The experiences of overseas-born, ethnic minority early childhood students teachers in New Zealand

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Charles Sturt University

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Certificate of Authorship

I, Janet Moles hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of another degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

This qualitative study draws on feminist, poststructuralist perspectives to investigate the experiences of overseas-born, ethnic minority early childhood student teachers in New Zealand. Data collection includes interviews with three early childhood lecturers and eight Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) or Diploma in Teaching (ECE) graduates.

Findings show that differences in pedagogical understandings appeared to make it difficult for lecturers to convey new concepts to overseas-born students. Most students found that there was little they could relate to, so they were unable to understand the concepts and practices expected. Moreover, the power of mainstream discourses caused many students to negotiate contested identities because of expectations that contradicted their cultural and gender perspectives. This proved particularly challenging during practicum placements because participants were unfamiliar with the role of the teacher in child-centred pedagogies. However, when their cultural knowledges, skills and competencies were incorporated, students were able to make links between existing and new understandings. To offer ethnic minority students equitable opportunities for learning, it appears critical that lecturers and Associate Teachers recognise different perspectives of teaching and learning and are critically aware of the influences of different understandings that shape students’ learning.

Findings showed that friendships with other students were instrumental in the retention and success of participants. However, differences in social expectations and communication caused delays for students in forming friendships and a reluctance to ask lecturers questions and contribute in class. Furthermore, oral and written English competencies were frequently found to be inadequate to cope with the academic requirements. Therefore, more detailed pre-entry information along with specifically focused academic preparation could greatly enhance overseas-born students’ initial experiences of teacher education in New Zealand.

To reflect the increasing social and cultural complexities of New Zealand societies and to challenge the hegemonic Anglo-Celtic perspectives that appear to be evident in many teacher education programmes, it is recommended that different cultural knowledges,
values and understandings are incorporated in course content. Furthermore, to strengthen and further inform the sociocultural understandings of lecturers and Associate Teachers, it is recommended that more robust professional development could be provided. This may assist with identifying and reducing the challenges experienced by ethnic minority students and support them to incorporate their existing knowledges and understandings when constructing new learning.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study, located in New Zealand, investigates the teacher education experiences of ethnic minority early childhood students, who were born and raised overseas in cultures significantly different from that of mainstream New Zealand. Retention and success of ethnic minority tertiary students has been a concern for teacher education providers and the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2002). I therefore identify and investigate the strategies used by graduate participants to successfully complete their teacher education programme.

Reforms of the early childhood teacher education sector during the past twenty years have seen a move from different qualifications for childcare and kindergarten teachers, to the implementation of one qualification for all early childhood teachers. Early childhood teacher education in New Zealand now provides Bachelor or Diploma qualifications that allow graduates to teach in any of the early childhood services available in the country. Although the numerous universities, polytechnics and private institutions that provide the qualifications are able to develop their own programmes, the content and delivery must be approved and monitored by the Ministry of Education through the New Zealand Qualifications Authority for polytechnics and private providers, or the Committee on University Academic Programmes for universities. Such monitoring bodies are required to ensure that government policy is implemented. The monitoring of programmes is intended to ensure consistency in content and quality of delivery.

Although consistency across qualifications should result in a reliable standard of graduate teachers, some researchers suggest that teacher education programmes reflect the Anglo-Celtic understanding of quality teaching, sometimes marginalising different understandings and worldviews (Durie, 2003; Mara, 2005). It has been noted by Harker (1985), that New Zealand teaching practices have been founded on an Anglo-European model, preserved by the power of dominant European society. However, during the past twenty years, New Zealand, like many other nations, has become increasingly multicultural (Statistics New Zealand, 2008) and educational
practices do not necessarily reflect the cultural understandings of the children and their families who use education services.

My interest in this area of teacher education has arisen when as a teacher education lecturer, I consistently observed ethnic minority student teachers who had been born and educated overseas, struggle with the pedagogies and teaching practices of the programme. I also noted their difficulty with the programme delivery, particularly with the participatory practices of most lecturers. Furthermore, from a personal perspective, I found little material to assist me to provide better support and guidance for my students. This study is therefore, intended to contribute to research in the early childhood teacher education sector and to provide an insight into the perspectives and understandings of ethnic minority student teachers. In the following section, I provide an explanation of the problems that I perceive exist for ethnic minority student teachers and for early childhood teacher education.

1.1.1 Background to the research

Historically, New Zealand has been perceived as a bicultural nation, meaning Māori and Anglo-European. To reflect the bicultural origins of New Zealand as a nation, in 1990 the New Zealand government gave equal status to English and Māori languages. This was a significant acknowledgement of the status of Māori as equal partners in New Zealand society. However, to date, official recognition of the multicultural nature of New Zealand society, which has continued to expand and now includes a significant population of Asian, Pacific and other non-European communities (Statistics New Zealand, 2008) has been less overt. Demographic projections for the New Zealand population (Ministry of Education, 2008) show that over the next decade, Anglo-European New Zealanders could be in a minority compared to the combined Asian and Pacific community. The statistics show that these populations are likely to grow by 3.4% per annum over the next decade, compared to European populations that have a projected growth rate of 0.3%. This is supported by demographic projections (Ministry of Education, 2010) that reveal:

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1 The term “European”, used by Statistics New Zealand, refers to Anglo-Celtic communities.
Ethnic diversity is set to increase in New Zealand in the future. All ethnic populations will increase numerically, but their relative percentages of the New Zealand population are projected to change considerably. Māori will comprise 17 percent of the population in 2021, up from 15 percent in 2001 (series 6). In a similar trend, Pacific peoples will comprise 9 percent of the population in 2021, up from 7 percent in 2001. The most significant change will be to the broad Asian ethnic group, comprising 15 percent of the total population by 2021, up from 7 percent in 2001. European will still be the largest ethnic group, making up 70 percent of the total population in 2021, although this is a drop from 79 percent in 2001 (p.147).

The recent increase in the ethnic diversity of New Zealand has also changed the demographics of the student population in tertiary institutions. Based on information from the Ministry of Education’s Education Counts website (Ministry of Education, 2010), the statistics for enrolments in all tertiary courses in New Zealand show that in the year 2002, a total of 71,580 non-European or Māori students were enrolled in full-time equivalent study, whereas by 2009 that figure had grown to 104,867, an increase in excess of 46%. At the same time, European enrolments in the same age bracket had increased by only 10.5%, yet early childhood teacher education continues to preserve the status quo by retaining the same programme delivery methods and paying little heed to alternative perspectives or worldviews. In the table below, statistics from the Ministry of Education (2010) highlight the increase in the cultural diversity in New Zealand tertiary institutions between 2002 and 2009. Of particular note is that while European students, who numbered, 276,000 in 2009 and remain the largest group, there has been a dramatic increase in Asian and Pasifika students. The category nominated as “others” includes ethnicities of non-European, Māori, Asian or Pasifika, where numbers are small in the context of the New Zealand population.

Table 1: Ethnicities of students enrolled in tertiary study in New Zealand institutions, 2002 – 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>% increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>252,842</td>
<td>276,244</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have not included Māori statistics, because for the purposes of this study, although Māori are non-European, they have been raised and educated in New Zealand society and hence, are likely to have different concerns from students raised overseas. All sectors of education in New Zealand, whether early childhood, primary, secondary or tertiary are expected to include Māori perspectives in programmes (Ministry of Education, 2007). Furthermore, there has been a large amount of research focussing on Māori education (see for example, Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2009, & Durie, 2003). I therefore feel that to attempt any discussion in this thesis, would be out of place because I am investigating overseas-born students.

In the following sections, I provide an overview of early childhood teacher education in New Zealand and present background information about the socio-political landscape of early childhood education in New Zealand. Following this, I will position myself in the study and define my personal involvement with the topic. I then briefly describe the research design, method, epistemology and theoretical framework. The final section of this chapter defines the research questions and gives definitions of some of the terminologies used in this study.

1.2 Early Childhood and Teacher Education in New Zealand

Throughout its 100-year history, early childhood education has had to deal with the role of being a political ‘football’ (May, 2005). This has had an impact on the way early childhood education has been perceived within New Zealand society, funded and staffed. Consequently, early childhood teacher education providers have been required to conform to approved models of delivery and programme content in accordance with political trends. This section provides an overview of some of the significant events and political decisions that have shaped the current landscape of early childhood and early childhood teacher education in New Zealand. Early childhood education in New Zealand
refers to the period between birth and six years. Although most children start school on their 5th birthday, it is not compulsory to attend primary school until the age of six.

Until 1988, childcare came under the auspices of the Department of Social Welfare, whilst sessional state kindergartens were part of the Department of Education. Following the release of the document ‘Education to be More’ (Department of Education, 1988), the significance of providing quality education and care across all services for young children was brought to the attention of the government. A significant outcome was that the Department of Education was replaced by the more powerful Ministry of Education, which raised the profile of the education sector and brought all early childhood services under the new ministry’s umbrella. This gave equal status to all service types.

The introduction of a curriculum for early childhood by the Ministry of Education was intended to provide greater consistency and improved quality across the early childhood sector. The New Zealand early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) was designed to form the basis of all programmes for children under school age. Prior to its introduction in 1996, there was little direction or guidance for programmes, other than government safety and care regulations. Te Whāriki was the first curriculum in the Western world to be written as a bilingual document, representing the New Zealand Māori and non-Māori (Pakeha) cultures (Ministry of Education, ibid). Based on the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1989), the curriculum was developed to provide a framework for planning and assessment in all early childhood programmes. Such a curriculum needs to be sufficiently flexible to work effectively across the wide and diverse range of early childhood settings in New Zealand, whether they are sessional, full day-care, or services that are based on culture or religion (special character). However, as claimed by Keesing-Styles (2002), the context within which the curriculum is implemented in mainstream early childhood settings typically remains within the traditional bi-cultural cultural heritage of New Zealand that understands Pakeha as referring to New Zealand European. This can have the effect of reducing the visibility of other non-Māori cultures within New Zealand society.
Reflecting the bicultural roots underpinning the document, *Te Whāriki* is a metaphor for the interweaving of strands and refers to a woven mat. This represents the traditional Māori craft of weaving. Thus, the curriculum works through the interactions and interweaving of four principles: holistic development, empowerment, family and community and relationships, and five strands: well-being, belonging, communication, contribution and exploration. The principles are seen as fundamental concepts that should be evident in all teaching practices and considered by teachers as they plan programmes, interact with children and their families and implement and evaluate centre policies. The strands are considered to be essential, interdependent elements for optimising children’s learning. All these elements should be present in early childhood programmes and evidenced by teachers’ reflections and assessments. As with a woven mat, if one strand of the curriculum is weakened or removed, the entire fabric is undermined. For example, if a child does not feel a sense of belonging, exploration is likely to be inhibited, and their well-being threatened. As suggested by Hawk, Cowley and Hill (2002), student well-being and belonging are important for promoting effective learning across all sectors of education.

According to Pairman and Terreni (2009), different perspectives and understandings of teaching and learning are often reflected in the knowledge and skills valued within cultures. However, as suggested by Montecinos (2004), the knowledge, skills and understandings of ethnic minority student teachers are at times, disregarded by teacher education providers and within the education field. Furthermore, there are concerns about the development of ethnic minority student teachers’ professional identities, because they learn within environments that often fail to notice other knowledge and their worldviews. Current pedagogies, values and practices promoted in early childhood teacher education programmes and in early childhood centres in New Zealand, appear to be driven by the discourse of the dominant Anglo-Celtic society (Keesing-Styles, 2002). This may not reflect or accommodate the needs of the significant and increasing proportion of New Zealanders and early childhood student teachers who were not born and raised in this country. Fa’afoi and Fletcher (2001) made particular mention of the importance of a supportive and positive emotional environment for student teachers whose culture and understandings are different from those of the dominant majority.
To uphold the effectiveness, quality and consistency of early childhood education in New Zealand, the Ministry of Education requires that those seeking teacher registration hold a Diploma in Teaching (ECE) or Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) from an accredited provider. Accredited providers are tertiary institutions that have had their programmes, facilities and staff assessed against the Ministry of Education’s current requirements. To monitor the ongoing quality of courses in polytechnics, colleges of education and private training providers, teacher education programmes are reviewed every five years by a panel that includes a member of the New Zealand Teachers Council and other early childhood experts. University teacher education programmes are approved and monitored by the Committee on University Academic Programmes, which will assess content and delivery against the criteria set by the New Zealand Teachers Council. This is intended to provide credibility, stability and authenticity for providers, employers and students. However, although providers might have some flexibility in their delivery of the programme, the controlling bodies have already determined the learning deemed appropriate for all student teachers in the setting of standards.

The predetermined content of teacher education programmes seems to suggest that all students begin their courses with similar knowledge bases even though many overseas-born student teachers come to New Zealand with previous experience of early childhood education. Students might have gained experience as mothers, carers, or in some cases, as teachers who have had formal or informal training in their original country. However, all students have to succeed in theory and practice within New Zealand contexts, which could be significantly different from their previous experience. For example, early childhood education in Samoa has traditionally been delivered through adult directed teaching, where children are expected to watch and learn (Mara, 2005). Similarly in Mainland China, teachers direct children in structured academic learning from an early age (Ping, 2002). In both the Samoan and Chinese models, children expect the teacher to tell them what to do and adults expect to direct children in their learning and to pass on knowledge. Conversely, in New Zealand, teachers are expected to facilitate children’s discovery-based learning and exploration through independent free-play, or by co-construction of learning with teachers. Thus, the
expectations of the teacher’s role in the Chinese or Samoan models differ radically from the New Zealand perspective.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education regards the Diploma in Teaching, Early Childhood Education, hereinafter referred to as the Diploma in Teaching (ECE), as the benchmark qualification for early childhood teachers in New Zealand across all early childhood services. Legislation was introduced requiring that by 2005 all those in positions of responsibility in early childhood settings would hold the Diploma in Teaching (ECE), or a degree in early childhood teaching. The aim was that by 2012, all teachers would be qualified and have completed the two year process to become fully registered with the New Zealand Teachers’ Council, which is the Ministry of Education’s controlling body for overseeing teacher quality. Although the goal of having all teachers qualified and registered has since been rescinded, the legislation created a significant growth in teacher education provision. This is evidenced by the increase in provider numbers from the six colleges of education, which were the sole providers of teacher education until the 1990s, to 27 providers in 2005. The new providers included nine private training institutions, seven polytechnics, six universities, three Wānanga (Māori tertiary institutions) and two colleges of education (Kane, 2005). The New Zealand Teachers’ Council’s responsibilities include participating in teacher education programme reviews and accreditation. They also grant registration to teachers who have shown that they meet the dimensions of a competent teacher (Ministry of Education, 2010). Thus, by overseeing the content and delivery of teacher education courses, they are in a position to monitor the quality of graduates.

To more closely represent New Zealand’s increasingly multicultural society, recognition of different understandings and perspectives should be reflected in teacher education programmes. Whilst the Ministry of Education has made attempts to strengthen sociocultural contexts in assessment and programme planning for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005 and 2009), the same focus has not been apparent in teacher education.
1.3 The aims of this study

During my years as a practising early childhood teacher and as a lecturer, I saw the cultural diversity of New Zealand increase dramatically. This raised my awareness of the responsibilities of teacher educators to prepare students to teach effectively in multicultural societies. I was already aware that there was an increase in student teachers of minority ethnicity. I therefore planned this study with an aim to investigate the effectiveness of current teacher education practices in New Zealand for preparing students whose ethnicity and cultural knowledge is different from the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture. Thus, the specific questions that have driven this research are as follows:

1. How do ethnic minority student teachers make sense of the early childhood education practices, knowledge and theory promoted in New Zealand early childhood teacher education programmes?
2. How are ethnic minority student teachers’ existing knowledges and beliefs about teaching and learning acknowledged and incorporated into teacher education?
3. What are the specific challenges faced by ethnic minority student teachers during the process of becoming early childhood teachers in New Zealand and how are these addressed by teacher education providers?

Within these questions, I investigate several influences on students’ learning and development as a teacher, including identities, understandings of childhood and pedagogies. Whilst a considerable amount of literature has been published about preparing teacher education students for working with school students of ethnic minority, there has not been a great deal of research about student teachers who are of ethnic minority and little that focuses on the early childhood sector in this context. Thus, it is my intention that the findings of this thesis will contribute to the literature available to teacher education providers to better inform practice, curriculum and policy-making so that the content and delivery of courses can be inclusive of the understandings of all students. During their individual journey of learning, it is likely that most student teachers might respond to new knowledge by making changes to their thinking as they incorporate their learning into existing understandings. Thus, central to this thesis is my contention that each learning journey is undertaken within the cultural understandings and specific knowledge of the individual.
I came to this study from a position that saw education as a process of change. I was born and raised in England and changed many of my own understandings of early childhood development and learning during my teacher education in New Zealand. As an immigrant to New Zealand from England some 34 years ago, I recall our arrival at Wellington airport with our one-year-old daughter. We arrived in a country where we had no relatives or friends and set about creating our new life. Establishing our new life was surprisingly complex. As English-speaking people arriving in an English-speaking country, I thought it would be relatively easy. However, we found that the way people went about life, some of their values, attitudes and especially the ‘feel’ of the country was quite different from our English life.

A few months after our arrival in the country, I took our daughter to a local early childhood centre. I found this quite different from anything I had previously experienced. My interest was aroused and I joined the New Zealand Playcentre organisation and completed a three year training programme. The New Zealand Playcentre Federation has associations throughout the country and provides parent-operated preschools for children from two to six years of age. This organisation was started in Wellington during the 1940’s by Gwen Somerset and has parent education and involvement at the heart of its philosophy (May, 1990). Taking the Playcentre training was a revelation to me. The free-play philosophy and encouragement of children to explore, problem-solve and discover in an environment where teachers were facilitators and supporters of learning, rather than directors, challenged my thinking about childrearing practices and education. Although I became aware that neither this philosophy, nor the pedagogies were intrinsic to New Zealand, it was different from that previously experienced by my husband or me in our country of origin.

More recently, as a lecturer in teacher education, I have observed the challenges experienced by ethnic minority student teachers, whose culture is quite different from the dominant Anglo-European society of New Zealand. As part of my responsibilities as a lecturer, I visited a wide variety of preschool services. I frequently saw culturally dominant teaching practice, where New Zealand-European teachers imposed their
understandings on non-European student teachers. I became concerned about the well-being of ethnic minority children, families and student teachers because they were at times, exposed to practices that had the potential to undermine their values, beliefs and cultural knowledges.

With cultural diversity in mind, my thinking during the period leading up to this study was influenced by the critical postmodern writings of Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999), which raised my consciousness of cultural issues relating to early childhood education. My thinking has also been informed by feminist work, such as that of Lather (1991) who helped me to appreciate feminist poststructural contexts in education and research. Thus, the theoretical approach that I draw on for this study, utilises the ideas of poststructuralist theorists (for example, Foucault, 1980). Poststructuralist thinking rejects the all-embracing grand narratives of positivism, finding these problematic because the powerful discourses they represent create a pervasive and dominant world-view (Foucault, 1980). Paechter (2001) defines discourse as a "...way of speaking, thinking or writing that presents particular relationships as self-evidently true" (p.41). To challenge the dominant, generalised modernist discourses, poststructuralist thinking focuses on smaller, more individualistic interpretations of the world (Paechter, 2001). As Ball (2006) argues, a positivist worldview suits the system of Western education, because it involves a structured, prescribed curriculum and pedagogy posited as the “appropriate” way for learning. The positivist approach is rejected by those who embrace a poststructuralist worldview, because it makes no space for individual understandings. Thus, feminist poststructuralists, including Paechter (2001) and Lather (1991) reject the modernist and traditionally male-dominated position of social structures that impose predetermined roles and expectations, preferring a more discretionary approach to thinking and interpretation. Paechter (2001) points out that poststructuralism accepts that physiological factors such as gender can be involved in ideas, beliefs and assumptions and attributions by and from self and others. Poststructuralists see no single reality or truth, as each individual’s experiences are multiple. Foucault (1980) therefore, perceived the imposition of a single idea or way of knowing as a tool for control, recognising the power of hegemonic discourse in subverting belief systems. Foucault saw a means to challenge this through opening up
new, less pervasive discourses. In a poststructuralist worldview, multiple perspectives can arise due to personal differences that shift through the ever-changing possibilities that emerge from each new life-experience.

Discourse and language can be viewed as interdependent concepts (Paechter, 2001), with language being a tool for conveying ideas, opinions and understandings and discourse being the often discursive dialogue that produces and drives opinion on a specific topic (Foucault, 1980). Current pedagogical discourses, as Gough (2002) suggests, can determine the content and context of a nation’s curriculum. To implement a curriculum is to make meaning from its written form. Cherryholmes (2002) and Gough (2002) explore, problematise and deconstruct the control mechanisms within traditional models of curriculum that prescribe knowledge, ways of knowing and methods of learning. In a sector that is largely staffed by women, the work of Weiler and Middleton is relevant to this study, because they bring a feminist pedagogy to issues within education, such as power relations, voice and academic gatekeepers. My thinking has also been informed by the work of feminist researchers (including Brodribb, 1992; Du Plessis & Alice, 1998; St.Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Tupuola, 1998; Weedon, 1997; Weiler & Middleton, 1999) because women are major stakeholders in, and contributors to, all aspects of early childhood education. As claimed by Weiler and Middleton (1999), the voice of women is generally overlooked in the traditional structure of education, given that the majority of those in positions of decision-making power are male, whilst the vast majority of those who teach in early childhood are women. Moreover, as claimed by Fa’afoi and Fletcher (2001), the voices of ethnic minority women are not heard in the dominant pedagogy of New Zealand education.

As this study investigates the learning experiences of ethnic minority early childhood students during teacher education programmes in New Zealand, I considered it necessary to examine how students’ existing knowledge about learning and teaching is recognised by lecturers. I also wanted to find out how students understand and take up the teaching practices they are taught in theory and those they observe during practicum. However, a significant aspect of this inquiry was to gain a greater understanding of how students establish teacher identities when learning in a different
cultural context from their own heritage. I wanted to investigate how ethnic minority student teachers perceive the changes to their understanding and practices experienced during the learning process. By using a case study approach and narrative inquiry, I have explored the teacher education experiences of eight ethnic minority early childhood graduate teachers. To add an alternative perspective, interview data were collected from three early childhood lecturers. All graduate participants of this study were raised in societies where the knowledge base, sociocultural and educational discourses differ significantly from those of the dominant, Western discourses of New Zealand.

I approached this research therefore, as an individual who has experienced some degree of post-immigration stress, who has taught in a variety of early childhood settings in New Zealand and who has worked with student teachers from a number of sociocultural backgrounds and ethnicities. Thus, my past experience has reinforced my understanding that adults who have lived and learned in a particular society, will have acquired a knowledge base in relation to child-rearing and educational practice. Throughout this thesis, I have aimed to highlight the multiple perspectives that students bring to teacher education programmes as they construct teacher identities. This knowledge will be brought with them and is likely to shape their ongoing learning in a teacher education programme.

1.4 Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions and abbreviations are used:

Cultural diversity is defined as cultures that are significantly different in terms of values and practices to the dominant Western culture, or the Māori culture of New Zealand.

Ethnic minorities are defined as people whose ethnic backgrounds are other than the dominant White Anglo-Celtic or Māori groups.

Pasifika is the term generally used by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, when referring to people from the Pacific Islands. I accept that this is a somewhat contentious
terminology, as each of the Pacific nations has its own language, culture and knowledge.

Asian is the term used by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to refer to people from South East Asia and the Indian Sub-Continent. The main ethnic groups in New Zealand are Chinese, Indian, Korean, Filipino, Japanese, Sri Lankan, Cambodian and Thai.

Associate Teacher is a term commonly used in New Zealand for a qualified teacher who is contracted by a Teacher Education provider (university, polytechnic or other tertiary institution), to support a student teacher placed at their early childhood institution for teaching experience.

Practicum generally refers to a student’s practical teaching experience placement at an early childhood setting or school.

1.5 Organisation of this Thesis

This chapter has outlined the research questions and has offered an insight into the background to the study, including an overview of the theoretical underpinnings and methodology of the research.

In the next chapter, I will review the literature that has informed my study. This will be followed by the methods chapter, in which I describe how the study was conducted and provide explanations and theoretical links that inform and underpin my decision-making. This includes an introduction to the participants and a discussion of ethics relevant to this research. Four data analysis chapters follow, each of which will address a specific theme that has emerged from the analysis of participants narratives. The areas that are presented in the data analysis chapters are ‘negotiating new experiences’, ‘communication’, ‘practicum experiences’ and ‘shaping students’ understandings’. Chapter 8 will discuss the implications of the findings and make recommendations for teacher education practice.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature that has shaped my thinking and challenged or supported my understandings. The literature identifies five major themes: Race, ethnicity and culture; identities; socio-political influences on early childhood education; early childhood teacher education, and teachers who belong to an ethnic minority group.

2.2 Race, Ethnicity and Culture

Milner (2007) and Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (1998) suggest that teachers and teacher educators need to recognise, acknowledge and accommodate ethnic and cultural differences within their communities. Banks (2009) also explains his position on the significance of multi-ethnic education, in an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse world. He remarks that nations, having previously defined themselves as culturally homogenous, now accept increasing diversity.

The significant changes in the racial, ethnic, and language groups that make up the nation’s population creates a demographic imperative for educators to respond to diversity. Diversity offers both opportunities and challenges to our nation, to schools, and to teachers. Diversity enriches our nation, communities, schools, and classrooms. Individuals from many different groups have made and continue to make significant contributions to American society. Diversity also provides our society with many different and enriched ways to identify, describe, and solve social, economic, and political problems (p. 200).

It is likely that until societies fully accept the values of ethnic diversity, it will be perceived as a problem because as Banks (2009) claims, the dominant cultural majority often regard difference as a threat to the status quo, rather than as something to be respected and valued. He suggests that the major purpose of multicultural education is to allow the mainstream population to develop “...the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to function effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse nation and world” (p.
Thus, to change attitudes about difference, Milner (2007) claims that education could offer opportunities to broaden societies’ attitudes. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (1998) state that current discourses of racial equality identify multicultural education as being designated for ethnic minorities and actively inhibit progress in reducing racism in society because it focuses on minority races in a way that positions difference as being negative.

The term “race” appears to be complex, having multiple uses and meanings. One of its more frequent meanings is to classify groups of people by using biological characteristics. These are explained by Edley (2001) as a:

… framework of ranked categories, segmenting the human population, that was developed by Western Europeans following their global expansion. To contemporary social scientists, this ranking is baseless, though it has all-too-real effects (p. 201).

There are a number of potential interpretations of the term “race”, including social, biological and identification with a group. Edley’s (2001) explanation highlights the problems of racial categorisation and emphasises that the term is immensely complex and has a multiplicity of uses. Thompson (2006) argues that race is a social construct, but suggests that the term ‘lineage’ could be used rather than “race” when referring to the physical characteristics that might connect people. Thus, ‘lineage’ links back to the genetic backgrounds that create and individualise people and removes the social construct from the equation. Therefore, by removing physical characteristics from the concept of race, the term can then be understood as having social constructs. As Lamm (2005) remarks, “Scholars continually reveal that “races” are not discrete entities, but emerge out of intricate cultural and political constellations” (p. 1).

According to Fought (2006), it is unlikely that any definition of the term “race” needs to be agreed upon, as doing so would diminish alternative interpretations and meanings. Race cannot be taken as a single determinant of identity. Variables such as gender, class, religion and ethnicity are social constructs that must also be included in the
criteria for considering an individual, hence race cannot be considered on its own. For example, Barker (1999) states, “Races do not exist outside of representation but are formed in and by it by a process of social and political power struggle” (p. 61). Thus, as Thompson (2006) suggests, the term “race” gives the impression that an individual belongs to only one group, whereas most people have varied genealogical backgrounds. It is a term that is usually, “imposed upon marginalized groups by powerful elites, rather than initiated by those groups” (Thompson, 2006, p. 1), suggesting that the categorisation of people, serves as a tool to establish social hierarchies. In New Zealand, few people actually represent only one racial heritage with many families reflecting several genealogical lines (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

The terminologies race, ethnicity and culture, were discussed by Hall (1989). He suggests that the term “Black” was often used by dominant White communities as a way of categorising people of various ethnic backgrounds, according to their skin colour. He remarks that this contributed to new communities forming through the unifying identification of being referred to by dominant White communities, as Black and often choosing to adopt the term. Hall points out that the categorising effect of “Black” can homogenise the uniqueness of different races and ethnicities of the peoples included in a grouping because it diminishes the particular qualities and focuses on one characteristic. This can result in people being identified as “Black”, rather than acknowledging their specific sociocultural heritage. Therefore, Bolatagici (2004) cautions that when using terminologies to identify people, there should be an awareness of the subjugations that can occur when assumptions and generalisations are made. Jordan and Weedon (1995) comment that “‘Black people’ were created - literally invented…Black is not a fact, but an effect of power” (p. 308). They claim that no people actually represent this label and certainly no people who were hitherto classified originally accepted this (class)ification, because it is not used as a term of reference to skin colour, but alludes to difference and minority status.

The complexities that surround interpretations of race are equally true of the term “ethnicity”, as they are often used interchangeably. Bhabha (2004) suggests that the concept of ethnicity is highly problematic and complex in its definition because it is likely
to be positioned as a focal point of difference and viewed through a negative lens. Although Bhabha points out that in the history of anthropological study, the term “ethnicity” appears to be relatively recent, he also adds that the concept of belonging to a group that has a specific sense of community with its own identity, is recorded throughout history. Thus, ethnicity seems to link people in a common bond, a kinship that is created through a way of understanding and making meaning of people, places and artefacts.

“Ethnicity” appears to be largely confined to identifying minorities within a community, thus differentiating them from the dominant group. Although Jibou (1988) contends that there is nothing in human behaviour that is sufficiently stable to create a tight definition of ethnicity or culture, he suggests that the structural relations that determine social and community relationships, may well be central to the concept of ethnicity. Similarly, Bhabha (2004) comments on the impact of discourses in the way they can position racial and ethnic differences. He points out that the representation of ethnic and cultural difference in “manners, words, rituals, customs, time…” (p. 178) can become diluted in societies that disregard the values, meanings and identities that are often reflected in culturally specific behaviours.

Peterson (1997) attempts to explain ethnicity by taking the term back to its roots, which he perceives could belong within concepts of nationhood and groups that are differentiated by class or other social structures. He further expands on this by discussing the textures of the term “ethnic”, suggesting that it cannot be discussed as a single entity, but is woven with multiple threads. However, Peterson warns of the dangers of using the term as a shallow way to categorise people in what he terms “a patterned differentiation” (p. 33), referring to the generalised characteristics that can often be used to highlight points of difference. Rather, he suggests that acknowledging the critical distinctions of a group illustrates its cohesion by drawing attention to the traits that connect them. Although Fought (2006) partially sees ethnicity as a socially constructed term, she refers to the identities that are constructed through a common descent, as well as the historical links of a specific group and makes particular note of the role of language in creating ethnic bonds. She argues that language and linguistic
understandings are shared by those who belong to the group in a different way from an individual who learns the language as a non-native speaker.

As social and communal concepts, race and ethnicity are firmly grounded in the consciousness of individuals and cannot be taken as self-defining concepts without also acknowledging that other markers of identity, such as gender and religion, intersect with and through them (Hall, 1991). Hall states that ethnicity “speaks for itself as it encompasses everything within its range” (1991, p. 20). This definition appears to personalise the term and yet embraces qualitative aspects of it, demonstrating that “ethnicity” cannot be understood as a clearly defined entity, but is something that embraces the essence of belonging to a group. It is totally inclusive yet paradoxically, can also be perceived as totally exclusive, since those who do not identify with the characteristics of the group, do not belong.

2.2.1 Multiple knowledges and cultural understandings

With the rise of poststructuralist perspectives, scholars have rejected the notion of one truth and one knowledge and have accepted that there are different understandings, knowledges and ways of knowing (Habermas, 1987). Through his ecological systems theory, Bronfenbrenner (1989) promoted the concept of pluralistic understandings. This theory demonstrated that the interplay between social and cultural factors, within global and local communities, can influence development and learning because of the values placed on knowledge, understandings and worldviews that are considered to be important by a community. However, when considering the views of Bourdieu (1991) on the outcomes of place and position in society, particularly concerning the power of words and the relative discourses of socialised, cultural understandings in which communications occur.

Like ethnicity and race, culture is a concept that embraces different interpretations. Beck (2004) identifies two understandings of culture that although not entirely without connection, relate to different concepts. The first concept views culture as a territorial and localised notion. This suggests that cultures originate from the perspectives of those located in a specific place in time and how they became incorporated into the
knowledges, skills and practices that were learned and utilised. In this view of culture, there is a sense that place and time is implicit in determining cultural knowledges, values and practices. However, Beck’s second definition perceives cultures as pluralistic concepts that although linked to place, determine the programming or prescribed teachings that underpin learning and shape understandings and worldviews. This perspective positions cultures in the context of the wider world, meaning that interpretations of values and practices are fluid and can be responsive to the context in which they are placed. However, Beck (2004), Hall (1996) and Bhabha (2004) agree that there is no culture without an association with place.

Bhabha (2004) sees culture as a fluid and mobile concept where traditions are constantly penetrated and disturbed by new influences. This is in keeping with Banks (1988) who remarked that cultures are, “…dynamic, complex and changing….are systems and must be viewed in wholes, not isolated parts” (1988, p. 73). As an institutionalised concept, cultures impact on all social dimensions including economics and politics, as well as the educational, aesthetic and material contexts of societies (Jordon & Weedon, 1995). Hence, Jordon and Weedon refer to culture as a “contested category” (1995, p. 6) and thus, a term that has many meanings. They also point out that cultures are creations of human society and are therefore, subjective, which allows them to be open to interpretation and change.

In an increasingly multicultural society, the importance of understanding what cultures mean to different peoples intensifies, particularly in the field of education (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 1998). Diverse knowledges, understandings and perspectives of learning and teaching mean that different paradigms of learning are likely to challenge the understandings and practices of dominant cultures. Thus, by challenging the concepts of truth, validity and knowledge, Habermas (1987) has been instrumental in developing postmodern awareness of meaning concerning human beliefs, interest and understandings. Habermas proposed that knowledges and understandings are derived through personal experiences within social and cultural contexts. Hence, the importance of appreciating different knowledges and worldviews that learners bring is central to creating effective, positive relationships with students.
and their families (Siraj-Blatchford, 1999). It cannot be assumed that specific knowledge holds the same value, or is perceived in the same way by all learners. As Milner (2007) claims, teacher educators make decisions about the knowledge that is considered important, credible and valid and even though they are working within political systems and regulations, can give precedence to the views they see as most important. This immediately places those whose knowledges do not sit comfortably within this framework, at a disadvantage. Banks (1996) suggests that it is cultures that characterise the differences in understandings and determine the way individuals view their world. Thus, increased recognition of the values, beliefs, understandings and practices of all ethnic and cultural communities are necessary if students whose understandings are different from those of the dominant culture are to experience equitable learning opportunities. This is echoed by Milner (2007) who states:

Clearly, it is important for those interested in teacher education to name the multiple realities that exist in the field, and conceptual tools (categorical language and concepts) can be useful to study, analyze, discuss, and explain realities that can contribute to "raced" policy, practice, research, and theory about and in teacher education (p. 332).

When educators acknowledge and integrate the lived realities and cultural understandings of individuals into policy and practice, positive learning outcomes can be achieved. This is exemplified by Beatch and Le Mare (2007), who discuss the success of a programme that aims to support the learning of young Indigenous children in Canada. They stress the importance of teachers understanding the language and traditional cultural values and practices of their communities. Beatch and Le Mare also emphasise the necessity of involving families in learning process and of developing a sense of empowerment to make it more comfortable for them to contribute to curriculum. Furthermore, Beatch and Le Mare suggest that teachers can help learners to build a sense of pride in their heritage by providing a curriculum that is developed to incorporate cultural understandings, beliefs and values.
The positive effect of culturally inclusive teaching practice on learning is acknowledged by the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) which is designed to guide teachers towards incorporating the cultural understandings of children and their families. The connections between individual perspectives and cultural ways of knowing, has received a great deal of attention in New Zealand. Māori pedagogy is based on fundamental principles arising from understanding the significance of the ancestors (spirits, kinship), the creation of all things (place, land) and the knowledge passed on through the generations. The pedagogy does not distinguish between knowledge subjects, rather knowledge and understandings are perceived as a seamless integration to be applied as relevant (Durie, 2003).

A longitudinal strategy and study by Bishop, Berryman, Powell and Teddy (2007) 'Kohtahitanga', found that through acknowledging Māori language, understandings and heritage and building positive relationships through strong communication, students' performance was lifted considerably. However, in arguing for greater understanding of Māori concepts by teachers, Stewart (2005) has questioned the depth of understandings displayed by educationalists who have taken aspects of Māori knowledge and integrated them into the curriculum, losing meaning and value by segmenting wholes. An example of how cultural knowledges and understandings have been diffused is provided by Stewart, through the science curriculum. Science is an important aspect of Māori traditional knowledge and integrated into traditional Māori lifestyle, practices and values.

The word 'putaiao ' has been coined and generally used as the Māori term for 'science' within the last 15 years. To date in curriculum policy putaiao has been treated either as translated Western science, i.e. 'science in Māori', or as matauranga Māori equated with science, i.e. 'Māori science', often without a clear differentiation being made between the two meanings. The problem with this is that it does not allow the inherent issues of language, philosophy, knowledge content or politics to be addressed or resolved (Stewart, 2005, p. 852).
It is necessary to acknowledge the importance of the traditional ways of knowing and the multiple worldviews that might be involved in different cultural knowledges. It is also essential that individual perspectives are understood and that generalised assumptions are not applied. For example, Barnhardt and Kawagley (2004) explain that First Nation American Ways of Knowing are closely linked to a sense of place, with understandings shaped by the sociocultural environment, reflecting the interests and values of a specific community. Similarly, there are many different Indigenous Australian cultures that have their own tribal knowledge, language or dialect and understandings. Hence, it cannot be assumed that one Indigenous worldview embraces all peoples identifying as Indigenous. However as Wyld (2007) explains, there are certain significant beliefs and values that underpin Australian Aboriginal philosophy:

The Aboriginal universe is basically one in which physical, scientific qualities are irrelevant and the world takes on meaning through the qualities, relationships and laws laid down in ‘the dreaming’. There are a number of striking differences: The Aboriginal world is not constrained by time or space – the land is still inhabited by the same beings which were involved in its creation – the spirits of dead people are constantly present – ceremonies not only re-enact the activities of ancient heroes but also recreate them. English words are inadequate to describe this historic and contemporary world (p. 89).

Wyld (2007) considers that any attempt to incorporate Aboriginal knowledges into the Western education models of Australia must involve the wisdoms of local elders and Indigenous academics. This would acknowledge and validate the partnership and enable students to develop their own pathways of understanding. In contrast, Western educational practices take a less holistic approach to learning and tend to break down content and view knowledge as a separate concept in its own right. Areas of knowledge are labelled, thus assigning an identity in their own right, rather than being part of knowledge in a wider context as they exist in Australian Aboriginal pedagogies. Wyld (2007) uses Indigenous Australian perspectives to show the need to incorporate cultural knowledge and understandings to give tangible reasons for learners to take up
new knowledge, especially if the new learning supersedes existing knowledge and states:

Only by understanding learning pathways, do we prevent ourselves from having to walk them again, and again – and only then can we guide others, who may or may not share the specifics of our own insights... Giving a learner control over their learning enables them to become not only a metacognitive learner; one who must think through what they are attempting to learn, and how, and why; but also a learner who must attend to their own strengths and weaknesses, and “know” the directions of their own pre-dispositions towards various modes of learning. In this paradigm, self-knowledge comes first – for without an initial self-assessment, no learning task can be positioned to suit the individual learner’s strengths or needs (2007, p. 77).

This section has reviewed literature about the importance of recognising, respecting and incorporating different knowledges and cultural understandings into teaching, so that learning has relevance and practical applications to learners, rather than relating to the knowledges of the dominant cultural group. As Doherty and Singh (2005) suggest, cultures are developed through processes of change that continue without reaching an end-point and as such, are continually (re)constructed through relationships with people, histories and societies. Doherty and Singh further suggest that an underlying force behind the struggles of minority cultures is the power of dominant cultural groups. They point out that unequal power relations are reinforced by Western education systems, learning styles, knowledge and ways of knowing, because they frequently disregard different perspectives and knowledge bases.

2.3 Identities

A substantial amount of literature exists about identities, how and why they are important and how they are constructed. Bhabha (2004), McAdams (1991) and Hall (1990) discuss identities as pluralistic and in a constant process of change, never arriving at a concluding point. Identities continue to develop and are shaped by life experiences. Hence, the life stories help the individual to make sense of his/her life. Thus, identities
can be understood as a complex, contextualisation of multiple selves in relation to place, time, culture, gender and experience. Hall (1990) suggests that although identity can be a problematic concept, it is reflected in the written or spoken word. Therefore, as with any written or spoken dialogue, it is essentially situated in a specific time and place, “always in context...positioned [italics in original]...” (p. 222), thus allowing identities to be dynamic and responsive to change.

The construction of identities, according to Hall (1996), occurs within and through difference. Rather than being a positive response to positionality, identities are constructed through a process of exclusion or opposition to points of origin (Derrida, 1981). As Lee (2002) points out, personal identities may be created through identification with collective identity and can be significant in establishing a sense of self through belonging with(in) a group, such as a national boundary. Hall (1996) reinforces the social processes and influences that produce identities by stating:

I use ‘identity’ to refer to the meeting point, the suture, [italics in original] between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us….Identities are, as it were, the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always ‘knowing’ (the language of consciousness here betrays us) [brackets in original] that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a ‘lack’, across a division, from the place of the Other… (pp. 5-6).

As Hall (1996) explains, any individual can have multiple identities, thus causing a need for many sutures. Hall further explains that identities are:

“…never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourse, practices and positions” (p. 4).
Thus, sutures may touch many points and connect many contexts, understandings and discourses. As McAdams (2006) suggests, life stories involve multiple themes and strands and as such, can involve many connections and interweaving contexts.

There are many identities through which any one person perceives himself or herself, with the major focal points of identification being gender, ethnicity, race and culture. Côté and Levine (2002) claim that constructing identities has become increasingly complex and multidimensional in recent times because individuals have not previously been accustomed to being free to make their own meaning and form personal understandings. Rather, identities were largely limited to and fixed by social factors such as belonging to a specific class, gender and race. Weedon (1999) suggests the feminist poststructuralist movement has continued to strive for acceptance and celebration of individual differences. She further suggests that the movement has become a vehicle to drive equity and the freedom to make meaningful choices and individual expressions of identities. She states:

In poststructuralist forms of feminism, differences are discursively produced….The idea that differences are produced within discourse however, does not mean that they do not take material forms which have material effects (p. 24).

According to Weedon (1999), it has become evident through postmodernist voices that an acceptance of difference has arisen within societies. While the term ‘postmodern’ is frequently used interchangeably with ‘poststructural’, ‘postmodernism’ can be used to refer to an historical period or a moment in time, with a mistrust of singular “truths” and grand narratives (Lather, 1991, 2006). The postmodern acceptance of individual understandings has allowed people to construct personally meaningful identities and reject the oppressive homogenisation of modernist social/gender/cultural identity. Yet the pressures of socially imposed influences have continued to shape the form in which identities materialise and marginalise those who assume other than socially conforming identities. Thus, as Lamm (2005) contends, people who identify with racial, ethnic,
cultural minorities, or assume other than heterosexual identities, have continued to be oppressed and marginalised.

2.3.1 Cultural identities and diaspora

Bhabha (2004) suggests that a strong culture is a tool for identity survival. Thus, when an individual is forced to confront marginalisation, the experience can heighten the development of critical strategies for intensifying identities and strengthening the sense of belonging. Bhabha writes:

“…contemporary critical theories suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement – that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking” (p. 246).

In an increasingly multicultural society, it seems necessary for individuals and communities to be cognisant of different worldviews and to become aware of the results of viewing diversity from deficit perspectives. As Bhabha (2004) claims, the sense of belonging to communities that share common values, beliefs and cultural practices has validated the presence of individuals identifying with specific groups within societies and allowed cultural identities to strengthen. Terms such as ‘Asian’, ‘European’, ‘African’, or ‘Pacific’ are highly generalised and possibly have more to do with a social need to apply labels as descriptions, than an accurate account of a person with their specific identities.

The importance of identifying with a group is discussed by McLeod (2001), who states that strong cultural identities are formed by people, dislocated from their communities of origin. McLeod credits this phenomenon to diaspora, which are defined by Cohen (1997) as emotional ties to ‘the old country’. According to Bhabha (2004) ‘diaspora’ was a term originally used to refer to the dispersal of peoples, specifically Jewish and African people, from their own lands. Migration has been occurring for many centuries. Thus, the concept of living within communities that share histories and cultures is not new. Evans Braziel and Mannur (2003) describe the creation of diaspora as forming through groups of migrant peoples who have made a conscious decision to maintain their
cultural identities and connectedness with their own ethnic group. Evans Braziel and Mannur further suggest that the study of diaspora has also become concerned with concepts of nationhood, identities and belonging and to understanding how being away from the homeland has materialised through feelings of dislocation. As people have travelled, they have brought their cultures, which have evolved, re-shaped and become redefined. Along the way, it has been the point of difference between ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing that have continued to characterise cultural definition and therefore, identities. Hence those who belong to diaspora have not necessarily experienced migration; rather they have been inducted into a sense of belonging to the understandings and identifying qualities of their ancestral homeland.

Clifford (1999), commenting from an anthropological perspective, writes figuratively of the changes that cultures undergo through time and society as ‘travel’, but he also refers literally to travel as he discusses cultural relocation. Clifford uses the analogy of the study of cultures as a “hotel lobby, urban café, ship or bus” (1999, p. 25), where people negotiate, organise and establish external relationships. He remarks that historically, the travels undertaken by people with their associated diversity of cultures have shaped societies, communities and global evolution. In this context it is not necessarily the people belonging to a specific diaspora that have travelled, but the emotional ties and cultural practices that have been transported by generations, born from the original travellers. When physical distance exists between the person and the homeland, increasingly subjective and fragile connections are likely to be created through fantasy, where images of the homeland are likely to become romanticised (Evans Braziel & Mannur, 2003). Connections between present and past can be fragile and tenuous because they are made through interpretations that develop within discourses and through representations that might be partly imagined. Cohen (2008) refers to the romantic and somewhat ethereal concept of ‘home’ that has emerged within diasporic communities, as a sense of belonging that exists outside of place, rather than being connected to a geographical location. Cohen also suggests that the new image of diasporic communities has shifted from the fixed notion of shared origins, to centring on shared understandings and worldviews.
As McLeod (2001) argues, the sense of living ‘in’ a culture that is removed from its origins or roots, adds a complexity to emergent identities, creating hybrid cultural identities where individuals might identify with their ancestral homeland, but also with their adopted land. In a sense, a relocated identity becomes hybrid because it no longer wholly reflects the original culture, nor does it reflect the adopted community. Hence diaspora are likely to be formed, or comprised of other culturally distanced individuals, who share a common context. Bates (2005) suggests that this returns the strength of group identity to individuals because a feeling of connectivity is restored. However, Bhabha (2004) contends that the sense of place continues to underpin the identities, creating a hub from which the sense of community, belonging and connectedness develop. Similarly, Beck (2004) explains that culture is essentially a territorial concept, hence to relocate it changes and redefines aspects of traditions and practices to more comfortably fit the new time and place. Thus, the subjectivity of identities relates to the interpretative nature of the present in relation to the past and the instability and fluidity of cultural identities when linking present to past.

Hall (1996) refers to the role of ancestral links, human and of place that connect with the historical past and subjective cultural identities. Thus, the value of diaspora is to give a sense of belonging and orientation, providing a notion of roots and identities that are attached to a specific place in the world. The tension that is caused by a search for identity, simultaneously with a quest for belonging, is discussed by Bates (2005), as an attempt to find self within a group context. This, he argues, creates a high degree of conflict, as the whole idea of establishing individuality, self and identity within a group is, to some extent, contradictory. Bates suggests that it is advisable for people moving across cultural contexts to decide which aspects of the group understandings, values and practices to adopt and which to reject. It is this that Bates refers to as the “anarchy of cultures” (p. 236), as it is this division that can create critical differences in the understanding of self when confronting different sociocultural discourses. Hall (1996) similarly positions the ‘selves’ created through cultural identification as incapable of any sense of stability or unification. Rather, he sees cultural identities in recent times as being fraught with the tensions of frequently hostile, conflicting discourses. Culture, in its
essential form, might be a source of comfort, offering familiarity and strength, but it can become a label and a point of difference.

2.3.2 Teacher identities
The complexities of becoming a teacher involve amalgamating knowledges and practices within the context of pedagogy, philosophy and sociocultural and educational discourses. Zembylas (2003) claims that forming a teacher identity is often a challenge to students and beginning teachers because of the conflicting values, beliefs and practices between their own socio-culturally derived values and beliefs, and those that are being taught as the ‘correct’ model. The concept of what it means to be a teacher can vary according to pedagogical understandings and culture. As Aitken (2006) found in her study of newly qualified early childhood teachers in Auckland, the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture of New Zealand largely determines the values, practices, norms and organisational structure of early childhood settings. She suggests that because it is likely that teachers’ professional identities develop around their cultural understandings of teaching and learning, New Zealand-born teachers are likely to construct their identities from an Anglo-Celtic perspective. However, teachers born overseas might work from different understandings of what it means to be a teacher.

It is probable that most teachers, particularly those teaching in New Zealand, will practice in multicultural communities. Thus, it is necessary to prepare teachers to work effectively within culturally diverse classrooms. A recommendation from Valentíin (2006) is to take a holistic approach to exploring diversity. This may result in the achievement of a critical level of awareness of diversity and enhance the opportunities for development of teacher identities. Valentíin suggests that student teachers are provided with specific education about ethnic and cultural diversity, as she has found that exposure alone is insufficient to prepare students for teaching in diverse communities. Santoro (2009) warns of the risks of simply teaching about other cultures, stating that this could result in positioning ethnic minorities as “problems” that need to be “managed” (p. 41). She recommends that student teachers address their own positionality in relation to alternative cultural knowledge and values. Santoro suggests that until this occurs, understanding what it means to teach ethnic minority students will
be unlikely to eventuate. She states, “Teachers need to move beyond their own worldviews in order to develop and understand their students’ perspectives” (p. 39).

Ping (2002) claims that the understanding of what and who a teacher is can vary considerably within different cultural understandings. Such understandings are integrated within the multiple identities of the ‘self’, a term which, according to Pratt, Kelly and Wong (1998) does not exist as an entity outside of the social context. The self exists only as it relates to the group, community or family, adding a communal / collectivist context to the knowledge, skills and achievements (or failures) of an individual.

There cannot be just one image of early childhood development and learning and, as suggested by Kukari (2004), the existing beliefs of student teachers are an important factor in the construction of a beginning teacher’s professional identity. Identities, behaviour, social order and social consistency, are therefore co-dependent, as none can exist in autonomous isolation. For example, a teacher cannot be a teacher without a student, a parent cannot be a parent without a child, and a leader cannot lead without supporters (subordinates). Hence all identities are constructed within relational contexts (Hall, 1996; Pratt, et al., 1998).

As the majority of teachers in the New Zealand early childhood sector are women (Farquhar, 1999; Farquhar, Cablk, Buckingham, Butler & Ballantyne, 2006), gender identity is likely to be strongly reflected in the construction of teacher identities. Gender identities are said by Hall (1996) and De Fina (2006), to be interwoven with the sense of self, incorporating sociocultural and gender role identities within multiple identities. Culturally driven behaviours such as duty, responsibility and social conduct are most likely to occur with women whose priorities are for social good, caring and nurturance (Gilligan, 1982; Steedman, 2002). To ‘become’ a teacher requires more than can be learned through theory or teaching practice. All student teachers are influenced by their own educational experiences and have preconceived ideas about what it is to be a teacher. Thus, when students are learning to teach outside their country of origin, their understanding of what constitutes ‘a teacher’ might differ considerably from that which is reflected in a teacher education programme. Hence, Hoban (2004) suggests that to
establish a clear image of identity as a teacher, a sound understanding of ‘self’ is required, so that the teacher is aware of how and why they make teaching decisions. This, he suggests, requires critical self-reflection on the role and responsibilities of the teacher and on their own professional philosophy.

When discussing student teachers’ professional identity construction, Hoban (2004) makes particular mention of the role of teacher educators. He states:

…Teacher educators need to examine their communities and reflect upon the influences they have on preservice teachers. Essentially there is a need to ask, ‘How do teacher educators and teachers who supervise students on practicum perceive themselves and what is their conception of teaching?’ Importantly, do teacher educators acknowledge the complexity of teaching and practice what they preach or do they perceive themselves as specialist teachers of discipline knowledge? (Hoban, 2004, p. 24).

Critical self-reflection appears to provide an important tool to enable teachers to be responsive to the dynamic nature of society (Hoban, 2004; Watson, 2006). Taking critical self-reflection further, Alsup (2006) recommends that teacher educators model and encourage student teachers to engage in a process she refers to as “borderland discourse” (p. 125), through which student teachers, as well as their educators, move between their current and prior understandings of teaching, to negotiate their new knowledge and to facilitate its integration into practice. For teacher educators, the borderland discourse process allows critical self-reflection into the space between the discourses spoken and the discourses reflected in practice. Alsup claims that through the reflective process, a state of meta-awareness is established, which is then transferred to action. The process described by Alsup, involves a reflective exploration of current educational discourses and evaluating these against the teacher’s own professional and personal philosophies. This either affirms the teacher’s professional identity, or causes them to re-evaluate. Similarly, Li (2007) suggests that using reflective narrative journaling about their teaching, can increase students’ and experienced teachers’ awareness of their practice. As Li points out, student teachers should be
critically aware of how their teaching impacts on the whole group or class, giving attention to how they support the learning of students from all ethnicities and cultures.

2.4 Socio-political Influences on Early Childhood Education

According to May (2005), early childhood in New Zealand has never been far off the political radar and continues to exert pressure on successive governments. The action taken from within the early childhood sector to promote political awareness of the importance of early childhood education, has involved some of the academic leaders in the field and has achieved huge changes during the past 20 years. May (1993) stated that, “Nobody has ever given anything to early childhood education without women being stroppy” (p. 193). Her statement also illustrates the contributions of feminist influence on guiding the direction and improving the status of early childhood education. The early childhood sector has been the subject of considerable and passionate socio-political debate concerning the use of early childhood services and the nature of programmes for young children. The profile of the sector was enhanced when in 2006, a further move towards pay parity between early childhood teachers and other teachers working in the compulsory sectors, occurred. This meant that early childhood teachers with degrees or higher degrees, could earn as much as their colleagues in primary or secondary sectors.

The status of teachers in the early childhood sector of New Zealand has been a significant professional and political issue since its inception (May, 2005). Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is perceived as being less important than primary or secondary education. This might be because it is not seen as delivering ‘real’ education and it is not compulsory. Although core academic subjects such as reading, writing and maths are central components of the early childhood curriculum, they are not taught or measured in a structured way around specified and prescribed learning targets. In New Zealand early childhood pedagogy, the academic strands of learning are woven through a range of learning experiences, with a focus on developmental outcomes rather than being taught formally (Ministry of Education, 1996).
Whatever the existing status of early childhood services, the system continues to be influenced by the compulsory sectors of primary and secondary education. This is not unique to New Zealand. As Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) have suggested, issues around early childhood services are frequently used politically by governments to influence the opinions of societies, perhaps because the sector is not part of a compulsory system in most Western nations and can therefore, be shaped to suit socio-political purposes. An example that illustrates the suggestion of Dahlberg et al. occurred in New Zealand when the government wanted women to be home-makers, rather than working in the paid workforce (May, 1993), thus leaving jobs for men and reducing unemployment statistics. As May recalls, cut-backs on funding provisions for infant care made it hard for women to find quality, affordable childcare, especially for very young children. The discourse that was promoted, constructed women who worked and used childcare, as negligent mothers. At around the same time, stories were generated about low school achievement levels and behaviour problems of children who had been in childcare. The work of Belsky (1984) who had conducted a study about the negative outcomes of childcare on preschool children’s learning and development, was used by politicians to support this, disregarding the fact that his work was carried out in the USA and had no direct relevance to New Zealand early childhood centres. Thus, those in positions of social power, such as the government, can manipulate the function, standards and ‘approved’ practices of the early childhood sector. The use of social discourses can also manipulate the attitudes, values, beliefs and practices that relate to women’s issues and to ethnic minority communities, particularly where they conflict with the views of those holding the power (Siraj-Blatchford, 1999).

The effect of socio-political discourses on early childhood education has been evident in pressures from families to increase the diversity of care and education available in New Zealand. This has led to a proliferation in the types and special characteristics of services available, including the establishment of early childhood education and care centres that represent some of the major cultures of New Zealand, including Māori, Samoan, Cook Island and Tongan.
The significance of having early childhood education and care that reflects the culture of families was discussed by Lubeck (2001). She found that the dominant Western perspectives on what childhood should be are likely to influence the way that early childhood care and education are provided, with the affect that minority understandings might not be represented. Lubeck’s findings recognised the diversity of understandings and values of childhood of different cultural perspectives and suggest that children, who are given opportunities to engage with their own languages and cultures as they learn, are simultaneously influenced by the understandings of their own cultures and those of the dominant societies. These children are therefore, likely to construct new understandings of their culture and how it connects with the dominant society because they are learning within two paradigms. Lubeck claims that when children’s learning incorporates their own culture, they can actively contribute towards shaping the way their culture transforms in response to changes in the wider community.

Recognition of the positive outcomes for young children that can be achieved through culturally meaningful and relevant early childhood experiences has been reflected in reviews of early childhood education and care policies, by the O.E.C.D. Education Committee (Bennett, 2003). According to Corsaro (2005), as a result of social and political pressures, several countries have now introduced funding to ensure that more children have access to quality early childhood education and care. This has had a positive influence on the education and development of young children because as Aubrey (2008) points out, socioeconomic factors can determine the educational and social outcomes for children because quality early childhood education can be unaffordable for low income families. Thus, funding towards the costs of early childhood education and care has increased its affordability and availability to families who would otherwise be excluded because of financial limitations. Moreover, as state interests have increased in early childhood, quality has been more closely monitored, with improved standards resulting (Aubrey, 2008). However, as Bennett (2003) claims, the socio-political discourses that continue to marginalise women in the workforce have resulted in the care aspect of early childhood services often receiving less attention than services that are regarded as educational institutions.
Socio-political pressures on governments to recognise the necessity of providing quality care and education for young children has shaped the way that family units have been perceived within New Zealand and several other Western nations (May, 2005). A greater acceptance of different family types, including single parent families and full-time working parents has created increased demand for more flexible early childhood services. This has resulted in longer opening hours of childcare centres, increased availability of quality care for infants and toddlers and more childcare services located in city centres (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, 2008).

2.4.1 The content and context of early childhood education
In this section, I will explore the influences that determine the content and context of early childhood education in a general sense. I am not specifically looking at New Zealand early childhood, but exploring the discourse, power relationships and sociocultural determinants of curriculum across the broader spectrum of who decides what and how young children should learn.

The specific characteristics considered desirable for children to display tend to be driven from the dominant culture and are generally reflected in the learning considered important for young children to acquire (Smith, 2002). However, the expectations of the dominant cultural group can become problematic for minority groups when the education and care of young children is the issue. All too frequently the dominant society fails to understand, acknowledge or respect the ways of people whose heritage is other than the dominant majority. As Cannella (2000) states:

Colonisation is not just about nations gaining power over other nations, it is about systems of knowledge that have gained power over other systems…Early childhood education (as a field) is a site for post-colonial struggle (p. 218).

On either side of this issue, different cultural knowledges and expectations of early childhood exist. Siraj-Blatchford (1999) gives the example of the perceived role of teachers and the pedagogies the policy-makers consider appropriate, suggesting that these might not reflect the understandings and aspirations of all stakeholders. As
Cannella and Viruru (G. S. Cannella & Viruru, 2004b) comment, the accepted model of practice is that of the dominant voice of education and society, driven by the owners of a curriculum. Keesing-Styles (2002) also suggests that deconstruction of the pedagogies considered appropriate for achieving the educational goals of a specific society may expose power issues, leaving minority perspectives neglected. Thus, feminist pressure on the ‘one size fits all’ modernist approach to curriculum aims to shift the colonial values reflected in Western education, so that it might more accurately represent the interests of a multifaceted society (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

Through social and academic pressure from researchers including Margaret Carr, Anne Smith and Anne Meade, the early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) was implemented in all licensed early childhood services in New Zealand. Te Whāriki was developed to provide a non-prescriptive framework that embraces and integrates diverse concepts and ways of learning and knowing. However in its implementation, pressures from stakeholders to “prepare” children for school often results in the values and practices of the compulsory sector being imposed upon preschool children. This is philosophically opposed to Te Whāriki, which aims to foster each child in a culturally appropriate way, by enhancing strengths, supporting their values, choices and ways of learning and knowing. However, due to the modernist approach of the compulsory education sector, children are expected to conform to the expectations of the dominant culture (Dahlberg et al., 1999). This in turn, feeds down to the early childhood sector, to ensure that children are “ready” for school at five or six years of age, knowing how to behave in the classroom and equipped with the basic competencies considered necessary by the school.

The struggle of children whose cultures and experience differ from the ‘mainstream’ is expressed in the National Association for the Education of Young Children position statement (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), that recommends, “…teachers take care not to place these children under added pressure…” (p. 19). The NAEYC statement continues by suggesting that pressure on children, already at a disadvantage, is unreasonable, thus implying low achievement expectations. It would appear that the distance between the understandings, practices and philosophies within the early
childhood sector, requires more exploration. Weiler and Middleton (1999) argue that such marginalisation is consistent with the reluctance of the education sector gatekeepers, such as those in positions of power, policy-makers and stakeholders who represent the dominant community, to accept the need for change and to respond to the interests of minority communities, or any who voice alternative viewpoints.

Marginalisation can occur when assumptions are made that children from ethnic minority families have lower achievement levels because their home and cultural environments differ from the mainstream (Zerbe Enns et al., 2004). Marginalisation can also occur when an individual is required to act in ways that conflict with their culture and spirit, where they find themselves placed in an uncomfortable space between understandings (Vaioleti, 2000). As Cannella and Viruru (2004) point out, those in positions of power in early childhood education, whether they are in a political, teacher education or teaching position, impose their interpretation of pedagogy, social expectations and cultural capital on children and their families who have different social and cultural backgrounds. Perhaps, as Cannella and Viruru suggest, those in positions of influence need to confront the reality of power distribution and critically reflect on the discourses that drive pedagogies.

Experiencing different pedagogies can cause difficulties in communication, leading to confusion (Terreni, 2003b). Terreni voices the experiences of overseas-born parents, who she interviewed about their initial experiences of New Zealand early childhood pedagogies. The parents spoke of the challenges they faced when their children first attended early childhood education. Terreni discussed the concerns of parents whose experiences of early childhood education were of formal, structured systems. She tells the story of a parent from Jordan, who explained that in his prior experience, children were not allowed to get dirty or wet, and were presented back to the parents clean and tidy, with brushed hair and washed hands and face. In fact, teachers would not let children leave if they were not well presented. His experience in New Zealand was of arriving to collect his child and finding her dirty with paint, wet from water play and with sandy clothes. To his astonishment, her teachers were delighted with this! Initially, this was very upsetting for the parent, but his concerns could have been ameliorated if
teachers had explained the philosophy behind early childhood pedagogies. The family would therefore, have been prepared for the different practices, even if they were hard to understand. Concern was expressed by Terreni and McCallum (2003) about the lack of understanding of alternative perspectives in early childhood education. They found little acknowledgement or acceptance of non-Western values or practices relating to early childhood education, or care giving. At times, practices in New Zealand early childhood settings were in direct conflict with the expectations and values of families. Of particular concern to Asian families, was the concept of promoting independence in young children, as in some cultures dependence on parents is perceived as an important family value.

In a study across a number of cultures (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane & Muhamad, 2001), it was found that the dynamics occurring within a specific culture largely determine relationships, expectations and behaviour. These are clearly understood within the culture, but can be used as a power device inside and outside the culture. Not surprisingly, those outside the culture found this considerably more difficult to manage than insiders. This supports the points raised by Terreni and McCallum (2003) that recently immigrated parents starting their children in New Zealand early childhood settings, clearly felt that they were outsiders, especially as the philosophical base to the curriculum and practices were not explained to them.

Tensions between cultural insiders and outsiders were further highlighted by Watson (2006), when she discussed the relationship between perceptions of difference and the assumptions of deviance. Watson’s study is based in the United Kingdom, yet similar tensions exist in many countries and communities. The tensions Watson refers to are especially pertinent to education in New Zealand, as the nation continues to increase in cultural and ethnic diversity. As Merriam et al. (2001) found, discrepancies occur when assumptions are made about what defines normal development, behaviour and expectations. For example, Malay participants in Merriam et al.’s study, showed that topics such as age-appropriate behaviour, learning activities and aging prove difficult to define, because the concepts were not necessarily understood in their culture in the same way as they are in Western cultures.
The findings of Watson (2006) suggest that even in an increasingly multicultural society, difference appears to suggest deviance. Deviance then becomes a phenomenon to be regarded with caution, or avoidance. As suggested by Fa’afoi and Fletcher (2001), despite a great deal of attention being given to New Zealand’s cultural diversity, the socio-political issues that pervade early childhood education, have only been blurred. Therefore, studies that explore challenges faced by ethnic minority student teachers are important in creating improved understandings of different perspectives. Gupta (2006) recommends that attention is given to incorporating the understandings, dispositions and values of all stakeholders in the development of curricula. In this way sociocultural understandings can be broadened and education strengthened.

Based on a study of socio-cultural and socio-political expectations, Chen, Wang, Chen, and Liu (2002) discuss the cultural discourses around expectations of young children’s learning, development and behaviour in China. This provides perspectives that dramatically contrast with the expectations of New Zealand society. Whereas Chinese society expects compliance, New Zealand expects autonomy and freedom of expression, tolerating challenges to authority. Chen et al.’s study discusses the socially unacceptable problem of aggressive children in China, making connections between children’s social behaviour and parenting styles. They see a connection between the one-child policy in China and increasing levels of childhood non-compliance, suggesting that parents are perhaps more lenient, as they know they can have only the one child. Similarly, Rosenthal (1999) found that in China, early childhood programmes were expected to socialise children by “unspoiling” them and to develop the skills they need to function effectively in a society, where children are expected to be compliant, respectful and diligent.

Terreni and McCallum (2003) highlight the difference between overseas-born parents’ and New Zealand born teachers’ understandings about children’s independence and autonomy. This emphasises the findings of Luo and Gilliard (2006), who note the importance of the early childhood community, stakeholders and policy makers
recognising that early childhood education development and learning is not mono-dimensional.

The ecological influence on the development of children’s characteristics heightens in complexity when the child lives in a society where the values and practices are different from those within the home. Chen et al. (2002) make the point that the terms authoritative and authoritarian might be understood differently in China than in America, with the likelihood that different parenting styles might be misinterpreted, or receive disapproval in cross-cultural contexts. The ethnocentric thinking that occurs in the academic world and in human development theory, tends to reflect Western views (Rosenthal, 1999). An example of this is identified in a study by Rhedding-Jones (2000) of early childhood education, pedagogy and the acceptance of culturally diverse perspectives in Norway, where minority ethnic groups struggle for representation in early childhood education. By challenging people from all communities to get in touch with their own roots, Rhedding-Jones highlights the complacency that can become an intrinsic aspect of belonging to a dominant society. She suggests that ethnicity and culture are shifting concepts that must inevitably change and grow with new input from diverse knowledge perspectives.

Even though some of the pedagogies might differ from New Zealand experience, there are commonalities amongst those who aim to support parents and children. For example, in Hong Kong, the early childhood education sector wrestles with similar problems to those experienced in New Zealand: funding, staffing and qualifications, alongside the issue of government input about curriculum and pedagogy (Rao, Koong, Kwong, & Wong, 2003). In Japan, curriculum standards are primarily determined by the Courses of Study published by the Monbusho (Ministry of Education, 2004), which consist of educational objectives and goals for student achievement at every grade level and for every subject, along with guidance and directions to teachers for the design of effective curricula. Teachers then plan their programme and instruction to reflect the requirements of the Course of Study. Guided by the Course of Study for Kindergartens, the preschool curriculum is primarily non-academic. This emphasises independent activities, instruction through play, and individual guidance of the development of the
child's intellectual and social skills. Similarly, in New Zealand, the agencies of the Ministry of Education, such as the Education Review Office, monitor the implementation of the curriculum and assessment, planning and documentation. This is designed to promote consistency amongst the early childhood sector.

In discussing issues of early childhood policy, particularly in the areas of curriculum and teaching, Mara (2005) drew attention to the inequitable representation of non-Western perspectives, concerning quality in early childhood education. She referred to the early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) claiming that it is difficult for Pasifika services to align with its philosophy with any degree of cohesion. In this discussion, Mara (2005) suggested that further work should be undertaken to establish a definition of quality early childhood education for Pasifika services. Her discussion concerning the early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki, demonstrates a tendency towards 'othering', in that it does not directly acknowledge Pasifika World Views. Rather, the document is based on Western principles and Māori ways of knowing, particularly in the Māori section, which is not a direct translation of the English section but is based on Māori pedagogies. As MacNaughton (2005) suggests, at this stage, it appears there is little space to allow alternative ways of knowing to sit alongside those of the majority in New Zealand because of the general lack of tolerance for different approaches to teaching. However, Te Whāriki claims that if teachers ensure that the purpose of the principles and strands are incorporated into the programme of the early childhood setting, all families should feel a sense of inclusion and belonging.

### 2.4.2 Early childhood education as a feminised profession

This section explores the background to some of the key feminist issues that early childhood education, the nature of women’s participation in the paid workforce, and the ways socio-political attitudes towards childcare influence the attitudes, values and political stance of the sector.

That women constitute the main early childhood teaching workforce is clearly evidenced by research identifying that less than 1% of teachers in funded early childhood services in New Zealand are men (Farquhar, Cablk, Buckingham, Butler, & Ballantyne, 2006).
The prediction from Farquhar et al. is that the number of men in early childhood will continue to decline, a trend that has existed since the mid 1990’s. They point out that in New Zealand, male early childhood teachers are appallingly under-represented, even in comparison to the low percentages in other Western nations. Australia for example, has male teaching staff of 4% in childcare, although only 2% in preschools. In Denmark male teaching staff account for 8% of early childhood teachers, and in England and Wales around 3% of teaching staff are male. Although the New Zealand early childhood philosophy stated in Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) advocates respect of difference and individuality, this is not reflected in early childhood teaching, as the community does not encourage men into the profession (Farquhar et al., 2006).

Early childhood teaching as a profession has been involved in feminist debate since the 1970’s when activists such as Helen May, Sonja Davies and Anne Meade brought women’s needs for quality education and care for young children to public and government attention. This eventually brought about greater provision of childcare and improved the monitoring of quality (May, 2005). However, feminist pressure created, perhaps unintentionally, a focus on women, as employees as well as service users, to the exclusion of men. Farquhar et al. (2006) claim:

> The veil of sexism inherent in the profession, due to it being a site for feminist activism since the 1970s and continued promulgation of the idea that men are not safe to work with young children, needs to be lifted and discussed (p. 3).

However, the sexism referred to by Farquhar et al. (2006), works both ways. As May (2005) suggests, the early childhood profession has a long history that is steeped in gendered discourses that subjugates women to care-giving and nurturing work and men to ‘more important’ roles. The idea that women should be encouraged to work outside the home and leave children in care, has been a difficult concept for New Zealand society to accept (Weiler & Middleton, 1999). It is therefore unlikely that the idea of involving men as early childhood teachers would have been an acceptable alternative to the mother at home (Simonton, 1998). This is particularly pertinent because, although feminists gained a foot in the workplace door by gaining improved childcare,
subsequently carried a double burden by working and being perceived as responsible for the main housework duties (May, 2005). Thus, socio-political discourses remain largely paternalistic.

Kincheloe, Slattery and Steinberg (2000) state that feminists are aware of the “…tacit value assumptions of modernist science and the political power it exerts under the banner of objectivity…(p. 293)”. Kincheloe et al. further suggest that the critical new paradigm of feminism challenges the paternalist modernist paradigms by “…grounding (their) critique in lived reality…as they analyse the connections between an unjust class structure and the oppression of women (p. 293, ibid).” Thus, the prime goal of the feminist strategies to gain improved childcare was to remove the physical and social barriers that kept women out of the paid workforce.

Particularly strong oppression has occurred in the context of women’s role in the paid and unpaid workforce. As Jordan and Weedon (1995) point out, conservatives in society have historically perceived the role of women as domestic and have an expectation that a woman’s life should revolve around motherhood and the home. Western society’s assumption is that women are biologically tuned for the domestic role. However the feminist argument is that any predisposition to domesticity is socially constructed, rather than biologically determined (Weiler & Middleton, 1999). Through the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, the gendered positioning that continued to limit women’s roles in society was largely based on biological theories of difference (Weedon, 1999). Through the inarguable physiological differences between women and men, the reproductive role of women was linked to physical and emotional vulnerability and weakness. As leading early feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) argued:

That woman is naturally weak, or degraded by a concurrence of circumstances, is, I think, clear. But this position I shall simply contrast with a conclusion, which I have frequently heard fall from sensible men in favour of an aristocracy: that the mass of mankind cannot be any thing, or the obsequious slaves, who patiently allow themselves to be penned up, would feel their own consequence, and spurn their chains (p.109).
The socio-political discourses surrounding women’s work have inspired commentary from many feminist writers, the history of which is of relevance to current paternalistic attitudes regarding early childhood teachers. Of note is Simonton (1998) whose historical work has reflected the long and arduous journey travelled by women to gain equity in the workforce. Simonton’s account showed the gendered histories of Western society that have positioned women as belonging outside the paid workforce, tracing the histories to Europe in the 1700s. At this time, discourses surrounding the appropriate education and social role of women were based on discovering ‘the nature’ of women. The conclusions drawn by the male leaders of society and education determined that women were suited to a domestic role (Wollstonecraft, 1792). The rationale was that women were innately weak, timid and unsuited to robust pursuits such as higher education or paid employment. Hence, women were subordinated to men and destined to support and care for husbands and children.

During the 19th century, industrialisation further subjugated women to menial roles in industry, or to domestic duties, but only unmarried women were to be employed (Simonton, 1998). Generally it was not expected that women would continue to work after marriage, thus leaving work for men and keeping women in the home. It was regarded by European societies that a wife in paid work would undermine the role of the husband. Hence, women were generally positioned as carers and nurturers, with unmarried women expected to look after male relatives, unless they belonged to the lower classes where ‘going into service’ or other suitable and menial work was an expectation of young, unmarried women (Simonton, 1998). This discourse continued until the second half of the 20th century, and Simonton explains that as late as 1950, women in some communities in Europe were still dismissed if they married whilst employed.

Slightly different practices had existed in Britain during the Second World War, when women were employed in factories and farms whilst men were fighting. The political discourses of the day urged women to ‘bravely face’ unfamiliar work for the country. As Simonton remarks, this reinforced the concept of women belonging in the home not the
workforce, whilst using their labour on a temporary basis. Women’s work in factories was largely unskilled and repetitive and after the war women were again sidelined to make way for returning men. However, Simonton suggests women’s issues did make some minor progress, as employers began to see potential in a female workforce, albeit limited to minor clerical and other roles positioned as subordinate to men. Care-giving, domestic work, teaching young children and nursing were also deemed as suitable employment for women. Simonton points out that, paradoxically, opportunities to work in nursing and teaching gave women an opportunity to broaden their horizons by meeting more people, and also gain independence and autonomy. She remarks that although the scope of women’s employment opportunities was widening, it was partly due to discourses that defined appropriate men’s work, with women picking up the supportive, lesser roles.

The perceived weakness of women in romantic desires were not viewed as a natural inclination of women, rather they were socially constructed images, created to serve the interests of men (Wollstonecraft, 1792). As such, socio-political discourses were used to ‘protect’ women from social pressures such as education that may prove too demanding for them thus effectively limiting career options and strengthening the position of men by promoting the seemingly weaker intellect of women. Wollstonecraft stated:

Only ‘absolute in loveliness,’ the portion of rationality granted to woman, is indeed very scanty; for, denying her genius and judgment, it is scarcely possible to divine what remains to characterize intellect (Wollstonecraft, 1792, p. 109).

Despite the work of radicals such as Wollstonecraft throughout the 19th and 20th century, women continued to be steered towards care-giving and nurturing roles such as nursing and teaching younger children. It was suitable for women to teach younger children whilst virtually unheard of for women to teach secondary aged students, and certainly not in higher education. Thus, again women were regarded as carers and men were seen as owning the knowledge. This also indicates a disregard for the education of younger children, deeming the education of older boys as important, thus to be taught by men. Furthermore, it was considered important for teachers to instil gender roles in
children, thus considered essential that boys be taught by men as they grew older. Simonton points out that even as late as the early 20th century, it was considered that a man would lose his masculinity if his superior was a woman. This resulted in a gender-based, vertical hierarchy in education.

Weiler and Middleton (1999) reflected on the struggle of women in education during the late 20th century as they attempted to infiltrate the male-dominated power systems that controlled attitudes, values and curriculum. It was during this period that Weiler and Middleton began to realise that being ‘different’; in education meant that it would be most probably considered to be wrong. Weiler and Middleton (1999) and Kincheloe et al. (2000) suggest that social discourses that marginalise those who are not in positions of power are areas that are represented in feminist debate. The feminist movement of recent times has drawn attention to alternative perspectives representing minorities, finding a supportive partner in poststructuralist theory. Together feminism and poststructuralism have challenged the status quo and the comfortable assumptions of modernism, and highlighted the importance of acknowledging and respecting difference (Kincheloe et al., 2000).

The feminist movement has journeyed from a binary perspective that failed to see diversities within women’s issues, to the current multi-positional viewpoint of poststructuralism (Zerbe Enns, Sinacore, Ancis & Phillips, 2004). However, the movement has only recently acknowledged that all women do not see feminist issues through the same lens. As pointed out by bell hooks (1989), the issues faced by Black Women, and Women of Colour are complex and necessitate different prioritising from issues that concern White women, focussing on racism as a major issue along with all forms of oppression. Hence, Zerbe Enns et al. (2004) draw attention to the notion of transnational feminisms. They emphasise the need for Western feminists to acknowledge that by viewing women’s issues through a Western lens, women from non-Western ethnicities and cultures can be othered even from within the perspective of feminism. Thus, the discourses offered in teacher education that drives curriculum need to reflect the multiplicity of understandings around gender roles, care-giving and parenting. Cannella (2000) states that recent academic dialogue concerning early
childhood education has been aimed at reconceptualising some of the long-standing notions of development and learning alongside women and children’s issues. She points out though, that power issues combined with the fears of society in relation to change mean that such discussions are likely to remain in the realms of academia and are unlikely to be reflected in practice.

The notion of what is ‘right’ and appropriate is strongly influenced by gender (Hearn, 2000; Tupuola, 1998). Feminist notions of Western society can conflict with the issues faced by non-Western women and actively serve to marginalise women from non-Western ethnic minorities. Feminism is likely to be perceived by Western women as empowering (Fine, 1994; Weedon, 1997; St. Pierre, 2000; Warnke, 2007) because of the perception of autonomy and independence commonly associated with feminist concepts. This is supported by Young (2000), who identifies the risk of feminism becoming a “White issue”, as it has a tendency to discuss women’s issues as if they were generic, most often originating from Western women. Different understandings of what is appropriate can create social issues for women whose gender role expectations differ from the social ‘norm’. Warnke (2007) claims that Western society judges women’s identities through a mono-cultural, stereotypical lens stating:

Ignoring difference in women due to race and class raises the risk of over generalising from the expectations and identity characteristics of White, middle-class American and European women. In addition, ignoring these differences marginalises other women and militates against the possibility of acknowledging their potentially very different experiences and concerns (p. 11).

Young (2000) claims that feminism is often regarded as problematic by non-White women who feel comfortable to contribute within the communal roles of their culture. What is empowering for some women may be uncomfortable for others.

2.5 Early Childhood Teacher Education

In New Zealand, early childhood teacher education prepares graduates to practice in any type of service within the sector. Montecinos (2004) points out, there is a paradox
that appears to exist in teacher education, whereby the teacher work-force is dramatically under-representative of the cultural diversity in the community and yet actively seeks to rectify this by encouraging ethnic minority students to join the teaching service. Simultaneously, practices within the teacher education sector disregard the worldviews of those student teachers who do not represent the dominant Western community. Moreover, it is claimed by Hedges and Lee (2010) that teacher education programmes generally under equip graduates to teach in complex, multicultural communities. As Gupta (2006) claims, it is critical that teacher educators incorporate the knowledges, skills and experiences that student teachers bring with them, because learning can be more meaningful when connections can be made to existing knowledge.

The difficulty in making connections between theory and practice was discussed by Jaruszewicz (2005), when she criticised current Western teacher education practice. She suggested that teacher education programmes often failed to achieve an in-depth understanding of philosophy in relation to teaching skills and knowledge for non-Western students. Jaruszewicz states that graduate teachers should be able to articulate what they are doing and why they are doing it and also claims that teacher education programmes need to be responsive to, and inclusive of, non-Western worldviews. However, Berno and Ward (2002) suggest that learning different pedagogies and teaching strategies can be quite confusing and arduous. Thus, as claimed by Fa’afoi and Fletcher (2001), when student teachers are required to implement unfamiliar child-centred practices, it is likely that the self-esteem of learners from many collectivist cultures will be affected, because they might feel their values, attitudes and beliefs have been contravened. Similarly, Sheets (2005) remarks on the discomfort that can be experienced by students who are required to adopt learning and thinking behaviours that do not match with their own belief systems and cultural understandings. She claims that cognitive dissonance can occur when students are expected to use unfamiliar gender roles, negotiate conflicting values and practices and communication styles. Sheets suggests that this can be an exhausting process, which most students address on their own and without understanding or support, because others are unaware of the tensions. Nolan (2008) found that student teachers who
shared their understandings with others in their cohort were better able to critically reflect on their beliefs and understandings and they experienced improved appreciation of their own and others’ knowledges, skills and attitudes. Similarly, Margetts and Nolan (2008) argue that by sharing reflective thoughts in supportive groups with others, preservice teachers can learn to think independently because the process of shared learning helps them to articulate and clarify their own thinking. Group work has been found by Herrenkohl and Mertl (2010) to be an effective method of learning more than course content. They claim that students learn about different approaches to learning and thinking, as well as learning more about each other. This can construct an appreciation of different understandings and promotes acceptance of diversity.

The politics of cultural diversity appear to attract more rhetoric than most areas of education. However in Australia, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (2003), has developed a framework that recognises the importance of pedagogy and an environment that makes learning meaningful to the student. Similarly, the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) and the newly developed National Standards, emphasise that improved learning can occur when students’ cultural heritage is represented. In recent years, the New Zealand Ministry of Education has offered teacher education scholarships designed to encourage Māori and Pacific students into early childhood teaching. This scheme is aimed at redressing the imbalance of teacher ethnicity, which remains dominated by New Zealand Europeans. The provision of the teacher education scholarships for early childhood did make an impact on the number of Pacific Island enrolments into programmes. However as Mara (2005) and Vartuli (2005) point out, the content of many teacher education programmes continues to reflect the perspective of the dominant New Zealand European culture. Both Mara (2005) and Vartuli (2005) see the beliefs that student teachers bring as essential components of identity and consider that the Western content of programmes undermines Pasifika students’ existing understandings. This is because the dominant pedagogy and policy direction of New Zealand largely remains in its Anglo-Celtic origins, combined with the national commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and Māori, with little inclusion of alternative understandings or cultural perspectives. However, the population no longer only reflects this heritage. As Terreni (2003a) suggests, strong
communication is an effective strategy for supporting families who are new to the pedagogies of a community. She claims that by using open dialogue with families, teachers can gain an insight into children’s strengths and interests. This assists families to adapt and to feel included in the programme, especially if there are opportunities for them to contribute in safe and comfortable ways. Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) suggest similar strategies for inclusion that could also support and enhance the experiences of overseas born student teachers during practicum placements. It is likely that student teachers who have been born and raised overseas might also face challenges when experiencing free-choice pedagogies during teacher education programmes. Hedges and Cullen (2005) found that because the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) focuses on learning processes rather than subject knowledge, student teachers who have learned in paradigms where academic subject knowledge is emphasised could find it difficult to relate to in practice because the subject knowledge is usually interwoven with other learning.

To address some of the challenges faced by students who are unfamiliar with the teaching practices normally used in New Zealand, mentoring has been suggested as an effective method of support. Mara and Marsters (2009) found this practice to be helpful to Pasifika students, but recommended that mentors be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences. However, Orland-Barak (2005) reveals that for her students to really grasp the skills required for an introspective exploration of their teaching, she implemented a detailed, explanatory approach that went beyond the modelling strategies that she had been using. The ‘talking the walk’ (p.44) strategy, systematically stepping through the processes, allowed students to more easily understand how to reflect on their decision-making and implementation practices, and become more critical in their self-analysis. This system guided students through adopting new attitudes and understandings about teaching and learning.

Kukari (2004) found that there was a strong relationship between religious and cultural experiences gained prior to teacher education and attitudes towards teaching and learning. Kukari’s findings agree with those of Mitchell (2001) that prior experiences influence student teachers’ beliefs about what it is to be a teacher, the nature of teacher
/ child interactions, as well as the teaching material and curriculum. Mitchell’s findings demonstrate the power of social and cultural experience prior to teacher education, in determining the attitudes and values of a teacher. She also found that although teacher education does to some extent, cause students to alter original beliefs, students who had beliefs that were grounded in family values remained stable. Similarly, values associated with affective aspects remained steadfast. The issue then, is the extent to which the student teacher can relate to content that might in some areas be incompatible with their own worldviews. As Atkinson (2000) remarks:

… normative textual identities create an image of ‘the pupil’ from which to differ is to be deviant; non-compliant; even (and particularly) sub-standard. Similar textual identities of ‘the school’ and ‘the training institution’ are created by the combined process of inspections, development plans and target setting. Differences are eroded in the quest for national standards; individual patterns of development are subsumed to the master plan. The need for stable identities for every player is paramount; otherwise the game cannot be played (pp. 92-93).

Mitchell (2001) expresses concern that the diversity that has been a notable characteristic and strength of the choices offered by New Zealand early childhood education, could be lost if graduating teachers are mass-produced to the same formula. Programmes have been developed that postulate the “right” way of teaching and learning (Gratch, 2001), rather than espousing postmodern epistemologies that deconstruct the status quo and open up alternative possibilities (Atkinson, 2000). De Groof and Lauwers (2002) argue that educational institutions have a moral responsibility to acknowledge and respect the cultural heritage and to protect ethnic minorities. They refer to “xenophobic politicians” (p. 10), who have a “perverse incentive” (ibid) to destroy cultures by insisting on assimilation. De Groof and Lauwers offer a strong argument for globalisation and the retention of culture and language as essential to well-balanced communities. They also highlight the accountability of educational policy in ensuring that minority students have the opportunity to learn within their culture and values, rather than putting them aside. De Groof and Lauwers suggest that to have to leave one’s culture is tantamount to leaving a right to which one is entitled. In arguing for a more
proactive model of tertiary teaching, McWilliam, Dooley, McArdle, and Pei-Ling Tan (2009) suggest that lecturers need to be more creative and courageous in changing the “dominant transmission culture of teaching” (p. 264), to accommodate a range of different worldviews. The challenge facing teachers is finding the balance between reflecting the values and beliefs of all members of a community and the pedagogical understandings of educationalists of the nation. As an alternative to traditional centre-based practica that could increase students’ understandings of diversity, Hedges and Lee (2010) found that students who were offered a community placement where they were placed with professionals or families, whose culture was different from their own, significantly increased their knowledge and understandings about cultural differences.

By developing the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) as a framework of principles and strands, the Ministry of Education aimed to reflect the wider contexts of learning by involving the aims and aspirations of family and community. This framework, according to Mitchell, Wylie and Carr (2008) was one part of a number of initiatives designed to bring universality across the diverse components of the New Zealand early childhood community. The curriculum also brought a means to assess programme and teacher quality in all areas of service. A number of significant researchers have been prolific producers of work and vocal on the subject of quality. As Wylie, Hodgen, Hipkins and Vaughan (2009) assert, it is well established by research that curriculum and programme focus, along with staff training and education are components of a quality learning environment. The curriculum has received praise for its potential, and intention to facilitate open learning in a non-prescriptive way across diverse services (Siraj-Blatchford, 1999).

Aspects of the curriculum that can be perceived as problematic are related to its implementation rather than its intent (Mitchell, 2001). She suggests that the openness of *Te Whāriki* allows for interpretation of the strands by teachers, thus programmes might on occasion, be implemented in ways that are problematic for some cultures. For example, this could particularly concern Strand 2, ‘belonging’ and Strand 4, ‘contribution’. Both of these concepts can be interpreted quite differently according to cultural understandings. For example, belonging and contributing within a collectivist
community, might involve observing the wishes of elders, rather than taking initiative. This can reflect strongly in self-concept and self-esteem (Watkins, Mortazavi, & Trofimova, 2000). However, in an individualist community, such as the dominant mainstream Western society of New Zealand, belonging and contribution might be reflected in making decisions relating to personal interests. Mainstream early childhood services in New Zealand and teacher education courses reflect the perspectives and worldview of the dominant society. Keesing-Styles (2002) questions the pedagogy that educators are promoting and asks what would be found if the philosophies and practices that are present in our educational communities were deconstructed. In her critical exploration of *Te Whāriki*, she points out:

The context, when closely examined and deconstructed, may reveal practices and philosophies that directly confront those held by the teacher and those valued by the sector (p. 114).

In deconstructing *Te Whāriki*, the question of how the curriculum can represent the range of cultures, world-views and socio-cultural perspectives currently participating in New Zealand society, remains a dilemma. In relation to individualist societies, Luo and Gilliard (2006) suggest that it is the structure of curricula which is of concern and confusion. They remind Western educators that success and achievement is of significance to Chinese families and they raise their children to understand this. No-one appears to be suggesting that New Zealand, or any Western educationalists move to the Chinese model, teacher education providers need to be aware that there is a significant community of stakeholders, including parents, student teachers and graduates, whose Chinese, Asian, Pasifika, or non-Western world-view of early childhood is their primary view. Thus, it is the context in which early childhood is viewed and understood that is the factor ultimately determining how the curriculum is delivered and contextualised (Keesing-Styles, 2002). Examining the context of the curriculum may not, according to Keesing-Styles, cause reflection on the relevant aspects. She challenges educators to deconstruct the difference in understandings between accepted traditions and those of minority cultures and to explore the real issues of practice in multicultural societies. To address this, Santoro, Kamler and Reid (2001) recommend
that teacher education programmes focus on greater sensitivity towards cultural diversity. Meanwhile, alternative worldviews of ethnic minorities continue to be devalued through the discursive practices of dominant cultures. Hoban (2004) suggests that teacher education requires an integrated approach that can be provided through a strong conceptual framework that incorporates all aspects of a course through a sociocultural lens, including practicum, theory and the views of practitioners in the field. He suggests that such a conceptual framework:

…focuses on highlighting the key relationships or links among the elements of a teacher education program. It also considers the relationships of the people most directly involved in teacher education--the teacher educators and teachers in schools. This is like using a multidimensional lens to bring to the fore thinking about the links across elements in a teacher education design as well as the elements themselves (p. 23).

Hoban's sociocultural view of teacher education focuses on a holistic approach to preparing teachers. He suggests that teachers who can respond to their communities in meaningful ways could support learners to construct positive identities. Rizvi and Lingard (2000) suggest that identity amongst those who have crossed cultural, ethnic and pedagogical boundaries will have been broadened in the sense of cosmopolitanisation, yet retained the sense of their own roots. However, they also caution educationalists to be wary of the likelihood that education is perceived as a consumable product and as part of the fiscal economy, rather than as part of the knowledge economy. As such, the notion of accommodating, acknowledging and embracing the multiple complexities of understandings is in danger of being overlooked in favour of selling a prepared ‘off the shelf’ education product, whether at the early childhood level, or tertiary level.

2.5.1 Culture, communication and learning
Communication styles are an intrinsic aspect of culture and according to Bruner (1990), are interwoven into the construction of understandings and meaning-making. Learning in a country and in an institution that reflects different cultural understandings, can
create challenges for students. All international applicants for teacher education programmes in New Zealand are required to pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test or similar assessment and achieve a high level of proficiency in spoken, written and aural English. However as Daly and Brown (2007) note, test results are not necessarily indicative of classroom performance. Similarly, Berno and Ward (2002) reported that although 80% of the Asian tertiary students they surveyed had expected to be able to understand New Zealand English, only 57.4% of respondents found they could. This suggests that many students entering academic programmes are unaware of the difference between being able to understand a language in a casual or social context and being proficient in an academic environment. It also suggests that the tests do not necessarily reflect students’ ability in the context of academic study. For example, Daly and Brown (2007) investigated the use of English by New Zealand lecturers and found that it was unsurprising that some students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) found lectures difficult. They state:

In the five minute samples taken of the New Zealand lecturers, it was noted that each participant used at least three observable colloquial terms. This suggests participating lecturers may be unaware of the language they are using and the problems this may cause NESB students…In a lecture, gestures and facial expressions combine with paralinguistic factors to signal important information in lectures. The findings in this study suggest that lecturers did not utilise such nonverbal communication to convey the information to the students. At times, participants did not maintain eye contact with the class and used minimal gestures. Further, the volume of the two female lecturers’ speech was more suited to a conversation, possibly causing students in the rear of the classroom to have to strain to hear the material (pp. 6-7).

Daly and Brown recommend that given the significant increase in the numbers of NESB students, lecturers should be provided with training to increase their awareness of their communication behaviour when teaching. This is also supported by Collett (2007), who points out that lecturers are generally unaware of the problems their delivery manner can cause non-native English-speaking students.
Tan and Goh (2006) and Berno and Ward (2002) express concerns about social understandings and language competencies. Their concerns included references to different cultural understandings about communication that prevented students from participating in casual discussions with peers, or approaching lecturers. They referred to concerns about being misunderstood, or considered incompetent if they misused words. Tan and Goh (2006) found that non-native English speaking students in Australia often felt self-conscious about their proficiency. They noted that in the social context of university life, many students lacked confidence to speak English, remarking:

…even though most of the Chinese students spoke English fluently, many of them often slipped into their own languages. The reason given by some was that they did not feel as competent in English as the Australian students. Others suggested that speaking in the Australian way…was unnatural, and would set the person apart from other Asian students (p. 656).

Tan and Goh (2006) found that many international students do not interact socially, or voice their opinion, because of the differences in communication styles. They claim that the Chinese style of interaction reserves close, in-depth communication about personal matters for close friends, relatives, or long-term acquaintances. Tan and Goh suggest that Chinese students might have found the Australian “show of outward affection, even to strangers, puzzling, pretentious, superficial and insincere” (p. 658). Thus, as stated by Schuerholz-Lehr (2007), theoretical understandings about the importance of acknowledging cultural differences, are not necessarily transferred into classroom practice. She claims that educators should place greater emphasis on cultural competence and world-mindedness to reduce the likelihood of disadvantage for ethnic minority students.

2.6 Teachers who are of Minority Ethnicity

This section will examine literature that discusses teachers who are ethnically different from their students. As there has been little material that relates to early childhood teachers who are of ethnic difference, this section will include literature about primary
and secondary school teachers. Developing understandings of different cultures is a significant aspect of teaching in the increasingly culturally complex communities of most countries and as Nieto (2000) and Santoro (2007) point out, is an area of learning that should be given considerable attention in teacher education programmes. Recent research (Cruickshank, Newell, & Cole 2003; Santoro, 2009), indicates that teacher education programmes do not adequately prepare students to work with children or colleagues who have a significantly different culture from their own. Santoro (2009) suggests that many teacher education providers are not responding with enough intensity to the increasingly multicultural contexts of learning required in Australian communities. She claims that ethnic minority students are taught by teachers who do not have the professional knowledge, skills or understandings to address the learning needs of students whose ethnicity is different from their own (Santoro, 2001). This can lead to lower academic achievement for ethnic minority students. Mara and Marsters (2009) suggest that academic success is more likely to occur when students’ experience an integrated approach to learning, incorporating their own understandings with those of the institution. They point out that this requires culturally appropriate learning to be provided, which means that the teachers must be able to relate to the culture and understandings of the students to create equitable learning opportunities. It seems likely that the same disparity of learning opportunities could occur in teacher education courses because statistics reveal that in New Zealand, more that

Equity is a concept that is fundamental to understanding cultural diversity and as Nieto (2000) points out, because of the increasingly multicultural diversity of many communities, should be considered an imperative factor in teacher education programmes. Nieto refers to social justice and the politics of education that dwell in the mainstream silo of society. She points out that to achieve social justice in education, a review of the fundamental content, processes and attitudes within education need to be undertaken, before any tangible progress can be made in addressing the inequalities that exist for those of ethnic minority. Nieto’s work is significant in highlighting the need for attitudinal change towards diversity for students. However, for teachers, who find themselves in the minority with their students and colleagues, the situation can be extremely challenging and compromising.
Martin and Van Gunten (2002) claim that students and teachers whose experience and understandings were different from the cultural majority were likely to feel “othered” and marginalised in the educational environment. This concern was also raised by Rymesa, Cahnmann-Taylor and Souto-Manning (2008), in a study with bilingual teachers in the United States of America. They interviewed teachers who had been specifically appointed by schools, for their fluency in Spanish and English and in some cases, because they were Latin-American. The schools sought the teachers’ cultural and linguistic skills and knowledge, so that they could strengthen communication with Spanish-speaking children and their families. However, the teachers faced hostility and alienation from their White colleagues. Participants specified many occasions when they had faced negativity by White parents and teachers, because they spoke English with an accent, or because they had different cultural understandings about spoken and non-verbal communications.

Facing negativity can be particularly difficult for beginning teachers. Patrick (2010) claims that beginning teachers can often experience stress due to the significant amount of extra learning they encounter. She suggests that the support and mentoring provided for beginning teachers can be inadequate because it fails to address the realities of teaching in a culturally diverse setting, often because the mentors are ill-equipped for teaching in multicultural classrooms. Moreover, Santoro, Reid and Kamler (2001) found that teachers who are minority ethnicity often face the additional stress of professional isolation. This can be due to lower numbers of overseas-born teachers in permanent positions than Australian-born teachers and because of colleagues’ disregard for their knowledge, skills and experience on racial grounds. They also point out that many overseas-born teachers have no immediate support from within their families due to geographic factors, with friends and family still located overseas. Furthermore, discursive practices that exclude overseas-born teachers from social and professional contexts were found to occur in schools, to the extent that many ethnic minority teachers saw themselves as “other” (Santoro, 2007; Santoro, Kamler, et al. 2001). As stated by Santoro, Reid and Kamler (2001), graduate teachers of ethnic
difference, who have been born and educated overseas, can be at considerable risk of stress.

In a study of beginning teachers of minority ethnicity, Basit and McNamara (2004) found that in many schools, positive induction processes were in place, but also found that other participating graduates experienced discriminatory practices. Consistent with Patrick (2010), Basit and McNamara (2004) recommend that those mentoring and supporting ethnic minority teachers, receive improved guidance and professional development for working in multicultural contexts. They make the point that many senior teachers in British schools may not have received training in cultural diversity and therefore, may be underprepared to work with colleagues who have different knowledges and perspectives from themselves.

Understanding the contributions that ethnic minority teachers can offer, can contribute to a positive multicultural learning environment. Santoro (2007) suggests that ethnic minority teachers can play an important role by providing support for the students and developing connections and by building understandings of ethnic minority students, for other teachers. Howard (1999) and Montecinos (2004) found that teachers from the dominant culture can find that teaching students from cultures outside their own cultural knowledge and experience places them in a compromised position as it causes them to behave outside their comfort zone. They claim that teachers often have little knowledge or understanding about the cultures of students they teach. Teachers who are of ethnic minority face similar challenges on many levels (Santoro, 2007; Santoro, Kamler, et al. 2001), because they are required to adapt to the culture of the school, which is generally reflective of the mainstream, Anglo-European model, that they might not share. Valentiin (2006) remarks that many teachers graduate with very limited experience of working in ethnically or culturally diverse communities. Similarly, Terreni (2003a) said that she found it quite problematic that experienced teachers could fail to acknowledge alternative cultural knowledge and values, particularly when considering the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural world in which they teach.
Although in recent years, effort has been made in New Zealand early childhood programmes to teach and assess children through an appropriate sociocultural lens, this does not appear to be consistently reflected in practice. Moreover, it has not appeared to have transferred into institutional practice amongst teachers. According to Rogoff (2003), socio-cultural assessment takes into account the particular strengths, interests and cultural values and practices of individuals. Within the context of the sociocultural assessment model of Kei Tua o Te Pae (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005 and 2009), the policy direction is aimed at steering the thinking of Anglo-Celtic teachers (who form the vast majority of the teacher workforce in New Zealand), towards accepting other ways of knowing as valid learning and knowledge. However there is no acknowledgement of ethnic minority teachers working in services, where other teachers and children represent the dominant Anglo-Celtic majority. This suggests that there is a gap between policy, practice and discourse. Ball (2006) highlights the subjective nature of links between policy and discourse, stating “We are [italics in original] the subjectivities, the voice, the knowledge the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows” (p. 48). This statement draws attention to the interplay between socially constructed attitudes, values and behaviours that drive policy direction. Ball suggests that educational policy tends to be set as a tool for controlling and driving discourse and claims that policies can “articulate and constrain the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment” (p. 52). As Milner (2007) states, the dominant majority are the curriculum gatekeepers and tend to be resistant to the interests of ethnic minorities, unless there is an area of convergence, or they offer a perceived advantage to them. Milner suggests that this indicates a resistance by the dominant majority to place minority communities in a strengthened social position thus retaining power.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature on race, culture, ethnicity, identities, pedagogy and curriculum in early childhood education, teacher education and teachers of minority ethnicity. The literature has shown how important it is for policymakers and lecturers to understand the culture and ethnicity of individuals, to support the construction of the multiple identities. Throughout much of the literature, the importance of acknowledging individual identities (Hall, 1996) has been regarded as critical to making learning
meaningful. This was also found to be significant for ethnic minority student teachers, because much of their existing knowledge was grounded in their racial and cultural heritage.

Constructing teacher identity has been shown to involve the positioning of self within the understandings of the role of the teacher and the pedagogy of society. Where there is little convergence between a teacher’s understanding of what it is to be a teacher, it is likely that their teacher identity could be fragmented (Kukari, 2004). In the early childhood sector, there can be significant differences between cultural understandings of teaching, what it is to be a teacher and pedagogies. Hence, understanding the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) can be challenging for student teachers whose prior experience involves a formal, teacher led approach to education. *Te Whāriki*, is based on the highly individualist, child-centred philosophy that reflects New Zealand early childhood pedagogy. However, with the impact of globalisation and the proliferation of multiculturalism within most countries and communities, it is increasingly important that pedagogies and teaching practices reflect the worldviews and individual understandings of learners.

This chapter has reviewed the literature that has informed my research. In the next chapter, I will describe and discuss the methods used to conduct this study.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research approach, design and methods used in this study and provide my reasons for making these choices. The research has been conducted as a qualitative case study, using narrative inquiry as the method. Hence, I begin this chapter by briefly reviewing qualitative research methods, case study and narrative inquiry. I explore the nature of my experience and my involvement as researcher and explain the context of the research. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the data analysis and address the ethical issues involved in this study.

3.2 Qualitative Research

Methodologies that are described as qualitative, essentially involve people as individuals. Such methodologies sit comfortably with the complexities of human concepts and contexts, with the involvement of the researcher shaping research processes and findings. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as:

...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 transform the world…making sense of meanings people bring… (p. 6)

Denzin and Lincoln make special mention of the researcher as central to qualitative inquiry processes, referring metaphorically to the bricoleur as a description of qualitative research. They suggest that like the quilter, the qualitative researcher uses the aesthetic material tools of their craft. The quilter brings together different textures and fabrics to create an image, much as the qualitative researcher brings together the complex, contextual range of fabrics that construct images of individuals’ lives, understandings and perspectives.

This study investigated the experiences of eight, recently graduated, overseas-born, ethnic minority student teachers during New Zealand early childhood teacher education
programmes. The narratives of three early childhood teacher education lecturers provided alternative perspectives.

In an overt and honest partnership between the researcher and participants, a qualitative research method uses an inductive approach that requires no hypothesis. The reader is thus free to make their own meanings through active, interpretive involvement (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). As pointed out by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), the method works from a question and allows the process of inquiry to determine an outcome, rather than working from a predetermined, measurable hypothesis as would normally occur in a quantitative study. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) reinforce the appropriateness of applying postmodern theory to a research method that emphasises the open, consciously active role of the researcher, minimising focus on method and tested science. The active role of the researcher is discussed in some depth by Davidson and Tolich (2003). They pay particular attention to the significance of the researcher’s involvement in the data collection and analysis process, pointing out that much of the meaning could be missed if the person analysing the data has not been involved in its collection. Moreover, the rejection of positivist claims about “proof” allows space for the emergence and growth of concepts within the project. Consistent with poststructuralist theory, qualitative methods recognise the subjectivity of experience through interpretation and meaning-making by the individual (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The impact of subjectivity through individual interpretation is emphasised by Britzman (2000), when she claims:

> In poststructuralist narratives, subjects cannot be uncoupled from the conscious and unconscious of discourses that fashion how subjects become recognised and misrecognised. Every discourse constitutes, even as it mobilises and shuts out, imaginary communities, identity investments and discursive practices (p. 36).

As the researcher, I was a key instrument in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore the choices I made, along with my knowledge and life experiences, would become woven into the texture of this study. This occurred through my active
involvement with the data collection, as I interacted with participants during the interviews and during analysis. When listening to and transcribing my recordings of narratives, I made meaning of the data through reflection on each conversation.

Regardless of the methods applied within a qualitative paradigm, the researcher is accountable for the findings of a study and must, according to Creswell and Maietta (2002), provide an overt and systematic path to any conclusions postulated. Thus, it was crucial to the credibility of my study that the methods produced the type of information that was required to enable me, as the researcher, to find a meaningful and informative response to my research question (Tolich & Davidson, 2003).

### 3.2.1 Case study

Whilst discussing the place of case study in educational research, Carter (1999) states:

…this line of inquiry underscores the importance of collaboration in the construction of cases and an active role for the teacher in coming to understand what a case might mean…Rather than seeing teaching "out there" as something happening to an anonymous someone, we can imagine a case as a personal account and construct an image of who the person in the case is (p. 173).

As Carter claims, case study can personalise an inquiry. It can be used in relation to an individual, a social group or institution (Miller & Salkind, 2002; Stake, 2006) and is not confined to either a quantitative or qualitative approach, but is equally available to either. The defining characteristic of a case study is the conceptualisation of a set of circumstances or a single issue in which there is an interest. Stake (2006) reinforces this point by referring to the capacity of case study to “study the experience of real cases operating in real situations” (p. 3). He refers to the complexity of an issue and describes the role of case study in education as a tool for defining the uniqueness of each situation along with the commonalities. In my study, ‘the case’ is characterised by a specific set of circumstances that affect a group of people who have studied early childhood teacher education in New Zealand, a country significantly culturally different from their country of birth, upbringing and school education.
According to Miller and Salkind (2002), the most significant factor defining a case study is its boundaries because these identify and frame the context for the study. The establishment of a “bounded system” (ibid, p. 162) ensures that the investigation has a purpose and clearly identified focus. The boundaries that encased my study concerned the experiences of early childhood student teachers during a teacher education programme in New Zealand. My inquiry was therefore, limited to factors within the life experience of each individual as it related to their teacher education programme. This included prior learning and understandings concerning the development and education of young children and their own experience of pedagogy as students and as beginning teachers.

In qualitative case study, the establishment of boundaries for the research allows for depth within the inquiry and the flexibility of gathering data in a number of ways, to augment the researcher’s understanding. Qualitative case study is described by Stake (2006) as being dynamic because the researcher is likely to reconsider matters as new information might emerge and cause the re-working of ideas and process. As such, the qualitative case study becomes a personal and unique interaction between the researcher and the issue in question. As Stake points out:

> The case to be studied probably has problems and relationships, and the report of the case is likely to have a theme, but the case is an entity. The case has a unique life (p. 3).

I acknowledge the unique experience of each participant and the affect this has on their learning and development as a teacher. It is this that is captured in the data collection and analysis processes.

### 3.2.2 Narrative inquiry

I identified narrative inquiry as an appropriate method for my study because I was interested in the individual process of learning, change and the relationship between
past and current experience and knowledge of each participant. It is claimed by Kohler-Riessman (2008) that:

Narratives are composed for a particular audience at a particular moment in history and draw on taken for granted discourses and vocabularies circulating in a particular culture (p. 3).

I anticipated that the stories that the participants told would contribute to my understanding of the process of learning to become an early childhood teacher in New Zealand. In particular, their stories were important because their existing knowledges, understandings and values differed significantly from those taught in New Zealand teacher education programmes.

It has been suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) that a research method should always be selected to best fit the question being researched. As this study involved participants from a range of experiential backgrounds, the design needed to be flexible and collaborative. Thus, the diversity of participants and the inductive nature of the questions were prime considerations for selecting the methods used. Kohler-Riessman (2008) refers to narrative as primarily relating to lived experiences and personal life stories. This highlights the significance of narrative in the education of teachers because it provides a method for close, in-depth interpretation of the process of learning and teaching, and learning through teaching (Watson, 2006).

Narrative inquiry is seen by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), as an extension of unstructured interviewing, as it provides an open opportunity for the participant to respond to the topic from his or her own perspective. Narrative is the product of an interview but differs from an interview in that the participant tells a story, rather than responding to predetermined questions. However, the researcher might use some open-ended questions to support the participant to tell their story within the context of the research. Kohler-Riessman (2008) suggests that narratives are a response to a specific aspect of personal experience, retold within the boundaries of a particular
context. Similarly, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to narrative inquiry as seeking the experiences of individuals. This is done through an interview, in the sense that the researcher sets and guides the topic for the conversation and is actively involved with the process through documenting, interpreting and making meaning from the story. Conle (2000) to some extent supports this, defining narrative inquiry as having the qualities and purpose of an aesthetic art form, being a reflective activity and as a means to create connections between contexts and components in an inquiry. Conle also comments that narrative inquiry remains largely under-investigated as a tool for research.

My research specifically focuses on the past and current experiences of ethnic minority, New Zealand teacher education students who were born and raised overseas. As a middle-class, white researcher, even though I was born outside New Zealand, I can never know, or presume to understand the life histories and experience of those whose journeys during teacher education, I seek to investigate. It is fundamental to the methodology of narrative inquiry that the researcher becomes involved as a participant in the study. Thus, the stories of those who were willing to share this experience with me provided a lens through which I could view and interpret their experiences. The open-ended approach of narrative inquiry that allows this interaction is described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), as an integral part of the knowledge of teachers. This is particularly pertinent to New Zealand early childhood teaching, where teachers assess children’s progress through learning stories (Carr, 2001). Similar to narrative inquiry, this is a post structuralist approach, where individual understandings, knowledges, skills and competencies are central to the assessment process.

During the past twenty years, narrative inquiry has increased in popularity as a recognised qualitative methodology, as researchers have formed greater understandings of the relevance of life-story to unravelling issues pertaining to social sciences (Kohler-Riessman, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This form of inquiry has further gained momentum with the rise of the postmodern and poststructuralist philosophies and the reduction of clinically regulated approaches to research, particularly in the education and social science fields. However, Kvale and Brinkman
(2009) highlight the importance of researchers taking a clearly defined, theoretical position in narrative inquiry. In response to critics who have regarded narrative inquiry as lacking formal structure, Kvale and Brinkman (2009) suggest that to ensure that postmodern and poststructuralist research methods are widely respected as robust approaches, researchers should clarify the epistemology that underpins their inquiry. They emphasise the importance of revealing a considered, clearly evidenced process that informs and guides their study, so that readers can feel confident about the findings.

Fine (1994) discusses the importance of careful consideration when selecting a research method, suggesting that much qualitative research has created a discourse of “othering”. She claims that by speaking of and for people, research has inadvertently created a tool often used for colonisation and domination. More recently, Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2000) explored the power of the researcher when working with the words of individuals and studied the position taken by the application of different methods of inquiry. They state:

We recognise that different methodologies are likely to illuminate different versions of men and women’s understandings of welfare, jobs, education and violence. Convergence is unlikely and perhaps, undesirable (p. 119).

Fine et al. (2000) continue by exploring the dilemma they describe as the “triple representation problem” (p. 120), when discussing the role of the researcher in representing the words and meanings / understandings of others. In doing so, they ask to what extent the researcher should take the position of presuming to be able to speak of and for others and to what extent they should reveal their own position within the research. Thus, it is important for me, as the researcher, to consider the position of all stakeholders as well as the type of information sought, before selecting my method of inquiry.

Despite the tensions that exist with interpretation, rather than speaking on behalf of others, narrative inquiry can give participants and readers the opportunity to engage in a
self-defining process. This allows the relationship between socially depicted aspects of self to be identified and drawn together within the story. As Clandinin (2007) claims, the process of narrative inquiry has the potential to achieve freedom of expression, empowerment and an opportunity to be heard through the storyteller’s own words. This can provide a significant tool for constructing identities and empowerment for a participant, particularly where lived experiences are frequently misrepresented or misunderstood (Letherby, 2003). Furthermore, Ellis and Bochner (2002), suggest narrative inquiry provides the reader with the opportunity that to interpret, identify and situate themselves within the story and thus become involved.

The experiences of any individual can never be viewed in isolation. The experiential past and anticipated future must all be considered as part of the contextualised, experiential present (Dewey, 1930). The viewer can therefore relate to, or empathise with an experience of life in a way that they might not otherwise have considered. Of course, within this relationship, the viewer might also find aspects of a life experience, or a view of life with which they closely identify. Thus the most effective way I could gain some level of understanding of experiences that differ significantly from my own, was through the stories of people who have lived within the parameters of my inquiry.

The way in which a story is told is dependent on the time, place, past experience, current context and imagined future of the narrator. The way a story is received and interpreted is equally dependent on the temporal location and context of the listener / reader (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Given this understanding, as a researcher I could not separate my personal experience and context from the narrative. I was therefore an active audience and a participant. Kohler-Riessman (2008) proposes that narratives are naturally presented for an audience. It therefore follows that if there is no audience, the value of the story is lost. Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 185) suggest that good narrative should also have “authenticity, adequacy and plausibility”. Thus, to ensure that the story does have value, the researcher should be mindful of the multiple understandings of audiences (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007).
The telling of stories from personal perspectives, especially where these may differ from commonly held views, allows the individual an opportunity to put pieces of experience together and (re)construct identities as they (re)tell and (re)view, problematise and (re)solve self as it exists at a given space and time. Thus in a narrative genre, the subjectivity of the researcher's role in determining the process and product is explicit and accepted as an integral part of the process. Moreover, within the context of narrative it is understood that the subjectivity and involvement of the readers, who will also reinterpret the text to their own concept of reality, is a significant aspect of the process. It is this involvement, combined with the overt nature of the process, which allows the reader to assess the validity of interpretations. As researcher and audience, the stories would involve my interpretation, conclusions and my biases. Moreover, the process of interpretation could create areas of tension in making decisions about the interpretation and application of data and between participants and me, regarding power, trust and developing relationships.

The challenge of interpreting other people’s stories creates a need for what Clandinin and Connolly (2000) refer to as wakefulness. Wakefulness requires thoughtfulness, anticipation and awareness of likely outcomes, specific actions, or behaviours. Through self-efficacy, I can monitor my own actions. By being respectful, honest, open, and communicative, I can allow a relationship of trust to develop. However, as Gergen and Gergen (2000) contend, a major challenge that faces poststructuralist research concerns validity and the rights of researchers to represent the life experiences of other people. Gergen and Gergen remark that a change of thinking about validity is required to accommodate the complexities and paradoxes that occur in social science research. Furthermore as Gee (2005) suggests, one of the complexities of interpreting stories can be the camouflaging of situated meanings, rendering the intended meaning incomprehensible to those not conversant with the specific discourse. As a researcher, I take from this, the importance of remaining wakeful and alert to the possibility that misunderstandings can occur. I also recognise the need to use consultation with participants as a strategy to minimise this risk.
Silences, spaces and that which remains unspoken provide further reason for using a narrative methodology. The aim of narrative is to understand individual experiences, thus reinforcing the significance of reading the meaning of what is not said in narrative (Clandinin et al., 2007). Clandinin et al. also observe that the narrative researcher is responsible for taking care that the interpretation creates the image that each participant intends. Thus, narrative becomes a transitional process, involving listening, knowledge and its application, relationships, empathy and understanding. Narrative inquiry therefore, provides a way for me to represent and form my own understanding of the experiences of individuals within the context of their experience of education and of their own previous experience.

### 3.3 Research Design

As this is a qualitative study focussed on gaining an in-depth understanding of participants’ individual experience of teacher education in New Zealand, I decided to limit data collection to a small number of participants with whom I could develop an effective working relationship. I therefore selected eight graduate early childhood teachers and three lecturers. I sought the participation of early childhood teachers who were born and educated overseas, in a culture significantly different from that of mainstream New Zealand and who had graduated with a New Zealand Diploma or Bachelor of Teaching (ECE). Data from the interviews with the early childhood graduates gave me an insight into their reflections on their journey to becoming teachers in New Zealand. The inclusion of three early childhood lecturers gave an alternative perspective and broadened the inquiry. This provided me with an opportunity to explore the significance attributed to student challenges and achievements by lecturers and to analyse this in relation to student perspectives.

I anticipated that the narrative of participants in this study would offer a range of experiential narrative ‘truths’. As suggested by Ellis and Bochner, (2002):

> One narrative interpretation of events can be judged against another, but there is no standard by which to measure any narrative against the meaning of events themselves, because the meaning of prenarrative experience is constituted in its
narrative expression. Life and narrative are inextricably connected. Life both anticipates telling and draws meaning from it. Narrative is both about living and part of it (p. 746).

In the following section, I will describe and provide a detailed discussion of the data collection procedure. This will include the research process and selection of participants. I will also provide a discussion of the interview process, research journal and epistemology in keeping with the feminist and poststructuralist theoretical framework outlined earlier. I will begin by explaining the data collection methods and discuss the selection of participants.

3.4 Data Collection

In this section, I describe and discuss the processes used to gather data. I also discuss the selection of participants and the methods used to conduct interviews.

3.4.1 Selection of participants

I drew my graduate participants from the cohort of teachers who had graduated from early childhood teaching qualifications, more than one year, but less than three years prior to the interviews. I felt that their memories and reflections would still be fresh, but not too immediate. I thought that the time and space since graduation would allow them to develop a greater sense of perspective in their reflections, potentially taking a more considered approach to their stories than more recent graduates. Letters of introduction were sent to 85 randomly selected preschool centres in the region of Wellington, New Zealand, to ask Head Teachers to distribute the Plain Language Statement (see Appendix 1) to staff. I selected Wellington early childhood centres because they attract graduates from a wide range of tertiary institutions. A consent form (see Appendix 2) and reply-paid envelope were included for volunteer participants. Letters were also sent to providers of teacher education programmes where the student cohort was known to be multicultural, to gain access to interview early childhood lecturers. Once permission was granted, plain language statements (see Appendix 3) and consent forms with reply-paid envelopes were provided for volunteer participants.
The participants, who were randomly selected for this study from the fifteen who responded, were given pseudonyms. The names reflect the culture of each participant, except where participants had requested a specific name. Some Chinese students in New Zealand are proud of having an ‘English’ name and this was the case with some of my participants.

Beth is a New Zealand resident from Niue, who had graduated two years prior to the interview. Before her teacher education programme, she had worked as an assistant in a Church-based ‘Aoga Amata’, a Samoan early childhood centre where children are taught in the language and culture of Samoa. She speaks Samoan fluently, although Niuean is her native language. Beth selected her pseudonym with me during the interview process. She is a mother of adult and teenage children and wanted to explain to me as part of her introduction that she is very proud of their educational achievement. Thus, it seemed that her role as the mother of children who were achieving academically was an important aspect of her identities as a Niuean woman and mother.

Naomi is a New Zealand resident from the Cook Islands who has a passion for her homeland and culture. She had graduated one year prior to the interview. She is a mature woman who was sixty years of age at the time of her interview and is richly experienced through her work in industry, her Church and community. However, Naomi’s main goal was to make sure that the young children of her Cook Island community, including her own grandchildren, were able to learn the language and culture of their heritage.

Kaito is an International student from Japan in his mid 20’s, and the only male in this study. Kaito had spent a few months in an English language school in New Zealand prior to starting his teacher education. He had graduated two years prior to the interview. Kaito had previously studied psychology in Japan and came to New Zealand to broaden his experience, improve his English and gain a teaching qualification. He had initially intended to take his qualification back to Japan, but decided to remain in New Zealand and gain residence whilst working as a teacher in an education and care centre.
Holly, an International student graduate from China, was proud of having an English name, so I gave her an English pseudonym, with which she was pleased. Holly came to New Zealand to improve her English and decided to take an early childhood qualification. She admitted that she thought it would be a relatively easy teaching option. As a young, single woman in her early 20’s, she enjoyed the opportunities that living overseas gave her. Holly decided to remain in New Zealand after graduating and has worked in an education and care centre since graduating three years prior to participating in this study.

Li came to New Zealand from China specifically to gain a New Zealand teaching qualification. During the first two years of her teacher education programme, her two year old daughter remained in China to be cared for by Li’s mother. In the third year, Li brought her to New Zealand whilst her husband worked in China. Li had graduated one year prior to participating in this study.

Julie, a New Zealand resident graduate from China, chose to retain an ‘English’ name. She had to balance study and parenthood and also support her husband in his business. The family had lived in New Zealand for several years after choosing to leave China for family reasons. Julie had studied in China and was fluent in several languages. During her second year of study she had a second child but was able to continue with her course and graduated with her original cohort. She had graduated three years prior to this study.

Mele, a recently immigrated New Zealand resident from Samoa is the mother of six children. Prior to studying teacher education, Mele had studied in Samoa and had done some teaching in her village community. She had also taught Sunday School in New Zealand. Mele became interested in early childhood teaching after becoming involved in her children’s kindergarten and has been teaching in an education and care centre since graduating, two years before this study was conducted.
Talei, a New Zealand resident graduate from Fiji, is a mother of adult children. She continues to be involved in her Church and community, offering support to parents with young children by using the knowledge she gained when becoming a teacher. Talei was a teacher in Fiji where she taught primary school children. She graduated three years prior to this study.

The lecturer participants were also given pseudonyms and were all New Zealand European, full time lecturers from institutions which had a significantly high multicultural student demographic. Two other lecturers volunteered, but withdrew before participating. I gave the three participants the pseudonyms of Natalie, Glenda and Karen.

Natalie visits student teachers on practicum placements. She has a young family of her own and has been a practising early childhood teacher prior to taking up a position as a lecturer. At the time of interviewing, Natalie had been a lecturer for 4 years. Glenda teaches curriculum subjects. She had been an early childhood teacher prior to continuing her study and had six years’ experience as a lecturer. Karen had been a kindergarten teacher for several years prior to becoming a lecturer, three years prior to this interview. She lectures in curriculum studies, literacy and maths and is a visiting lecturer, supporting students on practicum.

3.4.2 Interviews
Having given careful consideration to the nature of my question, I decided to use an approach that allowed me to acquire in-depth and reflective data. I used a semi-structured interview approach that guided conversation and encouraged the participants to tell their stories about their experiences during their teacher education, or as lecturers. According to Letherby (2003), interviews presented in an open and reflexive form can allow the voice of each participant to be heard and is thus, consistent with a postmodern approach to research. However, when a specific avenue of inquiry is explored, the conversation does need to have a purpose and as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) assert, the interview is more than an everyday conversation, but can be about everyday experiences. The boundaries of the narrative in this research were therefore,
restricted to the specific areas of the participants’ life experiences that related to my research question. As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) point out, recent directions in interviewing acknowledge that feelings, expressivity and subjectivity are necessary ingredients of an interview. Moreover, Cohen et al. state that rather than being a means of transferring information, an interview is a social encounter and as such, involves many of the features of everyday life. Cohen et al. also warn researchers to be wary of factors such as bias, which can influence the interpretation of dialogue during interviews. They remind researchers to remain alert to their own subjectivities and understandings.

To understand the process of interviewing, Kvale (1996) uses the analogies of the interviewer as a miner or as a traveller, to encapsulate different approaches to seeking understandings. The miner digs for buried knowledge and seeks quantifiable facts, whereas others may dig for precious “nuggets of data meaning” (p. 3), thus suggesting a fait accompli. In contrast, the traveller embarks on a journey of exploration and discovery with the vessel of interviews and can “…wander through the landscape and enter(s) [sic] into conversations with the people encountered” (p. 4).

Bochner (2001) claims that any topic researched has to be significant and relevant to the researcher, otherwise making meaning from the material would be difficult. He states, “I believe that the projects we undertake related to other people’s lives are inextricably connected to the meanings and values we are working through in our own lives” (p. 138). I was working with student teachers whose lived experiences were very different from my own and I wanted to improve my understandings about their experiences of New Zealand teacher education. I therefore anticipated that my thinking about the stories from participants might change, evolve and become increasingly complex during the data collection process. Consistent with a poststructuralist approach, described by Gough and Gough (2002), I did not wish to dictate the nature of the interview, but intended only to guide the focus of the conversation, so that the interviewees could interpret and respond to the specific topics. I prepared questions based on the topics I wished to address, so that participants could understand the nature of the inquiry and to ensure that the data gathered were relevant to the topic.
As Letherby (2007) suggests, the feminist poststructuralist approach seeks to acknowledge and respond to individual differences. Hence, by allowing conversations to flow in the way that seemed appropriate to the participant and myself at the time and place of the interview, participants were able to take greater control over the direction of the interview. I found that topics flowed according to the priorities and interpretations of the participants, meaning that each interview was unique, allowing the interview to become the participant’s story, told with a specific focus.

Participants were encouraged to tell stories that they felt were relevant and meaningful to them and that contextualised their experiences as ethnic minority students. In the first interview, topics for the recent graduates included reflection on the content, teaching styles, learning environment and practicum experiences. The second interviews evoked more thinking around practicum placements and explored the participants’ perceptions of challenges and highpoints during their courses. Within these topics, matters such as acknowledgement of prior learning, beliefs and values within the programme were discussed. In some interviews we also discussed the nature and outcomes of any personal changes that participants felt they had experienced as a result of their teacher education programmes. Lecturers, who were interviewed once, were prompted to discuss their experiences when teaching ethnic minority student teachers. This occurred through topics that included students’ adjustment to learning in New Zealand, their thoughts about the challenges students face and changes that they felt occurred as students progressed through the programme. Students’ experience during teaching practica was an area that received considerable discussion in all lecturer interviews. When meeting with each lecturer, I focussed on their responses to the topics. I worked across the boundaries of professional experiences, exploring their thinking in the spaces between objective descriptions of their teaching practices and the subjectivity of the complexities they faced in multiethnic student cohorts. This invariably included the difficulties and challenges encountered when working with students with significantly different experiences and understandings from their own. Therefore, the identities and professional experience of each lecturer interviewed, shaped the direction that each conversation took. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain, the interests, knowledge,
experiences and context of any interviewer and interviewee are likely to determine the direction and content of an interview.

All interviews were audio taped to allow me the freedom to participate in conversation without note-taking. However, after each meeting I recorded my ideas, thoughts and reflections in a journal. I transcribed the interviews and sorted the data for responses to the topics in my question. I did not use any data-sorting computer software, as I wished to retain maximum involvement with the material. Themes and texts were constantly compared.

3.4.3 Reflective journal

When I began work on this study, I started keeping a journal in which I recorded my thoughts, ideas and reflections about material I read, the direction of the study and methodology. As a narrative inquiry, this study requires that as a researcher, I maintain a close involvement with the participants and material gathered. This is consistent with poststructural thinking (Kohler-Riessman, 2008; Patton, 2002) because I cannot completely separate myself from the narrative and thus, co-exist in the roles of subjective and objective observer. As my role is one of participation, it was important that my own thoughts and ideas continued to be recorded, especially during the interview process.

Although interviews were the main source of data, my feelings about the stories, the interview meetings and my own involvement were also part of the data. Hence, my research journal was used to record my thoughts and allowed me to develop my ideas and understandings through continual questioning of my assumptions and the literature, as well as my reflections on the research process itself. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to the researcher's notes and reflective journaling as part of the experience being studied. I have also found this a useful document to assist me to keep track of my thinking, to note questions about my thinking, or to document reflections as they occur.
3.5 Data Analysis

To analyse the data collected during the narrative interviews, I selected an approach that made no assumptions about the nature of the findings. I used a grounded theory approach which provides an appropriate tool for narrative research because it is dependent on the involvement of the researcher with the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As such, grounded theory requires the application of the researcher's knowledge and understandings of the participants and data. This means that as the researcher, my involvement can never be value-neutral, as my own sociocultural values, beliefs and practices will influence my response to stories.

As an inductive process of analysis, grounded theory is appropriate for this inquiry because it requires no preconceived ideas or hypotheses and can be applied to data from each interview individually. This allows for each set of data to be analysed to reveal their own patterns and themes without influence from other data. Strauss and Corbin point out that grounded theory is particularly suited to research where closely integrated concepts exist. This is because the individual analysis of each set of data can be compared and contrasted to reveal patterns and themes that might construct wider understandings of the topic.

I identified patterns and themes within the texts of participants. These were relationships, with particular emphasis on forming friendships with peers; communication with lecturers, Associate Teachers and within their student cohort; and the importance of learning and teaching within students' own cultural knowledge base, skills and understandings in constructing teacher identities. Throughout the analysis, I acknowledged the uniqueness of each participant, his or her story and lived experience. As I worked through the analysis of data and interpreted each participants’ experiences, I found that by thinking about the graduate participants as 'students', I was more aware of the context of their stories. Thus, I refer to the graduate teachers as students, throughout the data analysis chapters.

The openness of the narrative approach was appropriate for the participants because it gave them opportunities to talk freely in response to the questions and to share aspects
of their experiences that seemed important to them. I found that most participants shifted across topics that related to the questions and so there was a sense of continuity and connectedness between different areas of interest in the study. This meant that in most cases I asked few questions, but engaged in conversation about their stories. This made my analysis very interesting as I found myself exploring the narrative texts to make links to topics and theoretical perspectives. In particular, the Pasifika students appeared to be comfortable with the storytelling because they spoke openly with passion and enthusiasm. The questions / topics that were used to guide the participants’ narratives are provided in Appendix 4.

The grounded theory approach allowed me to take each participant’s text as an individual case, free from influence from other data. I had no intention of generalising the findings, but analysed the stories of each individual to reveal their own reality as I sought to further my understandings of the specific experiences during teacher education from each participant. Hence, I read through transcripts and re-read, noting aspects of each participant’s story that indicated a significant event, catalyst, feeling or topic. This involved my interpretation, as I needed to identify the areas of significance from each interview. I also re-listened to the tape recordings of the interviews to re-listen to the way participants spoke about topics. This allowed me to hear more clearly the inflections, pauses and emphases that participants used to convey meaning. I was aware that the first few times I heard the recordings I focussed more on the words as I transcribed. However, once this process was complete and participants had verified the transcripts for accuracy, re-listening helped me to interpret the meaning of the stories participants told. During this process, I was able to identify patterns within each text. In particular, I found that communication was embedded in several topics within many of the stories. I also noted that this appeared to be interwoven with support, trust and friendships. Although language was a recurring theme, it seemed to be connected to communication as a larger issue, with interpretation and understandings and the way language is used having greater significance than the spoken or written word.

Having completed the analysis of each transcript and identifying the topics and themes that emerged, I made comparisons between texts. I identified areas of commonality and
highlighted sections of text, using colour coding to indicate areas of text where themes and topics were evident. This process helped to reveal patterns or threads that were woven through the stories. I also recorded specific points from the narrative of each participant that they identified as significant events, issues or perspectives. This enabled me to be responsive to the individual understandings of participants and to hear their voice, their own perceptions of events and their worldviews. I treated all interviews in the same way, whether the participants were graduates or lecturers. Of interest were the commonalities that occurred in the emerging patterns and themes of the lecturers and graduates, because both sets of participants identified several of the same topics, particularly communication and relationships.

By critically analysing the words chosen by participants to tell their stories, I became aware of the complexities, implications and working theories they revealed. In this way I considered the impact of social relationships and structures, beliefs and practices on the story and the way it was told. I was thus able to develop an “open coding” approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 78), categorising and naming the patterns that emerged to facilitate investigation of the phenomena. My own reflective journal was included in the analysis process and I worked with this data in the same way as the narrative texts. My journal provided a tool for documenting my thought processes and for recording points that seemed significant, to avoid them being lost. On many occasions, this enabled me to revisit material or ideas and develop the threads of my thinking more clearly. This also provided me with a tool for documenting and critically reflecting on my own subjectivity as I worked within the texts because the process of documenting my thoughts increased my awareness of how and why I was thinking in a specific direction. Gergen and Gergen (2000) point out that researchers should remain mindful of their subjectivity so that they are conscious of the influence this may have on interpretation.

3.6 Ethics
Researchers are perceived as holding a position of power over participants (Clandinin, 2007). I was aware that I held a position of power in relation to lecturer participants as well as graduate participants, as I was talking with them as a researcher who intended to represent their stories and interpret their meanings. I was particularly mindful of
intellectual property when interviewing lecturers because they represented institutions that like my own place of employment, delivered teacher education programmes. Intellectual property is closely guarded by teacher education providers, as there is a great deal of competition within the sector in New Zealand. I was highly conscious of the way that my professional role as a lecturer created a power relationship with graduate participants (McWilliam, et al., 2009), regardless of the different institutions they might have studied at. In the field of education, the position of lecturer is often regarded as higher than that of a teacher. Adding to this aspect of power, as an Anglo-Celtic woman I represent the dominant society, whereas I was seeking participants who represented the minority ethnic groups. Although I was already known to some of the participants, I had no direct or official power over them, but remained mindful of the potential imbalance in my role as the researcher. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) point out that merely having a researcher of the same ethnicity as the researched does not remove the power imbalance, partly because the interviewer is likely to be seen as having control of the research and also because of perceptions about social status. Cohen, Manion and Morrison further claim that remaining aware of the potential that power relationships can create is the most effective strategy to manage the relationship. However, conducting research with participants, who are of interest to the researcher because of their marginalised position in education, remains fraught with risks. This can be particularly challenging where cultural differences between researchers and participants are involved (Santoro & Smyth, 2010; Shah, 2004).

The complexity of the researcher/participant relationship is discussed by McWilliam, Dooley, McArdle and Pei-Ling Tan (2009), when they refer to the risks of misrepresenting participants’ voice and meaning. Cultures have specific codes of conversation that are an intrinsic part of making meaning, perhaps not understood or recognised by cultural outsiders (Shah, 2004). As McWilliam, et al. (2009) point out, the subjectivity of making meaning by researchers and participants means that misunderstandings can occur by both parties. This is reinforced by Shah (2004), who states “Both respond to specific perceived subjectivities. There are possibilities of misunderstanding, error and bias in every interview situation, which increase with additional variants such as culture” (p. 552). I was an outsider to the cultures and
understandings of the graduate participants and thus, at risk of either causing misunderstandings by participants, or misinterpreting communications of participants. Furthermore, the small community of teacher educators in New Zealand meant that in some cases, there was also some prior knowledge about each other. By acknowledging this awareness, I feel that positive research relationships and rapport occurred.

An important consideration and potential tension for researchers attempting to represent the lives of others, is the ownership of data. Patton (2002) reminds researchers to remain cognisant of the fact that the stories belong to the participants, as they are part of their lives. He further remarks that researchers cannot develop an ethical study purely by following a set of predetermined procedures; rather the researcher has the responsibility to remain aware of ethical issues at all times.

Although I entered into this investigation with the best interests of participants at heart, there remains an ethical question about unintentional, incidental harm that might occur during an interview process. This is particularly pertinent when interviewing in cross cultural contexts. As McWilliam et al. (2009) claim, it is possible to create unintentional stress by placing participants in difficult situations, or inadvertently causing them pressure to participate. When discussing the potential risks of further marginalising already disadvantaged minorities, doing more harm than good during well-intentioned research, McWilliam et al. apply Anna Freud’s term “doing least harm” to the difficulties faced in cross cultural research. They critique the term against the idea that the researcher should aim to “do most good” (2009, p. 64). However, this is synonymous with the “cup half full / cup half empty” metaphor and is meaningless until the outcomes of the research are revealed. As Shah (2004) states, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that they are aware of the intrusion they make into the social context of each participant’s cultural life and eliminate as many of the known risks as possible. This was my aim during this inquiry.

3.6.1 Validity

It has been pointed out by Guba and Lincoln (2005) that in a qualitative inquiry, the role of the researcher is likely to be the focus of scrutiny over the validity of their
interpretations of data. Furthermore Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that no qualitative method of research can be implemented without the inclusion of the researcher’s perspectives in the interpretation of data. Thus, it would seem undesirable to attempt to place objectivity on data, particularly the narrative data gathered for this study, as to do so would be to remove the ‘soul’ of participants and the researcher from the meaning-making process of the study. It would also deny the reader the opportunity to include their own interpretations of the data and findings.

Any study such as mine that involves multiple perspectives and voices, needs to be free from positivist paradigms. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), this means that analysis of data should be open to different perspectives appropriate to the nature of the study, whilst being transparent. In my study, data were given by participants according to their individual interpretation of the topics, allowing them to talk about aspects of their teacher education experience that seemed important for them to share.

Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest that researcher’s use of approaches that develop authenticity and reliability can validate the study by linking aspects of data and interpretations, so that the reader can see how understandings were reached. Thus, to extrapolate the layers of meaning woven through the complexities of participants’ stories, I was able to apply triangulation, which provided a process for analysis of data by comparing and contrasting graduate participants’ and lecturers’ stories and my own observations and reflections from my journal (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Furthermore, by identifying and connecting patterns that were revealed through analyses, I was able to construct key arguments and show reasoning and provide credibility.

Confidence in the findings of a study can be further strengthened by adding external validity. By presenting a rigorous approach to ethical concerns about relationships with participants and different perspectives taken, the researcher can offer assurances of the integrity of the study. This can also be reinforced by the literature used as supporting material and clearly articulated, authenticated reasoning about the methodologies applied.
To provide confidence in the validity of this study, I have made every attempt to explain, describe and support my decisions, interpretations and findings. I have given careful consideration to the approaches, processes and epistemologies used in this study and thus, have used methods that I believe reflect the unique characteristics and qualities of data in relation to the aims of the research.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described the approach and methods I used to undertake this study. I have discussed and explained the use of semi structured interviews as my method of gathering participants’ narratives, which enabled me to become involved with the participants and the data. As I wanted to gather quality, in-depth material that offered an insight into the experiences of participants, I took a poststructuralist approach. I was thus able to specifically explore individual understandings and experiences of the eight recently graduated, ethnic minority teachers and three early childhood lecturers.

As a case study, the context that formed the parameters of the research was that the graduate participants were born overseas and had been raised in a culture that was significantly different from the dominant, Western European culture of New Zealand. Through their stories, each individual’s experiences were represented and acknowledged. This allowed me to identify the aspects of their experience that were important to them in their teacher education programme.

In the next four chapters, I present examples of the narrative data gathered and provide my analysis and interpretation of participants’ experiences. These have been divided into chapters according to the topics emphasised in each excerpt. Hence, the chapters will relate to beginning the teacher education programme, communication, practicum experiences and the foundations of success.
Chapter 4: Negotiating New Experiences

4.1 Introduction

The stories shared by ethnic minority students who were raised outside New Zealand, gave me an insight into the way that external factors conspired to create challenges for them, as they encountered and negotiated new experiences. This chapter will present data that portrays the challenges that I identified as common threads emerging from the participants’ stories. The themes that will be discussed are; learning to study in New Zealand, coping with cultural differences, encountering and negotiating unfamiliar pedagogies and teaching practices, and gaining confidence.

4.2 Beginning Teacher Education Study in New Zealand

Student participants in this study included New Zealand residents and international students. None of the student participants who were resident in the country had studied in New Zealand schools or tertiary institutions. The international students had entered New Zealand on a student visa, specifically to study. A complex entry process, combined with the predominantly ‘White’ sociocultural environment, contributed substantially to the stress experienced by students during the first six months of their first year. Similar to a study by Lopez (2005) with Latino students at a university in the U.S.A., entering an institution that uses Anglo-European systems proved to be a challenge for most participants in his study and added stress for many of them.

Natalie, a lecturer in teacher education expressed her concerns for international students, because of the difficulties they face before they even enter the lecture room:

_I notice that particularly with students from China, - we have quite high numbers of Chinese students - when they first arrive in the country they’re given a visa about 2 days before the course starts. So they get here, they’re jet-lagged they’ve come from the opposite side of the world to an opposite season, and often their English is [pause] perhaps not as well-developed for someone coming into a tertiary education programme…_
Natalie identifies a combination of challenges faced by international students, over and above those of New Zealand residents, such as the demands that are imposed by having the worry of obtaining their student visa and arriving in a new country immediately before the course starts. This could mean that the student is still sleeping irregularly, living in accommodation in which they have not had time to settle into properly and still adjusting to the environment. Consequently, Natalie appeared concerned about their lack of preparation for study. Her words “get here” reinforced to me, the enormity of the task when international students commit to a course of study in another country. Given its geographic location, New Zealand is almost certainly many hours of air travel from their home. It is also likely that most will not have been to this country before and that they have left family and friends, a home and possessions behind.

Natalie’s reference to language raises another considerable challenge for international students. She suggests in this section of her narrative that international students from non-English speaking backgrounds might have low or inadequate levels of English for tertiary study. It is mandatory for International students to have achieved the required level of English language to pass an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) assessment, or similar measure of their competence. However, there is a significant difference between passing the test and actually participating in an English-speaking class in a degree level course. This is supported by data from a study of university students who were from non-English speaking backgrounds (Daly & Brown, 2007). Daly and Brown expressed concern about the challenges students faced in coping with the colloquialisms and assumptions presented by lecturers. As Natalie suggests, arriving only a day or two before starting a course does not give the students a reasonable opportunity to hear the local dialect of English and become familiarised with colloquialisms and in particular, to gain knowledge of words relating to academic contexts.
Kaito, a student from Japan, recalled how he had arrived just before the Powhiri (Māori welcome ceremony)\(^2\) that was held on the first day of the programme. The Powhiri was something that Kaito was not expecting and understood nothing about. Most of it was in Māori, a language he did not understand.

*Man it was scary...like I didn’t know what I had to do and I didn’t know what was going on, I didn’t know anyone, and the men had to go to the front! It was like everyone else seemed to know what to do and seemed to understand the language. ’Course I know now that they didn’t, but it just seemed like that to me then....*

To be confronted with a situation where customs are clearly formalised and highly specialised, it is easy to understand that this would have been a challenging start, especially when he was told to sit at the front, which could have left him feeling exposed. His words suggest a sense of isolation, as he knew no-one and would have had nobody to talk to or ask what was happening, or what he might be expected to do. Kaito’s recollections of this event indicate an overall sense of dislocation and confusion. His confusion suggests that there was a lack of information about what he might expect from his induction to the institution. Kaito states that he believed everyone else knew what to do and understood what was being said. Although he later realised that most people would not have understood, this indicates his intense feelings of difference at the time.

Holly came from China to study and found that the early childhood course was quite different from what she had expected. She told me:

*When I started my programme of study it wasn’t very easy for me and I didn’t realise that it would be so much writing through all the years and a lot of English. I*

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\(^2\) The Powhiri, usually conducted in Māori language, has specific protocols. Newcomers (manuhiri) are welcomed by the people of the land (tangatawhenua) and brought onto the site in a slow procession, during which a call (karanga) is offered by a senior woman from the tangatawhenua and responded to by a woman from the manuhiri. Women to go to the front of the procession, but seating arrangements position the manuhiri and tangatawhenua facing each other with men at the front, because on most marae only men can speak. After this, speeches and songs are exchanged.
went to study skills and they helped me a lot. After second and third years it's getting better. You know how to do the study, how to write the assignments and how to do the research. After two years and you go through all the basic things it's getting much easier. I don't think in my first year I got into things very deeply…but the first year is just to touch on all kinds of things. …But at the beginning it’s very hard.

Holly, like several other students, expresses surprise at the level of academic work expected, especially in the first year. This is apparent when she mentions that she thought there would not be so much writing in English. However Holly’s suggestion that the course became easier in the third year surprised me because most New Zealand teacher education programmes require a great deal of depth in the third year. Analytical and critical thinking is expected to challenge final year students, as they build towards higher levels of understanding. The third year of a New Zealand Diploma in Teaching (ECE), which was the course that Holly had taken, is at a level 7, the same as the final year of a New Zealand bachelor’s degree. Thus, Holly appeared to be more focussed on learning a mechanical approach to completing course work than learning to be a teacher. It appeared therefore, that having a format for writing assessments made her second and third years easier than the first. However, Holly’s reference to English makes it seem likely that her approach to study was driven by her difficulties with language.

Language limitations impact on more than oral communication, making the introduction to study more difficult in terms of comprehension and using higher order, or more subtle language cognitive / linguistic tools, such as inferences or metaphors. Bennett and Salonen (2007) refer to their study of overseas-born students’ communication with other students and lecturers when they remark that, “While we may master Japanese literature, we may not be able to read between the lines when a Japanese student attempts to share a problem with us” (p. 46). Bennett and Salonen are referring not only to language, but also to cultural understandings, suggesting that this difficulty can occur both ways in communication between the teacher and student. Not only can the use of expressive language be challenging, but making meaning from the words used can be
complicated and confusing. As Hilliard, Wong and Barrera (2004) point out, it is important to understand the perspectives of all students for robust learning to occur, suggesting that differences in cultural and linguistic understandings between lecturers and students can create barriers to learning.

4.2.1 Studying in a different learning environment

Several participants in this study were already parents when entering their programmes. Although studying full time as a parent is stressful and demanding for anyone, my student participants shared some experiences that compounded this complex role. Julie, from China, had lived in New Zealand for around ten years at the time of the interviews but had predominantly associated with her Chinese family and community. She had one toddler when she began her teacher education programme and found the first year extremely demanding. Julie told me that as a Chinese woman, she was required to fulfil her responsibilities as a wife, which meant that she managed the household and did the housework on top of her full time study. She told me in a casual conversation, that she also did the bookwork for the family business because her husband’s English was very limited. I (J.) asked her about entering her course:

J. So for that first year then, how did you get through? Was it a tough year to get through?

Julie: Very tough actually, like I took all the assignments by myself, and all the readings, and I have to leave my son in my mum’s house, and only see him through the weekend, and do housework every night, and do my study, and spend sleepless nights to do all the reading, and because it’s totally new, like the theories. We never touch the Western theories at school in China, and yeah, so I spent much time on the Internet, reading the papers, the resources from school, and also like I take lots of notes in class so I have to type out my notes during the night – try to remember what I learned and reflect on that, and get back to class, so I have to get ready for the next day.

Julie was exposed to a range of challenges that were imposed on her by the teacher education programme. Also, leaving her child with her mother during the week was a
huge sacrifice. By making these sacrifices, Julie demonstrated that becoming a teacher was sufficiently important to her to make significant changes in her life. This also seemed to reflect her cultural values, particularly concerning her gender identity as a Chinese woman who was working for her family’s future. As Guang-Lea and Lee (2001) and Huey-ling, Gorrell and Taylor (2002) suggest, duty to the family is a primary concern for Chinese women. Thus, Julie’s commitment to the course and success was likely to be motivated by fulfilling the gendered expectations of her culture. Although, as Weiler and Middleton (1999) suggest, many Anglo-Celtic women would be likely to perceive Julie’s additional domestic workload and her maternal sacrifice of separation from her son as indicators of male domination, Julie appeared to accept this as a family commitment. However, as claimed by Zerbe Enns, et al. (2004), different perspectives of women’s roles tend to be dismissed by Western societies because of the pervading Anglo-Celtic discourses that appear to dominate feminist thinking. Moreover, this highlights the complexities of feminist understandings about the roles and identities of women in different societies, exposing contradictions in what feminism means from different cultural perspectives.

Julie highlights her academic commitment to the course by referring to the sleepless nights while working on learning material. This suggests to me that she was prepared to do whatever it took for her to succeed. Adding to her workload was the research that Julie undertook to increase her understandings of Western theories. By making the point that the theories she was learning were Western, Julie seems to indicate that she had previously studied some theories, but that the course material was considerably different from her prior learning and dominated by Western perspectives. This possibly meant that it was difficult for her to link the theories with her existing knowledge and that she had possibly expected to use some of her existing theoretical knowledge in her study.

Julie appeared to be a reflective learner therefore, typing her notes would have given her time to reflect on the new material, consolidating her understanding before the new learning of the next day. This indicated to me that she was highly focussed and strategic in her approach to study, perhaps by necessity due to the time constraints caused by
her other commitments, and perhaps because she had so much at stake with the commitment that she, and her family, were making towards her study. Julie stressed “by myself” when referring to the difficulties of the first year of the course, suggesting that she had felt quite isolated. Her mannerisms and vocal intonations indicated a level of disappointment that she felt that other students might have had friends or classmates that they talked to about the course content, whereas she had no support.

I reflected on the different experiences of Holly and Julie. Holly, an international student from China, appeared to be unprepared for in-depth academic study. However she talked about meeting with other students from China and New Zealand and as an international student, she was likely to have had the advantage of a support service for international students within her place of study. Providing a support facility for international students is a requirement of the New Zealand Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2002). It is likely that support would be available for students with English as a second language, but I did not form the impression that Julie would have needed this. Rather, I felt she would have appreciated pastoral support. Thus, even though both students had to cope with learning new pedagogies and theories in a non-native language, Holly had the benefit of support, whereas Julie was on her own. As she seemed highly reflective and focussed, Julie gave her effort to understanding the theoretical aspect of the course. The strategies she applied to her study suggested that she understood herself as a learner. This appeared to enable her to develop a study programme around her preferred way of learning and thus, focus on the material rather than the process of producing work. The learning skills facility that Holly used gave her guidance and strategies for managing the course-work, but could not give her help with the conceptual aspect of the learning.

Mele, a student from Samoa, explains how she initially felt isolated, but found other students with whom she could relate.

*In the beginning it was sort of like the assignments and how to do assignments and I had that difficulty of the language and so I didn’t really have friends. It seemed like I was the only Samoan there, but I was happy that there were some*
other Islanders there that understood Samoan a bit… So I started to buddy up with those people. They were struggling as well and so we sort of liked working together, having those two weaknesses, having the energy to go and ask someone…

Mele emphasised the challenge of meeting unfamiliar academic requirements in a foreign language, within an unfamiliar educational setting and system. The confidence she found by collaborating with other Pasifika students interested me. Mele spoke of weaknesses, which she suggested were not understanding how to do assignments and not being a native speaker of English. I felt that she was comparing her knowledge and experience with that of the New Zealand-born students. This was because she placed emphasis on the Island students struggling ‘as well’, suggesting that in her opinion, the New Zealand-born students were coping better than they were.

Seeking help and support from lecturers was found by Hsu (2005) to be difficult for ethnic minority students because the teacher is the authority and not to be questioned. Therefore, they tended to seek help from peers, as this was a more comfortable and familiar option. Similarly, Mele seemed to suggest that she found it easier to ask for help when she found a peer who shared her language, culture and ethnic background. She used the word “energy”, which gave me the impression that by sharing their concerns and challenges, Mele and her fellow Pasifika students reduced some of their inhibitions and gained motivation.

The concerns that Mele expressed may have impacted on her confidence with assessment work. I note that in her story she mentions assignments and language, indicating that these were prominent in her thoughts. Writing to a high level of academic English could appear daunting and, as Mele had no prior experience of this, she may have doubted her ability to complete the required tasks.³

³ New Zealand residents do not have to take an International English Literacy Test (IELTS). However, many teacher education providers do have their own pre-entry assessments, designed to ensure applicants have the necessary language competencies.
4.3 Adjusting to Cultural Differences

The narratives of the graduate participants have all portrayed similar experiences about the significant adjustments to their ways of thinking about learning and teaching that were required of them. Whilst I acknowledge that all student teachers will be required to make changes to their practice and ways of thinking, New Zealand-born students are likely to more readily relate to the required practices, having experienced similar pedagogies in their own education. New Zealand-born students would have prior knowledge of the education system in this country.

When students are expected to engage in unfamiliar teaching practices that they do not understand, they may experience feelings of fear and self-doubt. Clifford (1999) suggests that the feeling of belonging to a cohort is important for constructing teacher identities because of the sense of affirmation that belonging to a group can provide, potentially reducing some of the power of hegemonic mainstream discourses. Hence, it is also likely that being constantly required to make changes to understandings or behaviours is unsettling, exhausting and challenging to self-esteem.

In the following narrative, Julie, a student from China gave an example of the family stress that can occur when students encounter values and practices that conflict with their own cultures.

*That’s great though, special, [different cultures, beliefs and practices] like I went on a Marae [Māori tribal home] visit and my prior knowledge something I learned [in class]…and at that time I was pregnant and my mum tried to stop me from going because in my culture you’re not to go on Marae or anything like that, it’s wrong. But it was part of my study I wanted for my experience. … And mum tried to stop me, and I said, I’m healthy I’m learning this course. … In our culture it’s not allowed to go to those places, sleeping (j. in a group) yeah, in Marae in New Zealand, because it’s a place to have Tangi [Māori funeral] and things like that, but I think just to be a part of New Zealand culture, yeah…but mum did pick a feud that night, but everything’s fine, and my baby is quite happy and healthy, so I think there was some changes in our family.*
Staying at a marae is a requirement of most New Zealand teacher education programmes. The intention is that students gain an understanding of Māori cultural values and beliefs, so that they can be incorporated into their teaching. Julie recounted her experience of a marae stay where she was culturally challenged. She initially had to rationalise her decision to attend the marae stay, subjugating one of the practices of her own culture. During pregnancy, it is considered inappropriate for Chinese to sleep in a place where funerals are held. However, Julie did this to gain the knowledge and experience that she thought was an important part of her teacher education. When listening to Julie tell me this story, I was struck by the enormity of what she was saying and the paradox that emerged because by choosing to stay at the marae, she also chose to act against her mother’s wishes. This would be an extremely difficult action to take because according to Luo and Gilliard (2006), Chinese parents expect their daughters or sons to be obedient and they do not encourage autonomy, or independent decision-making. As a teacher education student in New Zealand, Julie was expected to be an independent thinker and to find a way to fulfil the course requirements. However, as a Chinese woman, she was expected to observe the cultural practices that she had been taught by her family and community. However, she justified her decision to stay on the marae, with her statement that her baby is healthy and her relationship with her mother is restored.

The graduate participants appeared to be acutely aware of the cultural differences between themselves and their New Zealand European peers. Mitchell (2001) stressed the impact of upbringing and prior experience on the values and beliefs of teacher education students. Similar to Vartuli (2005), Mitchell (2001) sees the effect on the self-concept and identity of an individual when the values and practices that surround them appear incomprehensible, or even uncomfortable.

In the next section of data, Li, a student from China, describes the traumatic beginning to her teacher education programme which was largely due to family and cultural pressures. However, regardless of the difficulties she encountered, she found the
motivation to cope because of her desire to succeed and in the depth of her commitment.

_I had to leave my daughter in China with my husband and my mother. My husband didn’t like it in New Zealand so they went home. It was very hard. Also I was working to earn some money and so for the first two years I guess I was very tired and very scared. I was scared that I wouldn’t pass the course ‘cos I couldn’t understand so much, and I’d let my family down. I think that being the only Chinese in the class made it hard because there was no one to really understand. I think some of the class thought I was being a bad mother or something…_

Li expressed several fears in this narrative – fear of failure, letting others down and the fear of being judged harshly by others. She had told me previously that there had been a family discussion and a carefully considered decision made for her to study in New Zealand. For Li’s family, her teacher education was an investment in their financial future. However, there was considerable stress and anxiety about the domestic and financial impact of her study. Thus, Li appeared to believe that if she failed, she would be letting all her family down, causing them stress for nothing and leaving them with a financial burden from the significant cost of international programme fees of around NZ$16,000 per year.

It appeared that other students found it hard to understand how and why she could have left her child in China. This experience was similar to that documented by Lopez (2005) where Latino participants spoke of feeling judged and socially excluded by White students because of cultural differences. Li’s reflection on how other students might view her decision to be separated from her young child, suggests that she was highly conscious of the difference in family expectations between Chinese and New Zealand communities. She was also very concerned that the other students would judge her harshly and that she would not be accepted. Schuerholz-Lehr (2007) highlights the importance of education professionals possessing a high level of global awareness, a trait that could probably have been promoted in second year students. It seemed that the New Zealand born student teachers did not appear to understand the perspectives
of ethnic minority students and Li did not sense any acceptance of her particular worldview or practice, or her family’s expectation. I felt strongly that this is representative of Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of cultural capital whereby the understandings of the dominant majority were perceived to be more highly valued than those of person whose perspectives were different. This also supports Milner’s (2007) statement that the dominant majority might require additional education to improve their understandings of multicultural communities. Interestingly, Li understood the worldviews of her peers and realised that they did not understand hers.

4.3.1 Adjusting to different teaching practices

In recent years, the teacher education sector of New Zealand has moved towards constructivism and problem-based approaches to learning. This has challenged learners who are more familiar with more instructional pedagogies. For example, according to Ping (2002), children in China are expected from an early age, to participate in learning practices that assume the teacher to be the provider of knowledge, rather than a facilitator of learning, which is the commonly used model for child-centred pedagogies. In Confucian heritage cultures, children are not encouraged or expected to question and challenge the teacher. Rather, children are expected to accept the knowledge and information offered (Ping, 2002). Ping states that in cultures where pedagogies are similar to those in China, teaching is most likely to be transmission driven where students are presented with the material to be learned. It is unlikely that problem-solving, or exploration based teaching would be used. In contrast, New Zealand early childhood teachers are expected to promote questioning and inquiry with young learners. These practices are modelled by teacher education lecturers, who constantly challenge student teachers to ask questions of them.

Kaito, from Japan, talked about some of the differences in teaching practice and social behaviour that he encountered during his first year of teacher education…

*I’m not actually very familiar with Japanese early childhood education system. But yeah at school in Japan…it’s really quite different from what we do at early childhood education – or even at polytech. Teachers and children (here) are at the same level and
having discussions, but in Japan [indicates with hands. Raises one hand much higher to represent teachers] probably teachers are standing up higher than children. And we just needed to watch the teacher.

J: So did that feel very strange to you? Maybe being expected to challenge or question the teachers?

Kaito: Yeah, mmmm, yeah. When students were lying down on the floor when teachers were in class, I thought ‘Oh my gosh! What are they doing?’ So...yeah.

J: I guess that also translates to when you’re working with children yourself…was that a bit of a shock

Kaito: Yes, ‘cause some of them are quite tricky and quite challenging. But I got used to that.

Coming from a strict and formal Japanese education system, Kaito expresses his horror at the casual attitude of students, lying on the floor. The behaviour of students was something he was unprepared for and was unable to rationalise, perhaps making him feel like an outsider. However, seeing students behave in what seemed to him to be a disrespectful way emphasised the difference between the Japanese and New Zealand cultures. In his depiction of the way teachers and students in New Zealand are able to engage in dialogue with each other at the same eye level, Kaito illustrates his perception of the social standing of the teacher. The teacher not only stands up at a higher level than the students, but does not engage in discussion and remains aloof from the class. As Pratt, et al. (1998) suggest, the teacher is master and is to be watched and listened to.

Kaito appeared surprised by the extent of freedom given to children in New Zealand early childhood institutions. Moreover, while he may have found that managing children’s non-compliant or disruptive behaviour challenging, he seemed quite philosophical about it, accepting that he just had to adjust his own thinking.

Participants in this study have made significant reference to the practices of New Zealand education. Some have suggested that this has contributed to the difficulties they experienced during their teacher education programmes. Like Kaito, Holly from
China was surprised by the more casual approach demonstrated by New Zealanders in most aspects of life, including time-keeping. She told me:

“Yes, but you see the population in China and you see the population here…those countries – competition is a different thing. China is like… we want to go for an interview and there’s so many people waiting in a line for the interview, but in here it’s not that tense. A bit more laid back. [throwing up her hands to demonstrate frustration]. Everything is late, the bus is late, the train is late, and if people say they’ll meet at 7 o’clock, probably about 7.30 when they get there…or maybe about 8. They’re never on time. They even come to class late! Probably means people are relaxing, but in China, buses come on time, you come on time, we cannot be late. In New Zealand the childcare is more free play and more adults interacting, but not very structured. In China it’s like…children must sit down and we start teaching lectures, maths and such, we start teaching writing and all kinds of things, maybe children sit for hours doing writing…whereas here children play all day, learning the whole day through play…

Holly’s frustration at the comparatively ‘laid-back’ New Zealand social behaviour was evident in her absolute horror at the thought that students would come to class late. She raised her voice, and her body language suggested exasperation. In this part of our conversation, Holly makes an interesting comparison between the relaxed attitude of New Zealand adults and the seemingly free-flow pedagogy of early childhood settings. Although she points out that there is little structure in New Zealand early childhood, she also acknowledges that children are learning. When referring to China, she talks about teaching, not learning.

Lee (2002) highlights the significance of group identity to a person’s sense of self. Hence, by distancing herself from behaviours that she found difficult to comprehend, Holly was separating herself from her New Zealand friends. In her phrase ‘they even come late to class’ she clearly articulates and contrasts her approach to education against her New Zealand classmates, also using the word “we”, to include herself when talking about China. However she also explains her thoughts contrasting the two
societies, particularly with the importance of punctuality and discipline in Chinese culture and how this is demonstrated in education.

In my reflective journal, I documented my thinking about the experiences of Holly and Kaito. ‘Holly and Kaito reinforced the significance of feeling included in a given community, particularly regarding accepted social behaviours. As New Zealand immigrants, it appears that they felt quite different from New Zealanders and had few understandings about the practices they saw. I felt that this highlighted the significance of the influences that shape attitudes to culture and society, particularly teaching and learning. Many New Zealanders have been influenced by modernist thinking, which, according to Foucault (1980), reflects the discourses of the dominant society and applies a ‘one size fits all’ approach to society. The experiences of Kaito and Holly emphasise the value of teachers feeling sufficiently comfortable with their own identities, values, beliefs and understandings to be able to adapt and review their thinking to accept and incorporate different understandings.’ Thus, the responsibilities of lecturers is to provide all student teachers with opportunities and guidance to be sufficiently informed about different perspectives to be able to understand, respect and value individual and cultural differences. These understandings seem significant in the construction of student teachers’ professional competencies so that they can incorporate different knowledges and perspectives in their teaching practice.

Although teaching practices were unfamiliar and may have taken Julie, a student from China, some time to accommodate, they were none-the-less a pleasant surprise. Her first reaction to the physical environment was to compare it to the classrooms in China with which she was familiar. She was pleasantly surprised that only twenty students inhabited a large space. I asked what it was like for her when she started the course. She explained:

A little bit scary at the beginning because everything is new to me, like a new environment, the size of the class and the whole environment.

J: big or little?
Julie: little, like we get used to a big class with 60 students in the same class and suddenly I start the course in a big classroom – bigger than the one in China and only about 20 students in it. Yeah, so but I found one thing that made me so comfortable is that the teachers were really friendly and very helpful, like they introduced themselves, and also their families and we get quite close to them and get to know them more, so yeah, that’s the thing – and also, in China, you always call teachers Miss, or Mister, so like you think, ok, that’s how it gets between me and the teacher, so can’t have a deep conversation, so I can’t talk about my family with the teacher, so yeah, that’s another thing…

J: did that feel a bit strange to you?

Julie: yeah, and sometimes I think is that something I should tell my teacher – but yeah, no problem…no, no, ok, just to stay behind and keep it to myself…

J: How long did it take you before you could go and have a chat to a lecturer?

Julie: I think it’s a year…

As the only Chinese student in her cohort, Julie had no opportunity to form relationships with students with similar cultural knowledge or experiences. She appeared to feel that her identity as Chinese created a point of difference between herself and other students. Thus, she had no-one that she felt comfortable to seek reinforcement from or with whom she could discuss anything. Hsu (2005) reports that student teachers are far less likely to seek help from a lecturer than from a peer. This was true for Julie, who felt unable to talk to the lecturers for almost half the length of the programme, possibly because she was unaccustomed to the casual social environment of New Zealand, in which lecturers are addressed informally.

Hsu (2005) states that social support is a vital link in the survival of student teachers and explains that those who feel isolated from their peers, are more likely to find aspects of their study extremely challenging. Since Julie felt she had no peers she could call on, she was somewhat isolated and thus, could have experienced high levels of challenge. As noted by Bhabha (2004), confidence in identity can be strengthened by a sense of sameness. Sameness can reinforce the values and beliefs of a person because they belong to a group who share similar experiences, which can be
particularly important when regularly encountering new learning and new expectations of behaviour (Lee, 2002). Julie appeared to find difference, rather than familiarity or sameness. Although she encountered isolation and challenge, Julie seemed to remain confident in her ability because she appeared to take a pragmatic approach to coping with her study. However, the points made by Hsu (2005) and Lee (2002) imply that having the support of peers and being able to communicate with lecturers earlier in her course, would have made Julie’s life as a student considerably easier.

Of the points Julie makes, the one that I pondered over the most was the hiatus between her realisation that the lecturers were friendly and happy to be approached and for her to actually feel that she could engage in a conversation with them. Even though she acknowledged that lecturers behaved in friendly ways, such as introducing themselves to students by first name, revealing aspects of their family life and talking about their personal interests, she took eighteen months to speak with them. Thus, although Julie regarded lecturers’ friendliness as a positive practice that she was happy to adjust to, she found herself unable to engage in a practice that conflicted with her upbringing. On reflection in my journal, I wondered if lecturers were behaving in ways that were confusing to Julie because of her culturally constructed understandings about the roles of students and lecturers. It is likely that lecturers were failing to consider different perspectives and made assumptions that by being friendly, all students would feel comfortable about approaching them.

Even though student participants generally acknowledged the friendly approach of lecturers, several appeared to have been challenged by New Zealand educational practices. In particular, they experienced difficulties in understanding the way that learning experiences are introduced to children. The New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996), promotes a child-centred pedagogy, focussing on learning that emerges from children’s interests.

Fijian-born student, Talei, found that it took her over a year to relate to the pedagogical practices of New Zealand early childhood teachers. She told me how she found difficulty allowing children to learn through exploration in an unstructured way.
I learned quite a lot when we did music, a lot of the way that we have taught… like we didn’t realise that we were teaching…and we didn’t realise that the kids were learning while they were exploring things, and we said ‘oh, don’t make a mess’, you know, but those were teaching tools for the kids when they go and do those experiments, all that stuff, and we would say, ‘leave that alone, you’re not doing that’ you know, but that is a typical Fijian or Pacific way of thinking, yet I realised when I came into early childhood education that it is natural and yet we didn’t realise that this is the learning steps for children…and we’d give them music things from the shops…[audio] tapes and stuff, and yet we could make – and we had our own natural instruments and resources…these were the things that were naturally there, accessible for us to use but we didn’t have the knowledge.

Talei’s narrative suggests two major points. Prior to her teacher education in New Zealand, she appeared to undervalue and dismiss the natural exploration of children, favouring the more formal, adult directed method of teaching and learning that she had experienced. Talei seemed to be replicating her own experience of school, even though she had undertaken some teacher education in Fiji. Interestingly, Talei appears to have attempted to revise her thinking during her New Zealand teacher education programme, suggesting that her Fijian training had not changed her understandings of teaching and learning. This is apparent when she refers to the ‘typical’ Fijian or Pacific way of thinking, reflecting on her own culture and differentiating between the practice she had known and the practice she had learned in New Zealand. Talei also suggests that she previously undervalued learning from the natural environment in Fiji, placing greater value on Western products than the natural resources found within her home environment, thus reflecting the influence of mainstream discourses.

Cannella (2004) highlights the way in which Western developmental doctrines construct certain knowledge and worldviews as superior to other knowledge bases. Hence, it may be that unwittingly, students from ethnic minority backgrounds become influenced quite strongly by Western theories and worldviews, seeing their prior knowledge as secondary to the theories with which they are presented in teacher education programmes. Furthermore, Talei’s former dismissal of the resources around them in
favour of manufactured equipment, suggests a modernist approach, which Clandinin (2007) explains, advocates one ‘truth’ in educational methods, rather than accepting that alternative perspectives might be equally valid as a reflection of different worldviews. After her teacher education programme, Talei was able to view teaching and learning from Western perspectives, where she saw the potential to integrate the theory and practice that she had been taught in her course with her socio-cultural and ecological understandings. However, her use of the word ‘experiments’, suggests that she retained a structured approach to learning, where there is an outcome planned by the teacher. Although she was talking about how her understandings of play had changed, perhaps this indicates the ongoing influence of cultural values and understandings.

Teacher education lecturer, Glenda discussed the challenges students face when viewing early childhood through a new lens.

I took them for some curriculum workshops, some visual arts and science workshops, and everything I did I was doing to model ideas of things they could be doing with children … And I thought I’d made it really clear to them. I’d go around the groups as they worked…modelling, telling them that I was modelling the way I wanted them to work. But it took several workshops before they realised what I meant. … But some of them were back, especially with visual arts, to offering templates to colour in. And I thought, ‘gee, 6 visual arts workshops, and we talked about templates’ [laughter] then I gave them about 6 weeks of hands-on experiences of other, what we would think of in this country as more appropriate experiences to go out there and try.

At the end of this section of Glenda’s story, she uses the words ‘we’ and ‘this country’, to highlight the difference between her own pedagogical understandings and those of her students’ cultures. This is reminiscent of Holly’s use of collective pronouns when comparing Chinese social behaviours with those of New Zealanders, thus suggesting the sense of belonging derived from group identities and their connection to the construction of self-perceptions. Glenda’s reference to her modelling of practices also
seems to imply that the learning considered appropriate for young children in New Zealand can be generalised. This suggests that Glenda was attempting to shape students according to the hegemonic Anglo-Celtic discourses that pervade teaching practices in mainstream New Zealand early childhood services.

Glenda had made the point several times that she was modelling for students, however it was clear that the students were unaware of what it was she wanted them to actually learn in her workshops. She was frustrated that students did not understand what she was showing, or modelling for them. However, it is possible that her students were experiencing difficulty with the exploratory and interpretative teaching practice they were experiencing in New Zealand because they were more familiar with a transmission-based approach to teaching and learning.

Glenda’s students appeared to want teaching practice explained to them as a structured set of procedures, ordered in a specific way. However, each new teaching interaction in an early childhood setting requires a teacher to respond to each child or group of children in a way that is meaningful to them and builds on their knowledge, skills and experience. Therefore, as there cannot be a standard, generalisable model to follow, it is critical that teachers understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. Glenda showed concern that after six workshops some students still structured children’s learning experiences. This reflects that she was unaware of the impact of prior learning and experience on students’ attitudes, values and behaviour. Changing this perspective would be a major task for the students. It is therefore likely that students’ difficulties in understanding what Glenda was requiring of them also indicates that they understood neither the teaching methods in the teacher education programme, nor the practice expected in early childhood settings.

Lecturer, Karen expressed concern for the additional pressures created by students’ cultural expectations:

*Some students, especially the Pasifika women, seem to have so many additional obligations. I mean they have so much family and community work, especially*
church...it takes so much of their time that they get behind with their assignments. Some of them tell me that they work during the night to get their work done, and I know it usually takes them much longer because they have real difficulties writing in English.

In her reference to the commitments of some students, Karen was referring to the expectations that have become intrinsic with gendered, sociocultural role of Pasifika women (Fa'afoi & Fletcher, 2001). According to Fa'afoi and Fletcher, many Pasifika women regard their work within the church and community as synonymous with their gendered roles and identities. In discussing her concerns about the community commitments of Pasifika women, Karen is perhaps highlighting the different expectations of communal and individualistic societies. Pasifika cultures generally reflect communal values, beliefs and practices and working for the community can be regarded as a priority, over gaining qualifications. Zerbe Enns, et al (2004) point out that prioritising community work is often misunderstood by Western feminists, regarding women whose major commitment is to the wellbeing of others as being marginalised. However, by prioritising the advancement of her own qualifications and career, Karen was reflecting the Anglo-Celtic individualist cultural perspective.

Karen emphasises her concern for non-native speakers of English in an academic programme. She makes the point of Pasifika women working during the night to complete assignments, stressing that it would take them longer than for New Zealand-born students. However, in this statement she also highlights the additional factors that create challenges for overseas-born students, particularly Pasifika women. Although she shows her empathy, Karen also suggests that there is no flexibility given in relation to individual differences, for due dates of assignment work. Thus, getting behind in course-work would appear to have been a common event for many Pasifika students. When combined with challenges relating to academic literacy in English, these students appeared to have experienced considerable difficulties. However, Karen’s story also demonstrates the extreme commitment of the students to their teacher education programme.
Overall, the lecturers who participated in this study were aware of some of the extra challenges facing ethnic minority student teachers. They acknowledged some of the difficulties. For example, Glenda noted the difficulties experienced by some overseas-born students when beginning their course. She noted, as Kaito did, that at times, expectations on students to work quickly through material could be daunting. However, although all the lecturers participating in this study were aware of some of the difficulties facing ethnic minority students, the pressures of meeting the academic requirements of the curriculum within a given timeframe created a dilemma.

4.4 Gaining Confidence

Persistent challenges and fear can create a sense of despair and an acceptance of being less able than others (Hilliard, et al., 2004). Karen, an early childhood lecturer supported this view:

…I’ve often felt that some of our ethnic minority students begin with a strong sense of self-belief but then become trampled by the constant demands for changes in their academic, practical and language performance, as well as by the confident, advantaged younger New Zealand European students so that they eventually get to a point where they either walk away or find the strength to fight back. I like to really try to create a sense of empowerment for them to achieve this…

As Karen noted the different knowledge bases of students, she highlighted the advantaged position of New Zealand European students. With her comment about the amount of change overseas-born students are expected to make, she suggests that the programme reflects Western European perspectives of education and appeared concerned at the equity issues this created.

Karen was critical of the New Zealand educational system, in regards to difference. The inequity that she saw reflected the frustrations of several student teacher participants in this study, who believed there was disproportionate attention given to the performance of ethnic minority student teachers, in comparison to Western students. Karen referred to constant demands for ethnic minority student teachers to make changes to their
understandings and practices. It is pointed out by Aguirre (2005) and Lopez (2005) that some ethnic groups have been traditionally perceived negatively in academic contexts. They claim that this has been partially caused by the barriers that some ethnic minority students have to overcome, in order to draw equal with the more advantaged Western European students.

Karen’s description of students either walking, or fighting back suggested that a number of ethnic minority students become despondent, wearying of the struggle, and leave the programme. However, to fight back requires the commitment to work extra hard and considerable self-belief. Karen believes that some student teachers are constantly reminded that their knowledge or practices are inadequate or inappropriate, which might diminish self-belief. According to Zembylas (2003), frequent and ongoing demands to adopt different practices can cause students to believe that their understandings are of less value than those of the dominant culture, which can result in reduced self-belief.

Naomi, a mature Cook Island-born student, experienced a significant decrease in her confidence and self-belief. Naomi had some previous teaching experience in the Cook Islands and raised her family and had a career in industry in New Zealand before commencing her teacher education study. However, Naomi had no idea that teacher education in New Zealand would confront her with different perspectives from her previous experience and anticipated that her prior knowledge and experience would be more than adequate for the programme. She told me:

*I thought it would be easy, just like home – that’s what my thoughts were, until I came into the class and study and I see they’re a mile ahead of where I am. All things are way different, the system is way different from the Cook Islands where I came from, even though I’ve been teaching, it’s different all together…nothing is the same as where I came from, and I nearly give up, but for the purpose why I came back to study was so strong [to provide a Cook Island early childhood centre for her community], that I couldn’t just give up, even though that I have to struggle with understanding*
The shock at finding that she was ill-equipped rocked her confidence and she became highly conscious of the difference in her knowledge compared to that of the New Zealand-born students. Naomi expressed a sense of loss – loss of her prior knowledge and experience, loss of familiar understandings and ways of knowing, and loss of her sense of self as a competent and knowledgeable woman. As a mature woman, Naomi was a leader in her community and used to being a person perceived as holding knowledge. She had expected that her prior knowledge and experience as a teacher would be transferred and that she would find the programme relatively comfortable. However, Naomi found that the structure of the institution, the teaching strategies and teacher/student interactions were very different from her expectations and she was unprepared for such changes. To support her community, she persevered and demonstrated the importance to her of achieving the goal that she had set. She told me that she wanted to qualify as a teacher so she could provide an early childhood centre for Cook Island children, to retain their language and culture.

Finding the strength to retain self-belief was a theme that emerged through many of the student participants’ narratives. However, this was challenging at times and for some, their self-confidence and self-belief were disrupted. Some of the major factors that contributed to this were: not fitting in with other students; not relating to the content; finding the reading too hard; unfamiliarity with teaching practices, and being unable to express their feelings. Kaito spoke about some of his challenges during the first year of study:

…even in the first year it was too hard. It took ages to read one piece of paper.
J. So I guess things must have moved on too fast for you at times in class..
Kaito:.. Mmm, yeah, [shifts his position and looks down] well, but it can’t keep at my pace, because the others are all finished, so ….I just pushed myself, carry on working hard.

As an international student, Kaito would have been required to pass an IELTS (International English Literacy Testing System) assessment and therefore, achieved the required standard of English for the course. It seemed that Kaito was quite frustrated when he realised that his reading speed was too slow for the academic work. In his first
word ‘even’, he is expressing the surprise he felt when starting the programme and finding the first year work considerably harder than he expected. Hence, Kaito may have felt doubtful that he could cope with the higher academic levels to come in the latter years of the course. His point that ‘even in the first year it was too hard’ suggests that even in retrospect, he felt that the whole programme was beyond his ability and he did not really believe that he could cope.

Kaito’s discomfort showed in his body language as he shifted his position, which indicated that the memory of that first year was still quite raw. He directly compared himself to the rest of the class, stating that ‘the others are all finished’ whereas he was still working through the material. However, because he did not wish to slow the class down to his pace, he continued to struggle. Kaito’s commitment to overcome this challenge caused him to push himself and work hard, suggesting that he had considerable determination and self-belief. However, the struggle to do so was quite powerful and I felt that his words ‘pushing myself’ and ‘work hard’ were perhaps an understatement of his experience and emphasised his need to redress some of the difference he felt.

Being considerably older than the other students became an issue for Naomi, particularly when she thought that they were more knowledgeable than her, in the context of the course. She told me:

"I looked at my age…and I did look at it, too, I was looking at my age and how far – how long I've been away from education, and I look at that too. And I try to understand myself, but most of the time I don't. I don't really think I'm good for this. I did really push myself to go ahead, with the help of tutors role-modelling, and the help of students – most of the students are role-modelling to me too. They're young, and I look at the younger generation, how they're going on and I was thinking, - that…how can I think with the younger generation with their knowledge (open arm gesture). My way of understanding’s way behind theirs…"
Naomi made several references to her age, specifically linking it to her challenges. She also suggested that attending the teacher education programme had made her think about her age for the first time, indicating that being older was not a negative factor in other areas of her life. However, it seems likely that age most affected Naomi, because people considerably younger than her, appeared to be more knowledgeable and competent than she was feeling. She explained to me that in the traditional Cook Island culture, older people are regarded as the keepers of the important knowledge. I noted the self-correction of her choice of words as she used the term ‘far’ then corrected to ‘long’, which could have suggested that she might have been reflecting on the distance between herself and other students.

Kaito and Naomi both compared themselves to other students. Each had formed the impression that other members of their respective cohorts were achieving well, whilst they were feeling challenged. Both students had appeared to assume that they were alone in finding the work difficult, because some of their fellow students were completing tasks quickly, or appeared to be coping easily. Naomi expressed her confusion about different teaching practices and she attributed her difficulties to her age. Kaito thought that his English was inadequate for the level of course-work required. These comparisons to others appeared to cause them to doubt their own ability. Although their assessment of other students’ work could have been incorrect, it does indicate that they were feeling stressed.

Naomi seemed to be shocked at the extent of the difference between education in the Cook Islands and New Zealand and appeared quite concerned at how little of it she understood. This appeared to emphasise the difference between her prior understandings of teaching and the new perspectives that were taught in her course. Naomi indicated the distance she felt between her knowledge and that of the younger New Zealand-born students, when she asked, “How can I think with the younger generation?” This suggests that she perceived a considerable gap between herself and other students, in the knowledge and experience regarded as appropriate for teachers.
As stated by Sauvao, Mapa and Podmore (2000), most Pasifika cultures are rich in oral and visual history. It is therefore likely that because Naomi originated from the Cook Islands, the practices for the transmission of knowledge that she knew, were not evident in the teacher education classroom. Naomi spoke of ‘thinking with’ other students, which could suggest that she was searching for connections with the other students through like-mindedness. However, because she felt unable to think with others, this seemed to emphasise the differences between her understandings and those of her peers. Her age and different upbringing could have meant that the social and cultural influences that shaped her understandings were likely to have been significantly different from the younger, New Zealand born students in her cohort. This could have included aspects of learner behaviour because according to Vaioleti (2001), many Pasifika cultures are underpinned by collectivist perspectives and discourage children questioning or thinking independently. Therefore, by being expected to demonstrate and promote learning dispositions such as independence and autonomy, Naomi was negotiating two paradigms. In particular, her identity as a woman, which had been shaped by different perspectives from those of her New Zealand born peers, could have significantly affected her preparedness to contribute her ideas or ask questions of teachers or younger peers. However, the Anglo-Celtic discourses contradicted Naomi’s understandings about being a student and caused tensions between her identities as a learner and as a Cook Island woman. Thus, Naomi’s statement that other students had to role model, or show her what she should be doing, seemed quite revealing of Naomi’s vulnerability and possibly her fear of not being able to succeed, because she suggests that she had no idea about what she should be doing and clearly felt unprepared for the teaching practices she encountered.

Beth, a student from Niue, was looking at herself in a similar way to Naomi. Although like Naomi, Beth had lived in New Zealand for many years, she had no direct experience of New Zealand schooling. Both Beth and Naomi seemed to have strong cultural identities and like all the graduate participants in this study, showed pride in their ethnicity and culture. However, Beth was very direct when expressing the self-doubt and fear she felt on entering the teacher education programme.
'Is it going to be hard? It’s going to be in our language?’ It’s like frightening that we’re going to be schooling here and that long, in what is going to be, unknown. And you’re frightened, and whether you’ll be able to do the assignments and that…

Although Beth is from Niue, she also speaks Samoan as a second language, thus she was quite anxious about the language that she would be learning in. There is a sense of panic about studying outside her cultural comfort zone and thus, work in a language that she had never learned in before. She appeared to have little understanding about the course she had committed to and seemed worried about her ability to cope with the unexpected. The doubt that she expressed in her own ability, came across quite powerfully and the adjective “frightened” seemed to be carefully chosen, because she hesitated slightly before saying it. She also reinforced her concerns through facial expression and body language. I sensed that her reference to the length of study suggested the enormity of the commitment she was making to something that was unknown. However, Beth did commit to the course and completed, which indicates that she found both courage and confidence.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted some of the potential challenges faced by participants in this study. They have demonstrated through their stories that they had to face a number of difficulties, some of which were traumatic and confusing. For most participants in this study, the first year of their course appeared to be the hardest and in some cases, came close to causing them to withdraw from their teacher education course. The data indicate that participants’ lack of understanding about the requirements of the programme contributed to their difficulties, because they were not prepared for the quantity and academic level of work required of them. Furthermore, most expressed some doubt in their ability to cope with the work, especially during the first year of the programme, which for some, was exacerbated by difficulties with the English language.

Many participants seemed uncertain about the value of their prior knowledge to their new learning, because their understandings were not reflected in the new knowledge or practices they were required to adopt. Thus, finding that they were unable to relate
much of the new knowledge to their existing knowledge compounded the feeling of unpreparedness. For many participants, this was quite a shock, as they had been expecting to be able to build on their previous educational experience. Additionally, there appeared to be little assistance offered for students to incorporate their own way of knowing, values and beliefs into the programme. Hence, they found that they were placed in a disadvantaged position compared to the New Zealand born students in their classes.

The stress caused by unfamiliar cultural and educational practices was a common theme in the data and for some participants, the isolation caused by having no-one who shared similar understandings, compounded this. However, by forming friendships with other students, participants appeared to find that they were more able to cope with the course. Most found that by having someone to talk with, they realised that other students were also experiencing challenges with the work. Overall, graduate participants identified that the cultural and social differences were greater than they had expected and they felt under prepared.

In the next chapter, I will address the topic of communication. Student and lecturer participants have identified this as a complex and highly significant matter in social, academic and practical aspects of student teachers’ experience.
Chapter 5: Communication

5.1 Introduction

Although communication is embedded in all topics within the data, I have presented this chapter to discuss specific, significant themes concerning aspects of communication. In particular, the data from graduate and lecturer participants show the importance of understanding individual and cultural perspectives on teaching, learning and communication. Thus, I will analyse and discuss data that illustrate language and communication differences and student / lecturer communication.

5.2 Language and Communication Differences

All student participants in this study are learning in a second or third language and have referred to language as being a challenge, even if they had been New Zealand residents for several years. Lecturer participants have also spoken about the difficulties they found when conveying new learning material and concepts. However, language is only one aspect of communication because, as stated by Bruner (1990), cultural knowledges and understandings are intrinsic to making meaning from communications. It appeared that because of differences in worldviews and a possible lack of openness to alternative perspectives by others, it was the interpretative aspect of communication that participants found to be most challenging.

Several participants demonstrated a positive sense of themselves within their own culture, but in many instances, this was difficult to maintain in the New Zealand classroom. One such example was given by Kaito, a student from Japan, when I asked him about his early experiences in the teacher education programme:

To be honest, I didn’t want to carry on, ‘cos it was quite hard for me to tell what I’m thinking of. I mean, I could speak English at the time and I’m sure that people couldn’t understand what I’m saying, um, but it just felt quite scary. Because I used to go to language school at Christchurch, and the tutors and my friends there were supposed to listen to what I’m saying…because they’re quite used to students from
overseas, but my ex-classmates and my teachers were not used to talking to students from overseas. So, yeah, when I tried people listened to me,....I just have to push myself forward a bit…

J: Did you feel a bit reluctant to do that at first?

Kaito: Yeah, yeah,

J: Because of the language?

Kaito: Yeah, English is too hard for me. Quite hard to listen in English and speak in English.

Kaito, like all of the student participants in this study considered giving up his course during the first year. Some participants had come from overseas, alone; some had invested considerable sums of family money; some had the public backing of their community, and all had their own and family pride at stake.

Kaito makes several significant statements. As he had previously attended an English language course in New Zealand, he thought his English would be adequate when he entered the teacher education programme, but found major differences between speaking social and academic English. He suggests that the environment of the English school did not provide a true representation of other New Zealand social or educational settings, compared to a noisy classroom or lecture room where people talk quickly, over talk each other and use colloquial slang. Furthermore, he felt that students and teachers at the language school were expected to listen respectfully, which might not be the case in normal social or classroom settings. This indicates that the English he had learned in a general language class context was inadequate for an academic environment.

Through his statement that language school classmates were expected to listen to him, he appeared to imply that students in the teacher education class were not. His embarrassment at his English pronunciation is also shown in his statement that they would not want to hear him whilst he was struggling with the language. Moreover, he states that he expected people to be intolerant of his accent, suggesting that he was highly conscious of his ethnic difference from other students.
Kaito’s awareness of difference appears to have been acute, as he stated that his lecturers and classmates were not used to overseas students. However, the institution that Kaito studied at was highly multicultural, with over 20% of students being from non-English-speaking backgrounds. It would therefore appear that he was self-conscious of being new to New Zealand, a predominantly English-speaking nation and despite the ethnic diversity around him, he was conscious of not being a native speaker of English. Thus, Kaito suggests that he was reluctant to use his English at first, giving a sense of isolation and a perception that others were looking disparagingly at him.

Kaito points out how hard it was to listen in English. Similarly, Niuean student, Beth says:

...But Pacific Island people need to learn not to be frightened of speaking out more. I’ve seen so many Pacific Island people just sitting there and not asking, and not understanding. They’re frightened that they might say something wrong.

According to Vaioleti (2000), it is not generally acceptable for Pasifika people to ask questions in class, or to speak out to voice an opinion in class. Vaioleti stresses that most Pasifika cultures teach children to listen to teachers and not question them. He also points out that asking people to change behaviours that have occupied their understanding since early childhood is a major issue and one that is not always acknowledged by educators. Beth expands on her concerns about Pasifika students’ communication in class:

I think it’s the language, the language, because you’re too frightened to speak up and ask sometimes, because you’re thinking ‘is this word the right word? Am I using that word right?’ The language is always a barrier for the Island people, I think. The language is always a barrier for them. In the first year, some of the words in there are too big, and getting to get used to it, because when we schooling before you didn’t see all those words, and write it down properly. But I think it’s the language that’s new to us, because we’re used to Island language. But you’re coming in here and hearing all these words every day, and you’re
frightened ‘what are those words?’ you know, and am I writing my assignment properly?

Beth speaks of being too frightened to speak up. Although she qualifies the statement by referring to doubt about using the right word, I felt that it was more complex than that. I wondered about the implications of using the wrong word. Perhaps by using a word incorrectly, students fear revealing a lack of relevant knowledge or understanding, or attracting attention in a way that sets them further apart from the English-speaking students. It is also likely that Beth feared living up (or down) to the negative expectations of the European students. This is consistent with the findings of Lopez (2005), who states that when ethnic minority students were not expected to be academically successful, many began to believe it. Thus, low achievement became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Moreover, Lopez found that because of persistent exposure to the low expectations of the cultural majority about Hispanic students, low academic achievement became interwoven with the identities of the Hispanic communities studied. Thus, over time, those Hispanic communities began to identify as unlikely to attain academic achievement.

Several participants told me that they were afraid of being misunderstood and that they would appear incompetent. This was problematic because it often prevented them from speaking publicly in class. In my journal, I reflected on the challenges students can face with communication. ‘I sensed the marginalising effect of feeling unable to speak. This appeared to position cultural differences negatively, thereby disempowering ethnic minority students.’ Rymesa, et al (2008) suggest that the power dynamics that can develop in ethnically and socially diverse groups can be used to dictate what can be said by those in the minority. They also suggested that by being aware of the relationships, conflicts and tensions that might develop in the group, teacher educators can use critical discourse analysis to support minority students and construct more equitable relationships.
Julie, a student from China explained about her dilemma in class situations. During her first year, she felt unable to participate in group discussions. She revealed this when I asked her if instructions were difficult to follow:

*I think it’s not hard, because we know each day what the topic is, today human development, or health – we know what we’re talking about and also like we have a paper, or on the board, so we do have questions so that we’re thinking of the same thing, but I really like the way it’s like everybody have a chance to talk, so some very useful tips come out.*

J: *But did you feel that you could contribute?*

Julie: *Yes, about 1½ years later*

J: *so for the first year you didn’t contribute to your group*

Julie: *I was very quiet in my group*

J: *so it took you a very long time before you felt you could contribute. Is that because you didn’t feel comfortable with that different teaching style?*

Julie: *I think mostly that’s not related to the teaching; more related to myself. Like, I’m new here, I’m the only one here, because I can see in other things make me feel – like we’ve got that group that can speak Samoan, and English girls and the young group, and you know where can I put myself? But I only put myself in front of the class. I can listen to the teacher, I can listen to others, I remember at the beginning I used the tape recorder [to record classes] then and I think half of year two, then I think I can just do notes…*

Julie seemed to feel comfortable with the teaching methods because she knew what the topics would be and she could prepare. This suggests that it was important for her to be informed about class content in advance. She also appeared to appreciate hearing the views and ideas of other students, yet she felt unable to contribute to discussions. Her concern with this appeared to be in communicating her own ideas, so expressing herself became a deeper issue than speaking English. Julie was looking for a place to belong and a group to relate to and share understandings with as a means to support her learning and indicates that she was feeling isolated.
Julie’s reluctance to speak with others, or contribute seemed to be caused by her fear that no-one would understand her way of thinking. Thus, she believed her understandings and opinions would be misunderstood or miscontextualised. Although Julie states “I’m new here”, she started the course at the same time as others and had possibly been in New Zealand for at least as long as other class members, such as the Samoan group she referred to. This indicates that she might have felt that she was still an outsider in New Zealand and as such, was struggling to identify with other students as well as to communicate with them.

Julie said she used a tape recorder to record class content and discussions for the first year. This was to ensure that she had correctly understood the work, because she had no-one with whom to cross-check her understandings. She therefore felt unable to talk to anyone about the work. Julie could see other groups of students debriefing on a session but had to rely on her own resources for crosschecking and constructing new understandings. However, by adopting a strategy to sit at the front of the class, she made a point that she was self-reliant, although the strain of having no-one she felt she could communicate with seemed fairly severe on occasions. In the following excerpt Julie explains that, having lived in New Zealand for a few years, she was keenly aware that there were aspects of the Chinese culture that were viewed with some negativity by her New Zealand classmates. I asked Julie if she felt included in group discussions. She told me:

*In small groups sometimes they might say, ‘Do you want to share [your thoughts]?’*
*No, I don’t really want to show others sometimes because it’s completely different. Yeah, no, I think it’s my personal feelings…some of the classmates – it’s ok, but some I don’t want to show my feelings to – you know it’s too scary, their honesty, you know, some I really want to show them about my thoughts and talk to them because it seems like they’re open and talk to me, but some of them, yeah, I was quite scared, because they just like bullies, just make me like…[long pause]*
*J: you might feel that they were judging you or criticising you?*
*Julie: yes, I think it’s like they…I bring in my culture, you know, and that’s the worst part of my culture [the formal education in early childhood and family expectations*
for children to achieve academically], *and people make judgements by looking, yeah and people should listen and know more about it.*

According to Zerbe-Enns, Sinacore, Ancis and Phillips (2004), to be made to feel judged and disapproved of for one’s regular practice can create barriers to socialisation, communication and trust, and can have an othering effect on the individual or group concerned. Julie’s thoughts about engaging in personal conversations, suggested that because they spoke openly to their peers, she believed the other students already knew each other. However this is likely to have been due to the difference in cultural expectations between Chinese and New Zealand social practices (Tan & Goh, 2006). Tan and Goh state that in Chinese society, it is not considered appropriate to talk about personal topics with people who are not close friends. This contrasts with the less formal social practices of Australasia.

Julie found that she could not share openly, so was unable to engage in important learning opportunities. However, she engaged in critical analysis of the situation as she saw it and used this as a strategy to rationalise the pragmatic approach she took to working on her own. It was also something that she never shared with her lecturers. Gupta (2006) refers to the importance of self-understanding as a characteristic of teacher effectiveness. She writes about the use of students’ personal narratives as a method of promoting effective reflective skills. However, she also noted that this could only occur in a classroom where “students feel safe, included and respected” (p.16). Thus, Julie’s emotional competence meant that had a high level of self-understanding and so developed her own coping strategies that helped her to deal with her work, independently, until she was able to communicate with lecturers.

It appeared, from Julie’s narratives, that her lecturers were unaware of her isolation because they might not have understood the complexities of her social situation. The ability to demonstrate a global awareness of education has been highlighted by Schuerholz-Lehr (2007) as an important disposition for teacher educators. She suggests that world-mindedness incorporates intercultural competence, sensitivity to the
personal and professional background of individuals and a willingness to be open to practical knowledge and understandings.

Despite holding positions of responsibility in her community, communication was difficult for Naomi. She felt that her Cook Island heritage was not acknowledged or understood by others in her class. Although she had lived in New Zealand for many years and spoke English well, Naomi expressed a need to have people to talk with who shared a similar cultural experience. Communication appeared challenging for Naomi because, even though in my opinion she spoke English well, she found her understandings, experiential background and place in society to be so different from that of her fellow students. Naomi explained her perspective as a Cook Island student:

_I felt lonely in some parts, not because I can’t do it, it’s not because I can’t write or something, it’s mainly because there’s not any other Cook Islanders. And even though other P.I. [Pacific Islanders] people are there, it’s not the same, not the same feeling for me. I can still mingle with them, but still I hesitate sometimes to be with them, because their way of thinking is quite different from mine…but I like all of them, that’s not what I meant, but it’s that feeling as a Cook Islander…_ I just felt out of place sometimes…I liked all of them, but sometimes you need to talk about your own community with your own people…that holds me up most of the time, I couldn’t talk. Sometimes, the thought of like, if I say this I might not be right, if I say that…go against that, I never really, fully got into debating other cultures or other understanding of other people._

_J: you have to have a lot of confidence to enter into that, if you feel insecure_  
_Naomi: Yes, that’s the word, insecure_

She continues the conversation by telling me that she feels that her opinion or way of thinking is of less value than others’. Erosion of confidence can occur when the competence of an individual is questioned, intentionally or unintentionally by themselves or others, over a sustained period (Wertsch, 1991). Clearly, most individuals can rationalise sufficiently to overcome occasional challenges, questionings or failures. Erikson (1959) suggested that overcoming of the occasional failure could be healthy for
the individual in learning to cope with life. He also claimed that people who grow up experiencing only success can find coping difficult if they are suddenly faced with an unexpected bad result. However, the effects of prolonged feelings of self-doubt are likely to be seriously damaging to self-esteem.

Developing a positive sense of self through learning to cope can enhance self-esteem, as the individual can reflect on this as a learning experience. However, Naomi’s story indicates that having someone to talk through difficulties with, particularly where culturally based understandings are concerned, can be beneficial to establishing a positive sense of self. This is evident when she speaks of the importance of having someone who understands her way of thinking. To illustrate this, she refers to “feeling as a Cook Islander”, suggesting that her understandings had been shaped by her culture, thus only other Cook Islanders could relate to her perspectives.

Naomi, like several other participants, felt unable to speak in class and shared stories that included concerns about using incorrect English or about being misunderstood. In discussing her communication challenges, Naomi refers to cultural understandings, as well as language. She suggests that because communication between cultures can be complex, there was a distinct risk of misinterpretation occurring. Naomi was conscious that her Cook Island cultural understandings are different from those of other ethnicities, including people from other Pacific countries. This reinforces the importance of recognising the specific characteristics, values and practices of individual cultures of Pacific Island nations. As Levin and He (2008) and Gupta (2006) conclude, a student teacher’s personal beliefs strongly influence their professional practice, thus their interpretation of new learning can be strengthened if they are able to discuss the new material with others who can share their world-view. Naomi was indicating that she had no-one who shared her own knowledge and beliefs, or who would be likely to understand the things she ‘knew’ as a Cook Islander. Therefore, she felt that her knowledge was out of place in the teacher education context, so was unable to make connections between existing and new knowledge.
Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) emphasises that belonging is fundamental to a learner feeling empowered and making contributions to the environment. This was reinforced in a study of tertiary student retention in New Zealand by Zepke, Leech and Prebble (2005), which showed that 20% of those who withdrew from study did so because they had little sense of belonging. A further 22% claimed that their ways of learning were not reflected in the course delivery, a feeling that was reflected in Naomi’s narrative. This contributed to her low self-esteem as a student teacher because she appeared to feel that her understandings were not reflected or valued.

Collett (2007) notes that those positioned as the minority are generally expected to change their communication to the style of the dominant community. Over time, it is likely that most would adapt to the social and communication practices of the majority however, it seems important for lecturers to understand the challenges students’ experience, particularly in the early part of their study. As Collett states, the dominant group are usually unaware of these challenges, thus, the communication behaviour invariably serves to marginalise those positioned as the minority.

5.3 Student / Lecturer Communication

Communication with lecturers is a significant aspect of teacher education, especially when understanding new learning material is critical. Most participants in this study eventually came to trust key lecturers and felt able to ask for assistance or guidance, and would occasionally seek assistance in pastoral issues. However, the help sought would frequently be about technical aspects of their programmes.

Glenda, a teacher education lecturer told me that in many instances, Pasifika students do not appear confident to ask for assistance. She told me:

*I think that probably the Pasifika students are a little less confident – or maybe it’s part of their culture as well. Probably they don’t come forward for assistance in quite the same way. It’s just my experience that I’ve noticed…it’s probably how they might see the person who is the lecturer.*
Glenda partly attributes the Pasifika student behaviour to cultural differences. By acknowledging that Pasifika students have their own way of communicating with lecturers, she is acknowledging the students’ different worldviews. Furthermore, Glenda suggests that cultural differences may affect students’ perception of lecturers. Glenda’s assessment of Pasifika perspectives of lecturers is consistent with the views of Vaioleti (2003) and corresponds to the narrative of participants in this study. However, she also indicates that Pasifika students might have different ways of asking for assistance. Glenda uses the words ‘come forward’, to indicate that Pasifika students possibly use less obvious ways of asking for help that might require different understandings from the lecturer.

Teacher education lecturer, Natalie also made similar comments about different ways of communicating. She also spoke about developing relationships with Pasifika students:

*I guess it took me quite a while to develop relationships with some of those students, I found them… I’m generalising, I guess they were less confident in coming forward than the Asian students. So if they’re struggling they tend to be embarrassed and not want to come and talk with you [pause]... and Pacific students and some colleagues tell me that on the staff there are a handful of lecturers they will automatically go to for help because those connections have been made evident. It’s actually not necessarily the appropriate course lecturer – and I’ve become one of those, but I wasn’t at first, and I talked to a colleague who Pacific students did go to and asked for tips about what it is I could be doing to help. And now I think I’ve got pretty good relationships with most of the Pacific students… so now I think with my follow through they’re more willing to accept that I want them to get there and I’m willing to work with them and to play around with the rules and be flexible.*

People from Asian and Pasifika communities are often grouped without acknowledgement of their specific nationalities and cultural differences (Fa’afoi, Parkhill, & Fletcher, 2006). There are many different nations in the Pacific region, each with their own culture and identities and ways of communicating. Similarly, the nations classified
as ‘Asian’ have significantly different cultures, languages, communication styles and identities. According to Hall (1989), Fa’afoi et al. (2006) and Vaioleti (2000), grouping people by using a collective noun, diffuses the essence of each specific culture. To attempt to cluster individuals together because of their ethnicity undermines their personal identities, which Natalie acknowledges is unhelpful in relation to understanding individual viewpoints.

An important point raised in these data, was the support Natalie offered Pasifika students, in particular the direct, face to face communication that she refers to. This suggests that she sees the Pasifika students as competent learners and that she believes in them. Fa'afoi and Fletcher (2001) identified student / teacher relationships as critical to success and that Samoan and Tongan students’ achievements increased when the lecturers related to them as individuals, spoke with them and showed that they believed in their ability to succeed.

Natalie recognised that sometimes students are uncomfortable about sharing their skills or knowledge and need support to express their thoughts.

*Now I can think of teaching, I sometimes try to have a bit of fun and keep things light and I’ll say ‘I don’t know’ and then I’ll see some of the Asian students are surprised and that’s not what they expect to hear… I don’t set myself up as an expert, I have some particular skills and knowledge, and you have too, and that’s part of the idea of this country, that we share those, but that’s really revolutionary. And I have had some students … that won’t debate in class because they don’t see it as appropriate to share their skills and knowledge because they see that as being disrespectful to me. So I take the opportunity during group work to wander around and to say to them, in this course, I really want to hear your views and it’s all right to share your views with the teacher. And the same with children – that it’s – we want children to ask questions too.*

By offering the students opportunities to think about the skills and knowledge they bring to class, Natalie introduced the pedagogical practices expected of teachers in New
Zealand. She suggested that this was a difference between New Zealand expectations of learning and teaching and the teacher-directed pedagogies of some other countries. She also reinforced that teachers in New Zealand expect children to question, think and express their ideas, which might not be the experience of formal education of all the student teachers. Thus, Natalie linked the learning behaviours that New Zealand teachers expect to see from children in early childhood settings, to the learning strategies expected of the student teachers, including questioning, discussing and debating. She suggested that her students found this challenging because they were more familiar with teacher-directed education in societies where, as Gupta (2006) states, teachers are perceived as the ultimate authority that is not to be challenged.

Natalie suggests that sometimes students are uncomfortable about sharing their skills or knowledge and need support to express their thoughts. By personally inviting them to discuss their ideas in class, she found that students were more willing to contribute and debate. Amobi (2004) notes that teacher educators must constantly cross the borders of diverse practices, beliefs and values in order to infuse neophyte teachers with the skills to teach effectively in the community. Thus, by demonstrating that she had challenged her own thinking, Natalie was able to challenge her students to experience different practices and exposed them to a wider range of experiences and theoretical perspectives that were consistent with the community in which they might teach.

Natalie identifies specific aspects of communication that she has found helpful in allowing her to establish trusting relationships with students, such as direct communication, drawing out their ideas and empowering them to contribute. Once relationships were established, she found that students were more forthcoming and likely to seek support. This created opportunities for providing ongoing support and also increased awareness of issues that could impede students’ progress.

For students who are familiar with pedagogies where questioning is discouraged, it is likely that asking questions of lecturers would be incongruous with their previous educational experience. Zembylas (2003) suggests that for student teachers to establish positive teacher identities, an understanding of self and effective relationships
with others are vital. This cannot happen without communication and understandings between the student and the teacher. Natalie’s story shows that this requires a great deal of trust between student and lecturer, which seems likely to be most effective when the lecturer takes a proactive approach to building relationships. This is further demonstrated by data from student participants in this study, who indicated that once trusting relationships were established, they found their lecturers to be highly supportive.

Fijian student, Talei, found that the lecturers were a strong source of support when she was a student teacher:

*I believe that when I finished my third year, I had made friends with all the teachers, ‘cos I got to know them so well, ‘cos of going and asking for help, and asking questions…especially that action research – it nearly killed me – scary stuff…, and getting help and arguing, and now, even though I’ve been out for 2 years, I still miss that student days I call it, my time and days when I go to study.*

Talei appeared to have formed positive relationships with her lecturers and showed no reluctance to speak with them as friends. In feeling able to argue with them, Talei suggests that her lecturers were supportive and open to student debate and that she was confident and comfortable in this relationship. She appeared to have really enjoyed her years of study, regarding this as her special time, even though she faced work that challenged and appeared to test her. However, the relationship she had with the lecturers, where she could ask questions, seemed to be of great significance to her, especially when the work was difficult.

### 5.4 Conclusion

Data from participants have highlighted the potential for significant misunderstandings to occur because of cultural differences in ways of communicating. In particular, students’ stories have shown that it can be difficult for ethnic minority students to communicate in the classroom setting. Several participants told me that they were reluctant to become involved in class discussions, or voice their opinions because they
were worried that they might be misunderstood or that they might not express themselves clearly.

Communication with lecturers was difficult for several students for whom it was culturally inappropriate to approach lecturers and ask them questions. Hence, for many ethnic minority student teachers to form trusting relationships with lecturers, it is the lecturers who must be proactive, as some students are unlikely to make the first approach. Furthermore, when student teachers do not have someone they feel would understand their problems, or discuss learning material with them in a way they can understand, they appear to be at risk of failure.

In the following chapter, communication will continue to feature strongly as I analyse data concerning teaching practicum placements.
Chapter 6: Practicum Experiences

6.1 Introduction

Teaching practice, often referred to as practicum, is a significant part of all New Zealand teacher education programmes because it is believed to provide students with the opportunity to put theory into practice and develop their teaching skills. However, this is challenged by Korthagen (2001), who claims that little transfer of understandings between theory and practice actually occurs, particularly if the students’ existing perspectives are shaped by different paradigms. For ethnic minority students, practicum often means going to early childhood settings that operate in significantly different ways from those that they are familiar with and so they are expected to implement the theory they have been taught, whilst adapting to differences in early childhood perspectives and practices. Thus, practicum placements were challenging for some participants because of their different ways of communicating and differences in cultural understandings and knowledge about teaching.

This chapter will present and analyse data about experiences on practicum. These include experiencing different understandings about teaching, preparation for practicum and relationships with Associate Teachers.4

6.2 Experiencing Different Understandings about Teaching

Data from this study will be discussed in this section to show the importance of student teachers being informed about what they can expect during practicum placements. Participants suggested that they found the start of each practicum difficult because they were unsure of what they might experience, especially when they were going to different service types. In all teacher education programmes in this country, students are expected to learn and apply the skills of teaching by observing and modelling from experienced teachers during practicum placements. However, participants suggest that observing teachers is not an effective strategy for making sense of unfamiliar practices.

4 An Associate Teacher is a qualified and experienced teacher who is employed at the institution where a student will be placed for a practicum and who is contracted by a teacher education provider to support and assess a student during the practicum.
Keogh, Dole and Hudson (2006) and Levin and He (2008) recommend that student teachers receive more in-depth scaffolding to understand practice.

Consistent with the findings of Keogh et al. (2006), some participants found their identities as a student or teacher were challenged by the different expectations and understandings that they experienced. Kukari (2004) suggests that culture, religion and educational experience is important in shaping attitudes, values and identities. Cook Island student, Naomi, told me about her experience of different understandings and values during practicum placements.

*It’s a huge challenge Janet, for me it’s brand new, and I just can’t understand why I can’t hit the children (laughs) and I can’t understand why I have to be down at their level. I look at myself, I wasn’t taught like that, how am I going to go down to their level? It’s really hard… Yes that’s me that’s how we were taught, teachers all look down at us, you do what I say, if you don’t, you have the sticks… it’s completely, new to me, Janet. That first year, writing essays and assignments, I wouldn’t have a clue …but the tutors were patient, explaining and telling… ohhh…it was hard!*

To most New Zealanders, the idea of teachers hitting preschool children would be unacceptable. However, although she expected that children would be obedient to a teacher, Naomi assumed that she would have the right to use corporal punishment. Furthermore, positioning herself at the eye level of the young children was also uncomfortable for Naomi because in her experience, teachers are superior to children and remain above them in terms of authority and physically because they stand when teaching. Thus, it is likely that being at the same level as the child reduced her perception of having a position of power. These understandings were shaped by her prior experiences and cultural understandings about the role of the teacher. Kukari (2004) and Han (2005) claim that sociocultural and religious values and beliefs influence student teachers’ understandings of good practice. Using alternatives to physical control and authoritarian power over children required a major change in her understandings of childhood and teaching. However, by laughing at her statement about
hitting children, she showed her awareness of the difference between New Zealand and Cook Island practices and the changes she had to make.

Naomi appeared confused about the teaching practices she was being taught because they were very different from her previous knowledge, experience and understandings. As a student, she was expected to allow children to express themselves and make their own decisions, which was challenging for her. Naomi explained how she fought the urge to use physical methods of discipline with children:

*I was uncomfortable so I moved away from the children ‘cos I don’t like my own past coming into my mouth. Most of the time I stand away, I didn’t explain to the teachers I have to go away from the children. Because I know that if I sit there something will come out of my mouth and I will regret it.*

*J: is that if a child is being challenging?*

*Naomi: They all are, they’re all a challenge to me. I can’t help them, I can’t be there and it’s just there are sometimes like when they are asking questions, and I think, they’re asking questions and I never did. And I can feel that anger in me coming up. I have to come away. I have to walk away from the children. Because I knew that if I don’t control that right there and then something will come out of my mouth and I won’t pass. That’s what comes in my mind. If I sit there and show, I will regret it. So she [Associate Teacher] see me walk away if the children ask me to do something, because I have to walk away because I see children playing I don’t like it, I have to walk away. Children just talking to each other, which is good, but in my mind, I don’t like it so I have to walk away.*

*J: so you were rationalising your prior knowledge with what you were being taught and the two were incompatible…*

*Naomi: I can’t take it, I can’t take it right there and then, I have to move away and control my own mind and come back to them to there and then, cos things like that will happen, my mind will go straight to the past and I reflect.*

Naomi’s focus on her past illustrates the effect of her upbringing on her values and beliefs about teaching. Her anger at children merely talking to each other, playing or
asking her questions shows that she continued to view the learning environment as a place where children should be silent, learning formally and controlled by adults, as she had been in her childhood. She seemed aware of her emotions and the affect they could have and was increasing her understandings of being a teacher, which helped to manage her frustrations. However, it seems likely that she felt that no one would understand her difficulties with children’s play, so she was unable to share her problems with other teachers. Naomi appeared reluctant to reflect on her past and was more focussed on blocking her prior understandings than with building on these, perhaps because she had no strategies for incorporating them into her new learning. This suggested that the power of the Anglo-Celtic discourses shaped mainstream expectations of teaching practices and that Naomi felt the need to adopt these unconditionally. Furthermore, Naomi possibly found her past to be a stronger influence than her new learning and felt that she needed to prevent its influence on her teaching as she could see no relationship between the two paradigms.

Korthagen (2001) suggests that student teachers should be encouraged to reflect on positive and negative role models and experiences from their past because this can assist in the construction of connections that can build understandings. Additionally, Korthagen, Loughran and Russell (2006) and Nolan (2008) claim that to make learning from teaching practice effective, guided critical reflection, prompted by questioning from lecturers could scaffold students through a process where they deconstruct practical experiences and make links to theory. This could have provided a supportive way for Naomi to make sense of her experiences, particularly if the lecturer incorporated her existing understandings about her gendered expectations about being a student and a teacher.

I considered Naomi’s story and noted in my journal that I was particularly concerned by the apparent lack of support she received from her lecturers or her Associate Teacher. I wrote, ‘I wonder about the way Naomi blocked her prior learning, giving herself no access to her connections with her past. She seemed to be rejecting her cultural and gender identities, which suggests that she was trying to assimilate with Anglo-Celtic understandings about early childhood, teaching and gender-roles, yet these appeared
to make little sense to her. How come no-one noticed?’ It appeared that the different perspectives that influenced Naomi’s behaviour were not revealed to anyone else by her, possibly because she was attempting to replace them with modelled Anglo-Celtic behaviours, nor were they recognised by others as significant factors for constructing her learning. This seemed to suggest that the powerful discourses associated with the hegemonic Anglo-Celtic mainstream made her doubt the credibility of her own values and understandings.

Most participants in this study found it difficult to understand the child-centred pedagogy of New Zealand mainstream early childhood services, possibly because they were familiar with different paradigms. Julie, from mainland China, found it difficult to understand why children were allowed to engage in what she saw as a big mess. I asked her about her thoughts about the teaching practices she observed:

*J: The pedagogies of the centre must have been quite different from what you were expecting.*

*Julie: Yes, because they’re putting everything out and the children are making a big mess. I say, ‘should I tidy up?’ And the associate says you’re a student, just observe the children and after that we’ll tidy up. Yeah I think that’s me at the beginning. I haven’t sat down to really concentrate on one observation because I don’t know where I should put myself.*

*J: You probably don’t really understand at first what you should be looking at.*

*Julie: No! [Laughs]*

Julie’s challenge to contextualise and interpret the practicum learning environment reflects the findings of Korthagen (2001) because she found it difficult to relate to the theories that she would have been learning in her course to the practices she was observing in the early childhood centre. Hedges and Lee (2010) argue that experiencing different philosophies and practices can cause students to confront their existing understandings and beliefs. However, they point out that critical reflection is an integral part of making such experiences useful. Since it appeared that Julie had no support or
guidance to help her to make sense of the practices she was observing, she could not engage in any informed critique of her experiences.

The perspectives that Julie brought to her practicum were likely to have been informed by her cultural understandings and past experience. She perceived the wide variety of materials put out for children to use as a “big mess” and felt the need to tidy it, rather than seeing a free choice environment available for exploration. Julie might have wanted to make a contribution by tidying because she did not appear to understand the learning environment and could have been confused about how to respond to the children. It is therefore likely that Julie’s Associate Teacher failed to realise that there might be differences in their understandings about teaching practice. According to Guang-Lea and Lee (2001), ethnic minority student teachers are often misunderstood, because their knowledge and experience is different from that of their lecturers. Furthermore, Hedges and Lee (2010) point out that the way that Te Whāriki is implemented means that academic learning, even though it is integrated in the child-centred approach to learning, is not overt. Thus, student teachers who are more familiar with an academic, subject-based system could find it difficult to understand how children are learning from the free-choice environment.

The differences between Julie’s understandings and the practices that she encountered meant that she was unable record observations of children for her course work. Her confusion about the learning environment and the teaching practices she saw suggests that she was not well prepared for the practicum and seemed to need guidance in her role as a student. As the Associate Teacher appeared unaware of Julie’s understandings or experiences, she might have assumed that by watching the children and teachers, Julie would learn how to teach. This suggests that the Associate Teacher did not understand the different perspectives of ethnic minority, overseas-born students and thus, was unaware that Julie might be challenged by the teaching practices she saw. Therefore, the Associate would be unlikely to realise that Julie would require additional support understand and implement the practices that were expected of her.
Participants’ data suggest that because they found the practices being taught in teacher education programmes very different from their prior knowledge and understandings, many required guidance and support to adjust their understandings. However, some participants found the practicum effective for making links to theory. Even though she had found practicum daunting for the first year, Holly found it helped her to understand theory. She told me:

*Practicum really helped. Centres can also help your study, make links, also you speak English and talk to the children. So you learn lots of things, how things happen in New Zealand and how it’s different from where you come from…so that’s good things about practicum. Practicum for people who come out from different places is very important… otherwise we would never learn in the books about…. well we do learn the theorists, but the practicum is more informative…you see more children, and the other people how they teach, how they interact with children…*

Holly was aware of the need to connect theory to teaching practice and highlights the importance of practicum in making sense of new learning. Seeing how children use equipment and resources, how teachers prepare the learning environment and interact with children provides examples of theory in practice. However, as Holly and Julie found, overseas-born students, who are unfamiliar with child centred pedagogies, appear to require strong examples to guide their understandings of the teaching practices taught in New Zealand. Holly also suggests that reading about theories does not adequately build understandings of teaching and learning for overseas-born students, but found that the practical teaching experiences helped her to learn what to expect from children, the teachers and the early childhood centres. Furthermore, interacting with children and practice with English also appeared to be helpful. It is likely that because children often mispronounce words and consonants and make grammatical errors, understanding very young children could be difficult for non-native speakers of English. Equally, it is possible that Holly’s English could have been difficult for some children to understand and she would have had to try to pronounce words carefully.
Beth, a student from Niue, talked about the teaching practices and values she experienced during her first practicum at a kindergarten:

_I was thinking of the way I teach up there [at the Aoga Amata], so when I went in there [the kindergarten] the first day I thought, 'oh, their teaching is different'. Children are doing their own thing and they [the teachers] are not saying come there and sit down this is what we're going to do, so when I go out I thought oh, I'm doing it the wrong way. It shouldn't be my way; it should be the children's way. 'Coz I'm coming from what we did at our Aoga Amata. It's all from us._

When she realised how different the teaching practices of the kindergarten practices were from those of the Aoga Amata5, Beth appeared to assume that the kindergarten was right and the Aoga Amata, wrong. Cannella (2004) states that the practices and understandings of cultural minorities are frequently disregarded by the cultural majority and considered to be inferior. Hence, Beth’s response was to think that her centre had to change its practice, seemingly without considering the values and beliefs that underpinned the Aoga Amata philosophy.

It is likely that Beth had expected the children to sit and do planned activities and was unprepared for children to work independently. She also found it surprising that teachers were not directing children and controlling their activities. However, she also indicated that she had reflected on the kindergarten teaching practice and realised that they allowed children to make choices. Although she would have been learning about child-centred pedagogy in her teacher education course, it appeared that the practicum experience helped her to understand this in practice.

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5 Staffed by qualified, registered teachers, New Zealand state kindergartens currently have a teacher/child ratio of 1 : 15 in traditional sessional programmes, or 1 : 10 in extended six hour days. Programmes are child-centred, promoting independent learning aimed at developing competencies. Aoga Amata teaching is based on Samoan culture and language, has a high staffing ratio in excess of 1 : 8, but often with few qualified teachers. In keeping with Samoan traditions, experienced adults provide the children with the knowledge and skills they are believed to need.
6.3 The Importance of Preparation for Practicum

The majority of student teachers are very nervous about their first practicum. Students are sent out of the ‘comparative comfort’ of the lecture room, possibly for several weeks, into a setting that they have never been to before, with people they have not met. They know their Associate Teacher will assess their performance, so many student teachers have told me that they feel very, very anxious. The first practicum is of particular significance, because in most teacher education programmes, it occurs during the first few months of the programme. In this short time, overseas-born students are unlikely to have made sense of the new understandings and pedagogies being taught. As Levin and He (2008) state, it can take several years for changes to thinking and new understandings to be internalised. This is concerning because it is unlikely that many Associate Teachers would be aware of this and so would have the same expectations of all students.

Associate Teachers commonly assess students against criteria that involve basic skills and knowledge, dispositions, communicating and interacting with children and contributing effectively to the institution. Teacher education lecturer, Karen observed the significance of positive practicum experiences for student teachers, particularly in the first year.

…I’ve noticed that there’s a definite link between the quality of ongoing work and the practicum experiences students have. If they have a poor experience, their work is correspondingly poor, but if they have a good experience they seem to get off to a flyer, like it all really clicks and makes sense…

Karen suggests that practicum can have a profound effect on student teachers’ future success. Her link between a student’s negative practicum experience and poor assignment work indicates that she believes that it can impact on their association between theory and practice. In making this connection, Karen makes a general observation of student performance patterns as an outcome of practica. In particular, by identifying a link between a positive first practicum and future success, she implies that this could potentially strengthen their understandings and teaching practice. Conversely,
a poor practicum experience could make it difficult for students to understand practical applications of theory, perhaps because of poor role-modelling. This would explain the differences in students’ written practicum assessment tasks. Karen’s statement has implications for careful monitoring of student placements. She is making an assessment of the practicum placements, rather than the different abilities of students.

For many overseas-born, ethnic minority student teachers, practicum can be an unsettling and lonely time. To optimise the practicum experience, Karen explains in the following excerpt, that student teachers need to have time to observe appropriate and effective practice from qualified teachers in a supportive environment.

> When I visit students on practicum, I try to model good practice in the way that I talk to children, when I get the opportunity. The other thing I try to do is to point out when I see good practice happening. Sometimes it’s not easy ‘cos the practice that I observe is cringe factor material! I really think we need to place culturally diverse students really carefully. Some associates just aren’t really good for them and the student’s on a hiding to nothing.  

Karen highlights that students, who are unfamiliar with New Zealand early childhood settings, are unlikely to have the understandings necessary to make sense of the teaching they are observing, whether good or poor practice. She seems to have an image of the teaching practice she expects to see. In her reference to associate teachers, Karen is making a critical assessment of the quality of the teaching practice she has observed from some professionals because of her concern that student teachers are likely to observe poor practice and believe it to be appropriate, thus reproducing it as a professional model. She is therefore, suggesting that students from minority cultures need to be given positive examples of teaching practice, as they may be unfamiliar with New Zealand pedagogies.

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6 The phrase ‘on a hiding to nothing’ is a colloquialism meaning a pointless action which will inevitably result in failure.
Karen voiced an opinion that some Associate Teachers might not be ‘good for’ ethnic minority students, suggesting that support such as guidance with practice and with opportunities to learn from their placement could be lacking. This ultimately impacts on their practicum assessment and is likely to affect any other work that has to be submitted to lecturers. Karen’s concern for students who had been poorly placed was expressed in her use of the phrase “a hiding to nothing”, suggesting that she saw a poor practicum as being of no benefit and highly detrimental. Hsu (2005) states that careful placement of students is important, as some supporting or associate teachers do not give adequate attention to their role, or see its significance in teacher education.

I asked Naomi, a Cook Island born student, about learning from role-modelling when she was a student:

*I was wondering, lecturers often advise students when they go on practicum, to watch the teachers and see what they do. What sort of things did you notice that they were doing?*

*Naomi: The lecturers tell me to look at how the teachers are working with the children at the kindergarten. But they didn’t do anything for the children. ‘They’re lazy’ I’m thinking. They’re not working with the children or anything…they should be helping the children instead of just sitting around. They’re not teaching them anything…*

Naomi told me how she had tried to bring her own understandings into her observation, but made no sense of what she was seeing. Her views on teaching and childhood, shaped by her childhood and previous learning experience in the Cook Islands, were different from those of the lecturers, who had told her to observe how the teachers worked with the children. Naomi believed that the role of a teacher was to help children, whereas the practice that she was being taught would regard this as perceiving children to be dependent on adult assistance. In New Zealand, young children are generally encouraged to develop independence skills. When viewing the behaviour of the teachers through her own cultural lens, Naomi did not see the behaviour she was expecting to see and therefore there was no effective teaching practice to model. She
seemed to expect the teachers to be actively assisting the children, doing things with them and/or for them. When teachers were sitting talking with children, rather than standing and teaching, Naomi could not see that they were working (teaching); hence, she was critical of their behaviour.

Julie, a student from China spoke about her first practicum experience when she was placed in a Kohunga Reo (Māori culture and language preschool) which required her to observe cultural practices that were unknown to her. She told me:

*In my first practicum…they’re doing a programme about the Tangi [Māori funeral] and I think ‘ooh that’s scary, are they going to show the children a dead body!’ Because in my culture, children are not allowed to see a dead body or anything. Yeah but I was scared, because children were lying on the table [pretending to be laid out as a body] and….ooh it was scary… I was scared but they were little. I know it’s their culture, but I pretend to be brave – I’m the role-model here, be brave…*

Experiencing an event such as this on a first practicum was likely to be confusing and possibly stressful for Julie. The Kohunga Reo programme teaches children through Māori language and culture, which were unfamiliar to Julie. Her discomfort about the funeral topic that children were exploring was apparent in the way she spoke about it, even after about four years. When talking about the different Māori and Chinese cultures concerning the dead, it appeared difficult for her to put aside her own feelings. She seemed to have been genuinely frightened by the sight of children playing at being dead, something that in her own culture would have not been introduced to them, or permitted. Tangi is to cry and is the Māori translation of funeral. The tangi has many protocols and rituals, including family members staying with the dead person until they are buried. A tangi generally lasts for several days and is a very significant part of Māori culture and includes children so that they learn the customs. This was possibly why the children at the Kohanga Reo were incorporating this into their socio-dramatic play. However, this practice was very different from Julie’s own cultural experience and therefore confused her.
Julie’s story shows several ways that unfamiliar practices had challenged her, including adjusting to a setting that applied Te Whāriki through the language and culture of Māori. Furthermore, she had to cope with the introduction of a particular aspect of Māori culture that conflicted with her own beliefs. Julie’s openness to the Kohanga Reo placement in her first practicum showed that she was open to exploring other cultures and practices. However, having to accept and actively involve herself in a practice that was forbidden in her own culture in the number of times that she used the word “scared”. By identifying as a role-model, Julie positioned herself according to her understanding of a responsible adult and student teacher, which could explain why she did not want to be seen to express fear or anxiety. Although her behaviour might have been a way to manage her own fear, it could also have been because she expected herself to cope with the situation. As the children were little, she wanted to protect them, whilst providing a role model for appropriate behaviour. It is interesting that Julie makes no mention about her Associate Teacher in her account of this experience. However, she might not have shared her fears with her Associate because she would not want to be seen as a nuisance. Thus, it is likely that the Associate Teacher was unaware of Julie’s beliefs, or the challenges and trauma that this experience caused her.

Holly, from China, spoke with me about her early practicum experience as a student.

People who come from outside New Zealand... I can understand how hard it is. I was quiet for my first practicum. Maybe for my first year practicums I was very quiet…and I would never ask [a teacher in her placement] ‘do you need any help’ because I don’t know how [to help].
J: You’d have got criticised for that…
Holly: Yeah, I normally would go home and think ‘oh why’ because there’s other students doing practicum with me and they’re doing well, better than I’m doing. And I think ‘oh dear what am I doing?’ But it’s really hard for me.

Holly’s unfamiliarity with New Zealand teaching practices appeared to make her feel incompetent. Although students are normally expected to help with setting up, tidying
and other routine tasks, her lack of understanding about the environment meant that she was unable to make an appropriate contribution to the centre. According to Guang-lea and Lee (2001), Chinese students are taught to perform tasks by example and instruction. Making mistakes followed by self-correction is not an acceptable strategy for learning, so Holly may have been unable to try to perform a task, because failing would have been shameful.

When comparing her own practice to other students practicum work, Holly seemed to have low self-esteem, describing herself as ‘quiet’. In a practicum, being quiet can suggest that the student is not actively involved with the programme. It is likely that her Associate Teachers would have seen her as unmotivated. As this behaviour lasted for the first year, Holly would have received poor grades for her practicum placements. She therefore appeared to question her ability as a student teacher, observing that her peers were achieving success, whereas she was struggling. However, by not asking her Associate Teachers what she could do, or seeking any guidance, she created a self-fulfilling prophecy, because a busy Associate Teacher might have interpreted her behaviour as disinterested.

Holly differentiates between herself and her New Zealand peers, because when she said the word ‘me’, she did so with considerable emphasis. This suggests that she wanted to reinforce that she was finding the practicum experience much harder than her peers were. Similarly, her reference to people coming from outside New Zealand also indicates that she believed that practicum was harder for her and other non-New Zealanders, than for New Zealand born students. Sharing placements with other students could have given Holly the opportunity to learn alongside peers. However, this appeared to reinforce to her that she was not working as effectively as other students.

Mele, a Samoan-born student, spoke about her first week of practicum:

I was nervous; I don’t know what to do, just get there. I hadn’t been in an early childhood setting since I came to New Zealand. I expected something different. Going there and teach the children… but I spent a week looking around and see
what they do. Then I can tackle exactly what early childhood centres expect. So that made my second week a bit busier. In my first week I always look at the time. ‘Oh, I want to go home, is it time yet?’

Although she emphasises her nervousness in her words "just get there", Mele also shows that going to the centre and starting her practicum was a big step for her. She reinforces the challenge of the practicum when she explains that she found the centre was different from her expectations. The differences appeared to be related to the teaching practices and pedagogies because she referred to planning ways to share her knowledge with the children. Vaioleti (2003), describes the act of knowledge-sharing as a teaching style that directly transmits the skills and knowledge considered important in Samoan culture, which would have been Mele’s prior experience. However, when she realised that the teaching that she saw at the centre was different from her own understandings, she took a pragmatic approach to her situation by spending time observing the other teachers. By observing the other teachers, Mele constructed her understandings of what she saw happening so that she could participate in the programme.

Mele’s experience suggests that student teachers who are unfamiliar with New Zealand early childhood services, need time to make sense of theory and practice. Although most on-campus teacher education programmes give students some theoretical knowledge prior to their first practicum, it is likely that most have a practicum within the first semester of their course. However, student teachers without prior New Zealand early childhood experience might have little information about what they should expect to see in early childhood services.

Mele referred to ‘clock-watching’ during the first week of her placement, which suggests that she was feeling lost because she was unable to make the contribution she had expected. However, by being busier in the second week, she was suggesting that her strategy to observe and learn from the teachers meant that she could become more involved. Although she suggests that being an onlooker was not enjoyable, it seemed to have been a useful strategy, because it helped her to find ways to contribute to the
Her strategy of observing and not rushing in was effective and she learned ways to adapt to new settings with different understandings.

6.4 Relationships with Associate Teachers

When on practicum, the student is a visitor to the early childhood service. It is, therefore, the Associate Teacher’s responsibility to clearly communicate the particular routines and practices of the centre, so that the student teacher understands what is expected of them and feels welcome. Some participants in this study explained that if this does not occur, students can find it especially difficult to feel a sense of belonging or to initiate communication with their Associate Teacher. This suggests that teacher education providers should carefully consider the appointment and preparation of Associate Teachers, so that they can be helpful, supportive and effective in their role. I asked Natalie, a teacher education lecturer, what she felt were important points to consider for the practicum experiences of ethnic minority student teachers:

*It’s saddening to say, but we do choose our Associate Teachers carefully for students from diverse cultures, because it’s been our experience that some of them are intolerant and biased and racist – probably inadvertently, but certainly have students coming back distressed, and we have had students taken out and put into other centres. Not very often, a handful of times over a number of years, but we do look carefully and we will often try and target centres where there’s quite a diverse population – whether the diversity is amongst staff or families and children of that centre because we’re kind of confident that they will be a bit better supported there, plus it gives them the opportunity to be a resource….We’ve certainly had a lot of positive stories where students from different cultures, who have been able to use their language with a new family… or needed help settling a child, and it gives them a big buzz. So we’ll look quite carefully at placement, where we can make good matches and be better supported, and maybe get guidance of why we do things differently.*

Natalie seemed to be conscious of the stresses placed on ethnic minority students. She showed concern for their emotional well-being and was willing to remove a student from
any placement where she found negative attitudes towards ethnic minority students because of race. Natalie used strong language ‘intolerant and racist’ to describe the attitudes of some Associate Teachers, but accepted that although this behaviour could be unintentional, it was unacceptable and was poor practice. She also makes the observation that ethnic minority students often experience the most effective support in culturally diverse early childhood services. The behaviour of Associate Teachers was discussed by Han (2005), who pointed out that student teachers are often judged by their Associate Teacher, without taking into account their background, culture and experience. Han cites Hall (1996) when referring to the influence of practicum on the development of teachers’ identities. Han (2005) found that ethnic minority students learned to adapt to situations where their backgrounds are treated dismissively, but that it appeared to take around five years.

Keogh et al. (2006) discussed the role of Associate, or supervising teachers with students on practicum placements. They noted that the ‘expert - novice’ relationship of the traditional supervisory role could be disempowering for the student, preferring a mentoring relationship instead. They also found that the Associate Teacher could guide ‘good’ practice, using their experience in a more supportive way for students than the more formal supervisory role. Natalie spoke about the positive outcomes for students when they are supported to make a contribution to their practicum centre. In particular, she refers to the increased confidence and self-esteem of students who are able to find a role that uses their cultural knowledge and experience. Her reference to students using their cultural knowledge to support families provided a positive strategy for student teachers to use. However, for this to occur, the student would need to feel confident and empowered to engage with the family. The data show the significance of a positive and supportive Associate Teacher, especially during placements in the first year, giving the student teacher the opportunity to gain confidence. Thus, Natalie suggests that the Associate Teacher is the key to creating an effective practicum placement, which can help a student to understand the pedagogies taught in New Zealand.
Julie, a student from China expressed her thoughts about the importance of Associate teacher support:

*I think it’s that the associate teacher is quite important if they can tell you something, because not all associate teachers spend time with you, they’re really busy,*

J: *so you don’t feel that you can ask*

Julie: *Yeah, got no chance, they’re always rushing, you know, no time, probably it’s my culture too, if they’re on lunch I don’t feel that I should go and ask, because it’s their time*

J: *Mind you, they’re getting paid at least $10 a day!*

Julie: *But I don’t know that in my first practicum.*

As a student teacher, Julie appeared to be conscious that she was a guest in the practicum centre. She remarks that she tried to be careful not to annoy, or interrupt her Associate Teacher, perhaps showing her respect and / or nervousness. However, she was also aware that she needed support, but felt uncomfortable about asking for help. Although Julie had questions and needed support, she tried to avoid upsetting the Associate Teacher because she thought her questions might be seen as a nuisance or disrespectful. Julie’s respect for a senior, qualified teacher possibly reflected her cultural perspectives of the Associate Teacher’s position of authority. She might also have considered her need for support as less important than the Associate Teacher’s work. Furthermore, it appeared that a barrier to communication was created because Julie believed that the Associate Teacher was too busy to have time for her. As Huey-Ling, Gorrell and Taylor (2002) suggest, cultural differences might result in the misinterpretation of verbal and non-verbal communication. Although it is possible that Julie misread the Associate Teacher’s behaviour, her attitude appeared to change when she realised that the Associate Teacher was paid to support her.

Julie’s story emphasises the power that Associate Teachers hold over student teachers. They are responsible for assessing the student against criteria set by the teacher education provider and thus, hold power over all students in that respect. However, as
Julie’s narrative suggests, because they represent the discourses of the dominant cultural majority, some Associate Teachers use this as a power position over ethnic minority students.

Niuean student, Beth, told me about a third year practicum experience where her Associate Teacher seemed unsupportive:

…but she’s getting me to do this task [setting up the outside area]…she’s got to remember I’m only a student and I can’t look after the children by myself, and she’s sending the children – about 30 children outside, and I thought, this is not right, I can’t stay with these children. So I called to this other girl [a teacher] and I asked are you coming outside, and she said no, ‘I’m doing this’. And I can’t find the Associate Teacher to ask her. So I thought never mind, she must be testing me. I’ll just work with them. I know it’s wrong for me…

These data suggest that Beth felt compromised and unsupported during her practicum. She was aware that by being in sole charge of 30 children, she was breaching the New Zealand Early Childhood Regulations and felt additional isolation and stress when another teacher refused to help her. However, Beth thought that the situation might be a test, so she seemed to take a pragmatic approach and became decisive. By interpreting her Associate Teacher’s behaviour as a test of her skills, it is possible that this was Beth’s way of making sense of a challenging experience. However, it might also indicate her perception of the Associate Teacher’s powerful position. Furthermore, Beth’s belief that there might be hidden tests of her competence indicated poor communication between herself and the Associate Teacher and showed a lack of trust. This also reflected the power dynamics that can potentially occur when the values and beliefs of minority communities contradict those of the dominant mainstream. Thus, Beth appeared to feel that she needed to comply with her Associate Teacher in order to complete her practicum, even though it caused her to feel uncomfortable. This also indicates the challenges faced by ethnic minority student teachers as they internalise and deliberate competing political and conceptual debates about social justice, equity
and difference. Patrick (2010) argues that such conceptual negotiations are key components during the process of constructing professional knowledge.

Practicum experiences appear to be important in constructing pedagogical understandings and can provide a link between theory and practice. However, similar to Santoro’s (1999) study of overseas-born secondary school student teachers, my data suggest that practicum can be stressful if associate teachers are not aware of their understandings of teaching practice.

6.5 Conclusion
This chapter has explored a number of issues faced by student teachers during practicum placements. The data have revealed that whilst ethnic and cultural minority student teachers were learning about New Zealand early childhood practices, they needed support from lecturers and Associate Teachers to understand the relationship between theory and practice. Hence, by carefully placing ethnic minority student teachers, teacher education providers can increase the likelihood of culturally sensitive support.

Some overseas-born students have found that practicum is valuable in providing opportunities to link theory to practice. However, several students experienced challenges because they were confused by the differences between their understandings of teaching and the practices they saw in New Zealand early childhood centres. Thus, effective preparation would help students to understand the practices they will see and they would more easily understand the relationship between theory and practice. Data showed that students could find it difficult to build pedagogical understandings by observing teaching. However, the role of the Associate Teacher is significant in supporting students to make sense of the practice that they observe.

In Chapter 7, I will conclude the data analysis with data showing how students’ new understandings as teachers were shaped.
Chapter 7: Developing New Understandings of Teaching in New Zealand

7.1 Introduction

For each of the student participants in this study, there have been significant events or strategies that have contributed to them successfully completing their teacher education course and that have shaped their understandings of teaching in New Zealand. Data show that students’ understandings were shaped by forming relationships, motivation and constructing teacher identities.

7.2 Forming Relationships

Relationships were found to be significant for most participants in this study. Some found that forming relationships within their cohort was difficult because of differences in cultural understandings. Similarly, differences in cultural understandings about student / lecturer relationships also meant that participants were reluctant to communicate with lecturers or seek clarification about course material.

Hsu (2005) claims that when student teachers receive inadequate help, problems such as depression, anxiety or sleep disturbances can occur. She states, “Student teaching should not be a ‘sink or swim’ experience” (p. 316). However, several participants in this study have experienced times of extreme difficulty, but all ultimately formed relationships and found support that helped to keep them going. Thus, making friends with other students in their class was a defining event for many student participants. Hsu (2005) and Walsh and Elmslie (2005) identified friendships within student cohorts, as important in increasing the likelihood of student success. Kaito, a student teacher from Japan commented:

I guess I made a few friends in my class and, yeah, so I know I used to hate to come to school, but after that I really liked to come to school…

Kaito had told me that he was the only male student in his year and the only Japanese person in the teacher education department, for much of his study. This is likely to have
created challenges, because no other students spoke his native language, or shared a male perspective. His comment shows a marked contrast between hating and really liking school, with making friends appearing to be the catalyst. It is likely that making friendships within his cohort would have provided him with social and emotional support. This is consistent with the findings of Hsu (2005), who claimed that the support provided by tertiary institutions or lecturers does not meet all the needs of student teachers.

Fijian student, Talei, emphasised the value she found in having a friend.

One thing I learned at polytech is that it really helps to have a friend. I don’t know how people find friends at universities because the classes are often huge…

J: So you think the smaller class-size makes it easier

Talei: I would – this is for myself – I think it must be an advantage, because sometimes for us it’s a challenge to study. Most of our class they were young ones, Kiwis mostly and they thought they knew it all. We were mothers and didn’t fit in at first. They seemed to know how to do the assignments and for us that was a challenge, so finding a friend that we could work together with made a huge difference, Janet. So me and Rita, we were both from Fiji, we pulled each other through…and it made it so much easier to speak in our own language when we worked together.

In referring to class size, Talei suggests that the institution where she studied had smaller student cohorts than might be found at a university. Although it is likely that Talei could have found a friend in the larger cohort of a university, she appeared to have been comfortable in the smaller class and attributes this to making it easier to form relationships. Her friendship with a student who shared her language and culture seemed to be important to Talei because she found that using her native language and understandings made it easier to study. As McLeod (2001) suggests, this is pivotal in linking the homeland to the current situation.

Talei suggests that it was important for her to have a friend who was of similar age and life-stage, a need that was possibly emphasised because she felt different from the
young, New Zealand-born students. Perhaps because they shared similar life-styles and cultures, having a Fijian friend seemed to create a reciprocal, supportive relationship. It is likely that forming a supportive friendship gave Talei and her friend a sense of belonging, which did not appear to be the case with other students in their cohort. This is also evident in her use of the collective noun ‘us’, suggesting that although she considered that they had greater difficulties with the programme than some other students, they were able to support each other and completed their course successfully.

Talei suggests that she found it difficult to relate to the New Zealand-born students. She seemed to feel othered by the students and found them arrogant. It may be that as mature Fijian women, Talei and her friend were accustomed to young people being respectful of their knowledge. According to Sauvao et al. (2000), it is the cultural practice of most Pacific nations for younger people to be respectful of the knowledge of their elders because knowledge has traditionally been transmitted orally by the older generation. As a senior woman in her community, Talei appeared to be uncomfortable with feeling unable to be seen as a leader and role model for the younger students. It is likely that her gendered identities as a Fijian woman would be compromised (Sauvao, 2000). As bell hooks (1989) suggests, non-Western understandings of what it is to be a woman are rarely considered in Westernised communities. Thus, it could have been challenging for Talei to find that the young students considered her less knowledgeable and competent than they. Furthermore, although Talei and her friend believed that they struggled with the assignments and that the young New Zealanders found the work easy, this might not have been accurate, but it was her perception.

I asked Naomi, a student from the Cook Islands, how she overcame the difficulties she found early in her programme. She told me:

_I made relationships with the students, they help a lot by us talking together and group work and by showing me how to go about the writing out, note taking…’coz I never learned that back home. We don’t do much of writing, but talking and doing things, but writing never. It’s just now and again, if we’re working with the children. But over here other students, the talking and the group work, they showed me how_
to go about it, and if I’m talking right, if it doesn’t go along with what we’re discussing, they ask me questions, pull me back onto the right path that we’re going on. And I think that helps me to change my mind, keep on going

Group work appeared to have been helpful for Naomi because it provided opportunities to form relationships with other students. Consistent with the findings of Margetts and Nolan (2008), through the sharing of other students’ knowledge, Naomi found support to construct new understandings. Naomi appeared to accept the help and guidance of other students, despite the fact that most were considerably younger than her. Similar to Talei, as a mature woman, Naomi would have been accustomed to being shown respect for her knowledge. This suggests that accepting assistance would have been a difficult step to take, requiring a significant change of attitude. Whilst being an indication of her commitment to achieving her goal, it also appeared to become a coping strategy.

Although Naomi explains that the support of the other students helped her to remain in the programme, it seems likely that she also learned to change her thinking about ways to learn. This appeared to increase her confidence and self-belief. This is consistent with the findings of Lan and Frank (2002), whose Asian student participants also found that they needed to be able to change their thinking before they could progress with acquiring new understandings. Although Lan and Frank’s respondents reported that the transition seemed to take five years, Naomi had perhaps made an important move by accepting that such a transition was necessary for her to be able to succeed.

Some participants found that working through their programme with an existing friend, made their study easier. For example Beth, a student from Niue, consistently uses the term ‘we’ in her narrative. She shared all her practicum placements with her friend. This is a practice recommended by Walsh and Elmslie (2005), who suggest that the support of a peer can enhance the practicum experience, removing the isolation and increasing empowerment. Walsh and Elmslie suggest however, that the practicum partners should be selected carefully and agreed to by both students. As recommended by Margetts and Nolan (2008), using a collaborative approach to learning can strengthen students’ critical awareness of their understandings, thus increasing their depth of learning.
7.3 Motivation

According to McClelland (1985), the line of distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be quite blurred because the gratification associated with achievement from an activity relating to others may also offer personal satisfaction. This means that an extrinsically motivated action can become a reward in itself. Thus, when the goal is interwoven with personal ambition, such as gaining a qualification for improved family income, the motivation can equally be extrinsic. Most participants in this study were women from collectivist cultures, where the well-being of the community, family group and/or society is given priority over the interests of the individual (Ratner & Lumei, 2003). Thus they were motivated by gaining their teaching qualification to support their community and/or family. However, they also indicated that they found a great deal of personal reward in their achievements.

Data indicated that participants found it was important for them to keep focussed on their reason for studying. Therefore, maintaining an awareness of the factors that motivated them appeared to be significant in maintaining students’ determination to succeed. Mele, a student from Samoa explained how she realised that she was likely to succeed:

*Oh, the 3rd year, I felt that I had the ability to be a teacher. When I go out on practicum I expected myself to do something to show that I am a teacher, and also in class I felt like...not just to finish the year, I felt like, finish this course with a lot of knowledge to become a good teacher. So my challenge was how can I become a good teacher, how can I use the knowledge I have and use it to become a good teacher for the children and my community?*

Mele showed a great deal belief in her ability to be a really good teacher and determination to succeed. However, Fa’afoi and Fletcher (2001) suggest that Pasifika student teachers are often reluctant to promote their knowledge or skills. Thus, rather than showcase her knowledge, Mele’s approach was to prove to herself that she was competent, rather than being concerned about the opinions of others. She appeared to be motivated by her potential to make a contribution to children’s education and was
therefore, thinking of the community rather than her own interests. By using her motivation, Mele seemed to focus on continually strengthening her performance, proving that she could achieve at a high level and make an effective contribution to the community. Mele also seemed to perceive the knowledge she was gaining through her course to be a gift that she could offer the community. Weedon (1997) referred to women being marginalised because their community expects them to undertake roles generally perceived by many societies, as care-giving. However, Mele was motivated to contribute to her community in ways that reflected her gendered expectations as a Samoan woman and appeared comfortable with these decisions and proud of what she felt she could achieve. The importance of this, according to Zerbe Enns, et al. (2004), is often overlooked by Western societies, which might place greater value on individualistic goals. According to Vaioleti (2000), Mele’s motivation and goals were consistent with Samoan values, which regard knowledge as something to be shared within the community.

Having reflected on Mele’s narrative, I recorded in my journal that her story illustrates the influence of sociocultural understandings in shaping different perspectives and worldviews. According to Causey, Thomas and Armento (2000), it is a behaviour common to Anglo-Celtic, middle class teachers to think that the hegemonic mainstream, Anglo-Celtic perspectives are relevant to everyone. In particular, it appears that many teachers are unaware that different concepts of feminism exist and thus, they can be unaware of the importance of communal perspectives in shaping the roles of women and the importance of being able to contribute to the family and community. Mele seemed proud and confident because she felt comfortable within her own cultural contexts and gender roles and that she could use her achievements to support her community. Therefore, to incorporate different understandings and avoid assuming that every woman holds similar understandings of feminism, it seems necessary for Anglo-Celtic teachers / lecturers to broaden their understandings of the role of gender and cultural identities.
Contributing to the community appeared to provide several participants with satisfaction. They were therefore, highly determined to complete their teacher education programmes. Naomi told me:

We are shy people, that sort of thing I have to put behind me, and I have to hide it I mean, not show that I was shy, but I don’t want to be a quitter, I’ve always been a go-ahead sort of person, so I thought, why give up, who else is going to help…what I was looking for, for my people, for my community, that was the whole purpose why I trained again ...so I thought I’d just go ahead and see how it goes. I didn’t expect to get through it.

Naomi’s passion for her community provided her with strong motivation. Undertaking the programme and continuing, even though she doubted her ability to complete the qualification, indicates a high level of commitment. Furthermore, apart from not wanting to let the community down, she appeared resolved to not let herself down, as this would have affected her family.

By characterising Cook Island people as shy, Naomi suggests that she would feel uncomfortable drawing attention to herself, or engaging in self-promoting activity. This could mean that to achieve her community goals, she had to over-ride characteristics that she saw as part of her ethnicity and culture. Naomi appeared to maintain her focus on her community goal, as this provided her with a powerful source of motivation. She combined this with some of her values and beliefs, such as persistence, commitment and diligence, which she identified as strengths, therefore seeing these as resources to help her to reach her goals. Naomi was aware of her place in the community, realising that she has a leadership role on which others will be relying.

Several participants in this study were parents who were undertaking teacher education to support their family. However, some were also aware that they were putting pressure on the family during their course, especially Li, who left her husband and daughter in China. As most were female (only one male), data revealed several examples of the female role as the caregiver. This was particularly evident in participants’ references to
their family life. Simonton (1998) suggested that traditionally, women have been socially positioned as caregivers, being expected to fill roles such as caring for young children. Bourdieu (1998) claimed that this can be viewed as a form of symbolic domination, depicting the reproductive role of women and a masculine-contrived structuring of society. However, the female participants' data suggested that they were comfortable and proud of their role, which they perceived as their duty to their family and community.

Beth, a student from Niue, reinforced her sense of duty as a family and community role-model:

*Again I thought well, my children are going to school and how can I push them to go and do their study if I give up this and can’t study. Then they will say ‘why did you give up? Why do we have to go to school?*  
*J: So you then put pressure on yourself…*  
*Beth: Yes, to encourage my children and seeing them go further with their education. I don’t want them to fail; I don’t want myself to fail as well.*  
*J: You want to be that role-model…*  
*Beth: Mmm, so that’s why I carried on with my study, but it is a bit really tough to begin with.*

Beth’s self-perception as a role model for her family was a significant source of motivation. She appeared to be committed to her role as a mother, which also seemed to give her a sense of fulfilment. Beth indicated that she believed it would be an achievement to provide a positive role model for her children and saw this as her responsibility. By persisting, even though she found her study difficult, Beth was demonstrating characteristics that appeared to be important to her. Giving up could have been perceived as hypocritical, which appeared to be unacceptable to her because she wanted to set a precedent of achievement for her children.

Natalie, a teacher education lecturer, noted that her Pasifika students appeared to be under pressure to fulfil the expectations of their communities. However, she also observed that it could provide motivation.
…they [Pasifika students] also have their community’s counting on them and expecting them to do well, and it’s very embarrassing for them to do poorly, and I think that our institution – as I’m sure every Palagi [Samoan term for White European] institution does – inadvertently sets some students up to fail so it’s because… that we are a big, Palagi institution so I think that part of where I try to work is…I really want to try to counteract that and balance it, and even up the power field for them more, and I can’t do that without using a really personal approach.

Natalie suggested that Pasifika students were often compromised by the institutional environment and she seemed very aware of the risk that some students could face because of their cultural responsibilities. The majority of tertiary institutions in New Zealand operate on Western European systems7, thus, Natalie was concerned that Pasifika students could be disadvantaged, and emotionally compromised. She seemed to understand the potential distress, shame and disappointment that failure would cause students within their communities and the additional pressure that this caused. Natalie’s response aimed to reflect her understanding of many Pasifika cultures, by taking a personal approach to communication.

Participants in this study suggested that having trusting, reciprocal relationships with their peers and lecturers had a positive effect on emotional well-being and motivation. Thus, when students realised that they were able to disclose their problems to lecturers and would receive a caring and empathetic response, they appeared to be encouraged.

Inspiring Excellence for Pacific Peoples throughout Tertiary Education: The Tertiary Education Commission’s Pacific Peoples Strategy. 2004 to 2006 and beyond. Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission., have aimed to increase participation and success of the Pacific population in New Zealand, in tertiary programmes. Part of the strategy has focussed on the organisational level of institutions, recommending increased support for students, with community goals and aspirations central to aims and objectives.
7.4 Constructing Teacher Identities

Data showed that the process of constructing positive teacher identities was enhanced when students were supported to understand the contribution that they could make to early childhood. Some students seemed to realise their potential contribution independently, whilst others were inspired through the support of their lecturers or Associate Teachers.

7.4.1 Connectedness

By finding ways to incorporate their cultural values and understandings into their teaching practice, student participants seemed to become more confident as teachers. They appeared to find that connecting their cultural knowledge and understandings to their new learning, supported the construction of their identity as a teacher. As Martin and Van Gunten (2002) claim, teacher identity is strengthened when their worldviews are included in the learning environment.

Gibson (1969) suggests that individuals perceive and interpret elements of the environment, to determine its useable and meaningful properties. Furthermore, by adapting the environment and modifying their behaviour in accordance with the environment, individuals can achieve optimum effectiveness from the affordances offered. In this way, a niche is established, reflecting a relationship between the individual and the environment. This means that an environment can represent different things to different people. Many students appeared to take several months, some over two years, before they began to connect their prior knowledge to their new learning and utilise it in their practice. However, once able to find an area of strength, or an understanding that they could incorporate with their new knowledge, their confidence seemed to grow.

Naomi, a student from the Cook Islands, explained how she used her cultural knowledge to create an analogy that assisted her to understand programme planning. She refers to tīvaevae, a traditional Cook Island’s art form that uses pieces of fabric, which are carefully crafted, cut and sewn to create illustrations. To create tīvaevae, the artist must first conceptualise the design, source the fabrics, colours, threads and other
materials necessary. Thus, it is a process that requires careful planning and preparation. She told me:

*I went home* [from practicum]. *I remember something, how I was taught to make tīvaevae. That only came into my mind when my associate explained to me things, like just how I was taught to make tīvaevae and I went home and I looked through the bits and pieces my mother left for me, like how we do like turtle cutting, how we were taught, and I start doing this and that they go step by step, and I say ‘that’s what my lecturer was saying’…and then I do the whole thing right through, and this is why the plan is, and it comes out to a whole pattern, and I thought if I have to teach children how to write, like literacy, I have to get the resources, and what resources do I need, and how I’m going to use the resources, and now I understood the planning, and I’d been getting nowhere…so now I fully understood about the planning, some silly way of going about it…*

Frustrated by her inability to make sense of programme planning, Naomi reflected on her cultural knowledge and made links from this to her Associate Teacher’s explanation. By reflecting on her own childhood learning, she seemed to find a way to weave her past with her present. Thus, the approach used to teach her the complex task of making tīvaevae made sense to her in the context of planning for children’s learning.

Naomi’s reflections were consistent with the recommendations of Fa’afoi and Fletcher (2001), who suggested that making links between personal learning and cultural identities could strengthen learning and support the construction of a positive teacher identity. Nolan (2008) found that a process of guided reflection was helpful to support student teachers’ reflections about their understandings. She found that when students were given support to express their knowledge, ideas or understandings, they began to think at a more critical level and strengthened their learning process. Naomi’s reflections appeared to enable her to identify herself as a competent teacher and learner. This suggests that making connections between new learning and existing knowledge and understandings can support students to make sense of learning material and concepts.
Naomi continued to make links to her childhood, relating learning theory to practices she was familiar with:

*Sometimes I think about the theories like Piaget and I think about my grandmother. If I come across Piaget I always think about my grandmother and how she looked after us, sitting down and talking to me, and she always showed me how to look after myself, and how to use fresh coconut juice to make my hair soft. I never thought about putting it into my practice…so the life over here might be in a different way, but using that might be a model for me, to go ahead and participate and give to the others [parents at her early childhood centre] in a different way,*

Naomi appeared to realise that she had isolated her own cultural knowledge from her new learning, as she had considered it to be of little relevance to her course. Although she recognised the importance of her grandmother’s instruction in Cook Island society, Naomi began to contextualise her new skills and knowledge about teaching and learning, applying socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1962). Although she may have confused this with Piaget’s cognitive theory (Piaget, 1952), the concepts of the theory made sense to her. Vygotsky (1962) suggested that through language and culture, experienced adults educate children in the ways of their society, thereby ensuring that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in their community. Vygotsky also claimed that to be effective, learning and teaching should be culturally relevant. By appreciating how she had been taught, Naomi could incorporate her cultural way of knowing into her new learning. She appeared to recognise that by actively involving her in the learning, her grandmother applied the knowledge to something relevant and useable, which is the strategy that she used to reinforce her new learning. Language is also an important part of Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory and Naomi referred to the significance of her grandmother sitting down and talking to her, showing her the things she needed to know. Having connected her cultural knowledge and understandings to her role as a teacher, Naomi appeared to gain the confidence to share her knowledge with the parents in her community.
Participants told me of different ways that they had incorporated aspects of their cultural selves into their practice. Each expressed that this had given them increased confidence. For example, Li found that introducing children to her stories from her native China was fascinating to them. This enabled her to make relationships and brought something of herself into her teaching practice. Similarly, Kaito taught children some songs in his Japanese language. He particularly mentioned teaching ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’ in Japanese. Both these student teachers found it empowering to bring their own knowledge into their teaching. Kaito also spoke of introducing his songs to a curriculum class late in his second year and Li used some of her Chinese stories as the basis for a children’s literacy presentation to her class. By effectively incorporating their knowledge into the mainstream curriculum, not as a novelty, but as a naturally occurring factor, Kaito and Li countered the concept described as ‘ideological incongruence’ (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). Thus, they were able to connect their cultural understandings and knowledge to their role as a teacher.

Samoan student, Mele, said:

*Sometines I did have the chance when I was doing my writing, to bring in my own understandings, like relating my understanding to who I am so like relating to the theories and having that connection with that.*

Mele seemed to realise the importance of being able to incorporate her prior knowledge with her new knowledge. By bringing her culture into her work, she appeared to be connecting her new knowledge and culturally constructed worldviews. This is consistent with the findings of Hilliard et al. (2004), who claimed that when cultural identities are affirmed, confidence and identities as teachers can be strengthened. It appeared that the participants in this study began to perceive themselves as competent teachers once they had developed a connectedness between their new and prior understandings. The concept of connection appeared very significant to Mele, indicating ownership of her new learning and its application. Her thoughts about incorporating her cultural understandings to her learning also demonstrated that she had engaged in some depth of thought about her identity and how she could make sense of educational theory.
Julie, a student from China, reflected on her life experience to strengthen her teaching practice:

*In my third year I was doing my action research and I notice a little boy from Somalia, who seemed to get into trouble a lot. So yeah, I thought I’d work with him…So I work with him thinking about how I could communicate, yeah, and have him join in also to play with the other children.*

J: So what sort of strategies did you use?

Julie: I think about how I learned to understand what people are meaning when I go places that I don’t understand the language very well. I think that using music is a good place to start, like expression with dance and movement and instruments. Now I think that I can do this well and I can help children who don’t communicate well, yeah. I learn some words of his language from his mum, too.

Like Naomi, Julie thought about her own learning and the processes that she used that she could adapt to her new situation. She demonstrated empathy with a child from a different culture by reflecting back to her own experience, noting his behaviour and relating this to his social isolation. As Julie had experienced the challenges of communicating in unfamiliar cultures and languages, she appeared to be aware of the child’s difficulties in playing with other children. Using her own experience, she saw that expressive forms of communication could enable the child to contribute to the group. Thus, by using inclusive strategies, such as learning Somali words and involving his mother, she validated the child’s language and family, showing that these were important and had a place in his early childhood environment. However, Julie was also able to validate her own experience, acknowledging that she had become a competent communicator.

In many early childhood teacher education programmes, students work in clusters with lecturers who are familiar to them. Hence, relationships are formed, particularly where lecturers visit practicum placements. In such situations, lecturers might become aware of students’ strengths and interests and personal characteristics. As a lecturer, Karen
noticed the benefits of student teachers making connections between new and existing knowledge and understandings, during practicum placements. She would therefore attempt to bring this to the attention of the Associate Teacher. Karen explained how she supported ethnic minority student teachers to feel comfortable when beginning a placement.

*It’s like – well, sometimes the associates seem to…you know…make assumptions about students, especially the Pasifika ladies. I’ve started taking the students out to meet the associates before they start the practicum. It seems to make them more relaxed, like they’ve had the formal introduction and feel a bit safer, I guess. But then I try and persuade the student to bring something that they’re strong in, into the placement and I discuss it with the associate. Mostly it’s much more effective because I think they’re uncomfortable bringing their skills in – like they’re showing off or something.*

Concern for the success of student teachers appeared prominent in Karen’s thoughts and she seemed to apply her understanding of Pasifika cultures and aimed to incorporate the values and beliefs of her Pasifika students in her approach to supporting them. Karen appeared upset that Pasifika student teachers might be prejudged by Associate Teachers who were unaware of their specific cultural communication practices. She suggested that when Pasifika students became stressed by the Associate’s response, their performance was likely to be impaired, thus worsening the situation. Through making a formal introduction to their Associate Teacher, Karen believed that she could give Pasifika students a comfortable and supportive beginning to their practicum. She considered that students might feel insecure when having to introduce themselves without someone familiar to support them. Fa’afoi and Fletcher (2001) suggest that it is a customary Pasifika practice to have someone as a support person in such challenging situations therefore, by incorporating traditional cultural practices, students would experience an element of familiarity and be culturally affirmed.

As Hawk, Cowley and Hill (2002) point out, Pacific people are often reluctant to show their strengths to people who are unfamiliar to them. Karen was attempting to balance
this with the Western expectation that student teachers will contribute to the programme and autonomously provide learning experiences for children. Her encouragement for Pasifika students to contribute a teaching resource, skill or learning experience in an area of their strength, supported students to meet this expectation in a culturally appropriate way.

Holly had been teaching in an early childhood setting for approximately one year at the time of the interviews. I asked her if she liked the New Zealand way of early childhood education and whether she had ever wanted to implement Chinese ways of teaching.

Yeah I do [like the New Zealand teaching practice], I really I can’t imagine if I were in China a child could play around in childcare like this. They always have to go and study. When you are little you are still learning numbers and writing … I suppose it’s different for me, but I can’t just go my way. I can’t put my Chinese way into here. But no, I don’t really think that way, because as I said, I didn’t learn the Chinese way of childcare, but I do my learning here so I learn here’s way. But probably if you let me go back to China now I could not teach children. You know, because I don’t know how to get everybody to sit down nicely, so it would probably be too hard for me, because I don’t know how people do early childhood in China. Probably people who have learned early childhood education in China can compare it, but for me I can’t compare with learning here because for me I get all my knowledge from here.

Holly’s comments reveal a paradox because she appears to perceive child-centred practice as a positive pedagogy, yet would not consider implementing these practices in China. She also suggests that she probably could not teach effectively in China, because effective teaching in China would involve practices that she had not been taught in her teacher education course. Although Holly claims that she did not learn Chinese early childhood teaching practice prior to living in New Zealand, she considered it inappropriate to bring her Chinese ways to New Zealand. This suggests that she was highly influenced by Chinese practices for early childhood education, probably from her own upbringing, but was unaware of its effect on her attitudes and understandings.
Holly suggests that if teaching in China, she would expect children to sit down and learn in a formal classroom setting, adding the adjective “nicely”, implying that this would be appropriate behaviour for young children. This was also apparent when she spoke about needing to learn strategies for teaching children in China and her reference to how people “do” early childhood in China, because she had learned early childhood practice in New Zealand. Hence, in Holly’s understandings, Chinese culture seemed to exist separately from the practices she had learned in New Zealand. This indicates that she made little transfer of learning from her education as a teacher and limited connectivity of learning between her prior understandings and new learning.

In my journal I recorded that this excerpt from Holly’s narrative demonstrates the contradictions in her understandings of teaching and learning. She appears to have been positioning herself between two conflicting paradigms that each required her to think and behave differently as a teacher. As a New Zealand student, she understood that she should support children to explore and learn within child-centred environments. However, when thinking as a teacher in China she seemed influenced by the discourses that were associated with the Chinese mainstream, thus demonstrating the power of the paradigms that shaped her as a learner and caused her to develop conflicting teacher identities.

To increase understandings of their teaching practice, critical action research is recommended by Orland-Barak (2005). She claims that one of the benefits of action research is that it offers a systematic approach to analysing teaching, as it allows practitioners to see what is actually happening. Furthermore, it strengthens teachers’ and students’ understandings about effective praxis, requiring the acquisition of important dispositions, such as taking responsibility, using initiative and exploring their own actions. With appropriate support, teachers and students can learn a great deal about their practice. Day (2004) argues that to ensure student teachers gain an in-depth understanding of praxis and a high level of self-perception, teacher educators need to move beyond traditional theory/practice models. He suggests that teacher education combines the ‘head (intellect), the hand (actions) and the heart (emotion). As teaching
involves so much of self, identities and experience, emotion becomes a powerful force, especially when combined with past experience. Hence, students need lecturer support as they form new understandings of praxis that make sense to them. This appears to work most successfully when students interweave theory with past experience and new knowledge, allowing past and present understandings to merge seamlessly.

The data have indicated the importance of a student teacher finding something that they can contribute during teaching practice. It has also indicated that students can sometimes need support and guidance with identifying and utilising their strengths, possibly because they are unable to see any relevance in their knowledge or skills. Once this occurs, there can be a considerable increase in confidence and self-belief and performance. Student participants in this study have all experienced a great deal of change and have learned to adapt to new knowledge, different ways of thinking and worldviews. According to Han (2005), learning to adapt to new environments and ways of thinking is an important task in the process of becoming an effective teacher for ethnic minority student teachers. These are significant steps in constructing a positive teacher identity. Thus, I wanted to investigate how ethnic minority student teachers adapt to new pedagogies and practices as they construct their teacher identities. Student participant, Naomi, spoke about her educational experience in the Cook Islands.

*I said to myself, tutors can’t read your mind, ‘Naomi’ how are they to know what you don’t know…that’s how I talked to myself, when I looked at my assignments, I look at the comments, I love it, I love the comments, and I ask questions to myself ‘how come you don’t know that’ because you don’t talk…that’s a huge barrier to me, not talking, …er… why I’m saying this, for us women in the class we can’t talk, we are there just to hear, to take in, not to tell what we don’t know, we can’t do that…[in the Cook Islands].*

Naomi appeared to adapt to the classroom practice of New Zealand by understanding her own attitudes and reflecting on her past experience. In particular, she reflected about her reluctance to ask questions in class. She had understood that learning
involves reciprocal communication and valued the feedback she received on her work. Naomi realised that lecturers expected her to seek clarification, but she continued to behave according to her upbringing. It is probable that she would have seen other students asking questions and contributing their ideas in class and was aware that this was a practice encouraged and supported by lecturers. By describing her prior experience as a barrier, Naomi indicated that her upbringing had continued to influence her learning behaviour because as a Cook Island woman, she had learned not to ask questions in class. Thus, the contradictions between her culturally constructed understandings of learner behaviour and the hegemonic mainstream expectations appeared to create considerable conflict for Naomi, as she negotiated the powerful discourses from her past and present. However, through her reflective processes, she realised that the passive learning that she had experienced in her past was not relevant to her current learning. She commented that as women, they were in class to listen and accept the teacher’s knowledge and not to ask about what they did not know. Naomi’s reflections helped her to understand that in New Zealand, lecturers regarded interactions as part of the learning processes and wanted her to communicate so they could guide her. Thus, by reviewing her approach to learning, Naomi was taking a major step towards incorporating a different pedagogical paradigm.

Asking questions and contributing ideas was a significant modification in her behaviour. I asked Naomi how she achieved this:

*That’s how we were taught; you know I couldn’t ask questions. That is very strong in my mind. It’s very hard to get away from it...That’s why it’s so hard. I can’t ask questions....the first 6 months, I didn’t know where I was...I mean, I was over here learning, but in my mind kept going back, reflecting on how I was taught and the things I went through...and sometimes I compare things on how it was and what I was learning; and sometimes I noticed the difference and for me, I’ve chosen to go ahead with this study to make a difference. I don’t want my grandchildren to go through how I had to learn and my children have been through my way of teaching how I was, so I don’t want that to happen to my grandchildren. So when I learned from here, the study I went home and started practicing on my son, the one living*
with me, and the first day he got a shock, the first day when I asked him a question he said ‘where did that come from, mum?’ I never did that before. I thought I’d better try it out and see how it goes. It was hard. I didn’t know how the words came out of my mouth… That’s just me all over again, I look at those theories and I say, I have to be a child again to go through that …It’s hard.

Naomi appeared to feel a sense of cultural dislocation because although she was physically present in New Zealand, she was thinking through her Cook Island understandings and seemed to be caught in a gap between her existing knowledge and new learning. This meant that she was attempting to make sense of her new learning, but found it difficult to connect it to her existing understandings. She therefore found it difficult to put child-centred pedagogy into practice, especially to ask children questions. Although Naomi indicates that she understood child-centred pedagogy and accepted the benefits of using open-ended questions and promoting children’s thinking skills, the pedagogies she was being taught were very different from her past experiences.

McWilliams (2008) opens her paper about teaching and learning in culturally diverse contexts with the statement:

Our teaching and learning habits are useful but they can also be deadly. They are useful when the conditions in which they work are predictable and stable. They are deadly if and when the bottom falls out of the stable social world in and for which we learn (p. 263).

McWilliams’ statement defines the positions of many of my student participants, as the pedagogy they encountered was quite different from their previous experience. Therefore, the somewhat abstract approach where theory is provided and extended with some classroom practical work appears to be ineffective with student teachers who are used to more instructional pedagogies.

Suggesting that her new learning was like returning to childhood, indicates the significance of the changes Naomi was experiencing. This was perhaps because she
was going back to the basics of learning, also implying that she saw young children as an empty vessel to fill with knowledge and perceived herself in the same way. This possibly reflects her perception of her prior knowledge as irrelevant, needing to be replaced rather than built on. Naomi was very aware of her own behaviour and how the cultural constraints she felt created a barrier to new learning. However, as a result of her self-awareness, she made a considerable commitment to change her behaviour and construct different understandings of teaching practice. It is possible that because she drew her motivation from her family and community, Naomi felt safer practicing using open-ended questions with her family. However, her son’s response indicated that she had made considerable changes in her behaviour. The extent of the changes she made was evident when she told me:

_It was a struggle for me Janet…the last year was the best for me. I came half-way out of the past…_

Naomi indicates that she realised that she had increased her understanding of theory and practice and thus, was able to form a positive perception of her development as a teacher. Although she had made some significant moves towards adapting to the pedagogies and practice that she had been taught, she acknowledged that her past continued to influence the way she applied new learning.

Mele, a student teacher from Samoa, indicated that critical reflection had a significant influence in her adaptation to the expectations of teachers in New Zealand.

_…sometimes I sit down and think about the theories and the things that we do. Because we already have children and we have our way of bringing them up. So when I talk about changing the way I think, it is like looking at children, their development and why they behave in certain ways…which is something that we always want to stop, stop them from experiencing and developing and things like that. We as parents are putting in all the behaviours that a person needs. It’s good in other ways as a parent to discipline children, but the children also have the right to experiences, that’s something I was looking at. There was a bit of disagreement_
between me and my husband, because I was doing the course and he sees me change the way I talk about what I learn here, and sort of like say why did we start it that way. Why didn’t we start in a different way if you know there’s another way?

Mele’s accommodation of New Zealand teaching practices seemed carefully considered and occurred within the constructs of her culture. By thinking about her family, she incorporated her past with her new learning and her role as a parent. Her reflection shows that she was aware of the implications of crossing cultural borders and traditions. Not only was she focussing on changing her own practices as a parent, she was trying to influence the parenting styles within her household and was teaching her husband different strategies to use with their children.

Observing the development and learning of her own children offered Mele the opportunity to balance cultural tradition and child-centred practice, allowing her to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of both. Like Talei from Fiji and Naomi from the Cook Islands, Mele spoke of the controlling and directive strategies that were practiced in her own upbringing and the continuity of this in her own parenting practices. By questioning her traditional understandings, Mele appeared to critically evaluate her values. This could have guided her critical reflection to assess the aspects of her cultural practices that were important and those that were possibly reproduced unconsciously. This was further illustrated when Mele spoke about allowing her children to solve problems.

Yes looking, knowing how, when it comes to solving problems around the house with my own children, when my children were little and before I started the course, I thought I was the source of all the problem-solving. I can solve all the problems, my children don’t have a voice when it comes to solving problems, but from that, after that first year I started to listen to my children and let them speak. That was a difference culturally to my own understanding because you know the way we were both brought up, you just do what your parents tell you, you just do as you’re told and you don’t have a voice. But it’s changed the way I do this.
I think it was the relationship with other people was something I learned, and I started to get the idea of what early childhood was all about and I also learned from the teaching and other things, that everybody is different.

Giving her children a voice seemed to have been challenging for Mele, particularly as her husband was initially resistant. However, there also seemed to be a willingness from both of them to explore different ideas. This was perhaps, partly due to Mele’s ability to reflect on her new learning and to make links with her cultural understandings. Through this process, she constructed different understandings of early childhood. Moreover, by using critical reflection, she was able to make sense of the theoretical aspect of teaching.

I documented in my journal that Mele’s account of allowing her children to problem-solve was similar to Naomi’s description of using open-ended questions with her son. Like Naomi, Mele considered herself and her husband to be responsible for their family’s knowledge and had never previously considered allowing children to make decisions, or voice an opinion. These data reflected child-rearing traditions that regard the parent as the authority (Sauvao, et al., 2000). Mara (2005) also discusses traditional Pasifika notions of education and challenges educationalists to incorporate traditional knowledge and cultural understandings with new knowledge, so that Pasifika learners would experience more seamless connections between their cultural understandings and new learning. By integrating her new and traditional understandings with her home and family, Mele appeared to have made sense of her new learning and was in a strong position to construct her teacher identity in a way that seemed meaningful and relevant to her.

Most of the participants in this study required a great deal of commitment and effort to adapt to child-centred pedagogies in New Zealand. It appeared that most participants had to critically reflect on their prior learning and experience to find a way to incorporate past and present, before they could fully accommodate the new learning.
7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed data to identify themes or patterns that have increased students’ chances of success in teacher education programmes by helping them to shape their new understandings of teaching. Several participants in this study have faced many challenges and made huge sacrifices to be able to undertake teacher education. Throughout this, relationships have been shown to be significant in determining student outcomes, contributing to success in several areas of student participants’ experiences. These have included establishing relationships with lecturers and finding strategies for building relationships with children and their families during teaching practice. Most students also valued the support of family and community, which helped to sustain them during challenging times, but also was a critical factor in their motivation. However the most powerful relationships identified, were friendships within their cohort. Most claimed that making friends in their class actually helped them to stay in the programme.

Several participants identified that they had been struggling to learn new material, especially when applying this to practice. However, making links between their prior knowledge and new learning proved instrumental in helping them to understand new concepts and practices. Once student teachers were able to make sense of the new learning by relating it to their existing understandings, they were able to progress more confidently. Hence, by reinforcing the importance of connectedness between cultural understandings and new learning, many students were able to acquire greater confidence and competence in teaching practice. It seemed to be helpful when lecturers and Associate Teachers supported student teachers to use their cultural knowledge and competencies in practicum placements. This appeared to raise their confidence, particularly as some students found it difficult to see how their cultural knowledge and understandings were relevant for New Zealand teaching. However, once they were able to use their skills and knowledge, they seemed to construct positive teacher identities and strengthen their understandings of teaching and learning.

Student teachers were motivated by a number of different factors. Maintaining their motivation for becoming teachers appeared to be important for some participants.
However, this became most effective when lecturers understood students’ motivation and were supportive of it. For many participants, especially women, their cultural and gender identities were reflected in their motivation, because they were undertaking teacher education as a way of contributing to the community, especially Church and family.

Overall, no single factor appeared to be exclusively identifiable as the explanation for participants’ success, as there were a number of factors that students found made a significant difference to their experience. Although making friends was possibly the most common factor, all the topics discussed in this chapter including motivation, constructing identities and forming relationships, assisted students to succeed.

In Chapter 8, I will present my conclusions from this study and make recommendations for teacher education practice.
Chapter: 8 Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

In this study, I have investigated some of the specific challenges that can be faced by overseas-born early childhood student teachers in New Zealand and how these challenges can be effectively negotiated. New Zealand has an increasingly culturally diverse population, yet teacher education continues to be dominated by Anglo-Celtic theories and practices. I have therefore, investigated the tensions between early childhood education practices, knowledges and theories promoted in New Zealand teacher education and those of ethnic minority students who were born and raised outside New Zealand. I have drawn attention to the existing understandings of overseas-born students about teaching and learning and investigated how they are acknowledged and incorporated into the curriculum.

This chapter will discuss the findings of this study and their implications for teacher education policies and practices. I will then make recommendations that could improve the preparation of students for teaching in paradigms that are different from their prior understandings and experiences of education.

8.1 Key findings

This research has highlighted policies and practices in New Zealand early childhood teacher education programmes that can create additional challenges for overseas-born, ethnic minority students because of the assumptions and in some cases, lack of understanding by the hegemonic mainstream about the different perspectives of students. Student participants provided rich, narrative data that portrayed strategies they had found helpful in developing new understandings about teaching and learning. Many of their stories showed that until they found ways to connect their new learning to existing knowledge and understandings in theory and in practice, they sometimes felt marginalised and othered. Data have shown that for effective learning to occur, there needs to be a connection to existing knowledges and understandings. However, for
many students neither lecturers nor Associate Teachers appeared to recognise the challenges faced by many students in making links between new learning and their existing knowledges. Thus, key findings from this study were that differences in social and cultural understandings, values and beliefs about teaching and in learning styles created significant challenges for some students and lecturers. In some cases, this was exacerbated by differences in communication, which often caused misunderstandings to occur. Furthermore, the experiences of some participants, lecturers and students in this study suggest that Associate Teachers often appear to be underprepared to support students whose cultural knowledge and understandings differ from their own and seemed to disregard the possibilities of including different perspectives in their teaching. Considering the multicultural nature of New Zealand communities, this is a concern.

Findings from this study reflect the suggestions of Korthagen (2001) that teachers are resistant to change, particularly when the changes require them to shift from their comfort zone, yet teacher educators expect student teachers whose understandings and prior learning are different from those of the material being taught, to accept and adapt with little support. Thus, it appears that teacher education providers, policy makers and Associate Teachers are reluctant to incorporate understandings and knowledges that might cause changes in thinking and in practice. Although all participants, except one, in this study were women, data showed that ideas about feminism and the roles of women within societies differed significantly. Moreover, this suggests that when ethnic minority students are required to adapt to Anglo-Celtic practices that conflict with their cultural and gendered understandings, hegemonic mainstream discourses can cause the emergence of contested identities. As Foucault (1972) claims, the power of dominant discourses is exposed through pervasive ideas which become ‘embalmed’ as truth and can become internalised to the extent that they are accepted without question. As a reflection of the power of dominant discourses, some student participants told stories that suggested that they had felt marginalised by their classmates because of their cultural values concerning family and community roles and responsibilities.
In an increasingly culturally complex global society, teacher education does not appear to be incorporating the diversity of understandings, beliefs and values represented in society. This has been shown to marginalise some of the participants in this study and exacerbate their learning and development as teachers. As a teacher educator and researcher, it is my contention that those who prepare future teachers, need to develop policy, curricula and determine factors that constitute quality in early childhood teacher education. Teacher educators and policy-makers should be aware of the changes and different perspectives within communities and be responsive to them. Thus, through this study it is my intention to contribute to the literature that can inform and shape the future of teacher education for early childhood teachers.

8.2 Key Implications for Teacher Education Practices and Policies

In this section, I will discuss the ways participants negotiated and made sense of the different practices, knowledge and theory they were taught and the resulting implications for teacher educators. I will argue that by being more inclusive of the different cultural knowledges that students bring to their learning and by increasing their cultural competence in communication and relationships, teacher educators could significantly improve the experiences of ethnic minority student teachers through thinking differently about their teaching practices. I will also contend that changing the thinking of policymakers, so that their decisions might more closely reflect the multicultural nature of New Zealand could significantly improve the relevance of curriculum to ethnic minority students. This could also increase the understandings of all teachers about cultural perspectives that are different from their own.

8.2.1 Making sense of different knowledges, theories and teaching practices

To apply their learning to teaching practice, student teachers need to develop their understandings of theories in an effective and meaningful way. This means that teacher education programmes should consider the theoretical perspectives reflected in their practices and be wary of promoting discourses that solely reflect dominant Anglo-Celtic values and understandings. Practices should provide opportunities for students to incorporate their existing knowledges and understandings and use these as a position
from which to construct new learning. All student teachers are likely to bring their own preconceived ideas of what good teaching looks like, with most having been exposed to a variety of positive and negative teaching role models. Hence, interpretations and application of theory to practice can look very different according to individual knowledges, understandings and experiences. It is therefore, a responsibility of teacher educators to incorporate different perspectives in their teaching, perhaps challenging their own understandings, to reduce the power of dominant discourses and create equitable opportunities for students to construct new knowledge.

Student teacher participants in this study were born and educated in countries where early childhood pedagogies differ considerably from those of Anglo-Celtic New Zealand. During their teacher education courses, the students were introduced to pedagogies, teaching practices and theories that were very different from their prior experience. The learning material they were given generally reflected White Anglo-European perspectives, which many found difficult to relate to. The power of the hegemonic mainstream was such that some participants actively tried to block their existing cultural knowledges and understandings and learn new material without reference to prior learning or experiences. This suggests that different knowledges and understandings were perceived as holding less value than the mainstream perspectives and thus, were not visible in course content or delivery. Students were therefore expected to make sense of the material regardless of their previous experience or existing understandings about teaching and learning. It appears that material is usually presented from White Anglo-European perspectives and if written from different positions, it is generally plainly stated as an ‘alternative perspective’. Consequently, there seemed to be little that would support their new learning and help them to better understand the concepts and practices being taught. This had the effect of undermining what students’ understood as valuable. It was therefore, of particular concern for students and lecturers to find ways of making sense of theory and applying new understandings to practice that seemed culturally appropriate, comfortable and meaningful for students.

This study found that lecturers often assumed that students from non-Western education systems would learn as effectively as New Zealand-born students through the
same delivery methods and learning materials. These assumptions were found to be incorrect and created considerable challenges for overseas-born students who found it difficult to understand the theories and practices being taught, largely because of the unfamiliar teaching practices they experienced. Furthermore, overseas-born students often believed that their New Zealand born classmates were finding the work easy. This reduced their self-esteem and caused them to feel marginalised. Thus, traditional classroom teaching methods, where theory is introduced and followed at a later date with practice, are often ineffective for overseas-born students until they have formed basic understandings of the pedagogies being taught. Teaching by modelling problem-solving, unstructured teaching practices that are appropriate to New Zealand early childhood services was also unsuccessful because students’ understandings of teaching were very different. As a result of this, they were unable to make sense of the practices they observed and were likely to revert to the more familiar practices and understandings that they had previously experienced. Thus, students whose knowledge and experience of teaching is different from the required understandings can need more explicit teaching than New Zealand-born students, in order to construct new understandings of teaching practice. However, when lecturers utilised students’ strengths and related new learning to their prior knowledge and understandings, students appeared more able to make sense of the pedagogies being taught.

Implementing child-centred pedagogies during practicum placements appeared to be particularly challenging for student participants. Most took much of the duration of their teacher education programme to adequately implement the theory and practice expected of them because they were confused about what to do during practica. It also appeared that some Associate Teachers made assumptions about students’ competencies and were dismissive of their cultural knowledges and understandings. Such assumptions were often based on racial stereotypes and contributed to students being reluctant to use their cultural knowledges and skills in their teaching practice. While some student teachers were well supported on practicum, others felt marginalised and were unable to make sense of the teaching practices they observed. However, in some cases, poor initial preparation for teaching practicum served to compound these situations because students arrived not appearing to know what to expect or how to
interact with children, particularly in their first year of study. These findings suggest that teacher education providers should be aware of the understandings of student teachers, prior to practicum placements. Since many overseas-born students, whether international or New Zealand residents, are unfamiliar with early childhood settings in this country, they may not have questions to ask prior to practica because they are unaware of what they need to know. This means that they are likely to require more guidance and support than those born in New Zealand, particularly at the beginning of practica and when placed at different types of early childhood services. Thus, detailed, informative and comprehensive induction and preparation for teaching in New Zealand early childhood settings could significantly improve practicum experiences.

Associate Teachers have a critical role in mentoring, assessment and support while students strengthen their new knowledge and skills during practica. However, it appears that many Associate Teachers are underprepared to provide culturally competent guidance and support for students whose understandings about teaching and learning differ from their own. It also appears that many Associate Teachers have not made shifts in their own thinking or understandings, towards culturally authentic practice, having little knowledge about different cultural values or beliefs about learning. As a consequence of Associate Teachers who have inadequate cultural competence, ethnic minority students can sometimes experience practicum placements that are damaging to their self-esteem and ineffective in improving their knowledge, skills and teaching practices. This can occur when assumptions and generalisations are made about students' knowledges and competencies and when communication between student teachers and Associate Teachers limits opportunities for students to ask questions or make contributions to the programme. This indicates that the knowledge, skills and cultural competencies of Associate Teachers should be reviewed and monitored to improve consistency in the quality of support offered to ethnic minority students and provide more equitable opportunities for students to make links between theory and practice. Although the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) advocates for the cultural contextualisation and meaning-making of learning for all children and their families, it appears that such respectful practice is not always shown to ethnic minority student teachers in practicum. Where this is not
provided, students can find practicum experiences lonely, stressful and even frightening. However, where students are experiencing poor practicum placements, visiting lecturers can significantly ameliorate their stress by recognising and acknowledging their situation. Therefore, visiting lecturers should be aware of and responsive to students’ emotional well-being and provide practical guidance to Associate Teachers where necessary.

To be effective, the support and mentoring offered to students needs to relate to their worldviews, allowing them to feel validated and acknowledged. This means that lecturers and Associate Teachers should model best practice by affirming and respecting the students’ individuality and should provide a supportive environment, where students can feel empowered to apply their skills and competencies. By doing so, students could be better supported to construct understandings of the knowledge, skills and practices they are required to learn.

Although their role is integral to teacher education, the current monitoring of requirements for Associate Teachers is minimal. Current requirements in the curriculum documents of many teacher education programmes specify that Associate Teachers should have completed training for supporting student teachers. Most providers also do provide training. However, the reality is that many providers struggle to find practicum placements for students and do not follow through with the requirement that Associates have completed training. Thus, tighter regulations and increased monitoring of qualified teachers who undertake the responsibilities of supervising and assessing students could improve the quality of support and assessments that students receive. The New Zealand Teachers’ Council is a major stakeholder in monitoring the quality of teacher education programmes and of registered teachers, but is not actively involved in setting or maintaining standards of Associate Teachers. It appears that by taking a more active role in setting and monitoring standards for Associate Teachers, the Teachers’ Council and Ministry of Education could improve the consistency and quality of this role.
8.2.2 Incorporating existing understandings with new knowledge about teaching

Teacher educators can assist ethnic minority student teachers to learn about the child-centred teaching practices taught in New Zealand by providing them with support to construct new learning through their existing understandings. It appears that when these connections are made, students are more likely to understand theories and how to apply them in teaching practice. When ethnic minority students are able to connect their existing knowledge and understandings to new learning, they are also more likely to construct positive identities as teachers and learners. This can increase their confidence to make contributions to class discussions and during practicum placements, which can also enhance their learning processes.

Frequently, the community orientated motivation of non-Western, ethnic minority students is not acknowledged or validated by European New Zealanders. Contributing to the community is often a major incentive for students from collectivist cultures. This can sometimes mean that students have a number of commitments outside their course-work, which can put them under considerable pressure to manage all their duties and complete assignments on time. It can also mean that the students’ goals on graduating are to contribute to the community, rather than to achieve personal success. Such goals and community responsibilities are often misunderstood and dismissed by European New Zealanders because they do not reflect Western feminist perspectives. In particular, student teachers whose gender identities and socially constructed understandings about early childhood teaching differ from those of the hegemonic mainstream are likely to be challenged by the discourses that confront them in class and in practica. For example, in many mainstream early childhood settings, dispositions such as autonomy and independence are highly valued. However, these traits are likely to be understood differently in collectivist cultures where community duties / contributions and interdependence are seen as integral aspects of gender, cultural and teacher identities. Many of the participants in this study were motivated by the contributions they could make through their teaching qualification rather than by personal ambition. Hence, because of the power of the hegemonic mainstream discourses, the expectations of New Zealand teacher education and early childhood
services are that student teachers should demonstrate and foster individualist attitudes and values that might conflict with their own. Such expectations can create contested identities because of the conflict between cultural and gender identities and the influence of hegemonic mainstream discourses on emergent teacher identities.

The concept of professional identity appears to be strongly related to the interplay between cultural and gender identities, professional knowledges and professional actions. These can determine how the teacher will use their knowledges and thus, how they will behave in various situations. Hence, when overseas-born student teachers respond differently from European New Zealanders, they are doing so according to their interpretations of professional and experiential knowledges and ‘self’. This does not appear to be recognised by some lecturers and Associate Teachers. The experiences of some participants, particularly during practica, indicate that they felt othered by Associate Teachers who were not open to different perspectives. When Associate Teachers impose their views, practices, beliefs and values on students and fail to acknowledge the relevance of different understandings, students can feel marginalised. Students placed in situations where they become marginalised, can assume that their cultural knowledges and understandings are “wrong” and thus, feel pressured to accept the dominant cultural understandings without question or critical reflection. Associate Teachers are in powerful positions because they make assessments, passing or failing students on their practica. Furthermore, Associate Teachers can attempt to influence the type of teachers that students could become, potentially placing them in compromising positions that disregard their cultural values, beliefs and knowledges. This can create inequitable situations, where those in the minority are likely to feel undervalued and marginalised because their values, beliefs and knowledge are not represented in the environment.

It would seem that to offer equitable learning opportunities, ethnic minority students might require support and guidance to negotiate and problem-solve challenging situations that arise outside their familiar cultural knowledges. It appears that to make sense of the situations that they might encounter, problem-solving processes that use critical reflection, could ameliorate some of the apparent inequities and stressful
situations where they might feel marginalised. However, until students feel that their cultural knowledge and identities have significance and relevance to their learning, critical reflections that incorporate these understandings, seem unlikely to occur. As Bhabha (1994) claims, even when a person is dislocated from their cultural homeland, sociocultural tools such as values, beliefs, practices and language can reinforce and affirm a positive sense of self that can assist them through adversity or challenge. It appears that when students believe that their values and practices are poorly regarded by others, they can begin to view them as worthless and not draw on them as a platform for constructing new learning. Thus, because they may choose to disregard their cultural beliefs and practices, at least in the context of their new learning, they are without key sociocultural tools that could support them to develop confidence and construct positive teacher identities.

To assist students to use their existing cultural knowledges and understandings, this study has shown that working with a friend who shares the same culture and language can be beneficial. This has been found to increase their self-belief and build confidence because when working together, students seem more likely to incorporate their own cultural understandings, knowledges, beliefs and values into their coursework and reflections.

Communication and relationships have been recurring themes throughout this study, indicating that although not part of the academic programme, they seem to be a key factor in students’ success. Forming positive relationships and friendships appeared to increase participants’ confidence to contribute to the learning environment because they felt accepted. Similarly, when lecturers and Associate Teachers formed positive relationships with students and supported them to incorporate their cultural strengths and knowledges into their teaching, they were more likely to make connections between new and prior knowledge and experiences. Lecturers and Associate Teachers should recognise the importance of student relationships so that they can provide culturally safe and supportive opportunities for students to contribute their thoughts, ideas and understandings in ways that incorporate their cultural knowledges. By providing culturally and emotionally safe learning networks, lecturers can facilitate collaborative
peer learning, where students can increase their understandings about different perspectives, whilst providing opportunities for relationships to develop within the student cohort.

Several participants have suggested that lecturers seemed unfamiliar with the specific cultural values and practices of some ethnic groups. Moreover, lecturers appeared unaware that students might have different understandings of concepts central to teaching, such as the role of the teacher, pedagogies, or childhood. This was also raised as an issue by lecturer participants, who said that although they were committed to doing their best for ethnic and cultural minority students, it was sometimes challenging to convey new concepts to student teachers who were unfamiliar with the problem-based pedagogies commonly used in New Zealand.

Students appeared to feel marginalised when they were unable to see themselves reflected in the material being delivered and practices expected and could not identify with the concepts involved. Many student participants were also challenged because they were unable to understand the knowledge or practices they saw in early childhood settings. This meant they were unable to learn by observing teachers, which is often regarded as part of the learning process during practicum placements. However, when lecturers and Associate Teachers supported participants to link new and existing knowledge, the students were able to contextualise their learning and make it more meaningful. By using teaching practices that actively involved students’ cultural knowledge, skills and understandings, lecturers could strengthen new learning of concepts and understandings, without distancing students from their existing knowledge. Thus, when participants viewed their new learning through their cultural perspectives, they appeared to regard themselves as competent learners and became confident in their teaching. Moreover, in an increasingly multicultural society, teacher education programme content should become more inclusive of different paradigms so that the early childhood community is better informed about other knowledges, understandings and worldviews about teaching and learning. If this were to occur, ethnic minority teachers, students, children and families could be better represented and may have a greater sense of belonging in the early childhood community.
To construct positive professional identities, the cultural identities and understandings of students need to be acknowledged and accommodated within the institution and teaching programme. However, if students’ cultural understandings do not fit comfortably with the institution, whether in the teacher education classroom or the practicum placement, students can feel marginalised. This impacts on learning and in some cases, causes them to feel that they do not belong in teaching. Thus, teacher educators need to support ethnic minority students to construct positive identities as teachers.

8.2.3 Addressing challenges
Interactive teaching practices such as group work can provide useful opportunities for students to share and discuss their understandings and to clarify their thoughts, particularly when they are negotiating the challenges of adjusting to different pedagogies and understandings of teaching and learning. However, until they form understandings of each other’s social and communication practices, some students can feel unable to participate in class or group discussions and even fear being judged by their peers because of cultural differences. This can be exacerbated when students believe that their level of competency in English language is inadequate to enable them to contribute in open discussions with their peers. Thus, overseas-born students might need opportunities to learn about New Zealand social expectations and communication styles, which could make it easier for them to form relationships. Communicating with Associate Teachers during practicum placements can also be challenging, particularly for students who are not familiar with asking questions of their teachers. As a consequence of this, some students can experience poor practicum placements, which are likely to be detrimental to their learning. Thus, it would seem relevant for all teachers to increase their awareness of the different communication styles of cultures within their wider communities. It is likely that multicultural content was not a part of the teacher education programmes undertaken by some long-serving teachers, therefore specific professional learning to increase cultural competencies seems necessary. This could foster deeper understandings of cultural differences, teacher identities and different
knowledge and values and ultimately, provide improved support for ethnic minority students.

Positive relationships with peers, lecturers and Associate Teachers can be instrumental in the emotional well-being of students and has been shown to be a key factor in their academic success and retention. Most participants in this study said that forming relationships with peers allowed them to feel accepted, which helped them to remain in their course. Thus, increased opportunities for interactive learning or group work could reduce the likelihood of students experiencing isolation and marginalisation. Several participants said that they found the complexity of written tasks and reading material to be higher than they had expected, but by engaging in group work, they found that others also experienced challenge. Although all students who are new to a field of study or to academic language are likely to be challenged, it seems to be more confusing to non-native English speakers and can reduce their confidence. Lecturers therefore, need to be aware of the likelihood that some non-native speakers of English might be too embarrassed to ask for help, or believe that questioning their lecturer would be culturally inappropriate. Thus, in addition to providing group work opportunities, lecturers should monitor their teaching styles and use explanations that provide students with prompts and cues to add clarification. This would seem particularly important for students who are familiar with more instructional pedagogies and would assist with their interpretation of material and could make it easier for students to understand new concepts.

Increased information about New Zealand classroom practices could be helpful for students whose experience is of instructional pedagogies because they may be unfamiliar with collaborative learning environments. It can be extremely difficult for students from some cultures, to ask questions of lecturers or participate in group work, because they believe it to be inappropriate. It would seem that although teacher education programmes expect students to work together within a collaborative environment, there is no evidence to suggest that students are supported to develop the necessary skills to do so, perhaps underestimating the complexity of this activity. It appears that teacher education programmes do little to bridge the gap between New Zealand teaching practices and more instructional pedagogies in terms of preparation.
for this approach to learning. Culture shapes many of the learning behaviours people use. Thus, students can find themselves in a state of cognitive dissonance when required to engage in unfamiliar learning behaviours that originate from another culture and do not fit with their understandings. Ethnic minority students are often required to participate in practices that are not consistent with the beliefs they hold. Thus, it appears that teacher education providers may need to review the practices they use to prepare students who are unfamiliar with the pedagogies used in New Zealand. This could enhance learning and create increased sharing of ideas, perhaps also increasing the understandings of all students about different cultural perspectives.

8.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

This study has offered a view of learning to teach in New Zealand, from the perspectives of overseas-born, ethnic minority early childhood students. In this section, I make recommendations for policymakers and teacher educators that could improve the learning experiences of students regarding: preparation for study in New Zealand; the delivery methods used in teaching and the introduction of new pedagogies; and communication and relationships. I also recommend that policy-makers consider the content of teacher education programmes so that it becomes more inclusive of different and multicultural perspectives.

The teaching and delivery methods used by lecturers in many New Zealand early childhood teacher education programmes are likely to be significantly different from those experienced by students who are more familiar with instructional pedagogies. International student participants in this study arrived without understanding the type of learning environments or course expectations they would experience. This left them feeling confused and underprepared. Hence, the international marketing departments of institutions should take responsibility for providing comprehensive information about courses content and delivery for potential students. This should include examples of the type of learning material that will be used and explanations of classroom practices that will be experienced. Furthermore, preparation for study in New Zealand should be carefully managed, not only for international students, but for all students who have been educated by teacher directed practices. Overseas-born New Zealand residents
who participated in this study, also found themselves to be unfamiliar with the teaching practices used and the expectations of the coursework. It would appear that the educational experience of students, beyond qualifications gained, is not currently considered by most providers and thus, the course information provided might not be sufficiently detailed to prepare students for what to expect.

As the theories taught might not make sense to students who are unfamiliar with child-centred pedagogies, they can be difficult for them to understand. Thus, students are likely to need specific teaching to help them to learn about the practices used in New Zealand early childhood centres. It is therefore recommended that students who are unfamiliar with New Zealand early childhood services are taken to visit centres and be given explanations of the learning environments, philosophies and pedagogies, with examples of how teachers are encouraging children to think, problem-solve and learn. This should also include clear examples of how children learn key curriculum subjects, such as mathematics or literacy because this could reduce some of the confusion that some students experience in class and during practica.

Classroom and workshop experiences provide useful collaborative learning opportunities where students can share and strengthen their understandings. They can also help students to form relationships. However, many students whose experience is of more instructional pedagogies might be unfamiliar with collaborative learning and could find it culturally compromising to share their ideas and understandings openly with people who are not close friends. Thus, as part of their preparation to study in New Zealand, students should receive comprehensive information about the social expectations and communication styles they might experience. Detailed explanations and examples of how to engage in collaborative learning experiences to strengthen learning could assist students to use these opportunities effectively, much earlier in their courses. Lecturers need to be aware of the complexities that different teaching and learning styles can present and be better informed about, and more inclusive of different practices. With better understandings of the ways students learn most effectively, lecturers can actively support them to negotiate new experiences. Therefore, by being aware of, and responsive to how students are coping, lecturers could make a significant
difference to effective learning. Similarly, it is also unlikely that students would ask for help if their experience has been of pedagogies where it is considered inappropriate to approach or question lecturers. It is therefore recommended that lecturers should actively create opportunities for students to clarify their understandings or receive help and support. When they are aware of the challenges students face, socially, linguistically and academically, lecturers are more likely to implement teaching strategies that could support them to construct new understandings.

Associates Teachers are often perceived by student teachers, to hold positions of power. Differences in cultural understandings about communication and relationships with teachers can make it difficult for some ethnic minority students to approach their Associate Teachers. To provide equitable opportunities for learning during practicum placements, it is strongly recommended that teacher education providers and policymakers review the professional support that is provided for strengthening Associate Teachers’ cultural competencies, particularly in communication styles and relationships, but also being open to incorporating different knowledges and understandings about teaching and learning. By being aware of cultural differences in communication, the risk of misunderstandings with students can be reduced and with effective communication between themselves and students, Associate Teachers could be better positioned to recognise students’ strengths and knowledges. This could mean that students would be more likely to feel able to make meaningful contributions to programmes and to construct positive teacher identities. Current policy requirements do not stipulate the content of Associate Teacher training courses. Teacher education curricula do usually include statements about Associate Teacher training courses, giving the content and number of hours of study. However, these courses are not closely monitored by the Ministry of Education and it is likely that many Associate Teachers have not undertaken study for the role.

This study has clearly shown that the quality of an Associate Teacher is critical in the effectiveness of student learning. It is therefore recommended that the training requirements are clearly defined and become a required national qualification so that the quality and consistency of courses and of Associate Teachers can be monitored.
Course requirements should include strong elements of cultural competence and intercultural communication and be inclusive of different perspectives and cultural knowledges, so that Associate Teachers can be better prepared to teach in multicultural communities. It is likely that if teacher education providers and policy-makers incorporate different cultural perspectives about teaching and learning in curriculum, future Associate Teachers would be better prepared to support ethnic minority students and to incorporate different cultural knowledges in centre programmes.

In recent years, teacher educators have found that they are delivering courses to a rapidly changing and increasingly diverse student cohort. However, lecturers could be better equipped to implement the necessary support for ethnic minority student teachers by continuing to engage in critical reflection to reassess their own professional knowledge and professional identities. This could help lecturers to be aware of how their practices, attitudes and values reflect the multicultural society of New Zealand and how their content and delivery incorporates different understandings about teaching and learning. The teacher education lecturers who participated in this study have clearly articulated their efforts and commitment to providing effective and positive teacher education programmes for all their students, but have often found it a challenging task with few professional resources to support them. I therefore recommend that assessed courses in cultural competence are provided for lecturers. This could improve intercultural relationship skills and understandings of cultural differences in communication and assist lecturers to teach students whose understandings are of different paradigms. Current policy does not require robust assessment or monitoring of the cultural competencies of lecturers.

By incorporating students’ cultural knowledges and understandings into curriculum, the construction of positive teacher identities can be strengthened. New learning has been shown to be more effectively constructed when existing understandings are validated and incorporated into students’ new knowledge. However, this requires teacher education curricula to approach learning from a sociocultural perspective that recognises and incorporates different understandings and worldviews. Whilst New Zealand has made significant progress in reflecting sociocultural understandings in
early childhood education, current teacher education practices do not appear to adequately represent the increasing cultural diversity of society. It is therefore recommended that policymakers for teacher education programmes give greater attention to incorporating different cultural knowledges, values and understandings in the content of teacher education programmes. This could increase the equity of learning opportunities for ethnic minority students and strengthen the learning of all students to more closely reflect the communities in which they will teach.

8.4 Limitations of this Study

As qualitative research, this study was not intended to produce generalised findings that could easily be replicated. The small number of participants, each with their own backgrounds, prior experiences and meaning-making from their teacher education experiences, are unique. This study was interview-based and therefore, my own subjectivity and interpretation of participants’ stories is not replicable. Thus, this study represents a space in place and time and indicates the nature of experiences of overseas-born, ethnic minority student teachers in New Zealand. I do not suggest that I have provided definitive answers to my research questions. My intention was to raise awareness of the importance of each student’s understandings and perspectives, to their learning and to the construction of their professional identities.

Student participants had graduated from different programmes, more than one year, but less than three years prior to the interviews. This meant that there were differences in the amount of teaching experience they had gained at the time of data collection. All student participants were teaching in different services and it is likely that their professional experience could have focussed their thinking on different aspects of their teacher education programme. Thus, the particular time and place in which they were situated when interviewed could have influenced the way they interpreted the topics we discussed. Although I had prepared topics for discussion, I used a flexible and responsive approach when interviewing, so that each participant could have the opportunity to articulate and give weight to the matters that seemed important to them. As a result, each interview was different because it reflected the interests and concerns of the participant.
This study involved a small number of student and lecturer participants because I wanted to gain in-depth understandings of the experiences of each individual. This means that there are a number of different ethnicities, cultures and perspectives that are not discussed in this thesis. However, it would be unlikely that in a narrative investigation, adequate recognition could have been given to all the ethnicities of New Zealand and it was not my intention to do so. Rather, this study aimed to investigate how effectively teacher education providers are preparing ethnic minority student teachers for teaching in paradigms that differ from their own understandings and to inform and influence policy and practice for early childhood teacher education.

Teacher education in New Zealand is provided by a number of different types of institutions including universities, polytechnics and private colleges. It is likely that each type of provider would offer a different range of experiences for students. The limitations of this study resulted in only a small number of teacher education providers being represented and it is probable that alternative perspectives could have been incorporated. To reflect the variety of teacher education programmes that exist would have involved a larger and different type of study. However, I believe that for the context of this investigation, an appropriate and informative range of perspectives were presented.

8.5 Recommendations for Further Study

This study has identified several practices that require reflection and review by teacher educators and policymakers. The views, perspectives and experiences of ethnic minority student teachers have received little attention in literature and consequently, appear to be underrepresented in curricula and teaching practices. Although the intent of this study is to further inform and influence teacher education policy and practice, there is a great deal more that could be offered.

Throughout this study, tensions and complexities have occurred for ethnic minority student teachers and lecturers because of different understandings about teaching and learning. Thus, there are many questions about the most effective way to introduce
theories that are underpinned by unfamiliar pedagogies. Currently, students appear to be significantly challenged when attempting to implement understandings of teaching that differ from their own beliefs and perspectives. Teacher education programmes in New Zealand continue to mainly apply Anglo-Celtic teaching practices and theories, yet the nation has increased considerably in ethnic and cultural diversity. Although much research has been conducted to inform teacher educators about different understandings, little investigation appears to have occurred about teaching practices that would most effectively guide students during the process of understanding different theoretical perspectives and pedagogies. Therefore, there is little to inform the practices of lecturers. Thus, to more closely reflect the different understandings about learning and teaching that are now part of New Zealand society, it would seem appropriate for teacher education programmes to deliver broader perspectives of teaching and learning in early childhood. This study has made significant findings and made strong recommendations for practice, but I believe more specific research could further teacher educators’ understandings about teaching practices to help students learn to teach in different paradigms.

The nature of this study meant that I was unable to incorporate the perspectives of students and lecturers from all types of teacher education providers in New Zealand and represented a limited range of the ethnicities and cultures that compose this country’s society. Hence, a large scale, longitudinal investigation, representing a greater diversity of ethnic minority student teachers across different types of teacher education institutions could reveal a more comprehensive insight into ways to most effectively prepare students as they learn to teach in New Zealand early childhood services. In particular, a study that investigated students’ experiences from each year group could provide a more detailed understanding of the process of adaptation to different pedagogies.

This study showed that the content of New Zealand teacher education curricula appear to focus on Western perspectives and understandings about teaching and learning. Thus, programmes seemed concerned with preparing students to teach in early childhood services that reflect the dominant Anglo Celtic perspectives of New Zealand
society and do not appear to incorporate different or multicultural perspectives. Thus, further research should be undertaken to investigate strategies for incorporating different cultural understandings and perspectives about teaching and learning in New Zealand teacher education programmes.

Although many teacher education providers offer brief training courses for qualified and experienced teachers who wish to become an Associate Teacher, there is no standard, recognised qualification for this role. This study has drawn attention to the critical role of Associate Teachers in supporting students, yet there appears to be a gap in the teacher education process regarding training to undertake this responsibility. This is of concern, especially when considering the range in length and content of courses that existed in New Zealand, prior to 1998. It is likely that some courses might not have included much content about cultural diversity. Furthermore, the one-year, graduate diplomas that continue to be offered by some providers, allow little time to cover complex topics such as cultural diversity, in depth. Although I have made recommendations that a standardised qualification should be provided that would increase Associate Teachers’ cultural competencies, I suggest that further research could investigate the current knowledge and competencies of qualified teachers, so that more robust Associate Teacher education could be developed.

8.6 Closing Words

In a country that has rapidly increasing cultural diversity, it is relevant to provide early childhood teachers, who reflect New Zealand’s multicultural community and who are appropriately educated to incorporate community interests and understandings. Like many other Western nations, New Zealand actively encourages overseas students from non-Western nations and ethnic minority nationals, to undertake early childhood teacher education in this country. Yet, this study has shown that overseas-born, ethnic minority student teachers experience social, linguistic and cultural challenges in New Zealand early childhood teacher education programmes. It is therefore, a responsibility of teacher educators, to increase their awareness about students’ challenges and become proactive about providing culturally sensitive support and guidance. This study has
shown that teacher educators often make false assumptions that learning has occurred and that all students can learn from the same delivery methods.

When I began this study, I was a teacher educator and I was aware that ethnic minority, overseas-born students had challenges to negotiate that were different from those of New Zealand born students. However, the extent and complexity of the challenges that this study found was surprising because issues were revealed that could require significant rethinking about teaching practices and delivery and policy changes in the areas of curriculum, student intake, orientation, Associate Teacher training and further training for lecturers. In particular, the connection between students’ identities, their understandings about learning and teaching and the construction of positive teacher identities was striking because of its significance to their new understandings, yet there appears to be little attention paid to this in the area of linking theory to practice. Although there are no generalisable teaching practices or delivery methods, all teaching should support the understandings of students. This requires teachers in any education sector, to critically reflect on their own teaching to effectively respond to the rapid and extensive changes in the socio-cultural environment of societies.

It has been my intention that this study might provoke further thought and investigation by research communities, about teacher education practices that could better represent and incorporate different knowledges and understandings in curricula. Furthermore, I aim to influence teacher education policymakers to rethink the Anglo-Celtic practices and curricula of current early childhood teacher education. If this were to occur, the attitudes and values and discourses that can currently marginalise those of ethnic minority might be reduced to allow the perspectives of the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of New Zealand communities and other Western nations to be incorporated into practice.

Finally, I believe that the lecturer participants in this study were highly committed and motivated to ensure that students had the most effective and positive learning journey possible. However, there are few resources to support lecturers about teaching non-Western, overseas-born students. I therefore hope that through this study, the body of
knowledge available to teacher education researchers will be increased, so that the teacher education community can be better informed about appropriate teacher education practices for preparing students to teach within different paradigms.
References


Han, J. (2005, 27 November -1 December). "World English speaking" student teachers' entry into the education profession: The practicum as a stimulus to metamorphosis. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education, University of Western Sydney.


May, H. (1993). I was experiencing what I was talking about. In H. McQueen (Ed.), *Education is change: Twenty viewpoints*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books.


Appendix 1: Plain language statement for recently graduated teachers

Dear Recent Graduate Teacher

I invite you to participate in a study called "An Exploration of the Experiences of Culturally Diverse Early Childhood Student Teachers". I am enrolled as a PhD student at Deakin University, Australia, and am undertaking this research under the supervision of Dr Ninetta Santoro who is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education.

The aim of this project is to learn more about the experiences of early childhood student teachers born outside New Zealand in a community with a significantly different culture to New Zealand, during the three years of a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education. I anticipate that an outcome of this study will be to better support and improve the learning experience of student teachers from overseas.

If you are willing to participate in this study, after a brief meeting to become acquainted, we would meet for two conversational interviews. It is likely that each interview would be for approximately two hours and we would meet at a mutually convenient time in a venue that is mutually agreeable.

Each interview (conversation) would have a different focus, during which you would be invited to share stories concerning learning experiences and your beliefs and views about early childhood education and care. During the two interviews we would explore your process of learning to become an early childhood teacher in New Zealand and reflect on how your understandings might have changed throughout your programme of study and as a beginning teacher.

Interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. All the information collected will be treated by me as strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used in all spoken and written material about the research to protect your identity. Only myself as the researcher and transcriber, my supervisor and you as a participant will have access to all the audio-tapes and transcripts of your interview. Identifiable consent forms will be stored separately from codes connecting your name with your pseudonym. All data and transcripts will be kept, for six years, securely at my workplace in a locked filing cabinet, in accordance with Deakin University guidelines, after which time all tapes will be erased and all written material shredded.

As the researcher I will be protecting your identity so that your name or position, place of employment or teacher education provider will not be identified or associated in any report with the information you provide me in the interview. However we operate in a relatively small teaching community in New Zealand, so there is a slight possibility that some people may recognise your views as they are written in the research report. I draw this to your attention to this risk as part of the decision you make on whether or not you wish to participate.

It is not my intention that you unwillingly reveal information about yourself, and you will not be probed to reveal personal and private issues. Rather you will be invited to talk about issues relating to the influences on your perspectives on the professional issues of teaching, learning and education.

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent at any time. In this event, your participation in the research would cease immediately and any information obtained from you will not be used. You will also be asked to read and
authorise the interview transcripts and remove or change anything you do not want to be
included before they are used for analysis.

Findings of the research will be documented in the doctoral thesis submitted to Deakin
University, and will also be submitted for publication in academic journals or books and
presented at conferences. You will be informed of the results of the research and may be
invited to share in conference or workshop presentations about these, or invited to contribute
to the publication of articles. In this case you may choose to have your identity revealed. That
is your choice.

If you were born overseas in a country where the main culture is different from that of New
Zealand and went to school in your country of origin and would like to participate in this study,
please complete the enclosed consent form and return to me in the envelope provided by 31
August 2005

If you have any questions about the research or your participation in it, please contact me,
Janet Moles (phone 237-3103 ext 3608 email j.moles@whitireia.ac.nz or the principal Deakin
supervisor, Dr Ninetta Santoro (phone +61 3 9244-8808, email nsantoro@deakin.edu.au)

Thank you for considering this information.

Regards

Janet Moles

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the
Secretary, Ethics Committee, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway,
BURWOOD VIC 3125. Tel (03) 9251 7123 (International +61 3 9251 7123).
Appendix 2: Consent form

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM:

I,

Herely consent to be a subject of a human research study to be undertaken

By Janet Moles

and I understand that the purpose of the research is to learn more about the experiences of culturally diverse early childhood student teachers during the three years of a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education. I understand that an aim of this study will be to better support and improve the learning experience of student teachers from overseas.

I acknowledge

1. That the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.

2. That I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.

3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals.

4. Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.

5. That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Contact phone: ___________________________
Appendix 3: Plain language statement for Lecturers

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT, Lecturers

Dear Early Childhood Lecturer,

I invite you to participate in a study called “An Exploration of the Experiences of Culturally Diverse Early Childhood Student Teachers”. I am enrolled as a PhD student at Deakin University, Australia, and am undertaking this research under the supervision of Dr Ninetta Santoro who is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education.

The aim of this project is to learn more about the experiences of early childhood student teachers born outside New Zealand in a community with a significantly different culture to New Zealand, during a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Education. I anticipate that an outcome of this study will be to better support and improve the learning experience of student teachers from overseas.

If you are willing to participate in this study, after a brief meeting to become acquainted, we would meet for a conversational interview. It is likely that the interview would be for approximately two hours and we would meet at a mutually convenient time in a venue that is mutually agreeable.

The interview (conversation) would give you the opportunity to share your thoughts, reflections, and experience about the learning experiences of culturally diverse early childhood student teachers.

Interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. All the information collected will be treated by me as strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used in all spoken and written material about the research to protect your identity. Only myself as the researcher and transcriber, and you as a participant will have access to all the audio-tapes and transcripts of your interview. Identifiable consent forms will be stored separately from codes connecting your name with your pseudonym. All data and transcripts will be kept, for six years, securely at my workplace in a locked filing cabinet, in accordance with Deakin University guidelines, after which time all tapes will be erased and all written material shredded.

As the researcher I will be protecting your identity such that your name, position or institution will not be associated in any report with the information you provide me in the interview. However we operate in a relatively small teaching community in New Zealand, so there is a slight possibility that some people may recognise your views as they are written in the research report. I draw this to your attention to this risk as part of the decision you make on whether or not you wish to participate.

It is not my intention that you unwillingly reveal information about yourself, and you will not be probed to reveal personal and private issues. Rather you will be invited to talk about issues relating to the influences on your perspectives on the professional issues of teaching, learning and education. However, in the unlikely event that you become upset during the interview for any reason, you will be free to withdraw your consent and leave the interview at any time.

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent at any time. In this event, your participation in the research would cease immediately and any information obtained from you will not be used. You will also be asked to read and authorise the interview transcripts and remove or change anything you do not want to be included before they are used for analysis.

Findings of the research will be documented in the doctoral thesis submitted to Deakin University, and will also be submitted for publication in academic journals or books and presented at conferences. You will be informed of the results of the research and may be invited to share in conference or workshop presentations about these, or invited to contribute.
to the publication of articles. In this case you may choose to have your identity revealed. That is your choice.

If you would like to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed consent form and return to me at the above address by DATE.

If you have any questions about the research or your participation in it, please contact me, Janet Moles (phone 237-3103 ext 3608 or 04 563 6906 email jmoles@whitleyia.ac.nz or the principal Deakin supervisor, Dr Ninetta Santoro (phone +61 3 9244-6808, email nsantoro@deakin.edu.au)

Thank you for considering this information.

Regards

Janet Moles

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Ethics Committee, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, BURWOOD VIC 3125. Tel (03) 9251 7123 (International +61 3 9251 7123).
Appendix 4: Interview questions

<table>
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<th>Discussion topics</th>
<th>Potential areas of discussion</th>
<th>Potential issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic 1: Reflections on the programme of study</td>
<td>Thoughts on content: theory and pedagogy promoted, Thoughts on credits given to own prior knowledge</td>
<td>Understanding of theory, Relevance to prior knowledge, Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 2: Reflections on teaching practice so far</td>
<td>Role of the teacher, Experiences in centres, Pedagogy in practice, Thoughts on credits given to own culture, prior knowledge and practices.</td>
<td>Challenges, Areas of difficulty, Areas of conflict, Guidance and support given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 3: Reflections on any changes in knowledge, understandings</td>
<td>Thoughts on how and why and when any changes have occurred</td>
<td>Expectations of change, Incorporation of prior and new knowledge and understandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 4: The nature of previous educational experience</td>
<td>Thoughts about the learning experience in the teacher education programme.</td>
<td>Learning environment, Teaching styles, Social aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 5: The nature of previous knowledge about working with young children</td>
<td>Thoughts about the concepts and theory being promoted in the teacher education programme.</td>
<td>Understanding of theory, Comparison to prior knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 6: The nature of previous teaching experience in an early childhood setting in country of origin prior to the teacher education programme</td>
<td>Thoughts about practicum experiences</td>
<td>Understanding of the role of the teacher when beginning the programme, Personal philosophy when beginning the programme</td>
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<th>Table 2: Questions for recently graduated teacher interview 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic 1: Reflections on the process of change in pedagogy, understandings and teaching practice and philosophy</td>
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<td>Topic 2: Reflections on how the beginning teacher made sense of New Zealand pedagogy and practice as a student teacher</td>
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<td>Topic 3: Current practice</td>
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Table 3: Questions for Early childhood Lecturers’ interview

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic 1: Thoughts about the adjustment of culturally diverse student teachers to ECE study in New Zealand.</th>
<th>Understanding of ECE concepts, pedagogy and theory. Lecturers’ understanding of students’ prior knowledge, beliefs and expectations</th>
<th>Cultural differences Expectations of culturally diverse student teachers about learning in New Zealand.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic 2: Reflections on the changes observed in culturally diverse student teachers</td>
<td>Responses to application of theory Theory and cultural diversity Catalyst for change Role of lecturer in students’ change What approach does the lecturer take to diverse prior knowledge, practice and understanding</td>
<td>Lecturer’s relationship to culturally diverse students Challenges Support offered Support required /by students /by lecturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 3: Reflections on culturally diverse student teachers’ teaching practice experiences</td>
<td>Student teachers’ application of theory to teaching practice Changes observed in student teachers’ ability to apply appropriate pedagogy</td>
<td>Responses of early childhood centres to cultural differences Application of Te Whāriki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>