
**STRUCTURE AND AGENCY:
EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH TRAINEES**

BY

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Abstract

This case study explores the aspirations of young people in a youth training programme and how structure and agency shape their aspirations. Transition policy is currently based on the pathways framework which provides many different educational and training ‘pathways’ to assist young people to move from school to work. The pathways framework uses the ‘pathways metaphor’ as a response to the knowledge-wave economy where the individual is responsible for creating their own ‘pathway’ in a flexible and complex labour market. For youth in Youth Training their ‘pathway’ is often non-linear and complex; not having followed conventional or mainstream transitional markers they are easily labelled problem-youth and ‘at-risk’ or vulnerable to failure. This study endeavoured to move beyond the labels of young in Youth Training to explore their stories in the context of the lived-experiences. It gave them the opportunity to voice their aspirations for the future and considered the structure or societal constraints associated with their transitional experience.

A case study was undertaken with a group young people in Youth Training aged between 16 and 17 years old. Eight semi-structured interviews and two focus groups were held with four male and four female participants, of which the interview questions gave the opportunity to explore how young people felt about their future aspirations, the relevance of their training to their aspirations and how the students exercise their agency during training. Themes were drawn from the data and interpreted using choice biography, youth agency frameworks and discourse theory. The discussion of the data also explored the structural constraints within which the data sits.

Findings showed that the future aspirations of young people in youth training are shaped by their lived-experiences. These lived-experiences are mediated by structural constraints and their ability to use agency. Structural constraints negatively affected their lived-experiences; and therefore, at times impacted on their future aspirations. The young people in this study described many complex and unique stories that exhibited the use of agency. Agency was exercised in the context of their lived-experiences to move beyond structural constraints and pursue their future aspirations.

This study recommends the use of the contextual research approach when exploring youth transition research.

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Chapter One

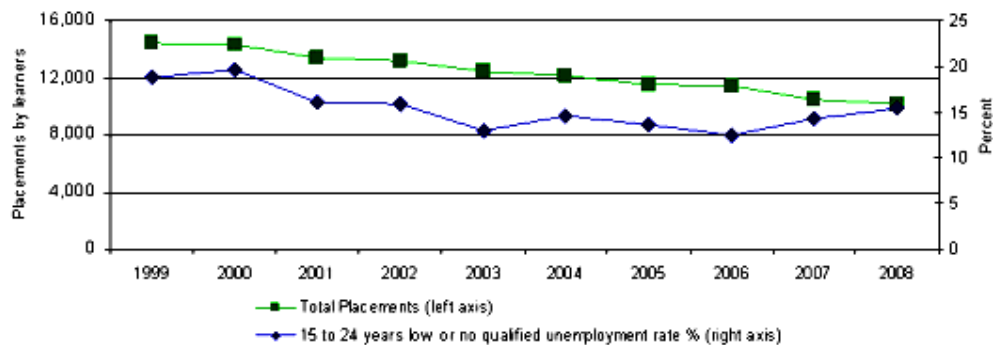
Bird's Eye View: Introduction and Research Overview

1.1 Introduction and Overview

Over the last 10 years, while policy makers and employers have debated how to up-skill employees to embrace the knowledge-wave economy, the number of young people who have left school but are not engaged in tertiary training has remained stagnant (Carter, 2008; Department of Labour, 2007; Gilbert, 2005). The current shift towards a knowledge-wave economy means that there is an increasing reliance on complex skills, such as; multi-tasking, problem solving, technology skills and interpersonal communication skills and early school leavers without such skills find it difficult to move into full-time work (Leggatt-Cook, 2005).

In 2010, 417 New Zealand secondary school students were early school leavers a vast drop from the 4,000 early school leavers in 2006. In New Zealand senior secondary school students are expected to achieve the National Certificate in Education Achievement (NCEA) Level 1, in year 11, NCEA Level 2, in year 12, and NCEA Level 3 in year 13. In 2009, 17.1% of all school leavers left school without at least NCEA Level 1. Of these students 14.8 percent were female and 19.2 percent were male (Education Counts, 2010). To counteract youth inactivity in the labour market the government, through the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the Ministry of Social Development, has continued to use targeted training programmes such as Youth Training (YT) to move early school leavers into the workplace (Ministry of Education, 2007b). In 2008, 10,226 young people were enrolled in Youth Training, as opposed to approximately 19,000 young people who were not-in-education-or-training (NEET) (see Figure 1 & 2).

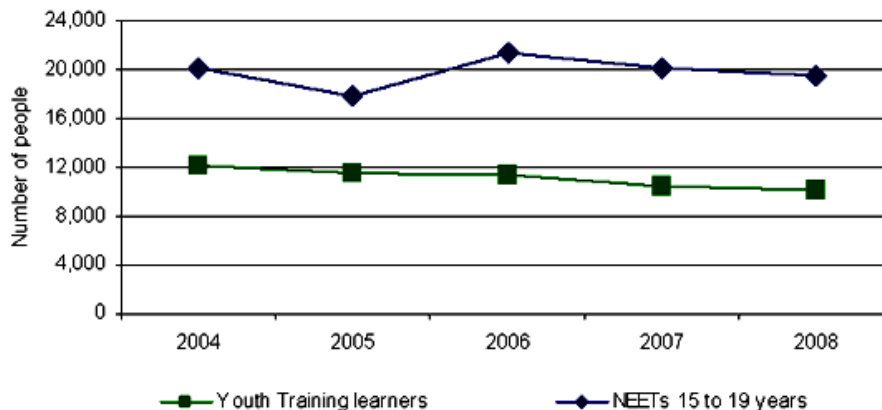
Figure 1. Youth Training Statistics 1999-2008 (Mahoney, 2010)



Source: Tertiary Education Commission and Statistics New Zealand

NB: Figure 1 shows that Youth Training placements fell steadily during the 1999 to 2008 period. The rate of unemployment for 15 to 24 year olds who left school with no or low qualifications also fell steadily during this time. The fall in the rate of placements was slightly greater on average than the fall in the unemployment rate for 15 to 24 year olds with no or low qualifications which fluctuated across 1999 to 2008 (Mahoney, 2010: p4).

Figure 2. Youth Training Placements and NEETs 2004 to 2008 (Mahoney, 2010)



Source: Tertiary Education Commission and Statistics New Zealand

Youth Training (YT) is the term used to describe government funded transition initiatives for teenagers aged 15-18 years who no longer attend secondary school, who have limited qualifications and are not in employment. The focus of Youth Training is to move young people from an 'inactive' to a participatory or 'active' role in the workforce, where they are deemed to be skilled salary or waged workers. Programmes enable students to complete a mixture of general and specific

employment skills unit standards from the National Qualifications Framework (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008).

Much of the research concerning school to work transition in New Zealand has often focused on the general population of students. This has meant gathering data regarding students from all academic levels and observing a wide array of transitional pathways (Vaughan, 2008). Although, it is important to investigate the wider picture of youth transition in New Zealand, school to work transition in the current economic climate is increasingly complex and clustering students into generalised groups may not necessarily provide a rich story of the transition experience. This research is focused on gathering interviews from young people in training, using a case study method.

Much has been done to alleviate the problem of providing courses for early school leavers. In the current economic climate educational policy emphasises encouraging young people to stay in education and training for as long as possible to ensure they have the skills and qualifications needed to pathway into a satisfactory vocation. Youth transition has been the focus of education policy, which has created opportunities such as the Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) for young people to experience on-the-job training or technical training, whilst attending high school. This focus on youth transition has not gone unnoticed and successes in high school partnerships with local community businesses have garnered a new wave of pilot programmes throughout New Zealand (Tertiary Education Commission, 2002, 2006). Recent budget cuts have rescinded some of these 'fluid' pathways for students up to 20 years of age; however, most secondary schools are currently providing a transition experience with community partnerships, including work experience.

In the last few years the Youth Training programme in New Zealand has been structured to enable trainees to complete a fluid set of modules over an open-ended twelve month period. The completion of the compulsory and elective unit standards leads to the achievement of the National Certificate in Employment Skills (NCES). In addition, this NCES fits in with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority framework and has a Level 1 and Level 2 qualification. This qualification is used in high school transition courses, such as the Gateway programme and is also used in out-of-school

courses run by Private Training Establishments, as a base qualification before students engage in a specialised course, work experience and full-time work (Higgins, 2002; Tertiary Education Commission, 2002).

Participants in Youth Training are labelled at-risk because of their lack of social capital or their perceived vulnerability to negative social influences (e.g., negative peer pressure, youth offending and 'gang' associations) (Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Social Development, 2002). In some cases they have been expelled from formal secondary education and at times are referred on by Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS). Youth Training offers at-risk youth who lack qualifications and training, the opportunity to learn new skills and gain formal qualification; thus, they have the opportunity to exhibit compliance with the social norms of people their age such as career goal setting, work experience (Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Social Development, 2002; Tertiary Education Commission, 2008; Wyn & Dwyer, 2000) Overall, Youth Training seeks to execute governmental policy in guiding young people to become productive and law-abiding citizens, and capitalising on their skills and abilities to enhance the economy (Higgins & Nairn, 2006; Tertiary Education Commission, 2008; Wyn & Woodman, 2006).

In 2008 New Zealanders with no qualifications had an unemployment rate over 42% higher than those whose highest qualification was a school qualification (OECD, 2010).

There is a hard-core of [New Zealand] youth who are at high risk of poor labour market outcomes and social exclusion. Among them are most of the 11% of youth aged 15-24 who are neither in employment nor in education or training. This rate is in line with the OECD average, but it is still much higher than the best-performing countries. (OECD, 2008, p. 3)

In 2008 New Zealand parliament debated the effectiveness of education policies for young people 18 years and younger (Carter, 2008). Even though there was clear evidence that youth unemployment had reduced, 11 percent young people were still not in education or training. In response to the OECD Report: *Joblessness in New Zealand* (2008) measures were taken by the government to maintain a strong institutionalised approach to youth participation in education. Youth Training courses

who had received positive evaluations by Work and Income New Zealand became the major recipients for government funding (OECD, 2008). Positive evaluations were given to Youth Training courses that enabled students to move into further training or employment for three months or more. Courses that did not obtain enough positive employment outcomes had funding reduced, regardless of student interest in the course or whether the course had a positive influence on youth career aspirations (OECD, 2008).

The problem with assuming that ‘inactive’ youth are at ‘risk’ of joblessness is these labels assume that youth do not have decision making skills and are lacking in relationships within their community (te Riele, 2004; Wyn & White, 2000). Youth Training, in complying with government objectives, may subjugate the shared practices and personal relational networks that promote social capital of the young people attending the course. More specifically, the assumption that ‘at-risk’ youth lack individual decision making skills also removes the possibility that societal constraints may influence the restriction individual life choices (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; te Riele, 2004; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). For youth who are labelled ‘at-risk’, or who travel along a non-linear transitional pathway, it may be easy to view them as not having education or career aspirations (te Riele, 2004). This research will endeavour to explore how youth formulate their future aspirations; how they view the relevance of youth training to their aspirations; and how they exercise agency during this training-

1.2 The Research Gap

This study explores the aspirations of a group of young people in Youth Training in the context of structure and agency (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Evans, 2002). Currently, youth transition and careers research in New Zealand provides data concerning the educational, training and work aspirations of young people and it is believed that those young people with high qualifications will more likely have strong career aspirations. Some research already undertaken on young people in Youth Training found that they were either; hopeful about the future and in training to avoid future risk, or anxious about their future career options (Vaughan, 2006). Australian research found young people to be optimistic about the future despite adverse

circumstances; however, not always realistic concerning the opportunities available (Wyn & White, 2000). The case study reported here endeavoured to explore a gap in New Zealand youth research allowing young people to tell their stories about how they shape their future aspirations. The current study closely researched a cohort of young people in youth training and explored the interviewees' unique stories across a range of aspirational life dimensions within the context of their lived experiences.

1.3 The Purpose of the Research

This study explores the aspirations of young people in Youth Training and the extent to which structure and agency shape everyday experiences. Secondly, it endeavours to provide an opportunity for young people to tell their stories; voice their thoughts concerning their aspirations. Lastly, this study draws from a contextual framework where the data is analysed in context of the young person's lived experiences.

This case study endeavours to closely research a cohort of young people in training to establish how these young people shape their future aspirations, with intention of allowing them to tell their unique stories across a range of aspirational life dimensions.

1.4 The Research Questions

Global question:

Question 1: How do young people shape their future aspirations?

Other research questions:

Question 2: How do young people view the relevance of this training to their aspirations?

Question 3: How do young people exercise agency during this training?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This case study research could positively contribute to the wider field of youth research in New Zealand. As it is a case study the data is important as it provides evidence of a group of young people in Youth Training and their thoughts, values and opinions at a particular place and time. This case study also emphasises the importance of researching young people and allowing them to voice their unique stories. This adds to the rich tapestry of youth research in New Zealand.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The strength of case study research is that the qualitative data collection can use interview questions to draw the rich experience of the interviewee; however, the limitations around this type of qualitative study. Firstly, the explanations that the interviewees offer may be influenced by the events occurring within the specific research time frame. Secondly, this case study research maybe influenced by intersubjectivity due to the fact that the data is interpreted by the researcher. The case study enables the in depth exploration of the phenomenon or experience of interest in this instance the aspiration of a cohort of young people. Lastly, the data collection cannot be generalised to the wider New Zealand youth population.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One – Introduction

Chapter one introduces the thesis topic and provides the background to young people in Youth Training. It also describes the purpose and significance of this case study and the statement of the problem, research questions and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two - Theoretical Framework

Chapter two outlines the relevant literature on this topic. It provides an overview of the literature of youth transition models based on developmental theory. It also provides the relevant New Zealand literature concerning the pathways policy framework and the effects of globalisation, market fragmentation and monetarist policies has had on youth career choices. The literature review also explores alternative youth research frameworks in Australian literature by Wyn & White and choice biography theory developed by Beck.

Chapter Three – Methodology

Chapter three introduces the methodology of this research by describing case study research and then explaining the research technique and design. The methodology describes how the research was instigated through discussion with the organisation, the ethical procedures, the interview and focus group procedures and how the researcher worked with all participants involved in the study. This chapter also discusses data organisation and analysis.

Chapter Four - The Organisation

Chapter four describes the background of Youth Training in New Zealand. It also looks at the current Youth Training programmes and Private Training Establishment requirements and outcomes. This chapter discusses the site, the course, the tutors' stories and interview themes and the classroom environment researched in this case study.

Chapter Five – Findings and Discussion - Participants Stories

This chapter introduces the interview technique used in this case study and the emphasis placed on allowing the young people to tell their stories. It also describes the future aspirations of the eight young people interviewed in the study and describes their lived experiences and aspirations, using the following themes: educational experiences, training experience, relational ties, shared practices, health and wellbeing, environmental effects and aspirations, employment and income, geographical aspirations, resources, ten year plus life goals and agency.

Chapter Six - Findings and Analysis Part 1 and 2

Chapter six provides discussions and explanations of the methodological framework used to analyse this data collection. This chapter also includes a discussion of the findings and considers the theoretical underpinning of the analysis.

Chapter Seven - Conclusion

Chapter seven provides the conclusion of the thesis including the summary of the findings and the contributions and implications of the research. It also covers the limitations encountered during this study, provides recommendations for future study and concludes with a brief final thought.



Chapter Two

Scoping the Landscape: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Youth Training (YT) is the term used to describe government funded transition initiatives for teenagers aged 15-18 years who no longer attend secondary school, who have limited qualifications and are not in employment. It is often assumed that youth who remain 'inactive' in training or employment are 'at-risk' or vulnerable to long term joblessness and youth offending (Wyn & White, 2000; te Riele, 2004). To counteract youth inactivity government policy encourages early school leavers with low qualifications, who reside outside of the school to work transitional 'norms', to seek guidance via programme intervention. The focus of Youth Training (YT) is to move young people from an 'inactive' role in the workforce to a participatory or 'active' role, where they are deemed to be skilled salary or waged workers (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Strathdee, 2005; te Riele, 2004; Vaughan, Roberts, & Gardiner, 2006; Walther, 2006). This case study research endeavours to contribute to the research gap concerning non-linear transition of youth in Youth Training. This case study also considers the assumption that young people who do not follow linear transitional pathways may be considered 'at-risk' or vulnerable to failing in the educational and training system. This study endeavours to use an alternative research approach that draws from young people's own perspective, allowing their stories to describe their lived experiences and future aspirations.

Youth Training, whilst focused on providing labour market opportunities and work experience to fulfil government objectives, may at times inadvertently subjugate the shared practices and relational networks of the young people attending the training, and label them irrelevant. More specifically, the assumption that 'at-risk' youth lack individual decision making skills and social capital removes the responsibility from the societal and policy constraints that may influence the restriction of the student's individual life choices (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; te Riele, 2004; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). For youth who are labelled 'at-risk', or who travel along a non-linear school to work transitional pathway, it may be easy to view them as not having education or career aspirations (te Riele, 2004). Therefore, this research will endeavour to explore

how youth formulate their future aspirations; how they view the relevance of youth training to their aspirations; and how they exercise agency during training.

2.2 Contextualising the Research

2.2.1 Construction of Youth in Society

In recent years New Zealand research concerning youth transition has focused on how young people have responded to the influence of the global economy and changes in education and training. The knowledge-wave economy depicts a fluid network of productivity, which is ever-changing and reliant on individual responsibility (Gilbert, 2005; Higgins & Nairn, 2006; te Riele, 2004). The pathways framework of youth transition reflects the shift towards a global economy, where knowledge is rapidly shared across vast territories to fulfil business and economic opportunities (Neyland, 2010). It depicts the impact on the construction of career objectives against the backdrop of deregulation and technological innovation, and in which young people are expected to change their career objectives more easily, in a non-linear fashion, to create training or work opportunities for themselves (Vaughan & Boyd, 2005). New Zealand research by Higgins and Nairn (2006) reveals institutional infrastructure, such as, economic and employment policy plays a large role in the construction of youth identity. Whilst in theory flexible career opportunities and cutting edge technology serve to bring a new age of innovation and learning to the masses, in reality underemployment and a lack of job opportunities can leave school leavers stagnant without the resources to ‘pathway’ forward. They may end up withdrawing their transitional decisions on their most desired path (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

In an environment of globalisation and economic reform early school leavers are faced with increasingly limited options (e.g., fewer job vacancies and expensive fee-paying courses); therefore, future decision making is riskier and more uncertain (Jane Higgins & Nairn, 2006). Current government policy expects young people engaged in training to be responsible for the outcomes of their individual journey, often disregarding societal constraints¹ (te Riele, 2004). Institutional structures created by government policy to pathway young people through training and onto fulltime work

¹ This is also reflected in neo-liberal policy based on free-market economic policy, globalisation and knowledge-wave ideology (Gilbert, 2005).

are not always successful, due to the mismatch of the jobs and training available, and may directly hinder the way young people make choices (Higgins & Nairn, 2006). According to Beck (1992), globalisation and economic reform bring the double-edged sword, of empowering individual choice and a heightened awareness of what can go wrong. Problems that were once localised and easily identifiable become widespread issues, spanning the globe and problems that were once socially-based, and supported by governmental structures, become the sole responsibility of the individual (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). In a globalised world the individual has a heightened awareness of risk and seeks to control it, so that their feelings of fear and vulnerability can be reduced (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). Consequently, inequity occurs in society where young people must factor in 'risk' to their daily decision making and negotiate their transitions with limited resources (te Riele, 2004).

2.2.2 The At-Risk Youth Discourse

In this research the term 'at-risk youth' is discursively analysed to explore the assumptions made in the construction of this label. A post-structural understanding of discourse analysis uses 'discourse' as a way of describing the shared practices and patterns, communication, or any semiotic event in the construction of a subject position (Foucault, 2000). Discourse analysis explores the relationship between power and knowledge to the subject. The dominant groups in society often hold institutionalised power, and they control decision making and resource distribution. The term 'Youth' is integral to a socially constructed discourse that sets adolescents apart from children and adults. Adolescents are viewed through a deficit lens, as they have not arrived at adulthood, and are defined for what they lack rather than what they embody e.g., lack of; decision making skills, responsibility of distributing resources, and assets (Wyn & White, 1997). Psychological theory assumes that adolescents will experiment with risky new behaviours, as they create their identity and ready themselves for the responsibilities of adulthood (Wyn & White, 1997). While it is probable that young people will interact with new experiences the assumption that all young people exude risky behaviour that is detrimental to the community is a socially constructed stereotype and only serves such a youth discourse (Wyn & White, 1997). The narrow definition of normative developmental markers underlying the youth discourse include the assumption that all young people need further training so they can be productive in society (Wyn & White, 1997).

‘At-risk youth’ is a socially constructed label created by the dominant group that assumes young people are vulnerable to negative life experiences. Young people not adhering to the normative markers are labelled as failing in the system. At-risk youth is a highly sensationalised discourse often validated by institutionalised positioning. Policy makers and media use statistics to emphasise the deficits in a young person’s life e.g., low socio-economic status, low qualifications, deviant or ‘problem’ behaviour and ethnicity, and in doing so substantiate this stereotype and the at-risk discourse. Young people deviating from transitional norms are deemed at risk of going ‘off track’ and as a problem to society; therefore, in need of intervention and guidance so they can meet normative youth transitional markers (Wyn & Dwyer, 2000; Wyn & White, 1997; Wyn & Woodman, 2006).

2.2.3 Traditional Approaches to Youth Transition

The conventional framework for youth transition depicts a linear developmental path, in which teenage-hood is a stage in which young people learn all they need to become active and productive adult members of society. Youth training policy draws on this framework e.g., tertiary funding for employment and life skills courses, for those who do not attend university or polytechnics, to enable young people into the workforce (Higgins, 2003; McLaren, 2003). In the traditional youth transition model young people are expected to complete each stage of their development before seeking success at the next (Wyn & Dwyer, 2000). This model is the basis of policies, practices, and popular discourse that encourage students to complete their secondary school education, with the possibility of more specialised tertiary training, in order to find a successful position in the workplace. In the traditional school to work transition, career decisions follow a linear path whereby successful scholastic achievement and career aspiration often predict a positive career trajectory. Likewise, young people who do not obtain high school qualifications are expected to have limited career options and for their career trajectory to be hindered by low academic achievement (Vaughan & Boyd, 2005).

Figure 3. Changing conceptions of youth transition (Vaughan, 2006, p.2)

Traditional Transition Model	Emerging Transition Model
Rigid, defined, and exclusive tracks	Linked and flexible pathways
Affects some young people, especially high school drop-outs or early leavers	Affects all young people (all high school trajectories need to be managed)
Risk of failure at school and unskilled jobs	Risk of inactivity after leaving school
Short linear step(s)	Extended linear process
Lifelong career	Lifelong learning and learning for life
No qualifications or single qualification obtained soon after leaving school; possible further professional qualifications	Possibility of multiple qualifications in different fields obtained over lengthy period of time
Adults make decisions and offer opportunities to young people	Young people make decisions, and take and create opportunities for themselves
Education solely as a public good	Education as a private investment and a public good
Learning then earning	Earning while learning
Secondary students attain fixed-design qualifications	Secondary students have greater role in designing or "producing" qualifications through choices over units and assessments
Adulthood marked by employment after study and marriage and parenting during the 20s	Adulthood marked by periods of combined employment and study throughout life, and commitment to marriage and parenting later in life

In contrast, the emerging model of youth transition is described as a fluid set of complex choices, determined by the individual, as they move from school to work (Vaughan et al., 2006). One of the major differences between a traditional transitional model and the emerging model is the relationship between study and work. There are no set stages in the emerging model. Students may be enrolled at secondary school while attending work experience in the community or studying additional courses at a tertiary institution (e.g., polytechnic). In this model students may be in paid employment whilst completing a qualification. The decision to embrace training or work is dependent on individual choice and opportunity (Gilbert, 2005; Vaughan, et al., 2006). This emerging model suggests that there are many different transitional pathways open to the individual and becomes the basis for the pathways metaphor repeatedly discussed in youth transition research (Wyn & Dwyer, 2000).

2.2.4 Structure and Agency

Structure and agency are two sociological concepts used in the explanation or theorisation of how human behaviour is shaped. Theories and analyses emphasising structure, identify structures such as socio-economic status, age, gender, ethnicity, and institutions as determining or shaping the patterns by which individual choices are influenced and limited. Agency is the way individuals make their own free choices and are able to shape the world around them (White & Wyn, 1996). Giddens attempted to transcend the voluntaristic and deterministic nature of structure and agency by developing the structure-agency dualism. He stated that structure was not just an external force inhibiting the individual; however, it was inherent in the activities and patterns of human agents (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Sewell, 1992; Wyn & White, 2000)

Structure or structuration is revealed in people's actions, as they construct their social identity, and adhere to social norms. Giddens defined agency as the pattern of a person's actions as they construct their world, rather than their sole intention to act. Giddens suggested that structure and agency do not exist independently of each other, but are a dualism, working together as an individual shapes their world. The structure-agency dualism is shaped by cultural structures and is reproduced as people recreate patterns, influenced or mediated these structures (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Sewell, 1992; Wyn & White, 2000). Giddens argued that structures provide people with knowledge so they are able to create or construct their social world.

Giddens concluded that the reflexive individual is able to change or recreate their position in their social world; therefore, allowing their narrative to integrate with the external structures and in relationship with others, so that they construct their desired social identity (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Sewell, 1992; Wyn & White, 2000). The individual's ability to be reflexive meant they were able to recognise external social forces and change their position within the social structure; thus, exhibiting self awareness and exercising choice.

2.2.5 Youth Agency

The psychosocial perspective of youth agency is derived from a deterministic developmental perspective and assumes youth transition is universal; progressing in

linear stages (Wyn & Woodman, 2006). “Youth” is seen as a time of transition into adulthood and career preparation. Education frameworks utilise this transitional model in emphasising compliance to age-appropriate social norms (e.g., career goal setting to get a job). Many young people in youth training would be considered to lack decision making skills; and therefore, are seen as entering youth training lacking agency. Young people who have not transitioned to the appropriate ‘stage’ and are not in education, training or work are seen as abnormal or problematic (Wyn, Smith, Stokes, Tyler, & Woodman, 2008; Wyn & White, 1997; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). This deterministic perspective ignores alternative explanations for what appears on the surface to be a lack of decision-making skills. Lash (1993) argues that group membership may influence the reflexivity of an individual. He asserts that at times group membership can create an ambivalent and avoidant response to risk; therefore, young people who decide to preserve group membership over an individual response can be seen by others as choosing to avoid key life decisions and are labelled passive decision makers who lack agency (Lash, 1993; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; White & Wyn, 1998).

White and Wyn (1998) describe three models of youth agency used to analyse how young people exercise agency. Firstly, a deterministic model of youth agency based on developmental theory portrays teenage-hood as a time of risk. This perspective is focused on seeing compliance to ensure adult behaviours are learned. Positive choices are those linked to social norms. This model assumes that ‘adolescence’ is a discrete category and young people will experience a set of universal experiences at this stage in life. Teenagers are empowered only as they grow older and learn adult responsibilities. Until then, they have diminished power within their community. It is assumed that they cannot fully function and have limited choices because of their age and inexperience (White and Wyn, 1998).

Secondly, in a voluntaristic model of youth agency, young people are depicted as being able to pick and choose their social groupings and sub-groups to express their unique interests and abilities. It is assumed that young people have freedom of choice and are encouraged to make good choices to aid a better life. The voluntaristic model is based on humanistic theory and assumes that young people are a homogenous group. This model omits to speculate how class, ethnicity and gender affect the living

conditions young people find themselves in. In reality socio-economic conditions directly affect lifestyle choices; therefore, for young people the way they express their lived experiences may be hindered by financial constraints and family living conditions. The notion that young people are a homogenous group sharing the freedoms to choose educational and career pathways stems from a traditional and linear developmental theory approach (White and Wyn, 1998).

Lastly, the contextual model differentiates young people as unique individuals who construct their identity through a complex set of choices. Young people are not defined by their age or stage in life; but are seen to engage in social practices within the context of their life. It is acknowledged that individual and collective choices may be hindered by institutional and societal structures and risk and inequalities that limit choice may be influenced by the power dynamics that exist. This model also situates young people in their local setting as well as members of a global community (White and Wyn, 1998). The contextual approach explains youth decision making in a non-linear framework, not always recognised by policy; within this approach non-linear decisions can also be described as agentic (te Riele, 2004).

Normative choices are choices based on social norms or a set of agreed upon preferences held by the dominant group. In youth transition it is assumed young people will desire to pathway from school to further training and into full-time work (White & Wyn, 1998; Walther, 2006). However, normative choices are not always available and these young people often opt out of a linear education and career transition pathway (Higgins & Nairn, 2006). In contrast, the contextual approach to youth agency, described by White and Wyn (1998), releases young people from the traditional constraints and focuses on social practices where meaning is determined by youth themselves (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). This approach reflects a move away from the pathways metaphor and towards the choice biography concept. When exploring the aspirations and agency of youth in youth training programmes it is important include alternative frameworks. Choice biography is an alternative framework that conceptually aligns with a non-linear framework by disembedding traditional transitional markers and allowing the individual to create meaning from their own narrative. Choice biography is discussed later in this chapter.

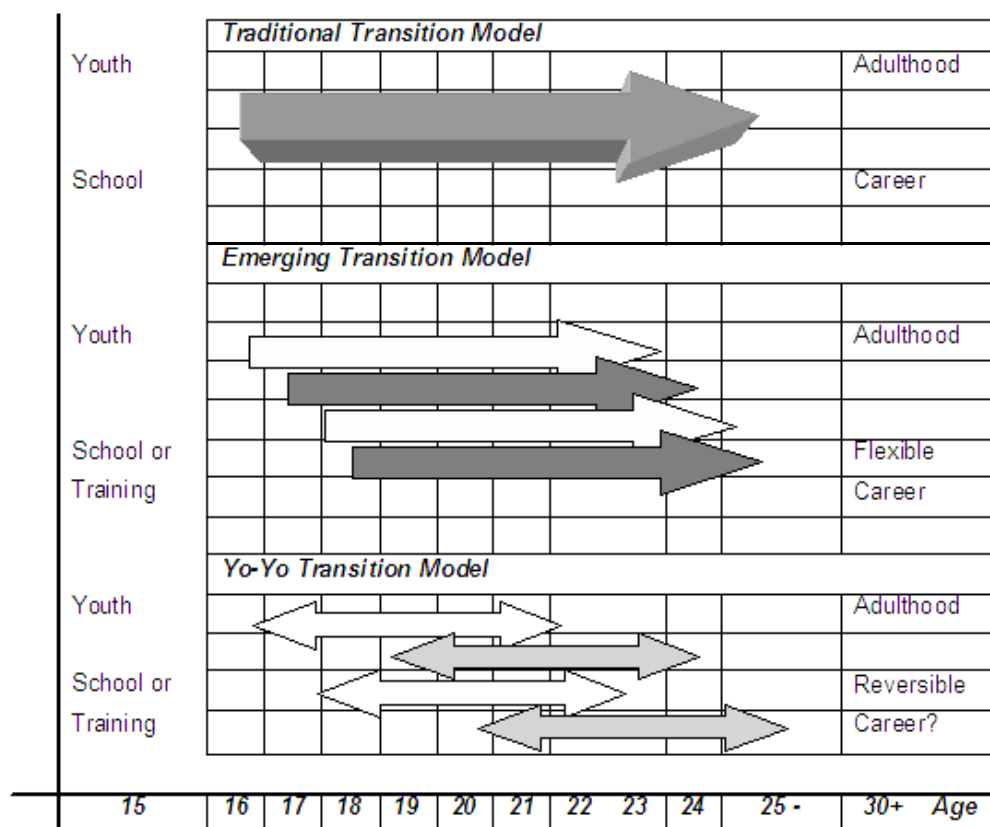
2.2.6 Policy Frameworks for Youth Transition: The pathways framework

Frameworks from youth research are influential in the shaping policy frameworks that in turn are the basis of funding and provision of training and career resources for young people. The pathways metaphor currently used in transitional research and policy assumes there are many opportunities or 'pathways' available to the individual and all that is required for success is for young people to use their agency to create their own pathway through a rapidly changing market (Higgins & Nairn, 2006). The pathways metaphor and the emerging model of transition are the basis for the pathways framework currently depicted in career transition theory. The linear pathway once based on the tradition transition from school to work, including a 'job for life', has been superseded by a myriad situational vocational option. The pathway framework depicts the job seeker using an elongated period of time to try many different career preferences after leaving school (Vaughan, 2006). It frames transition as a non-linear and unique transitional trajectory; however, instead of being different from the traditional transitional approach, is based on a linear set of developmental stages. It merely defuses these stages into many different pathways, unique to the individual. In the pathways framework the individual is now responsible for their career pathway and transitional decisions are still based on how the individual moves forward towards their career goals; there is an assumption that the more confidence a young person has to explore meaningful career decisions the more successful they will be (Vaughan, 2006). A myriad of unique pathways, while on the surface may look different from the traditional linear transitional approach; however, the pathways framework still embraces an outcomes-based methodology, measuring how well a young person serves their career goals or vocational ideals by the decisions they make.

Often policies related to youth transition continue to reflect a traditional linear approach, in which young people are expected to make decisions that continually move them toward the goal of workplace success; however, in actuality many young people experience the fragmentation of a yo-yo transition leaving them uncertain about their future (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Walther, 2006). In the yo-yo transition students backtrack on career and training decisions as a coping strategy to deal with the de-standardisation of educational, lifestyle and work experience. Unlike the

traditional transitional school to work model where decisions move the young person forward to the next significant career step, in the yo-yo transition approach decisions may be reversible until the individual can find the resources to construct a new work or training opportunity (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Walther, 2006). Even though the yo-yo transition approach includes the withdrawal of transitional decisions, it still falls within the pathways framework as it recognises the most desired opportunity is one that moves forward towards an employment goal (Fine, 1991; te Riele, 2004; Walther, 2006).

Figure 4. Youth Transition Models (Walther et al., 2002, p.121)



Traditional Transition Model: Transition as a linear and homogeneous status passage

Emerging Transition Model: Transition as a life phase composed of prolonged and diversified status passages

Yo-Yo Transition Model: Reversible and fragmented; Yo-yo transition with uncertain perspectives

The New Zealand *Pathways and Prospects* study (Vaughan et al., 2006) was a 4-year longitudinal study that began with 114 young people in the first year out of school and

explored how these young people experienced the school-to-work transition, and made career decisions and created career identities. Using qualitative and quantitative data this study showed that young people who had scholastic success and were enrolled in tertiary institutions had a good sense of their long-term career goals. The young people in Youth Training who had low academic achievement were reported to be the most uncertain concerning future career decisions and had difficulty thinking beyond their current circumstances (Vaughan & Boyd, 2005; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Young people in Youth Training seemed mostly overwhelmed by the options available and doubted their decision-making in light of the pathways framework. While this study endeavoured to establish how young people create meaningful pathway decisions, some 'lived experiences' reported by youth in Youth Training seemed shallow as they did not include the aspirations beyond their educational or career choices.

2.2.7 Alternative Approaches

Aspiration

Aspiration has been seen as a key element to educational and workplace success. In recent years youth aspiration has been of interest to youth research as it gives an insight into how young people think and feel about themselves and their role in the community (Loeber, 2004). Quaglia and Cobb (1996) define aspiration as the synthesis of ambition and inspiration. They combine the motivational elements of ambition with the future perspective of inspiration, to reveal an individual's perceived future desire. Their research showed how participants shifted in their level of aspiration due to the way an individual wanted to avoid failure or maintain their social status. Further research showed that levels of aspiration were influenced by environmental factors, social and cultural factors, and were susceptible to intervention (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996). Career aspiration features widely in youth research and is directly linked to academic achievement, self-efficacy and previous learning experiences (Neumark & Rothstein, 2003; Patton & Creed, 2007; Ussher, 2008; Vaughan, et al., 2006). In a study by Neumark and Rothstein (2003) high academic achievement was positively linked to future career aspirations. In addition to high academic achievement Jackson, Potere and Brobust (2006) also showed self-efficacy and learning experiences were key variables to occupational aspirations.

The New Zealand *Pathways and Prospects* study by Vaughan et al. (2006) reports that high academic achievers were predominantly featured in the cluster of participants who were happy with their career decision making and were exploring widely beyond their current education and training. In the study young people in Youth Training were predominantly clustered into two groups. The first group were participants who, due to a lack of scholastic success, were pushed into training to avoid further negative life events. It was suggested that this group were enthusiastic about their course participation and felt secure in their training; however, not many students had reported planning their future career aspirations. Some youth trainees stated they had embraced the self-development training the course offered; however, very few trainees were reported to imagine themselves beyond their current development (Vaughan, et al., 2006). Young people in Youth Training also featured in another group who were uncertain, unhappy and anxious about their future. They were described as not knowing which way to turn and were unsure of how to change their current pathway option (Vaughan, et al., 2006). This study suggests that young people in Youth Training had low aspirations for the future and were ambivalent about their long-term career trajectories.

In contrast, vulnerable youth have also been documented with having positive future aspirations in the wake of a number of negative life events. In a qualitative study by Flom and Hansen (2006) a group of fifteen American young people were interviewed who had a multiple risk factors, including; educational challenges and judicial or emotional difficulties. Despite living in crisis, those participants who maintained strong relationships in their personal lives and were involved in new learning experiences continued to maintain positive aspirations concerning work, education, family, community and personal satisfaction. These participants were able to “envision future satisfaction, occupational stability and contribution to the community” (Flom & Hansen, 2006). Those students with limited interests and weak social capital were more at risk of reporting vague and unrealistic future goals (Flom & Hansen, 2006).

Based on a longitudinal study of 30,000 Australian young people Wyn and Dwyer (1999) showed that even when young people faced adversity a majority of them still continued to have positive life aspirations. Structural constraints such as limited job

opportunities and economic deregulation required greater individual responsibility. A neo-liberal economic environment meant that for most young people their sense of agency increased due to an increase in individual responsibility. For many young people being able to choose their own career pathway meant they were happy with their decision making and were optimistic about the future (Wyn & Dwyer, 1999).

Resilience and Resistance

Where young people live and grow up has a big influence on how they make decisions (White & Wyn, 1997). Youth decision making may fall into the category of one or both of the following: resilience or resistance. Resilience is a psychological term that describes one's ability to cope during adversity. It is two-fold as it is concerned with environmental factors and internal decision making that help young people to cope with adverse circumstances. Psychological theory highlights certain positive environmental factors such as; social support, mentors, positive educational environment, as protecting young people against adverse circumstances. In theory, making choices, and therefore, positive behaviour adjustments are seen as helping young people to cope with stressful circumstances, thus, young people are able to successfully transition despite their 'negative' life experiences (Harvey & Delfabbro, 2004).

Resistance occurs when young people choose not to conform to expected positive behaviours and social groupings. Often the indirect choice of joining a 'rebellious' sub-culture or remaining silent on issues relevant to young people to oppose a 'norm' is by definition a resistant or 'active' choice, mediated by their structural constraints e.g., age, class, gender (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; Smith et al., 2002). By assessing young people based on their age-based circumstances or social circumstances without differentiating their lived experience means that it is easy to overlook their reasons for adopting (or not adopting) certain choices. An example of this might be a sub-culture that is deemed 'rebellious' to those in authority e.g., youth sub-culture. Within the context of the wider community the sub-culture is deemed inappropriate and as a negative factor in youth transition; however, the young people may have chosen this sub-culture to escape experiences such as family fragmentation and family violence. Their decision making is based on the 'resistance' to a greater hardship and they are choosing a sub-culture that provides social capital; however, to the wider society their

personal choice is not seen as an ‘active’ or positive choice towards successful transition due to the individual’s outcomes being linked with negative statistical outcomes. Often young people who remain ‘silent’ on issues are not seen as agentic; however, resisting voicing one’s opinion is also a way of choosing to not conform or agree with the dominant group (Lash, 1993; Dwyer & Wyn, 2001).

Choice Biography

In order to discuss how young people shape their future aspirations in a non-linear framework it is important to recognise the concept of ‘choice biographies’. Normal biographies involve mostly linear transitions and normalised family and labour market outcomes. Choice biographies are created by the individual and are free from institutional labels and age-specific categorisation reflected in traditional developmental theory (Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Choice biographies incorporate the tension between choices made from limited options available to the individual and the celebration of freedom of choice (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; te Riele, 2004). They also can help to explore whether choices are structurally constrained, for example the coercion inherent in youth training programmes that shape trainee choices in relation to employment based on government funded outcomes, or choices that are self-governed (te Riele, 2004). Therefore, the choice biography approach can be used to reshape the concept of biography, so that wider social engagement (not just choices based on punishment and reward) are reflected in a youth choice (Cohen & Ainley, 2000; te Riele, 2004). This is necessary to understand how youth are using agency to resist social constraints and to create their own narrative.

Choice biographies differentiate individual lives from institutional and age-specific norms; and therefore, may reveal non-linear life pathways of the individual (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; te Riele, 2004). Within non-linear pathways different values are used to judge “success” and the “self” is continually repositioned depending on the context the young person is in. In the choice biography a larger focus is given to meaning, relationships and to the ‘trusted others’ who help to mediate decision making and provide social and cultural resources that support future aspirations (Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Any personal resource is incorporated in a strong personal narrative, unique to the individual and utilised to negotiate the harsh realities of risk management and marginalised living (Wyn & Woodman, 2006).

2.2.8 The Current Study Approach

The current case study uses a contextual approach to youth research, including choice biography and phenomenology to examine young people's lived experiences (Byrne, 2001). The contextual perspective moves away from 'essential' categories that define youth development and endeavours to explore the complex lives of young people (Wyn & White, 1997). This approach recognises that power relations and structural constraints influence young people's complex decision making and endeavours to respond to the gap in New Zealand youth research by providing an opportunity for a group of young people to voice their stories and make meaning of their experiences.

2.3 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the traditional approach to youth transition is shaped by a linear, developmental model of transition. This is underpinned by the assumption that a universal stage development and compliance to social norms are the acceptable and normal transitional markers (Wyn & Woodman, 2006). While the pathways framework attempted to incorporate non-linear based transitions, this framework was still based on a view of youth need to exercise agency and comply to social norms to achieve desired educational goals and career outcomes. Both approaches neglect the wider societal constraints (including globalisation and deregulation) that inhibit choices available to young people and create an unequal playing field from which they must choose to live their lives. Choice biography provides the opportunity to look beyond perspectives that are either deterministic or voluntaristic to explore how individual young people shape their future aspirations along non-linear pathways. Therefore, the methodology of my thesis is based on a case study approach, which enables young people to share their lived-experience by incorporating both choice biography and non-linear frameworks.



Chapter Three

Creating the Environment: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the methods used to complete this research. It is divided into four sections. The first section looks at case study research and explains why this methodology was chosen for the research project. The second section of this chapter describes the research design. Firstly, examining the data collection, and then discussing the ethical considerations of the project. Student participation in the research is also detailed, including the tutors interviewed in this study. This is divided into stages; including, site and selection, contact procedures, participants, selection, interviews, focus groups, review and summary. The final section of the research design explains the process used to analyse the data. This chapter concludes with a summary of the constraints of this research project.

3.2 The Current Research

This thesis was undertaken to explore the aspirations of young people in youth training. Many early school leavers do not follow a linear transitional pathway into adulthood or work and are frequently categorised as ‘at risk’ of lacking employment skills and life skills to productively contribute to society. This thesis endeavours to move beyond the labels to explore how young people view their life aspirations and what they deem important to creating a meaningful life. This study enabled young people to discuss a range of personal topics drawn from various life dimensions, and to talk about both positive life experiences and social constraints.

The study was conducted at a local Private Training Establishment (PTE) in the Lower North Island. The PTE delivered both youth and adult training programmes and offered a range of courses e.g., computers, employment skills, and job search advice. This study centred on the Youth Training course that offered 20 places to local young people who were 16 - 18 years of age. The purpose of the Youth Training course was to develop a range of employment skills and to connect the young people with local businesses so that they could complete a work experience module. By the conclusion of the Youth Training course the students had achieve

completed a National Certificate in Employment Skills (NCES) and many moved on to further training e.g., local Polytechnic, teen parent school, or had acquired apprenticeships or work. Students were sometimes referred to the PTE by government agencies such as, Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), the Department of Justice or local activity centre; however, most students enrolled in the Youth Training course after encouragement from friends or family.

3.3 The Global Question(s)

The global question explored how young people shape their aspirations while in training and the research endeavoured to answer the following questions:

:

Question 1: How do young people shape their future aspirations?

This question explored how young people shaped their aspirations and was not confined to employment and education aspirations. Previous research has studied the career aspirations of New Zealand school leavers; however, it was important that this global research question endeavoured to explore a wider range of aspirations, and left scope for young people to share their stories concerning their future aspirations.

Other research questions:

Question 2: How do young people view the relevance of this training to their aspirations?

As the chosen research cohort were enrolled in youth training, the second research question sought to explore how this environment and lived experience influenced their future decision making and aspirational thinking. A portion of the National Certificate of Employment Skills that youth training students complete is dedicated to future decision making; therefore, students may have wanted to comment on their experiences or not.

Question 3: How do young people exercise agency during this training?

Agency or the ability to take action, or make decisions, is an important factor in creating a social identity, making personal choices, or aspire to create new life experiences. The third research question supported the global question by exploring

the ways in which young people construct their identity or make decisions to plan for the future.

3.4 Case Study Research

The methodology of this research is case study research. Merriam (1998) defines qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1988, p.21). She further adds that it is a “single entity, a unit [of study] around which there are boundaries.” (Merriam, 1998). Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison (2000) define qualitative case study as, “the “single instance... of a bounded system. It provides a unique example of real people in real situations.” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). The bounded system of the current case study is the Youth Training Cohort the participants are members of.

Even though the findings of the current case study of a youth training cohort cannot be generalised, this methodology may contribute to understanding how young people create their own aspirations and exercise agency whilst in Youth Training. Case study methodology considers the holistic perspective of the participants, and in this study this perspective is accessed by drawing out the participants’ experiences and stories. The immediate context of the participants was closely considered e.g., space and time, policies and economic climate, as the research acknowledges the whole world in which the participant resides (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

The inherent nature of case study research is the social construction of knowledge; therefore, the current data collection drew on the deep and authentic stories of the participants, so that their point of view was elicited. This was important, as young people are often labelled out of a need to explain their behaviour through categorising it for educational policy purposes. For instance, behaviour such as early school leaving may be categorised as risk or anti-social because it does not comply with norms, and hence in need of remedial attention. However, what the behaviour meant from the young person’s perspective is ignored. This research seeks to explore the perspectives of one cohort of young people as to how they see their futures, and the choices and constraints they are working with. This includes describing the young people within their chosen context. This provided a deeper understanding of who they were, beyond their categorised employment status and behaviour. The aim of

this case study research endeavoured to portray a ‘thick and rich’ description of a participants’ situation (Cohen, et al., 2000).

The researcher invited the participants to share their thoughts, feelings and lived experiences, and thus was a visitor in their world (Merriam, 1998). How the young people in this cohort thought, felt and acted was often associated to their personal interests and their media choices associated their chosen social groups. Case study methodology helped to draw out the stories of the young people, providing an opportunity for them to describe their meaningful experiences. More specifically this research project used the interpretive case study method, whereby, the interviews provided meaningful data to be analysed (Merriam, 1998). The nature of researching a bounded group of participants means that the stories provided are subjective and cannot be used as generalised theory across the wider youth population. The interviews that provide the basis for this case study research reflect the thoughts of the participants involved, and to avoid bias, it was important that the researcher did not prematurely insert her own experience or preconceptions. Choice biography and the concepts of structure and agency guided the interpretation of the interview data and the participants’ stories and the context within which they were located.

3.5 The Case Study Approach

This case study uses a contextual approach that places emphasis on a broad spectrum of life dimensions, rather than merely focussing on educational and career goals. The research also explored the relational, social, health and wellbeing, finances and leisure aspirations of these young people. Aspirational desires are contextualised within the young person’s lived experiences, and in the interviews each individual was encouraged to articulate the meaning of their unique stories. The contextual approach in youth research endeavours to look beyond the markers defined by developmental theory and policy makers, and instead analyses how young people are situated within both localised and wider institutionalised structures (for instance, the specific training programme and transition policy) whilst shaping their own complex lives.

This study drew on a phenomenological research approach. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that seeks to explore the lived experiences of people. It

examines life experiences in an effort to understand and give meaning to them (Byrne, 2001). This is done by collecting and analysing the narrative data. This case study methodology also drew from a phenomenological approach as a basis to understanding the essential "truths" or essence of the lived experience of young people in youth training (Byrne, 2001).

3.6 The Participants' Voice

In New Zealand research on youth transition has often used the pathways framework. In these studies student aspirations are framed in terms of the creation of successful educational or career goals and the positive influences that help students towards a successful outcomes in terms of employment and further education. This study endeavoured to look beyond the pathways framework to explore how young people create meaning around their lived-experiences and future aspirations. It was not limited to educational or work aspirations and aspirations concerning relationships, community and family were also considered. In this research semi-structured interviews were used to elicit answers, anecdotes and stories from the participants. It was important to maintain the participant's voice as the primary focus. Framing the anecdotes and stories in the context of participant's lived-experience, rather than on their previous educational outcomes e.g., educational achievement or lack of qualifications, meant that what was shared by the participants had meaning and importance within their personal story or biography. Many stories or narratives acknowledged the societal constraints and 'norms' and people were happy to explore their experience beyond these constraints.

3.7 Research Technique

As the researcher I was the main instrument for collecting the qualitative data for this study I need to adapt to the context and circumstances (Merriam, 1998). I used interviews and focus groups, and examined documents as part of this research. I tried to ensure that the interview tools were non-intrusive, such as audio recorders and tape recorders, so that participants could tell their story with the least distraction. The analysis of data in this research was ongoing. The first interview questions provided a good starting place for study, and these changed and re-shaped as the study progressed.

3.8 Research Design

This research was based on eight interviews with students from a local Private Training Establishment (PTE) in the Lower North Island, who were completing a National Certificate of Employment Skills (NCES). Their course was designed around unit standards from the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Entrance requirements were deficit based and included the criteria that participant had not have completed National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 which is to be achieved in Year 11; therefore, all students currently were described as having low qualifications. As a researcher I was aware that I was a visitor in the participant's world and it was my responsibility to be sensitive to the participants and their context throughout the data collection process. Methods of data collection used in this research involved individual interviews, focus groups, data sources, and analysis the of Youth Training policy by relevant government departments.

The PTE had a long history of government funded employment courses and runs many niche courses that serve different targeted groups. The NCES course ran for five days a week, from 9am to 4pm. Participation was mandatory and students needed to complete core unit standards and work experience to graduate with a qualification. At the time of the research tutors were committed to achieving an adult education qualification (in accordance with TEC policy) and to staying abreast of youth issues. Students were taught in a classroom-style setting and undertook work placements in nearby businesses.

3.8.1 Positioning the Researcher

I had previously worked as a tutor with students enrolled in the NCES in a Private Training Establishment (PTE). I had knowledge of the process around creating transitional pathways for young people in Youth Training . As a trained Primary School teacher I had knowledge of how people learn and scaffold new learning on prior experience. It was important as the interviewer, that I constantly checked and assessed my attitudes and pre-conceptions towards the participants in the study; thus, acknowledging my position within the research.

3.9 Method

3.9.1 Informal Discussions

An informal discussion took place with the tutor/facilitators of the course. A meeting with the tutors and their managers took place to gain an understanding of the current course aims and objectives. Topics covered included: the National Certificate of Employment Skills for early school leavers, the age range of students on the employment skills course, the ethos of the course, the ethos of the organisation and the values of attitudes of the tutors towards the students completing or moving onto further work or training.

3.9.2 Course Documentation

The documentation for the course programme that the participants were enrolled in was primarily related to the National Certificate of Employment Skills (NCES). This Certificate had a number of unit standards that the students had to complete to obtain their certificate (NCES). Workbooks containing exercises and assessments were the core tools used to teach the NCES; however, these were supplemented with computer internet research and computer applications, such as, Microsoft Office. Many of the students used websites focused on youth issues, employment information and local community resources e.g., health centre, sports and recreation information websites. Students frequently used job and career websites to obtain up to date information concerning jobs and vocations they were interested in. At times additional literacy and numeracy resources were used to help students gain unit standards in these respective areas; however, most course documentation was specifically based on employment-related materials.

Team building activities were a large part of the course programme and some written activities were used to enhance team work. Art and design activities gave students the opportunity to create their own resources, displays and art work. Photo boards of group gatherings and community activities were used to reflect on the positive group experiences and relationship building activities students had participated in, and these were displayed around the classroom walls. Additionally, music and video resources were used were appropriate to class team building activities.

3.9.3 Ethics

Ethical approval for the research was given Victoria University's Faculty of Education's Human Ethics Committee. The ethical considerations for this research included that all participants be informed about of the aims and objects of the study before agreeing to participate. All participants provided written consent, as did parents for those under 16 years. Participation in this research was voluntary and care was taken to avoid pressure or coercion by peers, tutors or the researcher. It was made clear to participants that they were not be penalised in any way for not participating in the research and that they were free to answer or not answer interview questions in their own way (Cohen, et al., 2000). In discussions with the research cohort it was agreed that experiences involving illegal behaviour would be considered part of their personal story and they would not be penalised, or details made public, to their detriment. At times this meant leaving a research question blank or passing on an interview question. In these discussions the researcher provided an assurance that if interviewees wanted to share experiences that included illegal behaviour they were free to share their stories; however, interviewees would have an opportunity to review their transcripts. If their stories were used in the final data summary it would be done with care and confidentiality.

Ethical procedures around data and documentation meant the researcher and focus group members entered into an agreement to respect the confidentiality of all participants involved in this research, whilst using verbally, written and electronic communication tools, during the research, findings and publication processes. The raw data was kept at the researcher's home and will be destroyed after two years as normal procedure permits and all files will be kept in a locked filing system. Data was also needed to be compared in different ways so that threats to the validity of analysis can be thwarted; therefore, all interviewees needed to have the opportunity to give feedback concerning their individual interviews and subsequent transcripts so that meaning and authenticity of the research can be verified (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

3.9.4 Interviews

Eight in-depth interviews were used in this study to provide a rich description of the participants' feelings and beliefs can be recorded and so that their individual

narratives could be brought to light (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Explicit descriptions made by interviewees in the current study included explanations, anecdotes and examples of how they created their future aspirations and how they exercise agency. These stories were then interpreted and analysed by the researcher. Opportunities were provided both during interviews and post-interviews to the participants to confirm and edit stories, thus reducing bias and enhancing internal validity.

3.9.5 Focus Groups

It was intended to run two focus groups one with the student participants, the other with tutors. The student focus group was an opportunity to follow up on the interviews and to collect additional insights from the students on aspirations and the exercise of agency. It provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on the research process and to gain feedback. They were able to discuss issues raised due to the research process; and hence, this contributed to internal validity. The student focus group was run twice, once with six participants, and once with two. A focus group was to have been carried out with the tutors and instructors of the Youth Training course; however this was not changed to one-on-one interviews due to the tutors work and time constraints.

3.9.6 Working with Students

Site and selection

The selection of the site and participants was guided by the desire to contribute to research on youth training in New Zealand. This fieldwork was carried out at a Private Training Establishment currently delivering Youth Training and offering the National Certificate of Employment Skills (NCES). The selected Private Training Establishment had many years experience in training and was responsible for delivering a range of employment and education courses that catered to a diverse group of students, amongst which they taught a specialised youth training course.

The Youth Training classroom was decorated with students' work and students were responsible for the design and arrangement of the wall adornments. The classroom walls were filled with photos taken by tutors and students displaying students participating in course activities and celebrations. Some class members, who were interested in drawing and design, had created 'tags' (slogans) and drawn pictures with

positive messages, to encourage their peers and express their thoughts and opinions. The classroom was a bright, vibrant place often filled with music played on the class stereo system. It catered for book work exercises, team building activities and sometimes was turned into a temporary movie theatre as it was installed with a projector and laptop.

Student Participants

The Youth Training course had a class roll of over twenty-plus students who were at varying stages of course completion. Initially all showed some interest in participating in the research. As the current research design was based on up to ten participants, ten were randomly selected by ballot. Participation was voluntary and the aim of the ballot was chosen so that a range of gender, ethnicity and age could be included in the data collection. Of the ten were selected from the ballot, eight participants finally agreed to participate in the research. Of the eight participants, four were female and 4 male. Of the female participants, one described herself as European, one as Māori and one as both Māori and Pākehā, while and the fourth described herself as having Māori and New Zealand ethnicity. Of the male participants, one described himself as Cook Island Māori and Pākehā, two as Māori and the fourth as being of New Zealand ethnicity. All the female participants were 17 years of age whereas two male participants were 16 and two were 17 years of age.

Table 1a. Interviewees: Young people in Youth Training

Interviewee	Pseudonym	Age	*Ethnicity	Gender
Interviewee 1	Michelle	17 years	Māori / Pākehā	Female
Interviewee 2	Sarah	17 years	Māori / European	Female
Interviewee 3	Amanda	17 years	European	Female
Interviewee 4	John	16 years	Cook Island/ Pākehā	Male
Interviewee 5	Tim	17 years	Māori	Male
Interviewee 6	Cassidy	17 years	Māori	Female
Interviewee 7	Mike	17 years	New Zealander	Male
Interviewee 8	Pete	17 years	Māori	Male

*Ethnicity: Recorded in the Table 1 as indicated by Interviewees

Some students had enrolled directly into Youth Training from secondary school and others spent a longer duration of time not-in-education-and-training (N.E.E.T.) Participants had both positive and negative experiences during their involvement in Youth Training and it was important that they were able to express their own unique ideas, beliefs and experiences during the research.

Contact procedures

Contact with the students was made initially through the manager of the Youth Training Course. A meeting was organised with managers and tutors in order that they understood the topic of study and the ethical requirements needed to create a safe research environment. Students were then presented with the topic of study and a discussion created around the voluntary research participation process and requirements. During the meeting students spent time asking questions in a group setting and reading the consent form. The consent form was also read aloud for further understanding. Future contact with the students was then organised with the class tutors. They organised a time to suit their programme and assigned a slot in their class timetable so that students were available for interviews and focus groups.

Interviews

Eight participants participated in research interviews that took place in the tutors offices at selected times. This was a private space where no-one was able to hear the interview in progress. Each interview was taped with a manual hand-held tape recorder and also by a digital mp3 player. Notes were taken throughout the interview to support the recorded data. Eight semi-structured interviews were undertaken and a set of interview questions were used to prompt the student's response. The main emphasis of the interviews was to capture the young person's stories to explore how they shape their future aspirations while in training.

Review with student participants

Once an interview was completed and written up as data, the interview answers and summary notes were shown to the participant the following week. Students were able to read their answers or listened as their answers were read aloud. This review with an individual participant was undertaken in a private space, where the young person

could make changes to their interview transcripts and comment and feedback on their experience.

Focus groups

Ten participants were randomly selected by ballot for the focus group discussion and eight students finally participated in the focus groups. Two focus groups were completed with the student participants, instead of one large focus group. This was due to timetabling of student availability and absenteeism from class. One group had two participants and the second focus group had six participants. The focus groups took place once the student interviews were completed and most students were still familiar with their interview answers and incorporated them into their focus group discussion. Feedback to the focus group was completed the following week and students were able to change any comments or answers in the transcripts, or add further thoughts and feedback on their experience.

Review with student participants

A review of the research process was completed after all interviews and focus groups had been completed. All transcripts were read by participants and an initial summary was presented to the research participants. Some commented on the research process and a number expressed the view that the interviews showed how much their communication skills had improved over the research process. Many students were keen to chat in groups about what they felt the initial findings meant.

Summary

Overall, the semi-structured interviews were a new process for many of the participants. They preferred to chat with friends about their lived-experiences; however, endeavoured to relay anecdotes as trust was built with the interviewer. Feedback was generally positive; most participants repeated their interview responses in the focus groups and had strong ideas concerning how the course programme, and course tutors and fellow students positively impacted on their decision making.

3.9.7 Working with Tutors

Tutor Participants

The tutors were positive towards this research study even though it meant that they had to make time for interviews, focus groups, feedback sessions and discussion groups in their busy timetable. Three tutors were invited to participate in the study and all three read and agreed to the study requirements. Two of the tutors had direct contact with the student participants and one tutor was an auxiliary tutor, involved in a similar course for adult students

Contact procedures, Interviews and Reviews

It was intended to hold a focus group with the three tutors once the student interviews were completed; however, due to time constraints and workplace requirements by their organisation, the focus group was replaced by individual interviews that took approximately one hour in duration. All tutors were able to feedback on the research process and to clarify their interview comments.

The nature of their work meant that in their spare time tutors sometimes spent time with students needing help outside class hours. This meant that the tutor participants had limited time for the research process; however, they used their own time to fulfil the study requirements. Most felt the research process was a good opportunity to share their thoughts concerning their area of work and as an opportunity to gain perspective on how youth shape their aspirations and agency. They believed the aspirations of youth in training was an area often overlooked by researchers and they were positive about the study.

3.10 Data Organisation and Analysis

This study involved interpretive case study analysis, whereby, data collected was organised into themes. The qualitative emphasis of the methodology continued through to the analysis stage of this research. The thematic analysis was shaped by a choice biography framework and this was used to analyse the aspirations of young people in training. The foci of this study endeavour to explore how youth shape their future desires (Research Question 1). Biographies often focus on normative transition

goals such as education and work aspirations (e.g., anecdotes concerning youth career goals and current work experiences.) This research incorporated a wider scope of participants' future aspirations, such as family, community and personal satisfaction aspirations, based on linear and non-linear transitional pathways (Flom & Hansen, 2006; te Riele, 2004). By using choice biographies as an analytical tool a broader understanding of how young people make meaning (e.g., choices that are significant to their identity appropriation etc.) was important to analysing youth agency (Cohen & Ainley, 2000; Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; te Riele, 2004).

The focus of the analysis was on understanding how these young people made meaningful choices. The three models of youth agency theorised by White and Wyn (1998) discussed in the previous chapter were helpful in analysing the types of choices recounted by the youth participants. These three models were the voluntaristic nature of youth agency (choices based on access), deterministic nature of youth agency (choices based on developmental theory) and the contextual model of youth agency (based on social empowerment of the individual) (White & Wyn, 1998). The analysis also explored how these young people viewed the relevance of this training to their aspirations (Research Question 2). Narrative analysis was used to look for common themes in the participants' narratives and stories (Merriam, 1998).

The overall purpose for this analysis was to move beyond developmental theory and incorporate non-linear transitional frameworks and choice biography. This analysis sought to allow space for young people in Youth Training to reflect on their experiences and create their own meaning surrounding their choices (Research Question 3).

3.11 Constraints of the Research

The design of this research was based on a case study methodology and on authentic stories of the participants drawn from interviews. The intention was to keep the stories in context and to be open to the lived-experiences of the participants. However, there are some constraints around this study.

Time

The duration in which the research process allocated time for the interview process to take place meant that student interviews had to be negotiated around class work. At times this meant reorganising interview times as students had important deadlines or assessments to complete. On occasion students were absent from class due to illness and this meant interviews were rescheduled to suit their needs. Student availability echoed class attendance and due to student obligations outside of the course programme e.g., sick family, court dates, appointments, work experience, interviewees were temporarily unavailable. Overall, the interview process was able to fit around course commitments; however, schedule constraints meant there was a lot of time for relationship building so that interviewees were completely comfortable with the interview process. Most warmed to the interview process as they were given space to tell their stories. For a few participants interviewing was a completely new skill and this meant they were initially more reserved until they were reassured of the feedback process.

Data gathering

The data gathering process is solely an oral process and did not completely suit all participants. For some interviewees talking about their experiences was the best way to communicate their stories; however, other participants enjoyed art and technology and possibly would have been able to express their ideas more freely with through these mediums. Not all interviewees had the same literacy levels, so this meant the researcher needed to find the most desired vehicle to feedback their transcripts. For some reading their transcripts was appropriate, for others they chose to have their transcript read aloud to them. At times the ability for electronic devices to pick up the nuances of the interviews and data gathered was limited, as many of the interviewees used body language and gestures to augment their anecdotes; therefore, notes were taken by the researcher to provide greater understanding of interviewee stories.

3.11 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the case study methodology sits within a constructivist paradigm in which the interviewer and interviewee construct knowledge. The case study methodology supported the current research question(s) as it allowed socially

constructed meanings to emerge from the research and emphasised 'rich and thick' description (Geertz cited in Rubin & Rubin, 2005) e.g., young people were encouraged to share their stories create meaning from their lived experiences. This case study drew on both a contextual approach, endeavouring to incorporate the context in which young people exercise agency; and a phenomenological approach to bring greater meaning to young people's lived experiences. Finally, the qualitative approach provided an opportunity for themes to be drawn from the research, helping to answer the research questions and to further draw meaning from the data (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).



Chapter Four

Existing Structures: The Organisation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background to the Youth Training programme in New Zealand and the organisational structures that have been implemented to deliver this training. Secondly, it introduces the setting of the current case study, a private training establishment (PTE) and its organisational goals. Thirdly, this chapter will outline the findings and discussion from the data collected from the case study tutor interviews and focus group. The findings and discussion from the tutor data contextualise the student data collection and create an alternative view point in which the current Youth Training takes place; further providing validity for the study (Merriam, 1998).

4.2 Background: Youth Training in New Zealand

In 1987 the Labour Lange government established the Access training schemes. These schemes catered for unemployed people who needed training for employment or in industry related skills. Access schemes incorporated literacy skills into a small portion of the programme; however, job readiness was the main programme emphasis (Benseman & Tobias, 2003). This initiative was delivered by tertiary institutions such as polytechnics and private courses run by employers and private providers, which later became known as Private Training Establishments (PTEs). Training providers were funded for Access schemes based on agency identified learner needs. The government's objective was to create a flexible training environment, with greater receptivity to the labour market (Benseman, 2001; Benseman & Tobias, 2003). Running parallel to the Access scheme were the Maccess schemes, which catered specifically for Māori trainees and were managed by the Māori authorities or Maccess Authorities and delivered by Māori training providers (Benseman & Tobias, 2003).

In 1992 as part of the National Government's training legislation the Education Training and Support Agency was established, and in addition to funding for industry training specific funding was allocated to contract training providers to deliver increased employment and further training outcomes. In 1993 Access schemes were

abolished and the Training Opportunities Programmes (TOPs) were created. Maccess was also incorporated into the TOPs' policy. Training Opportunities Programmes were to focus on school leavers and the long-term unemployed. Training Providers were measured on their success in terms of how many of their trainees moved into employment or further training and there was a greater emphasis on student results or 'outcome' after finishing the programme (Benseman & Tobias, 2003). This sea-change, on the back of a changing labour market, also mirrored the move towards an outcomes-based National Qualifications Framework, and with outcomes (e.g., achievement of unit standards) being the basis of assessment and funding delivery onwards (Benseman & Tobias, 2003; Mahoney, 2010). Critics have argued that both are the result of the scientific management of education as a response to a globalised economy (Neyland, 2010). The emphasis on outcomes has been reflected widely across New Zealand education policy from 1990.

In 1998 Training Opportunities Programmes split into two groups: Youth Training and Training Opportunities. Youth Training catered for students aged 15-17 years and was funded by the Ministry of Education. Fifteen year olds were required to have a school exemption to apply for the Youth Training Programme. Eligibility for the Youth Training Programme was dependent on students having low-qualifications or no qualifications, for example, a student with some NZQF Level 1 credits was eligible but whereas those with a National Certificate qualification were not. Training Opportunities Programmes were designed for those 18 years and over and in recent years has been funded by the Ministry of Social Development (Mahoney, 2010; Tertiary Education Commission, 2006, 2008).

4.3 Current Focus: Youth Training Programmes

In 2002 youth training policy was widened to incorporate young people who were lacking foundation skills, and this was operationalised as any student who had fewer than 12 English or Mathematics NCEA level credits. The courses were still described as 'targeted-programmes' because students must meet an eligibility criteria (Tertiary Education Commission, 2002).

More recently courses funded as Youth Training have the following characteristics:

- A labour-market focus
- Leading towards national qualifications
- Meeting local industry and employer requirements
- Levels 1 to 3 on the National Qualifications Framework
- Full-time, with typically 30 hours a week or more of tutor contact time
- Providing workplace learning experiences (Mahoney, 2010)

Training is provided by Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs). TEOs must be registered by the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA). Currently a range of providers offer Youth Training in New Zealand, and they include: marae; charitable trusts; employers; government training establishments; incorporated societies, kokiri centres; local authorities; private training establishments (PTEs); polytechnics and institutes of technology; schools; and wānanga (Benseman, 2001; Benseman & Tobias, 2003; Tertiary Education Commission, 2002, 2008).

4.4 Private Training Establishment (PTEs)

Much of the youth training that currently takes place outside of the secondary school sector is undertaken by Private Training Establishments (PTEs). These mainly government funded training organisations are either run from a business framework, choosing to establish courses that link into the marketplace; or run by charitable trusts and not-for-profit organisations that have a goal to create opportunities for young people in their community (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008). Whether PTEs have a profit or non-profit framework all organisations are required to adhere to the guidelines outlined by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the NZQA. Future funding is based on audits and reviews by NZQA and TEC; therefore, organisations are encouraged to adopt a business framework so that funding is managed in responsible manner (Tertiary Education Commission, 2006, 2008).

PTEs are permitted to run a mix of courses, from fee paying courses to government funded courses, catering for adults to young people; however, when an organisation decides to run a course funded under Youth Training they may only enrol early school leavers 16 to 18 years. Youth Trainees are required to complete unit standards worth

20 credits (the equivalent of 200 hours of learning and assessment) in the first 10 weeks of study and the PTE is required to ensure student attendance, learning and development and that trainees progress into further training or employment. Without an adherence to these requirements PTEs would lose current and future funding and allocation of student placements. When students have fulfilled the core requirements they are able to choose electives and able to move onto another course (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008).

4.5 The Case Study: The Private Training Establishment (PTE)

Information about the PTE in this case study was obtained from interviews with staff and examination of the organisation's documentation. The PTE is run within a business model; however, it is a not-for-profit organisational with a vision to create opportunities for people in their community, and providing training that encourages students toward successful career goals. The PTE has over 25 years experience in training and development and with both adult and youth trainees. The PTE provides separate courses to cater for the different age groups. This is in contrast to some PTEs that have a mix of age groups in classes and spread resources and tutors across courses. The case study PTE perceives itself as having a history of excellence with students; and enjoying a good reputation with government organisations for positive employment outcomes. This means that they have been able to successfully see students from their employment skills courses obtain either training or work, in some cases before the course has ended.

4.5.1 The Values of the PTE

The values of the PTE as an organisation were articulated by staff and evident in the observed practices within the day-to-day organisation and relationships within of the Youth Training programme. The PTE had a strong sense of wanting each student to believe that they can find direction and purpose in their life:

1. There is a strong emphasis on self worth and self acceptance amongst staff and students. Tutors dedicate a great amount of class time to encouraging students towards self efficacy and promote the acceptance of all students within a community environment.

2. There is a commitment to professionalism by all staff. This is to ensure that students are provided with role models of how to perform in the workplace. Tutors and other staff are keen to provide a professional environment as they are working with many different government agencies and organisations and endeavour to create a excellent communication between all groups.
3. This PTE is committed to providing further opportunities for training and employment for all students. This means that they create strong links to the business community and other training providers.

4.6 The Case Study: The Youth Training course

In the last few years government policy for the Youth Training programme has consolidated an expectation that young people obtain a fluid set of learning modules over an open-ended twelve month period, once the compulsory and elective unit standards are completed, ending in a National Certificate in Employment Skills. In addition, this National Certificate of Employment Skills (NCES) is linked with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority framework and has a Level 1 and Level 2 qualification (Tertiary Education Commission, 2002, 2006). This qualification is used in high school transition courses, such as Gateway and is also used in out-of-school courses run by Private Training Establishments as a base qualification before students engage in a specialised course, work experience and full-time work (Tertiary Education Commission, 2006). Here, as in the United States, and in the United Kingdom such courses are influenced by the social learning theory of career decision making e.g., that people aspire to occupations in which they have successfully undertaken similar occupational tasks (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999). The work experience component of the NCES is seen as an integral element of work readiness and successful future employment. This qualification creates the backdrop for the current research and incorporates future decision making as part of the unit standard programme of the National Certificate of Employment Skills (NCES).

4.7 The Case Study: The tutors

In the case study PTE employees the Youth Training tutors for their training ability and their desire and passion for young people. This is evident in the strong student-tutor relationship in the classroom. The students are encouraged to build trusting and

open relationships with the tutors in much the same way they would with a youth worker. The tutors spend many extra hours outside of class time helping students with their personal lives. The tutors have developed class resources and activities that are student focused rather than course focused, and they nurture student participation and input in planning and preparing course materials and outings. The attitudes and beliefs expressed by the tutors suggest that they were more influenced by youth development frameworks and approaches, than by youth employment and career frameworks. As part of the current research three tutor interviews were completed and the findings from this data helped to consolidate a description of the context for the data and findings from the case study student interviews.

The Course Focus

The tutor interviews revealed a tension between fulfilling governmental and funding requirements and creating a Youth Training course with a strong youth development focus. There was also tension between running a business and maintaining a not-for-profit agenda at the same time as maintaining student-centred learning and a focus on student wellbeing.

I think it's about building their [the students] self esteem; and their own confidence and learning to find their own identity. And that's my whole focus. Teaching is the easy side - learning and getting their units – but getting them to accept the beauty that's inside them; then they'll do anything. **Tutor 1**

I see our course hopefully taking them through maybe a couple of years of their immaturity to... taking them to some maturity level where they can actually get some credits and skills to go into other employment or further training. **Tutor 2**

The Tutors' Role

The tutors who teach in the Youth Training course are part of a larger team at the PTE that offers many different employment readiness courses; however, it was apparent that the youth tutors spent a lot of time and energy working one-to-one with the students, and positively mentoring them.

[My role is] lifting them up when they're down. Because once they're up they can do assessments; all their units; find a job – easily. Lifting them up and keeping them up

– that’s my job. [You need] the right staff. You need to have a person there not because they want a job and income – but are there for them [the students] succeed. A lot of people discriminate because of my students’ identity, because of the way they look. But when you actually get down to who they are they’re beautiful. I’m biased – but you need to be. I don’t see them for what they’ve done – I see their potential.

Tutor 1

Prior History

Many of the students had strong memories from high school. For some their time in secondary education was brief. Many of the interviewees spent time after leaving high school at home or at an Activities Centre². Most of the interviewees were encouraged by government agencies to enrol in youth training. One of the students had to enrol in the course as part of his justice system requirements; however after a month of mandatory attendance, he reported enjoying the course. It is important to note that a majority of students had spent time not in education or training prior to enrolment, a status that is referred to in policy as NEET.

[Some referrals are] from CYPS, or from Legal Services... because of the journey we have with our current students we get referrals by friends – word of mouth now. It use to be by promotional – going into WINZ and doing presentations; communicating through - and working with – [the] local youth centre– but now we get people coming in because other students tell them this is a great course. So they’re doing our marketing. **Tutor 1**

A typical student has gone through the schooling system and been expelled from school...because of...bad behaviour, which is possibly stemmed from being able to learn in a classroom situation – got left behind. Also, coming from an unsupportive environment [at home], then going through school and then through the activity centres and then coming out without much in the way of qualification. Then they come to us.

...

They’re not old enough to go to Polytech – they’re too young. They may have been asked to go to a course from the Courts. One of the Courts main thrust is trying to get errant students back into some sort of education – and some sort of training. It’s

² Activities Centre: An education-based centre supported by local high school for early leavers that have been suspended or excluded from high school.

really tiding them through – when they’ve left school say at 14 (years), 15 (years) and then getting them to a stage of 18, 19 [years] when they can actually go to Polytech and they can have some qualifications for pre-entry [to Polytech].

Tutor 2

Course Environment

All of the students interviewed said that they enjoyed the course environment. This was because of the people who attended the course and the emphasis on friendship and family. This whānau environment was born out of class activities and discussion. All of the students interviewed described the tutors as having a large part to play in creating a warm and open environment in which they felt they could express their needs and build relationships with other students. This was a stark contrast to the way in which interviewees describe former learning environments. Tutors spent a lot of class time getting to know their students, building their trust, and working with them to achieve their personal goals and creating a family or whānau learning environment.

They all have a reason why they are there. Circumstance for where they are. However, I just look at um... they’re coming into a different environment – so first they’ve got to get use to that and they actually just sit there and watch. A lot of them are hard and surprised by the environment we have because it’s relaxed, very family orientated. And it’s really positive; we focus on only the positive communication. Sometimes when they get here – the new students – feel that they have to be all tough and created this image to be accepted. But by the end of the day they think, “Hang on, this is fun.” And they learn [from] the atmosphere really quickly.

Tutor 1

Today I was talking with a group and I was asking them about being unemployed. And I asked them, “Who in this room feels like they’re by themselves?” And the whole room raised their hands. And I said, “If you think you’re the only one in the world who hasn’t got a job, look around the room – there are 16 other people going through the same thing.

Tutor 3

Student Learning

Many students relayed stories of tutors working one-on-one with them to complete their unit standards or course work. The tutors explained that the course allowed for mistakes and students were not bound by tight deadlines to finish work. They often

worked in groups and set personal deadlines to finish unit standards. A few students were helped with literacy needs and a small percentage was given help writing down their answers. Many students had excellent literacy and numeracy skills; however, spelling often seemed to be an issue.

It's just – our whole focus is – whatever the students do outside of course is what they do outside. What they do here is who they are. They don't have to put on a façade or put on some cool gangsta person this is [a place] where you can just be yourself and it's okay. It's okay to mess up here, but when you mess up outside the classroom that's when the consequences are huge. If we just teach them how to deal with what to do when they mess up – in class... that's helping them.

Tutor 1

Unit Standards

This Youth Training course is based on the National Certificate of Employment Skills (NCES). Although many of the students were early school leavers some managed to complete the Certificate and go onto further work or training. The tutors on this course use a mix of practical work, book work and leisure activities to encourage student learning. They see the group and discussion work as a vital part of learning to communicate with peers, family and future work colleagues.

The Units reinforce what we teach – we do the whole life skills thing - how do they communicate with people; how do they see their future; how do they plan goals. So before I even give them a workbook we do the practical. So when they get to the workbook it's easy... and when they get to the assessment they say, "I know all this!" Just giving them the Units to do – and not telling them how to do it - without comprehension or support would be setting them up to fail. So in the mornings we do team work and in the afternoons we do one-to-one learning. So we are mentoring them... helping the ones that are struggling and those who have questions.

Tutor 1

Student-Tutor Relationship

Strong student-tutor relationships were formed on the Youth Training course. The students told stories of ringing their tutors when they were in what they regarded as danger, such as being in trouble with the authorities and in need of a parent-figure. At

such times the tutors acted as youth workers and were asked to step in when family were unable to support the young person. Due to this involvement trust was quickly built and tutors were often a part of the student's important life events.

They go to court conferences and court meetings and we go with them. That's not part of our role, but they need someone who can come along side them and support them. So at the moment we're filling that gap until they're confident and able to get out of that system. Find confidence in themselves to achieve.

Tutor 1

Decision Making

Much of the Youth Training course was based on the belief that if students were able to make good choices, this would mean better life outcomes. When the tutors discussed the emphasis placed on making choices, they couched this in ways which suggested everyday interpretations of psychological theory and humanist approaches to learning for living. All students were given class activities to discuss the types of choices they would make if confronted with a number of challenging scenarios. Students were given many opportunities to share their thoughts, and often shared personal challenges and allowed fellow students to give advice. Decision making was considered a 'life skill' and students were given unit standards around this topic.

There's peer pressure. There's expectations on them by others. It can be family, CYPS, Police or Court – because they all come from that environment. They've got to learn; they need to understand what do they like. What do they enjoy – not what do they do because their friends enjoy it – what are they good at. Like I said it's about them finding themselves.

Tutor 1

Their decision making has been very space-of-the-moment-type decision making. Hopefully by trying open up discussion on topics – and things like that – we open up the opportunity to see the whole picture. Not just to react.

So you talk about a problem and then ask them for their opinion?

That's right – everyone joining in. Which is very hard at first at all – because no-one will open up and they find it quite hard to discuss things. They will give their opinion and that's it – and they don't want to hear anyone else. So that's something that takes quite a while - of development...we actually put problems out to them for

discussion...there is a unit. It sounds a bit theoretical, but it's not at the end of the day – if you approach it in the right way. I think that's a really good.

Tutor 2

Authority Figures

The tutors were aware that many of the students had had negative experiences with authority figures during high school or in their leisure time.

At school they get told, "Do this!" Teachers, parents. They [the students] come to us through the Police so they've got external obligations that they have to fulfil. When they come to us not really independent. They have to learn what it is to become independent. So they have to learn to trust themselves and know that they are capable of making their own decisions. That's where self esteem comes in... when they are confident in themselves – they are confident to make decisions; to stand up for what they believe is right. **Tutor 1**

Outside Influences

Most of the tutors agreed that students were easily influenced by American youth trends, and the PTE banned gang colours from the Youth Training classroom. This rule affected the few students who described themselves as knowing or being affiliated with a local gang.

I think they're very marketable – you can involve them. The methods used in the media tells them where they going in society – especially young people. The American Gangsta Ghetto thing which influences New Zealand quite strongly. We've always had gangs, but the language used; the aggression used, knives; what they see on the news – they're impressionable... so they say they wanna be like that. They see the money. Their role models are distorted from reality.

When you get into policy – how can you support the students; they're on a tumultuous journey – an up and down rollercoaster – how can you help them through that without stepping on their toes – I think it's difficult. **Tutor 3**

Student Relationships

Tutors sought to encourage relationships built on honesty and trust. Often tutors would spend their own time e.g., the lunch hour or after class, with young people who were in need of help in their personal life. Tutors were honest about their own views and feelings during discussions and this helped to build trust with the students. Tutors

encouraged students to develop positive relationships in their personal lives or helped them deal with challenging relationships e.g., romantic or family issues.

Nature has created us to be in relationships – so relationships are utterly important – when you have an older relationship with growth and nurture is good – but a negative relationship degrades. For young people they struggle is this a positive or negative influence – that they are all influenced. So having to look around and support them – and address that.

Tutor 3

Perceived Student Barriers

Tutors believed that all students were able to achieve their goals, however, they needed to overcome their personal barriers to learning and achieving. Their interviews suggest an underlying assumption that anyone can achieve their goals providing they first change their negative thinking or behaviour. This message was very poignant for the students as much of their academic life they often had been told that their negative and rebellious behaviour was hindering their progress. The Youth Training tutors sought to teach the students how to cease negative behaviour and assume a more positive pathway. Individualism was nurtured to break what was seen as a collective but negative mindset that students had with groups outside of the Youth Training course. Students were encouraged to set individual goals and make decisions based on personal desires.

They're just busy – [doing] anything and everything... with friends, with family. When I discuss their dreams I say, "We are busy people, just take 20 minutes to sit and think." They love that and they start thinking, "I'd do this, and I do that." Having the opportunity to think about what they want to be doing in the future.

One of the biggest barriers for young people is boredom. So when they get bored they fill their time. Some people fill their time with things that are negative - others play station, Xbox, study.

Personalised success – who you want to be – they struggle with that because they're told they should be like anyone else – instead of listening to their special diversity.

Tutor 3

The academic side is there - and that's all good, but it's secondary to behaviour and personality issues and things like that. You have to get over those until you can do anything.

Tutor 2

Student Aspirations

The tutors believed that students could aspire to their desires. A portion of the course was dedicated to helping students create new goals and dreams. Guest speakers were organised to inspire students to create individual plans to achieve their dreams.

Tutors believed with the right mentoring all students had the ability to create a positive life plan. Many of the students formerly admired people in the media, such as movie stars because of the success or fame they had achieved. However, more realistic aspirations were encouraged and tutors inspired young people to create achievable steps towards their desires.

When they come on the course, I think they think, "Oh this is just another course, what's going to happen here?" They might have been instructed to come on it. It might not have been their choice to come on it – um... yeah they're quite wary of it to start with. But gradually it becomes obvious to them they are getting some where – they are actually achieving.

We make a point of doing their plan and their goals – and when they want to achieve these goals – and we set their plan up. We do their CVs and point them in the right direction. And try to help them find perhaps part-time jobs or during the course as well – start getting them into work habits.

Tutor 2

Oh they come with ideas – but a lot of it's from movies or associations outside of course. But once they actually find out what they're good at and what they actually can do – and what they enjoy doing – and we look at careers around those skills and their interests. And then they can say, "Yeah, that's me." But it's breaking through to that – and careers that be built along that line.

Tutor 1

Course Outcomes

The tutors assumed that they would achieve the targets set by government if they were able to mobilise young people towards their learning and training goals. Former students on the course had gone on to apprenticeships, Polytechnic courses or employment.

I think they have the potential to work. They're only limited by the way the students buy into the programme – if you've got an employment – how much time to you give to a student. If they're there to get added tools, they may not get unemployed, but

the life journey or life change that comes from that is the best they ever had to help them move forward. And actually putting themselves out there and say, "Give me a shot." And that's where our support kicks in... encouraging, encouraging, encouraging.

Tutor 3

Student Changes

The governmental funding requirements are that students must complete certain unit standards within an agreed timeframe, therefore, the course focus is to see students achieve these. It is apparent that on this Youth Training course that the tutors, and the organisation, also focus on positively impacting on student wellbeing so that the students are able to create future aspirations.

I think everyone has the ability to change; they need change because they're unemployed. The reasons for work are really sincere – they need to provide for family, they need to pay bills, general things. We can go in and work with them, we can challenge them, we can encourage them, we can point them in the right direction, we can open up a door and go, "Way you go." We'll support you along the way."

I think that's really important – that the change has to be known by the person making the change; not the person saying they need to change. As soon as you do that – the power shifts. The power shift to somebody who shouldn't have the power. And they say, "They told me to do it. See I told you I couldn't do it." All the excuses come.

Tutor 3

They like [the course] so much they don't want to go [laughs]. I love to take the before and after photo – their holistic approach of where they're at. I know it's an Employment course and Computing, but my goal is to give them time to find themselves – then they can achieve what they want to achieve. So they can be successful – themselves.

Tutor 1

I would describe one young woman who was completely anti- authority, anti-tutor on this course. Wouldn't communicate. And just gradually blossomed, relaxed down, communicates all the time. Completely different person. That's amazing to see.

Tutor 2

4.8 The Case Study: The environment

The students on the Youth Training were given their own classroom within the PTE complex. There were many other courses running parallel to the Youth Training course, however, the young people were able to create their own environment by using arts and music to share their personal stories. Many of the walls were covered with photos of students enjoying class leisure activities and students were allowed to play their own selection of music throughout the day. Two of the students interviewed who were interested in art and design had played a large part in designing the class walls and motifs.

4.9 Summary of Findings: Tutor interviews and focus group

The summary of findings for the tutor interviews and focus group illustrate the tension between adhering to governmental youth training policy and providing youth focused environment, which has more in common with a youth development framework, than a youth employment framework. Youth training is funded by the government and is measured by training and employment outcomes. Although, at times Youth Training policy and guidelines provide the basis for life skill training and development, the requirement to deliver unit standards, training and employment outcomes override the opportunity to use alternative youth transitional frameworks by choice e.g., relational or mentoring programmes. Often staff were able to integrate team building activities into the weekly course programme, however, these experiences are often an in-house initiative and show the commitment of the private training establishment in the current study. The course fused a mix of youth training policy, educational and workplace skills, life skills and relationship building to achieve students and governmental outcomes.

Humanistic theoretical framework

The interviews and observations suggest that the tutors used an informal humanistic theoretical framework in their work with young people in Youth Training. There was an assumption that students would be successful if they were empowered to make good decisions and think positively. Tutors' attitudes played a large part in modelling greater self efficacy and motivating students towards achievement. Students were taught life skills and self awareness to ensure they have a healthy sense of self;

therefore, are able to achieve their personal goals (Sewell, 1992; Wyn & White, 1997). The focus was on providing an opportunity for students to positively change their thinking, behaviour and decision making so that they could become agents of change and create future goals and aspirations.

Relational framework

Although structural constraints are managed by creating an in-house or separate environment from the 'outside' world, tutors were focused on creating a relational environment. Findings show tutors were passionate about creating a course environment with a strong sense of belonging and worked tirelessly to building trust with students and create strong relational ties (Strathdee, 2005; White & Wyn, 1998).

4.10 Chapter Summary

This organisation had a long history of working with unemployed people back into the workplace. It had often surpassed governmental and policy requirements to place people into work experience and employment, and because of their consistency, flexibility, openness and professionalism this organisation had excellent feedback from the people attending courses and connected to their services. Most of all their concern for the wellbeing of the people attending their courses was reflected in the way they relate to students, spent additional time with students and create a positive learning environment. The tutors who delivered the Youth Training programme used an informal humanistic framework whilst working with young people and were committed to the wellbeing of the students they taught. They were passionate about creating a relational classroom environment and spent time building strong relationships with their students, modelling life skills and helping students towards self actualisation.



Chapter Five

Voices by Firelight: Descriptions and Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the findings and descriptions of the study from the interviews and focus groups undertaken with the student participants. The global question of this study looked at how young people shape their future aspirations. It also explored how young people view the relevance of youth training to their aspirations and how they exercised agency during this training. Interviews were used to address the research questions in depth and the findings were then organised into themes taken from the data collection.

Firstly, this chapter provides a unique look at the raw data drawn from the participants' interviews. This study endeavours to draw directly from the stories the young people shared from their own lives, allowing them to provide the narrative for these findings. Currently, there is a gap in youth transition research in New Zealand in terms of young peoples' lived experiences of the transition process, and their views on this (van Manen, 1997). The interviews were structured to enable the young people to tell the stories of their transition experience. Therefore, describing the findings and descriptions of the interviewees in loose narrative form are an important aspect of this study. Secondly, the themes of these findings were drawn from the lived experiences of the interviewees and reflect their future aspirations in the context of their day-to-day lives. These themes include; educational experience, training experience, relational ties, shared experiences, health and wellbeing, environmental effects and aspirations, employment and income aspirations, geographical aspirations, resources, and agency. These major themes were then divided into sub-themes that relate to the interviewees' future aspirations. Lastly, as this chapter provides the raw data from the stories shared by the interviewees further analysis of the data is found in chapter five. Analysis will draw on the rich data and themes described in chapter four and also analyse the interviewees through cross-data groupings and discussion discourses in an effort to further understand their stories.

5.2 Participants tell their stories

The main objective of using a case study methodology was to gain insights into the aspirations of young people in a youth training programme. It was also intended to give the participants a voice through sharing authentic stories of their lived-experience (van Manen, 1997). At times this was not an easy process for the students, as telling stories of past experiences drew raw emotion for some, and was sometimes cathartic. A case study design is for a bounded phenomena or group, in this instance a cohort from a specific youth training course, and considers the context in which the cohort resides in (and it is important to reiterate that the researcher was invited into the world of the participant and needed to respond with respect and openness) (Merriam, 1998). A case study approach combined influenced by choice biography is important as it enables to research to move beyond the normative or mainstream labelling of students e.g., those with low qualifications, early school leavers, low socio-economic status to empower the participants to create their own meaning around their personal narrative (Byrne, 2001). After the participants had reviewed their transcripts and fed back their thoughts concerning their transcripts, themes were drawn from the data and were organised around topic headings.

5.3 Introducing the Young People

There were eight participants who participated in individual interviews and focus groups. There were two focus groups in which the students were able to talk about their ideas at length in a group discussion.

Table 1b. Interviewees: Young People in the Youth Training

Interviewee	Pseudonym	Age	*Ethnicity	Gender
Interviewee 1	Michelle	17 years	Māori/ Pākehā	Female
Interviewee 2	Sarah	17 years	Māori / European	Female
Interviewee 3	Amanda	17 years	European	Female
Interviewee 4	John	16 years	Cook Island/ Pākehā	Male
Interviewee 5	Tim	17 years	Māori	Male
Interviewee 6	Cassidy	17 years	Māori	Female
Interviewee 7	Mike	17 years	New Zealander	Male
Interviewee 8	Pete	17 years	Māori	Male

*Ethnicity: Recorded as identified by the Interviewees

5.3.1 The Young People

Michelle

Michelle is a 17 year old, who describes herself being from Māori and Pākehā heritage. She currently lives with her mother and father and sister. Both her parents work. Her mother runs her own business and her father is a qualified tradesman.

She was at secondary school for three consecutive years and passed English and Science achievement standards. She feels she was bullied at school by the teachers because of her choice of clothing and because she was too slow copying down work from the board. She found high school 'too big' with too many people.

Her close friends mostly go to the current course, however, she has one best friend from childhood that she still has a close relationship with. They also trained in dance together. She currently has a boyfriend and they have been together for two years. She is close to her family and has a desire to have a family of her own. Her goal is to become a qualified mechanic and make money so she can buy whatever she wants.

Sarah

Sarah is a 17 year old female who identifies herself of both Māori and European ethnicity. She currently lives with her whāngai-mother [foster parent in Māori cultural context] and her brother and sister that work in a fast-food restaurant and a younger brother at high school. Her whāngai-mum works as a teacher at the local Kura Kaupapa school.

She briefly attended high school, but left after 6 months. She was unable to go to another high school as they would not accept her. Living in Auckland she attended a creative arts course for three months. While in Auckland she also played netball as part of a wider whānau/iwi group.

She is close to the people on the current course and has made some close friends. She would like to be a Veterinarian or become a teacher; however, is currently focused on gaining her unit standards and is in the third trimester of pregnancy and would like to attend a local high school that caters for young parents.

She is close to her family, especially her whāngai-mum and was brought up by her "nan". She is no longer with her baby's father and doesn't desire a partner at this stage.

Amanda

Amanda is a 17 year old who describes herself as having European ethnicity. She is currently living with her Mum, Dad and younger brother while her boyfriend fulfils a judicial sentence. Her mother and father both work two jobs.

She was asked to leave high school after three months due to poor attendance. She now has a goal to become a hairdresser or a childcare worker. As she is currently pregnant she will be going onto to a local high school that caters for young parents and hopes to continue her education.

She met her core group of friends through the course and spends most of her time with her boyfriend. She mostly enjoys 'hanging out' with her friends and listening to music.

John

John is a 16 year old male of Cook Island Māori and Pākehā heritage. Both his parents are working and he lives at home along with his younger brother.

He went to high school for two and a half years and was asked to leave due to bad behaviour. While at secondary school he passed Maths unit standards and still enjoys Maths problems.

He has met some good friends on the course; however, is best friends with his cousin who he sees every day and is involved with a group of friends who skate. His main focus is skating and spends most of his spare time practising at the local skate park. His other interest is art and would one day like to have a job as a graphic artist that uses a spray paint style. He is currently sponsored by a skate label and would like to be a fulltime skater one day.

Tim

Tim is a 16 year old male of Māori ethnicity who lives with his mother and three brothers. He said he was asked to leave high school after two weeks because of bad behaviour. He has two best friends. One lives locally, the other lives in another city. Usually hangs out the friends from the course and his best friend. They mostly play video games and like playing touch rugby.

His goal is to race cars and to own his own car one day. Tim has previously worked with his father, helping out in a labouring role; however, no longer sees him. His goal is to one day become a mechanic and to have a family.

Cassidy

Cassidy is a 17 year old of Māori heritage. She lives with her Mum and two brothers. She went to high school for a year and a half and left to do another course that included correspondence school. She thought that high school had too many people and she 'wagged' classes for the first few weeks. Spent two years at an Activity Centre and passed English and Maths unit standards.

She likes to hang out with her friends and family and enjoys playing netball and softball. Cassidy is in a relationship and has been with her boyfriend for three years. She is also very close to the people on the course and they 'hang out' after the course is finished for the day.

She would one day like to become a youth worker or a nurse. She has a goal to attend a camp run by a local youth organisation that offers a transition course.

Mike

Mike is a 17 year old who describes his ethnicity as being a New Zealander. He lives with his mum and has older siblings who no longer live at home. He attended two different high schools – each for a year and started a number of unit standards but didn't complete any.

He has made two new friends on the course and they have a common interest in 'gaming' (playing video games). He is an avid reader and enjoys anything to do with history. He would like to become a computer programmer and has a goal to attend a polytechnic course in computers after he has met the entry requirements. He would one day like to buy a house, a car and have a partner.

Pete

Pete is a 17 year old of Māori ethnicity. He currently lives with his Grandmother and left high school after two years due to behaviour problems and lack of attendance. At high school he started some unit standards; however, did not complete them. He enjoys sports and really likes rugby and was good at long distance running when he was younger.

He hangs out with his cousins and people from the course. He still plays indoor sports and touch rugby and plays for a local team. Most of his spare time is centred around friends and playing sports.

His goal is to become a panel beater and would like to finish his entrance requirements and then complete the polytech course.

5.4 Future Aspirations of Youth in Youth Training

The stories of young people in Youth Training revealed many future aspirations and these were organised into three groups; short-term, mid-term and long-term aspirations. These future aspirations were talked about at length in their one-on-one interviews and focus groups and formed the basis for the major themes of this study.

Short-term aspirations:

- Educational: course, training
- Social: friends, relationships
- Leisure: sports, art, music, clothes

Mid-term aspirations:

- Vocational: employment, jobs
- Family: whānau, mentors
- Health and wellbeing

Long-term aspirations 10 years plus:

- Assets, wealth
- Geographical: travel
- Long-term life aspirations

Many of the participants revealed that before attending the course they had not set any life goals. A few had ideas concerning vocational aspirations. Three participants said that they did not think about the future and did not care what happened to them prior to attending the course; however, since journeying through the programme they had begun to make life goals.

Before I came here I didn't give a crap about life. I didn't care about what would happen to me if I died. But now I actually got people I care about now.

Tim

My attitude [has changed]. I never use to think about what was going to happen to me when I'm older – but now I'm like thinking about that.

Pete

I thought I was going to go on the 'Benefit' – honestly.

My [family member] is on the benefit.

It's okay - my [family member] lives on the benefit – it didn't seem that bad to me

Mike

5.5 Educational experience

5.5.1 Secondary educational experience

For most students the entrance requirements to a government funded Youth Training Course mean that they have not completed a National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level One. Classed as early school leavers, many of the students had not attended school for at least three years. Most of the participants remembered engaging in unit standards or achievement standards while at high school; however, only two participants had actually completed their units. One participant had only attended school for two weeks, after which they were asked to leave. Tertiary educational policy frames these early school leavers as having low qualification; therefore, they are in need of further training to gain the skills they lack. It is easy to describe these through a deficit framework; however, when talking to the participants involved in this study, each person had a clear opinion about how they felt while attending high school.

All of the participants had a negative view of high school. For most their lack of conformity to school rules meant they met a negative response from teachers and staff. Again it would be easy to define this group of students as rebellious teenagers who, because of their inability to curb their negative behaviour, needed to be removed from the mainstream population. Seven of the eight participants in this project openly described their exit from high school as being “kicked out” or “asked to leave.” Three of the participants, one girl and two boys, said that they were expelled for “non-behaviour”. This included aggression, fighting, being blamed for having drugs at school and riding a skateboard around the school on an on-going basis. All participants described a reluctance to wear the correct uniform - a continual source of reprimand. Two students were severely punished for their lack of adherence to the school uniform code. A male participant preferred to wear ‘skate’ clothing, and as his spare time revolved around skate culture, did not curb his behaviour. A female participant was called a “Ho” (inferring that the way she wore her stockings were

similar to that of a prostitute). Both of these students saw their lack of uniform contributing largely to their expulsion from high school.

When asked about how they felt about school three participants describe high school as being too big. Mike said that there was, “too much moving around the classes.” Cassidy explained her transition experience from Primary school to High school as overwhelming:

Like for the first few months I wagged cos I was too scared to go to school. I don't know – I didn't understand most of the things that we had to do – and the teacher would just write it up on the board – and um – all we'd have to do is just copy it in our books – and then when it came to like to study and stuff I didn't know what to do because it was all the writing on the board. What do I do? And I'd ask for help, but there were so many people in the class they'd help everyone in the class – and then they [the teacher] would just stand at the front of the class.

Cassidy

Three of the participants described their classroom experience as being overlooked and neglected by teachers. When trying to engage in learning and copying down notes they believed they were told they were “too slow” or “stupid” for not being to complete the assigned task within the allotted time. Two of the participants spoke of asking for help, but not being given the attention they needed. Many of the participants talked about the feeling of disconnectedness while being at high school and preferring to ‘wag’ to be with their friends or be at home during the school day.

I got kicked out at the start of [the year] – I didn't really show up... they were like what's the point of being here. Just use to hang with friends. I got kicked out after three months – but they worked out I was only really there [present] for a whole day [in total] [laughs]. That's when I moved in with my boyfriend.

Amanda

5.6 Training experience

5.6.1 Time spent prior to attending Youth Training

After high school and before attending the Youth Training course all interviewees spent time not enrolled in education or training or attending work (NEET). Most of

the participants organised their own time around activities at home or with friends who were available during the day.

Stayed at home [for a year before starting course]; it was okay – got bored after a while - watching TV and played video games.

Mike

Before course I was just hanging out – missioning it [finding ways to get money] and stuff – support my drug habit. I use to hang with all the hoodlums –but yeah – they don't tell me to do stuff [now].

Tim

5.6.2 Youth Training Experience

In contrast from their high school experience, the participants all described their Youth Training course as enjoyable, laidback, fun and a place of learning. They openly praised the course environment and their tutors, fully embracing the sense of community it provided.

This place is like an lwi environment – school was too crowded – classes too packed. Yeah – it's changed my life around. It's brung the happy side of me out. I use to be real aggressive... but come to this course – can't really get aggressive – they're just too happy – all you can do is smile.

Sarah

Yeah – it's made me realise I need some sort of education. I guess I came out more socially.

Amanda

Yeah. When I first came in it was like, "Stuff everyone. I hate you guys. I'm only here cos of my Court." And all this stuff. But now it's like, I really want to be here. I want to be here every day and I want to do all my work.

Cassidy

[It's] fun... Oh it's laidback but you still get your work done.

John

Many of the participants discussed making smaller goals to attend class and complete unit standards as significant steps towards gaining a qualification. At the time of this

study all the participants had achieved a number of unit standards and two students were ready to complete a National Certificate in Employment Skills (NCES) Level 1. Many of the participants enjoyed completing the Maths units, while others said the Interpersonal skills such as; communication skills, speaking to others and ways to handle emotion had significantly impacted the way they interacted with their friends, family and classmates.

It's pretty good – yeah it's pretty good. Like you learn 20 times as much than [high] school hard out...

Michelle

Yeah – I didn't like communication ... I mean verbally communicating I find it easy now – [I'm more] confident after that Unit.

Amanda

Cos like at school there's heaps of people there for a speech or something, but here there's only a small number – it's easier to get up and speak – it helps... It's like school without all the bits ya hate (laughs).

Mike

One student spoke of being classed as illiterate before coming to class. This participant described a fragmented primary school education where he was moved between different home environments and caregivers. At the Youth Training course he had re-engaged with reading and currently has a desire to further his literacy ability. Threaded through all of the participants stories is the understanding that there is something different about the learning environment that the course offers. The course is funded by the TEC for a maximum of twenty students. Most days there are some students away due to workplace commitments or personal issues; therefore, the classroom usually has approximately fifteen students and is facilitated by two tutors. This smaller learning environment is focused on a constant flow of relational activities, sometimes suggested by the students themselves, and at other times tutor led. All eight participants spoke of the classroom environment as “laidback” and fun. It is a place where students are encouraged to complete their units within a realistic timeframe and tutors are on hand to give one-on-one help.

5.7 Relational Ties

5.7.1 Friends

All the participants spoke of enjoying having people to 'hang out' with on a daily basis. All described having friendships with 2 or 3 people who know them well and with whom they share their life struggles and successes with. Five of the participants had maintained friendships with people they considered 'best friends' prior to the course. For three of these participants their best friends were their cousins and they were in close contact with their extended family on a weekly basis. The other two participants maintained close relationships with friends from high school and spent time with them on a weekly basis.

All of the participants described people from the Youth Training course as being in their core friendship group. Strong ties were formed through class interactions e.g., formal class discussions and informal chat during class 'hang out' time. Many of the participants form friendships through similar interests e.g., music, fashion, skating, video gaming. There is a process by which they participants get to know the new students and consider what group they will join.

Yeah. We only like each other and if anyone tries to come in we're like "Nah". Cos we're not use to talking to other people - only talking to us. Umm – like we're always there for each other. Like we've together through our friend's pregnancy. They weren't as close to her and we were so it was weird when other people wanted to come – we were like "She won't wanna see you!" And when we got there she was like looking. And then we were like, "It's okay".

Cassidy

Friendships are formed over time and all of the participants engaged in shared activities outside of class time – after class and on the weekend.

Yeah – we're really close – cos like – we all come to [town] – and we'll all be together and then we'll see the boys – and we'll be running up to each other like – "Hi".

Cassidy

All of the participants described life struggles that they have shared with their friends on the Youth Training course. Due to the small numbers on the course participants

are able to form close relationships that allow for honesty and vulnerability. The four female participants particularly discussed the strong relational ties that were formed with course friends because of life issues they have shared. Many of the participants described times where trust was created through sharing personal life moments, where course friends have been non-judgemental, acted as a confidante, and provided social support in times of crisis.

I think all of us are similar – like we've got things in common – that's why we get along so well, but it's kinda like when new kids come in everyone has their backs up. We don't like them and stuff, cos we've been together for so long. And when someone doesn't come to course we're like um – everyone's like texting them... "Where are you? Come to Course! Like "We miss you" and stuff.

We just mock each – look at who you hooked up with last week – or stuff – the boys will be down the road all drunk and we just laugh at them – cos most of them are pregnant – so I'll just hang out with them and we'll go laugh at all the boys that are drunk [laughs]. Every Thursday night – we'll go home after course – and then we'll get back from being apart– and we're like "Hi!" like we haven't seen each other all day. **Cassidy**

Participants also bonded through similarities in their family upbringing and similar familial experiences (negative experiences: domestic abuse, fragmented families and positive experiences: connections to caregivers and parents)

Yeah – four good friends. We've all been through the same things... and our upbringing is the same as well – yeah. [3 in the group also having babies due this year] **Amanda**

5.7.2 Romantic relationships

Four out of the eight participants are in ongoing, long term relationships and have been with their partners from 10 months to 3 years. Three of the participants with partners are female and have been in a relationship for more than 2 years. Significant to their relationships is one of the ups and downs of lived experience. All of these female participants have thought of breaking up with their boyfriends, and one was advised by close friends to end her relationship. Some understand that their partner may not have desirable behaviour and have either sort help to deal with this or decided to carry on with the relationship e.g., a partner who was not in education or

training (NEET); unmotivated; controlling, annoying, aggressive. Again, the participants explain that when they need to sort through a relationship issue with their boyfriend they rely on their core friendships from the course for social support.

Like if I'm upset about my boyfriend I'd text one of the girls. And she'd say, "Meet up with me now." Even if it's like 2 o'clock in the morning – we'll go and cry with each other. And then we'll go to course the next day and the boys are like "Grrr"

Cassidy

Significantly, they all express a feeling of acceptance and understanding by their partner and have relied on this relationship to get through challenging experiences. All of the participants see their relationships as long term and some talk of the possibility of marrying the person they are going out with in the future.

Yeah, yeah. He wants to marry me...It's pretty early...Yeah – oh when it's the right time [I'll have children] – I've still got a lot of things to do.

Michelle

5.7.3 Family relationships

All of the participants were currently living with or in close contact with a family member. Many described a closeness to a parent, sibling or grandparent who they held in high esteem. Family is important to these young people as family is part of a core group of people who have journeyed with them through negative and positive experiences and know them well. References were made to family members who cared for them (looking after them as children and as young people) and with whom they now experience on-going and growing relationships. Interviewees talk of being able to tell family members personal and confidential information, and at times being able to ask for help or advice. Those they trust become a listening ear and are listened to. At times disagreements arise from a difference of opinions; however, these are clearly a dimension of having a balanced relationship. This shows the deep level of trust and understanding they have with their family.

Familial ties are strong with dependant siblings or younger family members. Many of the interviewees spoke of looking after younger family members, caring for them on a

day-to-day basis; making sure they have meals, went to school and fulfilled the task of a daily routine.

My family – that's it... they're the only ones that matter.

Mum just fought for us. My Mum was trying to find somewhere for us to live - cos they wouldn't let us live with her – then my nana took us in. **Tim**

My family are my life. My [whāngai] mum... [and] my nan – she passed away – she bought me up. [We have] a kai and a chat [when I need to talk]. **Sarah**

My Mum and Dad [are important to me] 'cos I grew up around them, they know me. My Mum - She's fun. Oh sometimes she gets angry. **John**

My Mum – she's like everything to me.

My little brother is like my everything. [He's 4 years old]

Yeah. He's like my world aye, I don't know what I'd do without him.

Cassidy

My mum – yeah she's an important person to me – well, she's the only other person at my house so I have to talk to her. We argue sometimes. **Mike**

Many of the interviewees also have family members they considered not being able to trust. At times they expressed deep hurt about being left when family members moved away or betrayed or lied to them. Often family members may have negatively affected a young person's emotional or physical state, and those who displayed these behaviours were not easily forgiven and ties were severed.

My little brother – he's a daddy's boy. And when he moved down here – he had to move cos my Dad doesn't care about anyone – so he came down and moved to us. And we were giving him the facts. And he was like – “Dad's gonna come, Dad's gonna come”. Come see him. He's not gonna be there – he's not going to come.

Tim

5.7.4 Mentor relationships

For three of the interviewees family members were also described as mentors. One male participant described his Dad as the person he looked up to. Another male participant had strong relationships with his older cousins and they encouraged him to

play sports. A female participant described her mother as her mentor and sounding-board.

My Dad [inspires me] – we do stuff [together].

My [older] cousin. Cos he bought me stuff. Bought me a skateboard.

John

The tutors of the Youth Training course were mentioned as a continuous source of support. The interviewees spoke about confiding in the tutors, and relying on them for personal help as well as for inspiration in their lives. Social support was a strong characteristic on the mentor relationship interviewees had with their tutors. Understanding that the tutors were not going to ‘judge’ their behaviour, but honestly give help and advice was important to the participants. Tutors also mentored students in their vocational decision making. Students discussed their job preferences and were encouraged to talk about their likes and dislikes to aid self awareness.

[The tutor] is real understanding – you know even when we do things she does things to make us feel better and help us with our problems – yeah the course is real supportive – like when something happens one of the girls had her baby the other day and we all went to see him.

Cassidy

It's [inspiring]... it's just the – the area of this course [in the building] – the people – the tutors. She just inspires. They talk to you about what you wanna do aye. They really get you to... they understand you

Tim

Sometimes I talk to the [tutor] Yip – she's real supportive

Michelle

5.8 Shared Practices

Many interviewees discussed their group membership in relation to how they dressed, what activities they participated in or ways of being together. Practices, or ways of undertaking activities, were created by a few dominant group members for others to follow. Over time these practices became group behaviour norms. Practices could be challenged, e.g., where the group hung out after course; however, emphasis was given

to time spent together and activities that enhanced togetherness, such as, listening to music, playing games.

5.8.1 Group Initiation and Affiliation

Many of the female interviewees spoke about the way they formed their group connections. While they continue to have friends outside of the course setting, the groupings within the course are created by the students and determined by dominant members of the sub-groups. The more socially aware group members voiced strong opinions as to why their group was significant. At times groups were discussed with a hierarchical emphasis, but there was also an underlying sense that trust, loyalty and conformity to shared practices e.g., wearing similar clothing, would mean that new students would be allowed entry into various sub-groups. Loyalty is a key characteristic of group membership and helping each other through challenging situations created strong attachments.

Have a brother's back... If someone's smashed over... go and take revenge. It's not always like that, but once the problems arrive – go and help them out.

Tim

I dunno it's just like everyone goes in their own group, me [and names her group] then the boys group and outsiders – kind of – but people we don't have things in common with them. And then they put them in a little group by themselves. Some kids on course rate them by what they look like. Yeah, and how they dress and their hygiene. Yeah and if you smell really bad you go straight to the bottom and you've got no-one to talk to. So all the smelly kids and the ugly people talk to each other.

It was always like that. I don't really know. I don't know if I started it or anything but I just talk to my friends that are here. If someone tries to come into our group and we don't like them we tell them to go away. If no-one has the 'balls' to tell them to go away they just make an excuse for not turning up with them.

Cassidy

5.8.2 Shared Activities

Many of the students on the course shared similar tastes in music and media. They often shared their likes and dislikes with their friends. Two male interviewees discussed playing video games with others on the course and introducing them to new

games. Most interviewees had been involved in sporting teams and still had a desire to play sports. Two male participants were keen on sporting activities and had strong sporting aspirations. They were originally affiliated with sporting groups, or groups of friends outside the course; however, over time they had introduced course mates to their individual sports e.g., a group of students now bought skateboards to class and had goals to learn new ‘tricks’.

The female participants predominantly described their love for cellphone use, listening to music on stereo systems, computers and cellphones while hanging out with friends. All interviewees used cellphones as their main medium of contact. Many had used computers to access social networking site; however, but had greater enjoyment and satisfaction from being with their friends face-to-face. They desired to see friends after course on a daily basis and used music as an enhancing element to group activities.

Computers - more like programming – video games.

Mike

Cars, I love Fords, and music... rock, hard out, Metallica, Korn.

Michelle

Umm yeah [music] – not playing an instrument or anything – I like hangout – going to the Hutt

Amanda

I like playing Netball, singing, like music, oh and I like spending time with family.

Sarah

I'm sporty, artistic. Like skating, playing X Box... hanging out with my mates...

Graffiti... Yeah - Dad likes it. That's cool. One day I tagged his bird house – [laughs] he got mad.

Oh skating full time. Oh like I would like to get sponsored. I've already got one brand – Traffik. **John**

Sports – rugby, touch and rugby league

Kinda both cos I use to do long distance running and played sports – I use to do athletics. **Pete**

5.9 Health and Wellbeing

5.9.1 Personal Satisfaction

Personal satisfaction was often discussed in relation to choices or agency (the ability to choose an outcome and create progress). The feeling of satisfaction from setting a goal and completing a task was a common anecdote. This reflected the course environment. Part of the course requirement meant that progress and assessments were discussed at the beginning of each week and goals were set each day by the tutors and students. Students were focused on achieving their educational goals as well as enjoying group work and relational interaction as they completed their units.

Unit standards – makes me feel good.. makes me feel happy relieved – takes a big weight of my shoulders.

Hanging out with my mum – it's relaxed

Friends – feels exciting.

Sarah

I feel [satisfied] at night I guess – when I've done heaps of Units [unit standards]

Amanda

Personal satisfaction was also discussed in relation to relationships. Often being with friends and family members who were younger and dependent on interviewees for help and wellbeing gave participants a deep feeling of satisfaction. The relationship with young children within the family setting was often described as happy and enjoyable.

Thinking about my niece. When I see my little girl [niece]. Yeah. Cos when I see her I feel real happy – get all happy. Yeah... when I'm sad she like makes me happy. It's really weird aye? Yeah – I wish she was mine, but she like laughs and smiles

Michelle

The young people also discussed satisfaction in relation to progress and excitement. Many hours were spent playing and achieving higher status on video games, as well as watching movies and playing games online. A few interviewees discussed activities that provided excitement; however, were often related to games or media that distracted the interviewees from the pressures of everyday life.

When I've accomplished something I've wanted to do for a long time –

Yeah – sometimes like when you play a really hard [video] game – getting through all the levels. **Mike**

I feel [satisfied] when there's no drama – that's why I have sessions (drugs) cos it gets rid of it. Driving... it's every time I get in a car I feel... excited. Like you can tell nothing goes wrong – cos I'm like... wise.

Tim

5.9.2 Physical Health

Physical activity for some interviewees filled a large part of their personal time, was enjoyable and enhanced their physical and emotional health. Wellbeing was often centred around the re-orientation of personal habits. Some of the interviewees had been to drug and alcohol counselling and were given 'tools' or new exercises or activities to help prevent a relapse. Interviewees were very aware of their personal wellbeing. They discussed their journey from alcohol and drug abuse to educating themselves about how to value their physical and emotional health. Some interviewees also discussed choosing preventative habits based on the health of their others in their friendship groups – so that their friends could be encouraged to have better health.

... [long pause] sometimes at the skate park... it's relaxing.

John

Yip – Touch start up next week – and we're in the finals for Netball.

Pete

Cos...yeah, I'm pretty much sober cos I'm tryna not drink around my pregnant mates

Cassidy

I don't drink or anything now – cos of my baby

Amanda

For three participants the positive changes in psychological well being focused on learning how to express emotions differently. They spoke of how they had made different attitudinal choices whilst being on the course. Six out of eight interviewees discussed how the course had affected their emotional wellbeing. All described a increase in happiness, calmness and the ability to internally control their choices.

...my brother use to teach us how to get stuff and not get caught. And that... this is how you have stuff for the rest of your life... if you have no money. I don't think that way no more. If I see something [I don't steal it] – I just walk past. But I've walked past a few things – just look and keep walking. I wouldn't have done that in the past.

Tim

I think like... how to handle, like... aggressive situations. When everyone has fights up there we learn how to control them. Yeah it was just like get in there and do whatever you can to get involved. But now it's like... [the tutor's] taught us how to control fights and stuff and make it better and take the people away so they don't get hurt.

Cassidy

5.10 Environment Effects and Aspirations

The course took place in a double-classroom space with desks and chair, with shelves for resources. The physical space resembled a school classroom; however, the participants described it as a whānau atmosphere and as a place where students could 'be themselves.' Next to the classroom was a kitchen and offices for the tutors, or for individual computer-based learning. In the classroom space students mostly gathered in groups and chose to complete learning tasks at desks, surrounded by other students, or alone. There were many pictorial references such as photos of class members on the surrounding walls, and although this was tutor-initiated, students were depicted in informal settings, playing games and hanging out with friends. When the interviewees discussed their classroom 'environment' they were often referring to the atmosphere created by the members of the course, led by the tutors, to ensure that all students felt a sense of belonging and felt they were valued. The ability of the tutors to engage with students in an open and honest manner, establishing equal relationships, created a thriving learning environment.

Interviewees often spoke of environments where they would hang out after course. These were known youth hangouts and on weekends attracted large groups of young people. Interviewees discussed the excitement of finding friends at the hang out spots and participating in activities that were not sanctioned by authorities e.g., drinking in a public place, and often fraught with having to move to the next hangout due to the

complaints by members of the public. Over time some meeting places were banned by authorities; however, were sometimes still used to meet friends.

Hanging – like the bus stop (Laughs)

Yeah (Laughs) Like on Saturdays. Cos my cousins hang there and my mates and stuff.

Michelle

See all of our friends we hang around the B park – well at least we know where everyone is – if we've lost someone – we know where to go back to.

Amanda

Yeah – there's M park and everyone's there – or E park and there's some boys there. And on the other side the boys call it Mexico. We'll be walking and we'll go see who's over E park first and then we'll walk straight across and we'll be like, "Wassup!" And they're like all on the other side – and they're like, "Come over to Mexico!"

And we're like, "Why do you call it that? [Mexico]"

And they say, "Cos it's so far away from E.park" [parody on US – Mexican border]

It's so funny – so we have to walk up and walk over the bridge to get to the other side.

And then... running away from the Police. It's like, "I can't run in heels!"

Like last Thursday the police had two paddy wagons and they had just come from the park. So everyone got kicked out of the park and went to the B park and there's was just heaps of people at the there and they [the Police] just kept coming and grabbing them and putting them in the paddy wagon. I thought, "Stuff this". I text my brother and said, "Come pick us up." Yeah, nah. I didn't wanna get arrested – not for nothing anyway.

I think they just look at us and think, "Well, they're in a gang, they all steal and drink in banned areas." And think real bad stuff of us... like if they got to know us first then they'd actually know what kind of people we are. They're just judging us by what we look like.

Cassidy

Hangouts, whether they were in town or at a skate park or at a friends place, served as a place that young people could make their own. At times other sub-groups would visit these spaces, and originating groups were not always welcoming.

[Mostly hang out] at the skate park is it quite relaxing at the skate park?

Usually, not when then Mallrats come. People from the Mall. They sit there and watch people skate. Sometimes they stand in front of you - try and get in your way.

John

We hang out at my mates B's house over in L

Yeah... we have the [boxing] gloves – for sparring.

Tim

5.11 Employment and Income Aspirations

Six out of the eight young people had childhood dreams of growing up to be in a particular vocation. Of these one was inspired by her father's occupation and four of them were influenced by television or sporting images. While attending the current Youth Training course they all completed a unit standard based on future planning. This included a goal setting and module and class and one-on-one discussions with the tutors about things the liked doing, personal skills and abilities, and eventually lead them to start to think about what job training they would like to undertake that would pathway them into a vocation. Although, the unit standard clearly had some holistic elements requiring students to think about their unique life strategy, it was mainly focused on educational and vocational future planning.

5.11.1 Work Aspirations

Oh I wanted to work on the railway tracks with my dad, but he said it wasn't a girl's job. He's been doing that [rail engineer] since he was 15. All over New Zealand.

Sarah

Yeah – sometimes I think I'd like to be a receptionist. But I can't see myself sitting at a desk all day, cos I like walking around. And I want to be a youth worker so I can help young people be heard and not some criminals in the street. And then I want to be a nurse but I don't think I can handle seeing kids die – or anyone die.

Cassidy

Um – didn't know. I've always liked cars – so I just pretty much – I didn't really want to do Engineering so I chose panel beating.

Pete

Oh yeah – this is when I was really little. And then I wanted to be a tattooist... and then...oh first of all I wanted to be a beauty therapist. But then I was like nah. And then I wanted to be a tattooist and I got put off that... then ... mechanic... yeah dance teacher. I worked as a dance teacher [part-time]... it was pretty boring

[A friend] was like... “Do you wanna do something?”

So I was like – “Oh sweet.”

So I gave them my CV. I got the job like straight away.

Yeah - cos I wanna do it - you feel pretty cool.

Now I work as an early childhood worker [part-time].

Yeah, it's pretty laid back.

Michelle

5.12 Geographical Aspirations

Most of the young people described enjoying being at home as a place to ‘chill-out’, but after a while it became boring. Five of the eight young people lived in government housing provided by Housing New Zealand. All lived in suburbs of a small city and liked going into the heart of the retail district to meet up with friends, by food and access resources. Other parts of the region were a desirable change, but few wanted to live bigger cities. Two out of the eight interviewees spoke of previously living in other parts of New Zealand. They continued to have strong ties to these places as they remained in contact with family or friends that lived there. One young person described being sent to another city for their own protection, there they were looked after by whānau (family) and welcomed into Iwi-based sports teams and activities. Two young people discussed overseas travel, based on experiences by family members or media e.g., movies, Youtube. Many were not ready to travel outside of New Zealand and most enjoyed their local community and enjoyed city life.

One interviewee moved frequently during childhood, and was keen to shift cities to be closer to friends. He was currently happy to live with family, but wanted to be away from local authorities (police) who he felt targeted by. This meant that when he or his family members were in a public area they were questioned about their activities. He found this aggravating and became fearful and aggressive as he felt he was unfairly treated. He described moving closer to new friends as a desirable life choice.

In New Plymouth – last New Year’s I met some mates – actually they’re out of gangs – yeah so – we’ve been tight ever since. So I might move there... near friends.

Tim

5.13 Resources and 10 year+ life goals

All participants were able to describe their future aspirations associated with assets. Most wanted to buy a car and a house in the future, and planned to have a well paying job to finance these aspirations. Two interviewees were pregnant and soon to be responsible for their baby’s welfare; however, they had similar asset aspirations but were more realistic concerning marriage and did not always aspire to be married or have a partner. All participants described having a family in the future and many were keen to maintain the relationships they currently had, whether they were close friendships or romantic relationships.

Ah don’t have myself to think about anymore [laughs] – I have someone else to think about – responsibilities now.

Sarah

Umm – hopefully I’ll have my own house and car. Maybe some more kids – yeah. Have a good job. I guess I’ve decided I’ll do what Mum does – childcare – be easy with my kids. Education hopefully –

Amanda

I hope to be success. Have a house and a good job. And I hope I still have my friends that I have now. I hope I don’t lose them – cos it’s like, every time someone leaves here – they’re real close friends that just drift away from you and you don’t really stay in contact. You don’t see them like you use to, because you’re around different people – so you make friends and forget about the old ones. I hope I still see the girls I’ve met here.

Cassidy

I wanna be rich. I wanna buy what I want... Yeah... I wanna know what it’s like. A house – oh nah I don’t want a house I wanna rent.

Michelle

Job- money – things I want... Play Station 3, a computer, a new couch, a new TV – I hope one day to have a girlfriend and maybe... buy a house.

Mike

Just enough money. [To buy] a house... a car.

John

Family and kids. Hopefully fully qualified Panel Beater. And hopefully still playing sports.

Pete

A good pay job... a mechanic – a car for drifting – hopefully have my own car – a truck for my car. Like to have a Mrs – no kids by then – wait – till my early 30s.

Tim

5.14 Agency

Many of the participants spoke of meaningful decisions they made whilst being on the course. Most of the participants talked about vocational goal setting around educational and employment goal setting. Some talked of psychological changes born out of choosing to think and behavioural differently as they journeyed through the course. Decision making was sometimes a consciously an internal process where some participants chose to ‘think alone’ or ‘write down ideas’.

Umm – I think about it – I have to sort of... write everything down. It's easier to sort everything out.

Amanda

Most participants talked about needing to discuss their decisions with friends, family or the tutors at the course.

I don't – I can't make my mind up

What do you do?

I get my Mum to make my decisions

What does she say to you?

Depending on what kind of situation it is – then – she says – cos usually I want to take the crooked pathway – the ones with corners and edges – but then she'll put me on track –

And what does she say when she puts you on track?

Like – stick to that one thing – focus on that main point – and why you're doing that – and not go somewhere else [laughs]

Sarah

Um – I talk to people heaps, cos I'm too scared to that I'll make a wrong decision. So I talk to my boyfriend heaps about going away. Like, "Shall I go away? Or shall I stay?" And then I'll talk to my friends about it and see what they have to say. And then um ... I'll talk to my Mum and make the key decision myself.

Cassidy

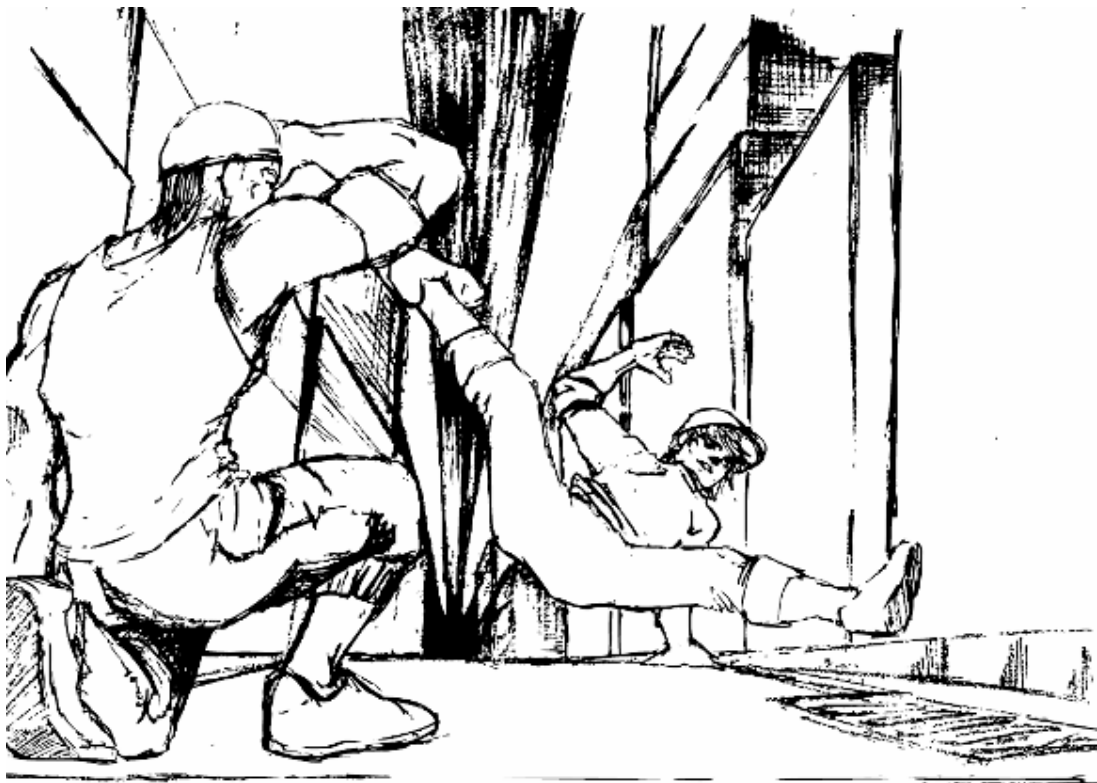
My attitude [has changed since being on the course]. I never use to think about what was going to happen to me when I'm older – but now I'm like thinking about that.

Pete

5.15 Chapter Summary

All of the interviewees in this case study described many different future aspirations. The basis of their future desire was born out of their lived-experience and influenced by the constraints arising from their status as early school leavers, their lack of qualifications, their age, gender and family circumstances (structural constraints), and also by the extent to which they felt able to make choices (individual agency). In the previous chapter, it was noted that tutors deliberately encourage a sense of individual choice. Many interviewees discussed their educational and vocational aspirations within the context of their Youth Training course and often described an individualistic ambition for the future, without reference to others. Aspirations related to leisure, wellbeing, relationships, environment and long-term life aspirations were more likely to be discussed in the context of others and often described being with, or being helped to fulfil aspirations by, their peers, close family members or partners. Very few of their future aspirations were discussed as solely being influenced by mass media consumerism, stories or images. All interviewees were positive about the future and were optimistic that they could fulfil their dreams. Many spoke of older mentors they could turn to for help and advice when they encountered life challenges.

All participants were influenced by structural constraints. Institutionalised structures, such as, educational policy meant that because of their ‘problem behaviour’ they had been expelled from secondary school and had to make other educational choices to gain a qualification or participate in work experience. A number of those interviewed were involved in drug and alcohol counselling and had been referred to this Youth Training programme to aid their wellbeing. Some due to judicial and court recommendations had been referred into training. All interviewees encountered negative experiences because of leaving school early and because of their age. Many spoke of ‘labels’ given by authorities because of membership to sub-groups. This meant that they had limited access to hang-outs and desired environments, because of their group affiliations. All of the young people described future aspirations that included- family, assets, education, vocation, income, and desire new experiences. They all described a future with positive aspirations and believed they could achieve their desires.



Chapter Six

Stories Converge: Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the stories from young people in a Youth Training course and the themes from the data were discussed. This chapter analyses the data and endeavours to explore the research questions of this study. Firstly, the data will be analysed in context of the interviewees' experiences and will draw on both phenomenology and choice biography approaches to establish an analytical framework. Secondly, the analysis will use the themes drawn from the raw data to create further meaning, to explore how young people shape their future aspirations. The themes for analysis include; lived experiences, future aspirations, learning experiences, wellbeing, employment and resources, structural constraints, and agency. It should be noted that although they have potential to provide additional insights this analysis does not use frameworks such as tikanga Māori, Māoritanga or emphasise the psychological development theory of risk and protective factors. Although, both of these theoretical frameworks would give considerable facility to the current research topic, they will need to be considered for future research. The chosen analysis framework for this research is based primarily on sociological theory and endeavours to view the data in a choice biography context, considering structural constraints and the social identity formation of young people. Lastly, the data will be analysed examining the stories shared by the individual interviewees and cross-case analysis method. The cross-case analysis provides a deeper examination of the students' learning experiences and how their experiences compare and contrast across the wider case study.

6.2 Lived Experiences

We are our lived experience, and lived experience is the realisation of transcendent meaning. Hence we always already understand something of the truth of lived experience, because our very being lies in this understanding (Burch, 2002).

Lived experience is a phenomenological term and describes the way a person experiences and understands the world, or a particular situation, as real and meaningful to them (Burch, 2002; van Manen, 1990). Derived from this idea is the

statement: 'I am my lived experience', inferring that selfhood is the process of giving meaning to life patterns and creating a personal history (Burch, 2002; van Manen, 1990). Part of the process of understanding the lived experience is recognising the reflexive and reflective nature of the individual experience. Reflexivity establishes that an individual's thoughts and feelings will be the sole foundation of their experience; therefore, cannot be generalised to another person. Lived experience also draws on reflectivity which helps the individual to respond to the memory of their experience and begin to create a personal history (Burch, 2002; van Manen, 1990). A focus on lived experience recognises the subjectivity of the individual, and moves away from generalisation and essentialism, to consider the context of the subject position. Subjectivity is an important factor to understanding an individual's lived experience and the meaning they create from their experience. According to Lister (2007) lived experience cannot be separated from its context. It is the way in which people understand, and bring meaning to, specific dimensions of their life and the way people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives (Lister, 2007). Wyn and White (1997) describe mainstream status as the 'positive lived experiences' that young people have; specifically in youth transition gaining education and employment. Alternatively, negative lived experiences are associated with marginalised young people. And drawing from socio-cultural theory, the structural dimensions such as; class, age, ethnicity, gender and disability, affect the way young people interact with the world around them; where young people choose to hang out, what activities they choose to participate in, their interpersonal relationships and the way they form their identity (Beals, 2006). Negative lived experiences maybe mediated or influenced by these larger structural constraints based on, economic, social and political marginalisation (Beals, 2006; Wyn & White, 1997).

The findings of the current study illustrate the diverse range of experiences that young people have in their daily lives. The stories shared by the interviewees are embedded in the context of their individual experiences. The thoughts and feelings they shared are intrinsically linked to the context in which they 'experienced' the life events that shaped their attitudes.

Examples of lived experiences described in the Findings:

- A majority of interviewees described secondary school as a negative experience; however, their more recent Youth Training experience was described as a positive experience.
- Most of the interviewees described negative family experiences that had deeply affected them. Specifically stories of parents leaving the family home and domestic violence were described in detail, and two interviewees were working these issues through in counselling.
- Half of the interviewees had severed ties with old friends due to the negative experiences they had gone through with them. Three interviewees discussed drug and alcohol abuse and the work they had put into recovery. Part of this recovery had meant lifestyle changes and a new set of friends and a different “hang out”.

Table 2. Summary of Lived Experiences: Stories unique to young people in Youth Training

Thematically Grouped	Lived Experiences	
Educational experience:	Primary school experiences:	e.g., Was on the soccer team, played netball
	Secondary school experiences:	e.g., Being asked to leave High School; teachers who don't like you
	Training course experiences:	e.g., experiencing achievement, sense of belonging; lwi environment, people who help you, people you can trust.
Relational ties:	Friends:	e.g., close mates that you can talk about personal stuff to like boyfriend issues, course issues; I got in trouble with the police and rang my friends.
	Family:	e.g., my Mum's supportive she tells me what I should do; I talk to my Dad about important things, family motto – no one's gonna take us down.
	Romantic relationships:	e.g., my partner's in jail, I decided to stay with him. I started going out with my girlfriend through friends; she's cool, she just hangs out.
	Mentors:	e.g., tutors, counsellors, youth workers, friends, family always there if you need someone to talk to, help you.
Shared practices:	Symbols and Leisure activities:	e.g., sports, art, music, clothing, language, transport; good times hanging out with the girls; go to the skate park most days after course 'cos it's where I wanna be.
	Media; games, internet, phone, tv, movies:	e.g., sometimes I stay up all night gaming; love music and hanging with my mates.
	Defining moments:	e.g., she had her baby and we all went up to the hospital to see her and gave her a present. Dad left, I haven't seen him in years.
	Group initiation and affiliation:	e.g., didn't like it when I first came then she began talking to me – now she's my best friend.
Environment:	Spaces; hang outs, time, environment:	e.g., we meet them down town most Friday nights, if we get asked to leave we head for the next place.
Resources and Income:	Work; work experience; shared resources:	e.g., my friend told me about the job and I put my CV in got the work experience and I'm still there; if I do jobs for my Dad he'll give me money; I have to turn up to course to get my benefit.

Interviewees described both negative and positive life experiences concerning the same issue or life dimension. At times their lived experience was changed by a mediating factor e.g., the introduction of a new friend, mentor or type of media use into the circumstance; therefore, creating different feelings in the lived experience and changing the experience from negative to positive one or vice versa.

6.3 Future Aspirations shaped by young people in Youth Training

The global question of this study explored how young people shape their future aspirations. According to the findings young people shape their future aspirations through lived-experiences; these maybe positive or negative. They described many goals and desires they would like to accomplish in future. Some were short-term aspirations, such as finishing the training course and gaining a Certificate in Employment Skills. Other aspirations were long term, such as buying a house and having a family. Interestingly, the young people were able to describe positive future aspirations in spite of a negative life experience such as family violence.

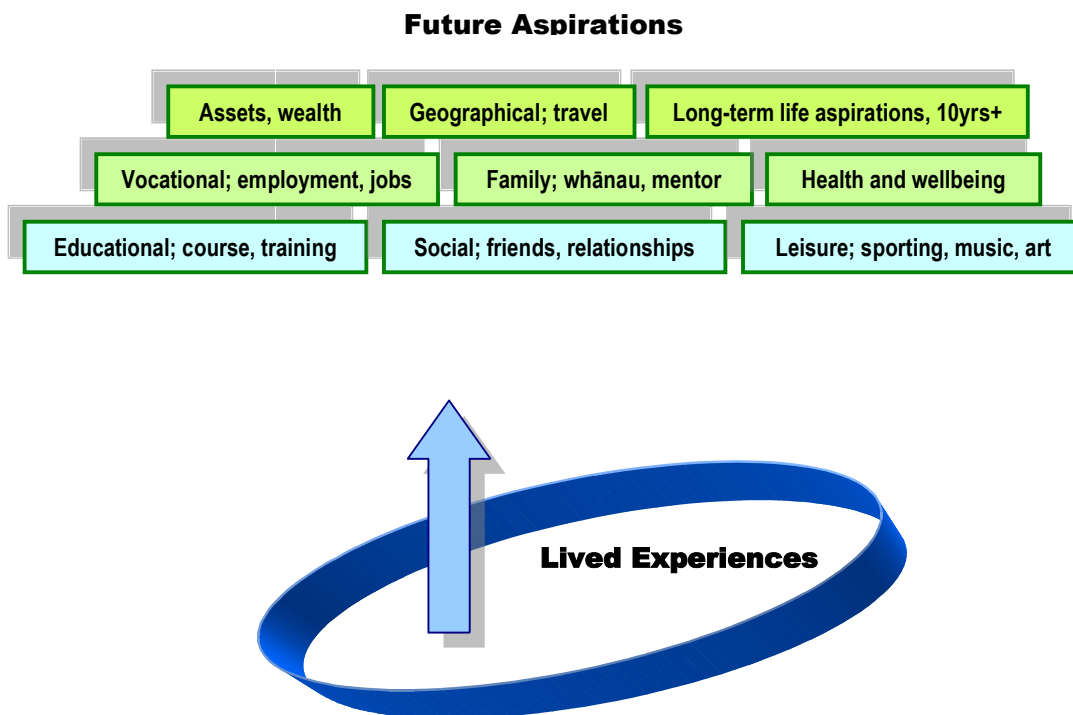
Table 3. Summary of Future Aspirations of a Youth Training cohort

Long-term	Assets; Wealth	Geographical; Travel	Long-term aspirations, 10yr+
*example	Buy a house - Mike 7 Buy a car - Michelle 1	Go the USA - John 4 Live in New Plymouth - Tim 5	Have a family one day - Pete 8 Have a partner - John 4
Mid-term	Vocational; Employment, Job	Family; Whānau, Mentor	Health; Wellbeing
*example	Work as a: Mechanic - Tim 5 Computer Programmer - Mike 7 Early Childhood Teacher - Sarah 2	Talk to the Tutors if ya need help any time - Sarah 2 Finish counselling - Cassidy 6	Stop drinking & stop smoking - Amanda 3 Get fit - Pete 8 Work on anger management - Sarah 2
Short-term	Educational; Course, Training	Social; Friends, Relationships	Leisure; Sporting, Music, Art
*example	Finishing Youth Training next month - Cassidy 6	Hanging out with friends every weekend - Amanda 3	Get a skate label soon - John 4 Listen to music on the weekend - Amanda 3

* Raw data: Future Aspirations of Young People in Youth Training.

The findings suggest that often more than one lived experience in an interviewee's life had developed a particular aspiration, and aspirations were often mediated by other factors; thus, revealing the complexity by which young people shape their future aspirations (Wyn & Harris, 2004).

Figure 5. Future Aspirations of a Youth Training cohort

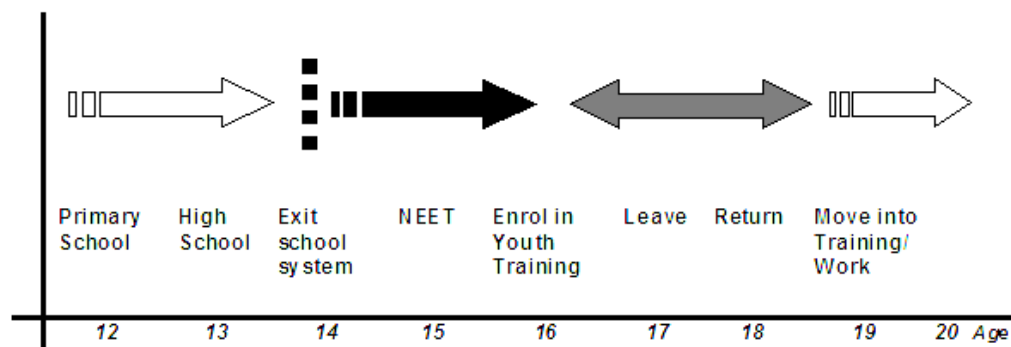


6.4 Learning Experiences

The secondary research question of this study explored how young people view the relevance of training to their aspirations. All of the interviewees spoke positively concerning the Youth Training course they were enrolled in and all interviewees reflected on a significant journey to consolidating a sense of belonging. Conversely, their secondary school experience was described as a negative lived experience. All interviewees were early school leavers, with their total time in high school ranging from 2 weeks to three years. All interviewees encountered some form of 'suspension' from school and were asked to consider leaving due to poor attendance or behaviour problems. Institutionalised practices within the educational system mean that young

people who do not conform to policy and ‘norms’ of schooling structures are marginalised or excluded from resources, knowledge and capacity building social practices (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; Wyn & Dwyer, 2000).

Figure 6. Marginalised Youth Transition – Education, Training and Work



As seen in Figure 6, the young people often encountered a positive primary school experience but left early from secondary school citing a negative school experience. Interviewees were suspended and at times excluded from secondary school; however, seven out of eight interviewees described themselves as being, “kicked out” or “expelled”. One interviewee described being asked to leave school and not finding another school to enrol in, as schools that were approached refused entrance into their programmes. This non-linear pathway reveals that interviewees negotiate their way into training. Figure 6 illustrates how interviewees negotiating fragmented and complex routes into education, training and work, sometimes bi-directional routes, that differ from traditional linear transitional norms (Beck, 1992; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Figure 6 could also be explained through the lens of psychological theory and emergent youth transition. Seen through this lens the interviewees’ transitional experience fits with an elongated transition model, in which the participants take longer to decide their preferred career or vocation (Vaughan, et al., 2006). However, an early exit means that early school leavers are unable to access the resources provided by the secondary school system, and they cut short the opportunity negotiate their social identity between family and school (Wyn & Harris, 2004; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). A sociological framework suggests that the interviewees are

limited by the social, economic and political structures and constraints in which their identity is formed (Wyn & Harris, 2004).

6.4.1 Environment, Participation and Belonging within Educational Structures

The Environment

The young people described high school as crowded, too big, hard to understand and a place where teachers didn't listen. All of the interviewees resorted to truancy as a way to avoid punishment. Deciding to not attend school was also a way of meeting up with friends they would rather be with and undertake activities that they preferred to engage in, such as, computer games and watching DVDs. The findings show that the environment in which learning takes place is important to the interviewees.

Cassidy described her high school as, "too big" and Sarah also described her high school as, "too crowded - classes too packed." In contrast all of the young people commented on the friendly environment of the Youth Training Course and how over time they were able build relationships and trust others, as there were only approximately twenty students in the class all year long. Wyn and White (1997) describe young people as experiencing life in the "communal process of family and friends and significant others". Many of the interviewees described Youth Training course environment as supportive and similar to an Iwi (*tribal*) environment (Sarah); therefore, the efforts made by Tutors and students to mirror the communal nature of the family (whānau) process helped to create a safe, supportive place to learn.

Participation

According to Wyn and White (1997) young people negotiated their social identity between their experiences with family and friends and social institutions. The findings show that interviewees decreased participation in secondary school their behaviour and not adhering to school rules or norms. In the same way the secondary school structure was incongruent with their personal (sub)cultural norms, but they were empowered by engaging in activities outside of the secondary school. The Youth Training course provided an opportunity for the interviewees to participate in the development of the day to day activities of their learning environment. They were able to suggest ideas, create and establish practices, and they were encouraged to voice their opinions concerning the course content and structure, which aided further participation and learning.

Belonging

The positioning of the interviewees within the secondary school environment meant they lacked power to create change and had to adhere to the dominant group norms. As they were unable to comply to school norms, the findings suggest, the interviewees felt lonely, isolated and as if they did not belong. In contrast the Youth Training course provided an opportunity for interviewees to shift their dispositional focus towards learning, education and social interactions (Archer, Hollingworth, & Halsall, 2006). Due to the inclusivity characterised in the course students felt they could create relationships, participate in class activities and programming and exercise agency in shaping their own aspirations.

6.4.2 The Relevance of Learning Experiences in Shaping Future Aspirations

The learning environment within the Youth Training course meant that the interviewees were able to build relationships over time. Many interviewees described how they had thought about what they wanted to do at Primary School. All young people recounted specific occupations or vocations they aspired to as children; however, only two out of the eight interviewees thought about what type of career they wanted at secondary school. The Youth Training course provided a unique opportunity to develop self identity, increase social support and acquire new learning.

The Youth Training course curriculum included a goal setting and future decision making unit standard. This meant that interviewees created personal goals based on skills, attitudes and interests and implemented steps towards researching their desired industry. As they came to the end of completing the required course unit standards they participated in work experience at a workplace of their choice. Students completed a range of mental, emotional and even physical tasks in preparation for their work experience. Tutors mentored students through the preparation process, encouraging them to self-manage the tasks needed to obtain a short-term placement in the local job market. Seven of the interviewees had previously acquired casual work; however, only two had on-going part-time jobs and worked around course hours.

6.4.3 Cross Case Analysis of the Young People in Youth Training.

From one person we can recover social processes and social structure, networks, social change..., for people are located in a social and cultural environment which constitutes and shapes not only what we see, but also how we see.
(Stanley, 1993 as cited in Thomson 2002)

The cross case analysis examines the interviewees at different durations and stages of their Youth Training course involvement. Interviewees had rich reflection of their primary, secondary and alternative education experiences. This cross case analysis serves to further understand the interviewees' perspective by looking more closely at their reasons for aspirational thinking. This analysis explores how the involvement Youth Training has affected the young people's future aspirations.

Table 4. Interviewee Groups: Length of Time in Youth Training

Interviewee	Name	Age	*Ethnicity	Secondary School Attendance	Progress towards qualifications at time of Enrolment
Red Group: 3 Months in Youth Training					
Interviewee 5	Tim	17 years	Māori	2 weeks	-
Interviewee 8	Pete	17 years	Māori	2 years	-
Interviewee 4	John	16 years	Cook Island /Pākehā	2 ½ years	Maths: Unit Standards
Orange Group: 6 Months in Youth Training					
Interviewee 1	Michelle	17 years	Māori /Pākehā	3 years	Maths, Science: Achievement Standards
Interviewee 2	Sarah	17 years	Māori /European	6 months	-
Interviewee 3	Amanda	17 years	European	3 months	-
Yellow Group: 1 Year in Youth Training					
Interviewee 6	Cassidy	17 years	Māori	2 ½ years	Maths, English: Unit Standards
Interviewee 7	Mike	17 years	New Zealander	2 years	-

*Ethnicity: Recorded in the Figure 3. as identified by Interviewees

Red Group: 3 Months in Youth Training

The members of Red Group were new to the course and were very enthusiastic about the new learning they had acquired. They described how the class atmosphere made them feel happy; and they appreciated having people around them who showed they cared and understood what they were going through. Two students who were particularly affected by this new classroom experience for Tim and Pete. Tim and Pete both stated that prior to the course they didn't care about their future life; however, because of the people at the Youth Training course, both fellow students and tutors they had a sense of hope and some direction for the future.

Tim

I was going to be a rugby player
Yeah – little dream – just made me feel good

Yeah – I want to get a mechanics job... get my own car... a cheap car... do it up.

Tim had the least amount of schooling of all Interviewees. He had only been to secondary school for a total of two weeks. He was very loyal to his family and had made some close friends on the course. He had struggled with literacy and numeracy skills over a number of years and described himself as illiterate until he came to the Youth Training course. He described the course tutors as being a big support in his life and helping him both with course work, judicial obligations and family agency meetings. He had renewed his interest in sports and played touch football and sometimes skated.

Pete

Kinda helped changed my ideas about where I wanna be – job – the future – being a panel beater.

I just like coming and seeing the people that are here. [It's] easy and laidback course.

Pete's main interest was rugby and netball. He was a keen sportsperson before he attended the course. He reported that the course had helped him think about his future; whereas prior to the course he had been in trouble with a group of friends and had been asked to leave high school due to breaking school rules and behavioural issues. He wanted to be a panel beater and had recently investigated the local polytechnic course.

John

...you're not allowed skateboards at school. I use to take my skateboard. Me and my mates would skate at school. And the teacher's would use to chase us.

Like Pete, John had attended secondary school for over 2 years. He enjoyed Maths at secondary school and was still keen on Maths unit standards at the Youth Training course. John had the most support from family members of all the Interviewees; however, had made close friendships with other Youth Training students who were enthusiastic about skate boarding. The friends he had made on the course had motivated him to make a skate video and acquire sponsorship.

Red Group Summary:

The interviewees in the Red Group had developed strong relationships within the Youth Training course in a short period of time. They also describe strong ties with the tutors and who were their only mentor figures outside of family, and who they had quickly grown to trust with personal issues and would confide in for advice. The future aspirations of Red Group members were still being developed; however, the course curriculum had motivated each interviewee to think about their future career aspirations and life goals. This was new learning, particularly for Tim and Pete.

Orange Group: 6 Months in Youth Training

The Orange Group had created strong friendships within the Youth Training Course and were close friends with each other. Michelle and Amanda were in long-term romantic relationships and all interviewees had strong support from at least one older family member.

What has changed in your life since you started this course?
Umm yip – I got a job – Yeah.

Michelle

Michelle spent three years at secondary school and had the highest level of academic achievement in the cohort. She also had strong family support and was in an established romantic relationship. She valued the space the Youth Training course gave her to pursue unit standards in her own time. She was the only one of the eight Interviewees that worked part-time as well as attending the course.

What do you like about the course?

Meeting different people – getting to know other cultures.

Sarah

Sarah attended secondary school for a total of six months, and reported that the Youth Training course provided her with a breakthrough in communication skills. She had never performed a speech in front of people before coming to the course and had become more confident with one-on-one interviews. Sarah endorsed the way the tutors supported the students and she felt motivated to come to course everyday because the students on the course were her close and trusted friends.

... my friend came here for quite a while – and then she was like – stop being a bum [laughs] - sitting on the street – alright then – so I came here and haven't quite left.

Amanda

Amanda had only attended secondary school for 3 months; however, had been at the Youth Training course for 6 months. She had completed a number of unit standards towards her NCES and reported that the completing one unit standard inspired her to begin the next. She did not have the same motivation at secondary school. She stated that the tutors were very supportive and were always available to talk about personal issues.

Orange Group Summary:

All of the interviewees in the Orange Group were close friends and 'hung out' outside of the course. They had completed a future decision making Unit Standard and identified two possible career aspirations. They had made strong progress in the academic learning and Amanda, who had only spent 3 weeks at secondary school, had completed a number of unit standards and was focused on completing all course requirements so that she could obtain her NCES. Michelle was concurrently working part-time and attending the course, and was motivated by the self-paced, laidback style of learning the Youth Training course offered. Both Sarah and Amanda were expecting babies within the next three months and were motivated to enrol at a school for parents, where they could finish their qualification and begin correspondence Achievement Standards towards NCEA Level 1.

Yellow Group: 1 Year in Youth Training

I think it's awesome. The tutor is real understanding – you know even when we do things, she makes us feel better and help us with our problems – yeah, the course is real supportive.

Cassidy

Cassidy had two unit standards to complete before gaining her NCES.

She had previously been at secondary school for two and a half years, and then enrolled with the local Activities Centre. Cassidy was apprehensive at first about attending the Youth Training course.

However, she described her time at Youth Training as fun and laidback and the PTE as a supportive place. She had created a close group of friends at the course and was a definite leader of the group. Cassidy was motivated to come to course because she was keen to obtain her qualification and see her friends on a daily basis.

I didn't use to have motivation – [now] I have to have a goal – it needs to be something I actually need or want – I want to start earning & get a good job.

Mike

Mike spent two years at secondary school, and he was quiet by nature, but valued the learning he had acquired around communication and

relationship building. He maintained two strong friendships outside of the course environment; however, and he had made friends within the course and had broadened his leisure activities. He described himself as having more motivation to finish unit standards and learn new skills.

He only needed to complete one more unit standard before finishing his NCES.

Yellow Group Summary:

The Yellow Group members were very close to completing all the unit standards needed to gain a NCES. Characteristically, they had both stayed at secondary school for at least 2 years and had been in Youth Training for one year. Both interviewees reported that their significant changes whilst being on the Youth Training course had been their decision making development and emotional growth.

Summary: Cross Case Analysis

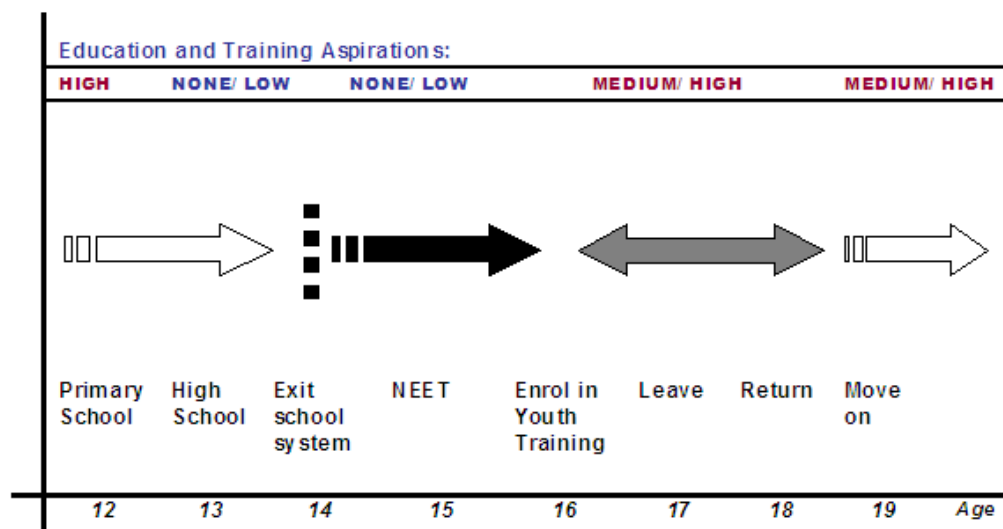
The cross case analysis shows that secondary school attendance did not factor in the attainment of NCES unit standards. Once students were in the Youth Training course environment they completed unit standards at their own pace and made significant

progress towards their own learning goals. Although Red Group were slightly more enthusiastic about the new learning environment, all groups described the Youth Training course as open, friendly, laidback and supportive. With the exception of Cassidy, this was the first time the young people had experienced teachers or tutors being available for one-on-one support and they reported across all groups that this made a difference to their academic and personal development. It was apparent that the Orange Group in particular shared a strong bond, having started the course around the same time, they enjoyed each other's company and this motivated them to attend the course on a daily basis.

6.4.4 The Relevance of Youth Training in Shaping Young People's Future Aspirations

Figure 7. shows the relevance of participation in this youth training course, and implicitly in a "Youth Training Programme" contracted by a government agency, to this cohort of young people shaping their future aspirations.

Figure 7. Marginalised Youth Transition – Education and Training Aspirations



The reflections by young people in Youth Training revealed that high aspirations were associated with supportive learning environments that helped them create future vocational goals. Positive learning experiences were described as small and encouraging settings where teachers or tutors to work one-on-one with students.

Young people described tutors listening and scaffolding their ideas and guiding them through learning experiences, which motivated them to think about their personal desires and future aspirations.

The findings show that the Youth Training course learning environment influenced the way the young people shaped their future aspirations. All of the interviewees described the future decision making unit standard as useful for shaping their future career goals. The interviewees reported that the skills obtained from completing the formal exercises were helpful and interesting. Significantly this learning was closely associated with the mentoring and support provided by their tutors. The interviewees reported that the key factor to establishing personal future goals and desires was the tutors' ability to listen to their ideas; and the fact that they were available at any time to ask questions and help students investigate further leads. Tutor support helped motivate and encourage the interviewees into new learning experiences that meant they were, in turn, motivated to plan future goals.

6.5 Structural Constraints

As presented, the stories of these young people provided insights into the construction of their social identity through both positive and negative lived experiences. In the literature Wyn and White (1997) suggest that social identities are formed within specific social contexts that are mediated through experiences influenced by structural constraints; thus, limiting the possible choices and roles young people are able to draw on to create their identity. Furthermore, the literature states that subjectivities are the limited subject positions available to young people due to the inhibited structural allocation of societal resources and lack of options available. Subject positions are taken up by young people, dependant on resources available and their thoughts, feelings, attitudes (subjective disposition) towards their circumstance (Evans, 2002; Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2007; Thomson et al., 2002; Wyn & White, 1997). For the young people in the current study these constraints include their age, their perceived marginalised status as early school leavers, their gender, and the low socio-economic status of their families and their communities (Harris, et al., 2007; Thomson, et al., 2002; Wyn & White, 1997).

Figure 8. Structural Constraints and Lived Experiences

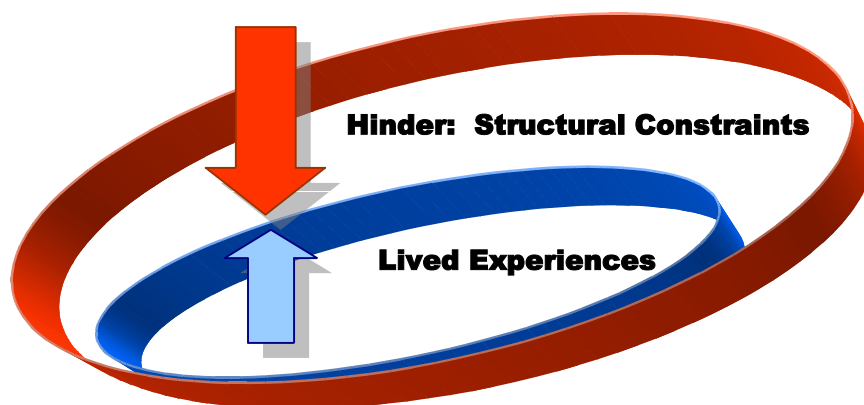


Figure 8. shows that structural constraints hinder the social interactions and resources young people can access when constructing their social identity. Their lived experiences are mediated through the constraints they encounter, leaving young people with a negative experience. Interviewees recounted negative experiences concerning secondary education, income, socio-economic status, housing, disability (learning needs) and judicial decision making. Tim in describing wanting to buy a car recognised that this would be delayed due to his low income and housing needs.

[Buying a car] it depends how much money I get 'cause I really wanted to go earn something. Cos I want to get out of that house – get my Mum out of that house. Cos it's falling down, literally, the house is sinking down and the house is tipping – yeah – and [Housing Corp] won't move us.

Tim

Interviewee 3: Amanda describes being, “kicked out” of school for truancy and being too young to get a job, therefore she had to move in with her boyfriend. Mike discussed how his family member’s reliance on a benefit had a profound effect on his wellbeing. He believed that he would move onto a benefit after secondary school, which would mean limited income and choices. In this study structural constraints

created bias and inequity that hindered young people's experiences. While young people in mainstream transition were able to access education and career resources, negative lived experiences meant for the young people in this study resources were harder to access e.g., education, housing, counselling through school programmes; therefore, increasing marginalisation (White & Wyn, 1998; Wyn & White, 1997)

6.6 Marginalisation

The marginalised have in common a general position of relative powerlessness in society and shared experiences of social division which are exacerbated through the operation of mainstream social institutions such as schools (Wyn & White, 1997).

The review of the literature shows that monetarist policies of the last twenty years has intensified the commodification of human capital (Higgins & Nairn, 2006; Wyn & White, 1997). Greater power is given to those in society who can make political decisions concerning wealth distribution; and who are in full-time employment in the labour market, as they are seen as the most productive members of society. Young people, who are often dependant on others for health and wellbeing, often have little resources and limited power; and therefore, struggle to create self worth in capitalist society (Eckersley, Wierenga, & Wyn, 2006; Wyn & Dwyer, 2000). The dominant social relations that place young people in inequitable positions mean they can be excluded or marginalised from resources offered by mainstream institutions and greater society, e.g., social welfare beneficiaries may be unable to afford housing at market rental rates, school or university fees and provisions for their family. Those unable to participate in the mainstream are labelled as the 'underclass' or stereotyped as 'poor' and discussed in policy and media through a deficit-based framework (Archer, et al., 2006; Wyn & White, 1997).

The findings showed the young people were aware of the assumptions about their lack of power due to their age, gender, behaviour, low-qualifications and unemployment. Three of the interviewees of this study have been responsible for their own living conditions from the time they left secondary school (aged approximately 13 years to 16 years). This has meant moving in with partners and or boarding with friends. All of the interviewees at times have had pressure to find extra income to meet their own

personal needs and three young people described having to seek illegal means to meet food and clothing for themselves and dependent family members.

...my brother use to teach us how to get stuff and not get caught. And that... this is how you have stuff for the rest of your life... if you have no money.

Tim

‘At-risk’ youth is described in the literature a label constructed by institutionalised policy to described marginalised young people are vulnerable to detrimental relationships and circumstances; and also, who pose a threat to wider society because of their deviant or criminal behaviour (Beals, 2006; Wyn & White, 1997). Three of the young people described at times being on the ‘wrong track’ in their lives and needing to improve behaviour to be a better human being. Their assumption was that their deviant behaviour consolidated the idea that they had been “a bad person” and they were working on being “better”. This assumption draws from dominant structures to focus on problem teenagers, instead of young people who have problem. The latter, draws the differentiation between behaviour and personhood (Wyn & White, 1997).

I think they just look at us and think, “Well, they’re in a gang, they all steal and drink in banned areas.” And think real bad stuff of us... like if they got to know us first then they’d actually know what kind of people we are. They’re just judging us by what we look like.

Cassidy

Depending on what kind of situation it is – then – she [Mum] says – cos usually I want to take the crooked pathway – the ones with corners and edges – but then she’ll put me on track –

Sarah

As described in the literature Foucauldian theory states that power resides in institutions, rather than with the individuals who run them (Foucault, 2000). A number of the young people had been recipients of interventions from government agencies including; Police, Justice, CYFS and Work and Income New Zealand and were conscious of being pressured to find employment or be in training. This meant that initially they did not choose to attend youth training and were required by

authorities and policy requirements. Findings show young people gained power when they are able to take up other subject positions and make their own, which in turn helped to create meaning from lived experiences hindered by structural constraints (Davies, 1994).

Yeah. When I first came in it was like, "Stuff everyone. I hate you guys. I'm only here cos of my Court." And all this stuff. But now it's like, I really want to be here.

Cassidy

I use to get in heaps of trouble [for skating at school]. Now I'd like to skate full time. Um, I'd like to get sponsored.

John

6.7 Young People and their Choices

Experience is not reducible to simply positive and negative categories. Human life is contingent on how we respond to events and social capacities also depends upon both the specific circumstances of an individual (or group), and the degree of self-conscious 'human agency' in choosing to act and react to these circumstances in particular ways (White & Wyn, 1997).

In the context of this research the definition of agency is described as the action or exertion of power or choice in the context of social engagement to negotiate social identity and position (Evans, 2002; Wyn & White, 1997). The final research question of this study examined how young people exercised agency while in Youth Training. In this study the idea of agency is not solely based on the humanistic approach, where it is determined by the choices an individual makes, or based on their self efficacy or willpower, to form their identity. This research uses a contextual approach and examines how young people's negotiate life in the context of structural constraints; therefore, agency might be displayed in the form of resistance or resilience, choosing or not choosing to do conform or undertake an activity to resistant to establish their identity (White & Wyn, 1998).

6.7.1 Resistance

Analysis of the findings show that the interviewees use both resilience and resistance to negotiate their lived experiences. Resilience is a psychological term that emphasises the ability of a young person to cope despite negative experiences they

encounter. Alternatively, resistance is the ability to resist a negative experience by intended or unintended (inactive) means. Resistance can take on the form of inaction, or resisting a larger negative experience in exchange for a lesser experience (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; Wyn & White, 1997). The findings show that young people negotiated the complexity of their social worlds by resisting structural constraints and using resistance to negotiate their social position by embracing or resisting the choices available to them.

The young people spoke of secondary school as a negative experience, choosing not to engage in formal schooling and stay home or hang out with friends. They were mindful of the consequences of truancy; however, resisted the negative school experience by choosing another social context. Resistance may at times involve deviant behaviour, as recounted by another interviewee who had previously stolen money to help feed his family; although this was a criminal act the interviewee described his actions as taking steps to ensure his younger siblings were cared for. At times many of the young people recounted stories of alcohol or drug consumption to avoid negative personal relationships or family breakdown.

Yeah – that’s why I have [drugs] cos it gets rid of the drama [at home].

Tim

6.8 Relational Ties

A human self without this actual experience of otherness would never become a self in the first place (Burch, 2002)

Economic reform and social change has also meant a loss of familial and community ties that once helped young people transition from school to paid work. Employment courses delivering competency-based programmes have sought to remake social networks and empower young people into the workforce, reversing the effects of social exclusion; however, structural constraints and marketplace competition continue to make it hard for young people to obtain full-time jobs (Strathdee, 2005). The Youth Training course that interviewees attended emphasised the formal and informal use of a relational framework to deliver the employment skills training. The central course construct was based on relationship building and group membership, and findings showed this premise had a great effect on students enrolled on the

course. All the young people stated that they attended the Youth Training course because of the friendships they had made with their fellow students and tutors.

Relational ties were strong and developed over time through formal classroom exercises and team building that took place one a day; and informal associations where students hung out with each other outside of class hours.

The young people demonstrated the exercise of agency in their descriptions of making friends and forming groups. Cassidy who had been at the course the longest out of all interviewees had assumed informal leadership for organising the girls' group she helped create. Group membership was a strong pull towards course attendance and fulfilled personal satisfaction aspirations, particularly as Cassidy's group were able to confide in each other concerning personal issues.

I dunno it's just like everyone goes in their own group, me [and names her group] then the boys group and outsiders – kind of – but people we don't have things in common with them. Yeah. We only like each other and if anyone tries to come in we're like "Nah". Cos we're not use to talking to other people - only talking to us.

Cassidy

Sarah, who was also a member of Cassidy's friendship group described being very close to her course friends as they had all had similar lived experiences concerning family backgrounds and had supported each other negative relationship experiences, both historical and present.

We've all been through the same things... and our upbringing is the same as well – yeah. **Sarah**

Decision making was often aided by friends, family or mentors and promoted by tutors as part of the growth and development needed by students to negotiate personal relationships and workplace training. Interviewees discussed how they often used trusted friends or family members to help them make decisions. All interviewees identified the course tutors as their most trusted authority figures. The tutors were regarded as active agents in their relationships and the young people would often approach them to discuss course and personal issues.

Many of the challenges interviewees faced concerning personal relationships, income needs, judicial issues were mediated through the strong relational ties they had with

course friends or tutors, and at times trusted family members. The findings show interviewees initiated agency within their everyday relationships to resist personal challenges and structural constraints; therefore, shaping their social identity and future aspirations.

6.9 Shared Practices and Spaces

Socially situated agency is a temporarily embedded process by which habits are strong in certain contexts, but not in others. Findings show that interviewees often used agency to comply with course rules and negotiate the completion of course tasks; however, at times were unable to replicate this at home. Interviewees also discussed talking with core people to help negotiate personal challenges (Harris & Wyn, 2009). Michelle recounted needing to share her relationship challenges with her course friends and seeking their advice; however, described not always having a decision making process when alone. The young people described different ways in which they enjoyed time together including, listening to music, talking or skating. Many of the male interviewees discussed personal satisfaction from the relationships around sporting or gaming activities. The female interviewees explained how the personal, relationship and course challenges they had faced together had strengthened relationships and created trust amongst the girls' group.

The young people highlighted many different places they liked to hang out with each other. The Youth Training course made an effort to ensure interviewees were able to decorate and design their classroom space to meet their own needs. Home environments were mostly described as comfortable, but also needed to be robustly negotiated with parents and caregivers. Group "hangouts" tended to be harder to negotiate, because once high numbers of young people gathered in retail areas, they attracted the attention of the police and many favoured areas had become off-limits.

Like last Thursday the Police had two paddy wagons and they had just come from the park. So everyone got kicked out of the park and went to B. and there's was just heaps of people at B. and [the Police] just kept coming and grabbing them and putting them in the paddy wagon. I thought, "Stuff this". I text my brother and said, "Come pick us up." Yeah, nah. I didn't wanna get arrested – not for nothing anyway.

Cassidy (Repeated excerpt)

Overall, spaces were important to the interviewees concerning individual and group identity (Harris & Wyn, 2009). They were strongly negotiated by structural constraints sustained by police and media organisations. Overall, interviewees also considered time spent together as their most important practice. Within the Youth Training course setting interviewees exercised agency by turning to friends and tutors for help with course activities. These shared practices had a flow on effect into interviewees' personal lives; however, were not always replicated in the home environment.

6.10 Personal Satisfaction

In the context of this research wellbeing is not defined by a single factor; but is however, described by the interviewees as a feeling of personal satisfaction or overall feeling of “being healthy”. The young people discussed personal goals or activities that promoted greater health in their lives; however, the ability to use agency to promote personal satisfaction resulted in feelings of academic achievement, relational connectedness or enjoyment from social or leisure activities. The interviewees discussed a sense of happiness and freedom when making their own choices, but paradoxically they often looked to friends, mentors and family to endorse and support these choices. Since being on the Youth Training course all the young people had developed vocational aspirations. While at times their career aspirations may have been unrealistic, with some aiming for vocations significantly beyond their level of qualifications, (e.g., veterinary science) they were none-the-less enthusiastic about participating in the labour market.

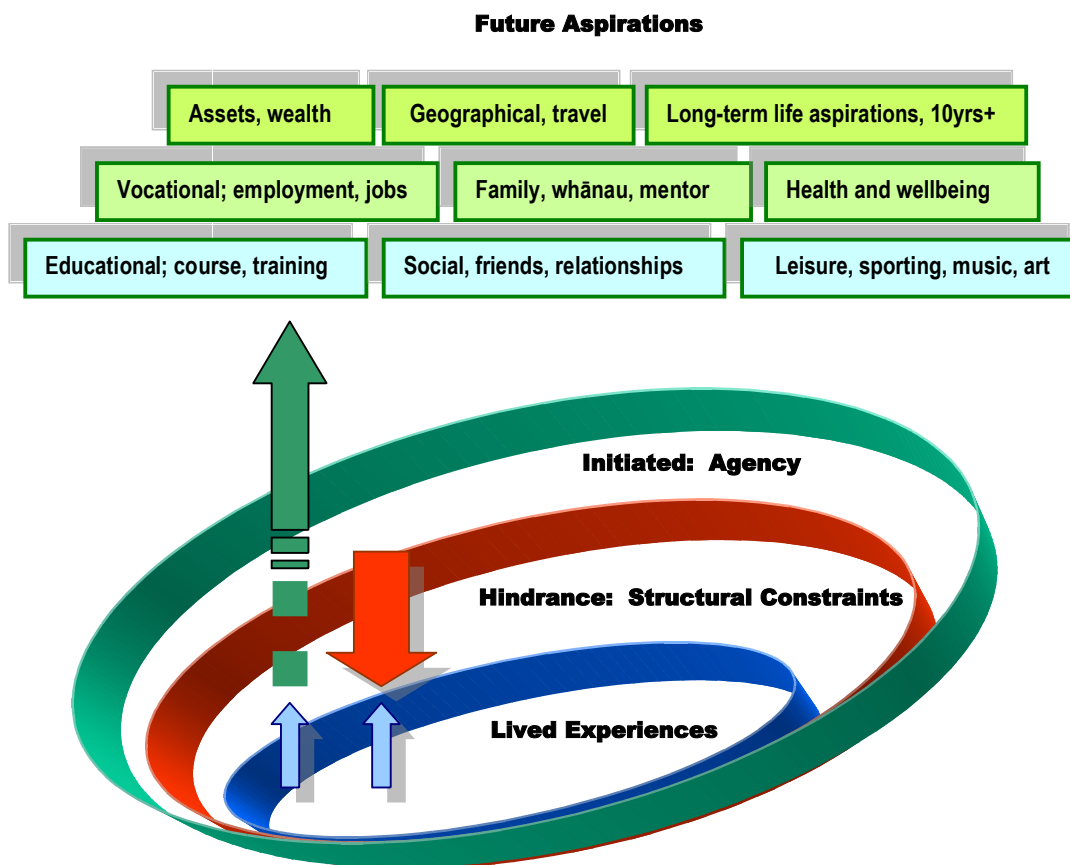
They are not alone in their optimism. Elsewhere researchers have found that even though young people may be faced with deteriorating transitional choices they are still optimistic concerning their future aspirations (Wyn & White, 2000). This “paradox” derives from, firstly, the sense of freedom created by decentralisation structural conditions that promote individual responsibility, and secondly, the agency young people use to resist or embrace their lived experience (Wyn & Dwyer, 2000).

6.11 Agency and Future Aspirations

The findings discussed by interviewees revealed the presence of both agency and structural constraints as they negotiated their lived experiences. In education and training statistics these students are placed within the low-qualifications category and within educational and welfare policy such students are labelled as ‘at-risk youth’ (one of the many labels they are categorised with) and in need of intervention to regain footing on linear transitional pathway. The Youth Training course was one such an intervention and this research explored the experience of a group of youth trainees. All interviewees have had better-quality learning experiences in Youth Training than any other educational environment, and six of the eight interviewees have had more academic success than previous schooling or training environments. All eight interviewees believe it will be possible to achieve their educational aspiration of completing their NCES, and three interviewees are due to complete this qualification within the three months of this study. A strong use of relational ties and social networks interviewees both resist and cope through lived experiences created by external structural constraints and internally produced challenges.

Figure 7. shows the way in which young people’s lived experiences are hindered external or structural constraints; therefore, creating a negative experience. As young people initiate agency in the individual lives and social contexts, these negative experiences and either used to further to serve their social identity allowing young people to regain control or dominance of these experiences; or positive lived experiences are created to subverting the negative experiences and giving young people more choice and more experience e.g., negative secondary school experiences are usurped by positive training experiences. Agency is seen in the way that interviewees create and maintain strong relational ties and create social networks that help provide income, wellbeing, education, training and work experiences, future aspirations (White & Wyn, 1998).

Figure 9. Lived Experiences and Future Aspirations of young people in Youth Training mediated by Structural Constraints and Agency



Interviewees discussed creating choices well beyond the parameters of government intervention and benefits. They live creative and complex lives, filled with relationships, education and training experiences, shared practices and future aspirations. Findings show even though interviewees are acutely aware of the stigma their historical wrongs and inadequacies; in many cases they have used these previously experience to created rich and deep social identities, making new choices based on cultural, learning and subculture practices, that in turn create positive lived experiences. The stories recounted by interviewees describe a far from linear transition from school to work; however, contextual analysis illustrates the complex use of agency and socially situated agency in their every day lives to create rich social identities and life experiences.

6.12 Young People in Youth Training: A metaphor

Hūtia te rito o te harakeke. Kei hea te kōmako e kō?

Kī mai nei ki ahau. He aha te mea nui ki tēnei ao?

Māku e kī atu. He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

If you were to pluck out the centre of the flax bush, where would the bellbird sing?

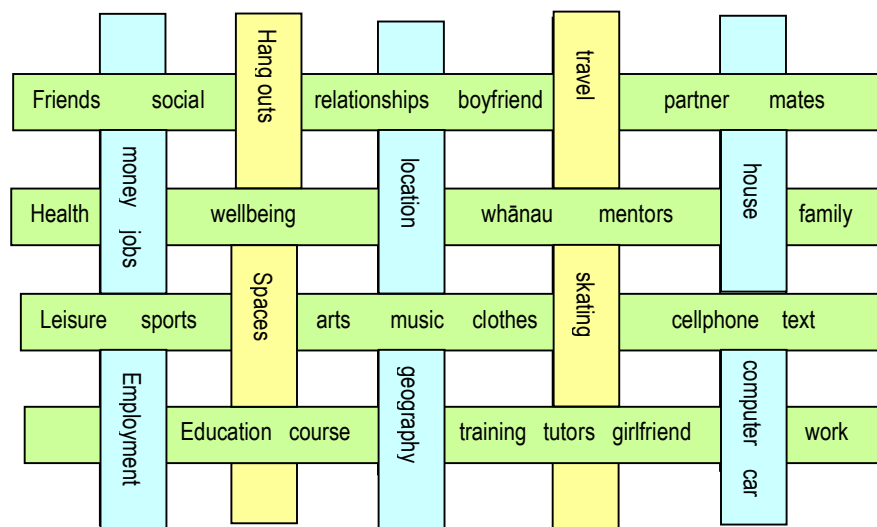
If you were to ask me "What is the most important thing in the world?"

I would reply, "That it is people, people, people."

(Māori Whakatauki)

Previous researchers have used the pathways metaphor to describe young people in transition from school to work. This case study shows that the contextual approach to youth transition reveals that young people in Youth Training live complex lives; therefore, the pathways metaphor is unable to incorporate the wide range of future aspirations young people describe (Vaughan & Boyd, 2005; Wyn & White, 1997; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Wyn et al. (2008) use the 'mosaic concept' to describe the uniqueness and complexity of young people's lives, due to the myriad of dimensions young people actively negotiate through collective and individual agency (Wyn, et al., 2008).

Figure 10. Metaphor - Woven Harakeke: Young people in Youth Training



This case study research uses the woven harakeke (flax) mat as a metaphor to describe the complexity by which young people use to create their future aspirations. This image of a weaving all the individual strands of a young person's life together to

create a larger whole, inspires a new dynamic in youth transition. All strands are needed to create a strong representation of a young person's life; all strands are uniquely woven with raw harakeke (flax) and will be matured over time, to create a greater use.



Chapter Seven

Parting Tales: Conclusion, Implications and Future Direction

7.1 Introduction and Overview

The chapter presents the main conclusions of the current case study research, and summarises the findings and their contribution. The limitations of the study are identified, and the implications of the findings canvassed. The summary of findings is based on the research questions of this study. The global question for this research explored how young people in a Youth Training course shape their future aspirations; the second question examined how these young people view the relevance of the Youth Training course to their aspirations; and the third question discussed how young people in this Youth Training course exercised agency.

7.2 Summary of Findings

This case study research is based on interviews with young people from Youth Training in a local Private Training Establishment (PTE), completing a National Certificate of Employment Skills (NCES). The research explored the stories and narratives of eight young people in Youth Training and examined how they shaped their future aspirations. The results of this case study show that young people in Youth Training shape their future aspirations through their lived experiences, both remembered and current. Their experiences and the contexts in which they located, and whether they are negative or positive, are pivotal to how young people shape their social identity (Wyn & White, 1997). Structural constraints, such as social, economic and political constraints, mediate their lived experiences by hindering choices and diminish resources. The findings show that young people in this Youth Training course exercised agency by resisting structural constraints and creating further choices, beyond the (institutional) resources available. This study contributes to the research of youth in Youth Training in New Zealand, specifically from the point of view of the young people themselves. These findings are specific to the current case study and cannot be generalised to the wider New Zealand youth population.

In Chapter two attention was paid to past research including that of Vaughan et al. (2002) who drew on the pathways metaphor in exploring the transitions of young

people from school to work and how they made career choices and planned their vocational aspirations. In contrast, Wyn et al. (2008) highlighted young people negotiating approaches to life in the midst of social, economic and political structural constraints. Wyn et al. (2008) suggested that the linear, traditional transitional model of transition was out of date, and the 'pathways' metaphor and pathway theory had been replaced by the 'mosaic' concept. The mosaic metaphor integrates the complexity by which young people negotiate and assess their social identity, within the world of structural dimensions and constraints.

Wyn, Smith, Stokes, Tyler & Woodman (2008) argued that the geographical location of young people affects their aspirational and optimistic thinking. Others have found that young people located in metropolitan areas are more optimistic, due to the availability of choices and resources (Harris & Wyn, 2009; Wyn, et al., 2008). The findings in the current study show that young people in Youth Training were optimistic about their future aspirations when they were part of a small community learning environment where they could build strong relational ties and were part of an greater urban environment with access to resources.

This study has described the complexity by which young people in Youth Training shape their future aspirations using a woven harakeke metaphor, where every strand is woven together to support the great whole, or life, of the young person. A single harakeke plant uses the important outer leaves to nurture and support the development of young plant; the inner and outer leaves rely on each other for sustainability and growth (Panoho, 1995). This metaphor depicts the findings of this research as relational ties between tutors and students, mentors and young people and between peers were a strong contributing factor in shaping the future aspirations of young people in Youth Training.

7.2.1 How Young People Shape Their Future Aspirations

Future Aspirations, Agency and Structural Constraints

According to Quaglia and Cobb (1996) future aspirations are the synthesis of ambition and inspiration; combining also an individual's motivation and future desire. Future aspirations also include an individual's ability to avoid failure or maintain their social identity. Aspirations are influenced by environmental factors, social and

cultural factors, and intervention (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996). In this case study findings showed that young people shaped their future aspirations through their lived experiences. This meant that the negative or positive life experiences young people had helped them acquire knowledge and create meaning in the context of their life.

Young people in Youth Training had experienced the negative effects of being the “subjects” of the ‘at-risk youth’ discourse. Within this discourse young people are positioned as deviant and a risk to society, as well as being vulnerable to external deviant activities. The wide use of this discourse in government agencies and policies and nationwide media means that young people categorised with this label came to identify with it, and found it difficult to exercise agency and reshape their subject position; often choosing behaviour to fulfil labels given by authority figures. At times lived experiences can be mediated by economic and, social constraints such as living conditions, limited number of available part-time or full-time jobs in the youth labour market, and the policies defining resources allocated to young people. Social constraints limit the amount of choices open to young people, creating a negative experience.

Alternatively, young people in Youth Training were able to exercise agency within their lived experiences, by their engaging in their learning environment and learning new skills and acquiring knowledge and building strong friendships and relational ties with people from their course. The interviewees negotiated a complex set of choices within the context of their course, their families and their friendship groups to create their social identity, e.g., even when they had been excluded from high school or required to attend a course by policy or judicial regulations young people found ways of creating social networks and relational ties that positively added to their experiences, thus, helping them mediate and negotiate structural constraints. Future aspirations and desires were often born out of discussions the young people had with peers, mentors from their Youth Training course or family members. The young people created meaning out of both negative and positive lived experiences, and often by transcending a negative experience for a positive one, e.g., when a student had a housing problem they decided to move in with their boyfriend; strengthening and maturing their partnership.

7.2.2 How Young People View the Relevance of this Training to their Aspirations

Future Aspirations and Youth Training

The findings of this case study showed that learning environments contributed to how young people shaped their future aspirations. The environment of the Youth Training course had a positive effect on future aspirations, particularly career, relational and leisure future aspirations. In addition to the course's deliberate focus on career planning, and in contrast to alienating experience of a "big school", the experience of working within a smaller learning environment, that emphasised relationally-based activities, provided the young people with opportunities to exercise agency and create stronger relational ties with peers and tutors. In essence, these young people had support and resources to help in shaping their future desires and aspirations. The Youth Training course provided the opportunity for interviewees to complete a future planning unit standard, and findings showed this had a positive effect on developing future career aspirations.

7.2.3 How Young People Exercise Agency During this Training

Agency, Learning Environments and Relational Ties

The findings of this case study showed that young people in Youth Training exercised agency in complex and purposeful ways to achieve their daily goals and plan future desires. The strong relational ties young people created with their peers, family and mentors significantly shaped their future aspirations. Interviewees recounted how the friendships with other young people on the Youth Training course had grown closer over time, due to similar lived experiences and time spent together. The cross-case study showed that they female interviewees were extremely close. Cassidy who had attended to course for the longest out of all interviewees, had assumed a leadership position in her group and also within the greater course environment. Tutor-student relationship had a strong influence on how the interviewees approached course learning and personal goals. Interviewees described their tutors as supportive, encouraging and caring. Tim along with other interviewees stated that he would leave the course if tutors left the organisation.

Future aspirations were also shaped by interviewee personal satisfaction. Many interviewees described being with family members very satisfying and these

experiences influenced their future desire for family and long term relationships. Often family members, who were trusted as mentors, helped with decision making concerning future plans; however, interviewees gained more confidence within the Youth Training environment where they planned future aspirations themselves under the guidance of tutors.

7.3 Research Contribution

This section will discuss the contribution this study will have for young people in Youth Training in New Zealand. This study contributes to the gap in New Zealand youth research, by focussing on what is an under-researched area of research -the future aspirations of youth people who were previously NEET who are now youth trainees. It draws on the participants' perspective, from interviews with young people in a Youth Training course, and enabled them to share their stories, thoughts, beliefs and experiences. Thus, the young people provided the narrative for the research themes of this study. This research contribution also includes the research framework used in this study and acknowledges the complexity of the context in which young people negotiate their social identities.

Firstly, this study sought to have young people tell their stories and share their lived experiences, and to create meaning from the negative or positive experiences they have had. Much of the research concerning young people in PTEs has focused on tutoring pedagogy or career transition; however, this case study explores how young people feel about their experiences and allows them to share their desires for the future. Providing participants with a voice in research so that they can create their own narrative is an important element to youth research. The wider societal acceptance of the youth discourse often reduces the opportunity for use their voice, participation and power to inform policy and the distribution of resources. This research also contributes to the implementation of new research ideas and theories that are explore how youth think and feel about their future aspirations, and the way in which research is conducted to understand how young people shape their future aspirations.

Secondly, young people in Youth Training are often labelled as 'at-risk' youth. The at-risk discourse restricts young people due to the decisions to marginalise young

people because of their behaviour and preconceived behaviour. Young people labelled 'at-risk' often find themselves banned from mainstream spaces, schooling resources, and forced into intervention programmes e.g., boot camps for disenfranchised youth, so that they can 'reform' their behaviour and return to mainstream transition. At times these young people do not have the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings on their lived experiences in programme and course design; therefore, this case study values the contribution from young people concerning their thoughts and feelings of their Youth Training course.

Lastly, this study adds to the wider research community exploring how young people shape their future aspirations with complexity and fluidity. This research contributes to youth research through a contextual research design that seeks to understand the way in which young people plan for the future. This study shows how young people create strong relational ties that encourages agency and supports their future aspirations.

7.4 Research Implications and Recommendations

The implications and recommendations of this research are based on the findings and analysis presented in this study and on the gaps discussed in previous literature and research. This research is a case study of a bounded group; therefore, analysis cannot be generalised to the greater population, however, the implications of this study may contribute to the wider understanding of how young people shape their future aspirations, particularly those in Youth Training. The implications and recommendations cover the following areas; implications on research, learning environments and teaching pedagogy.

Firstly, interviewees described their future aspirations in context of their lived experiences. The contextual analysis approach allowed interviewees to describe a rich description of the context of their lives; therefore, a broader perspective of how structural constraints and agency mediated their lived experiences was able to emerge. The contextual approach provided interviewees with an opportunity to describe the complexity of their aspirational thinking and augment their aspirational narrative to include a range of aspirations across all dimensions of their lives.

Without such a contextual research and analysis approach to young people in Youth Training, interviewees would be unable to share the complexity of their thoughts, feelings and beliefs concerning a specific research topic; therefore, hindering their voice in youth research. This research recommends providing an opportunity in transition research and youth research to consider the context in which young people form their beliefs, providing an opportunity to move beyond linear and orthodox paradigms, so that they can provide a rich description of their experiences. The implication of the contextual approach moves away from traditional youth research and policy models that focuses solely on their educational and work aspirations, to include more of the individual's unique life experiences; allowing an individual's distinct story to emerge.

Secondly, in the findings interviewees described a strong contrast in their learning environment experiences. Interviewees recounted secondary school experiences that fostered feelings of isolation, exclusion and disconnection. In the Youth Training environment interviewees recounted experiences of belonging, friendships, general feelings of social support; learning support, mentor support, peer support, academic achievement and future planning and decision making. The implication of this case study research provides an opportunity to discuss the reasons why some secondary school students find it difficult to connect to classroom environments and wider school culture. It contributes to the important dialogue concerning the reasons why some students disconnect from school life, by looking beyond students' negative behaviour, to the contextual factors that create barriers to school participation.

This research recommends the implementation of smaller settings for some students to study in, so that they are able to create relational ties amongst their peer group and complete academic work within a negotiated time frame. This research also recommends that Youth Training providers (PTEs) provide an opportunity for young people in Youth Training to design their own courses, encouraging a greater sense of ownership and belonging. This would mean that young people have an active voice in programme design and would provide an equitable learning environment.

Thirdly, findings also showed that interviewees believed the way in which tutors support aided academic achievement and the formation of social identity and

relational ties. Tutors choose an informal relational-based pedagogy that was student-centred, as well as, achieving policy outcomes. Their relational-based tutoring style gave tutors the opportunity to get to know students on a one-on-one level so that they were able to uniquely tailor academic work to their individual needs, in addition to, at times supporting interviewees with personal needs. Tutors were focused on the success of students to achieve, not only their NCEA, but also in their personal goals. Tutors aided students as they negotiated their social identity (e.g., relationship negotiation, self efficacy, future aspirations). This research recommends that tutors employed in PTEs participate in youth training workshops that encourage student-centred learning and learning engagement, literacy and numeracy techniques, as well as, workshops on youth participation, youth work and social support and the benefit of team building and mentoring within learning programmes and training environments.

Finally, the findings of this research shows that a greater relationship between Youth Training and secondary schools and activity centres would help to create a synergy of knowledge around teaching in alternative learning environments. This relationship would build knowledge of how to create positive learning environments for early school leavers, whose early marginalisation creates tough terrain for them to re-establish themselves back into a formal educational or training environment. This research also recommends that policy makers consult Youth Training providers that young people advocate as providing positive learning environments. Providers are currently viewed in light of their statistical outcomes that describe work and training results of students; however, if policy makers consider a contextual approach to course programming, in turn, course design would provide a much need holistic experience for students and staff.

7.5 Research Limitations

This research acknowledges that there are factors that have limited this research. As this study was a small case study it can only provides insight into the perspective of this cohort of young people, it cannot be generalised youth training courses in New Zealand. Only one youth training setting was examined and data gathered from this

site; therefore, this research cannot make any claims to the wider group of PTES and Youth Training programmes.

This research acknowledges that there are factors that have limited this research. As this study provides insight into the perspective of this cohort of young people, it cannot be generalised youth training courses in New Zealand.

7.6 Future Studies

The contextual approach in youth research is a recent research framework, lead by Australian youth researchers within Australasia. However, there are many factors that have emerged from the current case study that could also contribute to the wider body of youth research in New Zealand. The analysis of this study shows that many of the interviewees ethnically defined themselves at Māori and some had experience in Māori learning environments. It is recommended that future study of youth aspirations include a tikanga Māori perspective and, or, Youth Training within a Māori learning environment. Specifically, a Māori research framework would give greater meaning to interviewees who wished to share their lived experience in reference to Māori cultural understandings, or through a bi-cultural lens.

This case study captures the rich and thick descriptions of young people in their lived experience. Future study involving pictorial or photographic representation of lived experiences and enable young people to provide the narrative to this data collection would give interviewees another medium to communicate their voice. This would provide an even greater opportunity for young people to describe their life in the context of their experiences and how they negotiate their social identity.

Future research focused on the future aspirations of young people within secondary school would help to explore how classroom and high school learning environments could aid their future planning. Also, research based on early school leavers could also provide an opportunity to explore the secondary school experience from a young person's perspective, gaining vital knowledge of positive and negative lived experiences for future school community development.

7.7 Concluding Thoughts

As youth research in New Zealand continues to gather momentum it is important to note that there are many youth topics yet to be studied. The purpose of this case study research was to explore how young people in Youth Training shape their future aspirations. It found that young people shape their future aspirations through their lived experiences which are mediated on a day-to-day basis by structural and institutional constraints. At times young people in Youth Training exercised agency, in the form of resistance, to negotiate their constraints and negative experiences. Moving forward it is important to understand that young people have the ability to form strong social networks and build solid relationships in spite of their circumstances. Policy makers who label young people with resistant or deviant behaviour as a 'risk' to society need to be mindful that intervention policies may only serve to further marginalise young people. Alternatively, providing young people with the opportunity to experience rich learning environments, staffed with supportive mentors, will help empower young people to create positive future aspirations.

Young people live complex lives and the findings of this study described a broad view of youth transition, beyond education and career aspirations. Young people have the ability to create strong relational ties and this was an overriding factor in development and transition of the young people in this study. Many young people described strong attachments to their core group of friends from their course and to their tutors and older mentors who supported them without judgement. The young people of this study were bright, talented young people with hopes and dreams. Often they had been told that they could not progress because of their lack of qualifications or their socio-economic background; however, all of the young people interviewed had found ways to empower themselves by drawing strength from those around them. They continued to shape their future aspirations with the support of friends, tutors, mentors and family.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Terms	Definition
NCEA	The National Certificate of Educational Achievement is New Zealand's main qualification for senior secondary school students and has three levels usually completed in years 11, 12 and 13.
NCES	National Certificate of Employment Skills
N.E.E.T	Not in Education-Employment-or Training
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZQF	The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (previously the National Qualifications Framework).
Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)	A government agency responsible for all Tertiary Education in New Zealand. The TEC provides policy advice and is responsible for the implementation and funding across the tertiary education sector.
PTE	An establishment that provides post-school education and training, and is registered by NZQA.
Unit Standards	Outcomes based specification of what a learner needs to demonstrate in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve the standards. National qualifications such as the NCES are made up of unit standards.
Youth Training (YT)	Youth Training (YT) is a government funded programme for young people aged 16-18, and is free to participants. Tertiary educational organisations including PTEs are contracted by the TEC to deliver specified courses.

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Gus

Tia ©

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES – Student Participants

Michelle

Michelle is a 17 year old, who describes herself being from Māori and Pākehā heritage. She currently lives with her mother and father and sister. Both her parents work. Her mother runs her own business and her father is a qualified tradesman.

She was at secondary school for three consecutive years and passed English and Science achievement standards. She feels she was bullied at school by the teachers because of her choice of clothing and because she was too slow copying down work from the board. She found high school 'too big' with too many people.

Her close friends mostly go to the current course, however, she has one best friend from childhood that she still has a close relationship with. They also trained in dance together. She currently has a boyfriend and they have been together for two years. She is close to her family and has a desire to have a family of her own. Her goal is to become a qualified mechanic and make money so she can buy whatever she wants.

Sarah

Sarah is a 17 year old female who identifies herself of both Māori and European ethnicity. She currently lives with her whāngai-mother [foster parent in Māori cultural context] and her has a brother and sister that work in a fast-food restaurant and a younger brother at high school. Her whāngai-mum works as a teacher at the local Kura Kaupapa school.

She briefly attended high school, but left after 6 months. She was unable to go to another high school as they would not accept her. Living in Auckland she attended a Creative Arts course for three months. While in Auckland she also played netball as part of a wider whānau/iwi group.

She is close to the people on the current course and has made some close friends. She would like to be a veterinarian or become a teacher; however, is currently focused on gaining her unit standards and is in the third trimester of pregnancy and would like to attend a local high school that caters for young parents.

She is close to her family, especially her whāngai-mum and was brought up by her "nan". She is no longer with her baby's father and doesn't desire a partner at this stage.

Amanda

Amanda is a 17 year old who describes herself as having European ethnicity. She is currently living with her Mum, Dad and younger brother while her boyfriend fulfils a judicial sentence. Her mother and father both work two jobs.

She was asked to leave high school after three months due to poor attendance. She now has a goal to become a hairdresser or a childcare worker. As she is currently pregnant she will be going onto to a local high school that caters for young parents and hopes to continue her education.

She met her core group of friends through the course and spends most of her time with her boyfriend. She mostly enjoys 'hanging out' with her friends and listening to music.

John

John is a 16 year old male of Cook Island Māori and Pākehā heritage. Both his parents are working and he lives at home along with his younger brother.

He went to high school for two and a half years and was asked to leave due to bad behaviour. While at secondary school he passed Maths unit standards and still enjoys Maths problems.

He has met some good friends on the course; however, is best friends with his cousin who he sees every day and is involved with a group of friends who skate. His main focus is skating and spends most of his spare time practising at the local skate park. His other interest is art and would one day like to have a job as a graphic artist that uses a spray paint style. He is currently sponsored by a skate label and would like to be a fulltime skater one day.

Tim

Tim is a 16 year old male of Māori ethnicity who lives with his mother and three brothers. He said he was asked to leave high school after two weeks because of bad behaviour. He has two best friends. One lives locally, the other lives in another city. Usually hangs out the friends from the course and his best friend. They mostly play video games and like playing Touch Rugby.

His goal is to race cars and to own his own car one day. Tim has previously worked with his father, helping out in a labouring role; however, no longer sees him. His goal is to one day become a mechanic and to have a family.

Cassidy

Cassidy is a 17 year old of Māori heritage. She lives with her Mum and two brothers. She went to high school for a year and a half and left to do another course that included correspondence school. She thought that high school had too many people and she 'wagged' classes for the first few weeks. Cassidy spent two years at an Activity Centre and passed English and Maths unit standards.

She likes to hang out with her friends and family and enjoys playing netball and softball. Cassidy is in a relationship and has been with her boyfriend for three years. She is also very close to the people on the course and they 'hang out' after the course is finished for the day.

She would one day like to become a Youth Worker or a Nurse. She has a goal to attend a camp run by a local youth organisation that offers a transition course.

Mike

Mike is a 17 year old who describes his ethnicity as being a New Zealander. He lives with his mum and has older siblings who no longer live at home. He attended two different high schools – each for a year and started a number of unit standards but didn't complete any.

He has made two new friends on the course and they have a common interest in 'gaming' (playing video games). He is an avid reader and enjoys anything to do with history. He would like to become a computer programmer and has a goal to attend a polytechnic course in computers after he has met the entry requirements. He would one day like to buy a house, a car and have a partner.

Pete

Pete is a 17 year old of Māori ethnicity. He currently lives with his Grandmother and left high school after two years due to behaviour problems and lack of attendance. At high school he started some unit standards; however, did not complete them. He enjoys sports and really likes rugby and was good at long distance running when he was younger.

He hangs out with his cousins and people from the course. He still plays indoor sports and touch rugby and plays for a local team. Most of his spare time is centred around friends and playing sports.

His goal is to become a panel beater and would like to finish his entrance requirements and then complete the polytech course.



STRUCTURE AND AGENCY:

EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH TRAINEES

Kia Ora,

My name is Leah Hutchison and I am an Education student at Victoria University of Wellington. As part my study I'm keen to talk to young people aged 15-18 years about how they shape their future hopes and dreams. I think it's really important to hear your story because you have some important things to say that often people in government and media don't always get to hear. Research is a way to give you a chance to talk about the stuff that is important to you, so that others can understand what young people in youth training courses are thinking and experiencing.

I am inviting young people to share their experiences in a one-on-one interview. The interview will take about 50 - 60 minutes and there will be opportunities to choose what stuff you want to be recorded. There will also be a group meeting called a focus group with 5-10 student participants from your course. The focus group that will give you the chance to chat about other thoughts you might have.

The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants to make sure people participating are protected. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington College of Education Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is a process where experienced researchers look at what is being proposed to check that people taking part in the study are given all the information they need. The ethics committee also looks at the interview questions and makes sure there are plans in place to keep interview notes and tapes safe.

If you agree to be part of this research project your name won't be used in any of the paper work or final reports. You will also be given an opportunity to check your interview notes, so you can say what you prefer to be used in the research.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate you may choose to withdraw from this research up until the end of the data collection. You are not required to give an explanation for withdrawing and you will not suffer any penalties. All the transcripts, interview tapes and notes will be kept in a locked file and destroyed after 2 years.

After all the information has been gathered from the participants a summary of the things discussed will be given to the participants and tutors for further feedback – your thoughts would be appreciated!

When this project is completed the research gathered will be written up as part of my thesis. A copy of my thesis will be in the University library and another copy given to your PTE. I may also use the analysis from this study in other academic publications and conference presentations.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact myself or my supervisor at the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Leah Hutchison

MEd Student

School of Education Psychology and Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

Dr Stephanie Doyle

Supervisor

School of Education Psychology and Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

Thank you for your participation in this research.



STRUCTURE AND AGENCY:
EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH TRAINEES

Researcher: Leah Hutchison
School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
Victoria University of Wellington

My name is Leah Hutchison and I am a Masters student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this study I am creating a research project that explores how youth aged 15-18 years shape their future aspirations. I believe that it is important to understand what young people are thinking and experiencing and this research project will focus on how young people shape their future hopes and dreams while in youth training.

All youth participants will complete a one-on-one interview and be involved in a focus group discussion with other students. Tutors will complete a focus group discussion with other tutors from your PTE. Both the one-on-one and group discussions will not take more the one hour. All participants will have the opportunity to give feedback concerning the information gathered during this study and will be given access to their individual transcripts prior to analysis. A summary of findings will be given to participants and any information they do not want to be used in this study will be changed or discarded at their request.

The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants; therefore, the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee must approve this research project before it is implemented. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington College of Education Ethics Committee.

APPENDIX C cont. INFORMATION SHEET – Tutors and interested others

This research project will use anonymous explanations from your answers to questions concerning youth aspirations, youth decision making, and how youth training influences aspirations. All transcripts, tapes and interview notes will be kept in a locked file and destroyed two years after the completion of the study.

Names of participants will not be present in the final report. Participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate you may choose to withdraw from this research up until the end of the data collection. You are not required to give an explanation for withdrawing and you will not suffer any penalties.

After all the information has been gathered from participants a summary of the things we discuss will be given to the participants and tutors for further feedback. When this project is completed the research gathered will be written up in as part of my thesis. The analysis of this study will be available to be used in academic publications, academic conferences or published in the University library.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact myself or my supervisor at the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Leah Hutchison

MEd Student

School of Education Psychology and

Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

Dr Stephanie Doyle

Supervisor

School of Education Psychology and

Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

Thank you for your participation in this research.

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM:
16 years and over on 1st August, 2009



STRUCTURE AND AGENCY:
EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH TRAINEES

I have read the information sheet provided on this research project and I understand all the information presented. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I may have and these questions were answered to my satisfaction. **YES/NO (Circle one)**

I am aware that I may withdraw from the study before the time of interviewing without needing to give a reason. I am also aware that if I choose to withdraw I will not incur any penalties. **YES/NO (Circle one)**

I understand that all the interview transcripts, tapes and notes gathered during this study will be kept in a locked file and will be destroyed after two years. **YES/NO (Circle one)**

I consent to the use of my personal story in this study; however, understand that my name will not be published in any documents concerning this study. **YES/NO (Circle one)**

I also understand that I will be given opportunity to check and approve of the interview transcripts. **YES/NO (Circle one)**

When this project is complete I am aware that the information I have provided may be used in academic publications, academic conferences or published in the University library; however, all names of those involved will not be used. **YES/NO (Circle one)**

I agree to take part in taped **interviews** for this research project **YES/NO (Circle one)**

I agree to take part in a taped **focus group** for this research project **YES/NO (Circle one)**

Name:

Signed: **Date:**



STRUCTURE AND AGENCY:

EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH TRAINEES

I have read the information sheet provided on this research project and I understand all the information presented. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I may have and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

I am aware that I may withdraw from the study before the time of interviewing without needing to give a reason. I am also aware that if I choose to withdraw I will not incur any penalties.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

I understand that all the interview transcripts, tapes and notes gathered during this study will be kept in a locked file and will be destroyed after two years.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

I consent to the use of my personal story in this study; however, understand that my name will not be published in any documents concerning this study.

YES/NO (Circle one)

I also understand that I will be given opportunity to check and approve of the interview transcripts.

YES/NO (Circle one)

When this project is complete I am aware that the information I have provided may be used in academic publications, academic conferences or published in the University library; however, all names of those involved will be not be used.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

APPENDIX E cont.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM:

Under 16 years on 1st August, 2009

I agree to take part in taped **interviews** for this research project **YES/ NO**
(Circle one)

I agree to take part in a taped **focus group** for this research project **YES/ NO**
(Circle one)

*All of the following must be signed.

I agree to allow my child to take part in this research project:

Date:	
Name of youth participant:	
Name of parent(s)/caregiver(s):	Signed: <input type="checkbox"/>

I agree to take part in this research project:

Date:
Name of youth participant:
Signed: <input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX F TUTORS AND INTERESTED PARTIES CONSENT FORM



STRUCTURE AND AGENCY:
EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH TRAINEES

I have read the information sheet provided on this research project and I understand all the information presented. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I may have and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

I am aware that I may withdraw from the study before the time of interviewing without needing to give a reason. I am also aware that if I choose to withdraw I will not incur any penalties.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

I understand that all the interview transcripts, tapes and notes gathered during this study will be kept in a locked file and will be destroyed after two years.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

I consent to the use of my personal story in this study; however, understand that my name will not be published in any documents concerning this study.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

I also understand that I will be given opportunity to check and approve of the interview transcripts.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

When this project is complete I am aware that the information I have provided may be used in academic publications, academic conferences or published in the University library; however, all names of those involved will be kept confidential.

YES/ NO (Circle one)

APPENDIX F cont TUTORS AND INTERESTED PARTIES CONSENT FORM

I agree to take part in a taped **focus group** for this research project

YES/ NO (Circle one)

Name:

Signed:

Date:



STRUCTURE AND AGENCY:

EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH TRAINEES

Please Tick

Name of organisation:

.....

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, which have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that this organisation will not be identified in any reports from this study.

I am assured any information that is given will be treated with respect and confidentiality, and no names will be used in the material that is published concerning this study. At the same time this information will not be used for any purpose beyond that for which consent is given.

I understand that the participants in this research will be individually approached for their informed consent.

I consent to the members of this organisation taking part in the research as it has been set out in the information sheet.

I understand that the participation in this research is voluntary. Participants may choose to withdraw from this research up until the end of the data collection.



Date:

Name:

Position:

Signed:

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington College of Education Ethics Committee. If you have any further questions or concerns please contact myself or my supervisor at the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Researcher: Leah Hutchison

Leah Hutchison

MEd Student

School of Education Psychology and

Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

Dr Stephanie Doyle

Supervisor

School of Education Psychology and

Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

Thank you for your participation in this research.

**STRUCTURE AND AGENCY:
EXPLORING ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH TRAINEES**

General:

Age:

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Who are you currently living with (siblings, parents, caregiver)?

Number of siblings (brothers and sisters)?

Parents/care giver occupation?

Sibling(s) occupation(s)?

High School(s) attended:

Year started High School:

Year left school:

When did you first enrol with this PTE?

What were you doing between leaving school and starting this course?

What standards or units did you achieve at High School?

Identity:

How would you describe yourself?

Probe: What things do you like doing?

How would your family describe you?

How would your friends describe you?

Probe: What things do you think you are good at? (performance/ability)

What are things are important to you? *Probe:* Why?

What organisations/clubs do you belong to (sports, church)?

Probe: Where do you most often hang out?

Who do you spend the most time with (friends etc)?

Probe: Do you have a core group of friends?

Probe: How are you similar/different to your friends? What do you think of this?

Youth Training Course:

How did you come to be on this course?

Describe what this course is like?

What has been the most important thing you've learned on the course so far?

Probe: Why?

Probe: What else do you want to learn or get from the course? What would you tell someone else about this course?

Education Aspirations:

What courses or training do you think you want to do in the future?

What would you like to do after you finish this course?

Probe: How has the course influenced this decision?

Probe: Are there other things that you want to learn (not necessarily from a course?)

Work Aspirations:

What did you use to want to be when you grew up? Why?

What job you want to have when you were in 3rd Form/Yr 9 at high school?

Probe: What jobs didn't you like at high school?

What would you like to do in the future?

Since being on the course has this changed? How?

Probe: What new work experiences has this offered you?

Personal Satisfaction Aspirations:

What inspires you?

Probe: What do you like doing the most in your spare time? Why?

When do you feel satisfied?

Probe: Why? Why not?

Probe: What might help you feel satisfied?

Do you think this course helped you as a person? *Probe:* Why?

Family Aspirations:

What does family mean to you?

Probe: Who do you think of when you think about family?

Who are the important people in your life?

Who inspires you? *Probe:* Why?

Do you see yourself having a partner in the future? *Probe:* Children?

Probe: How does this make you feel?

Community Aspirations:

When you think of your community, what are you involved in?

Is community important to you? *Probe:* Why? Why not?

What would you like to be involved in, in the future? Church, sports, clubs etc.

Agency:

What has changed in your life since you started this course?

Probe: What do you want to change? Why?

How do you go about making decisions?

Probe: Do you have a way of 'deciding' things? Who would you talk to about your decision making?

Have you set any goals whilst being on this course?

Probe: How will you go about making this change?

Probe: Who would you ask to help you achieve your goals?

How much freedom do you feel you have to do what you would like with your life?

Probe: What options do you see yourself having?

Future aspirations:

What would you like your life to look like in 10 years?

Focus Group Questions:**Student Focus Group: Participants Questions -**

How would you design a course so it would be helpful to young people?

What things would you have in the course design?

What would you want other young people to learn?

Tutors Focus Group: Tutors Questions -

How do you think your course is helpful to young people?

How do you think this course fosters the aspirations of young people?

In what way does this course help with decision making?

