures of the university. Like the university students in Grant’s (1993) research, they did not participate in any organised movement of resistance during the course of this research, and did not find a place within a wider political movement. Usually, these students did not verbally interact with those in
positions of power, such as tutors, lecturers, and those at management level, in order to make their concerns known. Only a few students articulated explanations of class and social reproduction. However, this did not mean that they did not resist. It means that there is the possibility of reading their experiences, actions or inactions in different ways, and that their ongoing and contradictory practices of resistance may be localized, rather than widespread or part of a collective movement.

Within another reading, I, like Pasikale (1996) suggest that culture mediates resistance. Pasikale writes that in a “Polynesian context ... silence can be used to communicate discontentment, respect, or lack of interest or understanding” (p. 22). For example, there are differences in acceptable ways of behaving in Samoa and New Zealand. In the traditional Samoan culture, many young people are taught to listen to their elders and not to resist them verbally or physically, or refuse to do what they are told. Active resistance against adults is not tolerated to the same degree as in many New Zealand families (see also Tupuola, 1998a). This does not mean that resistance does not occur in Samoa; rather it can occur in more silent ways. Examples include withdrawing emotional responses, or becoming musu (when things are done but done unwillingly with a resentment and usually in silence, or the person becomes sulky). If we accept Niko’s view that the most obvious and tragic form of resistance among young people may be suicide, then the high rate of suicide in the younger population in Samoa is testimony to his view. Silence, in the Samoan culture, can be seen to work in contradictory ways simultaneously: through silence a person is showing respect and adhering to cultural norms, but through silence, that same person can also engage in a form of resistance. This dichotomy, contained in cultural notions of respect, has implications for acts of resistance in the university setting.

Reading silence as a form of resistance, from a cultural positioning or its interconnectedness to culture, enabled me to reflect differently upon these students’ experiences. While their silences might be read initially as accommodating to or
coping with discursive practices, their cultural positionings enable the possibility of silent resistance. As detailed in the findings chapters, a number of students spoke about the sense of disjunction they experienced in a variety of settings within the university. They added however that they did not feel they were in a position to do anything else but remain silent, or walk away from situations with which they were not comfortable. Examples include withdrawing from courses or tutorial groups but not saying why, not attending orientation related activities because of what they thought were inappropriate practices, not attending to administrative aspects of being a student because of the need to deal with individuals who made them feel uncomfortable, walking away from stereotypical or discriminatory comments rather refuting them. This was their way of refusing to accept these constituting practices; they were resisting assimilation and its related discursive practices.

Similarly, other participants spoke about how they understood their position as a student in the university to require them to be respectful to those in authority; they too did not see any other option but to remain silent, and/or to withdrawal. One example is where participants did not openly challenge stereotypical views of lecturers or tutors, instead they did not participate in discussions. Another is the belief of some participants that as students they cannot change aspects of what is taught in relation to the Pacific so they are silent to those in authority about their concerns. Another situation saw a student continue with inadequate supervision rather than purposely address concerns with the supervisors. In this example, the participant’s resistance meant the continuation of inappropriate communication and an inability to resolve the issues.

The contradictory connectedness and co-existence of resistance and power relations meant that if participants had openly and obviously challenged or resisted certain practices then they could be seen as rejecting their cultural upbringing where younger members are not expected to show resistance. Speaking out might be read as resisting or going against their cultural norms of respectfulness, or being fiapolagi.
On the other hand, if these participants were silent, if they did not take obvious actions to challenge or change situations they were adhering to their cultural discourse of respect, and some, at the same time were resisting their current situation through silence and inaction.

However, in an educational environment, such as the university, where speaking out or expressing one’s thoughts is a normal expectation of being a student, being silent is not an expected act of resistance (see also Jones, 1991; Pasikale, 1996). Nevertheless, in the university, several participants used silence and its complexities as a form of resistance to the discursive practices in a culture that they saw as exclusionary, and one in which they felt they were invisible and isolated.

This reading of silence as a resistance does not mean that every act of silence by every participant was an act of resistance. Rather, it does allude to the various ways that silence can be an act of resistance. It redirects our thoughts to previous feminist arguments where silence has been written about both as a political act of resistance where silence would be more effective than words, as well as where silence has been socially imposed on oppressed, exploited and subordinate groups (Lewis, 1993; Luke, 1994; Orner, 1992; Ropers-Huilman, 1998). Orner (1992) reminds us that “a feminist poststructuralist analysis, in order to avoid the “master’s position” of formulating a totalising discourse, is contextually based” (p. 81). As Weedon (1987) argues, “power relations in any given situation determine how best we will act” (p. 139). This means that student silences cannot be simply read as resistances or false consciousness, as students are complex, contradictory subjects within contexts, which also are complex environments of shifting power relations (Orner, 1992).

These participants’ silences do suggest that silence can be a chosen act of resistance, or an act where a subject refuses a constitution, although visible change in an existing power relation might not be evident. For example, if a student withdraws from a course as an act of resistance to the lecturer or course content, or
to being constituted as the Other, then this will not necessarily bring about a change in the course content or the lecturer's act of Othering. Although I argue that if a student refuses a constitution, refuses to be taken up by the Othering discourse, then a change in the constitutive effects of the power relations in that constituting act is occurring. Moreover, there is the possibility of unconscious acts of silent resistance, where students may be resisting a discursive practice but not consciously aware of why they may be resisting. For example students may be choosing not to participate in group discussion but not aware of why they felt they did not wish to take part. As suggested by Willis in 1977, the possibility that resistance might be thought about as being more complex than a conscious act, in which subjects attempt to free themselves from domination, allows for alternative readings of silence. Poststructuralist thinking enables a continuation of this debate.

A further reading of resistance focuses upon several participants' comments about why they took part in this research. A number of the students participated in and used this research as an active form of resistance. Of those, some said they wanted to be able to talk about issues concerning them in an environment that felt safe. Others hoped that change might occur, because of the research, while a few saw it as an indirect way to encourage other Samoan students into the university. They stated it was a way of having their voices heard in an institution that does not appear, or even attempt to listen to their needs. Some participants believed the interviews provided one place in which they could say how they thought the university, for the most part, was culturally unfriendly and culturally unaware, without being ignored or being judged for speaking in such a way. Similarly, in the group interviews they could discuss things amongst themselves in an environment that was culturally sensitive. Several students felt able to challenge stereotypes in conversations with their peers. These particular participants obviously viewed this thesis as a fitting vehicle to disseminate aspects of their experiences as tertiary students.
In light of Spark’s (1995, 1998) and Crowther’s (2000) theoretical arguments about resistance and participation in adult education, I wish to offer yet another reading of resistance and argue that acts of resistance can be simultaneously shifting and contradictory. Sparks (1995, 1998) described ‘resistance strategies’ as strategies with clearly defined boundaries. In contrast, I posit that acts of resistance are not that clearly definable. In this study, more often than not, those who resisted in one form or other also continued to participate in the discourse or discursive practice that they were resisting. This means they were accommodating a discourse as well as resisting a discourse.

Additionally, Sparks (1995, 1998) described ‘avoidance strategies’ to mean acts of walking away or withdrawing, and ‘acts of refusal’ that meant that students refused to take part in a particular institution. I argue that acts of resistance can take up contradictory roles, which at times can also be taken up simultaneously, and that boundaries are often not that clear. For example, one student resisted by withdrawing from a particular paper she saw as maintaining the discourse “Pacific Islanders” as the Other, but stayed within the university to complete her degree. Other students went to tutorials but said they never spoke or only spoke when prompted, withdrawing from verbal interaction because they felt uncomfortable. Others stayed in lectures but sat in the back of the room and talked amongst themselves, as a form of resistance because they felt they did not belong. In these instances, students used non-participation and/or withdrawal to resist the constituting effects of a discourse, but stayed within the student discourse to complete their degrees.

I concur with Crowther (2000), who suggests it is more useful to think of peoples’ non-participation in adult education as ‘part of an implicit ‘culture of resistance’ to mainstream educational values’. This is in contrast to a “blaming-the-victim” or deficit accounts of a motivation-barriers approach to explanations of non-participation (p. 488). Crowther (2000) draws on Clegg’s (1989) concept of ‘frictional’ resistance to argue that this form of resistance “may not necessarily
involve, overt, intended or direct conflict with power" (p. 489). I also concur with Elizabeth (1995) and hooks (1984), who view acts of refusal as meaning that a subject will not accept the way that others are trying to constitute or Other that subject, which may be seen in a complex multiplicity of positionings.

Finally, I believe that feminist poststructuralism enables us to read disjunction in a slightly different light than that offered by Weil (1989). I argue that disjunction is descriptive of another way of resisting. In his reference to black students in the academy, Allen (1997) described how students resisted those practices within the academy that made them feel isolated, and how they had created their own black space. Similarly, in the University of Canterbury there exist relations of power that shape various participants’ feelings of not belonging, of not having the right dress or clothing labels, of not being part of the dominant culture. Their sense of disjunction occurs as they resist the norms within the institution. Their “brown” space and their informal network is provided by the Samoan Association, and the rooms this Association uses in the Student’s Union Association building. Implicit in disjunction are relations of power, which as previously discussed and according to Foucault (1982/1997a), co-exist with resistance.

In conclusion, I have argued that resistance is not only an act that is “do-able” or “see-able,” as in an uprising of a collective against oppression or an individual act that purposely seeks to disrupt and change the dominant discourse. Instead, resistance is always possible, where acts of resistance within discourses do not necessarily disrupt existing power relations. It is possible to accommodate to discourse and undertake acts of resistance to discourse at the same time. Resistance “implies the existence of a context shaped by power relations” (Elizabeth, 1997, p. 22), where resistance to those power relations is always possible, because “as competent social actors we are able to recombine discursive elements to produce new discourses and subjectivities” (p. 24). It is not my intention to posit a hierarchy or a continuum of different acts of resistance, or to compare differences between
various acts. Instead, through revisiting concepts of resistance I suggest that we are able to attend to and become aware of different ways in which people resist, in order that we can be more open to possibilities of transformation. Simultaneously, I believe that there are times when we need to retain the ability to unite in collective resistance to oppression and power. I also understand that agency enables an individual to consciously take up an act of resistance. In the following themes, I further discuss agency, choice and the ivory tower, respectively.

**Disturbing the notion of choice**

I, like other feminist poststructuralists (Davies, 1991; Davis & Harré, 1990/2001; Elizabeth, 1997; Flax, 1992; Lather, 1991; Ropers-Huilman, 1998; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1987) have embraced a theoretical perspective that allows room for people, as subjects, to participate in the social processes that shape who they are and the society in which they live. As Ropers-Huilman (1998) writes, “agency coexists with discursively formed subjects” (p. 17). These writers have argued that choice is possible because people have agency, and that choice itself is not a unitary concept. Agency allows for resistance, and signals an awareness “of the complex character of negotiations we undertake in the course of everyday life” (Elizabeth, 1997, p. 22). A strength of the feminist poststructuralist paradigm is that it recognises the constitutive effect of discourses, and in particular, of discursive practices, as well as an agentic subject who is capable of exercising choice over those practices (Davis & Harré, 1990/2001).

This contrasts with rational choice theory underlying neo-liberalism, as well as the humanist and positivist discourses, which predominate in the social sciences. The former assumes that people are free to make their own choices from a range of possibilities that the market offers, and that individuals are defined by self-interest (McLennan, Ryan & Spoonley, 2000, p. 93). Here choice is “seen as being a series of equal preferences,” has no regard to the “influence of collective norms and values” and is highly individualistic (p. 51). On the other hand, a humanist
perspective emphasises personal agency, and normalises choice through the belief that:

The choices that the individual makes are based on rational thought and are thus coherent choices that signal coherence and rationality of the individual. People who do not make choices on this basis are regarded as faulty or lacking in some essential aspect of their humanness. (Davies, 1991, p. 43)

The liberal-humanist educational discourse advocates personal development, individual freedom and human relationships, and:

assumes a world of non-contradictory ... individuals whose unfettered consciousness is the origin of meaning, knowledge and action. ... and present[s] the individual as a free unified autonomous subjectivity. (Belsey, 1980, p. 67 cited in Codd, 1990, p. 145)

At a wider societal level, the notion of choice in education has also been examined through Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony and Bourdieu's (1973/1977, 1989/1996) theory of cultural reproduction (see also Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Both these theoretical positions argue that wider societal forces and messages have an influence on the choices that people make, and that education is not a neutral process but a site of struggle. In this discussion on choice and agency in decision-making processes, I wish to signify that a feminist poststructuralist disruption of choice can still exist alongside notions of hegemony and cultural reproduction. One theoretical paradigm does not necessarily exclude the other. I suggest that poststructuralism allows us to acknowledge hegemony and cultural reproduction while, at the same time, recognising the importance of being aware of other discursive injunctions that impact on our ability to make choices.

Jones (1997), Butler (1990), and Davies (1991, 1997) argue that choice is constitutive, in that we can only choose the tools that are lying there. As Butler (1990) says, “there is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very ‘taking up’ is enabled by the tool lying there” (p. 145). By this, they mean that our subjectivities are constituted through the discourses to which we are exposed. Davies (1991) writes, “we can only ever speak ourselves or be spoken into existence within
the terms of the available discourses" (p. 42). Crowther (2000) also argues that choice is complex and is affected by the conditions under which it is made. He points to the relationship between choice, power and authority, and writes that choices people make are “never even in their consequences” (pp. 483–484). Thus, it is important to understand agency as meaning we can choose, mindful that our choices are related to available discursive practices, as we look at the complexities and contradictions in these participants’ lives.

Choice is also full of complexities and is contradictory. Choice is not something we just do, or that we have free will to just do; contradictions from various discourses shape our choices. It is the weaving together of these complex positionings that disrupts the assumption that agency is possible within a set of consistent choices located only in one discourse (Davies & Harré, 1990/2001). For the students in this research, their countless choices, including those of first language in the home and subjects / degrees at university, have been shaped by numerous conflicting messages, including those within cultural, racial, ethnic, class and gender discourses.

Let us firstly consider the “tools,” or discourses, that were lying there for these students as they contemplated and made decisions to attend university and their subject / degree choice. On the surface, choosing to attend university and deciding what subject to take would seem a relatively simple process. The liberal humanist discourse suggests that a person has the agency to do what she/he likes, and that each person has the same opportunity to make similar choices. However, the experiences of these students illustrate that choice is a contested notion, where choice is dependent on numerous complexities that enable some people to make certain decisions and others unable to make the same decisions. Not only was it a cluttered pathway into the university, for most of these students, exclusive practices impeded the direction of that pathway into certain subject areas.
On what complex constitutions did some students make their choices? Cultural discourses of respect and adhering to the tradition of listening to one’s parents, as well as parental emphasis on university education, influenced the choices of several students, in particular the younger ones, both in their decisions to attend university as well as in their decisions on types of degrees and subject areas. There were several students who came to university, and a few specifically to this particular university, because that is what their parents wanted. Success, in their parents’ eyes, was graduating with a university degree. Others also came to this university because of directives from scholarship committees. In addition, parental expectations often dictated subject choice. Parents had pre-conceived notions of degree status: they thought that some degrees produced higher financial rewards and better career prospects than others, and advised their children accordingly. This is one explanation for enrolments by Samoan students in law papers surpassing those in any other department, and accounts in part for the high number of international Samoan students in engineering. In these situations cultural discourses, and family traditions, determined the initial “choices” that some students made.

Simultaneously, there were other underlying societal and institutional messages associated with class, gender and processes of racialization. These messages implied that university, and indeed this university, was not a place for Pacific peoples, and/or people from a working class / low socio-economic background. There were mature women students who had previously worked in low paid menial jobs and whose decisions to enter university stemmed from a desire for better career and employment opportunities. It was more usual for these students to participate in tertiary education after encouragement from friends and/or family who had also experienced some form of tertiary education. There was little encouragement from the institution, as seen in these students’ descriptions of enrolment processes and general pre-enrolment information. There were also younger students whose secondary school experiences had not prepared them for university study but rather encouraged them into employment straight from school. Their available discourses
did not include the tertiary option or an understanding of how the institution functioned.

The types of subjects and degree chosen by these participants also indicated gender and ethnic disparities. These participants' choices of subject areas were similar to the wider patterns in the university for Samoan students (see chapter one and chapter five). The undergraduate Samoan men in this research more often chose Engineering, Sciences, and Commerce whereas the undergraduate Samoan women more often chose Education, Law, Commerce, and History. The discourses available to most participants ensured that they chose this limited range of subject areas, which became even more restricted at postgraduate level. Class, ethnicity and gender simultaneously shaped their choices, additionally constituting them as students who were only able to study in certain areas. A lack of, as well as a difference in, cultural capital encouraged certain fields of study and obstructed others. Furthermore, messages from school, home, the institution and society influenced their decision-making processes. The underlying messages were that some subjects are more suitable for females and others for males, and that some subject areas are more suitable for Pacific students than others, and probably even more loudly, 'don't come here at all.' Thus, from these students' experiences, there was inequitable access both to the university, and to certain subject areas.

Let us now consider ways in which various discourses, within both traditional Samoan culture and New Zealand culture, have had a constitutive effect on participants' choices for Gagana Samoa. In chapter four, I have discussed numerous ways in which participants described and interpreted their shades of being. One of these focused on Gagana Samoa. The complexities and tensions around who spoke the Samoan language, and to what extent or level of fluency, and how language choice by others impacted on some of these participants' lives, were marked. Available discourses shaped the practices of others, which in turn also shaped the choices and practices of these participants.
Drawing again on Fraser's (1997a) suggestion, this thesis explores the ways in which people, as constituted subjects, are able to reconstitute themselves differently in particular situations. Disturbing the place and role of Gagana Samoa, can be seen as another example whereby some of these participants tried to rewrite the script; to understand and address the ways in which they saw themselves as being constituted through their use, or their lack of the Samoan language.

There were contradictory and similar discursive practices within both the Samoan community and the wider New Zealand community. Instances of parents, who did not teach or encourage their children to speak Samoan as their mother tongue, indicate processes of racialization through practices of assimilation and integration. In these situations, parents are not exposed to, or have not taken up discourses that value bilingualism or mother tongue language maintenance. Instead, within a predominantly monolingual society, the English language was seen, both by members of this minority and by the dominant societal group, as the language that would serve their children best. Samoan parents who traditionally place an emphasis on education, which in New Zealand is conducted in English, were seen by their children to advocate English as the preferred spoken language.

In juxtaposition, participants described ways in which the spoken Samoan language constituted shades of “being a Samoan” within the Samoan community, particularly for those who do not speak Gagana Samoa fluently. The emphasis placed by some fluent Samoan speakers in this study on speaking Samoan “the proper way,” along with a lack of recognition or acceptance of a New Zealand dialect, as many of the New Zealand raised participants suggested, indicates a certain cultural capital within the wider Samoan community. These discursive practices were a challenge to those students who felt unaccepted as Samoans by the wider Samoan community, while simultaneously being identified as Samoans by the wider New Zealand community. They were both constituted by choices that had been made for them, as well as constituting themselves by taking up those very same discourses.
and continuing with those choices. Some participants were making little effort to learn the Samoan language, while others were now reclaiming Gagana Samoa for themselves, and becoming more fluent in the language.

Finally, we can view subjectivity, resistance, agency and choice from both a poststructuralist and a reproductionist perspective, if we consider points of convergence from these different theoretical understandings. Feminist poststructuralist understandings of power, discourse and agency, Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, Foucault’s discussion of hegemony and Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital and reproduction can be read together. While Foucault is more concerned with power relations at a micro level, Gramsci focused on the structural sources of power at a societal level. Bourdieu centred on the cultural reproduction evidenced in schooling, and feminist poststructuralists posit choices that are shaped by discourses, which are exclusionary and reflect relations of power. While Gramsci and Bourdieu are more concerned with a class analysis, both Foucault and feminist poststructuralists allow for considerations of class as well as other discourses arising from influences such as culture, gender and racialization. Each of these theoretical perspectives allows us to consider the influence of power relations on the educational pathways of these students, even though their central focus varies.

As detailed in chapter two, a number of writers have drawn on Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, habitus, and cultural and social reproduction to explain the reproduction of inequalities in compulsory schooling in New Zealand. This, in turn, must shape the type of tertiary choices that students make. Others, including McDonough (1997) have also drawn on Bourdieu to explore effects of class on choices for college (university) education. She argues that social class does shape perceptions of college choice. Lauder & Hughes (1990), Lauder et al. (1999) and Hughes & Lauder (1991) suggest that social class has a major impact on school performance and subsequent occupations in New Zealand. Furthermore, they argue that social class is pertinent to understanding tertiary inequalities in New Zealand,
where “individuals usually make decisions with respect to education according to the collective wisdom of the group or class to which they belong” (Hughes & Lauder, 1991, p. 8). I argue that a Foucauldian and feminist poststructuralist understanding would suggest that this ‘collective wisdom’ might well be the discourses available to that group or class, however such an understanding displaces class and critical theory that is focused on a concept of labour as the central analysis (Poster, 1989).

Furthermore, what are the points of convergence between Gramsci’s hegemony and poststructuralists’ power in relation to choice and agency at tertiary level? Firstly, Kenway (1990) contended that both Foucault’s power and Gramsci’s hegemony are complex, and not only a top-down process: both give recognition to complex notions of resistance and agency. Smart (1994) agrees, by claiming that Foucault’s work on the operation and effects of power and regimes of truth has opened up how we think about hegemony. This has enabled a reconsideration of the possibilities in addressing hegemony; the very existence of forms of resistance “signify the presence of a potential for instability or confrontation in any situation of hegemony” (p. 218). Other writers (Fraser, 1997a, 1997b; Kaufmann, 2000) also argue that discourses help us understand wider hegemony, and that postmodern agency allows for a disruption of hegemony. Olssen (1999) uses both Gramsci and Foucault together to provide for a theory of domination that understands all practices as always in transition and all formations connected to relations of power. He writes that both thinkers “emphasize the independent and creative role of the human will,” which allows for the possibilities of agentic change (p. 99).

Taking into account the above theoretical perspectives, I also concur that it is possible to draw on more than one theoretical perspective to disturb the notions of choice and agency, in order to change our thinking about these taken-for-granted assumptions. I favour a poststructuralist perspective in that it enables a rethinking of agency as being constitutive, and that constitution is a result of a variety of complex discourses that shape the choices made. However, within that rethinking, it is
important not to dismiss notions of hegemony and social reproduction, along with considerations of cultural, racial, ethnic, class and gender discourses that shape agentic choices. I now turn my reflections to focus on the university, which as an exclusive institution maintains normalising discourses.

(Re)constituting the ivory tower?

As detailed in the theoretical chapter, a number of writers have drawn on Foucauldian theory to inform their own perspectives on power relations, power-knowledge, regimes of truth and processes of normalisation. This thesis is particularly concerned with ways in which these writers have informed educational research and widened educational debates. I, too, have drawn on Foucault and other writers, especially feminist poststructuralists, to inform my arguments, and I maintain that discursive practices within intersecting, complex and contradictory discourses normalise what it is to be a student in this academy. Furthermore, a discourse of what it means to be a Samoan student has emerged that places the collective minority on the outer, produces regimes of truth that posit the Samoan student as invisible, isolated and excluded, and enshrines the dominant group as normal. Poststructuralism allows us to investigate these discursive exclusionary practices, through enabling questions that include: How are different discursive categories constituted? (Søndergaard, 2002). In this theme, I wish to discuss both the discursive practices and the constitutive effects of power-knowledge in the university, particularly in relation to participation in university education by Samoan students.

Liberal, humanist, liberal-humanist, or neo-liberal traditions have neither drawn on epistemologies of difference, nor disrupted the normalising power relations in the institution. Universities, as institutes of higher learning, are still seen as traditional sites of learning and producers of knowledge, and are often designated as being the conscience and critic of society. Foucault's theoretical stance, along with those writers who draw on his work, has challenged these traditions and assumptions.
These writers argue that universities are not necessarily liberating, for example Makosky & Paludi (1990) wrote:

The stereotype is of the academy as a place where new ideas, approaches, and views are welcome. Although educational institutions may be more liberal than society at large, the fact remains that they are strong pressed towards conformity to the status quo operating in the academy. This norm is strongly entrenched and serves to support the continuation of other existing norms and values. (p. 8)

Additionally, traditional epistemological foundations have been domains of a selected group of white middle class men, as Allen (1997) writes, “it is often argued that higher education has served an elite group of white middle class men” (p. 179). In the last few decades, challenges to these traditional epistemological foundations of modernity have emerged from a number of sources including feminists, black writers, postmodernists and poststructuralists (Brooks, 2001). Seidler (1994) agrees, and states that within modernity conceptions of knowledge were tied up with notions of masculinity. Moreover, within modernity and the identification of masculinity with reason, “men become the protectors of and gatekeepers for” the epistemological underpinnings of the traditional university (Seidler, 1994, p. 19). I concur with Grant (1997) who argues that the situation has not changed to any great extent in recent years and believes that contemporary university practices “continue to reproduce the liberal humanist individual of the enlightenment” (p. 21).

In order that the ivory tower can be (re)constituted as a more inclusive place where epistemologies of difference enable an environment that acknowledges a framework of intersectionality, we need to attend to such questions as: How are students constituted and normalised? What are the discursive practices that allow and enable those constitutions? Rather than address how Samoan students are posited on the margins, I have endeavoured to centre the margins. At the same time, I address the normalisation of students that occurs through a number of discursive practices that reinforce exclusivity.
I have previously commented on the fact that research continues to highlight the under-representation of Pacific peoples throughout tertiary education in New Zealand, especially at university institutions. While I acknowledge that within the University of Canterbury, there is an increasing representation of peoples from different ethnic groups, proportionally this increased participation is not evident for Samoan peoples, or indeed Pacific peoples as a collective, as I have previously detailed in chapter one.\(^5\) Of recent years, and particularly with current governmental emphasises and priorities (see Ministry of Education, 2002a, 2002c, 2002d, 2002e), prominence has been given to identifying barriers to participation at university for those under-represented groups, in order to improve access, retention and postgraduate continuation. However, this focus on barriers appears to result in an over simplification of the complexities that produce disparities in the academy. The “barriers” approach does not readily identify structural or institutional practices and/or influences on tertiary participation. Instead, this approach attends more to the superficial or surface practices that need to alter to make the institution more inclusive. This thesis, whilst not denying that there are more obvious discursive practices that need to change, attempts to move beyond the barriers approach to delve more deeply into the multifaceted institutional disparities for Samoan students. I attend to visible, as well as obscure and arcane, discursive practices that are enmeshed in relations of power in this university.

The findings have highlighted that the discourses of equity and equal opportunities have in fact normalised the exclusive nature of the university and relations of power-knowledge, rather than encouraging an inclusive institution. Equity does not always equate to equal access or opportunities, or equality of outcomes. Government rhetoric implies that most individuals regardless of age, gender or ethnicity now have access and opportunities to participate in tertiary education. However, as these participants’ experiences suggest it is not only financial restrictions that limit participation in tertiary education, particularly for those from the lower socio-economic strata. Other ingrained discursive practices
initially limit access into the tertiary sector, and then for those who do venture into
the academy, further restrict them by constituting them as ‘Others’ on the margins of
the student body and privileging certain knowledges.

Let us reconsider the question: How do discursive practices constitute these
Samoan students at this University? Crowther's (2000) argument on rethinking the
dominant discourse on participation in the education for adults is pertinent; he states:

The discourse of participation has become one of professional self-
justification and consequently a self-fulfilling prophecy [sic] in which the
problem of participation is always located in 'the other.' In this sense, it
pathologizes the 'victims' or the 'problems' of the system. (p. 490)

To add to the debate, Ropers–Huilman (1998) referred to the systemic structures in
the university that, in her view, often shaped feminist lecturers teaching practices.
She explained:

Systemic practices ... refer to the various institutionally created
arrangements that shape the practices of those who participate in that
system. Systems of higher education have long established and retained
their norms of practice. These norms of understanding and practice
continually reinstate systems of propriety to which those enacting feminist
educational discourse are often held accountable. (p. 59)

If we refer to these systemic structures in the university as barriers we have
centred people on one side of the barrier or the other, we have set up another binary.
In this case, Samoan students would be considered as outside the barriers, and
students from the dominant culture on the inside. If we only take up the barriers
approach, the implication is that, if the institution changes a few of its visible
practices and Samoan students take up certain behaviours then all will be well. The
result would be that more Samoans would participate successfully in the university,
and the university would be addressing the government's goals of increasing the
numbers of Pacific students at tertiary institutions. However, I suggest that this is too
simplistic a way to think about addressing the disparities within the institution.
Instead, I believe that we need to focus our attention on the discourses and relations of power-knowledge that constitute those practices or the structures. I argue that unless the institution examines the underlying philosophies and discursive injunctions behind these systemic or discursive practices, altering the way certain activities are accomplished, undertaken or presented will still not alter the underlying processes of normalisation. By adopting this argument, we are locating these students at the heart of the institution and the underlying discourses that shape the practices and structures become the problematic. Thus in this change of focus, we can bring to the fore issues of gender, culture, class, race and ethnicity. We can also recognise that nothing happens in a vacuum; disparities are multiple, complex and multifaceted.

As other writers have also suggested, a useful beginning would be for the university to acknowledge that its practices and structures maintain, produce and reproduce power structures, in order that processes of changing these structures and practices can occur (Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Giroux, 1993 cited in Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Lewis, 1993). While Ropers-Huilman (1998) argues that feminist writers have already begun the processes of disrupting the practices and structures in academia, these particular participants’ experiences confirm that there has been little obvious disruption of the normalising and constituting practices in this university, despite participants’ acts of resistance. It is evident that relations of power within the academy have shaped the overt and covert lack of neutrality, norms and assumptions in academic structures, and cultural, racial and ethnic indifference.

For example, we have seen that equity and equal opportunities policies have done little to address the lack of role models in the institution for Samoan students. A lack of academic Pacific staff members has not altered to any great extent over the last decade, in 2002 there were two Pacific academic staff members. A consequence is that these Samoan students relied heavily on peer support throughout their academic endeavours. Student support services for Samoan students have been either
non-existent, or couched in terms and practices that were often non-inclusive or did not recognise different cultural needs. The expectation is that Samoan students would assimilate, rather than the university addressing its own role in adapting to ethnic diversity. Perhaps the most recent and obvious opportunity for the university to address a number of its exclusionary practices, via the review of the Macmillan Brown Centre, has not eventuated. In this thesis only a very small number of participants studied in this Centre, only a few used the Macmillan Brown Library, and some were not even aware that either existed. However, this 2001 review still does not address the needs of undergraduate students in this university, but continues to identify its role as a postgraduate Centre only. An opportunity to disrupt certain restrictive practices has been lost, for now.

Similarly, and simultaneously, we need to reconsider another question: What are the constitutive effects of power-knowledge in the academy for Samoan students? According to poststructural feminist writers, power and knowledge are intrinsically inter-related and this relationship determines the production of knowledge and what is accepted as the truth. Hence, educators in our institutions need to attend to the power relations that validate and accept some knowledges rather than others. By drawing on feminist poststructuralist understandings of power, drawn from the work of Foucault, along with reproductionist theories at the macro level, we can identify how regimes of truth operate to suppress certain knowledges and exalt others. The ways in which our educational institutions reproduce and disperse knowledge is a reflection of the power relations in our wider social institutions (Maher, 1985).

The liberal discourses of equity and equal opportunity have masked the constituting nature of power-knowledge and have maintained the hegemonic reproduction of knowledge within the university. This is illustrative in the fact that I have been unable to locate any research specific to Samoan peoples, or Pacific peoples, that critiques and centres the discursive nature of the university pedagogy.
and curriculum in New Zealand. This includes reviewing the recent publications *Literature Review on Pacific Education Issues* (Coxon et al., 2002) and *Pacific Peoples and Tertiary Education: Issues of Participation* (Anae et al., 2002). At the Pacific Islands Learning National Symposium in 1996, Konai Helu Thaman stated that she had argued for "the inclusion of Pacific cultures in the curricula of higher education" (p. 18) and incorporated aspects of her students' cultures in the courses she taught at the University of the South Pacific. However, she also recognised that developments to include Pacific Studies in the university curriculum in New Zealand do not necessarily translate into culturally appropriate or accepted pedagogy or curricula:

I am very much encouraged by developments in some universities in this country [New Zealand] to recognise Pacific Island Studies content in their curriculum, although exactly what this means in relation to other studies remains to be problematic. (pp 17–18)

The relations of power-knowledge in this academy are evident in the participants' descriptions of discursive practices that have privileged some forms of knowledge and excluded others. The constitutive effects have been participants' feelings of being excluded, outside of the norm. They have encountered many exclusionary regimes of truth. These regimes of truth include an unspoken message that their own language and culture is not important or acceptable for academic study in this institution. While the university introduces new language papers into its curriculum, none of the Pacific languages is on offer, nor do they even appear to be contemplated for the future. And, as I have previously mentioned, there is not an imminent undergraduate course in Pacific Studies.

Similarly, processes of normalisation also shaped participants' feelings of inadequacy, intimidation and inferiority. The university was described as culturally unfriendly, a place that did not embrace other cultures. While the university's policies provide for equal opportunities, many of these participants experienced situations where their knowledge and their cultural traditions and beliefs were not
seen as "right." At times, some described what they saw as examples of racialization, while others believed as individuals they just needed to adjust to or learn the ways of the institution to succeed in their study. Others described conflicting differences in status, both socially and academically. It was more usual for these participants to recognize the need to accommodate and conform to different norms, or resist in ways that did not necessarily have any major impact upon the institution. These participants' experiences illustrate that the academy, in most instances, did not accommodate to ethnic diversity.

Thus, the challenge is for educators in the university to analyse how institutional philosophies, policies and practices enhance certain behaviours and knowledges while restricting others. According to Bloland, (1995) poststructural approaches allow universities to consider "alternative" or "nontraditional" educational practices (see also Ropers-Huilman, 1998). He says:

It is not just a matter of responding with open arms to different dress and celebrations of holidays, or of taking in new languages and literatures; it is dealing fairly but firmly with customs and values that have been morally repugnant to higher education. (p. 553)

The isolation, invisibility and exclusion felt by many of these participants at various stages of their study suggests that their available discursive positions were located in regimes of truth that had not been shaped by non-traditional or alternative practices. The possibilities open to them need to be transformed.

Whether practices and structures in the university reflect the liberal, humanist or liberal-humanist traditions, or the more recent neo-liberal philosophies that espouse human capital theory and market driven theories of globalisation, this research illustrates that the university did not provide equitable experiences for these participants. I argue that exclusivity still exists within the ivory tower, where differences are not accepted and dominant regimes of truth reign. Foucault's arguments about the relationship between power and knowledge direct and enable our understandings of processes of normalisation, which continue to maintain the
dominant hegemonic order where discriminations flourish. Language, discursive practices, institutional and social structures constitute Samoan students in ways that exclude them from certain positions and understandings, and according to societal hegemonic dictates.

To conclude this chapter, I firstly acknowledge the imagery of the curtained mirror. My introduction to curtained mirrors occurred in 1973 when I went to live in Falease‘ela–uta, Samoa. I was told that the curtain was drawn across every mirror, particularly in the evening, so that the living could not see any reflected spiritual images, any aitu or agaga leaga. The concept of a curtained mirror to block out what one does not wish to see remains with me today. However, my take up of this discourse has also contributed towards my disruption of multiple, contradictory, concealed and obvious discursive practices that constitute these participants’ subjectivities as Samoan students. I have drawn on a number of theoretical understandings to disturb the taken for granted philosophical assumptions within concepts of collectivity, resistance and choice, as well as those abounding within the academy. However, I have particularly favoured a poststructuralist understanding that has enabled these concepts to be re-examined alongside racial, ethnic, gender, class and cultural discourses, within the institution of the university. I have argued that relations of power, power-knowledge, regimes of truth and processes of normalisation have at times constituted these participants in an exclusive manner. In the final chapter, I will further discuss the implications of these findings for the University of Canterbury, and address the complexities of the issues by drawing on the notion of an interwoven intersectionality.

Notes

1 The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs generally uses this term.

2 Tupaola (1998a) describes how the adolescent period for the western population does not have a parallel in the Samoan culture.
A number of feminist writers have deconstructed notions of silence. Ropers-Huilman (1998) considers silence in relation to feminist teaching discourses. Magda Gere Lewis (1993) wrote that women’s silence can be rethought of as “not an absence but as a political act” (p. 3). Orner (1992) has also written about silence. She argues that silence is not necessarily just resistance, in that “there may be compelling conscious and unconscious reasons for not speaking—or for speaking, perhaps more loudly, with silence” (p. 81). She also relates silence with power relations. Luke (1994) explores the contradictions in women’s speech, voice and silence in the academy. Each of these writers has suggested that there are complex multiple reasons and meanings to silence in education.


The increased numbers of international students over the last four years is very evident on the University of Canterbury’s campus. However, the drive by the university to market itself to students from a variety of different countries in Asia might well be attributed mainly to an economic desire for international exchange.

The Report by the Select Committee Board of the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies (2001) has recommended that the New Director should examine the teaching programme by reviewing the teaching programme at Honours level and above as well as upgrading research training. It has dismissed all suggestions to develop an undergraduate teaching programme. Unfortunately, the report did not make any other suggestions or comments as to the role of the Macmillan Brown Centre in any future undergraduate teaching programme.
Conclusion

As I draw this thesis to a close and present some concluding remarks, I acknowledge that it is but a beginning, rather than a tale of finality. I offer a reading of these participants’ experiences in the hope that this will provide credible insights into their stories, and do justice to the trust and respect formed within our relationships. Additionally, I have offered my (re)presentations of their stories for the distinct purpose of disrupting, challenging and changing the discursive practices that underpin acts of constitution, within both this university and the wider community, and instigating further debate. If this thesis initiates progress towards a more equitable and culturally aware environment where differences and diversity are embraced, then our (re)reflections are a fruitful beginning.

A summation
The overall purpose of the thesis was to explore with Samoan students their experiences as they studied at the University of Canterbury. My motivation initially evolved from my own life experiences. Drawing particularly on feminist
poststructuralism, this thesis seeks to disrupt and open up into the public arena discursive practices that have constituted and positioned Samoan students in certain ways within the academy. As I explore acts of constitution and subjectification, I consider the constitutive effects of power relations that institutional policies and discursive practices produce and reproduce, in the university. I also document a number of participants' different responses to their experiences. I specifically attend to relations of power, in order to challenge and reconfigure taken-for-granted assumptions.

I introduce the thesis by drawing attention to the significance of discourse in the experiences of these participants. I locate and contextualise tertiary education for Samoan students within the wider collective in Aotearoa/New Zealand, provide a historical overview, and present a synopsis of relevant literature. Next, I centre the discussion within the University of Canterbury, by providing a statistical picture of the nature of participation of Samoan students, and referring to equity and equal opportunities policy. I finish by stating the research questions and locating myself as a researcher.

The second chapter is a framework of the theoretical positionings, which underlie and inform my thesis. I draw on theories that address the intersections of social structures and human agency, while simultaneously allowing attention to complex issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender and culture. While I argue particularly for a feminist poststructuralist analysis, I complement this analysis with other theoretical positionings, particularly in relation to hegemony and cultural reproduction.

Throughout the thesis, I address methodological issues that are particularly pertinent to cross-cultural research. I explore the power relations between the participants and the researcher, and discuss the importance of Samoan methodological positionings for this research. I acknowledge some dangerous
territories in cross-cultural research, and particularly focus on the politics of positioning including researcher motivation, representation and knowledge ownership as well as the complexities of fieldwork and the need for reciprocity and reflexivity. I believe I have adhered to the ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality, informed consent, respect and doing no harm to the participants, and writing up my research in such a way that my particular view of reality is representative of the data, which I have neither fabricated nor distorted.

While I consider the complex nature of the research findings, I do not provide a neat list of things that the university must do in order to remove barriers and disparities within the academy. Instead I suggest that it is necessary, indeed crucial, to simultaneously attend to the underlying philosophies, discourses, discursive practices and policies within the institution. To undertake such a discussion in this chapter, I will at times move beyond the data as I indicate how the university can locate itself more fully, and position itself differently, in Aotearoa / New Zealand, through constituting itself within and through other discourses.

In the first findings section, chapters four and five, I particularly address the constitutive effects of discourses in shaping these participants’ subjectivities as Samoan university students. Through deconstruction and exploring processes of subjectification, my (re)presentations capture acts of constituting and being constituted within a multiplicity of discourses, as well as revealing participants’ sense of agency as they challenged and critiqued processes of normalisation and collective identities. Furthermore, I highlight the intersections of many discursive injunctions within their student, family and church lives, and the wider community, which shaped their choices and their subjectivities.

The second findings section consists of chapters six and seven. In these chapters, the deconstruction of discourses is specifically focused within the University of Canterbury. I make clear contradictory discursive practices in the
institution, which sustain processes of normalisation, and particularly focus on the
hegemonic discourses of equity and equal opportunity. I also reveal the relations of
power-knowledge and their interconnectedness with processes of racialization and
ethnicity, gender, class and cultural differences. I expose the discursive positionings
of exclusion, isolation and invisibility that are reinforced within a number of
inequitable student support services, and deconstruct the normalisation of the ‘right’
knowledge and culture. At the same time, I ascribe these participants’ acts of
resistance to their discursive positionings, as they attempt to make sense of relations
of power within the institution. Their experiences tell a story where only certain
knowledges, experiences, and cultural practices are acceptable regimes of truth.

In the discussion chapter, I present a number of possibilities for disrupting and
reconfiguring discursive practices and discourses in the academy. I particularly
argue that collectivity, resistance, choice, and the ivory tower are multiple and
complex notions that are able to be deconstructed and represented, and are
interwoven with racial, ethnic, gender, class and cultural discourses. Additionally,
my (re)presentations of these participants’ experiences illustrate that a constitutive
effect of power relations, processes of normalisation, regimes of truth and power /
knowledge is exclusivity. At the conclusion of chapter eight, I indicate that one way
of addressing the complexities of the issues is to draw on the notion of an
interwoven and multifaceted intersectionality. I now turn my attention to this
theoretical concept.

**Intersectionality: interwoven and multifaceted**

In chapter two I discussed the notion of intersectionality and an interlocking analysis
as a way of moving forward beyond the politics of difference with its assumed
question, difference from what? I now draw on both arguments to think about
intersectionality as being also interwoven and multifaceted; an intersectionality that
interweaves interconnectedness rather than linear intersections that meet at points of
convergence. An interwoven intersectionality reflects an image that each part not
only intersects but also connects with the others in a number of ways that can also be multifaceted. According to Bograd (1999), feminist scholars, and others, used to talk about intersections of race, gender and class as one dimensional or linear intersections. More recently, those feminist writers, including feminist poststructuralists, who use the notion of intersectionality, have taken those discussions further. I now wish to briefly discuss intersectionality in relation to these participants’ experiences.

This thesis aptly conveys the notion of an interwoven and multifaceted intersectionality, which allows for differences within similar locations. From the initial interviews, it was clear that the student experiences of the participants interwove with other aspects of their lives, such as family and church. This was illustrated in a mature participant’s directive for me to take into account more than one dimension of these participants’ lives. However, no one person’s experiences were exactly the same as another’s experiences. For example, participants talked about the discursive injunctions (or discourses) that shaped being a student, a mother, a son, a daughter, a church member, amongst other subject positionings. The convergence of these discursive injunctions was contradictory and competing.

There was a complex interplay within the relationships of university, family and church, and each participant experienced their interconnectedness in multifaceted ways. Some spoke about positive relationships, some about negative consequences, some spoke about the varied constituting effects of power relations. Sometimes the interrelationship was conflicting. For example, there were participants who felt a personal need to participate in family and church activities even though they knew it would be to the detriment of their studies. In these instances, although they wanted to succeed at university, cultural traditions intersected.

In addition, an interwoven and multifaceted intersectionality, which enables an analysis of the intersections of the constitutive effects of race, gender, ethnicity,
culture and class, acknowledges that none are necessarily deemed more prevalent or important than the other. In this thesis, different experiences emphasised different intersections. For instance, some participants spoke about the Samoan traditional gendered roles that they were expected to maintain in the home and the effects this had on their study. Others said they did not experience these traditional expectations in the home, but instead found that they had gendered or ethnic expectations or stereotypes placed upon them within the university.

There were instances when the intersections of race, gender, ethnicity, culture and class seemed to converge, particularly when participants spoke about power-knowledge and whose knowledge was seen as “right” in the institution, or their financial concerns, or their discursive positionings of invisibility and isolation. However, participants experienced the constituting effects of these intersections in various ways. While some participants spoke about the difficulties of being a Samoan student and a mother with limited financial resources, this position was not applicable to all those participants with children. Similarly, while participants discussed the constituting effects of power-knowledge and how they felt excluded, these effects were discussed within numerous locations and contexts.

Intersectionality also allows for these participants’ identity with the collective “Pacific” or “Pacific Islander,” as well as acknowledging their resistance to these collectives. It embraces historical locations of collectivity and identity, including the taking up of the racialized Othering term “brownies,” as an identification that they owned and shared. At the same time, it recognises the conflicting constituting effects of collectivity, categorisation and labelling as they colour the meaning and nature of being a Samoan student.

Additionally, in the discussion, I focused on four themes that can be read separately but also need to be read simultaneously: collectivity, resistance, choice and the “ivory tower.” While the findings and discussion chapter refers to obvious
points of convergence for all four of these themes, their intersections are not standard nor to be viewed in a linear fashion; they do not all intersect at the same time or in the same direction, or to the same degree. For example, discussion on the discourse of resistance considers intersections of accommodation and resistance to existing power relations within the university and participants’ cultural communities. Some resistances intersect with the discourse of choice, and others with the notions of collectivity or the ivory tower, and various other conjunctions of each of these. The constituting effects of each of these intersections are complex and multiple.

None of these types of examples referred to above can be analysed linearly. A feminist poststructuralist reading of intersectionality allows for differences within the seemingly similar. The notion of intersectionality demands that an analysis must take into account the many discursive injunctions to be a Samoan student, and that an analysis must attend to the intersections of power relations, rather than only being concerned with the politics of difference. I believe that these participants’ experiences are able to be more fully understood through this concept of an interwoven and multifaceted intersectionality. Intersectionality also has implications for the future directions of the University of Canterbury, which I address in the following section.

Implications for the University of Canterbury

In this thesis I argue that the University needs to do more than focus on the “barriers” to participation in order to implement changes in its approach to education for Samoan students. I suggest that the discourse of non-participation can have acts of resistance as its focus rather than deficit accounts of barriers. Nevertheless, as I also indicate, at the same time I acknowledge there are a number of more obvious discursive practices that the university can address to begin that process, which I will discuss before considering wider possibilities.
In regard to the lack of or the type of support services for Samoan / Pacific students, the university has recently implemented a longstanding request. The provision for a permanent position for a Pacific liaison person at the commencement of 2003 is a welcome initial step. The Pacific Liaison person, who had begun in 2002 to introduce tutoring, student support, and orientation programmes for Pacific students, had been on two six month short-term contracts. Nevertheless, this welcome establishment of the permanent position is tempered by the recognition that one person cannot be responsible for, or achieve, all that is necessary to increase participation, retention and continuation of Samoan students at Canterbury. Solutions are not as simple as providing one liaison person. Increasing participation, retention and continuation is a slow process and not one that can be achieved in six months, as stated in the first job description for a Pacific liaison person at the university. This position needs to be supported by other initiatives and policy changes.

On campus, a number of other obvious discursive practices need attention. For many years Samoan students have been requesting that a room be provided in the university, similar to that provided in the Education department, where Pacific students can meet and study. It was only recently, in two different situations that I heard Samoans students who were not in this study once again asking for a Pacific room and tutorials for Pacific students, both postgraduate and undergraduate. Their requests still seem to “fall on deaf ears.” Additionally, departments should take a pro-active approach to increasing Samoan / Pacific students. Departments with greater enrolments of Samoan / Pacific students should be providing tutorials and support groups for their students. Departments with fewer students need to ask such questions as Why are there so few Pacific students enrolled here? What can we do as a department to change this? How welcoming are we? Departments could relook at the discourse of non-participation in relation to student resistances, with a view to understanding and addressing the underlying practices that produce those resistances.
The Samoan Association could be utilised more formally for academic student support. For example, the Association could be encouraged to link students who are part way through their degrees with first year undergraduates. It could disseminate information about particular university strategies and tutorials. The Samoan Association could encourage their postgraduate students to tutor, or to be a resource for departments to call on. A representative of the association could work closely with the Pacific liaison person, in order to communicate more personally with Samoan students, or could relate specific concerns back to appropriate committees or staff. These types of suggestions could be part of a wider strategy for Pacific students, in conjunction with the proposed Pacific Peoples Students’ Association as outlined in the recent job description for the Pacific liaison person. A more formal recognition and wider use of the Samoan Association also gives recognition and value to the specific ethnic group as well as the collectivity of all Pacific peoples in the wider proposed organization.

I note that a small number of Pacific staff have met in 2002 on a couple of occasions, to discuss issues and also provide support for the Pacific liaison person in her role. It is their intention to initiate a Pacific staff association early in 2003. One strategy could be for this small group to identify other staff in the university who are more supportive and aware of Pacific needs and concerns, who would be open to approaches from Pacific staff and students. At present numbers of academic Pacific staff personnel are just too small to provide adequate support for all Pacific students, particularly in many academic areas.

There could also be an overall committee for Pacific students and staff in the university, perhaps initiated or co-ordinated through the Director of the Macmillan Brown Centre alongside the Pacific liaison person. It could involve representatives of Pacific staff as well as postgraduate and undergraduate student representatives from each of the Pacific Associations, community representatives and the community representative from the Macmillan Brown Board. Such a committee
would support the participation, retention and continuation of all Pacific staff and students at Canterbury, as well as enabling communication and cooperative strategies between the various sectors, staff, students and community.

Another suggestion is to establish a Samoan or Pacific resource group of alumni, to utilise the skills of those students who have already graduated, and to establish a positive relationship between the university and the wider community. The benefits of providing links between graduates and the community would be positive, particularly in promoting access and participation in tertiary studies, as well as career directions and employment opportunities.

Although I have suggested only a few initiatives that the university could take as it begins to address the lack of both support for staff and students and community involvement, attending to the philosophies within the institution is more difficult. Looking at an interwoven intersectionality of race, ethnicity, gender, culture and class requires more than changing a few overt practices. Changing individuals’ beliefs and their understandings about the need for cultural diversity and recognition of differences is far more complex. Student support and administration staff as well as academic staff must become more culturally aware in their dealings with students. Staff development could have this as a focus. The approach should not be one which emphasises a simple ‘fix’ or which seeks to direct staff to behave in a particular way. The approach should instead be one which informs staff and challenges them to consider personal awareness of prejudices and cultural diversities. A number of departments in the university could explore how they might address disparities and ethnic and cultural differences through drawing on the developments or strategies in other university departments. This university could use the examples and practices of other universities in New Zealand as a resource; a base on which to begin to address its monocultural positionings and practices.
In our bicultural nation, if academic and administrative departments and student support services have not adequately attended to the Treaty of Waitangi, through staff development workshops which result in inclusive practices, then multiethnic relationships cannot suitably be attended to either. On the surface, this might appear to be an unrelated argument. However, addressing Treaty requirements begins the processes of addressing racialization, colonisation and ethnic discriminations and prejudices. By showing a greater commitment to the Treaty, the university then may draw on, or be taken up by, different discourses that enable it to recognise and locate itself more fully, initially within Aoteorea / New Zealand and then more widely as part of the Pacific. The discursive practices in the university that produce and reproduce certain constitutions then are able to be disrupted and reconfigured. As part of its commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, the university could initiate a process whereby both partners to the Treaty could work together with smaller ethnic groups, such as Samoan students, to address multiethnic issues on campus.

I suggest that power relations have to change at all levels of the academic community. Instead of acting as an agent of social and cultural reproduction, roles could be reversed, and the institution could become an example for society to reflect upon. The university has to make it a priority to purposefully address staff equity issues, especially with regard to increasing Pacific academic staff numbers. Although the more recent slight increase in non-academic Pacific staff is to be commended, it does not signal to students, or anyone else, that Pacific peoples are acceptable as academics in this institution. Pacific mentors and role models are necessary for Samoan or Pacific students to want to attend university and succeed in their respective areas of study. At present, prospective students might find little of relevance in this institution: Where are Samoan or Pacific students in brochures or other advertising material? Where are the “brown faces” on the university’s website? How much Pacific art is there in advertising material? Are Pacific issues or concerns relegated to the Macmillan Brown Centre alone?
As noted earlier, the EEdO committee has recently introduced programmes that are attempting to make access to university more open. While this is a positive step, I ask such questions as: Is this programme a form of resistance to or a result of a colonising discourse? What prominence does the university give to this committee? The fact that a position for 2003 to work with low decile schools was advertised among postgraduate students appears to signify the low level of commitment and status that this position brings. In order to not constitute the Other in exclusive ways, questions I ask the committee to consider include: What affinity does the person dealing with prospective students in the low decile schools have with those communities? In other words, who is speaking to and for whom? What practices are in place to recognise and embrace differences and cultural diversities? Does the committee only focus on the discourse of removing barriers?

The continuing use of the term “Pacific Islander,” and its derivatives, is problematic. Currently, this term is still used in the wider New Zealand society, in some official statistics, policies, documents, press releases, as well as in some current university documents. Although change in this practice is occurring, I have recently attended seminars where presenters and participants refer to “Pacific Islanders” with no explanation of who they meant to include. The term is one of colonisation, and its usage, by people who do not have a Pacific background, needs to be actively discouraged. As Spoonley (2001) notes “the traditional term “Pacific Islander” is a racialized box which does not adequately acknowledge the diversity amongst those from the Pacific or those descended from migrants from the Pacific” (p. 96). Although, I have used the terms “Pacific,” “Pacific peoples” or “Pacific students” in this thesis, and endeavour to make clear that they allow for a diversity of representations, at the same time I recognise that they still categorise the Other. I suggest that the university consults with its Pacific student body and staff, and the community, with a view to adopting a term that reflects current epistemological and methodological thinking. In the meantime, I suggest that the term “Pacific Islander”
be eliminated from all official university documents and the term “Pacific” be used, until this consultation has taken place.

This university must accept the implications of its geographical location within the Pacific. The university has not generally chosen to take up those discourses that provide an inclusive environment for Pacific peoples. This is very evident in the epistemologically exclusive nature of the university’s curriculum. The knowledge taught and accepted in this institution is monocultural and draws mainly from European traditions. Why are there no clear plans for undergraduate Pacific studies? Why are the new languages to be introduced into the curriculum in 2003 not Pacific languages? Whose knowledge is taught? Has there been any consultation with the Pacific community about whose or what Pacific history is represented and reproduced in this institution? Why are there not more Pacific authorities or guest speakers used in various papers throughout the university, which deal in part with Pacific issues? While this university continues its exclusionary practices, which deny its place in the Pacific or in developing the future of the Pacific, participation, retention and continuation of Pacific students will not improve to any significant extent. In consideration of the new ministerial directions for tertiary institutions, this university is only attending to a barriers approach, without disrupting dominant discourses and exploring new possibilities to change discursive practices that continue to constitute Samoan students, and I suggest Pacific students, as the Other.

Continuing beyond these pages

It appears to be a traditional requirement that dissertations include possibilities for future research. However, it seems rather trite and colonising of the Other, for me to suggest very specific concerns or topics that could be researched with or by Samoan peoples. I believe the Ministry of Education’s initial publications on a review of literature, participation in tertiary education for Pacific peoples and research guidelines with Pacific peoples, raises as many questions and issues as they answer (Anaé et al., 2002; Anaé et al., 2001; Coxon et al., 2002). Therefore, I would like to
think that these publications, along with academic research like my own, will inspire more Pacific researchers to continue to explore relevant issues. However, I have raised a number of broad areas in this thesis, which should be further explored. They include, but are not restricted to, the positioning of Samoan epistemology and methodology, the discourse of non-participation in conjunction with notions of resistance and choice, the notion of intersectionality to explore the intersections of systems of power including race, ethnicity, gender and class. In addition, research with a specific focus on particular positionings, such as those of younger or mature women or men, or the experiences of students who are from smaller Pacific nations, or the discourse that university qualifications provide better employment opportunities or career options for Pacific students, would further deconstruct discursive acts of constitution. The possibilities are numerous and important in order to gain further insights into the social, historical, political and cultural contexts and locations that define our living, and more particularly, in analysing the discursive practices in universities and other tertiary institutions that shape the lives of Samoan and Pacific students.

To conclude this dissertation, I return to the historical location of future possibilities, when as a young woman I first met my husband. Our cross-cultural relationship has evidenced many acts of constitution, and numerous discursive practices have shaped our subjectivities over the course of the past thirty plus years. However, our journeys and the take up by different discourses have made my research, decades later, possible. After consultation with my husband, the final words in Samoan signify the place of this research as also a new beginning, with possibilities for others to follow; ala fati mo se lumana'i o le fanau i fafuaga fa'a-Iunivesete—[this research lays the foundations for] new directions for the future of the Samoan fanau within the university system.
References


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O’Connor, D. (2001). Journeying the quagmire: exploring the discourses that shape the qualitative research process. Affilia, 16(2), 138-158.


Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agaga leaga</td>
<td>an evil spirit</td>
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<tr>
<td>aitu</td>
<td>ghost, spirit</td>
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<tr>
<td>faife’au</td>
<td>pastor, minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fanau</td>
<td>offspring, children</td>
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<tr>
<td>fiapalagi</td>
<td>to be like a palagi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiapoko</td>
<td>trying to be smart or high minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’afetai tele lava</td>
<td>thank you very much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’aaloalo</td>
<td>respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’alavelave</td>
<td>a ceremony to mark special events such as deaths, weddings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’alogo</td>
<td>listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’aSamoa</td>
<td>the embodiment of the Samoan culture – the principles, values and beliefs that influence and control the behaviour and attitudes of Samoans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gagana Samoa</td>
<td>Samoan language</td>
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<tr>
<td>iunivesete</td>
<td>university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leo</td>
<td>voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lotu</td>
<td>religion or church, act of worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matai</td>
<td>a Samoan chief; refers to the chiefly title of a Samoan who may be the head of a Samoan extended family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>musu</td>
<td>to be utterly uncooperative, sullen and obstinate, sulk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>palagi</td>
<td>a white person (shortened from papalagi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siva</td>
<td>dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so’otaga</td>
<td>the annual gathering of all the various University Samoan Students’ Associations, with cultural, religious and sporting competitions. A different Association hosts it each year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taupou</td>
<td>title of the village maiden, a position held according to Samoan custom and traditionally a virgin daughter of a matai. She performs the kava ceremony, and is the</td>
</tr>
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</table>
principle female dancer.

*to'ona'i* the main Sunday meal

**Sources**

Abbreviations

ADHA  Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BNZ   Bank of New Zealand
BWS   Bank of Western Samoa¹
EEdO  Equal Educational Opportunities
EEO   Equal Employment Opportunities
NUS   National University of Samoa
NZODA New Zealand Overseas Development Assistant
ODA   shortened form of NZODA
PI    Pacific Islander
PISAAC Pacific Island Students Academic Achievement Collective
PTE   Private Training Establishment
Sa    Samoan. (pl. -s)
TEAC  Tertiary Education Advisory Commission
TEC   Tertiary Education Commission
TOP   Training Opportunities Programme
UE    University Entrance
UPY   University Preparatory Year
WASS  Writing and Study Skills programme
WEA   Workers' Education Association

Note
¹ Western Samoa is now called Samoa
Appendix A

INFORMATION SHEET

University of Canterbury

Department of Education

Fa'alogo i le o le fanau: a study of the ways in which students of Samoan background experience their education within the University of Canterbury.

*I would be most grateful if you would be willing to participate in a study which I am undertaking for a Ph.D. in Education.*

The aim of this *Fa'alogo i le o le fanau* study is to document the ways in which students of Samoan background experience their education within the University of Canterbury.

If you consent to participate in this research this will involve *either* a series of four group interviews *or* a series of four individual interviews, to be held over the 1997 academic year. If for any reason you are willing to participate in this study but are unable to participate in all interviews do please let me know as we could negotiate an alternative.

These interviews would be approximately one hour long. Each interview would be taped and typed up. You will be asked to think about and describe your experiences while studying at the University of Canterbury. The types of questions that will be asked in the interviews include: What were your expectations when you first came
to Canterbury? Have these expectations changed? Can you describe some of the positive/negative aspects of academic life at university? Can you describe some of the positive/negative aspects of social life at university?

**Confidentiality is very important.** To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, information will be presented in ways that ensure that individuals cannot be identified. The transcriptions, any notes and the written report will use pseudonyms for names and places (apart from the University of Canterbury). The transcriptions and notes will only be read by myself and my supervisors where necessary. If this study is published, pseudonyms for people and places (apart from the University of Canterbury) will continue to be used.

This study is being carried out by [Lorraine Petelo](#), who can be contacted at 364–2470. Please call if you have any questions about participating in this project.

The [Fa'alogo i leo o le fanau study](#) has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Fa'alogo i le o le fanau: a study of the ways in which students of Samoan background experience their education within the University of Canterbury.

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I am aware that I can have access to the recorded interviews and any transcriptions of these. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

Signed.................. Date.............
Appendix C

The University Preparatory Year at the National University of Samoa: a brief overview

Shortly after I had begun the interviewing in 1997, a number of the participants discussed their experiences in the University Preparatory Year (UPY) at the National University of Samoa (NUS). Their experiences at NUS before coming to the University of Canterbury are important in that they provide further insights into how these particular participants view their studies and their experiences in New Zealand. Participants who have attended the UPY have gone on to attend Canterbury as international scholarship students, as New Zealand citizens, or as private students. The UPY is a year that is meant to act as a step between secondary school studies and study towards a university degree. During their sixth form year students apply for entry into the UPY programme, at the NUS. Entry is provisional on the level of sixth form national examination marks that are set by the University Council. Only those who have succeeded academically at secondary schooling have the opportunity to enter this programme, which, according to a number of people to whom I spoke, brings in the “Cream of Samoa.” After completing this programme, students can subsequently enter degree studies at the NUS, or go overseas as private students, or take up offered scholarships for study overseas or at the NUS.

The UPY endeavours to give the students an insight and experience of university study in order to make the transition from the government secondary schooling system in Samoa. In this schooling system, participants said they had usually experienced an environment where the teachers have the knowledge to impart and as students, they were expected to copy and learn the necessary
information in order to pass the examinations. They believed that they were not generally encouraged or taught to critique, interpret or challenge what they were taught in the classroom. However, the UPY students I interviewed mentioned there is one private secondary school in Samoa where the students are being encouraged to think for themselves and become more active classroom participants.

In 1998, the courses offered at the UPY were in three strands of Science, Social Science and Commerce. The science students had more contact hours with lecturers than the others. The scholarships that students worked towards were coveted, and competed for at a high level. As these scholarships are awarded solely on grades, we could presume that those students who come to New Zealand on a scholarship will be those who have succeeded academically and are among the top students of Samoa. The scholarship students are often directed to specific universities for certain subject areas, for example all the medical scholarships are for study at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, or if individuals want to study engineering they could either choose Canterbury or Auckland. Therefore, the University of Canterbury should expect to get engineering students who have achieved at a high level in Samoa. We could then ask the valid question: Why do these students often have difficulty in their first years at the University of Canterbury?

Answers to the above question may be found by attending to the discursive practices within both the University of Canterbury and the National University of Samoa. While my research has focused on the former institution, and offers some insights into the significance of discourse, it has not been my intention in this thesis to similarly research the constitutive effects of discourses prevalent within the UPY. However, I am able to provide an initial insight into some discursive practices that existed, and may still exist, within the NUS.

From my participant observations within the UPY programme at the NUS, which included attending selected lectures and campus facilities such as the library
and the café, I noted that student life was still very structured. The students were expected to wear uniforms to lectures and generally were given the information to learn. In comparison to New Zealand universities, library facilities were extremely limited as were computer facilities for the whole of the student body. Textbooks were also scarce and often the lecturers provided a photocopy of the necessary notes for the students’ use. While the lectures that I sat in on were often interactive, the students told me that this is not usually the case in most of their lectures. Furthermore, although lecturers I spoke with said that the students are encouraged to ask questions when they do not understand, the students I interviewed said they found it difficult to go to lecturers after class and clarify their thoughts. I observed a few lecturers who were able to provide the environment where the students interacted with their lecturers in a way that was pro-active and stimulating.

The National University of Samoa was also in the process of addressing certain issues as an academic institution. While I was visiting there, the rule that only a certain dress standard was acceptable in the library was revoked. Previously students could wear only certain tee shirts with sleeves and collars into the library, so that if the students were not wearing the required dress they needed to bring something to change into before going into the library. Another was the introduction of a Counsellor to whom the students could go to discuss any issues of concern. As the Counsellor said, “Samoa does not have counsellors—no-one is expected to talk about their problems.” She discussed at length how the students’ attitudes are beginning to change and they are using her services.

The participants in this study, who came to the University of Canterbury for study purposes, have all come from a background which encouraged and supported educational success in active ways. Similarly, those students interviewed in the UPY, said that those who were doing well were in the main students who had lived and gone to school in Apia, and were exposed to a home environment where formal education was valued, encouraged and supported. It appears that there is a distinction
between the success of those from an urban environment and whose parents actively encourage educational success and those whose experiences are dissimilar. The UPY students interviewed, who had a rural background, spoke about how their schooling experiences were different and that their need to work at home after school finished, was detrimental to their studies. Also, these students did not have access to home computers in the same way as their urban counterparts.

In October 2000, I revisited the UPY co-ordinator at the NUS, because I had heard that the programme was to undergo some changes. The new co-ordinator affirmed that the University Council had decided that by the year 2003, the current form of the UPY programme would be phased out. Although the university would still offer the courses, each department would offer them on an individual basis. One reason given was that this would allow for students who have succeeded in an individual subject at school to study that subject further at university. Under the regulations before 2003, if a person succeeded in one subject area but did not reach the required total acceptance marks to enter the UPY programme, they were usually unable to attend university until they could be admitted as mature students. The intention of this new proposal is to widen students’ access to university study. In 2000, for the first time there were two hundred student enrolments in the UPY, and the eighty available scholarships for international study in New Zealand were still widely sought after.

It would be simplistic to attribute any lack of success by Samoan international students at the University of Canterbury solely to either their own inabilities or their experiences within this UPY programme. There are obvious discursive practices and relations of power within both institutions that constitute students’ positionings and contribute towards their experiences as students, successful or otherwise. This thesis briefly peers behind the curtains in the UPY, and in doing so extends an invitation for more in-depth research of the experiences of students at the National University of Samoa.