# Toward Inclusive and Equitable Education for All

Lessons from the experiences of New Zealand refugee background university students

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ABSTRACT

The ability of education to transform individuals' lives, and by extension those of their communities and societies, is well documented. As such, education is at the heart of the United Nations' (2015) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), represented by SDG 4, "Quality Education", which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Tertiary education institutions (TEIs) in particular, have been highlighted as critical settings from which SDGs can be better understood and achieved.

Although the benefits of tertiary education are well understood, access to, and participation within, TEIs remains unequal for students from marginalized backgrounds, particularly those from refugee backgrounds (RBs). Over the last twenty-five years, research has begun to consider issues relating to access and participation within TEIs for students from refugee backgrounds (SRBs) highlighting numerous barriers that they face. However, very few studies have focused on identifying strengths, capabilities and supports.

The experiences of SRBs within the contexts of New Zealand TEIs are vastly understudied. In response to this gap, as well as to the dominance of barrier-focused literature, this thesis considers the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand universities from a strengths-based lens. It seeks to understand what has enhanced the experiences of SRBs, and what can facilitate further positive experiences for them in the future. It answers the primary research question: "What is working well to enhance the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand universities and why?"

To answer this question, a transformative research approach using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology was taken. Primary data was generated using semi-structured interviews with sixteen undergraduate and postgraduate SRBs at four different New Zealand universities. The data was analysed using thematic analysis.

This analysis identifies several targeted provisions and personal strengths that are working well to enhance the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand universities. Comparing these results with the current landscape of targeted provisioning and policy relating to SRBs in TEIs, I argue that existing and future initiatives could be

(re)designed to emphasise: social connections, institutional welcome, staff advocacy, financial provisioning, and the resource of family and community. In addition, this study strongly advocates for the designation of SRBs as an equity group within national level policy, in order to mandate all universities to provide targeted provisioning.

Overall, this research provides a New Zealand-specific perspective on the growing body of literature centred on the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education. Its strengths-based AI framework offers a unique understanding of how future practice and policy can be developed around what is working well for students. Additionally, its New Zealand context unsettles traditional understandings of where education and development research and initiatives are conducted and implemented.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

He aha te mea nui o te ao. He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Refugee Background

RB - refugee background

SRB – student with or from a refugee background (singular)

SRBs – students with or from a refugee background (plural)

International Government Bodies

UN – United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

National Government Bodies or Non-profit Agencies

CRF – ChangeMakers Resettlement Forum

INZ – Immigration New Zealand

MBIE – Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment

MOE - Ministry of Education

RASNZ – Refugees as Survivors NZ

TEC – Tertiary Education Commission

National Universities

AUT - Auckland University of Technology

Auckland – University of Auckland

VUW - Victoria University of Wellington

Canterbury - University of Canterbury

Lincoln – Lincoln University

Otago - University of Otago

VUW - Victoria University of Wellington

Waikato – University of Waikato

Misc.

TEI(s) - tertiary education institution(s)

SDG(s) - Sustainable Development Goal(s)

SRJRDS – Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters' Scholarship

VWB – Vic Without Barriers

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of education cannot be understated. Education's potential to transform lives, eradicate poverty, construct peace, and drive sustainable development has made it a central focus for the United Nations, particularly within its branch agency, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Education is at the heart of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), represented by SDG 4, "Quality Education", which seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015). SDGs such as Health, Growth and Employment, Sustainable Consumption and Production, and Climate Change also include targets that are education-focused, emphasizing the important role of education in achieving these goals (United Nations, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). Indeed, the *Education 2030 Agenda* consistently mentions education's potential to improve the world: it can address poverty by "helping individuals to obtain decent work...and fuel economic development", promote gender equality by "empowering women and girls to participate socially and politically", and improve community health outcomes such as preventing and containing disease (UNESCO, 2015, p. 27).

It has been well researched that completing a higher education qualification can serve as a means of acquiring valuable skills that in turn may lead to employment which pays more than jobs without tertiary degree requirements. However, participation in tertiary education also plays an invaluable role in advancing knowledge and promoting personal, community, and wider societal development. These observations are stated in UNESCO's *Education 2030 Agenda*, where the role of tertiary education institutions is articulated to go beyond solely imparting job skills; rather, it encompasses the stimulation of critical and creative thinking and the dissemination of knowledge for social, cultural, environmental, and economic development (2015). In the *Agenda*, UNESCO writes that tertiary education institutions are "critical for the education of future scientists, experts, and leaders… play[ing] a fundamental role in creating knowledge… that enable[s] solutions to be found for local and global problems in all fields of sustainable development" (p. 41). Indeed, obtaining tertiary education

qualifications often generates a ripple effect of positive development not only within the individual recipient's life, but also outwards into society.

Education (including access to and success within) has been a popular area of focus for academics within Development Studies and practitioners/policymakers in the wider field of international development. Indeed, education is a pivotal inclusion in the SDGs, developed in 2015 in the hopes of reaching all targets for each of the 17 goals globally by 2030. Quality Education, or "Goal 4", seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Goal 4 aligns well with the motivations for creating this research study. In particular, this study aligns well with Target 4.3, which seeks to "ensure equal access for all men and women to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university" (United Nations, 2015).

Of particular note to this project, which centres on the tertiary educational experiences of RB people, is the significance that international agencies have placed on the role of education in the lives of children, young people, and adults who have been affected by crisis and conflict: it has the ability to "provide… the tools to rebuild their lives and communities" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 27). Although education can be one of the most pivotal tools used to help redevelop and reconstruct societies that have experienced crisis, the same international agencies have also observed that access to all kinds of education remains unequal for internally displaced people, refugees, and those living within conflict zones (United Nations, 2015; UNESCO, 2015).

Most of the research done relating to equal access to and within education in Development Studies research has considered it from the perspectives of individuals and institutions in "developing" nations – countries that typically have a less developed industrial base and a low Human Development Index score. Even the targets within Goal 4 point toward a primary focus on achieving SDGs in "developing" countries. For example, Target 4.B reads:

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"By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small Island States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education…"

While equitable access to quality education, and financial support such as scholarships, can and does need to improve in the regional areas delineated in Goal 4's targets, focusing primarily on "developing" regions misses populations of people (such as people from refugee backgrounds) within "developed" countries such as New Zealand, who similarly do not have equitable access to tertiary education. As Priyanca Radhakrishnan (2012) wrote: "the need for progress exists everywhere; it is not limited to specific geographical locations" (p. 9).

In terms of the importance of higher education in aiding global development, it can be argued that obtaining a higher education qualification leaves an individual better poised to contribute toward the 17 SDGs, regardless of their background. Target 4.7 of SDG 4 (Quality Education) seeks to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development" and identifies access to quality education, including higher education, as a means to achieve this goal (United Nations, 2015). For example, UNESCO (2015) argues that "education can accelerate progress toward the achievement of all the SDGs" (p. 24). For students from typically disadvantaged demographic groups such as those from a refugee background, the results of accessing tertiary education can be even more meaningful: it can provide opportunities to find higher wage employment and make wider societal connections, thereby increasing wellbeing for themselves, their families, and their larger community networks.

This project offers insight into the educational experiences of tertiary students with or from a refugee background (SRBs) situated within the resettlement context of New Zealand, a "highly developed" country. In doing so, it seeks to expand upon the limited research within Development Studies that centres on the educational experiences of demographic groups in " highly developed" countries and emphasise the need for continued development and research within these often-overlooked contexts.

1.1 REFUGEES AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1951), a refugee is a person who:

"...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country" (p. 14).

The UNHCR (2019) currently estimates that there are 70.8 million forcibly displaced people worldwide: 41.3 million internally displaced people (individuals displaced from their homes but still residing within their country of origin), 25.9 million refugees, and 3.5 million asylum-seekers – which is described as the highest levels of displacement on record. Common contributors to the high numbers of displaced people include violent political conflicts, climate change, and even development projects (such as the creation of major public works) which force people to relocate (Black & Oeppen, 2014). The statistics of the forced migration crisis have not escaped international development agencies and political bodies like the UN; - in the 2030 SDG Agenda, the UN (2015) stated:

"Those whose needs are reflected in the Agenda include… refugees and internally displaced persons… we resolve to take further effective measures and actions, in conformity with international law, to remove obstacles and constraints, strengthen support, and meet the needs of people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism" (p. 10).

In the past, academics within Development Studies have struggled to consider how "refugees" fit within development theories and strategies, especially when the production of refugees can be seen as "the *opposite* of development, particularly [since] development has come to be defined more in terms of human rights, democracy, and the

rule of law" (Black & Oeppen, 2014, p. 503). However, as the number of displaced people grows, more development academics, practitioners, and state policy makers are examining how to address the complexity of situations that create refugees and other displaced persons in which "poverty and need are not simply technical issues, but also political ones" (Black & Oeppen, 2014, p. 506).

Although acknowledged by the UN as a group considered in the 2030 Agenda, no SDGs refer directly to forced migration crises or refugees. However, almost all of the 17 SDGs are concerned with addressing issues that RB people are commonly affected by. As discussed, Quality Education (SDG 4) is concerned with providing equitable quality education opportunities for all. In 2016, the UNHCR brought the subject of accessibility to tertiary education for SRBs to the forefront of discussion when they released an education report entitled *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis*. The report found that only 1 out of every 100 of the world's adolescent refugees enters tertiary education, in comparison to 34 out of every 100 non-refugee adolescents (UNHCR, 2016). Identifying it as an education accessibility crisis, the report emphasized that it is "vital that governments and higher education institutions provide more schemes allowing refugees to attend university" and highlighted the need for further development in this regard (UNHCR, 2016, p. 39).

To date, most Development Studies research or practices centred on RB people have been situated in "developing" countries, often in humanitarian camps. Studies relating to resettled refugee background people in "developed" countries are less numerous, even though RB communities within developed countries are still often societally disadvantaged in comparison to those from non-RB backgrounds. Difficulties for RB people do not cease to exist after they have resettled in "developed" countries. Rather, new barriers relating to unfamiliar social and government systems are often generated for RB people (including educational barriers). As I will demonstrate in this study by examining the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand universities, even "developed" countries need to ensure that, as SDG 4 states, "inclusive and equitable quality education" is accessible for all.

It is also important to acknowledge that the literature outside of Development Studies that centres on SRBs within tertiary education is overwhelmingly produced by academics from wealthy, highly-industrialised, Anglophonic nations such as Australia, the UK, the USA, and Canada (Ramsay & Baker, 2019). Additionally, the vast majority of these studies explore the experiences of SRBs within these same societies (Ramsay & Baker, 2019). In comparison, very little formal research with a similar focus of exploring SRBs within tertiary education has been conducted within New Zealand.

1.2 PREVIOUS NATIONAL RESEARCH

This research study stands as a continuation of the limited research that has been undertaken in New Zealand tertiary education institutions (TEIs) with SRBs over the last 13 years. All of the prior studies have arisen from, or are intricately connected to, a postgraduate Geography class, The Geography of Development Studies (GEOG 404), taught by Sara Kindon at Victoria University of Wellington. This participatory action research course, which requires students to undertake a group research study, has previously produced projects centred on understanding how to improve equity outcomes for refugee-background communities in the Wellington region. Several of these projects have focused on improved understandings of the experiences of SRBs both at VUW and nationally at other New Zealand TEIs.

The first research in New Zealand that considered the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education was conducted in 2006. Specifically, it evaluated the experiences of SRBs at VUW. Researchers found that SRBs were not utilizing many support services offered to the general student body because they were either a) unaware of the existence of services, b) mistrusted university services, and/or c) could not relate to or understand service delivery (Horner, Khan, Paton, Hagos, & Kindon, 2006).

The next study, conducted in 2008, was primarily interested in identifying whether a student club for SRBs at VUW would be beneficial or feasible. Alongside SRBs, the researchers in 404 helped to establish a student club called "Global Remix." Global

Remix was a dynamic student club that placed an emphasis on being a fun setting to decompress and socialize while gaining academic support (Evans, Cowie, & Vink, 2008).

Following the 2008 GEOG 404 report, Dr. Mary Roberts, a former researcher with Teaching and Learning Support Services at VUW, wrote a report for Victoria's Academic Deputy Vice Chancellor about the "key issues in supporting refugee background students to achieve their goals at VUW" (Roberts, 2010). Alongside her own interviews with students and staff, she brought together the previous 404 research and supplemented them both with international literature (primarily from Australia) to develop a holistic picture of the challenges SRBs at VUW encountered and institutional changes that could best support them.

2011 was a pivotal year, both in terms of the research being done into the experiences of SRBs in New Zealand higher education institutions and the increase of awareness key stakeholders (such as TEIs, outside organizations, and national policymakers) had of the needs of SRBs. The first 2011 study involved ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, the New Zealand National Refugee Network, the ESOL Assessment and Access Service, prominent academics, and GEOG 404 students. It was the first study to consider the experiences of SRBs at New Zealand TEIs and the support structures in place for them. 12 GEOG 404 students designed and implemented the research study, visiting 13 TEIs within New Zealand and conducting focus groups and interviews at each institution. The report highlighted specific barriers SRBs face when accessing and succeeding within university in New Zealand (such as financial costs and domestic student enrolment caps) and strongly advocated for a need to include SRBs within TEI equity and diversity policy in order to "remove barriers to participation and achievement among those who are disadvantaged and/or under-represented in the [higher education] community" (ChangeMakers Refugee Forum et al., 2011, p. 2).

Parallel to the GEOG 404 and ChangeMakers study, Diane O'Rourke (2011) published an academic article in *Kotuitui* alongside VUW postgraduate Anthropology students the

same year. This seconded the ChangeMakers report's recommendation for including SRBs within TEI equity and diversity policies in New Zealand.

The final study in the progression that led to this research was conducted in 2017 by GEOG 404 students, and served as a follow-up to Horner et al.'s 2006 VUW-specific study. The study, which was similarly VUW-specific, identified areas where equity for SRBs could be improved, namely in terms of funding within the university (for both grants for SRBs as well as funding for support initiatives) and SRB representation within the VUW community itself, such as in student leadership roles, clubs, and staff positions (Reid, Castro, Songnamavong & Willette, 2017).

1.3 RESEARCH FOCUS

Apart from the 2011 studies led by Angela Joe, Sara Kindon, and Diane O'Rourke, no research has been conducted on a national scale that examines the experiences of SRBs in higher education. The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's (MBIE) 2014-2019 Tertiary Education Strategy (2014) mentions the need for individuals from all backgrounds to "realise their talents through tertiary education" and the obligation for TEOs across New Zealand to "recognise the diverse needs of their communities and have appropriate mechanisms" to support them (p. 12). While the Tertiary Education Strategy references to SRBs as a group that various educational institutions have acknowledged in equity plans, the Strategy itself does not include any overarching government initiatives to support SRBs as learners. Instead, it centres its focus on better improving equity outcomes for Māori and Pasifika students (MoE & MBIE, 2014). Since the Strategy still does not specifically identify SRBs as an equity group within its policies, TEIs are not required to include them in their own policies and strategies. Rather, TEIs have been operating "ad hoc" in terms of their strategies for supporting SRBs. Even though universities have been trending toward formal inclusion of SRBs as an equity group within their formal equity policies, their support strategies and initiatives for SRBs differ widely (see Chapter 3). Understanding the perspectives of SRBs from multiple universities can help clarify what

is working and why for SRBs on a national level, as well as identify what might still be needed to better support them within university.

As I detail in Chapter 2, much of the existing literature generated over the past twenty years that centres on SRBs within tertiary education is largely deficit-based and barriers-focused in nature. The literature highlights potential barriers that SRBs bring to tertiary education as a result of their histories with forced migration: psychological "trauma" (Joyce et al. 2010; Benseman, 2014, Stevenson & Willott, 2007), clashing community and family expectations (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Joyce et al, 2010; Harris et al., 2013; Ferede, 2010; Kong et al., 2016), issues with language comprehension (Bajwa et al. 2017; Barbour, 2016; Naidoo et al., 2018; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Morrice, 2013; Kong et al, 2016), and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Naidoo et al., 2018; Morrice, 2013; O'Rourke, 2011; Abamosa, 2015). All factors may impede a student's ability to succeed academically, socially, and professionally within a tertiary setting. However, this thesis takes a different approach, highlighting how SRBs have self-identified strengths – many of which are born out of their RBs - that enhance their experiences within tertiary education.

The majority of recent studies in the field also consider institutionally-created barriers that can impede the success of SRBs within tertiary education (see Chapter 2 for further discussion). Active discrimination and obliviousness to the presence of SRBs on campus from peers and tertiary staff (Mangan & Winter, 2017; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Mupenzi, 2018; Kong et al., 2016), complex university systems (Bajwa et al., 2017; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Kong et al., 2016), and a lack of institutional resources and time to adequately address the needs of SRBs (Bajwa et al., 2017; Harris & Marlowe, 2011) have all been identified as potential barriers that may make accessing and completing tertiary education more difficult. While very helpful to understand areas that may need improvement, case studies that provide examples of good practice and support from institutions are few and far between. Therefore, this thesis will also highlight narratives of good practice alongside areas for improvement.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering the above discussion and the study's primary objective of identifying and interpreting the perspectives of SRBs within New Zealand universities from a strengths-based perspective, the primary research question guiding this research is as follows:

- What is working well to enhance the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand universities and why?

This leading question is supported by the following sub-questions:

- What are the experiences of SRBs at New Zealand universities generally?
- How can SRBs continue to be supported (or begin to be supported) by NZ universities, and how are universities currently supporting the strengths of SRBs?
- How do available targeted initiatives for SRBs at universities reflect the experiences SRBs have disclosed, particularly from a "what's working" perspective?

To answer these questions and use the findings to advocate for institutional change for SRBs, a transformative epistemology strongly informed how this thesis was conceptualized, implemented, analysed, and disseminated. Central to transformative epistemology is the idea that research should strongly focus on social justice issues and that transformative projects should be constructed with the intention of achieving change to address these social justice issues at both community and institutional levels (Mertens, 2017; Walton, 2014).

Given my goal of constructing and implementing a strengths-based study, I employed Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as my principal methodology and followed its 4-D (Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny) cycle in both my research design and thesis structure. It provided a radical approach to understanding the experiences of SRBs that concentrated on exploring their ideas on what is valuable within their university, their individual experiences, and within themselves.

Semi-structured interviews with sixteen participants were employed to develop a shared understanding of their experiences, needs, capacities, and strengths of SRBs at four New Zealand universities. The findings are examined using thematic analysis.

The outputs are intended to serve as a means to increase awareness and understanding of the different strengths, needs, and experiences of SRBs within the context of New Zealand universities. This shared understanding provides significant insights into how to develop, refine, or continue targeted initiatives for SRBs within tertiary education that honour their capacities and strengths as student. Furthermore, this study also showcases areas where TEIs and must make improvements in order to honour their stated commitments within policy to diversity, inclusion, and equity for all.

1.5 THESIS CONTRIBUTIONS

This study contributes to the small (but growing) body of strengths-based literature that centres on SRBs within tertiary education settings. However, it is the first that assesses this topic within the context of New Zealand. It is also the first study within this field of research that uses AI as its primary methodology, and the first within New Zealand that considers the experiences of postgraduate SRBs. The results of this thesis can be of use in improving university-specific and national-level tertiary education policies, programmes, and practices.

Additionally, its New Zealand context unsettles historic understandings of where education and development research is implemented. It is one of very few studies situated within Development Studies that considers education and development within "developed" nation, and argues that *all* educational institutions, regardless of setting, must uphold the goals articulated in SDG 4: the need for continued development exists everywhere.

1.6 THESIS STRUCTURE

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) discusses and analyses the existing literature on access to and participation in tertiary education for SRBs in resettlement contexts, and is taken primarily from studies of SRBs within university settings. The chapter identifies common themes that arise within the existing research. The first third of the chapter centres on international literature, the second on New Zealand-specific studies and how their findings compare with international research, and the final third presents a comparative analysis of deficit-based and strengths-based studies.

Chapter 3 (New Zealand Context) situates the thesis within the context of New Zealand by discussing both New Zealand's refugee resettlement history and processes, as well as its tertiary education system. It brings the two together, discussing pathways to tertiary education for SRBs as well as institutional supports at New Zealand universities.

Chapter 4 (Methodology) outlines the epistemology, methodology, and methods employed by this research, organising it into the 4-Ds of AI. It includes descriptions of partner organisations and participants, data sources and collection techniques, data analysis, ethical considerations, health and safety measures, and study limitations.

Chapter 5 (Discovery), delves into the results of the semi-structured interviews used in the study and constitutes the initial stage of AI – Discovery. The sections are organised into eight key *Discoveries* (themes), and literature from Chapter 2 is also integrated throughout to supplement the analysis of experiences.

Chapter 6 (Dream) provides insights into the *Dreams* SRBs have for New Zealand universities in terms of continuing or starting to offer support for SRBs. It considers these *Dreams* in relation to the *Discoveries* articulated in Chapter 5.

Chapter 7 (Design) brings together the *Discoveries* and *Dreams* from Chapters 5 & 6 and considers it critically in relation to the existing targeted supports provided by New Zealand universities, as well as within wider bodies of literature. It posits how future provisioning and policy can be *Designed* to reflect "what is working well" for SRBs.

Finally, Chapter 8 (Destiny) concludes the study. It provides a summary of the thesis, and connects the results back to the research questions and wider themes relating to research with SRBs and Development Studies. It also brings forth some key ideas pertaining to the *Destiny* of future research, practice, and policy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

While academic studies involving refugee background persons in primary and secondary education are numerous, research analysing SRBs in tertiary education has only begun to emerge within the last 15 years. Even though this research is both new and relatively limited, key findings have emerged which I critically review in this chapter.

The first section considers international studies that explore the significance of, and access to, higher education, particularly for SRBs, as well as their experiences within it. I also review the emergence of strengths-based studies, and explore ideas of resilience and post-traumatic growth in relation to SRBs within higher education. I subsequently consider the recommendations and suggestions academics have put forth in terms of support for SRBs, and in the second section, I engage with New Zealand-specific studies and examine how their orientations and findings interact with themes identified in the international literature. The final section ends with reflections on the significance of the shift toward strengths-based studies.

2.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

Many academics and international government agencies consider the possession of a tertiary education certification from a host country as a critical indicator of a "successful" refugee resettlement outcome (Barbour, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Ferede, 2010; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011). This then enables RB individuals to attain social and financial independence within their host country (UNHCR, 2002; UNHCR, 2016). In 2016, the UNHCR officially identified a host country tertiary degree certification as a key means of accomplishing social and financial independence, writing that it gives SRBs more opportunity to "find work, contribute to the economy of their host countries… and become self-sufficient leaders of their communities" (UNHCR, 2016, p. 30). Indeed, for a diverse demographic that shares a narrative of forced migration outside of their country of nationality due to a "well-founded fear of being persecuted," academics have observed that a tertiary-level qualification is one of the key ways for RB individuals to (re)build their professional identities and (re)establish their lives in their

country of settlement; their degree stands as an affirmation that they "belong" in their home country (Barbour, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Ferede, 2010; Morrice, 2013; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011).

2.2 ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

The overwhelming consensus within the literature indicates that many RB individuals have high aspirations for themselves in relation to accessing tertiary education within resettlement countries and perceive that a tertiary qualification will positively impact their quality of life (Abamosa, 2015; Gately, 2015; Hannah, 1999; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017; Stevenson & Willot, 2007). However, researchers have repeatedly observed that access to tertiary education often remains difficult for SRBs, especially in comparison to their non-RB peers.

This section will discuss several of the prevailing themes within the literature that relate to tertiary education access for prospective SRBs, giving special consideration to the documented barriers that may make accessing tertiary education challenging and providing examples where access was made easier for SRBs.

2.2.1 EMPLOYMENT-FIRST PRIORITIES

Although many resettled RB people dream of attending tertiary education institutions, their aspirations may not be compatible with the expectations and stereotypes that host country resettlement organizations and educational institutions have of them. Scholars have been quick to point out that resettlement policies within host countries, particularly in the global North, prioritize preparing resettled refugees for job seeking rather than for higher education (Bajwa et al., 2017; Ferede, 2010; Hannah, 1999; Morrice, 2007; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017). American literacy scholars Perry and Mallozzi (2011, p. 260) observe that a focus on immediate employment "inhibits refugees' access to education and ultimately limits their ability to advance beyond low-skilled or unskilled jobs", as tertiary qualifications are often required to access highly skilled employment opportunities that offer better compensation. The thought driving

the "employment-first" priorities within resettlement policy is that employment will lead to self-sufficiency, which in turn will provide RB people with the financial means to attend higher education. However, in reality the wages tied with low-skill or unskilled employment do not often allow RB people to put aside savings to pay for higher education, especially if they are providing for families as well (Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017).

Scholars have indicated that a lack of information about higher education opportunities and established pathways to access them are potentially significant barriers that may make it difficult for RB people to enter tertiary education (Bajwa et al., 2017; Hannah, 1999; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). RB individuals may not know what the differences are between educational institutions and programmes or how to identify which one would be most compatible with their needs and aspirations (Bajwa et al., 2017). As a result of an "employment-first" focus, resettlement agencies are often not equipped to provide individuals who are interested in pursuing tertiary education with the proper information to attain their goals (Hannah, 1999; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). Resettlement agencies ideally serve as liaisons between interested individuals and higher education institutions, but SRBs have recounted instances where they were improperly advised about how to start their journey into accessing higher education opportunities or, worse, actively discouraged from pursuing higher education (Abamosa, 2015; Hannah, 1999; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). In many instances, SRBs who were able to access tertiary education recounted having to perform much of the legwork to get into tertiary education on their own, though they could have benefitted greatly from extra guidance with tasks such as filling out applications and crafting personal statements (Hannah, 1999; Stevenson & Willott, 2007).

Education institutions themselves may also not adequately recognize, appreciate, or enable the aspirations that RB individuals have for higher education. Similar to resettlement agency staff, secondary and post-secondary institution staff may not adequately understand the background or needs of RB individuals looking to access

tertiary education (Hannah, 1999; Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Education staff may offer advice about accessing institutions (for example, applying for particular programmes or general admission to an institution) that is not applicable to or helpful for prospective SRBs (Hannah, 1999). Furthermore, secondary school advisors and tertiary education staff may steer prospective students toward particular programmes or courses that they think would be better suited for a student's literacy or support needs, thereby removing the agency of students to make their own decisions about their future study (Gately, 2015).

Additionally, tertiary education institutions may not be entirely welcoming of SRBs due to stereotypes, primarily ones concerning a perceived lack of language and academic ability (Hannah, 1999). Hannah's (1999) qualitative study in the UK observed that "encouragement received [from universities to apply for admission] was negatively correlated with the prestige of the institution and the level of popularity of the subject area the enquirer was interested in" (Hannah, 1999, p. 159). While Hannah (1999, p. 159) postulated that the results may be a coincidence given the small sample size, SRBs in the study still felt undervalued, with one stating, "when these courses could have their pick of the brightest school leavers, why should they give more places to… refugees?".

2.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS

Regardless of whether student selection is biased toward SRBs to this day (Hannah's 1999 study was conducted 20 years ago), Kanno & Varghese's (2010) qualitative study observed that SRBs may "self-eliminate" themselves from pursuing tertiary education because they believe they will not be admitted. How tertiary education institutions welcome prospective SRBs may play a role in this "self-elimination" (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Lack of encouragement to pursue higher education from secondary school teachers and outside organizations has also been found to perpetuate self-selection out of further education, with scholars and SRBs within their studies recounting instances where prospective students had been deterred from pursuing tertiary education at the advice of teachers and practitioners (Abamosa, 2015; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Stevenson & Willott, 2010). Since the majority of studies centred on

higher education access are primarily deficit-based and focus on barriers, instances of good practice are not usually reported. Yet, I assume that there are resettlement agency and education staff (both secondary and post-secondary) that have strongly enabled and encouraged SRBs to pursue higher education opportunities, thereby actively supported them through these processes.

Although resettlement organizations and educational institutions may contribute to, or create, barriers that make access to tertiary education more difficult for refugee-background people, the aspiration and determination of prospective SRBs to pursue higher education often overcomes these challenges. Indeed, there are strong narratives of self-advocacy and agency within the journeys SRBs took to reach tertiary education (Abamosa, 2015; Gately, 2015; Hirano, 2014; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011). In addition, SRBs' personal networks often help in their journey to access higher education, with word of mouth information from family members, friends, and community members cited as key supports in accessing and utilizing information (Bajwa et al., 2017; Hirano, 2014; Naidoo et al., 2018).

2.2.3 FINANCES

Finances often play a large role in whether or not a prospective SRB can access higher education (Abamosa, 2015; Ferede, 2010; Hannah, 1999; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Kavuro, 2013; Naidoo et al., 2018; O'Rourke, 2011; Stevenson & Willott, 2007; UNESCO, 2015). SRBs often come from low socio-economic backgrounds, and many prospective SRBs may not be able to afford the costs of attending tertiary education (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Kavuro, 2013). Ferede's (2010) qualitative study on the structural factors associated with higher education access for SRBs in Canada also found that prospective students and their families may overestimate the actual costs of attending higher education because they may not know of, or understand how, to access government or institutional financial supports. As a consequence, prospective students may self-eliminate themselves from considering tertiary education a possible pathway (Ferede, 2010).

Other research shows that access to government or tertiary institution-specific scholarships or grants can significantly aid prospective SRBs in enrolling in higher education programmes, with many citing adequate financial support as being the most important reason that they were able to pursue their dreams of attending higher education within their country of resettlement (Hirano, 2014; Naidoo et al., 2018).

2.2.4 CULTURE, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

The role of family, culture, and community in accessing tertiary education is a paradox. On the one hand, a few academics have observed that culture and community can inhibit prospective SRBs from pursuing tertiary education (Joyce, 2010; Perry & Mallozi, 2017) whereas others have emphasized the importance of both in enabling access to it (Bajwa, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018).

A few studies have cited cultural context and beliefs, particularly gendered expectations, as a potential barrier that may dissuade prospective SRBs from pursuing higher education (Joyce, 2010; Perry & Mallozi, 2017). Perry and Mallozzi's (2017) discourse analysis with Congolese refugees in the United States explored the cultural worldviews of their RB participants in relation to accessing educational opportunities. The researchers found that male participants indicated that they felt obligated to prioritize work over education, as they viewed themselves as the primary financial contributors to the family unit whereas women (particularly those that were married) felt responsible to provide childcare while the men worked. Thus, they concluded that there was not enough time or financial resources for many of their participants to consider accessing higher education, although a few were able to pursue educational opportunities despite dominant expectations within their communities (Perry & Mallozzi, 2017).

In contrast, other studies viewed culture and communities as resources that helped prospective SRBs to access tertiary education. As stated earlier, community members often help one another to realize their goals of attending tertiary institutions by providing word-of-mouth information, advice, and guidance that resettlement

organizations and educational institutions themselves are not equipped to provide (Bajwa, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018).

2.2.5 NON-TRANSFERABLE QUALIFICATIONS AND LOST DOCUMENTS

Academics have observed that resettled refugees in countries such as the United States and Australia are more likely to have stronger educational backgrounds than other categories of immigrants (Hannah, 1999; Kerwin, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017). Many SRBS who attend university in a host country have already attained tertiary-level qualifications in their country of origin (Abamosa, 2015; Hannah, 1999; Morrice, 2013).

However, many host countries do not recognize these qualifications, preferring to recognize degrees obtained from institutions in the global North because they are better equipped to ensure that educational standards are comparable (Hannah, 1999, Perry & Mallozzi, 2011). These concerns of higher education institutions are reflected in the UNESCO's (2015) *Education 2030 Agenda*, which states that "the comparability, recognition, and quality assurance of qualifications has become a growing area of concern " for institutions given the rise of international learners seeking qualifications outside of their home countries (p. 41).

While the *Agenda* does not reference what type of institutions are or should be concerned with qualification quality, they say the "concern" primarily lies with qualifications from countries where "administrative systems are weak", implying that tertiary education institutions that are concerned about quality are typically in more developed countries (UNESCO, p. 41). Because RB individuals frequently have narratives of forced migration due to reasons such as political instability, it is likely that the majority of SRBs with existing tertiary qualifications obtained from institutions in countries that UNESCO would deem as having "weak administrative systems", thereby throwing the quality of the qualifications previously received into doubt. It is often left to the host country institution to determine whether or not they will recognize the

qualification(s), and the decision may differ between institutions within the same country.

If tertiary institutions choose not to recognize previous qualifications or if prospective SRBs are unable to prove that they obtained their qualifications, individuals are often required to prove their preparedness by repeating courses they have already completed in their country of origin, or by sitting language proficiency exams (Hannah, 1999; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011). Because these courses usually require time and extra money to complete, SRBs may be dissuaded from pursuing further tertiary education and instead pursue immediate employment. Additionally, the concept of having to start over from scratch after attaining hard-earned tertiary qualifications in their country of origin can be very frustrating and demoralizing for prospective SRBs, thereby influencing individuals to turn away from tertiary education as a viable option within a host country (O'Rourke, 2011).

2.2.6 LANGUAGE

Language is a well-cited barrier that makes initial access to higher education institutions difficult for SRBs (Bajwa et al. 2017; Barbour, 2016; Naidoo et al., 2018; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). Refugees often arrive in their host countries as language learners, even if they have previous educational qualifications from their country of origin. For those SRBs who had significant interruptions in their formal schooling, their language proficiency is often lower upon arrival to their resettlement countries, thereby often prolonging their journey to get to tertiary education (Capps et al., 2015; Hannah, 1999; Joyce et al., 2010).

The first step to accessing higher education for those who arrive without much background in the language of their host country is language-learning classes. Regardless of resettlement pathway, the language-learning process requires time and money, neither of which RB individuals are likely to have in abundance. The cost and time spent toward language-learning courses is particularly high if an individual has an end-goal of accessing higher education, as many of the free or subsidized courses

prepare refugee-background individuals for low-skill, low-wage employment rather than higher education (Bajwa et al., 2017; Hannah, 1999; Morrice, 2007; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017). Thus, to adequately prepare for entering higher education, prospective SRBs may have to enrol in additional language courses that are more advanced and specifically geared toward tertiary education preparation, which may not be subsidized. Once prospective SRBs complete intermediate to advanced level language courses, tertiary education institutions often require language learners to pay to sit proficiency exams before offering admission which creates additional financial and structural barriers that may make it even more challenging for SRBs to enter tertiary education.

2.3 EXPERIENCES WITHIN TERTIARY EDUCATION

As with access *to* tertiary education, researchers have primarily focused on discussing key barriers *within* tertiary education that may make it difficult for SRBs to succeed academically, personally and professionally. This section will discuss some of the major recurrent themes within the literature in relation to the experiences of SRBs in tertiary education, giving particular consideration to enablers of success alongside the more well-documented barriers.

2.3.1 LANGUAGE

Language proficiency, particularly as it pertains to academic literacy, has been noted as a potentially significant barrier that makes it difficult for students to succeed academically within university (Bajwa et al. 2017; Barbour, 2016; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Kong et al., 2016; Morrice, 2013; Naidoo et al., 2018). It is common for SRBs to be near-fluent in the language of their host countries but to struggle with academic language for tertiary education assignments (Harris & Marlowe, 2011). Because their language comprehension is commonly behind their peers', SRBs often spend more time on their assignments and, as a result, experience academic burnout in greater frequency (Benseman, 2014).

SRBs in several studies often expressed concerns about the equity of marking schemes in relation to language proficiency. UK academics Mangan and Winters's (2017) meta-ethnography of international research on SRBs in higher education found that SRBs were worried lecturers neglected to take the extra language barriers SRBs often have to overcome into consideration when grading assignments, and didn't factor these considerations into their making schemes. Harris & Marlowe's (2011) qualitative study on African SRBs in Australia observed similar findings as well. For example, students suggested that lecturers could be more understanding when marking assignments that may have small grammatical or punctuation errors, and felt frustrated that they had to fight harder than their peers due to the extra time needed to process the language used in course materials and assignments (Harris & Marlowe, 2011).

The experiences of staff, while not as commonly explored as students, have also been analysed on relation to SRB language proficiency. Harris & Marlowe (2011) considered the perspectives of staff who interacted with SRBs, particularly in terms of potential academic language barriers. In the study, staff were concerned that they did not have the "specific capacity or time to address issues relating to... language writing and comprehension" due to being overstretched with other work commitments (p. 189). Additionally, staff interviewed didn't feel properly instructed on how to mark assignments with language comprehension issues: if lecturers were "unable to understand a student's writing (or feel they must *interpret* or ascribe meaning to what is written), they cannot accurately assess whether the student has learned key concepts" (Harris & Marlowe, 2011, p. 190). In many cases, lecturers went above the call of duty and dedicated their own personal time to work one-on-one with SRBs to mitigate language comprehension issues, but noted that this often came at the expense of their own time for research and writing (Harris & Marlowe, 2011). This study highlighted a need for specific programmes to be developed and staff to be hired that would work specifically with SRBs in order to take some of the pressure off staff who do not have those responsibilities explicitly written into their job descriptions (Harris & Marlowe, 2011).

Hirano's (2014) study on the academic literacy of seven first-year SRBs at a small liberal arts college in the USA offers a contrasting narrative to those depicted in Harris and Marlowe's (2011) study. Although Hirano's (2014) participants did initially struggle with academic literacy, she found that they were able to cope with the rigours of writing assignments due to the "highly supportive" nature and small size of the college (Hirano, 2014, p. 48). While Harris & Marlowe (2011) observed that their participants were less likely to take advantage of academic support services that would help them with their assignments, Hirano's (2014) participants took advantage of the support services on campus such as the writing centre and writing tutors, and flourished with the added supports. Additionally, academic staff interviewed in Hirano's (2014) study were more accepting of language comprehension errors, with one lecturer stating that she "'cuts them some slack in terms of how I grade the mechanics of their writing in their paper'" (p. 43).

It is important to note that Hirano's (2014) study was conducted at a small private college, whereas most of the studies on the experiences of SRBs, including Harris & Marlowe's (2011) study, take place at larger public universities. As Hirano reflects, the college featured in her study was an "almost ideal" setting for SRBs to enter because of how privileged and well-resourced the private institution was; she also observed that other institutions, particularly larger ones, may not be able to focus on individual students in the same ways. Overall, Hirano's research presents an interesting case study to consider in terms of how tertiary education institutions react and adapt to SRBs with lower levels of academic language and literacy comprehension.

2.3.2 NAVIGATING INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS

In a similar vein to language proficiency, scholars have also observed that many SRBs arrive at host country universities with a limited knowledge of their host country's academic systems and structures (Bajwa et al., 2017; Horner et al, 2006; Naidoo et al., 2018; Reid et al., 2017). The increasing reliance of tertiary education institutions on technology to disseminate information about courses, programmes of study, and support services can make it difficult for SRBs to access information on how to navigate

institutional systems, particularly if SRBs are coming from backgrounds where they did not have reliable access to technology (Bajwa et al. 2017; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Kong et al., 2016). For example, in Bajwa et al.'s (2017) study, SRB participants were repeatedly directed to websites to access information after they approached their schools for support, an procedure which they found "dismay[ing]" since they found it "challenging to navigate the wealth of information on these websites" (p. 60). However, for students more technology and internet literate, this barrier may not be as significant.

Additionally, students may not know when or if it is appropriate to ask for help from lecturers and university staff because they may come from cultural backgrounds where asking for help or approaching those in positions of power deviates from cultural norms (Harris & Marlowe, 2011). The participants in Hirano's (2014) study, however, readily requested help when they needed it, perhaps due to the small size of the school they were attending and its inclusive nature.

Finally, research has observed that existing university facilities may not adequately fit the cultural and/or religious needs of some minority students. UK geographer Peter Hopkins's (2010) study on the experiences of Muslim students within a university in the UK highlighted a lack of provisions and facilities in place for these students.[1] Students noted an absence of halal food on or near campus, and articulated a wish for a centrally-located mosque on campus (Hopkins, 2010). Additionally, students occasionally struggled with socializing at university, as the majority of university-sponsored events were hosted at pubs which made many Muslim students, particularly those who did not drink, uncomfortable (Hopkins, 2010). While the study did not focus specifically on SRBs and rather on Muslim students generally, it provides an interesting case study for how a lack of cultural and religious provisioning could possibly affect SRBs within higher education.

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[1] While Hopkins's (2010) study does not focus on SRBs specifically, many SRBs come from regions where Islam is the predominant religion and may be practicing Muslims. Thus, the findings of his study may only be applicable to *some* SRBs.

2.3.3 "TRAUMA"

One of the most hotly contested themes in the literature centred on the experiences of SRBs within higher education, and perhaps throughout the larger literature on refugee studies, is trauma. Several academics have cited trauma as a barrier that could potentially affect the experiences and successes of SRBs within education (Benseman, 2014; Joyce et al., 2010; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). Benseman's (2014) study on ESOL learners reported that one of the largest differences between SRBs and their peers was the greater significance of having their emotional needs met, needs which were often precipitated by family separation, culture shock, and having previously lived in dangerous situations. Joyce et al.'s (2010) reported similar findings, stating: "some participants expressed a sense of anxiety and emotional distress while studying… this involved carrying the burden of their refugee background" (p. 90). As a result, these studies found that students may be more distracted in their studies and take longer to complete assignments in comparison to their non-SRB peers, and may also require more mental health support (Benseman, 2014; Joyce et al., 2010; Stevenson & Willott, 2007).

However, academics are shifting away from the deficit-based label of "trauma" to evaluate SRB experiences within higher education. Harris et. al, (2015) argues that the stereotypes and mainstream discourses that depict a homogenous, deficit-based refugee experience of deeply embedded trauma "limits the potential" of students (p. 1227). As Mupenzi (2018) adds, SRBs' "future aspirations are crippled by labelling them as victims and traumatized people without agency or history" (p. 132). Indeed, several studies have emerged that contest the mainstream discourse that portrays SRBs as emotionally-scarred victims, choosing instead to highlight the successes and resilience of SRBs (Harris et al., 2011; Harris et al., 2015; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018). For example, Harris, Spark & Chi's (2011) study showcased a student who indicated that her wellbeing had increased since attending university; she reported that she was not distracted by thoughts of her home country or previous life experiences.

Although scholars are shifting away from viewing the experiences of SRBs through the deficit-based lens of trauma, it is important to acknowledge that individual SRBs may

need mental health support during their time at tertiary education institutions, just like any other student that attends university. However, Mupenzi (2018) and other scholars have argued is that it is dangerous to homogenize the experiences of those within the label "SRB"; homogenization has the potential to lead to the development of institutional practices framed to address deficit-based conceptions of what it means to be "RB". Such practices miss the larger, richer picture, which is the diversity of individual experiences of those who identify with the label. Not all SRBs are traumatised, and educational practice should not be developed to react to the trauma that *all* refugees are commonly implied to have (Mupenzi, 2018).

2.3.4 FINANCES

As with accessing higher education, financial supports (or lack thereof) can have a large influence on the overall experiences of SRBs. Because many SRBs come from low-income backgrounds, access to grants and scholarships can play a key role in the retention of SRBs within higher education institutions (Abamosa, 2015; Morrice, 2013; Morrice, 2013; Naidoo et al., 2018). For example, in Naidoo et al.'s (2018) Australian study, a participant disclosed this sentiment to interviewers, stating, "'I don't think I would have finished my degree if I had to think about paying for accommodation and all that'" (p. 95). Scholars have also observed that SRBs may be more likely to work to support themselves while pursuing full or part time study due to a lack of financial capital, which can sometimes present difficulties while studying (Abamosa, 2015; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Morrice, 2013). SRBs may also work to financially support their friends and family in their host country and/or overseas (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Morrice, 2013). These added employment obligations and financial pressures may make it more difficult for SRBs to focus on tertiary education commitments and, as a result, add stress to SRBs or, worse still, it may influence them to reconsider continuing tertiary education altogether (Morrice, 2013).

2.3.5 DISCRIMINATION AND IDENTITY

Experiences of invalidation and discrimination are prominently recounted throughout the literature on the experiences of SRBs within host country higher education

institutions. SRBs in various studies felt that tertiary education staff seemed oblivious to or unaware of what it means to come from a RB, particularly as it relates to prospective barriers that may come up during tertiary education attendance and the diversity of experiences within the label "RB" (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Kong et al., 2016; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018).

Mangan and Winter's (2017) meta-ethnography of qualitative research with SRBs within higher education found that, throughout the literature, "there was a sense that many [staff] failed to recognize the factors which contributed to refugee-background students' performances" (p. 495). One of the researchers' examples of staff invalidating or misrecognizing the needs of SRBs were instances of educators consistently speaking too fast and refusing requests for clarification, an observation also demonstrated in Harris & Marlowe's (2011) study.

Additionally, SRBs disclosed instances where they felt their intelligence was underestimated and their opinions invalidated by both educators and their student peers (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018). For example, a participant interviewed in Harris and Marlowe's (2011) study lamented: "I can see it in the lecturers' faces, they see [a black student for] the first time… when you talk it's like they look at you almost as if they don't expect anything to come out of your mouth. And I feel so insulted by such an assumption that I should be stupid…" (p. 190). Indeed, Mangan & Winter's (2017) meta-ethnography observed multiple instances of dismissal of intellectual ability, where SRBs felt their "contributions were less valid or valued than others" in the classroom (p. 495).

Perhaps because of the potential discrimination and invalidation experienced within higher education settings, as well as wider societal deficit-based discourse relating to refugee-background people, academics have observed that SRBs are often hesitant to disclose their identity to peers and staff members (Mangan & Winter, 2017; Morrice, 2011; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018). The act of seeking to avoid the negative labels and stigma associated with being from a RB is deeply understandable. However,

choosing to keep a refugee-background identity secret creates a challenge for tertiary education institution staff who are trying to provide more targeted support for SRBs, but only know who the SRBs are at their institution if those individuals self-disclose (Mangan & Winter, 2017). Additionally, even if students felt inclined to disclose their background, many educational institutions do not provide areas for students to disclose this information on their enrolment forms and/or have an adequate database that education providers can access to obtain this information (Mangan & Winter, 2017).

The studies that have assessed discrimination, invalidation, and complexities surrounding identity have highlighted a need for enhanced training for staff to better understand the variety of experiences and assets within the refugee-background label (Mangan & Winter, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018). Higher education teaching and support staff play a major role in the retention rates of SRBs: the more educated they are about potential SRB experiences, the more likely they are to create a welcoming and enabling learning culture which could help in achieving a parity of participation for SRBs (Mangan & Winter, 2017, p. 107).

2.3.6 COMMUNITY, FAMILY, AND FAITH

Studies show that higher education institutions may be isolating and culturally alienating settings for SRBs, particularly during their first year (Harris et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018).

Scholars have observed that it can be difficult for SRBs to see themselves represented within the demographics of university student bodies, or to know how to go about connecting with other RB people who have gone through the same acclimation process (Bajwa et al., 2017; Joyce et al., 2010; Mupenzi, 2018). Social networks and friendships established within higher education institutions often positively influence the experiences SRBs have within these institutions, and also increase their educational resilience (Mupenzi, 2018). Peer networks at have been shown to help SRBs access the information they need as well as provide them with a strong sense of belonging within tertiary education institutions (Bajwa et al., 2017; Hirano, 2014; Mupenzi, 2018).

A few scholars have explored how mentorship programmes that either connect SRBs with host country natives or SRBs with other SRBs could help develop the peer networks SRBs have within tertiary education institutions and develop cross-cultural understanding (Bajwa et al., 2017; Vickers et al., 2017). On the other hand, mainstream university culture can also temporarily or permanently undermine the educational resilience of SRBs. This phenomenon is exemplified by the story of Solomon in Naidoo et al.'s (2018) case study, wherein the individual found that participating in mainstream Australian drinking culture to feel included left him struggling to find work/life balance during his first year; thereafter, he made the decision to limit his drinking. It is important to note that the issue of adjusting to university culture is not exclusive to SRBs. Many students, regardless of background, may encounter difficulties in adjusting to a university's culture.

Scholars have also found that community and family can both promote and undermine the educational resilience of SRBs within higher education institutions. Luster et al.'s (2009) qualitative study on former Sudanese refugees in the United States advocates for the positive role community and family can play in the lives of SRBs, stating that "maintaining attachment with caring and supportive people, such as family members, mentors, neighbours, and people in the community" can help them to cope with the rigors of education (p. 203). Indeed, family and community members, particularly if they themselves have already undergone tertiary education programmes within the host country, can be important sources of information and advice for current SRBs (Bajwa et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2015; Mupenzi, 2018; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). However, community expectations and family demands can also present difficulties for SRBs within tertiary education. SRBs in multiple studies recounted being expected to take time away from studies to support family members financially or within day-to-day activities such as translation (Ferede, 2010; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Harris et al., 2013; Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016). Expectations to attend community events regularly can also be overwhelming for SRBs, because family and community members

may underestimate the amount of time study requires, especially if the individual seeks to achieve high marks (Harris & Marlowe, 2011).

A few studies have recounted instances where faith and faith-based community networks have enhanced the experiences of SRBs within higher education. Mupenzi's (2018) study briefly explored the potential for faith to enhance the educational resilience of SRBs within higher education, stating that it has the possibility to aid SRBs in overcoming challenging circumstances and bring them peace of mind. Additionally, Naidoo et al. (2018) recounted how, in one of their case studies, a participant was able to "build links into the broader Australian community" by attending church and participating in youth group events, which provided him with "crucial" mentors that assisted him more than those at his actual educational institution (p. 94-95).

2.3.7 MOTIVATION, AGENCY, AND RESILIENCE

Most RB individuals have high aspirations for themselves in relation to attending and completing tertiary education in resettlement contexts (Abamosa, 2015; Gately, 2015; Hannah, 1999; Joyce et al., 2010; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). As Joyce et al. (2010) wrote in her study, "participants were extremely motivated and ambitious… regardless of the varied difficulties associated with enrolling and completing their university degrees, students are extremely determined to complete their studies" (p. 93).

While high aspirations and motivation are frequently referenced by researchers, only a few studies delve deeper into asset-based concepts such as resilience and agency (Earnest, De Mori, & Timler, 2010; Mupenzi, 2018, Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). The construct of resilience within education typically refers to students' abilities to overcome adversity and succeed academically despite difficult circumstances" (Portnoi & Kwong, 2019, p. 437), and this study follows Varghese's (2012) definition of agency which states it is "how individuals can exercise their will to determine their own fate" within a situation or institution (p. 151). Mupenzi's (2018) research delved heavily into

the concept of educational resilience of SRBs within Australian tertiary education institutions, observing that that "refugee-background students' ability to continue their education is a result of their inner strength in managing adversity" as well as through various government, institutional, community, and family supports (p. 139-140). Shapiro & MacDonald's (2017) discourse analysis of the written and oral narratives of Najib, a Somali SRB in the USA, touched on resilience as well but emphasized the role agency plays in the lives of SRBs. Throughout Najib's oral and written accounts of his story from primary school all the way up to obtaining an associate's degree, he consistently responds proactively to each challenge he faces and is able to advocate for himself (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017).

The goals and dreams of SRBs, combined with an attitude of "not tak[ing] anything for granted" resulting from a narrative of forced migration, means that many students tend to be "highly resourceful and adaptive" (Mupenzi, 2018, p. 144). This view challenges many other studies which view a forced migration narrative as one that may inhibit rather than enhance the ability of SRBs to succeed within higher education (such as Stevenson & Willott, 2007; Joyce et al., 2010), and has interesting and important implications for future practice within the field of tertiary education (see 2.5).

2.4 NEW ZEALAND LITERATURE

Very little research has been done on the experiences of SRBs within education generally in New Zealand in comparison to other countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Where research has been carried out in New Zealand, it has primarily focused on the experiences of primary, secondary school, or adult ESOL learners. Specifically, most of these studies focus on literacy and language learning experiences, practices, and techniques. However, several observations made in these studies resonate with the themes identified from the wider international literature on SRBs and tertiary education in resettlement countries.

For example, Geraldine McCarthy's (2016) study on refugee-migrant language learning within New Zealand secondary schools found that friendship in the classroom - both

with RB and non-RB peers - had the potential to increase English language learning uptake. While not a study centred in tertiary education, this finding echoes some of the sentiments expressed by international authors about the positive role peers may play in the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education, such as helping to develop a sense of belonging and community within an unfamiliar setting (Bajwa et al., 2017; Hirano, 2014; Mupenzi, 2018). Wendy Calder's (2014) research on SRBs within New Zealand primary and secondary schools emphasized the importance of staff valuing the individually distinct narratives and cultures of the SRBs, a point which reverberates in the calls for tertiary education staff to acknowledge and understand the diversity of SRB experiences in the wider international literature (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Kong et al., 2016; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018). Pat Strauss & Frank Smedley's (2009) research into New Zealand primary and secondary schools' strategies for welcoming SRBs similarly emphasized the important role staff play in the experiences of SRBs, and like Calder (2014), proposed cross-cultural professional development for staff. However, Strauss & Smedley (2009) went one step further by advocating for the hiring of staff specifically to support SRBs.

Although not a report centred on education specifically, Jody McBrien's (2014) critical analysis of New Zealand's Refugee Resettlement Strategy indicated that the country's top priority for newly resettled refugees was employment, which aligned with the international literature that documented similar findings in other Western resettlement countries such as Australia, the UK, and the United States (Bajwa, 2017; Ferede, 2010; Hannah, 1999; Morrice, 2007; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017). Consequently, accessing any education outside of subsidised English courses was made more difficult for prospective SRBs (McBrien, 2014).

As detailed in 1.3, the handful of studies centred on the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand tertiary education institutions have all connected back to GEOG 404: The Geography of Development Studies, a postgraduate research course at VUW taught by Sara Kindon. Like the several studies conducted in other resettlement countries that highlighted difficulties SRBs may have in navigating or understanding tertiary

institutional systems (Bajwa et al., 2017; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Naidoo et al, 2018), Horner et al.'s (2006) GEOG 404 study found that SRBs at VUW were not utilizing support services on campus due to issues arising from a lack of awareness, mistrust, and misunderstandings of the different campus support systems.

The findings of international studies that emphasized the importance of peer connections for SRBs within tertiary education (Bajwa et al., 2017; Hirano, 2014; Mupenzi, 2018) are re-iterated in Evans et al.'s (2008) GEOG 404 study. Their study is unique in the international body of literature, in that it is the only one that analyses the potential of a SRB club at a tertiary education institution, as well as the experiences within it. The report cited the VUW club as an important way for SRBs to create friendships outside of their usual social networks, as well as an important means of feeling socially connected and included at university.

Roberts' (2010) unpublished report for the VUW Vice Chancellor identified areas where SRBs at VUW needed extra support, such as with language comprehension; this assertion is in keeping with international findings that show that instructors may overestimate their students' academic language comprehension given that many SRBs that enter tertiary education are fluent or near-fluent conversationally (Bajwa et al., 2017; Harris & Marlowe, 2011).

Like many international academics, New Zealand researchers have highlighted that finances can present challenges for SRBs hoping to access or continue their tertiary studies. ChangeMaker's (2011) joint-research project with VUW academics and GEOG 404 students, as well as O'Rourke's (2011) study, called attention to financial barriers to tertiary study that SRBs may encounter. The two studies jointly recognized the socially isolating nature of university settings for SRBs, echoing studies conducted overseas (Harris et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016; Naidoo et al., 2018).

Finally, the high aspirations and motivations of SRBs to succeed within university were detailed by all GEOG 404 Studies (Evans et al., 2008; Horner et al., 2006; O'Rourke,

2011; Reid, 2017), mirroring several other international studies (Abamosa, 2015; Gately, 2015; Hannah, 1999; Joyce et al., 2010; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017; Stevenson & Willott, 2007).

Within the small body of existing literature centred on SRBs accessing and studying within higher education institutions in New Zealand, there are a few notable gaps of perspective and current understanding. First, it is critically important to note that none of the authors of New Zealand studies are RB themselves. While literature produced in other countries is overwhelmingly produced by non-RB authors, there are at least a few research studies written by RB scholars in countries such as Australia and the UK that lend invaluable perspectives to the conversation.

Additionally, research on SRBs within higher education programmes in New Zealand has primarily been limited to university settings, with almost all of them occurring at one university (VUW). Only one study, the ChangeMakers et al. (2011) report, conducted research at a national level and incorporated SRB perspectives attending non-university TEIs such as polytechnics.

In comparison to international research, the New Zealand studies on the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education have been limited in terms of their scope: all but one of the GEOG 404 studies were conducted only at VUW, whereas many international studies span a number of institutions to obtain a wider understanding of national or region-specific SRB needs. Additionally, much of the literature has been support services focused, and does not adequately consider the influence of family, faith, and community, which many international studies have included in their analysis. Finally, the existing research in New Zealand, like the majority of international studies, is largely situated within deficit-based frameworks. Barriers to entry and areas in need of improvement are readily identified, but examples of good tertiary practices are rarely highlighted.

2.5 CLOSING REFLECTIONS: THE SHIFT TOWARD STRENGTHS-BASED STUDIES

Many scholars, particularly ones publishing studies in the early-to-mid 2000s, have "problematize[d] refugee-background students themselves [by] cataloguing their difficulties" within higher education, implying that barriers to achievement within higher education often stem from the refugee background itself (Vickers et al., 2017, p. 198). Essentially, these studies have asked, "what are the specific attributes of SRBs that make tertiary education outcomes unequal in comparison to non-refugee background students?"

Scholars are currently encouraging a shift away from these deficit-based framings when considering barriers to higher education access and completion for SRBs, advocating instead for the adoption of strengths-based approaches. As refugee background researcher Alfred Mupenzi (2013) stated, "it is a choice by host [institutions] whether to concentrate on the visible and evident adversities experienced and thus define them in terms of deficit," thereby effectively stripping SRB research participants of power and agency (p. 125). Additionally, deficit-based studies run the risk of strengthening pre-existing biases toward RB communities by perpetuating the perception of these communities as being needy, ostensibly foreign, and non-contributors. This negative stigma, which discourages many SRBs from disclosing their identities in academic settings for fear of discrimination, can ultimately impede them from accessing beneficial support services and relationships within universities (Abamosa, 2015; Morrice, 2013; Mupenzi, 2018), thereby rendering the push toward strengths-based frameworks even more crucial. However, only a handful of academics have actually implemented strengths-based frameworks in their work.

According to Mupenzi (2018), the fact that SRBs are at a host country tertiary institution is an indicator of incredible accomplishment given the statistics, not to mention the challenges they are likely to have faced earlier in their lives. Focusing on SRBs' survival strengths and resilience can "boost their morale to pursue [and complete] higher education" - it reverses the discourse of vulnerability and strife commonly attached to

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SRBs and replaces it with one of power and remarkable accomplishment (Mupenzi, 2018, p. 125). The authors who have adopted strengths-based frameworks all highlight strong accounts of agency, determination, and critical awareness that run counter to mainstream deficit-based depictions of SRBs. In adopting a "what's working?" research framework over a "what's not working?" perspective, I am hoping to similarly position my thesis as a strengths-based study that highlights the accomplishments of SRBs, staff, and universities.

3. NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT: REFUGEES AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

This chapter situates this thesis within the context of New Zealand's historical and contemporary refugee resettlement trends. Additionally, it considers New Zealand's tertiary education landscape, particularly in relation to pathways and supports for SRBs to enter and succeed within New Zealand tertiary education institutions.

Immigration New Zealand (2015) follows the UNHCR's definition of "refugee", adding that they are a person "outside of his or her home country [who] faces a real chance of being harmed if returned to that country… that needs and deserves protection in New Zealand" (p. 4). The New Zealand government officially considers anyone to be a former refugee if they were accepted through one of four pathways: the Refugee Quota Programme, the Family Support Sponsorship Programme, the Community Organisation Sponsorship (CORS) Programme, or if they were granted Refugee and Protection Status as an asylum-seeker (see 3.1). It is important to acknowledge that not all who identify as RB are officially considered former refugees by the government of New Zealand. Many people who have had experiences with forced migration and would identify as RB emigrate to New Zealand on visas (such as skilled migrant work visas) that do not recognise this history (Joe, Kindon, & O'Rourke, 2011).

New Zealand's first refugees were admitted in November 1944 after fleeing from the atrocities of World War II. However, formalised resettlement processes only became systematic when the 1986 Immigration Policy Review and Immigration Act of 1987 were developed (McBrien, 2014). These policies established a category for humanitarian immigration (primarily refugees) and created the Quota programme for refugee intake that is still in operation today (McBrien, 2014).

Since 2014, refugees admitted through the Quota and Family Reunification programmes, as well as those granted Refugee and Protection Status, come from twenty-six countries and four different continents, bringing with them hundreds of languages

and cultural practices (Refugee and Protection Unit, 2019a). Since 2009, the New Zealand government has primarily focused on admitting Quota refugees from the Asia/Pacific region (McBrien, 2014; Stephens, 2018). There were three core reasons behind New Zealand's decision to concentrate on admitting individuals from the region: cost (it is cheaper for the government to fly Quota refugees from the Asia/Pacific region); regional pressures (the government wanted to dissuade individuals from making the dangerous boat crossing by sea to New Zealand and believed that in admitting more refugees from the region, fewer would be pressured to arrive by boat); and 'broad security concerns' (the government was concerned that refugees would be falsifying claims about their backgrounds and be a threat to New Zealand society) (Stephens, 2018). The Quota policy revised in 2009 allocated 50% of Quota spots for refugees from the Asia/Pacific region, 15% from the Middle East, 17% from Africa, and 18% from the Americas: prior to the shift in focus, the regional intake was split around 30% each for Africa, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific (Stephens, 2018).

Current Quota admissions still reflect the shift in allocation: during the 2017-18 fiscal year, 519 out of 1020 admitted refugees came from the Asia/Pacific region (Government of New Zealand, 2018).[2] In 2018-19, many politicians and academics advocated for the government to reconsider the Quota allocation policy, with many considering the current framework discriminatory toward Middle Eastern and African refugees, who must have a "family criterion link" (family already living in New Zealand) to be considered for resettlement (Stephens, 2018). In October 2019, the New Zealand government terminated the family link criterion for refugees from Africa and the Middle East in response to scrutiny of the policy.

Within the past five years, the largest number of Quota arrivals came from Syria, followed by Myanmar, Colombia, and Afghanistan respectively (Immigration New

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[2] It is also important to also note that, in 2016, the New Zealand government established a separate category for Syrian refugees in response to the Syrian Civil War, meaning that Syrian refugees are not required to have the same family criterion link in order to be resettled in New Zealand. For the 2018/2019 year, they were allocated 250 Quota slots annually.

Zealand, 2019a). This reflects ongoing forced migration crises in or around these countries.

3.1 REFUGEE PATHWAYS TO NEW ZEALAND

As noted above, RB people are officially accepted to New Zealand via four pathways, as detailed below:

3.1.1 REFUGEE QUOTA PROGRAMME

The first, and most common pathway, is through the New Zealand Refugee Quota Programme. The number of refugees resettled annually through the programme is determined every three years by the government. In 2019, the programme resettled roughly 1000 refugees. In 2020, the quota will increase to 1500 refugees per year. Refugees resettled via the Quota Programme are mandated refugees referred to Immigration New Zealand by UNHCR staff operating in areas with large numbers of mandated refugees (such as humanitarian camps). When Immigration New Zealand processes the applications from the UNHCR to determine who to accept through the Quota Programme, they consider the credibility of the refugee's case, their settlement prospects, security risks, immigration risks, health factors, and how well the refugee fits within Immigration's resettlement policy (Immigration New Zealand, 2019a).

Once a refugee is accepted through the Quota Programme, they travel to New Zealand on Immigration New Zealand funds and are granted permanent residency status upon arrival. Next, they undergo a 6-week orientation programme at Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre to introduce them to support systems, English courses, and day-to-day life within New Zealand.

After completing the orientation programme, Quota refugees are resettled in state housing or private rental accommodation selected by resettlement agencies in one of eight following regions within New Zealand: Auckland, Waikato, Manawatu, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill (Immigration New Zealand, 2019a).

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3.1.2 REFUGEE AND PROTECTION STATUS (ASYLUM)

The second pathway for refugees to obtain refugee status from the New Zealand government is by claiming refugee and protection status as an asylum seeker. This pathway requires individuals (who have not been officially mandated by the UNHCR) to pay their way into the country and claim asylum at a New Zealand port of entry. Alternatively, if the person is already beyond a port of entry within New Zealand, they can inform a government official or police constable that they intend to claim refugee and protected person status as an asylum seeker (Immigration New Zealand, 2015). The refugee must next lodge an asylum claim, usually with the help of a lawyer or licensed immigration advisor. It is typically a lengthy and expensive process that requires written statements, numerous documents, and an interview (Immigration New Zealand, 2015). After submitting the required documents and attending an interview, a Refugee Protection Officer will review the case and decide whether to allow the asylum seeker to settle within the country.

This pathway comes with more individual restrictions than the Quota Programme. For example, asylum seekers cannot leave New Zealand until their case has been processed (unless they want to drop their case), cannot work within New Zealand until their case has been approved, and they must find and pay for housing on their own (Immigration New Zealand, 2015). Additionally, the New Zealand government is very selective about who is granted refugee and protection status: over the last five years, only 33.9% of applications have been approved, averaging 118 people granted refugee and protection per financial year (Refugee and Protection Unit, 2019b).

It should also be acknowledged that those granted Refugee and Protection Status do not have access to the same benefits as individuals admitted through the Quota Refugee Programme (such as the Mangere orientation programme or housing placement by resettlement agencies).

3.1.3 REFUGEE FAMILY SUPPORT SPONSORSHIP

Former refugees can also arrive via the Refugee Family Support Sponsorship programme. The Family Support programme allows RB individuals (who arrived as Quota refugees or those who had their asylum cases approved) to petition the New Zealand government to invite immediate family members in foreign countries to apply for New Zealand resident visas.

Applications submitted by refugee background individuals living in New Zealand are sorted into two categories: Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 applications come from refugee background individuals with no immediate family members living with them in New Zealand, and receive priority from the NZ government. Tier 1 applicants can sponsor a parent, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, adult sibling or adult child, and that person's partner and/or dependent children (Immigration New Zealand, 2019b). Tier 2 sponsors can sponsor a parent, adult sibling, adult child, or grandparent (if that grandparent is the sponsor' legal guardian), and that person's partner and/or dependent children. An average of 313 permanent residence visas have been granted annually through the sponsorship programme since 2014 (Refugee and Protection Unit, 2019c).

Upon arrival in New Zealand, Family Support visa recipients are granted permanent residency. Sponsors are required to ensure that their family members are provided reasonable housing for the first two years of their lives in New Zealand (Immigration New Zealand, 2019b).

3.1.4 COMMUNITY ORGANISATION SPONSORSHIP

Finally, the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship programme (CORS), first piloted in 2017/2018, provides an alternate and additional form of admission for refugees to New Zealand that complements the annual quota (MBIE, 2019). The 2017/2018 pilot programme admitted 25 refugees to New Zealand who had been identified by the UNHCR as having the necessary skills (basic English and work experience and/or an educational qualification) for their successful resettlement. CORS refugees are granted permanent residency upon arrival in New Zealand. After spending

two weeks at Mangere for a shortened version of the orientation programme for Quota refugees, community-sponsored refugees are then supported by one of four faith-based community organizations in Nelson, Wellington, Timaru, and Christchurch to "quickly become independent and self-sufficient so that they are able to enter the labour market, navigate their communities, and access mainstream support services without requiring additional support" (MBIE, 2017, p. 4). The community organizations, primarily using community volunteers, commit to providing resettlement services to their sponsees for two years: housing, connections with local community organizations, and enrolment into government support programmes.

3.1.5 NON-TRADITIONAL PATHWAYS

In addition to these formal routes, some people who identify as refugee background may not have received official "refugee" status from the New Zealand government. For example, individuals from countries with recent conflicts such as Venezuela, Colombia, Zimbabwe and Iraq may have migrated to New Zealand on skilled migrant visas, but share a similar life narrative of forced migration with those who have been recognized as coming from a refugee background by the New Zealand government (Joe, Kindon, & O'Rourke, 2011).

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF NEW ZEALAND'S TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR

The benefits of obtaining tertiary education qualifications within New Zealand are well-documented. The MoE and MBIE's Tertiary Education Strategy (2014) agrees with the UN and UNESCO's perception of higher education as a conduit for larger societal development, writing that it:

> "*...offers a passport to success in modern life. It helps people improve their lives and the lives of those around them... [and] in turn people are better off, healthier and happier, and New Zealand is a more attractive place to live and work*" (p. 3).

Bachelors degree graduates earn on average 1.3 million NZD more over their working life than non-graduates, have 55% higher hourly wages than those with no qualifications, and have lower unemployment rates than New Zealanders without tertiary certifications (Universities New Zealand, 2018). Additionally, New Zealand university graduates are happier and healthier than those without tertiary qualifications: 83% of New Zealanders with tertiary-level qualifications (88% of bachelor degree graduates) or higher reported having high satisfaction with their lives in comparison to 77% life satisfaction for those without tertiary qualifications (Universities New Zealand, 2018). As such, the government regularly invests large amounts of funding into its tertiary education institutions, allotting 1.6% of its GDP ($4.56 billion NZD total) toward tertiary education in 2018 (Education Counts, 2019).

New Zealand is home to eight universities, sixteen polytechnics and institutes of technology, three wānanga, and 100+ private training establishments (PTEs). These institutions are defined by the programmes they provide as well as the status they are granted from the New Zealand government. Roughly 75% of New Zealand's tertiary students attend universities or polytechnics, while the remaining quarter attend wānanga or PTEs.
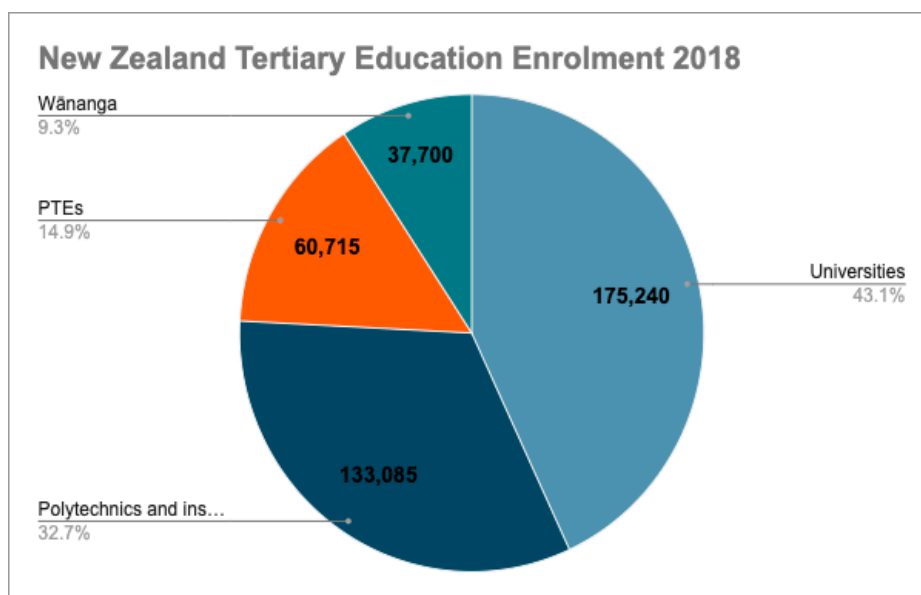
Figure 3.1. Total enrolment in all New Zealand tertiary education institutions.
Source: Author (using data from Education Counts, 2019).

3.2.1 UNIVERSITIES

Universities, as defined by the TEC (2019b), are characterized by a "wide diversity of teaching and research, especially at a higher level… [and] maintain, advance, disseminates, and assists the application of knowledge, promotes community learning, and develop intellectual independence". Universities administer three-year undergraduate degrees, as well as postgraduate certifications such as diplomas, Masters, and PhDs.[3] In 2018, New Zealand's eight universities enrolled 175,240 full time and part time students (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.2. A map of the locations of New Zealand's 8 universities.
Source: New Zealand Integrity Investment Limited. Retrieved from https://nzii.co.nz/study/tertiary/.

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[3] AUT, which gained university status in 2000, also offers short courses and certificates to its students, reflecting its origins as an institute of technology.

As shown in Figure 3.2, New Zealand's universities are located in urban locations. The 3 New Zealand cities with the highest populations (Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch) are collectively home to 6 out of New Zealand's 8 universities. Additionally, 6 out of the 8 resettlement regions (Auckland, Waikato, Manawatu, Wellington, and Dunedin) have universities within them.

3.2.2 POLYTECHNICS AND INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY

Defined by the TEC (2019b), polytechnics and institutes of technology are educational institutions that focus on "delivering technical, vocational, and professional education up to degree and postgraduate levels". In addition, they also promote applied research to support vocational learning. (TEC, 2019). In 2018, 133,085 full and part time students enrolled in New Zealand's sixteen polytechnics and institutes of technology (see Figure 3.1). In April 2020, the sixteen polytechnics and institutes of technology will merge together as a single entity to combat declining enrolment numbers and resultant financial deficits.

Figure 3.3. A map of the locations of New Zealand's 16 polytechnics and institutes of technology.
Source: ESPI Visa Consultants (2019). Retrieved from http://espiconsultants.com/list-of-universities-in-new-zealand/.

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Polytechnics and institutes of technology in New Zealand, double the number of universities, are more widely distributed throughout the country (as represented in Figure 3.3), and are located in less urbanized areas. Significantly, polytechnics and institutes of technology are represented in all eight resettlement regions, including Nelson and Invercargill, which are not represented by universities. As new refugee resettlement regions open from 2020 with the expansion of the Refugee Quota Programme, polytechnics and institutes of technology could see an increase in the number of SRBs attending as polytechnics are well-represented outside of main urban centres within New Zealand and would likely be the first place of enrolment for many students looking to start their journey within New Zealand's tertiary education system.

3.2.3 WĀNANGA

Wānanga are publically owned tertiary education institutions that provide education within Māori cultural contexts. They are characterized by teaching and research that "maintains, advances, disseminates and knowledge… [as well as] assist[ing] the application of knowledge regarding *ahuatanga Māori* (Māori tradition) according to Māori custom, *tikanga Māori*" (Ministry of Education, 1989, p. 302). Wānanga offer a wide variety of educational programmes including certificates, undergraduate degrees, and postgraduate certifications (including Masters and PhDs). Wānanga enrolled roughly 37,700 full and part time students in 2018 (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.4. A map showing the locations of wānanga campuses in New Zealand.
Source: Kerryn Pollock (2012). Retrieved from http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/map/34488/location-of-wananga-campuses-in-new-zealand-2012.

While there are only three wānanga within New Zealand (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Te Wānanga o Raukawa, and Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi), all three have campuses across the country (see Figure 3.4). All wānanga are committed to making learning more accessible and offer distance learning programmes, and many have satellite campuses across New Zealand where students can reach in-person courses and instructors. Similar to polytechnics and institutes of technology, as new refugee resettlement regions outside of main urban areas are considered with the expansion of the Refugee Quota Programme, wānanga could see greater numbers of SRBs enrolling.

3.2.4 PRIVATE TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS (PTES)

PTEs fall under a broad category called "TEOs" or "tertiary education organizations". TEOs are any organizations that supply tertiary education and/or training and/or assessment services (TEC, 2019b). PTEs are numerous, diverse, and wide ranging in the services they provide; many offer English language training since they are often geared toward international student markets. Over 100 PTEs exist within New Zealand. PTEs

are operated by a wide range of companies, and most often provide programmes in specific vocational niches, teaching primarily at certificate and diploma levels. PTEs enrolled 60,715 full and part time students in 2018 (Education Counts, 2019). While PTEs are scattered around the country, 75% of PTEs are located in Auckland (School Leavers NZ, 2019).

3.3 SRB PATHWAYS INTO UNIVERSITY

The pathways SRBs take into New Zealand universities are often incredibly varied, and often depend on factors such as their age upon arrival in New Zealand and whether or not they finished high school and/or obtained tertiary-level qualifications in their country of origin. Several of the more common pathways for those interested in attending university are listed as follows:

3.3.1 SECONDARY SCHOOL LEAVERS

For SRBs who immigrated to New Zealand at an age where they were able to directly into enrol into primary or secondary school (or who are second generation RB), the pathway to enrolment at university usually mirrors that of their non-SRB, domestic student peers.

To attend university directly after secondary school, students generally must:
- Meet NCEA University Entrance (UE requirements)
- Meet "guaranteed entry" NCEA entry score requirements if wishing to enrol at Auckland, VUW, Canterbury, Massey, or Otago
- Meet NCEA entry score requirements for their programme of choice (if applicable)

All universities have special admissions considerations for students with New Zealand citizenship or permanent residency who are over the age of 20 and were not able to meet UE requirements and university-specific entry scores. Special consideration is given to

prospective students from "under-represented groups", most commonly including Māori[4] and Pasifika[5] students.

A select few universities have created admission pathways that are unique to their institutions. For example, Auckland has a "Targeted Admission Scheme" for students from UA's Equity Target Groups who met UE, but were not able to reach the entry scores for their programme of choice at the university (University of Auckland, 2016). Auckland's Targeted Admission Scheme includes SRBs (see 3.5).

3.3.2 UNFINISHED HIGH SCHOOL OR LOW NCEA RESULTS

Some SRBs may have obtained the NCEA qualifications to graduate high school, but do not have the NCEA credits to directly enrol in university. Other SRBs may have turned 20 before they were able to obtain the qualifications to graduate from high school and/or directly enrol in university, aging them out of New Zealand's formalised secondary school programmes. To attend university, these students generally pursue:

- Apply for special admissions considerations and/or pathways (see above section)

  OR

- Enrol in adult education programmes (usually provided by PTEs and polytechnics) to obtain the NCEA scores required to attend their university and/or programme of choice

3.3.3 MATURE LEARNERS: NO PRIOR EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS OR LOW ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

To reach university, SRBs who have immigrated to New Zealand as mature learners with no previous background in English and previous educational qualifications (including both secondary and tertiary level education) usually follow this process:

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[4] Māori are New Zealand's indigenous Polynesian people, and all education institutions are required by law to honour the commitments stated in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) to support, provision, and protect Māori people and culture.
[5] Pasifika people are migrants and their descendents from Pacific Island nations.

1. Enrol in basic English language courses provided by community-based organisations (Benseman, 2014)

2. Transition from basic English courses into intermediate, more formalised courses at institutions such as PTEs or polytechnics (Benseman, 2014)

3. Transition into more advanced English language programmes run by or affiliated with specific New Zealand universities (Benseman, 2014)

4. Transition into a Foundation Studies English programme (usually an academic literacy-intensive programme) run by a university (if offered)

5. Directly enrol in a university programme once they meet the English proficiency test requirements (they may skip some of the above steps in this process depending on the individual)

3.3.4 MATURE LEARNERS: PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND BASIC (OR HIGHER) ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

The pathways for SRBs who have immigrated to New Zealand with previous educational qualifications and basic level (or higher) English proficiency who have intentions of attending university in New Zealand are complex, particularly if the individual has completed a tertiary degree elsewhere. Whether or not the tertiary qualification is recognized depends on the university's specific policies relating to degrees obtained outside of New Zealand; it operates on an ad-hoc basis. Usually, universities make this decision based on the country from which the degree was obtained. Degrees from Western countries are usually privileged over degrees from non-Western countries, and many SRBs see their previous qualifications discredited (see 2.2.5). If universities are hesitant to recognize the qualifications, they may ask the SRB to take a semester or a year's worth of courses at the level of their previous qualification as a way of proving to the university that they are ready to undertake further study.

If an individual's English proficiency is deemed high enough and their tertiary (or high school) qualification is recognised, individuals may be able to directly enrol in a university programme. However, most SRBs in this category are usually advised to take English language courses at PTEs/polytechnics (if their English proficiency is lower) or

university-affiliated English language programmes (if their English proficiency is higher). Individuals must continue taking these courses until they receive the proper English proficiency test score to enrol in their university and/or specific programme.

3.4 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR SRBS SEEKING TO ENTER TERTIARY EDUCATION

The New Zealand government offers two financial supports toward the pursuit of tertiary education that are particularly applicable to SRBs with tertiary education goals: Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (Refugee English Fund) and Fees Free.

The Refugee English Fund, created by the Tertiary Education Commission, supports learners from refugee backgrounds to access fees-free study in ESOL courses at Level 3 and above with the intention of "provid[ing] learners from refugee backgrounds with sufficient English to undertake further higher-level tertiary study, as well as help them gain employment" (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 3). The fund commits to covering the costs of English language courses for eligible individuals for up to 36 months, including non-consecutive enrolments. To be eligible for funding, individuals must be a refugee or protected person, or individuals sponsored by a refugee or protected person (Ministry of Education, 2018). This definition includes asylum seekers who have been granted refugee and protection status (and the family members they sponsor). However, this fund does not cover those who self-identify as coming from a refugee-like situation without having official designation from the New Zealand government.

The New Zealand government's Fees Free policy, established in January 2018, allows citizens and permanent residents to enrol in their first calendar year of tertiary education for free.[6] However, to be able to access Fees Free funding, students must have not undertaken more than a half year of equivalent full-time tertiary education at Level 3 or above, including tertiary education at an equivalent level undertaken in any country in

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[6] Funding is capped at $12,000 per calendar year. The institution and course of study must be approved by the TEC. Students who choose to enroll in industry apprenticeship-based tertiary programmes are entitled to 24 months of fees-free (Fees Free New Zealand, 2019).

the world (Fees Free New Zealand, 2019). This disqualifies the many SRBs who have received or pursued tertiary education qualifications prior to resettling in New Zealand from receiving fees-free funding. Additionally, studies undertaken by Refugee English Fund learners since 2018 count toward their entitlement to Fees-Free as does study before 2018 in equivalent courses, as they are both SAC courses at Level 3 and above. The TEC has acknowledged that this catch-22 can "create a barrier to accessing Fees-Free tertiary education for further study" for SRBs, and has committed to reviewing individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis to permit access to Fees Free funding (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 3). However, this does not guarantee that every SRB who applies for Fees Free funding after accessing Refugee English funding will receive it (Ministry of Education, 2018).

3.4.1 EQUITY FUNDING FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Equity groups are specific demographics of people that have been recognized as facing a historic disadvantage from accessing and succeeding within higher education. In 2019, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)[7] provided equity funding to TEOs to support three equity groups: Māori students, Pasifika students, and students with disabilities. This equity funding serves as a means of "help[ing] to cover the costs of providing extra support" to students from these three equity groups (TEC, 2019a).

Much of the TEC's focus on equity within higher education centres on Māori and Pasifika students, mirroring the MoE and MBIE's Tertiary Education Strategy (2014): one of the six Strategic Priorities specifically centres on "boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika" students (p. 12). In implementing the Priority, the Strategy (2014) established indicators of success such as "TEOs set and achieve performance targets for Māori/Pasifika learners" to be monitored and reviewed (p. 13). For Māori learners in particular in order to honour the principles outlined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (see footnote 3), the MoE (2014) set expectations that TEOs will work in partnership with Māori to provide "culturally relevant teaching and learning" (p. 21). These measures attempt to

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[7] The TEC leads the NZ government's relationship with the tertiary education sector, investing over $3 billion each year to tertiary organisations. They also support the tertiary careers system.

ameliorate some of the legacies of British colonisation, as well as the high prevalence of Māori and Pasifika people experiencing varying levels of social and economic deprivation.

While SRBs are briefly referenced under Priority 3 as equity group for whom several New Zealand TEOs have generated equity plans for, the MoE itself does not include SRBs as a focus within its current educational strategy (MoE & MBIE, 2014, p. 12). Additionally, the TEC has not outlined expectations for TEOs to support SRBs, nor provided any funding to support SRBs studying within New Zealand TEOs at this time.

3.5: TARGETED SUPPORT FOR SRBS AT NEW ZEALAND'S UNIVERSITIES

Because SRBs are not a recognised equity group within national tertiary education policy, New Zealand universities are not technically required to provide targeted provisioning for SRBs. Rather, provisioning for SRBs at universities in 2019 has been ad-hoc in nature, meaning that several institutions have individually developed targeted support for SRBs, while others have not developed any initiatives at all. The current landscape of targeted provisioning for SRBs at New Zealand universities can be seen in Table 3.1 (following page).

	Equity policy	Collects data on SRBs	Scholarships and/or grants	SRJRD - accepts award	SRJRD - 50/50 agreement	Targeted admissions	Webpage	Staff position	Student club
Auckland	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
AUT			✓	✓	✓			✓	
Canterbury	✓			✓					
Lincoln				✓					
Massey				✓					
Otago	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
VUW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Waikato				✓	✓				

Table 3.1: The landscape of targeted provisions for SRBs at New Zealand universities.
Source: Author (2020).

3.5.1 EQUITY POLICIES

Four New Zealand universities (Auckland, Canterbury, Otago, and VUW) include SRBs as an equity group within their institution's equity and diversity policies. The equity policies of New Zealand universities all equate equity with fairness, safety, diversity, and inclusivity, and an environment committed to providing equal opportunities for students. Universities define equity groups very similarly, primarily stating that equity groups are more likely to have experienced one or more barriers – discrimination, marginalisation, under-representation, underachievement, and/or socioeconomic background – that may make it difficult to access and succeed within university. Inclusion within an institution's equity and diversity policy stipulates a university's commitment to recruit, retain, engage, actively support, and provide an inclusive, safe environment for SRBs. Ideally, inclusion into an equity and diversity policy indicates that a university offers, or will offer, targeted provisioning for its designated equity groups in order to meet its promises of recruitment, retainment, engagement, and active support of SRBs.

3.5.2 COLLECTS DATA ON SRBS

Only three universities (Auckland, Otago, and VUW) currently collect data on SRBs. Data is collected via enrolment forms where SRBs have the option to select a tickbox that states "refugee-background". Data collected in 2019 indicates that there are over 200 SRBs enrolled at VUW (VUW Student Learning, pers. comms., 2019), and over 700 at Auckland (Auckland Equity Office, 2019).[8] However, these numbers are not entirely indicative of the actual numbers of SRBs enrolled at these institutions. Given the tendency for many SRBs to not feel comfortable disclosing their background (see 2.3.5), the number of SRBs within these two institutions is likely higher than what is officially reported.

3.5.3 UNIVERSITY SPECIFIC FINANCIAL AWARDS

Only three universities have developed their own scholarships or grants specifically for SRBs (Auckland, AUT, and VUW). At VUW, SRBs can apply for "Equity Grants for

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[8] Data collection at Otago only just commenced in 2019, so numbers have not yet been allocated.

Refugee Background Students", with multiple need-based awards offered of up to $2000 NZD per individual (VUW, 2019). The actual amount allocated to an individual depends on their financial need and academic progress (VUW, 2019 –website). Auckland offers up to five "Scholarships for SRBs" of $5000 NZD. These are primarily given out according to an individual's demonstrated financial need and academic progress (University of Auckland, 2019). AUT offers a "Tastes of Home Scholarship" for SRBs with multiple awards of up to $3000 NZD. Applicants should demonstrate financial need as well as academic potential/and or success at AUT (AUT, 2019).

3.5.4 SIR ROBERT JONES REFUGEE DAUGHTERS SCHOLARSHIP

The Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters Scholarship (SRJRDS) is the only nation wide tertiary scholarship targeted toward SRBs. The SRJRDS, established by Sir Robert Jones[9] in 2015, was created to "assist young women from refugee backgrounds to complete a university degree or tertiary qualification from an approved tertiary institution" (SRJRDS Yearbook, 2019, p. 2). While funded by Robert Jones Holdings, the Scholarship is facilitated through Refugees as Survivors New Zealand (RASNZ), a non-profit organization specializing in mental health and wellbeing services for refugee background communities within New Zealand. To date the Scholarship has financially supported 90 past and current recipients at TEO, throughout New Zealand, offering flexibility for students to study specialist courses away from their home town.

To be considered for the Scholarship, applicants must be young women with refugee backgrounds who are between the ages of 18 of 25 who have already begun study toward a Foundation Course or university degree programme. Selection panels consider a wide variety of factors including academic performance and potential, family circumstances, and resources including financial, social, and cultural capital.

The Scholarship covers tuition fees until degree completion (as long as academic progress is satisfactory), and covers accommodation costs for two years if the student is studying away from home. Additionally, where possible the Scholarship connects

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[9] Sir Robert Jones is a New Zealand property investor, former politician, and author.

recipients with mentors to offer support as they pursue their academic, personal, and professional goals within tertiary education.

Four universities (AUT, Otago, VUW, and Waikato) share 50/50 costs of the Scholarship, meaning that they pledge to cover 50% of the student's fees while the RJH Scholarship covers the remaining 50%. This enables RJH to offer more scholarships each year, and provides a "valuable link between RASNZ and these universities so that [they] can work together to provide the best possible support for students" (SRJRDS Yearbook, 2019, p. 2).

3.5.5 TARGETED ADMISSIONS

Two universities, Auckland and Otago, have special admissions considerations for SRBs. Both Auckland and Otago reserve places in their competitive medical programmes for SRBs. Additionally, Auckland has a wider "undergraduate targeted admission scheme" (UTAS) which reserves a number of places in programmes for members of equity groups (including SRBs) who have met Auckland's UE requirements, but have not met the guaranteed admission score for the programmes of their choice.

3.5.6 WEBPAGE AND OTHER RESOURCES

VUW and Auckland have developed webpage resources for SRBs. These pages provide a list of information and resources that pertain specifically to (or would generally be helpful for) SRBs. In 2012, VUW co-developed a targeted informational booklet (Opening Doors) with SRBs. In 2018, VUW also produced a video with SRBs to showcase valuable services available to support health and study. Both the booklet and video are available on VUW's webpage for SRBs.

3.5.7 STAFF POSITION

Auckland and AUT have full or part time staff on their payroll to support SRBs. It is important to state that there are many staff at universities without SRB support written into their job descriptions who actively go above and beyond to directly support SRBs.

At the time of writing of submitting this thesis, VUW has approved funding for a part-time position to support SRBs, and Canterbury may also be pursuing similar action as well (see Epilogue).

3.5.8 STUDENT CLUBS

There are currently two student clubs that have been established by and for SRBs. Auckland has "Students From Refugee Backgrounds Club"[10], and VUW has "Vic Without Barriers" (VWB)[11].

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of New Zealand's refugee resettlement and tertiary education contexts. It discussed several pathways SRBs may take to enter university, and considered the landscape of targeted provisioning for them from both a national and university-specific lens. In particular, the national-level MoE/MBIE Tertiary Education Strategy was discussed, highlighting its role in the creation of equity groups and the subsequent distribution of funding. Although the Tertiary Education Strategy does not designate SRBs as a formal equity group within policy, this chapter demonstrated that several universities have included SRBs within their own equity policies and/or developed targeted provisions regardless of the exclusion of SRBs from national policy. While the landscape of current provisioning for SRBs demonstrated that many institutions have acknowledged SRBs, equity recognition from *all* New Zealand universities is certainly needed, and would be aided by the inclusion of SRBs as an equity group within national policy.

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[10] The Facebook page for Students From Refugee Backgrouds club can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/SRB201/.

[11] The Facebook page for Vic Without Barriers can be found at: www.facebook.com/VIC.Without.Barriers

4. RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

This chapter discusses the epistemological and methodological frameworks that informed how the study was ultimately designed and implemented. It then discusses the research process through the 4-D cycle of AI, highlighting various methods that were used to generate, analyse, and interpret data. The chapter concludes with reflections of the research journey and considers: What were the key ethical considerations of the study? What were the challenges encountered along the way? What are the possible limitations of this research?

4.1 TRANSFORMATIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

As discussed in Chapter 2, literature has shown that SRBs face barriers to accessing and succeeding within tertiary education institutions around the world. The literature has also shown that access and opportunities for SRBs within New Zealand universities are no different; while several universities have developed initiatives and strategies to support SRBs, there is not yet equity in relation to *Pākehā* (White, European descended) students (CRF et al., 2011; Horner et al., 2006; O'Rourke, 2011; Reid et al., 2017). The research questions "what is working well to enhance the experiences of SRBs within universities?" and "How can SRBs continue to be supported (or begin being supported) by NZ universities?" speak directly to the conscious effort made in this study to conceptualize pathways to societal transformation. Transformative research, Mertens (2017) says, does not leave the development of these pathways "up to chance" (p. 22). Rather, they lie at the very heart of transformative studies. Most transformative studies either design "intervention" - change that has the potential to transform individuals and society - or researches these interventions.

Using a transformative epistemology in this study allowed me to be flexible enough to honour the various perspectives that the diverse SRBs have contributed toward this study. One of the difficulties encountered in this study was the broadness of the term "refugee background" and its implications for how the research study was conceptualized, implemented, and disseminated. Those that identify with the "RB" label come from a wide variety of regions, have diverse cultural and language backgrounds,

and have differing life narratives that are only unified by a story of forced migration. As Naidoo et al. (2018) state, "a major challenge in studying the teaching, learning, and cultural needs of … is the variance in their experiences" (p. 4). The transformative epistemological assumption centres on the meaning of knowledge as it is seen through multiple cultural lenses (Mertens, 2015). It acknowledges that the many layers of societal positionalities such as gender, sexual identity, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, disability, and immigration status all contribute toward a person's privileges within a society, and that these privileges inform reality (Mertens, 2015).

Additionally, transformative framings place critical importance on the reflexivity of researchers for transformation that benefits research participants is able to occur. As a non-refugee background white-American woman from an upper-middle class background conducting research with refugee-background participants, an epistemology needed to be employed that would stress checking my own positionality as both a researcher and individual. Transformative research stresses that all researchers occupy places of privilege, and that to conduct transformative research well (particularly cross-cultural transformative research), it is necessary for researchers to be "cognizant of the dimensions of diversity that are used on a basis of both privilege and marginalization" (Symonette, 2009, p. 289).

Continuous consultation and partnership are also stressed in transformative theory. Transformative researchers emphasize the need for collaboration with research participants to ensure that the "interventions" designed and implemented match the goals of participants themselves. The very pinnacle of transformative research - affecting *positive* change that is beneficial to participants and their larger communities - is left to chance if partnership and collaboration is not incorporated into the research. In fact, many transformative theorists would argue that if methods of consultation and collaboration are absent from research design, so too is the "transformative" label (Mertens, 2015; Mertens, 2017). While I will provide a breakdown of how I worked with a team of SRBs at VUW (my local university) in the following sub-sections, initial

partnership and collaboration formed the basis of how my interview questions were constructed and how results were disseminated.

4.2 METHODOLOGY: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Given my goal of constructing and implementing a strengths-based study (see Chapter 1), Appreciative Inquiry (AI) provided a radical approach to understanding the social world that "concentrates on exploring ideas that people have about what is valuable in what they do - the emphasis is firmly on appreciating the activities and responses of people, rather than concentrating on their problems" (Reed, 2007, p. 2). Originally a tool implemented by those working in organizational development to increase cohesiveness and improve team culture within organizations and businesses, AI has also recently been incorporated in many social science research projects as a primary research methodology.

AI's assertion that "ask[ing] questions about problems… create[s] a reality of problems" while "ask[ing] questions about what works or what gives life to a community, group, or person… construct[s] a reality of potential" aligns well with both the concerns and goals of this study (Reed, 2007, viii). Conducting barrier-focused research can reinforce harmful academic and societal discourse with the potential of disempowering and discouraging research participants. For example, if a SRB consistently reads about the difficulties many SRBs face in accessing and succeeding within university, they may come to expect to encounter their own significant challenges. Some would argue that this information could help them prepare more adequately for university. However, AI theorists would argue that only reading about difficulties could disempower them and make them feel tied to the same fate, a concept Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2003) "learned helplessness". Learned helplessness commonly arises when it is implied to participants in negative situations that they are not able to change their state of affairs - it was found in their study that these participants often became apathetic and hopeless (Cooperrider et al., 2003).

A strengths-based approach, on the other hand, might detail SRBs' strengths within a university setting. If a SRB reads a strengths-based study rather than a deficit-based one, they may feel hopeful, empowered, and confident that they too will access and succeed at university.

By adopting AI in this study, barriers and problems that SRBs encounter have not been ignored - they do constitute a very real aspect of this study. Rather, a decision was made to amplify strengths and positives of the research participants and their perspectives. As Reed (2007) succinctly states, "we [researchers] have *choices* to make concerning what questions we ask, who we ask of them, and how we engage with others" (ix). It was my choice, then, to privilege a strengths-based, appreciative framework with the belief that the end result would be more empowering than one primarily assessing problems and barriers.

4.3: IMPLEMENTING AI WITH A 4-D CYCLE

In its most common iterations, AI is undertaken in a '4-D cycle' composed of four phases: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Reed, 2007; Koster & Lemelin, 2009) (see Figure 4.1). The following section explores how each phase of the cycle was approached and undertaken.
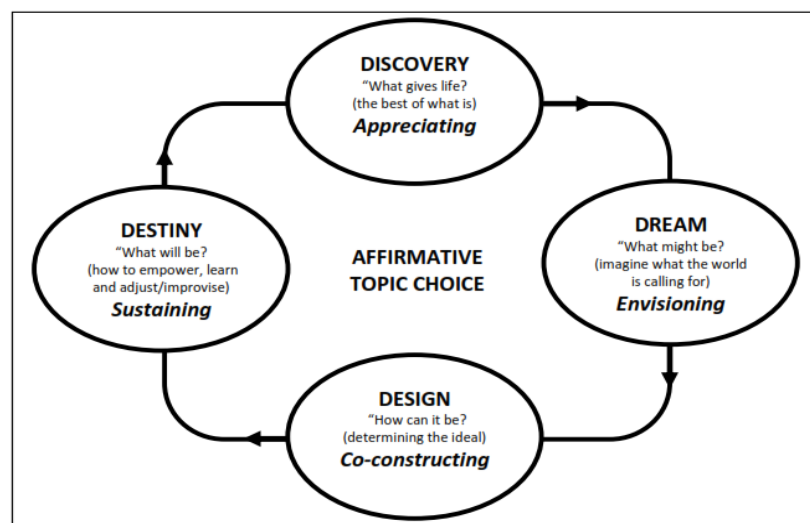
Figure 4.1. The 4-D cycle of AI.
Souce: Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 16.

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4.3.1 DISCOVERY

The *Discovery* phase of AI research (typically considered the "starting" phase) involves a "quest to find… what gives it [the organization or demographic group] its energy" (Reed, 2007, p. 32-3). *Discovery* was the busiest cycle of the 4-D research process, spanning from February to August 2019. It involved laying the groundwork for initiating the study through secondary data collection and analysis, the initiation of partnerships with Vic Without Barriers (VWB) and other organisations, and sampling and recruitment.

4.3.1.1 SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

To lay the foundation of the study, I initially called upon secondary data sources to enrich my understanding of international and national contexts of education access for RB people. In addition to the academic literature compiled in Chapter 2, secondary data collection and analysis involved a review of UN, UNESCO, and UNCHR documents (to inform an international perspective) as well as New Zealand-specific documents such as those released by INZ, CRF, Education Counts, and the TEC.

Additionally, an 'environmental scan' of institutional policy documents and content made available by New Zealand universities on their websites also heavily informed the generation and incorporation of secondary data in this project.

4.3.1.2 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

VWB, the club created by SRBs at VUW, was the key group that I partnered with for the duration of this study. I was first introduced to the future members of its leadership team in May 2019 (see Figure 4.2). After our initial introduction, I met with members of the club (particularly members of its leadership committee) continuously throughout the duration of the research project. throughout the year, we'd feedback ideas for the research project off of one another. We quickly developed close friendships, and they organically became accountability partners for the study. This was significantly helped by my decision to prioritise being a member of the club over being a researcher: most of my interactions with VWB were at club activities not related to my research.

Figure 4.2. VWB's first meeting, with community/university partners present.
Source: (VWB, 9 May 2019, VUW).

Another critical relationship that developed in this research project was with Refugees As Survivors New Zealand (RASNZ). Although I had not planned on contacting outside organisations to assess the possibility of helping with recruitment in this study, an initial lack of contact with SRBs at Otago and AUT influenced me to reach out to RASNZ. I had hoped that they might be interested in helping to recruit participants for the study given their pivotal role in coordinating the SRJRDS, or would be knowledgeable of different contacts to reach out to at the various universities. After learning more about the study, RASNZ (and in particular, Susan Hirst - Scholarship Coordinator) supported the study tremendously by reaching out to current recipients of the Scholarship at these universities and inviting them to participate.

Auckland's Equity Office was also crucial in advertising the study to prospective participants. This relationship was initiated through my advisor's network of tertiary

staff interested in RB-advocacy issues but strengthened over phone calls and emails about the study throughout the year.

4.3.1.3 UNIVERSITY SELECTION

Primary data was collected at four New Zealand universities: VUW, Otago, Auckland, and AUT. When this research study was first conceptualized, I had hoped to collect primary data at all New Zealand universities, polytechnics, and *wānaga* to the list as well. However, a combination of a lack of funding at the beginning of the project as well as the realization that expanding the project outward to encompass polytechnics and *wānanga* could broaden the scope too much within the constraints of a Masters thesis influenced me to focus the project solely on SRBs within New Zealand universities.

With the focus refined, I met with my supervisors Drs Sara Kindon and Angela Joe to generate a contact list of key staff each of the universities who I could approach, and I invited these staff to promote the study to their students. I supplemented this list with contacts sourced from my own secondary research, which primarily involved scanning university websites and resource lists for any leads that might be connected with SRBs (such as policies, clubs, associations, and organisations outside of the university).

No contacts or activity were identified at Lincoln and Massey, so they were removed from the list of universities I intended to visit. It is critical to acknowledge that the lack of contacts or activity related to SRBs does not mean that SRBs aren't attending these institutions, nor that staff aren't aware of and/or advocating for them.

Staff and outside organizations circulated recruitment materials at all universities, but those at Waikato and Canterbury were unable to find any SRBs keen to participate, As such, primary data collection only took place at VUW, Otago, Auckland, and AUT.

4.3.1.4 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

The selection criterion for inclusion in this study was current undergraduate or postgraduate students attending university in New Zealand that identify as RB. Students could be full-time or part-time students at their institutions to qualify. All participants had intermediate level English proficiency levels or higher, although they were not asked to disclose their proficiency level prior to participation in the study. Rather, it was assumed that any student enrolled at an undergraduate level or higher would have the English proficiency required to participate in this study.

Participants were purposively selected through a hybrid of convenience and snowball sampling techniques (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). Snowball sampling was used as one of the sampling methods due to the absence of data and documentation of SRBs at several New Zealand universities, and occurred primarily via email. Staff and students at VUW, Otago, and Auckland circulated information about the study via their own email networks which led to a "snowball" effect of emails being circulated and created, ultimately leading to the recruitment of participants. Those who had participated in interviews themselves also invited their peers to participate, leading to the recruitment of at least two additional participants in the study.

At VUW and AUT, convenience sampling was the more dominant recruitment method. My membership within VWB gave me access to a large prospective participant base, and I recruited heavily via these connections (although the study was advertised to networks outside of VWB as well). At AUT, I was invited to recruit participants at a morning tea event for SRJRDS recipients – this event was also open to friends of the recipients as well. I mingled with participants and invited them to participate in the project after ensuring that they met the requirements for the study, and during this event conducted the interviews at a private table that had been set aside for us.

4.3.1.5 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

In total, 16 participants were recruited for this study: 3 from VUW, 3 from Otago, 5 from Auckland, and 5 from AUT. The following subsection briefly outlines several of

the key demographic traits of these participants, including age, gender, level of study, country of origin, and entry status upon arrival in New Zealand. To see more detailed information about each of the 16 participants in this study, please refer to Appendix A.

AGE (Overall)
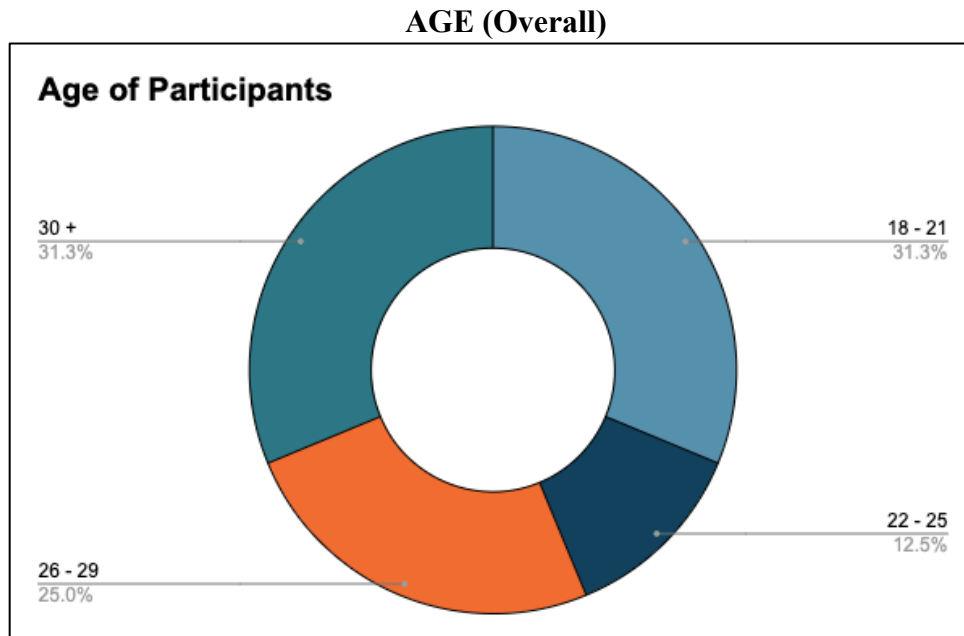
Figure 4.3. Age ranges of all participants, both undergraduates and postgraduates.

The average age of participants in this study was 27 years old. However, it is important to consider that 6 out of the 16 participants were recruited through the SRJRDS, which has age restrictions on who can receive an award (recipients must be between the ages of 18 and 25). The average age of the 6 Scholarship recipients was 21 years old, while the average age of the 10 non-Scholarship recipients was 31 years old, indicating that the decision to recruit via the Scholarship did affect the overall average age of participants in the study.
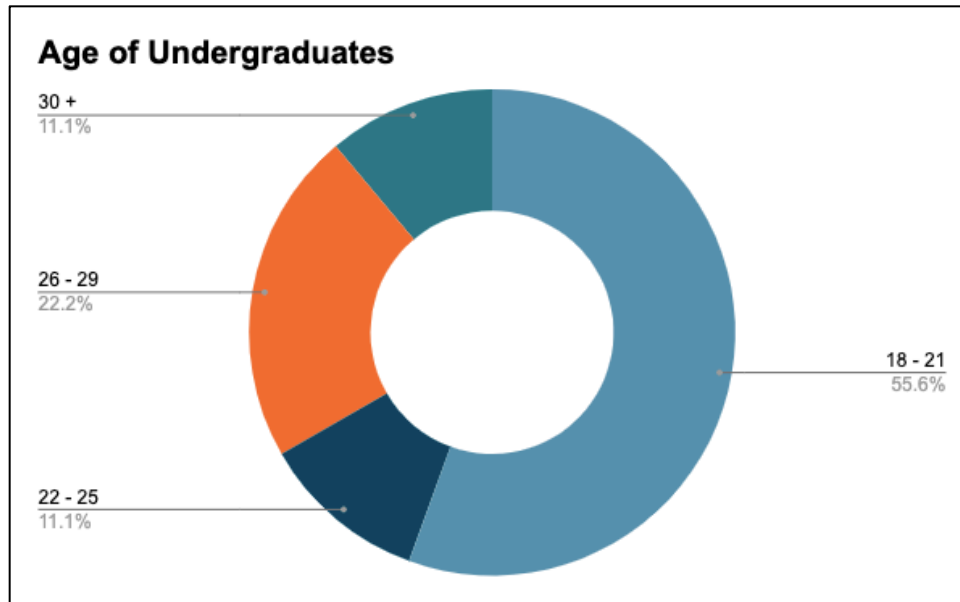
Figure 4.4. Age ranges of the 9 undergraduate participants.
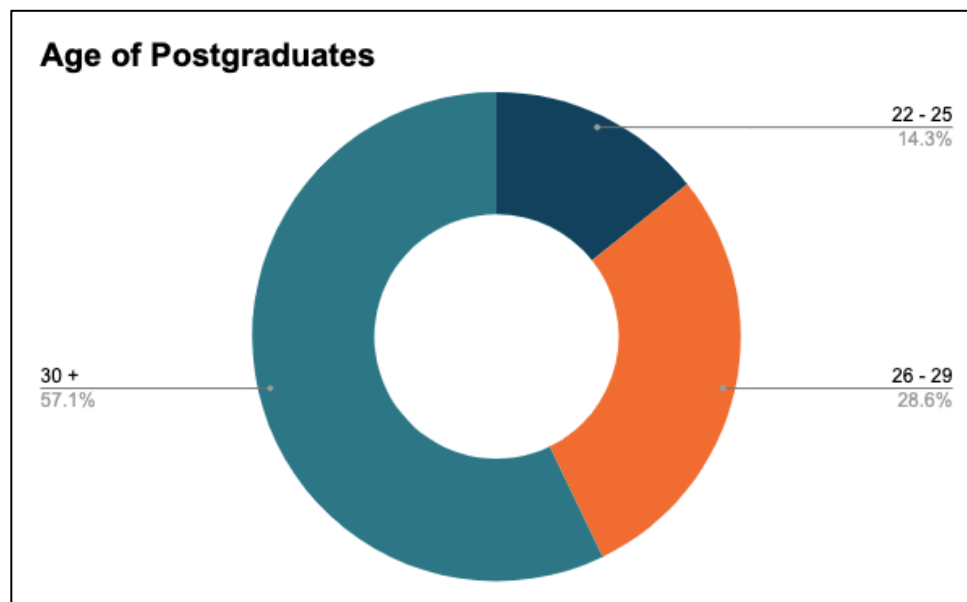
Figure 4.5. Age ranges of the 7 postgraduate participants.

The average age in this study was also influenced by my decision to include postgraduate SRBs in the study. The average age of the postgraduate students interviewed was 31 years old, compared to the average age of 24 for undergraduate participants. Compared to all New Zealand university undergraduate and postgraduate students, the ages of the participants in this study were slightly higher than the national average: the mean ages of undergraduates and postgraduates across all tertiary education

institutions in New Zealand in 2018 was 22 and 26 years old respectively (TEC, pers. comm., 18.10.2019). This sample reflects previous studies that have observed that SRBs often enter higher education within resettlement countries at older ages than their non-SRB peers, often as mature students (Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016; Naidoo, 2015; Naidoo et al., 2018).
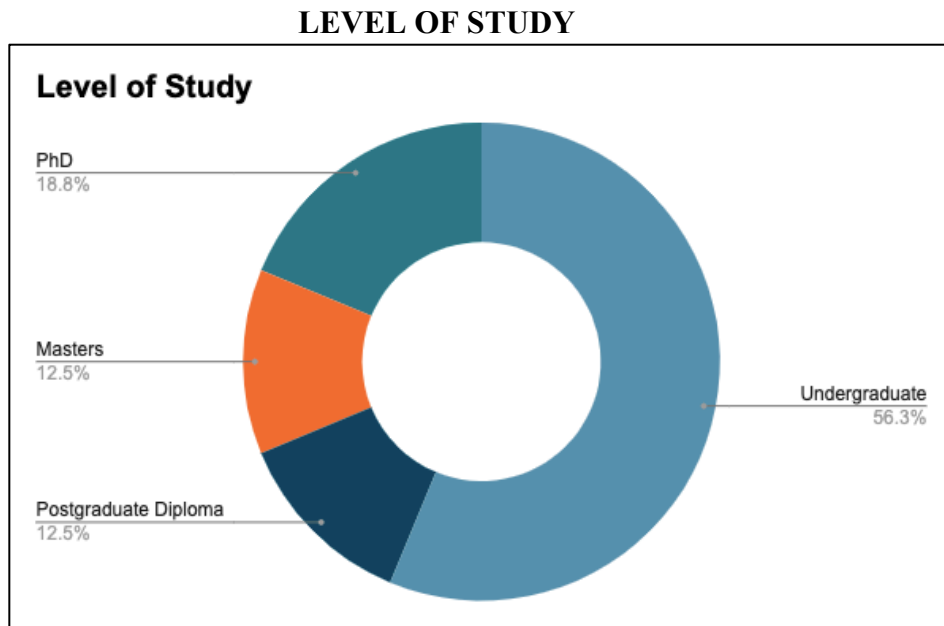
LEVEL OF STUDY

Figure 4.6. Level of study of participants when interviewed.

Nine undergraduates and seven postgraduates participated in this study, and the experiences between the two groups, while sometimes displaying similarities, were often different from one another in terms of their perceptions of institutional support (see Chapter 5).
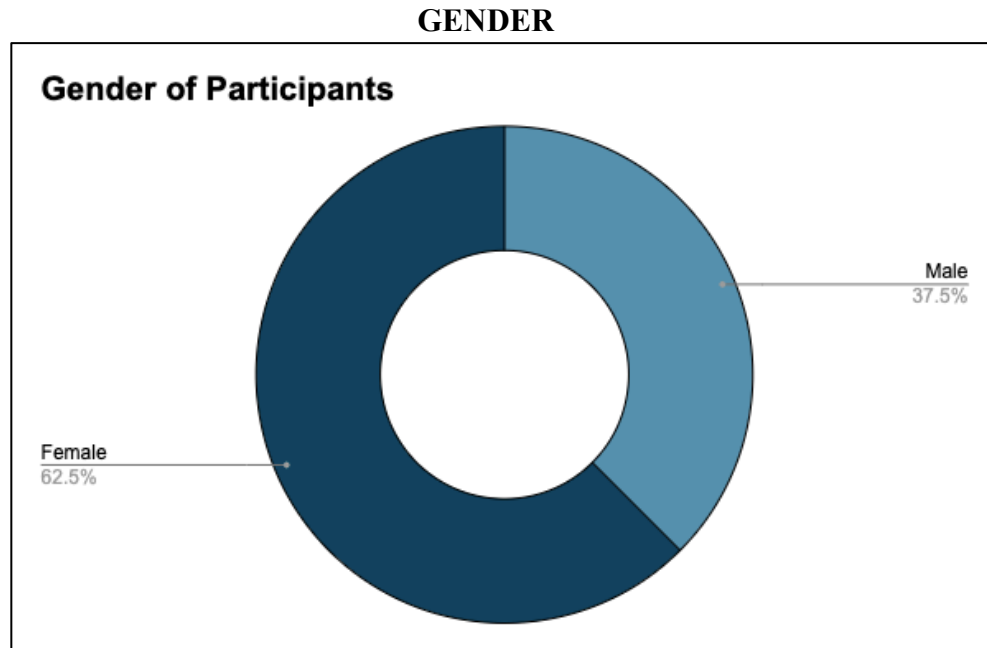
Figure 4.7. Gender of participants.

The greater number of female participants reflected recruitment from the SRJRDS network, but also may reflect enrolment trends within New Zealand universities generally. In New Zealand, more women participate in tertiary education than men in recent years (Education Counts, 2019). In 2013, 13% of New Zealand women of working age (16 to 64 years of age) were enrolled in tertiary education programmes in comparison to 9% of men (Education Counts, 2019). However, it is unclear if this trend accurately reflects the SRB population as well: some scholars have indicated that cultural expectations relating to gender roles may limit higher education opportunities for SRBs within resettlement countries, particularly for women (Perry & Mallozi, 2017; Joyce, 2010).
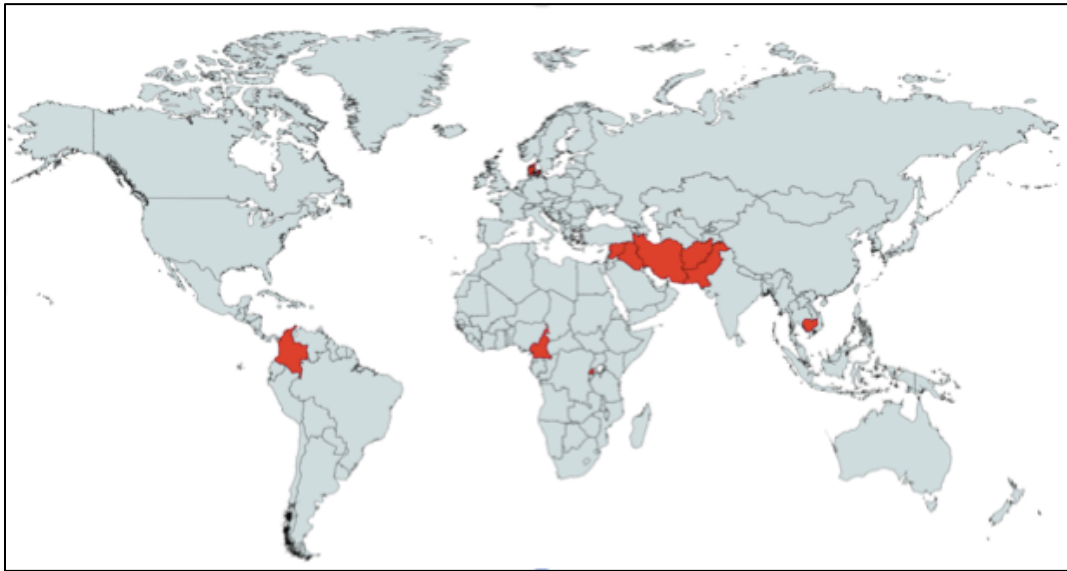
Figure 4.8. A map of the world, with countries highlighted in red to represent the countries of origin of participants.
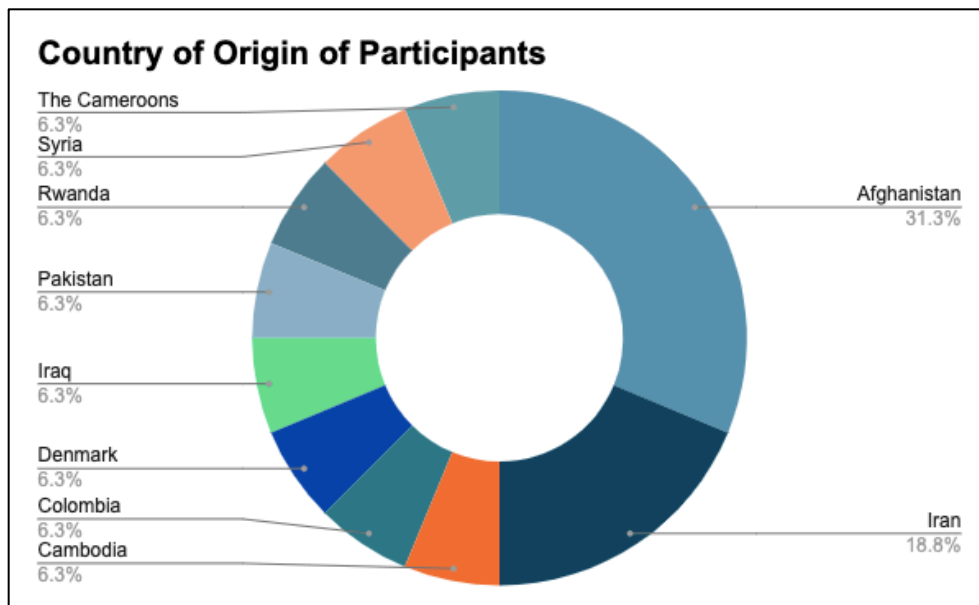
Figure *4.9*. Countries of origin of the study's participants. Only Afghanistan (5 participants) and Iran (3 participants) were countries represented by more than 1 participant.

Within the past five years, the largest number of Quota arrivals have come from countries with recent forced migration crises: Syria, followed by Myanmar, Colombia, and Afghanistan respectively (Immigration New Zealand, 2019a), and these trends are reflected in the data with a little under half (7 out of 16) of participants coming from 3

of these countries. However, SRBs originate from other conflict zones not represented in contemporary refugee arrival trends. For example, the Rwandan Civil War (1990-1994), the Cambodian Civil War (1967-1979), the Iraq War (2003-2011), and the Iranian Revolution (1978-1979) are all historical conflicts that led participants (and/or their families) to leave their countries of origin and ultimately resettle in New Zealand. Additionally, a lesser known conflict, the Anglophone Crisis (2008 - present), is also represented in this data.

The Middle East was the most represented region in this study in terms of countries of origins of participants, with 10 out of 16 participants (62.5%) originating from this area. The next most represented regions were Africa and the Asia-Pacific region with 2 participants each (12.5% per region). Finally, Europe and the Americas had 1 representative each (6.25% each).
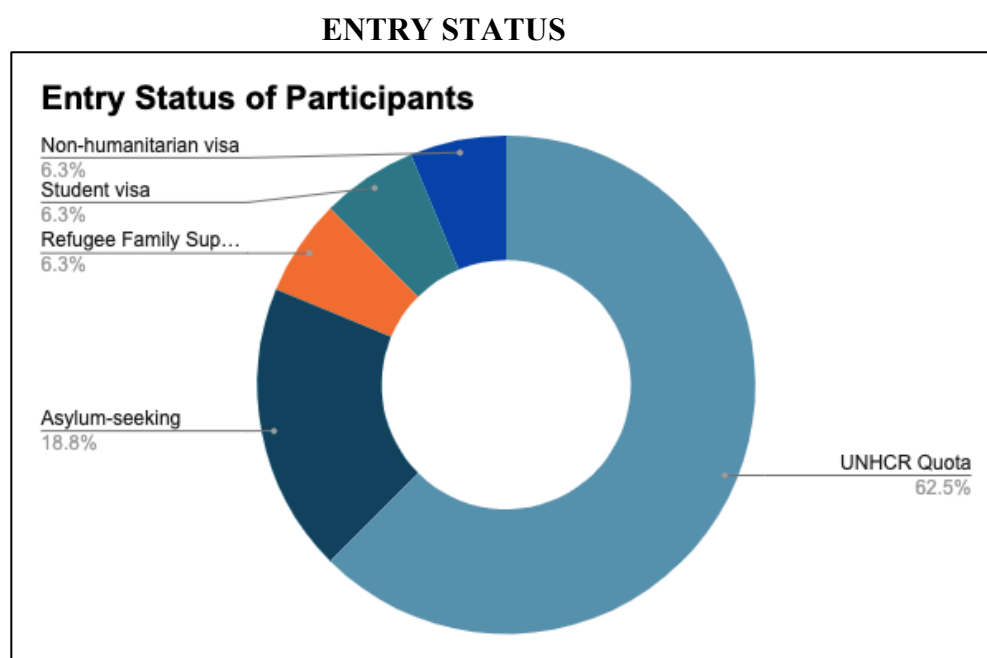
ENTRY STATUS

Figure 4.10. Entry status of interview participants upon arrival in New Zealand.

This study allowed anyone who identified as coming from a "refugee-background" to participate, regardless of whether they were officially recognized as coming from a refugee-background by the New Zealand government. 14 participants arrived in New Zealand via more "traditional" pathways: 10 were UNHCR Quota refugees, 3 applied for (and were eventually granted) asylum after arriving at a New Zealand port of entry,

and 1 immigrated on a Refugee Family Support Residency visa. However, two interviewees arrived to New Zealand via "non-traditional" refugee pathways: one through a student visa to pursue PhD studies (she later applied for and received refugee and protected person status during her programme), and the other through a non-humanitarian visa[12]. The two who arrived to New Zealand on "alternative" pathways but still claim refugee status, though the minority in this study, highlight the variance of experiences encapsulated within the label "RB": not all who identify with the label are Quota refugees or former asylum seekers.

4.3.2 DREAM

The *Dream* phase of AI "involves asking positive questions about what was and still is working" within a group of people or organization in order to conceptualize what the future could look like (Koster & Lemelin, 2009, p. 262; Reed, 2007). As such, the *Dream* phase involved my primary data collection phase, spanning from June to August 2019. It was also the phase where health and safety measures were the most employed.

4.3.2.1 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Primary data was collected via one-on-one semi-structured interviews with SRBs. All interviews were conducted on the university campuses that participants attended, but participants were allowed to choose when and where on campus they wanted the interview to be hosted (apart from the AUT interviews which were all held at a predetermined location). Interview locations included library study rooms booked out by students, campus cafes, and even outdoor spaces such as picnic tables and the lawns in front of participants' favourite campus buildings. Allowing participants to determine the time and place of interviews was a conscious choice influenced by participatory and transformative methodological principles: it aimed to "unsettle [traditional] hierarchies" between the researcher and researched by giving them the control to determine times and spaces more comfortable for them rather than what was most convenient and comfortable for me (McFarlane & Hansen, 2007, p. 91).

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[12] This participant chose not to disclose what visa he arrived on.

I chose to employ semi-structured interviews as my method of primary data collection due to its flexible and conversational style (O'Leary, 2017). While a semi-structured interview format allowed me to pre-select topics to discuss in order to keep the focus of the interview on the research topic, it also allowed participants and myself as the researcher to bring up or discuss topics spontaneously that I may not have foreseen when developing the interview questions (O'Leary, 2017; Rabionet, 2011). I found that the casual, conversational style of semi-structured interviews enabled me to develop trust with participants as the interview progressed. Several had never been interviewed before, and disclosed that they were relieved that the interview was not as formal as they had envisioned it being. Interviews for the most part were very conversational in nature, and laden with emotion: laughter and joy was common when recounting positive and surprising experiences, and sadness occasionally emerged when recounting specific experiences. The shortest interview was 23 minutes in length, while the longest was 1 hr. 45 minutes long.

As a strengths-based study, all planned questions and prompts poised to participants were positive (or, occasionally, neutral) in nature (see Appendix D). The introductory questions were rapid-fire in nature, meaning that they were easy for participants to answer (ex: "what are you currently studying?). The next interview phase involved having participants recount their educational journeys and experiences within their current university. Then, participants were asked to consider how their universities could continue (or start) supporting SRBs, and were asked to *Dream* of how their recommendations could be expanded to other universities. Finally, the interview ended with a section about participants' future goals, as well as general housekeeping.

The information disclosed in these interviews were based on the participants' actual observations, perceptions, and lived experiences of their time before and during university. However, many participants brought up examples of their SRB friends or SRBs generally to supplement their own experiences and ideas as well.

The questions asked in the *Dream* phase were directly constructed and framed by the information gathered in the *Discovery* phase, primarily from the partnership with VWB. VWB's leadership team provided feedback to drafts of interview schedules, making suggestions to add, remove, or reframe questions.

Figure 4.11. An interview being conducted at the AUT morning tea event. Pictured is an interview participant (left) and the researcher (right).
Source: (Sue Heggie, 15 August 2019, AUT).

4.3.2.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Data collection activities happened on the campuses of Auckland, AUT, VUW, and Otago. All interview locations were in public spaces, even in the cases of "private" study rooms. Before leaving to conduct interviews, I emailed a copy of my interview itineraries to my advisor and brought my personal phone with me in case of emergencies.

I stayed at accommodation that was very close to the university campuses which meant that I was able to walk to all of my interviews. All of my interviews were conducted during university operating hours (usually between 9 am and 4 pm). I never felt unsafe

during my data collection trips given that I was always surrounded by people (generally students and staff at the various universities).

I travelled to the various universities by car from Wellington, but was never the one driving. My partner and I decided to drive since it would give us more travel flexibility, particularly when we decided to take self-care detours along the way to see the local sights.

4.3.3 DESIGN

The *Design* phase asks participants and researchers to craft tangible plans or propositions for the future (Reed, 2007). While some of the questions asked in interviews were *Design* in nature, the *Design* phase primarily constituted analysing the primary and secondary data gleaned from *Discovery* and *Dream* and disseminating these results into thesis chapters and recommendations. Additionally, *Design* also encompassed feed backing the results with VWB, as well as data transcription and storage. *Design* was the longest phase of my research, lasting from September 2019 through to February 2020.

4.3.3.1 DATA TRANSCRIPTION AND STORAGE

Interview recordings were stored securely on the university computer provided in my office and were labelled by number rather than participant name. I manually transcribed each interview within two weeks of recording. Transcripts were similarly stored on the university computer and were similarly labelled under numbers rather than names, and the contents within the transcripts similarly remained anonymous. After transcribing the interview, I sent a copy of the transcript to each participant to have them look over it in case they wanted to make adjustments by adding, removing, or expanding upon certain points.

4.3.3.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis, a type of analysis in which themes or major ideas in qualitative data are recognised (Trochim & Donnelly, 2001), was employed to identify recurring themes

throughout the 16 interviews. Once participants got back to me with the adjustments they wished to make to their transcripts (or indicated that they did not want to make any), I combed through each transcript and sorted the content into preliminary codes with Nvivo software. I also used Nvivo to scan each transcript and identify the most used words to confirm my preliminary coding was in sync with what participants were saying. By the end of preliminary coding, I had arrived at around 32 codes. I then distilled the 32 codes into 8 wider themes using both deductive and inductive reasoning. These themes formed the basis of Chapter 5.

4.3.4 DESTINY

In the *Destiny* phase, project "energy moves toward action planning [and] working out what will need to happen to realize the propositions" (Reed, 2007, p. 33). A small portion of the *Destiny* phase lies in the critical recommendations for future practice and research outlined in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, as well as the final reports submitted to SRB participants and key stakeholders. However, the bulk of the *Destiny* phase will extend far beyond the submission of this thesis – it will feed into on-going work at VUW and more widely into national-level initiatives within the space of tertiary SRB support and advocacy.

One example of *Destiny* in action was the creation of "Learning Together in Aotearoa", a national forum hosted at VUW in December 2019 that brought together SRBs, academics, professional staff, government representatives, and NGO staff from across New Zealand to launch a national advocacy network to better support SRBs in tertiary education (see Figure 4.11). The forum was born, in part, by this thesis, and I played a key role in helping to organise it. Meeting with key stakeholders and students across the country re-affirmed to myself, my advisor, and staff at the TEC that a wider event needed to bring everyone together to action-plan identify key needs/goals to be addressed in the future, and to champion future support and advocacy for SRBs within tertiary education. At the Forum, several advocacy goals were stated and tentative timelines crafted to achieve them, progressing recommendations (such as those delineated in Chapter 7) into the beginnings of change and practice.

Figure 4.12. A student sharing insights at the Learning Together in Aotearoa Forum.
Source: Nadia Yris Infantes Abril, 6 December 2019, VUW.

4.4 POSITIONALITY AND REFLEXIVITY

As participatory researcher Caitlin Cahill (2007) says, "critical reflection upon one's personal experience" should be at the heart of any academic research process. Acknowledging one's own positionality and its potential to influence data interpretation, is an important and continuous step to take in the research process (Cahill, 2007). Positionality has often been discussed as binaries such as insider/outsider, self/other, young/old. However, these binaries tend to blur because they often overlap (Chacko, 2004; Merriam et al., 2001). While I tended to largely occupy an "outsider" role as a researcher due to my positionality as a non-RB white woman, there were moments in which the insider/outsider binary was softened and challenged (Chacko, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary to present the complexities of my role during my fieldwork and feed backing stage with VWB. The factors to consider when reflecting on my positionality include: my identity as a white American woman, my two years living in New Zealand, my age, my postgraduate education, and my prior work and research within the refugee resettlement sector.

In relation to my participants, my white non-RB identity very much placed me as an outsider. This identity certainly provided limitations within the study, particularly in terms of recruitment. In informal conversations with participants after the recorder had been turned off, a handful of students mentioned they had been initially hesitant and nervous to participate in the study when they saw my English-sounding name attached to the research. Although all were ultimately happy they had participated in the interview, they indicated they would have been immensely less nervous had the research been conducted by someone of a RB or minority background.

Throughout the study, I did my best to acknowledge my largely 'outsider' positionality and focused my attention on "bridg[ing] differences and produc[ing] literature that is mutually defined" by the researcher and participants (Chako, 2004, p. 381). I attempted to let participants take ownership over certain aspects of the research. VWB's leadership team served as my co-researcher/reference group throughout the study (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007). My feed backing with VWB helped formulate interview questions and helped me interpret some of the findings delineated within Chapters 5 and 6. Additionally, I asked to SRBs select the location for interviews in the hopes of making them feel more comfortable, and encouraged them to choose their own pseudonyms for the study. Encouraging participants to edit their transcripts as they saw fit to ensure they could remove, edit, or elaborate on any points was also a method of checking my 'outsider' positionality (see 4.5.1).

However, there were also moments within the study where there were significant shared understandings between myself and participants that could place me, at times, as an 'insider'. Significantly, my migrant-status to New Zealand (coming from the USA) meant that I shared a story of migration with most participants (although the nature of our migration differed). We were able to connect over observations about we had as initial 'outsiders' to New Zealand culture during interviews.

Additionally, my age and gender may have made me an 'insider' at times during the study. I am 25 years old (and look younger than my age), which meant that it was easier

for me to help make the younger participants feel comfortable and reassured that the interview would be casual in nature. Although age could have placed me as an 'outsider' with the older participants in the study, I found that it was mostly mitigated by my identity as a postgraduate student – the impending Masters degree somehow made me seem more legitimate and knowledgeable to several of the participants older than me (Chacko, 2004). My gender-identity was certainly an asset to the recruitment of SRJRDS recipients, a few of whom said they may not have interviewed with a male participant, but could have been a detriment to the recruitment and comfort of male participants.

Constantly reflecting on my positionality within this study helped me navigate the moments where there were conflicts between the 'outsider' and 'insider' aspects of my identity (Rose, 1997). Particularly, it helped me challenge perspectives I had from my own narrative as a migrant to New Zealand, as well as the knowledge I had gained through my prior work in the refugee resettlement sector in Seattle, Washington. I constantly attempted to challenge assumptions that had developed as a result of these superficially similar experiences that were ultimately born out of entirely different contexts to which the SRBs in the study came from.

4.5 ETHICS AND REPRESENTATION

The following section discusses the issues ethics and representation within the study, considering how both were undertaken in regards to SRB participants and the institutions they attend.

4.5.1 ETHICS

This research strictly adhered to Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Policy. Every SRB who participated in this study volunteered to do so, and I ensured that participants clearly understood their role in the research process by providing them physical copies of the information sheet before and during the interview (both physical and digital copies). Both the information sheet (Appendix B) and consent forms (Appendix C) were written in English, and none of the participants stated that they had

trouble understanding the forms. However, walking through the sheets verbally helped to clarify points for a few participants and was done to ensure to the best of my ability that participants were fully aware of what their role in the research process was. A few participants gave consent for their real names to be used in the study, while the majority preferred to be anonymized.

Although none of the questions inquired about negative experiences at or before university, I was acutely aware that participants might reflect on experiences that were not positive for them. Being interviewed was an emotional experience for some participants, and I continuously checked in with participants throughout the interviews to remind them that they could skip questions, take breaks, or pause if they seemed like they were struggling to answer or process questions. While a few participants elected to skip a question or two, none chose to leave, stop, or pause the interview at any time. Many participants really enjoyed the exercise of being interviewed and were very happy that they had been given the opportunity to share their stories and reflect on their identity as SRBs.

All participants were emailed copies of their interview transcripts to edit as they saw fit and return to me, and in the case of participants who chose to be identified in the study, were emailed sections where I had used direct quotes. In the timeframe of the study, no participants chose to withdraw their information from use in the thesis. Finally, all participants were informed of the final outcomes of the study by sending them an electronically-sent executive summary via email. Some participants requested an electronic copy of the thesis and were sent this alongside the executive summary.

4.5.2 REPRESENTATION

As stated in 4.3.1, allowing SRB participants to take ownership of the research process was a principal concern of mine. One of the ways in which participants were better able to control aspects of the research process was through representation. Recognizing that interviews can be intimidating settings for participants due to the power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee (McFarlane & Hansen, 2007) and as a result

statements may have been made (or not made) that participants later regret, all participants were encouraged to edit their initial interview transcripts to add, remove, or elaborate on the information they shared. Several interviewees returned edited transcripts to me. These edited transcripts were used for analysis rather than the original versions.

I chose to give participants the option to be identified within the study if they wanted, as anonymizing all participants by default can remove the agency of participants if they desire to be attributed with their quotes. Three participants total chose to identify themselves within the study. When their direct quotes or names were used in the thesis, I sent through these sections for them to review to ensure that they felt they were being represented accurately. Additionally, collaboration with VWB about sections of the thesis, particularly Chapters 5 and 6, enabled RB individuals to look over sections to provide their perspectives about existing representation in the study and recommend changes.

I was also concerned about how universities were represented in this study. While the opinions and perspectives that participants had of their institutions were honoured in this study, I was careful about how universities were portrayed in writing. I attempted to ensure that no one university was the sole focus or recipient of criticism or praise. Cognisant that staff at the four universities visited are well-intentioned and attempting to support SRBs to the best of their ability, I attempted to keep opinions and perspectives balanced so as to not call out, expose, or glorify institutions.

4.6 LIMITATIONS

There were several limitations encountered in this study, listed below:

The time constraints of a one-year Masters thesis to implement this project was very limiting, particularly in relation to by ability to utilise AI. AI is continual, flexible process that allows both participants and researchers to revisit different phases in the process based on how they are adapting and growing from the use of AI (Reed, 2007). It

is important to note that this study followed a more linear path between the four stages than many AI theorists would advocate for. I envision that a longer research study on this same topic would have facilitated less of a linear progression between the stages and provided more of the cyclical and freeform approach to revisiting phases that many AI theorists advocate for.

The sample size of the universities visited in this study is also a limitation of this study. I aspired to conduct research at all eight universities to generate a larger understanding of national experiences. However time, funding, and recruitment difficulties (for example, not receiving interest from students at Canterbury and Waikato) limited me to conduct research at only four universities.

The absence of support networks created for SRBs, coupled with the reluctance of many SRBs to identify as having a RB, meant that I had to reassess some of my recruitment goals and methods I had hoped for in the study. For example, focus groups were difficult to mobilize due to the absence of student organizations such as clubs crafted specifically for SRBs at two of the universities visited. One-on-one interviews seemed to be the preference for most of the prospective participants I emailed due to the flexibility of timing. Thus, while I still attempted to organize focus groups, I moved away using them as the primary source of data collection in this study.

Recruitment difficulties meant that I contacted out to RASNZ to help recruit participants. The overall demographics and experiences of participants were altered by the inclusion of SRJRDS recipients within the study. Saiah (pers. comm., 15.8.2019., AUT, UG) a very perceptive interviewee and SRJRDS recipient, even brought this up to me in her interview, mentioning:

> *The girls from the Sir Robert Jones Scholarship… I think they are refugees that are higher achievers than other people from refugee backgrounds. Do you go to [others as well]? Is it a diverse pool for you?*

Although I was initially concerned, like Saiah, that having so many Scholarship recipients would generate data that did not accurately represent the experiences of SRBs generally, I found that hearing the narratives of many Scholarship recipients actually reinforced how beneficial holistic financial supports during university enrolment can be for SRBs (see Chapter 5). The goal for this study has not been to generalise the experiences of *all* SRBs, rather to explore strengths-based experiences in depth. Including SRJRDS participants added value and insight into what was working well for students. However, many may still consider this a limitation of the study.

Allowing any student who identified with the "RB" label allowed the diversity of participants to shine through in the study, but at times the wide ranges of their experiences was difficult to manage as I distilled and wrote out my results. In particular, it was challenging to find space within the thesis (due to limited word count) to explain nuances between individual experiences, particularly those that could be attributed to small details such as the age a person was resettled in New Zealand.

Finally, my positionality as a white, non-RB certainly produced limitations within the study, namely in the recruitment of participants (see 4.3).

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the methodological and epistemological framings that have informed my research process. Adopting a transformative epistemology allowed me to implement a change-focused study that placed critical emphasis on reflexivity. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations arose from my positonality as a researcher, particularly in how I engaged with and represented both students and institutions in writing. Transformative epistemology's call for researchers to co-develop interventions with participants gave me the flexibility to collaborate with participants, as well as my reference group VWB, frequently throughout the research process. Frequent check-ins with VWB about my findings, as well as providing participants with the ability to edit their transcripts (and in the case of those who chose to be identified, the

choice to edit the sections where I used their direct quotes), helped me to negotiate my own positionality as I represented students and recommended changes.

Using AI as my methodology in the study significantly helped me solidify the study's stance as a strengths-based research project. Additionally, its 4-D cycle provided me with a pathway to follow as I designed and implemented the study, and served to structure the analysis and conclusion portion of my thesis. The results of the first stage of the 4-D cycle, Discover, are discussed at length in the following chapter.

5. (DISCOVER)ING EXPERIENCES

This chapter, channelling the goals of the *Discover* phase of AI (Cooperrider et al., 2003; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2012; Reed, 2007), will discuss the positive forces – or experiences – that SRBs identified in their interviews. The themes have been collated to answer the primary research question "What's working well for SRBs within New Zealand universities and why?" Based on a thematic analysis of the data, I discuss eight primary themes of "What's working" for SRB participants: the life histories of SRBs, financial supports, "welcoming" institutions, staff advocacy, peer connections, family/community connections, and self-identified strengths are all working to enhance the experiences of SRBs within university. Finally, "What's working" for undergraduates and postgraduates separately will be discussed in the final section.

5.1 RB LIFE HISTORIES ARE WORKING

RB experiences, commonly framed through deficit-based lenses as inhibiting or slowing the progress of individuals within education, positively influenced the trajectories of many of the SRBs interviewed in the study: they contributed to (or wholly constituted) the choice to attend university and pursue specific programmes of study.

Juan (pers. comm., 15.7.2019, VUW, UG) explained that he was motivated to study politics and international relations out of a desire to better understand his past. Studying these subjects at university offered him the opportunity to process his prior experiences and the context of his country of origin. He stated, "coming from a country that had a civil war […] understanding politics is the way you can get your head around this stuff". In another example, Alphonse (pers. comm., 16.7.2019, VUW, PG) initially enrolled in a programme for similar reasons, stating that witnessing poor, "easily fixed" conditions during his journey as a former refugee inspired him to initially pursue biology.

For others, previous careers they held in their countries of origin motivated them to enrol at university in the hopes of (re)building their lives and (re)constructing a professional identity (Perry & Mallozzi, 2017). Ammar (pers. comm., 13.8.2019, Auckland, PG) and Maryam (pers. comm., 25.7.2019, Otago, PG), from Iraq and Syria

respectively, had established careers in health professions in their home countries. When asked why he was motivated to enrol in the pharmacy programme at Auckland, Ammar stated:

> *So, from 2008 to 2015, I have worked as a pharmacist. You can't just destroy something, like, 12 years of study to work in something where you are not going to be happy. You need to… start your life again.*

In the above quote, Ammar references "work[ing] in something where you are not going to be happy", which he further went on to connect with the immediately available low-wage, unskilled employment opportunities he was encouraged to pursue by social services agencies. This narrative sharply aligns with previous research that highlighted an employment-first priority that many resettlement agencies have for newly-arrived RB individuals (Bajwa, 2017; Ferede, 2010; Hannah, 1999; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017).

Although not all interview participants cited past experiences as reasons for selecting a university programme, it is important to acknowledge the framings of those that did: their pasts – what they witnessed, practiced, and experienced – were sources of motivation to pursue specific areas of tertiary study. Rather than solely being associated with "trauma" and by extension difficulty accessing and succeeding within tertiary education (Benseman, 2014; Joyce et al. 2010; Stevenson & Willott, 2007), these experiences imbued SRBs with inspiration and purpose.

5.2 FINANCIAL SUPPORTS ARE WORKING

The significance of financial provisioning (or lack thereof) for SRBs within universities cannot be understated. Interview participants consistently brought up experiences or ideas relating to finances, whether it was through their own lived experiences with (or without) financial support at university or through conceptualizing future financial provisioning.

Using the SRJRD network to help recruit interview participants offered a unique glimpse into what financial provisioning for SRBs at tertiary institutions could look like,

as the six Scholarship recipients interviewed detailed highly positive associations with the award. The SRJRD's holistic nature - covering tuition and fees after a recipient's first year of study, offering local mentorship opportunities where recipients are paired with a mentor (where possible), and accommodation expenses for two years if required - was praised by recipients. Andisha (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG) summed it up the most succinctly, excitedly stating: "I just cannot honestly describe the amount of support that I have received from the Scholarship".

The Scholarship's Coordinator, who serves as a point of contact for current recipients and advocates for their needs on their behalf if requested (alongside many other responsibilities), received frequent praise from SRJRD recipients for being helpful and supportive. Nazrin (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG), who switched study programmes at AUT, credited the Coordinator with being a primary help in contacting relevant staff members at AUT to help facilitate the transition.

The SRJRD scholarship, through covering accommodation fees if needed by the recipient, also offered many participants the option to be mobile and attend an institution outside of the city where they lived. The two SRJRD recipients interviewed at Otago, Darya (pers. comm., 25.7.2019, Otago, UG) and Ajwa (pers. comm., 25.7.2019, Otago, UG), had been resettled in cities in the lower North Island. Both students knew that they wanted to pursue programmes in medicine, but in New Zealand, only two universities offer medical programmes: Auckland and Otago. Without the Scholarship, both indicated that they would have been forced to attend local universities that did not offer medical programmes. Darya explained the significance of the award in terms of her mobility below:

It was hard for me to even think about Otago [in high school] because I was in Wellington and obviously I'm not financially stable enough to be moving to a different city. It was a big deal moving here [Dunedin], but I got lucky with the scholarship. That's why I am able to be here today.

Beyond the support via mentors and the Scholarship Coordinator and the opportunity to have choice and mobility in the university selection process via covering accommodation costs, the most highlighted aspect of the Scholarship was the covering

of tuition and fees. Many of the recipients connected receiving with the Scholarship with the diminished presence of worry in their lives. Phrases such as "I don't have to worry" were repeated frequently in these interviews.

While most who indicated they had received financial support to complete their university studies were SRJRD recipients, a few other participants also referenced receiving financial support either through refugee equity grants or non-targeted scholarships. Both were referred to as helpful, although the one participant who indicated he had received an equity grant, while very grateful for the award, indicated that a larger grant (the amount he received was around $2000 NZD) would have made a difference toward his study. Additionally, two male participants referenced the SRJRD Scholarship and expressed a desire for a similar national scholarship to be set up for men, lamenting that support for men was under provisioned.

In contrast, the narratives of SRBs who indicated that they had received minimal or no financial support during their university study *did* reference worry, often accompanied with feelings of exhaustion and burn out. SRBs who attended university without any financial support from their institution or outside scholarships often worked other jobs to support themselves and their families while they studied. Several researchers have observed this as well, particularly in relation to the challenges this may pose to study (Abamosa, 2015; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Morrice, 2013). Simon's (pers. comm., 7.8.2019, VUW, UG) experience of having to work to support his family while studying was perhaps the most reflective of what international researchers have observed. Simon's late shifts, coupled with his walk home and lack of financial support from his university, led him to withdraw from university for a year:

It's a long walk. 40 minutes after 2 am, after finishing cleaning up. I had a really tough time. Really, really tough time. [...] I just finished trimester 2 in 2017 and I said, "I'm tired. I don't have enough money. And I really don't want my life to be like this." So I withdrew from university for a year.

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5.3 WELCOMING INSTITUTIONS ARE WORKING

While recounting their experiences at university, two participants used the word "home" to describe the institution they were attending. Their constructions of "home" usually centred around feelings comfort, inclusion, and belonging. Although only a minority of students referred to their institution as a "home", many more recounted instances where they felt welcomed - or, in some cases, not welcomed - at their university. Students primarily equated feelings of "home" and "welcome" with a diverse student body, campus events and positive institutional culture. Those who recounted instances where they had not felt welcomed usually pinpointed these feelings to stereotypes/stigma within the student body, as well as a detached or negative institutional culture.

AUT was the only institution that participants referred to as "home" in their interviews. Sakina (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, PG) and Andisha (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG), used this word for similar reasons: both felt that they felt comfortable, happy, and that they belonged at AUT. For Andisha, these feelings rapidly developed after AUT hosted a vigil after the March 15th Christchurch mosque shootings. When asked to recount a positive memory at AUT, Andisha emotionally elaborated:

> *In March when the Christchurch stuff happened, we [AUT] held a big vigil and they performed a very big haka.[13] It was so emotional and nobody could hold back their tears. It was just amazing and the amount of support… I really felt like I belong. Like I fit in, you know? This is my family and this is my home.*

For Andisha, holding the event was an example of AUT not "tolerat[ing] any sort of racism" and gathering under shared values of inclusion and diversity: "AUT is very diverse and they acknowledge and recognise that". Sakina (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, PG) posited very similar reasons for describing AUT as "feeling like home", although this feeling was generated over time instead of instantaneously as it had been with Andisha. Sakina completed her undergraduate studies at AUT, and in addition to being a part-time postgraduate student, was also working there as a full time staff member. A sense that AUT was "home" developed for her over a number of years, but

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[13] A *haka* is a ceremonial Māori dance that is often utilised in the present day to demonstrate a group's pride, strength, and unity.

was ignited by an appreciation for the institution's commitment to diversity and inclusion:

Sakina: *A strength of AUT is definitely diversity and inclusion. AUT really provides that welcoming atmosphere. You actually have that sense of belonging. There was never a time where I experienced people being ignorant. [...] Everyone was always willing to know more and more about you as a person, your family, and your history. I really felt that I belonged in that environment.*
Author: *What about AUT specifically makes it that way? Can you pinpoint where that starts?*
Sakina: *I think it's all because there's such a huge variety of communities who are a part of AUT.*

Other AUT students interviewed seconded diversity as being a major draw for them to attend the university, as well as something that contributed to their continuing happiness there. Participants equated "diversity" with being able to see people like themselves reflected in the student body. All five AUT interviewees depicted the campus culture warmly. Words like "colourful", "lively", and "friendly" were all used to describe the university. Anosha (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG) even referenced the architecture at AUT, describing the open building layouts being appealing and "inviting".

Open days for prospective students were referenced as being pivotal for getting a good feel of a university's institutional culture. The only open days discussed by SRBs were those held at Auckland and AUT. Students residing in the Auckland City were usually able and encouraged to attend Open Days at both campuses, which meant that several compared the two experiences in their interviews. While no studies centred on SRBs within tertiary education examine open days, studies within the wider body of education and people from RBs have emphasized the importance of a good welcome within educational institutions in helping increase students' sense of belonging (Hek, 2005; Lodge, 1998).

In Hek's (2005) study on the experiences of secondary school SRBs in the UK, a "good" welcome was in part equated with connecting students with supportive, encouraging staff members. Staff interactions on open days were also shown to contribute significantly to a student's perception of how they were welcomed to an

institution, and by extension, whether or not they decided to attend it. Nazrin (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG) referenced "feeling lost" on her open day visits to Auckland when she inquired about specific programmes, citing poor and stiff communication from staff who "sent [her] in circles" in search for answers. Sakina's (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, PG) experience at Auckland also echoed Nazrin's, explaining "the visual arts programme [staff] didn't really welcome me too much", whereas the same programme at AUT was "friendly" and "welcoming". These observations may agree with some of Hannah's (1999) findings, where she found that "encouragement received [by SRBs to apply to university] was negatively correlated with the prestige of the institution", whereas enquiries for programmes at less prestigious institutions were "greeted more warmly" (p. 159): Auckland has a much higher university ranking (83rd) than AUT (442nd) according to the QS World University (2020) rankings.

5.4 STAFF ADVOCACY AND UNDERSTANDING IS WORKING

University staff – including teaching staff, tutors, and support staff – were consistently referenced by SRBs as helping to enable their access and participation within their institution. Staff advocates who were knowledgeable of RB issues and/or understanding of students were deemed the most helpful by participants, as I will detail further.

Experiences with teaching staff were the most recounted by SRBs in their interviews. When asked what had supported SRBs the most so far in their studies, teaching staff who were generally understanding and approachable received the most nods. In particular, staff with knowledge of RB issues were valued and praised. Bernard (pers. comm., 14.8.2019, Auckland, PG) mentioned feeling "very safe" knowing that he was working with supervisors that understood the "depth of refugee issues". However, even teaching staff without specialization in refugee-related studies were also cited as being supportive.

Alphonse (pers. comm., 16.7.2019, VUW, PG) shared how his biology lecturer had helped him in his first year at university when he was struggling to understand the layout of campus:

> *In the middle of the trimester, they said, "Tutorials will be in the room at another location." When I tried to find it, but couldn't find it, I just went home. [laughs] So it was hard for me. And then I approached the lecturer. I told him all of my problems, and he was very happy to know. He then connected me with one of the tutors...*

Alphonse's lecturer could have marked him down for the tutorials he missed, but instead showed understanding and connected him with another resource – a tutor – so that he would always have the knowledge he needed to find tutorial classrooms. The empathetic actions of Alphonse's lecturer mirror the professors highlighted in Hirano's (2014) strengths-based study, which recounted instances where professors were more understanding and lenient with SRBs: as one professor put it, she "cut them some slack" when she marked assignments (p. 43).

Several other students referenced supportive teaching staff. For example, Andisha (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG) praised her lecturer for her promptness to support her: "you can literally email the lecturer and no matter how busy she might be, she gets back to you, like, that day. It's really good". However, the word "busy" brings up an issue that was highlighted was highlighted in Harris & Marlowe's (2011) study on the experiences of African RB students at Australian universities. The study observed that teaching staff often do not have the specific capacity or time to adequately support SRBs, particularly in regards to managing language comprehension issues. Staff may go above and beyond to try and support SRBs but may not be resourced enough to provide adequate assistance (Harris & Marlowe, 2011).

Tutors were also referenced by several SRBs as being helpful as they worked to complete their studies. For example, Simon (pers. comm., 7.8.2019, VUW, UG) recounted both the support and friendship he received from a tutor in his political science class, indicating that his tutor was the first one who "encouraged [him] to speak" and boosted his confidence during both class and tutorials:

My tutor came to me. He said, "Simon, every time I'm asking a question, your mouth is moving to say something, but you stop yourself. Why are you stopping yourself? [...] Just say it." And so I started. I started realizing that I have ideas.

Finally, several SRBs recounted helpful support staff they had encountered at university. Alphonse's pathway to enrolment within an undergraduate programme was expedited due to the advocacy of a high-ranking faculty administrator. Alphonse wished to directly enrol into an undergraduate programme after completing several English language courses and receiving high marks. However, when he initially approached general staff about enrolment, they advised he would need to take a Foundation Studies course prior to enrolment. Encountering the faculty administrator by chance, she listened to Alphonse's situation and fiercely advocated on his behalf:

Alphonse: *She helped me with everything. They went to other staff and said "He's over 21 and he gets his marks to a high level, why can't he do it?" They asked me to fill out the form and write a small essay explaining why I want to come to university. I went home and completed the requirements. And then they admitted me as a special...*
Author: *As a special case?*
Alphonse: *A special case.*

Bernard also discussed support staff at length in his interview, but for different reasons to Alphonse. While advocacy of staff was important to Bernard, he explained that the *background* of staff was perhaps more important when reflecting on his own experiences at university. When he attended AUT and was torn over the decision to switch degrees, Bernard (pers. comm., 14.8.2019, Auckland, PG) visited a counsellor from an African-background who made him feel validated due to shared experiences and cultural understandings:

I think that sort of gave me a sense that if I ever needed support, there was a brother that I could go to and he would understand my background. I met him and we spoke. [...] He said it was not like in Africa where, if you do the changing, you are stereotypically seen as a failure. [...] He sort of really supported, emphasised, and encouraged me not to be guilty [about switching programmes] because Africa and New Zealand are two completely different worlds.

At the time the interviews were conducted, only two universities were funding staff positions that were specifically created - either in full or in part - to support SRBs: 1 staff member at AUT, and 2 staff members at Auckland. In the cause of AUT, several SRBs who were interviewed mentioned the RB-support staff member as being a beneficial support during their studies. When asked what supports had been most beneficial to her at AUT, Andisha (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG) replied: "The [redacted RB-support staff member] is amazing. I always know she is there". Indeed, many of Andisha's peers referenced being similarly reassured that they would always have a go-to person to contact if they needed it who would support them.

It is also very important to recognise that not all experiences involving university staff were constructed positively by SRBs within interviews. For example, Juan (pers. comm., 15.7.2019, VUW, UG) stated in his interview: "lecturers… I feel like sometimes they are not aware we are there". His observation agrees with the findings of many researchers who have highlighted that SRBs may feel staff are unaware of their existence and/or may not fully grasp the complexities of RB experiences (Harris & Marlow, 2011; Kong et al., 2016; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018).

5.5 PEER CONNECTIONS AND SOCIAL SPACES ARE WORKING

Many international studies have observed that higher education institutions may be culturally-alienating settings for SRBs, particularly for undergraduates undertaking their first year of study (Harris et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016, Naidoo et al., 2018). While SRBs recounted moments where they experienced this well-documented isolation and cultural disconnect, experiences of social inclusion and belonging dominated many interviews. Peer connections and social spaces – both deeply valued by SRBs - helped facilitate these experiences.

For participants, feelings of initial isolation usually stemmed from one of two reasons: a) large class sizes and/or b) perceived cultural differences between themselves and their peers. These emotions were particularly poignant for first-year undergraduate students

(see 5.8). Juan (pers. comm., 15.7.2019, VUW, UG) discussed his experience in large first-year classes and the resultant isolation he felt at length in his interview:

The first year was tough. Because you go to those lectures where you have like 300, 350 students and you don't know anyone there. So you feel like nothing. [...] I didn't have any friends my first year, so that was a downside for me. I was like, "Okay, I go to university and I go to lectures, but I don't talk to anyone!"

Alphonse (pers. comm., 16.7.2019, VUW, PG), who also mentioned the isolation of large first year classes briefly in his interview, extended his observations about what was specifically alienating to cultural dissimilarity, echoing similar findings made by academics regarding cultural differences in education settings (Harris et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018). He recounted the difficulties of trying to make friends in his lectures and around campus:

It was a surprise here [at VUW], because when people don't know you, they won't talk to you. [laughs] In my country, when you're walking and you see someone you don't know looking at you, and you look at them and they smile. You approach them and say "hi!" But, it never happens here. I tried to approach and you see how they act. They pretend like they didn't see you.

Although not a study centred on RB people within the context of tertiary education, Kale, Kindon and Stupples' (2018) research on refugee citizenship and belonging within New Zealand recounted similar instances where social bridging – enabling social links to create spaces for 'bonded' communities - was difficult for many RB individuals, in many instances due to perceived cultural dissimilarities.

Following these initial difficulties of connecting with peers, however, were often stories of how SRBs were able to connect with one another achieve social bridging with non-RB peers. While some participants referenced creating organic connections within the classroom, most of these connections came as a result of facilitated social spaces including clubs, tutorials, and mentorship programmes.

Clubs, both RB-identity specific and non-identity specific, were the most referenced social space where SRBs were able to forge connections with their peers. Clubs offered RB students the potential to meet peers with similar interests and/or identities, often in groups smaller than the classes they were enrolled in. Juan, initially isolated in his first

year, articulated how he learned to use clubs to generate a network of friends, stating: "The way that I made friends was through clubs". Another participant, Simon (pers. comm., 7.8.2019, VUW, UG), explained the significance of his participation in VWB in fostering a sense of inclusion on campus and dispelling feelings of isolation:

What makes me happy is that now [after joining VWB] I have a few friends around the campus. When you go around and the people say "hello!", it makes you feel really comfortable. Rather than to be alone, all the time sitting by yourself with no one around you, you can spend time with a friend. [...] It now makes me encouraged more and more.

Srey (pers. comm., 13.8.2019, Auckland, PG) disclosed very similar feelings of inclusion and encouragement in her interview, but also articulated how participation in a club improved her self-confidence in her ability to complete university:

I joined Glee Club my second year. [...] That was like getting 60 new friends each year. So then that feeling of walking across campus and being like [snaps fingers] "Hey! What's up? I know you. Hi." All that stuff, I don't know, made university welcoming and within the realm of possibility to finish. [...] This is achievable.

RB-specific clubs in particular allowed students to meet other SRBs on campus, increase feelings of visibility (and by extension, belonging) at university, and forge deep connections with one another. The three participants from VUW were all members of VWB, and all referenced it when asked to recount positive experiences they'd had at university. Alphonse (pers. comm., 16.7.2019, VUW, PG) articulated the importance of VWB below when describing his experiences at VUW:

When I first came [to university], I didn't know if there were any other SRBs. There is a club, Vic Without Barriers. [...] If you know there are other SRBs, it gives you hope, help, and experience. Because at first I didn't know anyone and I thought, "this is hard." But, it is good if there is a way to meet people from a similar background.

Several academics have observed that SRBs may be reluctant to disclose their identity to their peers on higher education campuses, citing potential discrimination, invalidation, and deficit-based discourse associated with the label (Mangan & Winter, 2017; Morrice, 2011; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018). That, coupled with the lack of data collected by many institutions on SRBs, may explain why Alphonse (pers. comm., 16.7.2019,

VUW, PG) "did not know if there were any other SRBs" on campus. However, the presence of a RB-identity specific club at VUW allowed him to meet other SRBs to realise he was not alone on campus, as well as generate a sense of "hope" and understandings of shared "experience[s]".

It is important to note that several students interviewed that were at institutions that do not have RB clubs expressed the desire for one to exist. Nazrin (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG) expressed this wish and the reasoning behind it in her interview:

> Author: *What could universities do to continue supporting or better support SRBs?*
> Nazrin: *I think they can also make a group or club that is only for refugee backgrounds?*
> *So we get to see and meet each other, and say, "Oh, I'm not alone."*

Nazrin's perceived benefits of the presence of an RB-specific club – belonging and friendship - align with Alphonse and Simon's experienced benefits of being members of the club. These findings mirror Evans et al.'s (2008) case study of Global Remix (the first iteration of a SRB club at VUW), which found that an identity-specific club space enabled participating SRBs to mitigate feelings of isolation on campus.

Other small-group social spaces that SRBs referenced as being helpful were tutorials. Juan and Simon both referenced being more easily able to connect and socially bridge perceived cultural differences with non-RB peers in tutorial settings, particularly if run by supportive tutors (see 5.4). Other studies have similarly found that small group academic spaces (such as English-language or homework clubs) can help SRBs more easily develop a network of friends and establish a sense of inclusion within an institution or community (Naidoo, 2009; Yohani, 2013).

Recipients of the SRJRDS mentioned the Scholarship's mentorship programme and informal get-togethers as helpful for establishing connections with peers (both RB and non-RB). Having regularly scheduled meetings with mentors and semi-frequent informal meet ups with other Scholarship recipients helped individuals establish and maintain friendships with their mentors and fellow recipients. Mentorship programmes

are among the most studied initiatives to support SRBs within education generally, and similar benefits were found in Bajwa et al. (2017) and Vickers et al. (2017) studies.

Pre-established social networks (such as friend groups from high school and community members) were also beneficial to a handful of SRBs, particularly if individuals from these networks came from similar backgrounds. Srey (pers. comm., 13.8.2019, Auckland, PG) went to a low-decile high school (where very few students go on to tertiary education) in Auckland City before enrolling at Auckland. She explained how the small number of people from her high school who went to Auckland initially stuck together and supported one another to navigate the unfamiliar systems at university:

The fact that we were all coming from a school where this was, like, kind of rare and we were all kind of wide-eyed with each other was helpful. 'Ah, how does this printing system work?' 'I found out, here you go, here's how you do it!' So having people who were in the same place where it's not like, 'yeah, duh, you don't know how to do this thing?' but more like 'Like, yeah, this is so crazy!' was helpful.

Srey's articulation of the helpful nature of having a peer network of a similar background echoes some of the existing literature on SRBs within tertiary education institutions, in which social networks have been identified as important for the dissemination of knowledge of how to navigate complex institutional systems relating to general enrolment, campus layouts, and technology use (Bajwa et al., 2017; Hirano, 2014; Mupenzi, 2018).

5.6 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT IS WORKING

The motivation to please family was typically a strong consideration for students when thinking about attending university, and is perhaps where differences may emerge between SRBs and other New Zealand tertiary students, particularly ones that are not from migrant backgrounds. There was a strong desire from many participants to make their family, (particularly their parents) proud by enrolling in and graduating from university due to education being commonly referenced as culturally important, or as a couple of participants stated, an "expectation". Sakina (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, PG), who was born in Afghanistan, elaborated:

We really value education in our culture, and especially in my family… that's why I was like, "I have to go to university and finish my degree and be able to graduate and make my parents proud." You know? To see that happiness on their faces.

Those who completed degrees in their home countries often cited being encouraged to pursue higher education by their parents. Both Simon and Bernard recounted the influence their mothers had on nudging them into higher education, mostly due to the expectations they had of their sons to pursue education opportunities. Simon (pers. comm., 7.8.2019, VUW, UG), who was more into sport than education while growing up in Iran, reflected: "I'm really happy mom was… to push me to study. Sport is good, but now I understand that education is something different… it changes the way you are thinking".

Although many participants may have felt "expected" to pursue their tertiary studies by their families, it is important to emphasize that none interviewed in the study disclosed that they felt overwhelmed by the expectation - rather, many used it as fuel to motivate their studies.

Most participants who cited proximity to family as a reason for selecting a specific university desired to be close to them. Being close to family usually evoked a sense of comfort and familiarity to participants who chose to select a university close to home. Andisha (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG), one of the students who selected a university based on family, explained her decision succinctly: "I didn't really think about going to any university outside of Auckland. Auckland is a lot easier and more accessible to me. I just wanted to be with my family, basically". Alphonse's (pers. comm., 16.7.2019, VUW, PG) reasoning for attending VUW was very similar: "At first my motivation [to select VUW] was my home with my family. I didn't know anyone anywhere, and I didn't know how to move from one place to another".

For both Andisha and Alphonse (as well as several other participants), family was equated with familiarity, comfort, and ease: the decision to select a university close to home helped them to mitigate some of the unknowns of a university space. These findings agree with Luster et al.'s (2009) study which observed that "maintaining

attachment with caring and supportive people such as family members, neighbours, mentors, and people in the community" can help SRBs cope with the rigours of higher education (p. 203). Maintaining attachment is undoubtedly made easier by selecting a university in close proximity to family. The concept of proximity to family when selecting a tertiary education institution has interesting implications considering that many of the new refugee resettlement centres selected by the New Zealand government are not major metropolitan areas with universities nearby. Instead, polytechnics and PTEs, which are more numerous and spread out geographically across New Zealand will likely be seeing more students enrol at their institutions, especially if proximity to family is an important factor for SRBs in selecting a higher education institution.

It is important to note that not all of the students considered family as an important factor in selecting a university. One interviewee in particular, Saiah (pers. comm., 15.8.2019., AUT, UG), mentioned her initial drive to apply to universities away from Auckland *because* her family and community were there. Although she ended up studying at AUT (because they offered an academic programme well-suited to her interests), she elaborated on why she felt an initial pull to look beyond her city:

> *The reason I wanted to go to Canterbury was because I really wanted to feel what life was like outside of my community in Auckland. And also the pressures from my mom when I'm home and […] I thought if I went to Canterbury, I would be away from home and all of the community. […] If I had stayed in Auckland, I would always have these, you know...other people trying to make my choices more often? In my community, there's […] all this politics.*

Counter to participants like Andisha and Alphonse, Saiah referred to family and community as potentially restrictive rather than a source of comfort and ease during university study. Her sentiments agree with the findings of many academic studies which indicate that community expectations and family demands can present difficulties for SRBs within higher education (Ferede, 2010; Harris and Marlowe, 2011; Harris et al., 2013; Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016).

5.7 SELF-IDENTIFIED STRENGTHS ARE WORKING

Question 21 of interview schedule, which invited participants to consider the strengths SRBs have that support their university study, often elicited the most profound, reflective answers of the interview. Although several SRBs paused at the question and took a significant amount of time to answer the question, all but two interviewees highlighted strengths associated with a RB they observed within themselves and others that supported them at university. Self-identified resilience, adaptability, the ability to self start, cultural competency, and knowledge were all strengths tied to prior RB experiences that SRBs identified in their interviews that aided their experiences at university (see Chapter 6 for a critical analysis of these strengths in relation to research and practice).

The recent shift toward strengths-based studies in literature centred on SRBs in tertiary education often highlights the resilience and perseverance of SRBs (Earnest et al., 2010; Mupenzi, 2018). SRBs also were quick to identify these strengths within themselves, and usually equated resilience with a narrative of never giving up. Bernard (pers. comm., 14.8.2019, Auckland, PG) constructed this succinctly in his interview:

> *I think for people from RBs, they have been through a lot in their home countries and even transitory countries. This has helped us to build resilience and it is that ability to cope that keeps them going through the difficult and most challenging moments in tertiary education. You don't dodge bullets from AK47s and run from someone chasing your family with machetes to get here and succumb to the mere stress of tertiary education. This is what keeps us going as refugees.*

Anosha (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG) also articulated similar framings in her interview, stating: "coming from a refugee background, one of my strengths is not to give up when it comes to education, no matter how much you're suffering… you just don't give up".

Participants also discussed personal resilience as a strength on the journey *to* tertiary education. Srey (pers. comm., 13.8.2019, Auckland, PG) equated resilience with adaptability in her interview when she recounted having to navigate New Zealand institutional systems at a young age:

As a five-year old coming into Alexandra and having to learn English right away and figuring out a Western school system basically by myself because I was the only kid who was doing primary school. I had to be like 'permission slips? What?! And homework? What am I supposed to do?' [I had to learn] quickly and adapt. I'm so much more resilient than some of my friends in terms of adaptability, changing to suit the needs of a situation.

Ajwa (pers. comm., 25.7.2019, Otago, UG) similarly agreed that a RB attributed her the skill of "settling quickly" throughout her educational journey. Both Srey and Ajwa's experiences of adaptation and perseverance agree sharply with Mupenzi's (2018) assertion that, "by the time refugee-background students become visible at tertiary education institutions [...], they will have endured many challenges, [but] despite these challenges, refugee-background students display remarkable resilience" (p. 124). To even be enrolled at a tertiary institution, he argued, is very demonstrative of an RB individual's resilience and strong ability to adapt to new settings. It is important to acknowledge that narratives of personal experience contributing to the resilience of individuals accessing or participating within tertiary education is not just limited to SRBs: similar experiences of learning to adapt quickly and persevere are very commonly recounted in the literature examining the experiences of minorities (Hargrove and Kim, 2013; Perrot, 2015; Portnoi and Kwong, 2019).

The capability of SRBs to self-start and problem-solve individually was highlighted throughout the interviews. One of the questions asked to SRBs was to name key programmes, departments, or staff members that had been particularly helpful to them at university. Significantly, a handful of students could not name any. Darya (pers. comm., 25.7.2019, Otago, UG) indicated she had been succeeding at university "on [her] own", and Saiah (pers. comm., 15.8.2019., AUT, UG) at AUT said that she was her "own mentor". The narrative of succeeding on one's own was a common one (particularly for undergraduate interviewees): while several supports offered by universities were referenced as being helpful, the common denominator for the successes of students was often themselves. Students commonly recounted learning study techniques on their own (for example, learning to re-watch recorded lectures in preparation for exams or learning good self-care habits).

Cultural competency – the ability to understand, communicate, and interact effectively with people of different backgrounds – was another strength that SRBs highlighted. Ajwa (pers. comm., 25.7.2019, Otago, UG) elaborated on how her past narratives of migration allowed her to harness this skill:

> *I have been to different countries in my life. I was born in Iran, but my family is from Afghanistan originally. I was interacting with Persian people, Iranian people, and my Afghan people as well. And then going to Indonesia and meeting Indonesian people, and then coming to New Zealand and meeting Kiwi people… I think it has helped me gain the skill of understanding culture.*

As a result of this cultural competency, Ajwa and others explained that they had an easier time integrating with others at university and socializing.

Additionally, a few students referenced knowledge gleaned from experiences they had as a result of coming from a RB as a benefit to their academic studies, linking back to 5.1 (which discussed motivations for choosing a subject). This was particularly poignant for students who were studying subjects that very closely intersected with some of the experiences they had as a refugee. Simon (pers. comm., 7.8.2019, VUW, UG), inspired to study politics and international relations based on his prior experiences, emphasized that this knowledge imbued him with "power" in his interview:

> *I have knowledge about traditions, customs, culture. What makes me powerful was to go through all this [refugee experiences]. I went through many things. They [classmates] didn't. I saw many things. They didn't. […] I have advantages. I have a little bit of knowledge about life. This one, that one, and all because of those processes which we name 'refugee'. So that maybe makes me a little bit powerful.*

It is very important to note that not all interviewees could articulate strengths associated with coming from a refugee-background. Ammar (pers. comm., 13.8.2019, Auckland, PG), a postgraduate student at Auckland, was adamant that a refugee-background only inhibited his personal and academic successes at university:

> *Actually, for me, I see there are negative things to be refugee-background and studying at university. I lost one and a half years [of education]. […] If you are refugee-background, your language, your culture will be different. You are under a limited budget. We are survivors, but it's not positive. It's not going to aid anything in your study.*

Ammar's framings more closely align with much of the deficit-based literature that has been done on the experiences of SRBs within higher education. Much of the literature focuses on the difficulties SRBs may face when transitioning to higher education in resettlement countries, including language issues (Bajwa et al. 2017; Barbour, 2016; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Kong et al, 2016; Morrice, 2013; Naidoo et al., 2018), cultural issues (CORC, 2013; Joyce, 2010; Perry & Mallozi, 2017), and lost time frustrations associated with disrupted education and/or rejection of prior qualifications (Hannah, 1999; O'Rourke, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011).

5.8 DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE EXPERIENCES

While the experiences of undergraduate and postgraduate SRBs often shared many similarities (articulated throughout the combined themes above), several significant differences emerged and are detailed below:

5.8.1 UNDERGRADUATES

Undergraduates referenced initially struggling more during their first year of enrolment in comparison to the postgraduate students who were interviewed. The potential struggles undergraduate SRBs may have while transitioning to higher education in their first year are well-documented (Harris et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018). In this study, the most prevalent reason undergraduates occasionally struggled in their first year of study was simply adjusting to university systems, expectations, and class sizes. Some examples of this include Srey's story about needing to figure out how the library printer worked and Alphonse's story about heading home after he couldn't find his tutorial classrooms. The transition to university was a little less overwhelming for participants who resettled in New Zealand when they were younger (under the age of 12), namely because they did not encounter as many language-driven issues.

Even for undergraduate participants who were resettled in New Zealand later in life (over the age of 12), issues around language were present, but never cited as being

overwhelming. Rather than being confused by *words* or *content*, the most common issue related to language that was brought up by undergraduates was the pace of tutorials and lecturers. As Darya (pers. comm., 25.7.2019, Otago, UG) put it, good lectures were ones that went by at a "good pace" and good lecturers were ones that "didn't talk too fast" so that she could have extra time to process meanings. Unlike much of the literature that focuses on language comprehension issues within higher education and its impact on academic success (Bajwa et al. 2017; Barbour, 2016; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Kong et al, 2016; Morrice, 2013; Naidoo et al., 2018), few undergraduate students indicated that their marks had been impacted by this. The only two students who even referenced marks in their interviews were Otago students Darya and Ajwa, both of whom participated in the highly competitive Health Sciences programme with the intention of pursuing medical careers. Both students indicated that language comprehension barriers occasionally slowed their progress and affected their marks, but that the content in the programme was generally challenging as well.

The narratives of undergraduates were also more heavily concentrated on experiences with (or without) peer and social connections. Undergraduates more commonly referenced feelings of isolation. This was often connected to large class sizes, particularly those offered in the first year of university. However, on the other end of the spectrum, undergraduate students also recounted more instances of belonging and inclusion than their postgraduate peers. Significantly, the only students who were actively participating in clubs (with one exception) at the time of their interviews were undergraduates.

The "succeeding on your own" experiences referenced in 5.7 were much more dominant narratives for undergraduate students in comparison to postgraduate students. While many students recounted instances where they had received support from university provisioning and staff, the same students still highlighted experiences where they had to learn how to navigate and succeed within university on their own.

5.8.2 POSTGRADUATES

In comparison to undergraduate experiences, which often touched on initial or lingering feelings of isolation on campus, no postgraduates referenced having similar feelings while enrolled in their studies. Instead, interviewees recounted close relationships with their graduate student cohorts and/or supervisors. Interviewees generally attributed this to a) smaller class sizes if enrolled in papers and/or b) more one-on-one time with their instructors. Srey (pers. comm., 13.8.2019, Auckland, PG) explained how small class sizes and a small cohort led to the development of relationships:

[With] 11 people [enrolled], we just got really close. We've become really good friends. We've taken trips together, and it was a really, really, really, good, supportive cohort. It was so beneficial to have [...] people to ask questions to, and people to eat lunch with.

In comparison to the "succeeding on your own" narrative common for undergraduate interviewees, postgraduates recounted more instances of succeeding *with* others, particularly supervisors and members of their postgraduate cohort. All of the postgraduates interviewed who were conducting thesis work referenced having close relationships with their supervisor(s), and that the one-on-one time with them was valuable in helping them to succeed in their studies. In fact, the most positive stories in relation to lecturers came from postgraduate students. Given the nature of postgraduate programmes - which almost always have smaller cohorts and offer more one-on-one time with lecturers than undergraduate programmes - this is not necessarily surprising.

Postgraduate students were also better able to articulate their future goals and expressed less uncertainty about the future than their undergraduate peers. This was particularly relevant for Ammar, Bernard, and Maryam, who already had established professional careers in other countries before resettling in New Zealand. As Maryam (pers. comm., 25.7.2019, Otago, PG) stated, it was her "life and dream" to become a practicing dentist again, and obtaining a dental qualification in New Zealand would allow her to (re)build her professional identity in a new context. Maryam's aspirations agree with several academics who have found that re-obtaining certifications (if institutions do not recognise prior qualifications) in resettlement contexts has the potential to allow individuals to (re)establish their lives and a sense of normalcy in a new setting (Barbour,

2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Ferede, 2010; Morrice, 2013; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011). Even those without prior professional experience displayed firm goals. Srey (pers. comm., 13.8.2019, Auckland, PG), who had studied previously at Auckland as an undergraduate, explained that her mentality was much different as a postgrad, stating: "I had a new perspective of… I'm in, and then I'm out. I'm serious. I came here to get my degree and do something practical".

In terms of provisioning, a couple of postgraduate interviewees commented on the lack of targeted supports available for postgraduate SRBs. This particular point was emphasised by Veeda (pers. comm., 14.8.2019, Auckland, PG), who lamented the lack of postgraduate scholarship opportunities for SRBs. She referenced the benefits of the SRJRD award in her interview, but described her disappointment upon learning that the award had age restrictions attached to it. Additionally, postgraduate students on the whole were less likely to reference or know of provisioning for SRBs on campus when asked what they knew was available at their institution.

Postgraduate students were the ones most often plagued with issues relating to prior qualification recognition. The ad-hoc nature of qualification recognition between universities in New Zealand meant that some universities would accept qualifications while others would ask SRBs to prove their prepared-ness in courses, often to the detriment of the student both financially and time-wise. Veeda's experience of enrolment at Auckland most aptly displayed this. She obtained a Masters-level degree with high marks from her home country of Pakistan, but was still required to take 3 pre-requisite courses (at her own personal expense) before enrolment into her PhD programme because staff did not deem the degree "honest enough" for direct entry. AUT, however, offered her direct access into a PhD programme without pre-requisites. The ad-hoc nature of qualification recognition and the mistrust of non-Western degrees that Veeda (and others) experienced have been very well highlighted by existing research by existing research (Hannah, 1999; O'Rourke, 2011; Perry & Mallozzi, 2011).

5.9: CONCLUSION

This chapter has (*discover*)ed and explored "what's working well for SRBs in New Zealand universities and why" by identifying eight key themes through thematic analysis.

These *discoveries* have contested dominant understandings of RB experiences, which usually depicted them as inhibitors to success for SRBs within tertiary education. In this study, participants discussed how their histories of forced migration imbued them with the motivation to pursue university study, and in some cases, led to their selection of particular programmes of study. Additionally, these experiences often led to the development of personal strengths such as resilience, adaptability, the ability to self-start, and cultural competency. These personal strengths often enhanced the experiences of participants within university.

Additionally, *discoveries* have also spotlighted sources of support that have previously been identified as barriers to success and positive experiences within university. Family and community, more commonly depicted through deficit-based lenses as potentially restrictive, have been shown to be sources of motivation and comfort for several SRBs. Although instances where staff have misunderstood or discriminated against SRBs are well-recounted, SRBs in this study recounted many stories where staff were powerful advocates for their needs. Universities, usually assessed in literature for the qualities that make them unwelcoming to SRBs, can be welcoming and supportive of SRBs, particularly if they actively promote and enact values of diversity and inclusion.

The next chapter, *Dream*, will consider how these important *Discoveries* align with the *Dreams* – or recommendations – have for New Zealand universities in terms of their support of SRBs in the future.

6. DREAM(ING)

The Dreaming phase of AI invites participants to conceptualise "what was and is working" within a group or organisation to envision what the future could continue - or start - to look like (Koster & Lemelin, 2009, p. 262; Reed, 2007). The critical questions that *Dreaming* invites participants to reflect on are: "What might be?" and "What is the world calling for?"

Participants in this study were asked to *Dream* of possibilities in terms of support and initiatives for SRBs within their own university as well as New Zealand universities generally.

When participants were asked what their university - as well as other universities - could continue or start doing to better support SRBs, these were the results:

Recommendation	# of students who made recommendation
Create and/or support an SRB club	4
Hire a (RB) staff person to support SRBs	3
Reserve admissions slots for SRBs	3
Create targeted tutoring groups for SRBs	2
Collect/utilize data on SRBs	2
Offer (more) targeted financial support	2
Provide a designated space for SRBs	2
Provide targeted support for mature SRBs	2

Raise cultural awareness on campus	2

Table 6.1. Dreams articulated by two or more SRBs.

Dreams unique to individual participants (non-duplicated) included:

- Bring workshops to Mangere Resettlement Centre that inform and advertise educational opportunities at all universities
- Create Open Day/orientation events
- Create "women's only" hours at university recreation facilities
- Offer informal, regular get-together events for SRBs
- Provide mental health workshops for SRBs
- Provide subject-specific admission tests (so that English proficiency is not the only admissions consideration)
- Provide teachers' aides for SRBs in large introductory courses

Many of the *Dreams* articulated by SRBs are intricately connected to and possibly born out of the major themes identified in Chapter 5. Additionally, these *Dreams* often speak to wider themes highlighted within the literature.

The call for SRB clubs, designated social spaces, and informal get-togethers at university emphasizes a desire for greater social connection with peers and more visibility for SRBs within a university setting. As numerous studies have demonstrated, tertiary education can be culturally alienating settings for SRBs (Harris et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2016). As Chapter 5 and outside research (Bajwa et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2008; Hirano, 2014; Mupenzi, 2018) has shown, peer social networks such clubs can help combat these potential feelings of isolation and enhance the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education settings. Identity-specific clubs, as we've seen in Chapter 5 and Evans et al. (2008), may further amplify the potential of social connections to enhance the experiences of SRBs by providing a setting where SRBs feel their background is visible on campus and understood by their peers. In the words of Nazrin (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG)

and Alphonse (pers. comm., 16.7.2019, VUW, PG), these clubs can help SRB individuals, non-RB peers, and institutions realize that RB people are "not alone" at university.

The *Dream* of SRBs having a staff member at universities to support SRBs specifically re-emphasizes the important role staff can play in terms of enhancing the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand universities, as detailed in 5.4. Studies like Hirano's (2014) and Harris & Marlowe's (2011) research have highlighted instances where staff have gone beyond their job descriptions to support and enhance the experiences of SRBs at university, and 5.4 similarly recounted instances of staff advocacy for SRBs. However, Harris & Marlowe's (2011) study also highlighted that staff without SRB support roles written into their job descriptions are often over-committed and limited in their capacity to support them. 5.4 highlighted how beneficial having a person hired to specifically support SRBs was for participants, particularly for those at AUT. The *Dream* of having a SRB-support person at all universities, if realized, would help address the issue of over-committed staff and provide extra support for SRBs. Additionally, it could help address the well-documented concerns about staff awareness of SRBs on campus and the complexities of a RB (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Kong et al., 2016; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018). SRBs would have at least one person on staff who would (ideally) be very aware of these complexities. To ensure the highest possible amount of understanding between staff and SRBs, SRB-support staff should ideally come from RBs or similar regions of origin themselves. As Bernard (pers. comm., 14.8.2019, Auckland, PG) explained, having someone who he felt like he could relate to due to a similar background increased his level of comfort and increased his likelihood of using these services.

The *Dreams* of reserving admission slots, offering (more) targeted financial provisioning, and providing subject-specific admission tests all relate to several issues of access delineated in Chapter 2. Financial (Abamosa, 2015; Ferede, 2010; Hannah, 1999; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Kavuro, 2013; O'Rourke, 2011; Stevenson & Willott, 2007; UNESCO, 2015) and language barriers (Bajwa et al., 2017; Barbour, 2016;

Naidoo et al., 2018; Stevenson & Willott, 2007) are often the most pronounced barriers that can make access to tertiary education difficult for SRBs. However, as we've seen in Chapter 5 and within outside literature, provisioning to help SRBs address issues of access by providing financial provisioning and admissions support have been helpful. Their presence within the *Dreams* of SRBs indicates that this provisioning needs to continue and become more widespread throughout New Zealand universities and not just limited to one or two institutions.

Dreams of small SRB-specific tutoring groups and teachers' aides directly reflect ideas found in existing research and results in Chapter 5, which have shown that small group activities and one-on-one contact with staff and/or mentors can greatly enhance the experiences of SRBs within education settings (Bajwa et al., 2017; Vickers et al., 2017). Their existence within the *Dreams* of SRBs highlights the general lack of provisioning in this area, with the SRJRDS mentorship/tutoring programme being the only one in existence for SRBs within New Zealand. Very few SRBs have access to this programme, as they must be Scholarship recipients to access this. As articulated in Chapter 5, tutorials have been referenced as providing similar benefits to small tutoring groups and one-on-one support: they've helped several SRBs to meet peers, receive academic instruction, and grow in confidence academically. However, tutorial provisioning is generalized – all students (ideally) access tutorials for the classes they are enrolled in. SRBs have articulated in their *Dreams* that targeted tutoring groups or one-one-one academic support for those from a RB would be more impactful than these generalized sessions.

The employment-first priority in resettlement practice discussed in Chapter 2 directly reflects one individual's *Dream* for Mangere Resettlement Centre to host a workshop to educate newly arrived RB people about New Zealand tertiary education opportunities. Ammar (pers. communication, 14.8.2019), the student who articulated this *Dream*, lamented the "big loss" for RB individuals and New Zealand society when individuals with skilled professional backgrounds are unaware of tertiary education opportunities or are unaware of pathways to enrolment within programmes. As a result, they are "doing

nothing" or working in low-wage, unskilled careers (Ammar, pers. communication, 14.8.2019). A workshop could help raise the awareness of newly-arrived RB individuals of tertiary education opportunities, and help them envision it as a possible future. However, for the benefits of the workshop to be fully effective, resettlement agencies would need to commit to promoting the same opportunities.

6.1 CONCLUSION

Many *Dreams* that SRBs have for New Zealand universities have already begun to be reflected in provisioning: two universities have SRB clubs, two have targeted admissions schemes for SRBs, three universities have begun to collect data on SRBs, and, at the time interviews were conducted, two universities had staff hired on to support SRBs. However, existing *Dreams* also indicate that targeted provisioning needs to be more widespread: SRBs at one institution often admired the targeted provisions offered at another, and expressed a wish for their university to adopt similar support systems. It is clear that these support initiatives should be limited to two or three universities – *Dream*ing big to see targeted provisioning offered at all universities would offer more SRBs the opportunity to access supports that could enhance their experiences within tertiary education. The following chapter, *Design*, considers how *Discoveries* and *Dreams* could (re)design policy and practice, and considers the actions required so that *Dreams* could be realised at all universities.

7. DESIGN

Existing research has highlighted the many barriers that make it difficult for SRBs to access, succeed, and thrive within tertiary institutions. This research study has found that many of the previously-identified barriers – such as issues of financial access, family/community barriers, and isolation within university - also affect SRBs within New Zealand universities. However, this research, by adopting a strengths-based framework and methodology, has also identified "what's working" to improve the experiences of SRBs: their strengths and capabilities to navigate or overcome potential challenges, as well as supports within (or outside of) university.

Here, I consider the significance of the assets identified in the study, as well as the *Dreams* articulated by students from the lens of AI - which firmly believes that doing more of what's working will lead to better outcomes for communities – and transformative theory. How can transformative "intervention" (Mertens, 2017) be *Design*ed (Reed, 2007) to reflect "what's working" in order to start, continue, or better support SRBs in the future within existing institutional contexts? To do this, I first reflect on the individual strengths and resilience identified by SRBs and their resultant relationship with institutional responsibility. Next, I discuss five key areas where future practice and provisioning can be *Designed* to better enhance the experiences of SRBs. Then, I discuss the significance of SDGs in relation to institution-specific and national-level policies, emphasizing the importance of incorporating SRBs into equity and diversity policy. I move on to list recommendations for future practice and policy based on the results of *Discovery, Dream,* and *Design*, and then conclude by briefly recapping key takeaways from the chapter.

7.1 ON INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS AND RESILIENCE

Centring the lens in this study on "what's working" has highlighted many individual traits or strengths of SRBs that have enhanced their experiences within university and helped them to overcome potential challenges. In particular, SRBs discussed their own resilience, adaptability, and self-starting qualities as assets in their own experiences.

While vitally important that these strengths are acknowledged and recognized by institutions, it is crucial to also analyse *why* these strengths are called upon within this context and emphasize the responsibility of institutions to be the "duty-bearers" – entities who have an obligation to ensure that *all* students receive equitable treatment and experiences within university, as articulated in *Education 2030* (UNESCO, 2015).

Historically, research on educational resilience has centred on how individual traits lead to (or disrupt) educational resilience (Portnoi & Kwong, 2019; Waxman, Gray, & Padrón, 2003). However, researchers are starting to shift away from an understanding that focuses solely on the individual's role in developing resilience, instead considering how external factors such as institutional and structural barriers enable or inhibit educational resilience (Kumpfer, 2002; O'Connor, 2002; Portnoi & Kwong, 2019). These researchers argue that these external factors within an educational setting can have a greater influence on the outcomes of students than their individual traits (Kumpfer, 2002; O'Connor, 2002).

Although SRBs were very quick to reference traits born out of their RB experiences that contributed to their resilience (such as adaptability and the ability to self-start), it is very important to consider the language used in their framings. Bernard's (pers. comm., 14.8.2019, Auckland, PG) statement of "not succumbing to the mere stress of tertiary education" and Anosha's (pers. comm., 15.8.2019, AUT, UG) declaration "when it comes to education, no matter how much you're suffering… you never give up" both demonstrate individual resilience, but the words "stress" and "suffering" imply difficulties stemming from institutions themselves. University is arguably stressful for all enrolled students, but no student should have to "suffer" through their studies on their own. The narratives of students self-starting and succeeding within university on their own, being their "own mentor[s]" as Saiah stated, are powerful examples of strengths but are also strongly indicative of the need for more supports to lessen the responsibility on individuals themselves to participate and thrive within tertiary education.

Baker and Ramsay (2019)'s meta-scoping study on the international literature centred on SRBs within tertiary education called for disruption of the "pathologizing gaze on the 'resilient individual'" to focus more on "how the system can be better adapted to meet the needs" of SRBs. Indeed, honouring the strengths and capacities of SRBs (particularly ones they've articulated themselves) is important. However, believing that the resilience of SRBs alone is enough to ensure that they will complete and succeed within higher education places immense responsibility and pressure on SRBs to make it on their own. These responsibilities should instead be shouldered by tertiary institutions, as reflected in the commitments articulated within the diversity and equity policies of all New Zealand universities.

The next section, 7.2, discusses potential actions institutions can take in order to uphold their responsibilities as duty-bearers to ensure the quality education they offer is equitable and inclusive for SRBs.

7.2 WHERE DISCOVERIES AND DREAMS CAN (RE)DESIGN PROVISIONING

The landscape of current university provisioning can be enhanced if *Discoveries* and *Dreams* are incorporated into existing and future targeted provisions for SRBs within New Zealand universities. This section discusses five key areas (financial, staff, social, family/community, and welcome) where targeted supports can be (re)*Designed* to better enhance the experiences of SRBs.

7.2.1 DESIGNING FINANCIAL PROVISIONING

Existing financial provisioning for SRBs has been working very well to enhance the experiences of SRBs within university. Financial supports such as the SRJRDS and equity grants/scholarships have strongly helped SRBs access and remain within tertiary education.

As we saw in the and within the literature, a lack of financial support from educational institutions can dissuade participants from enrolling in tertiary education (see 2.2), and

for students already enrolled within the institution, can negatively affect their experiences within it or, at worst, lead to their departure from university as we saw in the narrative of Simon (see 2.3 and 5.2). Access to targeted financial provisioning, on the other hand, comes with numerous benefits for both SRBs and their educational institutions (see 2.3 and 5.2). The benefits of financial provisioning extended beyond solely enrolment and completion of degrees. As we saw with the SRJRDS recipients, financial provisioning can help increase the individual agency of students to select a programme and university that best suits their aspirations rather than be forced to select what is the least expensive option (which is usually physically closer to students' family/community networks). Research has extensively considered the role scholarships in particular play in individual agency and mobility of students, but primarily from the analysis of international scholarships for students from the Global South (Dassin, Marsh, and Mawer, 2017; Ortiz, 2015). Even the United Nations (2015) recognized the positive impact scholarships can have on the mobility and agency of individuals in low-income countries, including the creation of these scholarships as a target (Target 4.B) under SDG 4. However, scholarships for domestic students as we'd seen with the SRJRDS also facilitate the similar benefits of individual mobility, agency, and freedom of choice. As new resettlement centres in New Zealand are placed in areas without local universities (or universities nearby), the creation of more targeted scholarships and/or financial awards for SRBs could help make university more accessible for future students and allow them to select a university that best suits their aspirations, as we saw with Darya and Ajwa's ability to attend Otago for medical school (see 5.2).

It is important to acknowledge, however, that while financial provisioning is working for SRBs, there is not nearly enough of it to support all SRBs within New Zealand universities. The most holistic award – the SRJRDS – is only available to female-identifying SRBs between the ages of 18 to 25, and even then, is still limited in the number of awards it can give out. There are no equivalent awards for men, or for women over the age of 25. Additionally, only three universities have developed scholarships and/or equity awards for SRBs, and the amount and number that all three offer per year is limited. For example, Auckland has 700 SRBs and only five SRB

equity awards. While SRBs can certainly apply for non-targeted scholarships and financial awards, in doing so, they are often made to compete against other students who have not overcome the same number of challenges to access or participate within tertiary education. Further targeted financial provisioning must be developed for financial provisioning to work better for SRBs than it already has been.

7.2.2 DESIGNING STAFF ADVOCATES

This study has shown that relationships with and advocacy from university staff can enhance the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand universities, challenging literature that has focused on the role staff can play in facilitating institutionally-created barriers to SRB success (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018) and agreeing with others that have highlighted instances where staff have gone above and beyond their job descriptions to the benefit of SRBs (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Hirano, 2014).

What is clear, however, is that more staff in SRB support and advocacy roles are needed. Only AUT and Auckland provide staff that have these job duties written into their job descriptions, and these staff members were consistently referenced as being helpful in interviews with participants at these institutions. Students at both VUW and Otago (where no one is staffed to support SRBs specifically) both expressed dreams of having a support staff person. However, *who* should be hired to fill this role is of critical importance. Calls for TEIs to increase the diversity of their staff members have been increasing, and experts on diversity argue that minority leadership sets positive examples for minority students (Fincher, Katsinas, & Bush, 2010; Stout et al., 2018). A US education study found that a more diverse faculty led to increased graduation rates for minority students, in part due to students having a role model or someone they felt could relate to their personal circumstances (Stout et al., 2018). We saw the importance of this in action in Bernard's encounter with an African-background staff member (5.4), and it was also reflected in the *Dreams* of SRBs.

Given the diversity of the label "RB", it is not realistically possible to hire someone on who will tick everyone's boxes in terms of comfort and understanding. However, it is important that institutions consider a person's background before hiring them on to support SRBs. Hiring someone on from a RB (or similar background) would increase the chance that SRBs would access the staff member for support, and increase the level of trust and connection between staff and student.

Harris and Marlowe's (2011) study made a good point of highlighting how often university staff advocates without SRB support in their job descriptions are over-stretched and unable, at times, to adequately support SRBs. The advocacy efforts of staff are important, regardless of whether or not SRB support is written into job descriptions or not. However, it is ultimately up to the institution to recognize that the grassroots supports provided by over-committed staff is *not* a sign that equity needs are being met. Constantly providing support for SRBs on top of official job requirements can come at a cost to staff members, and SRBs may not be seen as often as they need to due to the busy schedules of staff. Instead, equity for SRBs *and* staff would be to hire on someone, either full time or part time, to officially support SRBs.

It is also critical to highlight Juan's (pers. comm., 15.7.2019, VUW, UG) observation that he felt like many staff were "not aware" of the existence of SRBs within their classes, a point identified by many studies as well (Mangan & Winter, 2017; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Mupenzi, 2018; Kong et al., 2016). To raise awareness of SRBs and their potential strengths, challenges, and needs, regular up-skilling of staff via cultural awareness trainings could help in this area, as well as the promotion of diversity-centred events on campus (the latter idea of which was dreamed by two SRBs).

7.2.3 DESIGNING SOCIAL PROVISIONING

Researchers within education have continuously analysed the role peer connections play in the educational experiences of students, and Astin's (1993) "involvement theory" postulates that students' frequent and meaningful interactions with their peers results in more positive academic outcomes and greater satisfaction within the institution (Van

Horne et al., 2018). The results of this study certainly agree with Astin's findings: social connections, particularly with peers, were the most heavily referenced sources of strength and support identified by SRBs. In addition, fostering and supporting social connections (through clubs, casual meet-ups, and providing designated social spaces) featured heavily into the *Dreams* SRBs had for the practices of New Zealand universities.

Clubs were the most heavily discussed social space, and an RB-specific club was the most frequently articulated *Dream* in the study. Although Evans et al.'s (2008) research is the only study that focuses on the benefits of a RB student organisation specifically, other researchers within education have advocated for the potential of student organisations to enhance student experiences within tertiary education (Case, 2011; Huang & Chang, 2004). Social spaces like student organisations can increase the confidence of students within a tertiary education setting (Huang & Chang, 2004), a benefit definitely reflected in the experiences of SRBs who participated in clubs, but particularly those who were in an identity-specific organization like VWB.

Student clubs are the only intrinsically social provisions reflected within New Zealand's targeted provisioning, and even then, are only present at two universities. Much of the current targeted provisioning is strictly access-focused in nature, meaning that it centres heavily on ensuring equity of enrolment and retention within an institution. For example, the creation of admission pathways for SRBs and financial provisioning are working to support SRBs' access and/or retention within university, but do not currently support or enhance social connections. However, given how beneficial social connections have been in enhancing the experiences of SRBs within university, tertiary institutions should look into the possibilities of re-framing old provisioning or developing new provisions that centre on promoting social involvement and connection.

The SRJRDS can be viewed as an example of provisioning that blurs the lines of access-based and social provisioning: the two can coexist and be extremely supportive of SRBs. SRJRDS recipients consistently explained that the Scholarship was helpful both

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financially and socially. The Scholarship's social events (informal get togethers, annual events, mentorship programmes) allowed recipients of the award to forge connections with one another, community members, and RASNZ staff.

It is important to acknowledge that there are complexities with developing social provisioning, especially if it is identity-specific. As researchers and a few SRBs in this study have pointed out, stigma (both real and SRB-perceived) still exists in relation to the label "refugee background" (Mupenzi, 2018; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Morrice, 2011; Naidoo et al., 2018). Many SRBs within an institution may not wish to engage with any identity-specific social provisioning offered to them. However, it is important to acknowledge that those that did access identity-specific provisioning such as VWB conceptualized it as an incredibly helpful conduit for them to forge connections with others.

Additionally, these initiatives function best when led and co-developed with SRBs. Co-development – rather than imposition – is a crucial pillar of transformative and AI research and practice. Transformative and AI all agree that, if lasting and positive change is to be achieved, initiatives should not be imposed upon groups of people or developed without extensive collaboration with them (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007; Mertens, 2017; Reed, 2007). VWB, for example, was initiated, designed, and is currently led by SRBs. They were the ones who expressed a desire to create a club, and were subsequently supported by several university staff in terms of financial provisioning and general advice. The club is thriving (having won numerous awards) with the strong groundwork laid for continuity. In another example of good practice, staff at Otago initiated consultation with SRBs to explore the kinds of supports that might be helpful for them (Anderson, pers. comm., 31.1.2020). Difficulty identifying students with whom to consult led to the realisation that institutional processes needed to change to enable more systematic consultation with SRBs. Staff then sought collaboration with stakeholders both within and beyond the university, including SRB representatives, with a view to implementing these changes. This group have met

monthly since the end of 2018, with a view to supporting the development of student-centred initiatives long-term.

7.2.4 DESIGNING PROVISIOINING THAT RECOGNIZES FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

One strength identified by the study that has been completely overlooked within targeted provisioning are those related to RB family and community members. A lot of existing research has examined the role community and family can play in limiting the opportunities and experiences of SRBs within tertiary education (Ferede, 2010; Harris and Marlowe, 2011; Harris et al., 2013 Joyce et al, 2010; Kong et al., 2016). While agreeing in part that family and community, as exemplified in Saiah's narrative, has the potential to restrict SRBs, this study has even more strongly highlighted the motivation and comfort family and community can provide to SRBs attending university: they are a significantly overlooked resource of targeted provisioning and policy.

Research has often examined the role family and community play in the lives of tertiary education students, but as with the literature on SRBs, studies have been trending toward strengths-based understandings of family and community that tab them as potential sources of knowledge and support (Jenkins, 2012). Jenkins' (2012) book challenges historic understandings of higher education practice, which views family and community as distinctly separate from – and at times, "an enemy of the state" of - tertiary education settings (p. 2). She argues that traditional markers of student wellbeing and adjustment to tertiary education (such as when students stop going and calling home constantly) misunderstand and undervalue the critical role family and community can play in enhancing the experiences of students within tertiary education due to the support, comfort, and knowledge they can instil, and calls for practices to more adequately incorporate and welcome communities to tertiary campuses (Jenkins, 2012). Indeed, the Jenkins' (2012) observations echo sentiments of Development Studies scholars like Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2002) who strongly believe that communities targeted by development initiatives are imbued with knowledges and

strengths that can positively contribute toward development goals, especially if they are included within the design of these development initiatives.

Diversity Festival, an event hosted by VWB at VUW in December 2019 may provide an example of how future provisioning that targets communities and families can be *Designed*. Diversity Festival was created to bring the families and communities of SRBs at VUW together on campus and welcome them to the university space, uniting them with food and cultural performances from different communities (see Figure 7.1). A key aim of the event was to introduce family and community members to campus (many of whom had never visited university), and posit it as a welcoming setting for future students. It was a widely successful event – over 210 people attended, and several guests contacted VWB about attending VUW in the future. By inviting families and communities to campus, it successfully blurred the institution and family/community divide identified by Jenkins (2012). Events with goals like Diversity Festival's ideally benefit all people involved: families/communities better understand university systems and feel welcomed, universities see an increase of enrolment interest from RB individuals, and students receive knowledge and support from their families/communities while they undertake their studies.

Figure 7.1. Community performers and VWB's leadership team pose for a picture at Diversity Festival.
Source: Terish Ming, 14 December 2019, VUW.

7.2.5 DESIGNING A WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE

AUT was consistently constructed as welcoming – as a "home" for participants. Considering that AUT does not designate SRBs as an official equity group within policy, and that the universities that *do* include SRBs within their equity policies were not described in similar terms, this is significant. How can an institution without SRBs in its equity policies potentially be more welcoming than those that do, and how can "welcome" be designed into practice and policy?

AUT's diverse and inclusive atmosphere was consistently referenced by SRBs as a primary reason they chose to attend the university, and as we saw in 5.3, "diversity" was typically associated with a study body in which they could see themselves reflected. Diversity policies and initiatives within tertiary education have been extensively researched, and many institutions have pushed to recruit a more "diverse" student body and faculty (Tienda, 2013). Typically, "diversity" within TEIs is most commonly measured by the presence of minority individuals within the overall body of staff and students – the presence of racial minorities in particular are considered a marker of diversity (Tienda, 2013). However, academics have cautioned that visible diversity within institutions does not necessarily mean that minority staff and students are adequately integrated within campus life and experience equitable opportunities (Tienda, 2013).

Critically, AUT SRBs *did* reference the campus as being both diverse and inclusive, and SRBs felt it was most strongly exemplified through institutional *actions* such as campus events like the organized *haka* after the March 15th Christchurch tragedy or through general Open Days. Campus events centred on diversity in particular have the potential to combat the well-documented stereotypes, stigma, and cultural misunderstandings peers and staff may have of SRBs (Mangan & Winter, 2017; Morrice, 2011; Mupenzi, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018), and SRBs also recognized this potential when they articulated their *Dreams* to see more RB cultural/diversity events on university campuses. Indeed, scholars like Tienda (2013) agree that verbal commitments to see diversity reflected within statistics must "match" their institutional actions such as

ensuring students from under-represented backgrounds receive the same equitable opportunities and experiences within and outside of the classroom (p. 474). Thus, institutional support for SRB-led clubs such as VWB or SEB-led events as Diversity Festival could be seen as an *action* that reflects a stated commitment to diversity and inclusivity initiatives.

7.3 DESIGNING POLICY

Since Education 2030's (UNESCO, 2015) call for tertiary education institutions to follow and implement the 17 SDGs in practice, several studies from education and development researchers have considered institutional responses (Franco et al., 2019; Nhamo & Mjimba, 2019; Owens, 2017). However, a significant amount of this research focuses on how tertiary institutions are responding to the SDGs by incorporating them into curriculum and/or academic research to promote and better understand sustainable development (Franco et al., 2019; Owens, 2017; Nhamo & Mjimba, 2019), or by implementing partnerships with the community to raise awareness about sustainability (Owens, 2017; Nhamo & Mjimba, 2019). How tertiary institutions have responded to the call to provide more "equitable and inclusive" opportunities for all learners (United Nations, 2015) has received far less analysis from researchers, particularly regarding institutions in the Global North.

Figure 7.2. SDGs on the wall of VUW's busy student hub.
Source: Author, 20 January 2020, VUW.

Tertiary education institutions cannot promote their adherence to and promotion of SDGs if they do not critically assess on their own equity and inclusion policies, as well as research the experiences of students (particularly under-represented students) to reflect on whether or not they are upholding the values they seek to promote.

All New Zealand universities have committed to providing equitable, fair, safe, diverse, and non-discriminatory environments for *all* students. This study has shown that, while SRBs have internal strengths and have at times received support that has greatly enhanced their experiences within a university context, opportunities for SRBs within New Zealand university contexts are still not "equitable and inclusive". Even though each education institution has a commitment to ensure they are upholding SDGs for the benefit of all students, it is crucial that they acknowledge the 2030 Agenda's added commitment to "meet the needs of refugees" and individuals coming from complex humanitarian situations (United Nations, 2015, p. 10).

While four universities have formally included SRBs within their equity and diversity policies, four have not yet done so. Additionally, the MoE has not recognized SRBs as an equity group within its Tertiary Education Strategy, an act which would provide targeted funding to TEIs, as well as require them to collect and report on data to better ensure inclusion and equitable opportunities for SRBs. This would also allow the TEC to monitor TEIs and intervene if they felt that equity and inclusion goals for SRBs were not being upheld. It is important to acknowledge that lack of equity recognition in policy does not mean that an institution is not considering the needs of SRBs, as we've seen with the experiences of SRBs at AUT. However, formal recognition within an institution's equity policy – as well as inclusion within a national equity policy - ideally comes with institutional accountability. Additionally, formal inclusion within institution-specific and national equity policy would arguably make it easier – or, ideally, required – for universities to *Design* the provisioning discussed earlier in 7.4 (financial, staff, social, and family/community provisioning).

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE AND POLICY

Based on the *Discoveries* (Chapter 5), *Dreams* (Chapter 6), and *Designs* (Chapter 7) articulated over the past three chapters, my current recommendations for future practice and policies are as follows:

1. The inclusion of SRBs within the MoE and MBIE Tertiary Education Strategy as a formal equity group (see 7.3).
2. The inclusion of SRBs within the diversity and equity policies of *all* New Zealand universities (see 7.3).
3. The collection of data on SRBs at each New Zealand university (see 7.3).
4. The creation of more nationwide and institution-specific financial awards/provisioning for SRBs (with particular consideration for male-identifying students, mature students, and postgraduates) (see 7.2.1).
5. The creation of a staff position to support SRBs at each New Zealand university. Ideally, this staff position is occupied by someone of a RB (or minority) background (see 7.2.2).
6. The creation of mandatory workshops to educate all university staff on cultural sensitivity, particularly in relation to RB issues (see 7.2.2).
7. The creation or continued institutional support of SRB-led student clubs (see 7.2.3).
8. The creation of a designated physical space on campus for SRBs (see 6 and 7.2.3).
9. The creation of events and/or provisioning that prioritizes welcoming RB families and communities to universities (see 7.2.4).
10. The creation or support of events that promote diversity/cultural awareness on campus that specifically highlight SRBs (see 7.2.5).
11. The creation of Open Day and orientation events specifically targeted toward SRBs (see 7.2.5).

7.5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This chapter discussed how future practice and policy can be *Designed* to enhance the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education in New Zealand. It outlined individual strengths of SRBs – particularly resilience – but cautioned that focusing on individual resilience risks lowering the emphasis on holding education institutions accountable for ensuring equity is met for SRBs. It investigated five key areas of provisioning (financial, staff, social, family/community, and welcome) that can be re(*Designed*) to continue or better support SRBs. Finally, it discussed institutional and national policy in relation to the SDGs (in particular, SDG 4) and emphasized the commitment TEIs have to ensure that they are adhering to and living the values outlined in *2030 Agenda* by incorporating SRBs within equity and diversity policies.

More work is undoubtedly needed to make New Zealand universities more equitable spaces for SRBs, and in some cases provisioning will take a significant amount of time to implement. However, it is important to acknowledge that *Dreams* have already begun to be realized for many students. The *Dreams* SRBs have for their universities *are* achievable, and have, in many instances, been achieved. It is also important for achieved *Dreams* to be continuously refined – read through the lens of AI and transformative theory, change is a fluid cycle (Reed, 2007) and transformative interventions are rarely fixed (Mertens, 2017). *Designs* must be continuously revisited and be mutable to fit contemporary, community-identified needs. However, highlighting *"what's working?"* in 2020 has provided a strengths-based foundation from which to build future practice upon.

8. DESTINY

This thesis concludes with *Destiny,* the final phase of AI that is intrinsically future-focused (Reed, 2007), in mind. What is the *Destiny* of research and practice in the space of SRBs within tertiary education, and what could a strengths-based future look like?

It briefly summarizes the key findings and values of the thesis, and discusses topics for future research. Section 8.1 summarizes the thesis's aims and briefly reviews each chapter. 8.2 discusses the key findings and recommendations put forth by the study, and 8.3 looks ahead to the *Destiny* of future research centred on SRBs within tertiary education.

8.1 THESIS REVIEW

Guided by a transformative epistemology and AI as the primary methodology, this study examined the experiences of SRBs within four New Zealand universities from a strengths-based perspective, and highlighted what has been working well for students in order to improve existing (and future) policies and practices in New Zealand tertiary education. The study discussed five key areas (financial, staff, social, family/community, and welcome) in which provisioning can be enhanced to better support SRBs and improve their experiences within university, and strongly advocated for the inclusion of SRBs within institution and national level equity and diversity policies.

Chapter 1 presented the rationale of the study, discussed the significance of tertiary education in the lives of RB people, and situated it within Development Studies. Chapter 2 outlined many key issues and themes within the international and New Zealand-specific literature on SRBs within tertiary education. Chapter 3 provided New Zealand-specific context in relation to New Zealand's past, present, and future of refugee resettlement, and also outlined New Zealand's tertiary education landscape. In addition, it highlighted several pathways SRBs may take to get to university in New Zealand, and highlighted the landscape of current national and institution-specific

targeted provisioning for SRBs. Chapter 4 discussed transformative theory and walked through the AI research process, highlighting various methods (such as recruitment and sampling) that were applied in the study. Chapter 5 *Discovered* into the experiences of SRBs, sorting them into eight strengths-based themes. Chapter 6 outlined the *Dreams* SRBs had for universities within New Zealand in terms of their support of SRBs, and discussed them in relation to *Discovery*. Chapter 7 brought together the *Discoveries* and *Dreams* of SRBs together to *Design* five areas where existing and future policies and practices can be (re)developed to better reflect what is working well to improve the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education.

8.2 KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Deficit-based understandings of the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education have been privileged within the overarching body of international research. By employing AI and developing a strengths-based research question that sought to understand "what is working well for SRBs within tertiary education and why?", this thesis has added a different perspective to the on-going conversation centred on strategies to best support SRBs.

This study has demonstrated that SRBs have personal strengths and knowledges – often born out of their prior experiences as refugees – that can positively enhance their experiences within university. These self-identified personal strengths include the resilience to overcome potential challenges, the ability to adapt quickly to new settings (such as university within a resettlement context), and cultural competency. Also, many SRBs articulated that the knowledge they had acquired both before and during forced migration benefitted them in the classroom and motivated them to pursue enrolment at university and/or enrolment within a particular programme. In addition to personal strengths, many SRBs within New Zealand universities also recounted encountering supports – both internal to universities and external of them – that significantly contributed toward their positive experiences within university. As such, this study challenged purely deficit-based understandings of the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education and asserted that a tertiary education setting is not a space solely

ridden with barriers and struggles for SRBs. While challenges may still exist within tertiary education for many SRBs, so too experiences where SRBs have found success, joy, and thrived.

When considering the landscape of current targeted provisions for SRBs, this study argues that existing and future provisioning could be (re)designed to be more reflective of what has been working well to enhance the experiences of SRBs within New Zealand universities. In particular, it has identified five key areas of provisioning – financial, staff, social, family/community, and welcoming - that be strengthened by building upon these assets. Developing more institution-specific and national-level financial provisioning such as scholarships and equity grants – particularly for male-identifying, mature, and postgraduate students – would enable more participation and retention within New Zealand universities. Focusing on the cross-cultural education of university staff, and committing to hire a staff member at each university that specifically supports SRBs, would strongly enhance the potential for staff to be sources of trust for and utilized by SRBs. Supporting and encouraging the development of social provisioning (such as clubs) - particularly RB-specific social spaces – could increase the sense of belonging, visibility, and confidence of SRBs at university. Developing targeted provisioning that includes families and communities has the potential to benefit all parties involved: families/communities would develop a better understanding of university systems, the university would receive more interest from RB communities, and SRBs would receive more knowledge and support from family/community members during as they undertake their studies. Finally, prioritizing institutional actions centred on how SRBs are welcomed and included on campus – for example, the implementation of diversity events or RB-specific Open Days – can help attract SRBs to study at university, but more importantly, foster a strong sense of belonging and confidence for SRBs on campus.

In order to actualize the (re)design of targeted provisioning, this thesis strongly advocated for the inclusion of SRBs as an equity group within the equity and diversity policies of *all* New Zealand universities. Rather than have individuals lobby their own

institutions for the equity inclusion of SRBs, the most efficient way to accomplish this would be through the designation of SRBs as an equity group within the MoE's Tertiary Education Strategy. Inclusion within the Strategy would mandate that *all* TEIs meet the needs of SRBs, provide extra funding to meet these needs, and supervision to ensure that these needs are being met.

The benefits of obtaining tertiary-level qualifications are far-reaching. Worldwide, access to tertiary education still remains profoundly unequal for RB people in comparison with their non-RB peers. For the few that do go on to access tertiary education, research has shown that many are not adequately supported by their institutions nor provided access to equitable opportunities and experiences within them. As the United Nations (2015) stated within *Agenda 2030,* every individual deserves access to quality educational opportunities that are both equitable and inclusive. Since the creation of the 17 SDGs in 2015, TEIs around the world have considered how best they can contribute toward the achievement of these goals, with many implementing activities and/or research outside of the university to exemplify their commitment to upholding them. However, it is imperative that tertiary education institutions reflect inward and examine whether they are meeting these goals within their own institutional policies and practices.

In the case of SDG 4 – which states that equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for be available for all individuals - New Zealand universities can and should be doing more to ensure that they are meeting this goal, particularly as it relates to SRBs. However, as new provisioning and policy is developed to achieve SRB equity goals, institutions should also engage with existing research and collaborate with their own students to better understand what has been working well to facilitate positive experiences for them within their institution rather than focus solely on what hasn't. The *Destiny* for SRBs within New Zealand universities already looks bright. Several universities have already incorporated SRBs within their equity policies and developed targeted provisions that have been working for students, and SRBs themselves have developed their initiatives that have strongly worked to enhance the experiences of their

peers. Developing future practice that reflects more of the good, perhaps, would pave a way for this *Destiny* to be even brighter.

8.3 WHERE TO NEXT?

Despite this study's contributions to studies related to education and development, refugee education, and SRBs, there is still a very strong need to further explore the experiences of SRBs within tertiary education.

It is critical to note that, in 2018, 4 out of 5 of the world's 20.4 million refugees resided in countries that shared borders with their countries of origin (UNHCR, 2019). Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda, and Sudan hosted the largest numbers of refugees in 2018, totalling 7.4 million between the four countries in comparison to the 81,300 refugees that were admitted via UNHCR processes to 29 different countries, almost all of which are situated in the West (UNHCR, 2019). Additionally, there were 41.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) – those displaced from their homes but still residing within their home countries – in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019). There is a profound absence of literature centred on the experiences within tertiary education of both internally displaced SRBs and SRBs within neighbouring countries, as well as a lack of understanding of institutional supports and initiatives for these SRBs. The *Destiny* of future research within the field must consider their experiences to adequately reflect the proportion of IDPs and RB people in these areas – at this time, the literature is heavily disproportionate toward SRBs in Western contexts (Ramsay & Baker, 2019). Additionally, this *Destiny* should include RB researchers, as they are vastly underrepresented and underprivileged in published literature on SRBs within tertiary education education (Ramsay & Baker, 2019).

While this study was one of the first of its kind to consider the experiences of postgraduate SRBs within its analysis, a much greater amount of research is needed that specifically focuses on their experiences and the provisions institutions have developed to support them. The results of this study indicate that there may be assets within the structures of postgraduate programmes in New Zealand that benefit their study. Smaller

class sizes, peer cohorts, and opportunities to meet one-on-one with lecturers and/or supervisors all helped postgraduate SRBs develop networks of trust and belonging at university – developing targeted provisioning for undergraduates that models aspects of these experiences may help mitigate feelings of isolation and disconnect brought on by large class sizes. However, more extensive research is needed to confirm if there are similarities of experiences internationally, and if it is feasible to apply assets of a postgraduate model to undergraduate provisioning for SRBs.

This study has shown that family and community can be beneficial sources of support for SRBs during their time within tertiary education, but the existing body of literature does not often view family and community through this lens. More strengths-based research needs to be undertaken to better understand the complex relationship between RB families and communities, SRBs, and tertiary education institutions. It may benefit future researchers to conduct case studies on events like Diversity Festival, which aim to bring families and communities to university campuses, to better understand the potential these events have to bridge the sometimes harmful university/family binary articulated by Jenkins (2012).

Gender-based experiences were not a focus of this study, but it needs to be in the *Destiny* of future research on SRBs within tertiary education. Some scholars have indicated that cultural expectations relating to gender roles may limit tertiary education opportunities for SRBs within resettlement countries, particularly for women (Joyce, 2010; Perry & Mallozi, 2017). A few SRJRDS recipients briefly discussed the significance of obtaining a scholarship and attending tertiary education as a woman from their respective communities, indicating that there are aspects relating to gender and its implications on access to and experiences within tertiary education that need to receive significant attention from future researchers.

The experiences of SRBs within polytechnics and comparative institutions around the world are not well understood at this time. The little research that does exist indicates that SRBs are more likely to attend "relatively lower cost community colleges or

publicly-funded adult education centres rather than [three-year] colleges" due to having a greater likelihood of being at a greater economic disadvantage than their peers (Tuliao, Hatch, & Torraco, 2017; Hollands, 2012). If polytechnics in New Zealand follow this trend of being a more accessible and popular pathway for SRBs to attain a tertiary-level qualification, it is critical that future research be done to explore how they are experiencing their institutions and the respective supports in place for them. This is particularly significant given the increase of the refugee Quota this year and the creation of new refugee resettlement centres, many of which are located in cities without universities within or near them. Instead, polytechnics, wānanga, and PTEs are often present in these areas, and it is imperative more research is done to ensure that these institutions are prepared and provisioned to best support SRBs.

EPILOGUE

As I write this epilogue in February 2020 to officially conclude my thesis journey, several exciting, recent developments have arisen in terms of advocacy and provisioning for SRBs within New Zealand universities that were not present when I had submitted my first and second drafts. As such, they do not factor into the analysis of my thesis. However, I believe it imperative to highlight some of these developments in order to provide an updated picture of the provisioning landscape as of February 10, 2020.

2019 was a pivotal year of advocacy by, for, and with SRBs in New Zealand TEIs. This is most sharply exemplified by the December launch of "Learning Together in Aotearoa"[14], New Zealand's national network to support SRBs in tertiary education. The network was launched at the Learning Together in Aotearoa Forum, held at VUW and organised by Sara Kindon, the TEC, and myself. Over 80 people – SRBs, lecturers, professional staff, government officials, NGO representatives – from different institutions/organisations across the country came together to action plan for a future that better supports SRBs. The Network currently has a Facebook group that is actively growing[15], a Forum report will be released in March 2020, Zoom meetings are being scheduled, and there are strong plans for an event to be held annually that discusses these important advocacy issues.

VUW has allotted funding for the creation of a part-time staff role that solely supports SRBs, and is actively hiring for this position. Additionally, VWB has planned to make Diversity Festival an annual event to bring family and communities to campus, and also has plans to work alongside Student Learning to create a week's worth of events that celebrate June 20th's World Refugee Day.

Finally, conversations with staff at Canterbury Refugee Resettlement and Resource Centre have revealed that there is a strong advocacy work (and research) being done to

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[14] Name likely to change.
[15] The Facebook group for Learning Together in Aotearoa can be found here:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/614967222376968/.

develop more supports for SRBs at Canterbury. Canterbury has launched a webpage, (similar to that of VUW's and Auckland's) which lists resources for SRBs. Additionally, the development of a staff position to support SRBs may be in the works as well.

The *Destiny* of advocacy in this space continues to look bright, and is moving at a rapid pace. I am excited to see how the provisioning landscape continues to (re)develop in 2020 and beyond.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Name	Gender	Age Range	Institution	UG/PG	General programme of study*	Region of origin	Age Range of NZ Entry	Category of entry to NZ	SRJRDS Recipient
Ajwa	F	18-21	Otago	UG	Science	Middle East	10-15	Quota	Y
Alphonse	M	26-29	VUW	PG	Mathematics	Africa	20-30	Family Support	N
Ammar	M	30+	Auckland	PG	Science	Middle East	30+	Asylum	N
Andisha	F	18-21	AUT	UG	Law	Middle East	10-15	Quota	Y
Anosha	F	18-21	AUT	UG	Business	Middle East	6-10	Quota	Y
Bernard*	M	30+	Auckland	PG	Law	Africa	20-30	Asylum	N
Darya	F	22-25	Otago	UG	Science	Middle East	16-20	Quota	Y
Hashem	M	26-29	Auckland	UG	Science	Europe	10-15	Non-humanitarian^	N
Juan	M	26-29	VUW	UG	Politics	South America	20-30	Quota	N
Maryam	F	30+	Otago	PG	Science	Middle East	20-30	Quota	N
Nazrin	F	18-21	AUT	UG	Counselling	Middle East	16-20	Quota	Y
Saiah	F	18-21	AUT	UG	Technology	Middle East	6-10	Quota	Y
Sakina*	F	22-25	AUT	PG	Communications	Middle East	6-10	Asylum	N
Simon*	M	30+	VUW	UG	Politics	Middle East	30+	Quota	N
Srey	F	26-29	Auckland	PG	Science	Asia	0-5	Quota	N
Veeda	F	30+	Auckland	PG	Education	Asia	30+	Non-humanitarian^	N

* designates participants who chose to use their real names in the study. The rest of participants have been given pseudonyms.
^ a non-humanitarian visa indicates that the participant entered on a visa not officially recognized as a refugee pathway to New Zealand, such as a student or work visa. Veeda entered on a non-humanitarian student visa but applied for asylum after arrival in New Zealand. She was later granted refugee-status after her case was approved.

Strategies toward supporting refugee background students in New Zealand tertiary education institutions: what's working and why?

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

Who am I?

My name is Sarah Willette and I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my thesis.

What is the aim of the project?

This project seeks to understand how refugee background students are experiencing university in New Zealand, as well as the different support initiatives put in place by universities to support refugee background students. Examples of support initiatives may include scholarships/grants for refugee background students, staff hired to support refugee background students specifically, or university support programmes such as Student Learning or Counselling services. The project wants to know what supports have been helpful (or not helpful) for refugee background students, and what could be improved to better support them in the future.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (application 0000027444).

How can you help?

You have been invited to participate because you are a refugee background person at or over the age of 18 who is currently enrolled in a New Zealand tertiary education programme. If you agree to take part I will interview you wherever you are most comfortable (for example, at university, at your flat, or at a café). I will ask you questions about how you have been supported in your studies at university, and what has been

helpful for you. The interview will take between 30 minutes to 1 hour. I will audio record the interview with your permission and write it up later.   You can choose to not answer any question or stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any time before November 1, 2019. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

What will happen to the information you give?

This research is confidential unless you would prefer to be identified in this study. Choosing to identify yourself in this study means that you would prefer to have your name attributed to any quotes I use in my thesis. If you choose for your information be confidential in this study, this means that the researcher named below will be aware of your identity but the research data will be combined and your identity will not be revealed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. However, you should be aware that in small projects your identity might be obvious to others in your community.

If you choose to be identified in this study, there is a possibility that you will be named in the final report if your quotes are used.

Only my supervisor and myself (the researcher) will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed on February 28, 2030.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my Masters thesis. Additionally, the information may be used in future academic articles authored by myself and/or my supervisor, Professor Sara Kindon.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study before November 1, 2019;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of your interview recording;
- receive a copy of your interview transcript;
- read over and comment on a written summary of your interview;

- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisor:

Student:	**Supervisor:**
Name: Sarah Willette	Name: Sara Kindon
University email address:	Role: Associate Professor of Geography
willetsara@myvuw.ac.nz	School: Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences
	Email:
	sara.kindon@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Strategies toward supporting refugee background students in New Zealand tertiary education institutions: what's working and why?

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

This consent form will be held for 1 year.

Researcher: Sarah Willette, School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.

- I agree to take part in an audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study at any point before November 1, 2019, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.

- The identifiable information I have provided will be destroyed on February 8, 2030.

- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.

- I understand that the results will be used for a Masters thesis.   YES   NO

- My name will not be used in reports, nor will any information that would identify me.   —— ——

    OR

    My name will be used in reports, as well as information that could   —— ——
    identify me.

- I would like a copy of the recording of my interview.   ____ ____

- I would like a copy of the transcript of my interview.   ____ ____

- I would like a summary of my interview: ____ ____

- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below.   ____ ____

Signature of participant: _____

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____

Personal Background
1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your country of origin? OR what country are your parents from? (Depends on whether student is first gen or second gen +)
4. When did you arrive in New Zealand?
    a. N/A if second gen

First, I'd really love to know about your experiences in education before enrolling at university in New Zealand. Can you tell me a little more about your study experience and what you benefitted from in education outside of New Zealand?

Educational History (Pre-NZ TEI)
1. Tell me about your educational journey before you started attending university, even before you arrived in New Zealand (if applicable)… when did you first start going to school?
2. Where did you attend this school?
3. What was it like…?
4. What came next?
5. Repeat until they say they enrolled in university in New Zealand.
6. What helped you the most while you were a student before starting at this university?
    a. Institutional helps?
    b. Professional support?
    c. Personal?
    d. Family

Next, I'd love to hear more about your experiences of higher education in New Zealand. Can you tell me more about your study experiences at university?

Educational History (NZ TEI enrollment)
1. What were the reasons you wanted to go to university?

2. Have you already completed a higher education programme at a NZ TEI?
   a. If so, repeat following questions, but in past tense.
3. What were the reasons you chose to attend this university specifically?
   . How did you hear about the university?
4. What are you studying?
5. Why did you choose that subject/area to study?
6. When did you start your programme?
7. When do you expect to finish this programme?
8. How has your experience at university been so far?
9. Describe a positive experience you have had at university (for example, a helpful staff member, in a class etc.)
   1. Can you describe an experience at university when you felt that you belonged? Who was there? What was happening?
   2. Can you describe an experience at university when you felt valued? Who was there? What was happening?
   3. Can you describe an experience at university when you felt that your specific journey as a refugee background student was acknowledged? Who was there? What was happening?
   4. Can you describe an experience at university when you felt respected? When you felt you were treated equitably?
10. What do you love most about studying x at y university?

Next, I'd love to hear your own reflections about what it is like being a refugee background student at university. The following questions will focus on your identity as an RBS.

RBS at University (Reflections)
1. What strengths do you have as an RBS that support your university study?
   1. How have these strengths been supported at university?
2. What empowers you as a refugee background student at university?
3. Can you name any support systems (for example, scholarships, equity office appointments, student learning appointments, clubs) your university offers to RBS?
   1. If so, what are they?
   2. Have you accessed any of these support systems? If so, what was your experience like?
   3. Are these support systems working for you?
4. Can you name any key staff or programmes that have helped you personally at university?
   . What department are they in?

1. How did they help you?

Dreaming phase
1. What do you think your university can do to keep supporting you and your goals as a refugee background student?
2. What do you think higher education institutions across New Zealand can do to better support refugee background students?

Next, I'd like to hear more about your plans for after university.

Future Plans
1. When you imagine leaving university/graduating – how do you expect to feel about yourself?
2. What will be the key learnings you will take away with you?
3. What do you hope to do after you finish your degree?
4. What are your plans for the next 2-5 years?
5. How will your time at university have prepared you for these plans?

Housekeeping
1. Do you have any key names of staff who you think would be interested in participating in a survey for this study?
2. Do you know any other students at different universities who might be interested in participating in this study?

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