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The Need to Belong in Secondary School. A Social Work Science Study of Austrian and Australian Students

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The Need to Belong in Secondary School

A Social Work Science Study
of Austrian and Australian Students

Sharon du Plessis-Schneider
The Need to Belong in Secondary School

Die vorliegende Arbeit wurde von der Fakultät I der Pädagogischen Hochschule Weingarten, Deutschland, unter dem Titel "A Pilot Study on Factors that Influence a Sense of Belonging in School: Perspectives of Minority and Majority Language Students in Two Secondary Schools in Austria and Australia" als Dissertation angenommen.

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Sharon du Plessis-Schneider

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List of Abbreviations

AASW	Australian Association of Social Workers
AustLit	The Australian Literature Resource
BEinstG	Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz [Austrian Disability Employment Act]
DaZ	Deutsch als Zweitsprache [German Second Language]
Cf	Compare
DJI	Deutsches Jugendinstitut [German Youth Institute]
DOAJ	Directory of Open Access Journals
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
ESL	English as a second language
GDRC	Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child
GSL	German as a Second Language
IASSW	International Association of Schools of Social Work
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
ICESCR	The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
INDOSOW	International Doctoral Studies in Social Work
OBDS	Österreichischer Berufsverband der Sozialen Arbeit Austrian Association of Social Work [translation by the author]
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSSM	The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale
SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
SSWIG	School Social Work Special Interest Group
SPSA	Systemtheoretische Paradigma der Sozialen Arbeit [Systems Theory Paradigm of Social Work]
UNCRC	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America
WOL	Wiley Online Library and Database

Preface

This book contributes towards identifying and explaining the social mechanisms in school that can facilitate or hinder student “need to belong” fulfilment. Based on my research findings, general guidelines for social work action are put forward. This is set against the backdrop of social works triple mandate as a profession and discipline (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016; 2018).

Our emotional-cognitive brain processes, such as perception, feeling and reasoning, are essential for understanding the external world – not in an isolated vacuum, but through social exchange with other human beings. These social interactions are driven by complex biopsychic processes which are further complicated by the fact that human beings are members of one or more social system/s that we shape and are shaped by (Bunge, 1977b, p. 457).

One such social system that plays a central role in the daily lives of children and adolescents is school. It comprises different social levels such as the peers, the class cohort, the teachers, the school management and the staff, e.g., the school social workers.

The theoretical framework developed for the research is informed by human needs theories that span the 20th and 21st centuries (Arlt, 1921, 1934; Maslow, 1943, 1954; Obrecht, 1996, 2005b, 2009; Mägdefrau, 2006). Human needs are the cognitive mechanisms of neural processes in the human brain that regulate our behaviour and bio-values. Needs set human beings in a specific framework that establishes us as biopsychic and social organisms within our social environment. How did this baseline of human need inform my research?

In what can be described as a deep dive into scientific enquiry, student statements about the school social system and its different social levels were elicited and analysed. It is about listening, thinking, reflecting and asking questions to uncover the individual student’s specific form of integration within the different social levels of the school. This was key to identifying and explaining how the school social system and its different social levels *tick* from students’ viewpoint through investigating their verbalised feelings of belonging. A distinction was determined between belonging as a biopsychic state and the “need to belong”. Belonging is a mental and psychic state that an individual student can reach due to the emotional-cognitive processes of the human brain – when resources or satisfiers for the “need to belong” fulfilment are accessible, i.e., for them to feel a sense of belonging.

The “need to belong” encompassed students’ biopsychic and social need tensions based on Werner Obrecht’s list of needs (2009, p. 27). By distinguishing between a student’s “need to belong” and a state of belonging, emphasis is placed on the practical issues that individual students may encounter in meet-

ing their needs while considering the strategies to achieve belonging. The interplay between the different social levels and the individual students directed me towards values and norms about human need tensions. The main point is to determine whether the different school levels promote or hinder the students' need fulfilment and facilitate their wellbeing – the term for the biopsychic state of a person with sufficient need regulation and satisfaction (ibid. 2009, p. 19).

My empirical research substantiates the complexity mentioned above by exploring and examining the nexus and interface where the individual student, classmates, teachers, and school management convene and interact on the different social levels of the school system. An example of this is how the human organism – a biological and psychic system, a single entity (individual) in their integration and position within a social system – cooperates with another human beings raising the questions *why, how, and to what end?*

In response to these questions, focus group interviews were conducted in two school sites to elicit student statements that addressed one or more biological, biopsychic and social needs (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). The first focus group interviews took place in a secondary school situated within a relatively densely populated, medium-sized Austrian town. This school enrolls a lower- to middle-class ethnic and linguistic diverse student population. The second set was conducted in a secondary school based in an urban area located in the south-eastern part of Australia. It has high admission standards that enrolls a middle-class, ethnic and linguistic diverse student population. Both are government-run public schools. Students live within the local school “Schulsprengel” (Austria) and catchment area or zone (Australia) specific to the school to enrol.

Post-data analysis, action guidelines are put forward to suggest ways to remedy the social problems of individual students – social problems that are theorised as a lack of access to material and immaterial resources for need fulfilment.

The research met with the policy requirements of the Austrian District School Authority and was therefore approved to be conducted in one Austrian secondary school. Scientific-ethics approval for the study conducted in the Australian secondary school was issued by the University of Siegen and endorsed by the State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Working with Children Check Policy, and associated procedures in Australia.

There is a fine art to academic expression and writing. It required deep practice to bring the researcher's voice to the foreground and brevity to take a clear stand in presenting an argument. The attention to detail and clarity is intended to invite the reader to take the arguments on board and endorse my thesis.

Acknowledgements

Over the past decade, there have been many people whose generous contributions of time and expertise were integral to completing this book.

I want to acknowledge the students, teachers, school management, staff and social workers of the schools in Austria and Australia where the fieldwork was conducted. Thank you for granting me access to your feelings, thoughts and views on how social-exchange relationships with others play out at school: what works well, where change is needed, and the rationale for change.

The successes achieved in the research, data analysis and write-up of the findings are attributed to the people who encouraged and supported me on this ambitious and memorable journey.

My deepest gratitude is extended to my first doctoral supervisor: Prof. Dr Phil. Gregor Lang-Wojtasik for his ability to challenge me to investigate alternative perspectives. I am in awe of his invaluable insight, knowledge and clarity. His highly esteemed support and encouragement got me back on track and to believe in myself as a researcher.

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Part I: Research focus and theoretical framework

Part I of the book addresses the sense of belonging, or the state of student belonging, described as a positive feeling due to emotional-cognitive processes in the human brain. The outline of the research problem, aims and questions will follow.

The school context is introduced with the description of social work in Austria and Australia featured as multi-professional student support services. School social work's triple mandate highlights the distinction between student belonging and children's rights and how they necessitate each other. What I mean by "triple mandate" is the extension of social work's mission to mediate between the interests of the social service providers and clients of social work through the addition of two core components: 1) the scientific foundation for practice and 2) the profession's code of ethics based on the commitment to human rights, reflected in social workers' value-judgements (Staub-Bernasconi, 2009, 2016).

A comprehensive review of the research literature generates assertions that drive this empirical investigation into student belonging. The conceptual framework developed for the current study – associated with four distinct need theories – is explained. It culminates in three synopses, drawn about the commonalities, the satisfaction of needs and belonging across all four approaches. Part I concludes with the realisation that students require access to resources to meet their "need to belong" and feel a state of belonging.

1 Introduction

Human need fulfilment is fundamental to human life. It is a complex undertaking that requires access to resources, referred to as satisfiers. If human beings are hindered in their need fulfilment, whether due to social or other constraints, this can negatively affect their wellbeing. The access to satisfiers for needs fulfilment is context dependent. This book features one such context that dominates children and adolescents' lives – the school social system. As young people spend a considerable amount of their time at school, their actions are shaped by it, and school, in turn, is shaped by their actions – as individuals and members of the school social system.

From this theoretical standpoint, school is a “social system” – the term used in this book in the tradition of Mario Bunge (1977b, 1977a, 1983, 1985, 1989). According to Bunge, a social system is defined as a concrete or material system that comprises social actors – human beings – in a shared environment, interacting through cooperation with the other members of the system. My professional background in social work is based on this understanding of social systems as tangible things that consist of individual actors as system components or members.

The definition of social systems as concrete things with individuals as its members is the basis of the social work systems theory paradigm *Systemtheoretische Paradigma der Sozialen Arbeit* (SPSA), developed by Werner Obrecht (1996, 2000, 2005a) and Silvia Staub-Bernasconi (1991, 1999; 2018) which has shaped the German tradition of social work science for the past 30 years. My thinking as a social work scientist evolved through using the SPSA as a framework in three domains – as an educator in bachelor's and master's programs, in the research for the current study, and over a decade in practice as a school social worker. In the latter role, I was concerned with developing remedies for the practical and social problems that confronted the students in a school social system. It came to my attention that dealing with the school meant navigating a complex social system. Such complexity is a given because of its different system members: students, teachers, school management and other school staff, such as school social workers. The crux of the matter is that individuals – with biological, psychic, and social needs – are simultaneously members of one or more social system/s (Bunge, 1977b, 2000; Obrecht, 2005a).

To understand the relations between the members of the school social system, it is necessary to understand a system's mechanisms and processes. In conjunction with the definition of “social system”, the term “mechanism” concerns the regularities and patterns in the behaviour of the different “macro-micro-micro-macro social relations” among the system members, i.e., how the

social system “ticks” when it comes to the members of its different social levels (Bunge, 1997, p. 410). Given the complexity of the school social system, this warrants a close study of its mechanisms and processes – because they are integral to understanding the way it works. Likewise, it contributes towards identifying and explaining the factors in the school social system that facilitate or hinder student access to resources for their need fulfilment.

In contrast to the definition of social systems used in this book (Bunge, 2000, p. 3; 2004a, p. 373), a second theoretical position, based on the anti-ontological systems theory of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1988), warrants particular mention. Luhmann’s understanding of social systems is the dominant theoretical position in the German and Austrian school education discourses. Extensive education research focuses on developing school theory that views school as a social system of communication (Lang-Wojtasik, 2008b, 2021). The difference here is that Luhmann perceives social systems in their functionality – meaning economy, politics, education, and so on – marked by system-own regulation of its parts or autopoiesis, which is driven through processes of inclusion and exclusion (1988, p. 230). Hence, social systems focus on their existence, distinct from the environment they interact with. Social systems consist of communication, which opposes Bunge’s definition of social systems – that they comprise individuals as their components or members. Luhmann’s understanding of social systems is a distinct perspective on school as a social system that serves as the foundational underpinning of education research and development. The impetus of education research based on Luhmann’s perspective of school as a social system is to develop education that prepares students for life in a diverse and changing local environment shaped by global factors. This combination of local and global is referred to as “glocal” and is centred around transformation (Robertson, 1994, pp. 33–34). It is used to study the role of school in the education of students with a focus on global citizenship – an approach to education that recognises education as a critical element of transformation.

Gregor Lang-Wojtasik (2008b, 2013, 2021) is a proponent of Luhmann’s theoretical approach. He bases the cornerstone of educational transformation from the perspective of Luhmann’s understanding of social systems on four dimensions: *Räumlich* spatial, *Zeitlich* temporal, *Sachlich* factual and *Sozial* social [original in italics, translation by the author] (2019, p. 35). The four dimensions aid development in education policies and practices for global citizenship complementary to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). It is about the interplay between environmental and social justice, both on the community level and globally, because the global level and vice versa impact the local level. Thus, the entrenchment of the school social system in past developments needs to move forwards to develop contemporary education fit for children and adolescents today. The term “school development” is a central topic related to the

school as a social system (Lang-Wojtasik, 2008a). As people are connected and interested in their social exchange relationships – locally and globally, in a positive and negative sense – environmental disasters in one country affect the lives and livelihoods of social citizens in that country and beyond. The boundaries and borders separating countries are human-made, i.e., socially constructed – although they can overlap with physical boundaries such as rivers, valleys, mountains or other natural topographies – the same applies to the economic and social policies. In addition, Lang-Wojtasik (2021) contends that education needs to be geared towards the individual student and their brain development. This concerns the process of learning while at the same time focusing on social equity and justice, locally and globally, to strive towards transformative education for world peace. Compared with Germany and Austria, there is less familiarity with Luhmann’s sociological systems perspective in Australian education discourse, which focuses on school policy and practices embedded in the marketisation of education.

The difference between Bunge’s and Luhmann’s conceptualising of social systems is that Luhmann does not advocate for a theory of the individual whereby Bunge does (Luhmann, 1988; Bunge, 2000, 2004a; Klassen, 2004). Lang-Wojtasik has developed a position on this through the previously mentioned differentiation of spatial, temporal, factual and social dimensions (2019, p. 35). As students navigate the different social levels of school in their interactions and social exchange relations, their actions to maintain or reinstate their bio values are marked by cooperation and competition. Cooperative action tends to be reciprocal because it is mutually beneficial for goal attainment, i.e., for need fulfilment. Competitive interaction would suggest that to meet their needs, students require access to naturally or artificially restricted resources, such as peers being open to new friendships, which can strain classroom interactions as the students jostle to make friends. Ideally, access to resources should be obtained through morally legitimate and legal means. The student adheres to social norms and rules in the social-exchange relationships with their peers, teachers, school management, and staff. Hence, a mismatch in how needs are met, or a lack of access to resources, can result in struggle and conflict among the social actors on the different social levels of the school.

As we saw earlier, young people spend a substantial part of their lives at school, a social system that shapes how they interact, form and sustain social relationships with peers and teachers. In this sense, student need fulfilment is regulated and legitimated through social norms and behavioural rules. Although classroom dynamics play a significant part in facilitating or hindering a person’s access to resources for need satisfaction that underlies deviant and rebellious student behaviour, the findings on school suspension show that the dynamics and interplay between the student, classmates and teachers are rarely taken into account as explanations for harmful and destructive behaviour (Du Plessis-Schneider, 2020b, p. 44).

The current study sought to identify, describe and explain the mechanisms and processes associated with student belonging and factors that facilitate their access to satisfiers to relieve their “need to belong” tensions. Likewise, it sought to establish which factors can impede the student’s need fulfilment. The core thesis is that school plays a leading role in student wellbeing by determining their access to satisfiers. Theories of human need were the basis – the theoretical vantage point – for analysing the empirical data generated from student statements that addressed “need to belong” fulfilment at school. Student belonging is associated with positive human emotions and wellbeing, an essential requirement of all human beings. Wellbeing is the expression of adequate need regulation. It is synonymous with the term “needs fulfilment” and “satisfaction” (Obrecht, 2009, p. 19). It expresses the pleasurable feelings derived from social bonds that recognise a person’s worth whilst acknowledging their independence as a subject (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25).

Similarly, Baumeister and Leary propose that belonging is the need to “form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships” intrinsic to the human condition (1995, p. 497). The difference is that the latter theorists position belonging as a psychological need. There is little reference to the relationship between the feeling of belonging and the social needs for the student to feel that they belong to the social systems they are members of. Student belonging requires stable and long-lasting relationships with others that satisfy the minimum intensity of close and strong feelings of emotional attachment. To achieve this, duties specific to a social-exchange relationship with another person, or the group members, are performed, such as actions of support. Through such activities, rights specific to that affiliation can be acquired.

Consequently, in this book, “belonging” is a feeling about a strong need. It is a state that could be achieved through, for example, the satisfaction of the social need for socio-cultural belonging. It can emerge through establishing and maintaining reciprocal social ties to another person or group, along with the rights and duties specific to that bond or group membership (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). Belonging is evident by mutual support and interest in each other’s wellbeing through caring, affection, cooperation, and significance in the interactions and social exchange relationships. It concerns the human biopsychic and social needs that drive individuals to establish and maintain strong emotional bonds with other individuals and members of smaller and larger social systems. Student belonging requires “need to belong” fulfilment along a continuum of different intensities or nuances. This depends on individual preferences and not a mutually exclusive dichotomy of belonging versus not belonging or the belonging/not-belonging continua (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, p. 499).

Correspondingly, belonging is about the state of need satisfaction and not equilibrium. If a state of needs equilibrium were to be achieved, the human needs range, which signifies the extent of need tensions, would remain in a

constantly stable state. However, in reality, there is no such state. Human beings are subject to change; thus, “to become” is “to be” (Obrecht, 2000, p. 211). Hence, all things are constantly in a state of change and are thus more or less dynamic. The duration of a state in which something can remain stable can extend for a shorter or longer period but not indefinitely (Bunge, 1981, p. 5).

Public school is a state-or government-run and funded institution mandated to organise and administer education to children and adolescents. It is embedded in specific geographical, political, economic and social contexts to educate young people to be(come) active members participating in that society. The role of the school is pivotal in supporting students’ learning and navigating the complexities of the world and their place in it. It provides the structural framework for socialisation. In the early 20th century, American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey addressed this in his writings on education and democracy. Education was emphasised as the

“[...] method of transmission which forms the dispositions of the immature; [...]” (1916, p. 4).

However, the transmission alone is insufficient because a more profound and substantial form of instruction is essential for humans to form and sustain communities. This emphasises the significance of school education which is part of the common good: to guide students in gaining the knowledge to understand, share and participate in working towards the “aims, beliefs and knowledge” of the community. In this sense, school plays a significant role in the socialisation of young people because here they learn about the ways and means to access resources as requirements for their human need satisfaction.

Because the “need to belong” concerns universal needs, human beings are intrinsically motivated or driven into action to relieve their need tension. This is done through interaction and social relationships with others, directed towards restoring the preferred internal state or bio value, an intrinsic regulatory and socially integrative function of the human brain and nervous system (Obrecht, 2009, pp. 15–16). These processes encompass affective and cognitive mechanisms that detect deviations from the organism’s desired state of satisfaction. Need tensions do not occur in a vacuum but can be simultaneous, in a dynamic, unstructured and chaotic way, with different need tensions alerting the organism to action for need fulfilment. This means that the human organism seeks to satisfy needs beyond the biopsychic to include social needs. Much the same as group membership is a resource to meet the social needs for acceptance and recognition, it is a resource for the biopsychic need for essential skills, rules, and social norms to manage new and repetitive situations specific to an affiliation. The individual develops a social bond with other individuals or the members of social groups. It signifies the person’s primary groups, such as the elementary family, friendship group, class cohort and school commu-

nity. These social relationships can influence or even determine a student's access to material and immaterial resources for their need fulfilment.

Similarly, school policies and practices alongside the national legislation and international human rights treaties provide students with access to the resources required to meet their needs. Woodhead and Brooker (2008, pp. 3–6) contend that while belonging is not explicitly defined as a right in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC),¹ it is a central thread that runs through the UNCRC Articles that focus on the provision, protection and participation of children in all walks of life. For example, an excerpt from UNCRC Article 28, the right to education, under section (e), specifies that “measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates” must be taken. UNCRC Article 29, the goals of education, under section (e), states that education must develop the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Likewise, Article 2 states that children have the right not to be discriminated against, and Article 12 specifies that children have the right to participate in matters concerning themselves (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). In other words, young people are guaranteed the provision and support of the state to access the resources required to meet their biopsychic and social needs at school.

1.1 Defining “belonging” and “need to belong”

According to the definitions of different studies, the word “belong” comes from the Old English “gelang” and Middle English “belangian”, with its roots in the German language (Dekeyser et al., 1999, p. 146). The Oxford English dictionary (2012, p. 59) lists “to belong” as a verb that indicates togetherness with a group or “category”. In this sense, it is used to express affiliation with someone or something external to the self. It is associated with feelings of familiarity. Group association can be self-selected or external, i.e., when a person is assigned to a group, they can “be rightly put into a particular position or category”. The word “belong” can indicate ownership of a thing. Overall, to belong is challenging to pinpoint because of the fluidity of its use to show the association with a group or the ownership of a thing.

In this book, the feeling of belonging as a psychic state of positive feeling and the “need to belong” are distinguished. The “need to belong” is conceptu-

1 The Austrian government signed the UNCRC on the 26th of August 1990 and ratified it on the 6th of August 1992. The Australian government signed UNCRC on the 22nd of August 1990 and ratified it on the 17th of December 1990. Through ratification, the governments of both countries committed to complying with the Articles within the Convention (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

alised as universal human biopsychic and social need tensions based on Obrecht's list of needs (2009, p. 27). The "need to belong" concerns the student's access to satisfiers such as social-exchange relationships with other individuals and members of the different levels of the school social system. The requirement to form and maintain social relationships with others is owed to the fact that human beings are self-knowledgeable. Humans regulate their behaviour in the social environment through emotio-cognitive mechanisms and processes that are inherent to the human condition. In this sense, belonging can be seen as a feeling, i.e., a mental state that is achieved because student "need to belong" fulfilment is facilitated. The existence of needs is not measured by overt behaviour but the biological and biopsychic consequences, such as stress resulting from a student's unsuccessful attempts to satisfy their "need to belong" at school (cf. Chapter 4). In comparison to other belonging theorists such as Baumeister and Leary (1995, p. 497)² – who define belonging based on the quality of interpersonal relationships that are motivated by human needs – in the current study, belonging is about needs that have different elasticity, i.e., the timeframe that a need tension can go unmet without serious harm. Student belonging as a state of wellbeing incorporates a broad perception of needs as biopsychic and social (Obrecht, 2005a, 2009, p. 27). The point being belonging is a state, not a need. The state of belonging is achieved when the individual has met their need tensions through social-exchange relations with other individuals or the members of social groups. Needs are intrinsic mechanisms linked with processes within the organism that motivate students to seek relationships of different intensities.

1.2 Research problem

At the core of the current study is examining student "need to belong" fulfilment at school as a precursor to, or to maintain, the positive feeling of belonging – a psychic state. The "need to belong" concerns access to resources for need satisfaction that can be achieved in the interactions and social exchange relationships with the members of the school and its different social levels: peers, teachers, school management and other staff members, such as the school social worker. In this sense, the school social system sets the regulative

- 2 As their analyses were conducted at the early stage of research on belonging as a psychological need in their field, it positioned their work at the forefront of psychology research on belonging. Their findings have retained a position of prominence in the contemporary student belonging discourse that focuses on belonging as a human need – as a value intrinsic to the human make-up (Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters, 2016, p. 99).

framework for the interaction by encouraging certain behaviours and discouraging others. But what if there is a lack or absence of social norms regulating interactions on the different social levels of the school social system? Similarly, the school social system may exacerbate practical and social problems,³ whether intentional or not.

A study conducted by Flashman (2012, p. 65) shows how the context influences the social-exchange relations. The research findings identified friendship with peers as a critical factor for academic achievement. However, academic achievement is shown as a statistically significant factor for friendship over time, with students more likely to form friendships that reflect their level of academic achievement. This drives educational disadvantage for low-achieving students. They are more likely to form friendships with other students who do poorly at school, perpetuating a low achievement cycle. Better academic achievement could mean the loss of an existing friendship before accepting or establishing new social relations with high-achieving peers. Interestingly, it corroborates previous research findings that show social-exchange relationships are a crucial determinant of student belonging and that young people form friendships with peers who share similar characteristics, such as socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and values about academic achievement. Flashman's (2012) research findings corresponded with my observations as a school social worker and spurred the interest in examining students' views on feelings of belonging at school.

Conversely, in a review of research on adolescent motivation in middle school, Anderman and Maehr (1994, pp. 287–288) show that a strong focus on educational outcomes could negatively affect students' sense (feeling) of belonging. When academic achievement is perceived as the overriding objective of the school, and there is low interest in the students' social skills, cooperation and friendship, the individual student is prioritised over the collective of the class cohort. This imbalance leads to a rift between the individual student and the collective, as they compete for scarce resources, namely, the teacher's recognition and praise. Such a stance increases competition and rivalry among the classmates to the detriment of peer-student social-exchange relationships. Something similar holds for students with high workloads when they have less

3 Social problems come about when individuals cannot solve their practical problems, i.e., a lack (or the denial) of access to resources for biological, biopsychic and social need fulfilment (Obrecht, 2005b, 2009, p. 27). Unresolved need tensions can have negative biopsychic consequences such as aggression which can result in additional social problems or reinforce existing problems resulting in an accumulation of problems such as social alienation (ibid., 2005a, p. 39) Hence, the resulting social problems are problems of individuals in social systems (ibid., 2005a, pp. 37–38).

time to play or socialise because it can have a negative effect⁴ on their access to interactions and relationships with peers. Through one-sidedly encouraging academic competition between students, coupled with restrictive discipline policies and practices, the school stands in the way of biological, psychic and social need fulfilment (Obrecht, 2005a, 2009, p. 27). Another factor contributing is a lack of clarity on the regulative framework that adjudicates the teachers' responses to students who are thought to lack friendships and the social-emotional support of their peers, or if students report feelings of social rejection, isolation and alienation.

The school social system, which comprises different social levels, plays a role in the social exchanges between students, teachers, school management and other staff members. The different social levels can facilitate or hinder student access to resources for needs fulfilment. The social exchanges on these different levels could be reciprocal or marked by a student's lack of power to control their access to resources for "need to belong" fulfilment. This could be caused by low social status or status imbalances related to age, sex and first language. An example of interaction problems that thwart student belonging, linked with adverse school outcomes, could be a student's unsatisfactory integration in the classmate social level due to recurring school suspensions for disruptive behaviour (Du Plessis-Schneider, 2020). On closer examination, the student could have low-level majority language skills, low grades and sought social recognition from classmates by acting out (Schneider, 2013). Similarly, the link between school suspensions, not belonging, academic achievement and school dropout was examined in a meta-analysis of 53 cases of school suspension derived from 34 studies. The findings show that the relationship between suspensions and achievement was significantly inverse. There were negative associations between social relationships with their peers, which related to psychological distress because of poor academic achievement (Noltemeyer, Ward and McLoughlin, 2015, pp. 227–229).

The variations in the macro-social policy level approaches to immigration in Austria and Australia sparked interest in conducting school research on student belonging in the two countries. It seemed an exciting starting point to think about research on human needs, especially around issues of universality. Austrian immigration policies are generally geared towards restricting immigration, particularly people coming from outside of the European Union (Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell, 2019; Herzog-Punzenberger, 2003b; Herzog-Punzenberger, 2003a). In contrast, the Australian immigration system is engineered to receive immigrants, but with a caveat: a stringent point system that reflects corporate governance demands. This translates to a selection process of those whose applications are accepted and those who are not, which is reg-

4 Effect is the result of something, i.e., "cause and effect". For example, the storm caused a dramatic effect on the physical wellbeing of students because they were injured when a tree was uprooted in the gale-force wind.

ulated in the Migration Program that developed out of the Migration Act (Australia: Migration Act, 1958) and the Migration Regulations Act (Migration Regulations, 1994). The second form of migration is the Humanitarian Program which is not directly linked to a point-based system. Bearing this in mind raises the question of the possible overlaps and differences that could arise from the varying approaches of Austrian and Australian immigration policies and whether this might influence student belonging at school.

Herzog-Punzenberger (2003a, p. 29) identified a significant difference between students in Austria with immigrant heritage and non-migrant students.⁵ For instance, students with immigrant heritage growing up in Austria felt less content with their lives than their parents, which was not the case for non-migrant students. This difference is linked to the education systems delayed response to recognising heterogeneity or developing support systems for minority language and immigrant students (Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell, 2019, p. 114). To address the developments, the Austrian education policies and practices of the 1970s should have been designed to support the changing demographics by optimising all students access to quality education. Instead, the learning requirements of students with German as a second language (GSL),⁶ *Deutsch als zweite Sprache* (DaZ), went largely unaddressed until around 25 years later. At the start of the current study, the policy inadequacies that negatively affected equity in student education attainment were prevalent. In contrast, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 data set – examined the correlation between student social background and their learning outcomes in Australia – shows no notable difference between the English language performance of the second language (ESL) and majority language students (2010b, pp. 70–71). These findings further deepened my interest in student language and belonging in Austria and Australia.

Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell (2019, pp. 111–113) contend that a disproportionately high number of students with Turkish as a first language are referred to special educational-needs schools. Referrals were made based on the students' low German language proficiency and poor school behaviour. This is linked with school policy and practice shortcomings that date from the 1990s back to the 1970s. The research tradition at the time was primarily descriptive and sought to establish student functioning, i.e., German language proficiency, in the Austrian school system. A second research tradition used quantitative research methodology to examine the relationship between the low academic outcomes of students with migration heritage and education inequalities concerning family social demographics. This meant that the relationship

5 In the current study, students with an immigrant heritage were jointly considered first, second and third generations.

6 The terms students with German as a second language and minority language students are used interchangeably in the current study.

between school policy, practice, and students' low academic outcomes with migration heritage was sidestepped (Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell, 2019, pp. 111–113). This development thwarted the integration of students with diverse language and cultural heritage in mainstream Austrian schools. As family social demographics, i.e., not speaking German at home, and socio-economic stress factors were crucial areas of research focus to assess the root cause of student low academic outcomes, school and welfare policy and practice was developed in that direction. However, a lack of rigorous data put the findings on shaky ground. There is a growing body of cumulative research from the 2000s onwards that covers the areas of intercultural education, ethnicity, education inequalities and discrimination. However, school policy and practice to accommodate the diverse student population lagged in development in Austria. Education in Australia focused on preserving the language skills and cultural identity of students with migration heritage. The approach was implemented through the multicultural education policy. It was widely regarded as beneficial for the students, their family and community livelihood, and generally for Australian society (Alcorso and Cope, 1986; Saha, 2019, p. 66).

The OECD (2017b, p. 6) report on school education equity in Austria drew on the PISA data sets from 2012 and 2015. It showed that GSL students underperformed in numeracy and literacy compared with majority-language students. These findings corresponded with Bruneforth and Lassnigg (2012, p. 24) on Austria, with a population of around one-fifth of migration heritage. They indicated that 36% of the students with migration heritage were in two risk groups and 2% with migration heritage in three risk groups. The risks mentioned were associated with students not speaking German at home and having educationally disadvantaged parents or parents with low occupational status. In comparison, students in Australia with migrant heritage were shown to have performed better on average than those without migrant heritage, irrespective of their socio-economic background (Ibid., 2012, p. 154).

In a secondary analysis, Willms (2003) used PISA2000 to identify concerns around the nexus between student belonging and participation.⁷ The findings show that Austria scored significantly above the average (515 was the country mean) in the sense of belonging and participation (Willms, 2003, p. 20). In comparison, Australia's country score aligned with the average. Concerning student-teacher relations, Austria scored 0.4, which is lower than Australia's score above 6.0.

7 The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) started in 1995 as a program of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): PISA assesses the quality of education through testing student academic proficiency across countries and generating comparative data. The OECD carries out comparative research on education across member countries and negotiates research in cooperation with non-OECD countries.

In a secondary analysis of PISA data from 2012 and 2015, the findings showed a decline in student belonging across member countries. This decline was traced back to students feeling unsafe because of an upsurge in bullying or awareness about the bullying (OECD, 2017b, p. 19). In comparing the findings on Austria and Australia, the percentage of students who disagreed with the statement “I feel like an outsider (or left out of things) at school” among Austrian students was 86.1, above the OECD average of 82.8. Australian students scored below the OECD average at 76.5. In response to the statement “other students made fun of me”, students in Austria scored 11.9, above the OECD average of 10.9. Australian students scored 15.1, a figure considerably above the OECD average of 10.9. This indicated higher bullying or awareness about bullying in Australian students than among the Austrian students and in the OECD average (OECD, 2017b, pp. 46–47). In member countries, 42% of students who reported being frequently bullied also reported feeling like outsiders. Students in OECD countries who felt like outsiders at school were three times more likely to say that they were not satisfied with their lives than those who did not feel outsiders. From a macro policy perspective, Austria and Australia have different migration regulations. There are differences in the OECD reports on the accessibility of education that show second-language German-speaking students have difficulties accessing equal-education opportunities. The OECD reports higher scores on bullying or awareness of bullying among Australian students compared with Austrian students, as shown above. Equal access to education and concerns around school safety is core to students’ access to resources to meet their “need to belong” at school.

From the onset of the current study, questions arose about the possible differences and commonalities in students’ view of belonging across language, age, sex, schools and countries. If this were the case, would the underlying mechanisms and processes in the school social system be identified and explained in the context of student need fulfilment at school? These questions were closely examined and resulted in clarifying the aims and research questions guiding the current study.

1.3 Aim and research questions

The object of enquiry in the current study is student “need to belong” fulfilment at school as the requirement for the psychic (emotional-cognitive brain) processes that give rise to the feeling or state of belonging. Student statements concerning student-peer and student-teacher interactions and social-exchange relationships were elicited to identify, explain and prognose the possible access of students to resources or satisfiers, or the lack thereof, for “need to belong” satisfaction at school. The phrase “need to belong” is in quotation marks be-

cause it encapsulates the three need classes – biological, biopsychic and social – that were sourced from Obrecht’s human needs list (2009, p. 27).

The aim was twofold: firstly, to elicit students’ statements that addressed or empirically met one or more of Obrecht’s list of needs to determine the processes and mechanisms⁸ that facilitated, or hindered, the “need to belong” fulfilment at school. Secondly, to identify student responses if access to resources was hindered, locate possible practical and social problem/s on the relevant social levels of the school social system that were associated with hindrances in “need to belong” fulfilment, and identify possible linkages between student age, sex and first language.

At the onset of the research, there were three broad topic areas of interest, namely, the students, the teachers and the school system. Two *prima facie* questions were formulated to guide the early stage of the enquiry:

- 1) How do students perceive⁹ their interactions with their peers and teachers in relation to their sense of belonging at school?
- 2) How can the school system¹⁰ influence¹¹ student belonging?

The *prima facie* questions reflect the initial interest in students’ perceptions and experiences of belonging at school. While perception occurs in our nervous system, i.e., as a response to something generated through neurocognitive human brain function, facts are different. Facts concern concrete things in flux that undergo scientifically lawful changes (Bunge, 2017, pp. 113–114). In this sense, facts are at variance with the phenomenon.¹² For the current study, this

8 The term “mechanism” means “[...] processes in concrete (material) systems, whether physical, social, technical or of some other kind” (Bunge, 2004b, p. 191). To grasp the central function of mechanisms, a specific type of system, namely systemism, purports that everything is either a system or the component of a system (Bunge, 1981, p. 30).

9 Bunge (2003b, p. 210) perception starts with sensing or recording and identifying (interpreting) the object of sensation. For example, student perceives that the teacher shouts and describes this in the focus group interview.

10 Analysis of a system entails its “composition, environment, structure and mechanism” (Bunge, 2003b, p. 282).

11 The term “influence” refers to human behaviour altered through something that impacts our actions (Bunge, 2003b).

12 Bunge (2003b, p. 212) argues that the use of the term “phenomenon” is misleading because it is incorrectly used instead of the word “fact” but concerns the “appearance to someone” of something which is not a fact of reality but an interpretation of the appearance of something. A fact, according to Bunge, is produced in a scientifically rigorous experiment (ibid., 2003b, p. 104). As the focus of the current study is student’s voice, statements were taken as facts of focus group participants concerning the “need to belong” fulfilment at school using a qualitative methodology for data collection as a suitable approach to accessing student voice (Czer-niawski, 2011).

distinction is essential because social systems are dynamic. They undergo changes related to their structure, mechanisms, processes and environment, all of which are material, i.e., exist in reality (Bunge, 1981, p. 109). The connection between facts and ideas, “Facts are facts are facts, even when produced in the light of ideas” (Bunge, 1993, p. 215), situates facts and the corresponding ideas in the epistemological frame, realism—the philosophical position of the current study. As phenomenology is concerned with the individual’s subjective perspective, facts are events outside human neurocognitive brain processes. This is not to say that there should be a preference for one or the other, but there is a distinction between facts and human perceptions, which is at the core of the current study. Hence, the individual student is seen as a member of the school social system and its different social levels.

School is a specific type of concrete system – a complex social system. It is in an exact geographic location with the distinct societal role of providing formal education to children and adolescents. It is commissioned to develop and implement education that contributes to students’ learning and future career trajectory. In this sense, the school has social (societal), scientific and ethical obligations. It incorporates social norms and rules that determine the corresponding duties and rights inherent in that social system (Obrecht, 2005a). Interaction and social relationships have social and cultural elements: social in the sharing and exchange of material and immaterial resources, and cultural in how this process is organised around social norms and codified in verbal and non-verbal acts of communication (Lang-Wojtasik, 2008b).

The *prima facie* questions help to clarify and narrow down the scope of the research interest. In this process, the focus shifted from gauging the satisfaction of needs themselves to exploring issues around students’ access to material and immaterial resources or satisfiers to meet their “need to belong” and feel a sense of belonging at school. The interplay between access to resources for need fulfilment, and the student’s first language, age and sex became of interest because these characteristics are shown to play a role in student-peer and student-teacher relations in the review of the research literature on student belonging, as discussed in Chapter 3. Likewise, my professional background and experience in the field as a school social worker corresponds with the research findings on language, age and sex, and made me curious about the underlying processes and mechanisms and whether they were associated with “need to belong” fulfilment – and if so, how.

The *prima facie* questions underwent refinement to specify the research focus further. This was an iterative and non-linear process that entailed developing my knowledge base and challenging the preconceived ideas against the research findings on student belonging based on different human needs theories. My biases that stemmed from traversing different school social systems in South Africa and Australia as an immigrant child were identified and reflected upon. Boundary issues concerning the researcher role contrasted with

my former role as a school social worker. The latter addressed social problems to develop and implement social work interventions to remedy social problems. As a researcher, the line of interest changed to the systematic collection and analysis of students' statements that address or empirically satisfy one or more of Obrecht's list of needs (2009, p. 27). The central part of a reflective process is to identify, acknowledge and reflect on a system of thought and the associated bias inherent in preconceived ideas about the object of the research. It was borne in mind that this process is integral to research because to ignore one's thoughts would obscure the research participant voice (Maxwell, 2012, p. 82). Reflection, coupled with knowledge acquisition, drew me closer to the core interest in students' statements about the social-exchange relationships with their peers and teachers and the impact on their "need to belong" fulfillment. The objective is to pinpoint what facilitates or hinders student access to resources to satisfy the "need to belong" at school.

The overarching research question and two sub-questions distinguish between three social levels: the student-classmate, student-teacher and student-school social system.

The overarching research question is:

How do students describe their positive and negative feelings about the possibility or impossibility to satisfy the "need to belong" in class and the school system?

And the sub-questions are:

- 1) *How do students describe the satisfaction of their "need to belong" in relation to their classmates, teachers and the school social system?*
- 2) *Do the students have plans or strategies to overcome the frustration of their "need to belong"? What social level is referred to, and in what way does it matter?*

1.4 The conceptual framework

The current research is underpinned by ontological materialism and evolutionary emergent systemism (Bunge, 2004b, p. 191). In the words of Bunge, it is a scientific worldview that is open to "analysis, criticism and correction" (2003b, p. 313). It underscores the importance of transparency and accountability in the research process, given that social systems are dynamic and in flux. Systemism is defined as the intersection of social systems where the individual and collective meet and interact, which comprises the: 1) individual or atomic, 2) collective or holistic, and 3) the intersection. Bunge's ontological position holds that the individual and collective are equally important. In this sense, students, the subject of the current study, are viewed as individuals and members of the school social system and its different social levels, i.e., the class

cohort or classmates, teachers, school management and staff. As nothing exists in isolation, the different social levels of the school social system, i.e., the structure, processes and mechanisms influence the individual and their need fulfilment. Ontological systemism has both conceptual and practical implications for the current study. “Conceptual” means the framework that is developed to make sense of things. “Practical” refers to the research design, objectives, data collection, and analysis set to identify, describe, and explain the social mechanisms associated with student “need to belong” fulfilment at school.

The book’s epistemological position is that of scientific realism, a fine-tuning of critical realism that distinguishes between the external or extrinsic world and the subjective human experience of it (Bunge, 1993, pp. 232–233). It is an epistemology concerned with knowledge about the real world, of which the individual student is a member or component, alongside the other members of the school social system. Students engage in social-exchange actions to cooperate or compete on the different social levels of the system, the focal area of social science research. Subsequently, social science is, by default, the scientific study of social reality that is constructed through neurocognitive processes in the human brain, i.e., related to subjective factors that, once they are called into existence, are as real as natural material things or objects (Bunge, 2003a, p. 37). The difference is that social science, according to scientific realism, is not concerned with making guesses about human action or the reasons for a person’s action, but instead seeks to explain the mechanism and processes that are inherent to these actions, i.e., possible relationship. Typically, causal relationships are associated with the natural sciences and a quantitative research methodology. In social science, using a qualitative methodology, relationships are understood in a broader sense – eliciting student statements about the individual and their function as a member of different social system levels and how these are interrelated. Other approaches to data collection are the observation of human actions, formulating hypotheses and conducting experiments. The research questions for the current study were used for data collection and a two-part analysis which was the basis to develop working hypotheses (cf Subsection 7.3) (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). Thus, the qualitative research methodology used in the current study is compatible with the scientific realism epistemology along the lines of Bunge, mainly because of the openness of this approach to issues of fallibility (1993, p. 230). However, as with other epistemological positions, scientific realism poses limitations. In the current study, one such limitation was that the student statements about their interactions and social relationships with peers and teachers were subjective and thus not objectively observable. This is a point worth mentioning, but it does not have implications for the rigour of the current study, as the methodological focus was geared to collect data from students and thus put student voice at the centre of the data collection.

Because students are biopsychic human organisms, the exchange with the external reality in the interactions and social relationships with others has an influence on their brains. The individual requires the collective, which is made up of at least one other person, to meet their needs (Obrecht, 2005a). Hence, individuals are members of at least one social system: friendship group, class cohort, school community, etc. Similarly, epistemological realism provides a foundation for social work research because reality exists before the social analysis. Thus, it is not a social product because the underlying structures and mechanisms that makeup reality are consistent, compared to our perceptions of it, continually changing (Bunge, 1997, pp. 416–417).

A purely objective truth, in the sense of reflections on Bunge's (2003b, pp. 242–243) scientific realist epistemological stance, is emphasised in the observation of human actions and scientific experiments. As the focus of the current study is student's voice, the interest was to develop a research design to collect statements from students about everyday school (Czerniawski, 2011). At the early stage of the research process, the objective truth presented a conundrum: how to garner objective truth using a qualitative methodology. Objective truth was not a viable course of action for data collection because students' voice was paramount, bringing things back to social facts versus objective truths. The conundrum was resolved by making a distinction between social facts and objective truths. Through a deep theoretical dive into the matter of truth, fact and social fact, it was concluded that a social fact is distinct because the student – the social actor – generates social facts as emotional-cognitive neural processes in the brain (Bunge, 1997). Objective truth can be objective-verified using brain activity-measuring technology. Thus, the social fact is compatible with a realism epistemology. Social facts hinge on the neurocognitive brain processes of students that generate them, which, as previously said, once out there in the world, are as real as other material things (Bunge, 2010). Hence, scientific realism does not negate subjectively *per se*, but research is biased around feelings and values concerning the object of the study. Thus, it is vital to identify, acknowledge and reflect our biases to prevent us, as researchers, from intercepting or tainting the data collection and analysis. Similarly, the researcher's engagement in critical reflection and ongoing commitment to carefulness, scepticism and reflexivity is central to rigorous research (Mayring, 2002; Maxwell, 2012; Gray, 2014, p. 20; Flick, 2018a).

Theories of human need to identify and explain the underlying process and mechanisms of the “need to belong” inform conceptual framework of the current study (Bunge, 1977b; Obrecht, 2005a, 2005b). The term “theory” is used in reference to a conceptual system that the human brain developed. It unearths the relations between “ideation”, the cognitive process of forming a new concept in the brain, and the concept itself, to develop ideas about the workings of structures to perform certain functions based on rules and laws that determine how things operate or “tick” (Bunge, 1993, p. 229). As Maxwell (2012, pp.

104–105) emphasises, from the epistemological perspective of critical realism, developing a conceptual framework to support and inform a research project requires a lengthy clarification and adaptation of the research purpose, aims, and questions. Similarly, Yin (2014, pp. 36–38) asserts that the theoretical framework informs the research question/s. It requires a systematic structure of concepts and propositions to examine and explore the object, fact or occurrence at the centre of the research.

In the current study, the research object is student belonging, and more specifically, students’ “need to belong”. Hence, a multidisciplinary review of the research literature on human needs and student belonging is undertaken that spans the fields of social work science,¹³ education science, psychology and sociology (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Brazelton and Greenspan, 2000; Osterman, 2000; Ben-Arieh et al., 2001; Fuhr, 2002; Andresen and Albus, 2010).

A qualitative methodology was used to generate data by exploring student statements about the determinants – objects, facts and occurrences that facilitate or hinder access to resources for need fulfilment (Bunge, 1977b; Obrecht, 2005a, 2009). The empirical research was conducted at two school sites. The impetus of the fieldwork was to identify social mechanisms and gain insight into the underlying processes associated with student “need to belong” fulfilment. Multi-disciplinary insights were taken from psychology, sociology, social work science and education science on human needs to conduct a deep dive into the mechanisms and processes integral to human functioning. The identical research design was used in both schools. All stages of the fieldwork were monitored for compatibility to ensure the rigorousness of the research framework and application. Other than the languages used to conduct the fieldwork and focus group interviews, the research procedures, methods and techniques were the same in both schools.

The case study method applies to the fieldwork, the data analysis and writing up because the schools are separate entities and individually examined in their specific historical, environmental and social context. For the current study, the schools were coded case study one (CS_1) for the Austrian school and case study two (CS_2) for the Australian school. CS_1 is zoned in a rural catchment area, *Schulsprengel I*, in a densely populated region of Austria. It is a secondary school that enrolls a lower-to middle-class ethnically and linguistically diverse student population. CS_2 is zoned in an urban catchment area located in the south-eastern part of Australia. It has high admission standards and enrolls a middle-class, ethnically and linguistically diverse student population.

13 In the current study, science is factual, i.e. it concerns the description, explanation and prognosis of facts about concrete things (Bunge, 1981, p. 30).

The focus group interviews with students in the two schools were conducted to gain insight into their “need to belong” fulfilment generated through statements that addressed one or more of Obrecht’s list of needs (2009, p. 27). As reality is viewed through a specific social work lens that defines the biopsychosocial problems of individuals as components or members of social systems as its object base, the student statements that indicated “where the shoe pinches”, so to speak, were of crucial interest (Obrecht, 2005a, p. 154; Staub-Bernasconi, 2009, pp. 25–26). As a method to generate data, focus group interviews positioned student voices at the centre of the research (2011, p. 18). In using this method, the current study sought to identify, explain and make prognoses about the school social system and what facilitated or hindered student “need to belong” fulfilment on different social levels. The focus group interviews were geared towards generating verbal exchange between the participants and moderator in response to the question guideline developed for this purpose. In the focus group setting, emergent properties develop through verbalised thoughts and ideas between the participants. This method facilitates a nuanced exchange between the participants and the moderator (Hennessy and Heary, 2005; Finch, Lewis and Turley, 2013; Krueger and Casey, 2014; Ritchie, Elan, et al., 2014). Compared to face-to-face interviews between an interviewee and a researcher, the verbal exchange between peers in the focus group interview had the added advantage of generating ideas that would not arise in an individual student face-to-face interview setting. In this sense, the research design draws from systemism because the data generated from the group setting, i.e., the whole system, is greater than its parts or the individual student’s (Bunge, 2004b, p. 191).

Focus group interviews were conducted with students in two schools, one in Austria and one in Australia. The sessions were conducted in the majority language of each school: German at the secondary school in Austria and English at the secondary school in Australia. The student participants responded to the question guideline and discussed their experiences and views in small groups with their peers. The focus groups were age- and not year-level based; the groups were composed of students from either the same class cohort, the same year level, or a year level behind or ahead. The data generated were transcribed and analysed to identify patterns that translated to similarities and differences in students’ “need to belong” fulfilment across focus groups and schools. The data analysis process was twofold. Firstly, on an individual participant level, student portraits were developed to identify the positive and negative feelings of each student about the possibility or impossibility to satisfy the “need to belong” in the class cohort and school social system (Ritchie, Elan, et al., 2014, p. 125). The data analysis was conducted through data reduction by sorting students’ statements into four levels: biological, psychic/psychological, social and socio-cultural, using Obrecht’s theory-driven list of needs (2009, p. 27). Secondly, a whole focus group structured-content analysis was

conducted. The research questions and a data-driven inductive coding system drove the analysis (Kuckartz, 2012).

1.5 Summary and consequences for the research design

The tenets of social work as a human rights profession inform the disciplinary lens of the theoretical and philosophical framework of the current study (Schneider, 2007; Staub-Bernasconi, 2009, 2016, 2017; Du Plessis-Schneider, 2020). Set against the backdrop of my prior experience in Austrian secondary schools as a school social worker, this led to the current study's enquiry into identifying, describing and explaining the underlying mechanisms of student belonging within the school context. In doing this, non-observable mechanisms, namely, human biological, biopsychic and biopsychic-social needs, were investigated. This entailed identifying the linkages between the focus group participants verbalised feelings, thoughts and views. The underlying non-observable mechanisms were explained from the standpoint of belonging as a state when students "need to belong" can be satisfied, or the possibility for "need to belong" satisfaction is given, i.e., students have access to resources such as relationships with peers and teachers. Hence, the enquiry sought to identify and explain the factors that facilitate, or hinder, students from meeting their biological, biopsychic and biopsychic-social needs. This approach is consistent with Maxwell's (2012, p. 90) concepts concerning the investigation of

"unobservable entities and processes [...]. It is completely legitimate, and often more productive, to frame your research questions in terms of the actual phenomena and processes that you think may be involved in the things you study, even if you can't directly observe these [...]".

For example, research students expressed anger by using strong language. However, strong language can be a form of identification within the clique or gain recognition or social standing in the focus group interview.

The data collected in focus group interviews underwent a two-part data analysis to hypothesise¹⁴ and explain the social facts linked to the hindrances of students' "need to belong" fulfilment at school. It is postulated that students have needs that must be met so that they feel belonging at school. Because the human organism is made up of highly complex body systems that perform mental functions in the brain, the spinal cord and a network of nerves through-

14 Bunge (2001, pp. 36–37) contended that 'scientific hypothesising' concerns "educated and testable guesses about imperceptible things and processes". In the social sciences, these informed guesses can be about values and norms, in addition to facts.

out the body, and those systems that perform the cerebral cortex-endocrine functions, it is postulated that students have needs that must be met so that they experience belonging at school – hence “need to belong” (Bunge, 2003b, p. 150; Obrecht, 2009, p. 13).

Part I of the book outlines the problem or core issue investigated in the current study and the theoretical considerations. It comprises four chapters. In Chapter 1, the book is introduced with the definition of “belonging” and “need to belong” used in the current study. The research problem, aims, research questions and conceptual framework are outlined. Chapter 2 focuses on schooling in Austria and Australia, the human rights underpinnings of education in the two countries and their crucial school social work developments. Chapter 3 is the literature review on needs and student belonging. In Chapter 4, the theoretical framework of human needs theory is presented, including an outline of the historical developments. The theoretical underpinnings of four needs theories, those of Ilse Arlt (1921), Abraham Maslow (1943), Jutta Mägdefrau (2006) and Werner Obrecht (2005b, 2009), are introduced, and the synopsis of “belonging” drawn up. This is the basis of belonging and the “need to belong” in the current study.

Part II concerns the empirical research and the resulting conclusions for social work. Chapter 5 lays out the research design, i.e., the ontological and epistemological position and the methodological and method framework. This is discussed against the ethical guidelines, case study approach and focus group blueprint used for sampling and conducting the focus group interviews. The fieldwork in each school or case study is discussed in detail in a separate section: the Austrian school (CS_1) fieldwork in subsection 5.6, and the Australian school (CS_2) fieldwork is laid out in subsection 5.7. Chapter 6 features the two-part data analysis, which commences after the focus group interviews with the students are transcribed. In subsection 6.3, the first part of the data analysis is introduced. It is an individual participant analysis based on Ritchie et al. (2014, p. 125). This analysis concludes with student portraits of the individual participants’ studies of their “need to belong” fulfilment on the different social levels: classmates, teachers and school staff. In subsection 6.4, the second part of the data analysis is discussed. The whole group analysis focuses on the participants’ access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment, using a seven-step approach based on Kuckartz (2012, 2016). In Chapter 7, the theoretical model of “need to belong” that was developed in the data analysis is explained. It is the basis for the transformative three-step approach to formulating theoretical hypotheses from examples of the student statements extracted from the transcriptions (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). It is the groundwork for developing working hypotheses on the different social levels of the school social system that address the social problems of the students. From this, guidelines for action are directed towards remedying social problems related to hindrances to “need to belong” satisfaction. The social problem of prejudice is

used to illustrate action taken by social workers on the level of the students, the classmates, teachers and school management and school staff social levels (Gomolla and Radtke, 2009; Fereidooni, 2016). In Chapter 8, the findings and recommendations for the “need to belong”, the significance of the findings, and suggestions for future research conclude the book.

1.5.1 Style and terminology

The book is aimed at a readership with knowledge of social work, social pedagogy and education. Where applicable, the first person is used to make the author’s presence in the research explicit and to reflect openly on the research process. As the feminist author Letherby (2003, p. 7) noted, the use of the first person actively brings the presence and responsibility of the researcher into the study and that which is written. Much the same, “writing as ‘I’, we take responsibility for what we write”. Therefore, it can be assumed that the “I” perspective emphasises the focal area of the research and the researcher’s engagement with the object of the study. The second-person plural, “we” and “us”, are used intermittently with “I” to engage the reader. The terminology is selected with the equal treatment of both sexes in mind. In unfairly distinguishing between the sexes, the existing imbalance and gender stereotypes may remain unreflected and perpetuate gender stereotypes. The use of the pronouns “he” and “she” have been avoided with either sentences constructed for this purpose or making use of pronouns “they”, “them”, and “their”.

In defining the terms “child”, “youth”, and “adolescent”, there are variations in how these age groups are represented in the Austrian and Australian legal system. In Section 21 of the Austrian General Civil Code, a minor is a person who has not yet reached 18 years of age. The Austrian law distinguishes between a child as a minor until 14, and a juvenile is a person not yet aged 18 (ABGB II, § 21, 2018). Children below the age of 12 cannot be held legally accountable for breaking the law, but the parents or legal guardians are held responsible. A juvenile from age 12 to 14 can be held responsible for minor legal infractions. The Australian federal law distinguishes between a child below the age of 10 and a juvenile until the age of majority at 18 (Age of Majority Act 1977 (Vic), 2015). This corresponds with the UNCRC, Article 1, which defines a ‘child’ as being below the age of 18 years: “for the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). In this book, the term child is used for minors below 12 years of age. The terms adolescent and youth are used interchangeably for minors aged 13 until the age of majority at 18 years.

The term “student” is used in Australia for all learners, regardless of their age or education level. This is not the case in Austria. The words ‘*Schuler*’

(male) and ‘*Schülerin*’ (female) denote a child of primary-school-age or an adolescent attending lower or higher secondary school (Gymnasium). By contrast, “student” is used in tertiary education to indicate adult learners with marginal supervision. In comparison, the British English term “pupil” tends to undervalue young people’s active and participatory role in their education by emphasising adult-led supervision and instruction. Therefore, although “pupil” is more closely related to “*Schuler*” or “*Schülerin*”, “student” is the preferred term used in this book to express the active role of children and adolescents in their formal school education. Likewise, based on this rationale, I argue that the term “student” is more appropriate than “pupil” for a human rights-based social work science publication.

When Obrecht’s list of needs was translated from German into English, it took careful consideration to maintain accuracy (2009, p. 27). Although the term “psychological” would be factually correct because it includes emotion and cognition, the “-logical” is incorrect for the German term “*psychisch*”, which is the rationale for using the term “psychic” over “psychological” for the cognitive-emotional brain processes.

The official language of Austria is German, and in Australia, the official language is English. The terms “official”, “dominant”, and “majority” are used interchangeably in this book. The terms “immigrant”, “person with immigrant background/heritage” or “newcomer” are used with caution because it could unintentionally validate ascriptive demographic characteristics linked to phenotypic superficialities and thus justify reductionist predetermined categories of othering through the notions of “them” and “us” (Leiprecht, 2011, p. 211). The use of these terms presents a conundrum. On the one hand, it is a fact that students speak different first languages, which is a topic of the current study. On the other, language can be used to give certain group members advantages over others. Hence, the approach is to underline the need for transparency concerning the power disparity between people in the dominant group versus newcomers or speakers of the other first languages. This can afford them access to material and immaterial resources to meet their needs and the possibility to limit or prevent members of the less dominant immigrant or newcomer groups from equal access to resources. What remains unresolved is the risk of unifying people into generic groups such as locals, immigrants, young people with migration background/heritage, First Nations People, Aboriginal population or First Nations young Australians because of the one-sided emphasis of one type of group membership or descriptor.

In this book, the majority language is defined as German in Austria and English in Australia. Minority language denotes the self-identified language, other than German or English, that the research participants speak at home with one or more parents.

2 Needs, human rights, school social work

This chapter is concerned with school social work, the disciplinary lens used to develop the research design for the current study. This applies to a multilevel approach to describe and explain the root causes of social problems – the cluster of practical problems that individuals face because they are thwarted in meeting their needs. To meet their needs requires that the person is satisfactorily embedded in the different social levels of the school social system. However, if this is not the case, they can face social problems related to the interaction structure. These include feelings of alienation and problems related to the position structure, such as social exclusion from class-cohort membership (Obrecht, 2005a, pp. 132–133).

Social problems are the object base of the social work profession (Staub-Bernasconi, 1999, 2009; Obrecht, 2005a; Martin, 2014; Geiser, 2015; Du Plessis-Schneider, 2020). The ethical principles and global standards of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is the framework for school social work action to address social problems (Schmocker, 2016a). The development of social work practice guidelines resulted from cooperation between the national and international social work associations. These guidelines uphold international human rights treaties and frameworks such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (United Nations General Assembly, 1966). In the school system, the UNCRC and ICESCR are relevant for school social work. The UNCRC applies to teachers, school management and school staff (and parents/guardians of the students).

The chapter comprises three sections. The first section introduces the foundations of school social work in Austria and Australia. In section two, the UNCRC and ICESCR are positioned as international human rights frameworks relevant to the school context. They are introduced considering the possibilities, ambiguity and tensions of student need fulfilment. This is set against social work's guiding principles or philosophy tripe mandate¹⁵ concerning chil-

15 “Triple mandate” is a term coined by Staub-Bernasconi (2009, 2016). It is used in reference to the extension of social work's double mandate to mediate between the interests of 1) the social service providers (represent civil and political society), and 2) clients of social work. The third mandate extends social work's mission through the addition of two core components: 1) the scientific foundation for practice which comprises transdisciplinary problem descriptions, explanations, and the laws which are the properties of things that generate problems. The impetus is to develop action guidelines, to critically review social workers' judgements, values and methods, and 2) the profession's code of ethics based on the commitment to

dren's rights entitlements (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016). In section three, reference is made to key terms in the school debate, namely, education, *Bildung* and didactics. For readers who might be less familiar with the secondary school system in Austria and Australia, an introduction to the historical and contemporary education developments is made. The relevance of human rights, in particular children's rights, for schools in Austria and Australia is outlined. It is argued that children's rights are the common baseline because both countries ratified the UNCRC, which obligates teachers, school management, and school staff to ground school policies and practices within a rights-based framework (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). The chapter closes with a summary of the core topics discussed with school social work as discipline and profession and their linkage with the current study.

2.1 Austria: school social work

School social work does not have a long tradition in Austria because guidance teachers and school psychologists dominated the student support role until the 1990s. The role of social workers at school differs from that of psychologists and guidance teachers because it incorporates the multisystem¹⁶ level approach, i.e., micro-, meso- and macro-level interventions, to remedy practical and social problems. The addition of school social workers to school-based student support systems signifies a focal shift towards an ecological approach to remedy social problems. It broadens the narrow scope of interventions that regulate the negative behaviour of the individual student (micro-level) by taking the student-peer and student-teacher social exchange relations and contextual setting into account (meso-level).

Over time, school social work developed as a school-based service for students with problems at home or conflicts with peers and teachers. It is seen as a first-line support towards combating school stressors, i.e., truancy and school suspension in a close collaboration with the Child Welfare Department (Vyslouzil and Weissensteiner, 2001). There is evidence in child welfare records that youth counsellors cooperated with Viennese schools from the 1950s on-

human rights, reflected in social workers' value-judgements, i.e., when they carry out policies and tasks. Similarly, it challenges (when necessary to reject) policies and tasks that do not comply with the principles of human rights (to uphold human dignity and respect the equality of all people).

- 16 Micro is the individual client level, meso concerns social subsystems or social groups such as the family unit or class cohort. Macro refers to is the social system level – district, municipally, region/province and/or nation state (International Federation of Social Workers, 2002, p. 12).

wards. This indicates that school social workers may have started informally around this time, i.e., without clear guidelines regarding their role and tasks (Schörner and Würfl, 2013). From the 1990s onwards, provincial welfare departments and the school authorities sought to regulate school social work, i.e., the tasks, the focus of the profession and the funding arrangements. It resulted in cooperation between the provincial and district child welfare departments across different school social-work programs. However, existing discrepancies between the regional child welfare and school authorities were forged due to the lack of transparency about funds which hindered schools from accessing the services of school social workers.

Würfl and Schörner (2017) investigated school social work to detect differences in the types of social schools where social workers were based and review their qualifications. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education funded the project, strengthening its credibility. The findings show that in 2017, around 285 school social workers were employed in full-time positions across Austria. The contractual employment stipulations varied from time-limited contracts in specified projects to fixed-term contracts and permanent roles in schools. The schools tended not to employ school social workers directly, nor did they fall under the school employment legislation. It was argued that the difference between guidance teachers and social workers was attributed to the latter's services, which were offered voluntarily and confidentially – which put the onus on students to use them. By contrast, guidance teachers fall under the regulation of the school, which means that although the services are voluntary, students are obligated to use them because of the close ties to teachers and school management. These interventions focus on improving learning outcomes and less on peer or teacher conflicts. It was shown that a range of different titles was used for school social work across schools, which included “social learning teacher”, “social work in schools”, “school and social work” to “social worker for school social work”. The title “school social worker” dominated at 74%.

The provision of school social work falls under the Child Welfare legislation, with the federal-provincial governments responsible for policy implementation. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education monitors and reviews school social work programs under a comprehensive support network to reduce and manage school refusal and absenteeism. School social work services support the school management and teachers to address the cause/s of disaffected student behaviour. Ideally, they organise resources – financial and otherwise – for disadvantaged student populations to reduce education and social inequalities (Melinz, 2012; Lehner *et al.*, 2013; Wagner and Kletzl, 2013). Schneider (2009, pp. 29–30) points out a growing tendency towards UNCRC informed social work programs. This means that the Convention serves to formulate objectives and guide interventions (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

2.2 Australia: school social work

School social work in Australia was established as a discipline and profession in the 1970s. Here, social workers and other essential professions such as health workers and pastoral carers are part of the school wellbeing team. Thus, the transparency and accountability of task distribution among the different disciplines, alongside social work's specific role in school policy development and implementation, is an essential requirement to effect multilevel school changes that facilitate student needs fulfilment.

School social work in Australia traces back to the early 1940s (Lawrence, 2016). However, the early days of school social work are marked by a dearth of literature that limits knowledge concerning the interventions and methods (McKinnon, Kearns and Crockett, 2004). The 1949-50 Education Report of the Minister of Education for the State of Victoria describes the role of social work: “[It] provides a specialised service for teachers and parents designed to help them to cater more adequately for the educational, emotional, and social needs of children under their care” (Victoria Education Department, 1951, p. 6). The Education Department saw social workers in the casework context under psychologists' auspices:

“The psychologist, with the help of social workers, carried out intensive case studies by investigating the personality of the child and the environmental stresses to which he is subjected” (ibid.).

Lawrence (2016, p. 164) contends that psychologists were more prevalent in the primary- and secondary-school sector than social workers. Consequently, interventions directed at changing student behaviour to improve learning outcomes gained ground over analysing, addressing and remedying social problems. Early records from the 1940s concerning school social workers in Victoria indicate that they advocated, alongside psychologists, to improve students' conditions and education prospects from low-socioeconomic and disadvantaged schools. Hence, the close ties between school social work and social justice were visible at the onset of school social work. Cooperation across disciplines remains a key driver for social works normative foundation. This is understood as a prescriptive value statement about how something should be in terms of good or bad.

Lawrence (2016) indicates a historical overlap in social work roles and pastoral care in schools. Early pastoral care is associated with Christian philosophy that encompasses normative notions of moral welfare. The central part of the Catholic Church in setting up schools in colonial Australia laid the groundwork for pastoral care programs (Lang, Best and Lichtenberg, 1995). The similarity between social work roles and pastoral care hinders the identification of the profession's education-based interventions because the specifics need to be untangled and distinguished from that of early pastoral care. Thus,

pastoral care has become a generic term for school-based programs and interventions that support students academically and emotionally, with the central focus on student wellbeing and resilience.

With the liberalisation of the Australian school system in the 1980s, social work became geared towards service delivery in government and non-government organisations and agencies. Social workers engage in multidisciplinary teams to serve the wider community along with their public primary and secondary schools. Because public-school education falls under the jurisdiction of the Australian state and territory governments, the employment and funding of social workers differ across the country. For example, in the state of Victoria, either the Health or the Education Department or the school funds school social work. A service can be called school social work if the primary goal is to achieve student learning potential and involves coordinating the “efforts of the school, family and community to achieve this goal” (Barrett *et al.*, 2008, p. 7). Practitioners formulated a directive in the Victorian chapter of the School Social Work Special Interest Group (SSWIG) drafted Practice Standards for school social work. The impetus behind these Standards is to clarify and establish the ethical-based link with social work, knowledge and skillset requirements for school-based interventions with students, parents, teachers and the school leadership (Barrett *et al.*, 2008).

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) adopted the Practice Standards for School Social Workers in 2011. The Standards set out the foundation for a unified approach to school social work in Australia, alongside the education level, skill requirements and work environment that affords effective practice (AASW, 2013, p. 5). The Practice Standards specify that “School social work is a specific field of practice with outcomes related to the primary and secondary student as a learner on the road to achieving social justice and personal fulfilment through education” (*ibid.*, p. 6). Although the AASW identifies social justice as a critical element of social work, there is a lack of direct reference in the literature on the role of school social workers in realising the UNCRC in school policies and practice (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). Owing to the scope of social work interventions and the methods used, the AASW stipulates that the Practice Standards for School Social Workers or the Practice Standards for Social Workers: Achieving Outcomes (Barrett *et al.*, 2008) are the foundation of practice. Either the Education Department employs school social workers to be outsourced to individual schools on a project basis, counsel students on certain days of the week, or the school employs them, and they work there in multi-professional teams. This allows social workers leeway to use the Standards suitable for their area of practice because of the variations in their employment, contracts and funding. However, because the models of social work practice in schools are broad, there are ongoing difficulties in identifying the role and objectives of school social workers. A further hurdle to assessing Australia’s school social work

status quo is the lack of statistical data on school social workers across the country (Henry, 2019, p. 58). Similarly, the variations in the titles used in schools for social workers, such as “wellbeing officer” and “pastoral carer”, reflect the dual roles of social workers in supporting students and exercising control to regulate their behaviour which raises questions about the advocacy role of school social workers in practice.

2.3 School social workers and human rights

The professional association with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) obligates school social workers to uphold the delineated set of ethical values laid out in the Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018). For example, suppose school legislation and policies are inconsistent with the 54 Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Child’s Rights (UNCRC). In that case, school social workers engage in advocacy activities to bring legislative and policy discrepancies of this nature to the attention of the school and education authorities to be addressed and rectified (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). In addition, the UNCRC informs the value-base of school social workers because it is a lens through which children and adolescents are viewed, on the one hand, as individuals reliant on adults, and the other, as members of small and large socio-cultural systems. When the UNCRC informs school social work, the marginalised, disadvantaged, rejected, and oppressed children and adolescents who might come to the attention of school social workers because of their problematic behaviour at school are advocated for. This behaviour might concern socio-cultural conflicts, defined as the adherence to values, goals, norms and behavioural convictions of at least two individuals that are incompatible or defined as incompatible (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp. 300–306). If this is the case, the school social worker describes and uses social science theories to explain the underlying causalities of traditional patterns and practices of cultural oppression according to universally accepted values and criteria such as the UNCRC, to devise new values, norms and rules (*ibid.*). Membership in a social system is indispensable because it is a requirement for needs fulfilment. For example, when conflicts arise in the classroom, they can be destructive and destabilising for individual students or all students, and thus also for the structure and stability of the classmates as a social level of the school social system. The task of the school social worker is to analyse the students’ interactions as members of the class, assist individuals to participate in conflict resolution actively, and agree to new rules that facilitate needs fulfilment in their social-exchange relationships. Through this process, the students are encouraged to

develop their intrapersonal skills by participating in classroom rulemaking. School social workers' actions resolve the tension between advocating for students and societal expectations to remedy social problems (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016; Du Plessis-Schneider, 2020b).

Staub-Bernasconi (2007b, 2016, 2019) emphasised that the UNCRC, and other human rights treaties and documents, inform the scientific foundation of social work action theories and coined the term “triple mandate” about the professions self-imposed mandate (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). The third professional mandate extends the “double mandate”, which comprises the mandate to assist/support and exercise control in the client interactions (Böhnisch and Lösch, 1973, p. 28). Assistance/support concerns the interactions between the social worker and the client in client-based service delivery. The aspect of social control expected of school social workers in carrying out service delivery refers to their roles, functions and responsibilities from the service delivery organisation and government. The extension of the double mandate by a third professional mandate constitutes the scientific basis for interventions and the code of ethics that subscribe to the value base of human dignity and human rights (Staub-Bernasconi, 2007b, p. 199). The theories developed through empirical research conducted in social work science and cognate disciplines drives school social work. The triple mandate provides the scientific basis and the obligation for school social workers to base decision-making on the core values, ethical principles and ethical standards of the social work profession in carrying out their professional role (International Federation of Social Workers, 2002, p. 26). Thus, school social workers operate relatively independently of the interests of the service-delivery organisations, governments or clients (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016, p. 44). The profession's third mandate extends the possibility to invoke human rights, which enables relative autonomy in social workers' actions (Staub-Bernasconi, 2007b, pp. 200–201). Children's rights are human rights explicitly developed to address the vulnerability of young people below 18 years of age. This is a given due to their age and developmental stage-related dependency on adults. School social workers are therefore able to invoke children's rights in the event of (alleged) child rights violations, thus exercising the professional triple mandate to work towards compliance with international human rights instruments, i.e., the UNCRC (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). Similarly, the triple mandate provides a human rights basis for decision-making and a benchmark for reviewing actions and social developments in school social work. The social work profession has a baseline of science, training and practice in its focus on remedying, reducing and possibly eliminating the social problems of students. School social workers collaborate with parents, teachers, school management and other professionals engaged in the school context. According to the professional triple mandate of social work, human beings with their needs – or specifically in the context of school social work, students, confronted with so-

cial problems due to hindrances that thwart their access to resources to satisfy the “need to belong” – are at the core of practice. Hence, social work science, ethics and practice are focused on facilitating students’ access to resources or satisfiers for their “need to belong” fulfilment in the school context (Staub-Bernasconi, 1991; Martin, 2014; Schmocker, 2016b).

2.4 Education, *Bildung* and didactics

As the research for the current study is set in the school social system, this section brings us to the core of what school is about: knowledge acquisition, learning and teaching.

In Austria, the terms *Bildung* and didactics are prevalent in schooling. In Australia, the term used is education. This begs the question of how the terms relate and their compatibility. Prange (2004, pp. 501–502) asserts that *Bildung* cannot be accurately translated into English – hence the concept has been appropriated in English education discourse (Bauer, 2003). However, although the underlying theory and the historical developments of *Bildung* differ from that of the term education, Hudson (2007, p. 136) argues that the terms “erudition” and “formation” come closest to an English translation of the German term *Bildung*, as *bilden* is a verb that indicates to form. Lang-Wojtasik and Scheunpflug (2005, p. 3) ascertain that the concept of *Bildung* interlocks the learner as the subject with the subject matter, content or knowledge because learning takes place when both the subject and knowledge are inextricably linked – which is to say that knowledge does not determine the process of *Bildung*, but that the relationship between the learner and knowledge are strongly correlated. Hence, *Bildung* concerns the process of knowledge acquisition that can facilitate self-emancipation. It is rooted in European enlightenment’s humanistic tradition and ideals as a normative term, an expression of social difference. Lang-Wojtasik (2008a, p. 5) points out that learning is multidimensional in the constructivist and phenomenological sense. This “open(s) a wide range of possibilities for reflecting on complexity in world society”, with cross-sectional teaching along four dimensions to understand differences in a diverse and heterogeneous society as a precept to problem-solving. It indicates that *Bildung* is the process of the individual acquiring knowledge in the process of self-reflection. At the same time, education is a social activity that revolves around the organisation’s necessities of the day, ever-changing to mirror in-vogue economic demands. Similarly, Block (2008) advocates *Bildung* as the centrepiece of the German constructivist education discourse, which describes subjectively interpreting and constructing meaning triggered by an intense learning experience. Thus, compared to education, *Bildung* is personal and cannot be grasped in its entirety because it concerns someone’s take on what

they have learned. *Bildung* is driven by philosophy, education, science and didactics, which means the theory and practice of teaching and learning. Hence, didactics serves as a precursor to the acquisition of *Bildung* to gain insight into a culture that can be defined as a property of individuals and the distribution of a conceptual system of meaning and knowledge between the members of social systems (ibid., 2008, pp. 91–101). Didactic principles are guidelines for the selection, structuring and design of the learning content.

I would argue that *Bildung* assists the student to navigate the socio-cultural context to meet their biopsychic need for information that guides direction and action alongside the cognitive code for the human brain to process information (Obrecht, 2009; Lang-Wojtasik, 2021). The Hebbian learning theory supports the assertion that the mental mechanisms in the brain that orchestrate learning are emergent properties of the brain's neural activity (Hebb, 1981, pp. 2420–2421). Bunge (1997, p. 429) contended that the rationale underlying Hebb's learning theory is based on the observation that the “neurons that fire together tend to associate or self-assemble into systems with properties that their components lack”. This brings us back to Bunge's (1997, 2004a) assertion that mechanisms tend not to be exposed – which, in the case of education, necessitates research to go deeper by specifying and explaining the workings and processes of knowledge acquisition and their interconnections.

2.5 Human rights framework for school *Bildung* and education

The personhood perspective of children and adolescents as subjects with rights correlates with the statement that a student's biological, biopsychic and biopsychic-social needs must be met as the universal requirement to survive and flourish. It is in line with the IFSW code of ethics, which stipulates that social work be governed by human rights laws and treaties (Hemphill and Schneider, 2013, p. 92). Explicitly, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) underscores the normative value of education as “the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity” (United Nations General Assembly, 1966). Therefore, education is a right in itself, and at the same time, education affords young people the means, the knowledge and the skills to realise their rights, i.e., to meet their needs and, in doing so, uphold their dignity.¹⁷ Hence, human rights are the regulative principles for school social work action. Contemporary debates concerning human rights frameworks for education are linked to the United Nations Convention

17 Dignity is the inalienable right of every person to be respected and valued as a member of the human species.

on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which the United Nations adopted in 1989. The Convention was signified by Austria on 26.1.1990 and ratified on 6.8.1992; Australia signified on 22.8.1990 and ratified on 17.12.1990 (United Nations, 1989). The UNCRC formulates education as both a right and the means to realise this right to participate in society and to have knowledge about these rights which corresponds with the ICESCR Article 13 (Dewey, 1916, pp. 2–3; United Nations General Assembly, 1966). Through the ratification of the UNCRC, ombudspersons were established in the nine Austrian federal provinces to monitor legislation for compliance with the UNCRC. The federal and provincial governments lack sufficient resources for the realisation of the Convention on different levels of the education system, such as direct reference to the UNCRC in policy and implementation. Hence, children’s rights organisations and the Austrian Association for Social Work monitor and report on government progress in these areas (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

The goal of education in the UNCRC Article 29 (a) is “The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their full-potential” (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). Although schools in Austria and Australia are bound to a specific geographic, temporal and social context, their shared commonality is the provision of *Bildung* to facilitate student reflexivity as members of society through citizenship education (Lang-Wojtasik, 2021). It concerns Article 29 (b), “The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations”, which entails instruction about the systematic workings of society, such as the administrative processes and apparatuses on the different government and state levels. To this end, *Bildung* is about the worth of education when children and adolescents can apply their knowledge and strengthen their position as members of social groups, be it at school or in the community. Schools operate as microcosms, small community units that encapsulate the traits of larger social systems such as the community, municipality, province and nation within which the school is nested. In addition, the students become acquainted with school structures and processes internalised by learning – for example, the starting and ending times of the school day and the timetable with the subjects taught by different teachers at certain times, on particular days.

As human organisms, our biological composition is constituted such that human beings are naturally inquisitive about their surroundings and engage in informal learning about the environment and how things work. School education formalises learning processes with its structural specifications, such as classrooms being fitted out with school desks, chairs, chalkboards, textbooks, technology, and so on – designed for teaching and learning. A curriculum-based approach is used to teach literacy, numeracy, language and a wide range of additional subjects within the framework of a specific mode of sequenced instruction, designed to measure and review student academic development

and progress. American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey contended “[...] that the educational process is one of continual reorganising, reconstructing, transforming” which requires that the students learn to interact in the classroom and the broader community to form relationships with peers and teachers (1916, p. 50) Through the school education process, students practise and refine their interpersonal skills with others at school in ways that are conducive to affiliating biological, psychic and social needs fulfilment. Hence, human rights are inextricably linked to human needs, which Wronka (1994) contends are polyvalent because each human need relates to more than one Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR, although not legally binding, laid down the groundwork for education rights. This required further elaboration in treaties such as the UNCRC, which commits states to observe specific obligations. For example, the right to education in Article 28 of the UNCRC recognises a young person’s biopsychic need for skills, rules, and social norms to manage new and repetitive situations, dependent on the relevant goals. So does Article 12 – the right to participate in decision-making (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). This corresponds with Dewey’s emphasis that school education “in its broader sense, is the means of this social continuity of life” (1916, pp. 2–3). In this sense, school education sets comprehensive goals to support students gain factual knowledge and develop their social skills.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the global network comprising over 180 countries with normative goals formulated for international peace, quality education and sustainable development, advocates promoting education as a fundamental right of all children (UNESCO, 2012). In the understanding of UNESCO, education focuses on global citizenship and human rights, which are the foundation of the learning objectives of the SDGs – for example, for students to reflect on the value base of their actions and to negotiate in conflict situations, based on ideals of social justice and fairness (ibid., 2012, p. 10). Against this backdrop, *Bildung* is suggested as the more applicable term than education. It accentuates the comprehensive knowledge base, strengthening student capacity to engage in self-reflective mental activities in social-exchange relations with peers and teachers.

2.6 Austrian school education

The human rights framework for education addressed above is helpful to examine the core education developments that paved the way to Austrian schooling today. It requires that we go back around 240 years to 1774 when Maria Theresia, head of the Habsburg Monarchy, mandated primary school compul-

sory for all children in the Austro-Hungarian Empire – towards the tail end of the social and intellectual European Enlightenment movement. Back then, education provided workers for government administration, the military and the economic sector, a mindset that is deeply entrenched in the Austrian school system. It is a way of thinking about education, coupled with the rigidity of power structures around educational policy, teaching and learning practices that remain a driver of education today (Seel, 2011, pp. 33–34). Similarly, the allegiance between the Catholic Church and government schools from back at the start of government education remains intact, with urban and rural distinctions.

The *Schulunterrichtsgesetz* school legislation act [translation by the author] mandates free primary and secondary school education and nine years of compulsory schooling (SchUG, 1986). Children enter the school system at six and attend their local primary school for four years. Secondary school is mandatory until the age of 15. The tripartite division of primary, lower secondary and higher secondary school means that primary and lower secondary schools focus on vocational education and technical training, compared to the academic career path of higher secondary schools. The students enter the tracking system by going to either the *Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* a general secondary school [translation by the author], or *Hauptschule* a lower-grade secondary [translation by the author]. Although the tripartite division is seen as a relic and criticised for perpetuating education and social inequity, with some tweaking since its conception, by and large, it is a selection process that has remained in place. The two-track system works such that in the child's fourth and final year of primary school, at the age of 10 years, the class teacher advises the parents on their child's ability to continue school along one of four education pathways. Hence, the school track selection is teacher-led, with the parents being informed and guided in their choice of the school type. However, the selection is idiosyncratic because the tools to measure the students' academic and social performance are left to the teacher's discretion. Hence, Herzog-Punzenberger (2012) contends that the tracking system lacks transparency and accountability from the teachers to the parents and students. In addition, students with diverse cultural and lingual backgrounds are underrepresented in higher, or academic, secondary schools – a structural problem linked to the early section system.

Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell (2019) reported that the early 1970s saw an upsurge in the number of *Deutsch als Zweitsprache* (DaZ) German second-language students [translation by the author] in primary, lower secondary and special-needs schools.¹⁸ Research results concerning the school tracking

18 Special-needs schools: children with a physical or learning disability are enrolled if the local public school lacks the resources to support and care for the child. Children's rights advocates are campaigning for the social inclusion of children with disabilities through in-school support in mainstream public schools. Special-needs

system show that first- and second-generation students from rural Turkey were predominantly on the lower secondary school track (Burtscher, 2008). Herzog-Punzenberger (2003b, p. 29) contend that the first 2000 PISA study results may have been misrepresentative if the sampling did not consider that over half of DaZ students ended school after completion of the ninth compulsory school year. In addition, there is a significant difference in wellbeing between students from immigrant backgrounds and those from non-migrant backgrounds. Students with immigrant backgrounds growing up in Austria felt less content with their lives than their parents. Herzog-Punzenberger (2003b, p. 36) associates these adverse outcomes with a delayed response in the compulsory schooling system to address student heterogeneity by developing support systems for DaZ students, alongside measures to facilitate intercultural exchanges with peers and teachers at school. This indicates the practical and social problems that individual students face, which can thwart student belonging due to hindrances in satisfying the “need to belong”. The 2009 PISA results showed a decline in students’ numeracy and literacy compared to the results from 2003 and 2006 (OECD, 2010c). Härtel and Steiner (2010) argue that results of the 2006 PISA indicate an imbalance in student abilities, along with the opportunities to transfer to higher-education tracks. Similarly, limited social mobility in the education system correlates with the parents’ education level. These criticisms aimed at the lower secondary schools, the *Hauptschule*, strengthened the impetus to rebrand and remodel the lower secondary school, which resulted in the new secondary school *Neue Mittelschule* trial phase in 2009/2010, in correspondence with the school organisation law *Schulorganisationsgesetz* (SchoG § 7a, 1962).

The development of the Austrian education system and policies can be described as an arduous and bumpy road, with interest groups driving education towards economic, religious and political interests and reforms. Whether in central government or on the fringes, the political parties remain vested in education reform to influence the education policy and the direction of society’s changes. This means that the development and administration of public-school education engage professions that are not directly involved in the formal education of students, such as social work, psychology and social pedagogy, alongside civil society interest groups and the provincial, district and municipal authorities. As Meyer (1977, p. 55) argues, “Education restructures whole populations, creating and expanding elites and redefining the rights and obligations of members”, which points to the direct influence of education policy and practice on society because of its role in socialising children and adolescents.

schools are a contested school model, and strong arguments have been put forward from the disability movement that children are discriminated against when unable to attend a mainstream school (Biewer, 2021).

In the 2000s, quality management was introduced into the Austrian education system. This means that public schools should focus on transparency and accountability by introducing a feedback culture to encourage parents and teachers to engage in the child's educational development. However, in their analysis of the Teaching and Learning International (TALIS) 2008 data, Schmich and Breit (2009) concluded that principals are predominantly concerned with school organisation and management over staff leadership and that 69% of the principals held teachers accountable for the academic outcomes of the students compared to the OECD average of 93% (Schmich and Breit, 2009, p. 72). Following this conclusion, Schratz (2016) associates the low scores of teacher accountability with a lack of mandatory baseline, standardised instruments and data collection to monitor and steer student outcomes.

Since the mid-2000s, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2012) contends that a shift in education policy and practice saw the *Hauptschule* or lower secondary schools rebranding to *Neue Mittelschulen* or New Secondary Schools [translation by the author]. The impetus of this shift was to focus on the students' skills in critical reflection, self-reflection and cooperation with peers and teachers by diversifying the teaching methods in three areas: *Fachkompetenz* subject-matter competence, *Selbstkompetenz und Sozialkompetenz* self-competence and social competence [translation by the author] (Lassnigg and Mayer, 2001, p. 12). However, Thonhauser & Eder (2017, pp. 551–552) point out that this shift failed to address the underlying structural problems of the education system associated with early tracking – for example, the influence of socioeconomic status on the school type in the early tracking system. Low socioeconomic status of the parents correlates with children being tracked into the *Hauptschule* or lower secondary school in urban areas, where *Hauptschulen* are stigmatised as “*soziale Restschulen*” “sink schools” [translation by the author] for disadvantaged student populations (Sertl, 2000; Vyslouzil and Weissensteiner, 2001; Fessl, 2008, p. 106). Similarly, PISA 2012 and 2015 show the academic outcomes of students with immigrant heritage below that of their non-immigrant peers (OECD, 2017a, p. 6). Hence, the lower secondary school system faces public criticism about the quality of education (Thonhauser and Eder, 2017, pp. 539–544).

2.7 Australian school education

The Australian formal education system was established after the first fleet of convict settlers from Britain in 1788. The school system is of Anglo-Saxon origin due to its history as a British colony, with English as the official language. The British government focused on education for British settler children

whilst mainly ignoring the First Nations People, referred to as the Aboriginal population. Campbell and Proctor (2014) contend that First Nations young Australians were the recipients of education for thousands of years before the arrival of the British settlers. However, as the colonisers regarded First Nations People as uneducated and intellectually inferior, the indigenous education of children and adolescents that existed pre-colonisation was of little relevance to the British (Bashford and Macintyre, 2015). The governors, religious leaders and free settlers regarded school education as a type of social control over the children of convict and poor immigrants to purge them of any criminal thoughts or actions. In this sense, they were to be moulded into diligent and obedient colonial servants. The impetus driving school education was to keep the children off the streets and teach them the labour skills needed to build up the new colony (Horne and Sherington, 2013).

Australia became independent from Britain on 1 January 1901 with the founding of the Federated Commonwealth. This paved the way for the discriminatory White Australia Policy that targeted British nationals as the preferred migrants through English language literacy tests (Kelly, 2018). White Australia policy was discontinued in 1973, which afforded people from a broader range of countries, such as Vietnam and China, the possibility of immigrating to Australia. Hence, the focus of education policy was on systematically introducing students to core competencies of English as a First Language (ESL). Since 1974, Australia has followed a pluralist policy of multiculturalism, with less focus on immigrants adopting and assimilating the dominant British Australian traditions (Elder, 2007). However, other aspects of Australia's policies and practices have been criticised and condemned internationally for violating human rights and dehumanising asylum seekers and refugees (Briskman and Coddard, 2007). Minority-language students report incidences of discrimination in interactions between themselves and their peers, relating to their diverse cultural backgrounds. Derogatory labels, such as "fresh off the boat" (FOB) [a term used to indicate that a person who has recently immigrated to Australia has low social status], as well as student-peer conflicts and exclusionary social practices targeting students from abroad, have emerged (Butcher, 2008, p. 373). These examples indicate the practical and social problems individual students face concerning student belonging due to hindrances in satisfying the "need to belong" at school.

The state of Victoria requires that students – children from the age of six and adolescents until the age of 17 – attend a minimum of 10 years in the educational system. There are minor variations in compulsory school years between the eight Australian states and two territories (Saha, 2019). Secondary-school enrolment depends foremostly on the students residing within a school's catchment area or zone. This entitles children and adolescents to attend the government secondary school that is geographically located closest to their home. However, not all schools offer the same quality of education, which

means that certain schools, such as the school where the research for the current study was conducted, have become sought-after education settings. Because students can choose to enrol in a school outside of their catchment area, the competition to enrol in top-ranking government and private schools is fierce, which means that students with high academic outcomes in primary school stand a better chance of being selected. Similarly, when a student from outside the school-catchment area has enrolled in a school, this automatically entitles siblings to the right of enrolment.

Contemporary Australian school education resembles the Anglo-Saxon model. It has the same primary and secondary school structure and national curriculum-based education. The teachers assess students' performance in the core subjects at critical stages in the education process. The curriculum drives teaching and learning or knowledge acquisition with the organisation of the school in the foreground of policy. The curriculum is a template, a guideline for teachers concerning learning content and classroom management (Bashford and Macintyre, 2015). As public schools are secular, with curricula devoid of doctrinal religious instruction and distinct forms of spiritual capital, the government funds faith-based schools to facilitate religious diversity by giving parents the choice to send their children to either non-denominational public schools or affordable private, denominational schools. The country of origin influences the students' prospects of attending tertiary education. Lebanese and Greek students in Victoria, where the research for the current study was conducted, showed lower rates of completing graduate university degrees in 2011. Asian students, predominantly from China and India, had an above-average chance of achieving their university degrees in 2011.

From the 1980s onwards, the Federal government and States introduced market-reform strategies that steered education in the direction of neoliberal policies, bringing market competition and quality assurance to the foreground of education policy and practice (Bashford and Macintyre, 2015). In addition, reforms focused on making public schooling free and accessible for all children. However, the right to education is not guaranteed on the Federal level in Australia because there are no constitutional provisions for this purpose. Each state is obligated to develop education provisions and policies conducive to making education compulsory for children and adolescents in that jurisdiction. This complicates implementing the UNCRC on the state level because of the gap in regulatory oversight on federal level (Basser and Jones, 2011, pp. 236–237).

2.8 Summary

This chapter covered four topics. The first refers to the commonalities and differences between student support teams in Austria and Australia concerning the UNCRC framework. The second topic concerns the rationale for student knowledge and skill acquisition as the baseline for school social workers and teachers in association with the UNCRC framework. The third topic addresses equity through equal-education opportunities that facilitate student belonging. The fourth topic indicates that the UNCRC framework is the formulation of student right entitlements for their “need to belong” fulfilment (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). The four topics are summarised as follows:

The *first* identifies that student support teams in Austrian and Australian schools comprise various disciplines, i.e., are multi-professional with different tasks and actions. School social workers engage in the description, explanation and development of ethically sound interventions to remedy social problems when students “need to belong” is hindered. This process is referred to as the triple mandate, i.e., it incorporates scientific knowledge, the profession’s standards of practice and code of ethics, and human rights. This indicates that school social workers use a multilayered ecological approach to remedy social problems which result from unmet needs. In comparison, guidance teachers and psychologists in Austrian secondary schools *Hauptschulen* and psychologists and pastoral carers in Australian secondary schools tend to focus their interventions on assessing and rectifying negative student behaviour and the implications of negative behaviour on the school social system. The difference in focus is a source of enrichment for schools because it diversifies the student support services. However, for this to be effective, a common ground is required that extends over and above the individual school or support service team. This is the rationale for using a human rights framework in general and the UNCRC in schools as a baseline for multi-professional teams. It would be the basis for developing and implementing school policy and practice within the human rights framework. The application of the UNCRC in school is further addressed in the review of the scientific literature on student belonging (cf. Chapter 3) (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

The *second* point infers that student knowledge and skill acquisition is the nexus between school social workers and teachers. Both professions are committed to advancing student knowledge and skills, which makes it a core task – although the disciplines differ in focus, tasks and implementation. Social workers focus on student support on the micro-, meso- and macro-level to remedy social problems through a range of interventions that involve parents, teachers, social group work and collaboration with child welfare and the school authorities. Their tasks concern support for students to address their coping strategies and develop approaches that facilitate student skill acquisition to enrich stu-

dent-peer and student-teachers social-exchange relationships. Teachers focus on student education through academic knowledge acquisition and generic skills in curriculum-based activities. *Bildung*, understood as a whole student approach extends learning activities through and across students' personal, social, and academic knowledge base. Hence, I propose that the common ground for school social workers and teachers is student knowledge and skill acquisition. The literature review in the next chapter (cf. Chapter 3) addresses the impact of knowledge and skill acquisition on belonging by facilitating or hindering student "need to belong" fulfilment.

The *third* point indicates that equality in education is a concern for both Austrian and Australian schools. The Austrian tracking system prevents students from gaining admission to higher education as it is not equally accessible for everyone. It presents a structural and positional problem by impeding students' social mobility. This hinders belonging by thwarting student access to higher secondary school. In Australia, students with immigrant heritage report discrimination by peers based on their country of origin, which hinders students belonging because it impedes access to resources, such as the power to regulate their social need for recognition and fairness (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). The insight here is that school policies and practices give some students an advantage over others. It is an indication that equal access to educational opportunities at school – be it relationships with other students or academic achievement – is a determinant of student belonging. This issue is revisited in the review of the literature in the following chapter.

The *fourth* point established the Austrian and Australian governments to have ratified the UNCRC. They are thus obligated by international law to implement the 54 Articles in school policy and practice (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). Likewise, school social workers are engaged in school, particularly in supporting vulnerable student populations, and are thus obligated to carry out their interventions based on the UNCRC. Therefore, the UNCRC provides the framework for the school and school social workers to engage in a joint course of action. They can develop and implement education and support services to facilitate student access to the resources to meet the "need to belong" at school. Hence, cross-disciplinary collaboration drives school policies and practices. Likewise, social work's triple mandate positions interventions within the human rights framework as a basis for upholding the dignity of all students – as an inherent right. The same can be said for education, which drives knowledge and skill acquisition. The dignity of students as an inherent right is upheld by *Bildung* – the whole student approach in education. Therefore, the suggestion that the guiding principles, or philosophy, of the tripartite mandate, extends to teachers, school management, and school staff – as the nexus between the student and school, by grounding knowledge and skill acquisition within the framework of the UNCRC, as a set of children's rights

entitlements for student need fulfilment at school (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

In essence, when students have problems concerning their structural or interactional position in the different social levels of the school social system, it impedes their biological, psychic and social need fulfilment. Based on this rationale, the UNCRC framework is relevant for the current research on human needs. It is the formulation of rights entitlement that links the school specifically with children's rights. The crux of the matter is that the above four points have clarified the UNCRC as the common ground – and nexus – for school social workers, teachers, school management and school staff in both Austria and Australia to facilitate student need fulfilment (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). This rationale is picked up in the literature review in the next chapter.

3 Literature review on needs and student belonging

This chapter is a review of the research literature on human needs and belonging. It provides an overview of the precedents of belonging across disciplines and checks for consistencies within research findings. It synthesises the findings that inform student belonging to identify possible research gaps. The aim is to position the current study in the international scholarly discourse on student belonging.

The review was compiled based on literature sourced from online databases and libraries. The first database that was consulted was Wiley Online Library and database (WOL). The rationale for using WOL was practical: it was recommended by lecturers and peers¹⁹ to source high-quality peer-reviewed publications. WOL provided a gateway to the international research literature on belonging alongside the web-based search engines Google Scholar and ScienceDirect. Further resources consulted were SAGE Journals, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), The Australian Literature Resource (AustLit), Office of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) iLibrary, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) and SpringerLink.

The search term “student belonging” yielded 2 368 potentially relevant peer-reviewed journal articles using Google Scholar and 178 articles on ScienceDirect associated with related terms, such as social bonds, affiliation, connectedness and relatedness. The research literature was consulted at different stages of the current study, i.e., from the initial review to the data collection and analysis. The publications accessed spanned over 20 years – from 1990 to 2016. The review provides the reader with a snapshot of the international research on human needs and belonging, such as Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters (2016, pp. 98–100) examination of socio-ecological factors on student belonging.

The review is compiled based on the perception of the international discourse on needs, rights and student belonging. Generally said, there are two strands: firstly, the research literature on children’s needs and wellbeing, and secondly, research on motivation, school attainment, participation, ecological or whole-school approach, relationship building and community. The two branches join or dovetail with the area of children’s rights and entitlements.

The review is organised into three sections. The first section is associated with the human needs discourse in social work (Towle, 1945; Obrecht, 2005b; Ife, 2012; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). It provides an overview of children’s

19 at the second summer university of the International Doctoral Studies in Social Work (INDOSOW) program. The summer school was hosted by the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work, from the 23rd May – 4th of June 2010 in Ankarana, Slovenia (Zaviršek, 2009, pp. 219–224).

needs, rights and wellbeing (Brazelton and Greenspan, 2000; Ben-Arieh et al., 2001; Fuhr, 2002; Ben-Arieh, 2007; Andresen and Albus, 2010). Section two addresses research on belonging as a psychological need, student belonging and friendship. It focuses on the school community's linkage between student participation and acceptance as a benchmark for belonging versus rejection and alienation (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Osterman, 2000). The third section looks at student, peer and teacher interactions and social relationships in connection with belonging and shows the significance of student affiliation with the school (Roeser, Midgley and Urdan, 1996; Anderman, 2003; Faircloth and Hamm, 2005; Singh, Chang and Dika, 2010; Zullig *et al.*, 2010; Law, Cuskelly and Carroll, 2013). It touches on research on membership, group affiliation and belonging (Drolet *et al.*, 2013). The central role of teachers – to support students and foster belonging – is highlighted (Faircloth, 2009; Van Ryzin, Gravely and Roseth, 2009) (Feigenberg *et al.*, 2008; Faircloth, 2009; Van Ryzin, Gravely and Roseth, 2009). Similarly, academic engagement and student belonging are juxtaposed (Willms, 2003; Aydiner and Kalender, 2015). Whether understood as the natural environment or student-peer and student-teacher relations, the school environment is shown to impact student belonging (Anderman and Maehr, 1994; Ma, 2003; Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters, 2016). Subsequently, heterogeneity, recognition of difference and belonging (Luhmann, 1988; Mecheril, 2003; Lang-Wojtasik, 2008b, 2008a, 2013) are outlined, and non-belonging and social exclusion are discussed (Feigenberg *et al.*, 2008; Crisp, 2010). The chapter concludes with a summary of the core points, research gaps and the assertions to position the current study in the international scholarly discourse on student belonging.

3.1 Children's needs, rights and wellbeing

As the current study is informed by a social work perspective²⁰, it is pertinent to mention here that social work science research on universal human needs has a long tradition that traces back to the early 20th century (Arlt, 1921, 1934). It concerns the description and explanation of social problems and the underlying mechanisms and structures that hinder need fulfilment to develop normative principles, guiding policies and practices that promote human wellbe-

20 A social work perspective refers to the profession and discipline's object base, which is social problems, i.e., need tensions that are not met because the individual is hindered in accessing resources for their need fulfilment (Obrecht, 2009; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018).

ing, i.e., to support people in gaining access to resources for their need fulfilment (Towle, 1945; Obrecht, 2005c; Ife, 2012; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018).

Brazelton and Greenspan (2000) identified “seven needs as irreducible needs” that are central to the child’s psychic development and physical growth. The specifications for these needs were developed in clinical practice with children and adolescents and psychological research on child development. The seven needs form the baseline of a theoretical framework on child wellbeing that covers children’s development in the family, school, community and social welfare policy and practice. The needs consist of 1) nurturing attachment relationships, 2) physical integrity and safety, 3) support in the child’s developmental stage, 4) age and developmentally appropriate experiences, 5) setting structure and limits, 6) stable and supportive cultural connections/bonds, and 7) future protections. In particular, reliable and reciprocal relationships between children and caregivers were emphasised as fundamental to the child’s belonging. It should be noted that in their relationship with caregivers, children learn by modelling and emulating the adults. However, if there is a lack of reliable relationships, children can have difficulties managing their feelings and forming reciprocal relationships with others. This assertion is consistent with an earlier study conducted by Bowlby (1988, pp. 119–121) on human psychological development linked to an innate need for emotional relationships. It examined the underlying mechanisms of human relationships and the interdependence of evolutionary human development. The findings showed that the responsiveness of adult caregivers in their actions towards infants and children influence the young person’s ability as an adult to form and sustain attachment bonds.

In an analysis of children’s needs along the theoretical lines of the deontological moral theory of Immanuel Kant, Fuhr (2002, pp. 516–519) focused on children’s happiness. It was noted in education discourse that happiness was contested as a vague and value-laden concept. Similarly, the gap in education science on children’s needs in general and happiness was theorised to be related and problematic. The analysis focused on a comprehensive assessment of children’s wellbeing in the present and the future, concerned with what makes life worth living – thus concentrating on the educational needs and interests of the child. Research on needs was emphasised as a viable approach to make general statements about the conditions of childhood happiness to determine how need satisfaction takes place empirically. It was contended that human need represents a hypothetical construct for research into the child’s affective and cognitive judgements about their happiness. Because happiness research is reputed to lack objectivity, the need theory examined objective happiness over the affective and cognitive judgments or feelings children have about their happiness.

Similarly, Bucher (2001, pp. 183–185) showed in the empirical finding generated from the Salzburger Kinder survey that children were generally con-

tent with childhood, which positively impacted their wellbeing. The survey was conducted in 1998 on 1 319 children with a mean age of 11.2 years. The results showed 45% variance in happiness, determined by: 1) a positive family atmosphere, appreciation and praise with 28% of the total variance, 2) positive school experience, 3) boredom, 4) enough space at home, 5) positive school experience, 6) leisure time – freedom – friends, 7) strict upbringing, 8) non-divorced parents, and 9) family activities. A statistically significant correlation between children's happiness and the school type was revealed. Specifically, children felt happier in elementary school than secondary school but less content in lower secondary/*Hauptschule* than in higher secondary/*Gymnasium*. The findings showed that of the factors considered in the survey, such as children's living arrangements, parents' financial situation, and spare-time activities, the type of school that the respondents attended had the most impact on the child's psychological wellbeing. In a survey of adults' views on contemporary childhood, the majority of the respondents (51%) considered children to be equally happy to themselves when they were younger. Notably, there was a tendency for adults to view contemporary childhood more negatively than the children themselves.

The Children's Society of the United Kingdom (UK) commenced in 2005 with the first national enquiry into the quality of children's lives in the UK (2006). The first survey was conducted with 11 000 adolescents between the ages of 14 and 16, who consulted with them about the state of their wellbeing. The findings became the basis of the index of children's wellbeing in the UK, with the domain school, education and learning defined as one of 10 determinants of children's wellbeing (Rees, 2017, p. 23). Similarly, Ben-Arieh et al. (2001, p. 89) were engaged in the early efforts to develop social indicators to measure children's wellbeing. The research focus was twofold: children's subjective perspectives of childhood and the development of objective approaches to measuring wellbeing. The movement around children's wellbeing indicators focused on aggregated statistics (Ben-Arieh, 2008, p. 89). The method applied was multidisciplinary and integrated knowledge from philosophy, sociology, social work, educational science and economics. This was strategically used as a baseline to advocate for children's access to resources for need fulfilment across the board, i.e., researchers, policymakers, child advocacy groups and educators. Likewise, the child indicator movement played a central role in the development of child survival indicators. A core area of concern was school failure and its implications for wellbeing when students disconnected from the education system because of academic and behavioural problems associated with social problems in the school context, linked to the lack of needs satisfaction. Similarly, research into young people's health and wellbeing in Australia showed data gaps concerning student relations at school and their participation in society (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011, p. vii).

In the Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI) *Handbook of Risks to Child Wellbeing*, Werner (2006, pp. 81–84) posits that the satisfaction of children’s needs was essential for their survival and development. Children’s needs – for example, existence, social bonding, relatedness and growth – were perceived as interrelated and interdependent. Access to need satisfaction was strongly linked to the school and home environment, where children spent most of their lives. Similarly, empirical research in developmental psychology on children’s needs was generated using experimental approaches to examine the day-to-day requirements of children and how they were met. Specifically, the satisfaction of children’s needs was examined and hypothesised about in association with the age-related commonalities and differences between children and adults. This primarily concerned age and developmental stages that a child goes through and children’s dependence on adults for need satisfaction – for example, the level of care requirements versus autonomy. Infants and toddlers showed a high reliance on support from their caregivers to survive and flourish. Conversely, older children and adolescents require less care or supervision and show an increased drive for autonomy. The same applied to attachment behaviour. Whereas young children were seen to require intense relationships with caregivers, older children and adolescents sought relationships outside of the parent realm with same-aged peers, alongside an increase in detachment and demarcation from parents. The need for belonging was understood as the child’s drive for stable, supportive communities and cultural consistency to achieve connectedness in social relations with others. In conclusion, Werner emphasised that fair, transparent and respectful community relations, based on shared values and norms, were critical to developing the child’s personality and social responsibility (ibid., 2006, pp. 82–83).

In their conceptual work on applying need theory in research and policy development, Andresen and Albus (2010, pp. 57–58) contributed to the human-needs discourse through their efforts to define and determine children’s wellbeing. Their approach aligned Deci and Ryan’s (1985, pp. 3–9) self-determination theory. Specifically, their interest was focused on the needs identified as “competence, autonomy, and relatedness” (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 68). Similarly, difficulties concerning data collection in education research on needs satisfaction were identified with assessing needs as suppressed, delayed or negated. For example, food can be suppressed because of a stronger desire or social pressure to maintain low body weight. This was viewed as emphasising the norms of a social group that were prioritised over the satisfaction of biological need tensions. The distinction here is that need tensions are universal and integral to the survival and flourishing of the human organism. Still, the actualisation of needs relies on external factors such as the person’s socio-cultural and natural environment. Questions around the construction of child-specific needs moved the debate away from universal essentials for every human being because children were perceived to have other requirements. Hence,

their biopsychic needs were regarded as age-related. As such, children's needs were to be considered separately from the needs of adults. This approach did not challenge the fact that children's needs are human needs but allowed for inquiry into the child-specific physiological and mental life cycle requirements. As such, it was identified as a critical area of development in comparison to that of adults. The focus to emphasising specific needs to children shifts concerns around the age-related vulnerability of children's need satisfaction. However, to treat children's needs as a problem area per se would be disparaging because the need discourse would move away from needs as existential, the common dominator of humanity. In addition, in-depth knowledge of children's needs and the requirements for satisfaction were perceived as the baseline for a wellbeing analysis. The correlation between children's rights and needs was evident. Children's rights were perceived as the referential framework of right entitlements that facilitate growth and development and the benchmark for monitoring the global wellbeing of children. The default assumptions of satisfiers and conditions that enable human-need satisfaction were questioned to emphasise that human needs are universal. Still, generation-specific differences are a given due to the developmental stages of a child. It was specified that empirical research should take the subjective attitudes of children about their situation into account alongside the objective indicators of need satisfaction. Hence, need research was viewed with criticism if a mechanistic approach to data collection on children was prioritised over participative data collection methods with children (ibid., 2010, p. 54).

3.2 Belonging as a psychological need

Academic interest in the investigation of belonging gained momentum around the early 1940s, corresponding with Maslow's publication on human motivation. He positioned "belongingness" within a nested hierarchy of human needs, a motivation theory set within a social psychology framework (1943, pp. 388–389). Even though the proposed order of needs is not supported by empirical research, it continues to spark interest in the underlying drivers of human motivation. Research on belonging has since expanded in the social sciences, showing an upwards trend in publications from around the early 2000s onwards.

In a seminal paper that draws from the research findings of studies conducted foremostly in psychology and sociology, Baumeister & Leary (1995, p. 497) set about testing a "belongingness hypothesis". It was proposed that

"human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships".

Thus, belonging serves as human protection – an evolutionary development that ensures survival. Individuals form and maintain social relationships with others in social groups, with the members cooperating to gain access to resources for need fulfilment. Consequently, relationships strengthen human social ties and feelings of affection. It was suggested that the lack of social relationships results in social isolation and alienation. It was seen to thwart belongingness because the need to belong is not satisfied. However, it was noted that people differ in their drive to gain acceptance and belonging from others. While some people are heavily invested in achieving the approval of others, sustaining their relationships, and expressing feelings of anxiety about how others value them, this does not apply to everyone in the same form or the same degree. Similarly, attachments are formed for emotional and material gain. In addition, intergroup biases are likely to decrease when group members spend more time together. By increasing the contact between in-group and out-group members, people are more likely to form positive opinions about each other, which can aid in the reduction of bias. When people acquire sufficient social bonds to satisfy the need to belong, a state of saturation follows. This diminishes the likelihood of actively seeking new relationships. Belonging is shown to mitigate delinquent behaviour. Conversely, suppose the need to belong is not adequately satisfied through social relationships with family members and friends. In that case, it could increase the individual's risk of low self-esteem, a high-risk factor for mental health problems such as depression (*ibid.*, p. 506).

Deci and Ryan's research on human motivation substantiated that the interaction between adolescents and their environment affects students' behaviour (2000, p. 69). Motivation was examined using variables constructed and manipulated from the social-cultural environment to establish the laboratory conditions for measuring the effects on students' internal processes and outward behavioural responses. The findings showed that when the social-cultural environment thwarted the fundamental psychological needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness, it had negative implications for a person's psychological wellbeing (*ibid.*, 2000, p. 76). Additional experiments examined the extent of self-regulated over externally controlled behaviours to predict and encourage certain types of behaviour. Two types of motivation that determined behaviour was identified as intrinsic and extrinsic, with different forms of motivation found in both types. Intrinsic motivation is a self-determined interest in doing something, an activity or pursuit derived from attitudes, beliefs, or core values. These values are internalised to the self; they are intrinsically driven and autonomous. In comparison, extrinsic motivation was identified as controlled, non-self-determined, input-output behaviour, in compliance with coercion or the obligation to avoid negative consequences, such as feelings of guilt. In short, human beings are motivated to self-determination and act deliberately to achieve goals and integrate new experiences into their existing behavioural repertoire (Deci and Ryan, 1985, p. 62). The social-cultural environ-

ment affects this process by playing a vital role in human mental functioning, equating with wellbeing. The environment directly influences human action by facilitating or hindering goal-directed motivation. It is driven by an external stimulus directly linked to reward gain and the avoidance of punishment in the social-cultural environment and is thus external to the self. Human beings are motivated to satisfy the need for relatedness by establishing and maintaining social relationships that facilitate connectedness or belongingness with others (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 73).

In an early landmark quantitative study, Goodenow (1993, pp. 82–84) investigated the predictors of student belonging. The terms psychological school membership and belonging were used interchangeably in a study that continues to be widely cited in contemporary research. A survey instrument was developed using an 18-item questionnaire called the “Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM)” with a five-point Likert self-reported scale. The PSSM focused on the variables’ expectancies of school academic outcomes, belonging in the classroom and school, values and beliefs. It was applied to assess the classroom belonging versus the alienation of students attending middle and junior high school in three phases across two schools. The survey was conducted in English and translated to Spanish for Hispanic students. The findings suggested that neither the student year level nor ethnic heritage played a notable role in student belonging. A positive correlation was identified between academic engagement and students’ feeling supported by peers. The attitude of the individual student towards school was found to correlate higher with their perceived classroom belonging than academic outcomes or the role of teachers. For early adolescents, student belonging is suggested to dominate over academic achievement (*ibid.*, p. 88).

Goodenow and Grady (1993, pp. 67–70) associate student belonging with students’ feeling that they mattered to others and others mattered to them, expressed through being valued and respected by peers and teachers. The research on student belonging was conducted using a survey of 301 students in two urban working-class schools. The students self-identified as being of African American, White-Anglo or of Hispanic heritage. The findings showed a correlation between the students’ age entering secondary school and their sense of belonging. Younger students aged 12-14 were shown to be more likely to establish belonging at school than older students aged 15 upwards. To be a member of the group required that students took on the values, attitudes and norms of that group which were internalised. A correlation developed between student personal characteristics and behavioural responses towards peers in social contexts, such as the classroom. However, interdependence emerged between the internalised norms and the reaction of the social group, which led to a recalibration of personal values, attitudes and norms to fit with those of the group.

In a review of the psychological research on belonging, Osterman (2000, pp. 342–343) identified belonging as a psychological need that drives the individual to seek relations with others because they strive for belongingness – the state of belonging; an innate psychological need that is vital for their wellbeing. It requires that human beings form and maintain relationships with others who care about their welfare and seek ways to be accepted by a group of people who care about each other. When people are accepted, they form social bonds through physical and mental interactions and derive positive emotions. Academic achievement, pursued as the central objective of the school, with little concern for the social environment, was suggested as impeding student-peer and student-teacher relations. Suppose provisions are not made in the curriculum for students to form and maintain relationships. In that case, some teachers perceive student relationships as predominantly related to events outside of the classroom, i.e., reserved for the student’s spare time, which undermines and undervalues the worth of relationship-building in the school. If students do not feel accepted in class and the teacher neglects relationship building, it can curtail their physiological and mental wellbeing and negatively impact their academic achievement. Thus, it was contended that community is key to facilitating need fulfilment. The concept of community was based on the definition by McMillan and Chavis (1986, p. 9):

“[...] a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to being together”.

Hence, the community was perceived as one of four instrumental criteria for belonging, membership, influence, and integration. Students’ subjective feelings about being in a community of people who care about one another and share a mutual social bond are thus directly linked with belonging because “the essence of this sense of community is a feeling of belonging within a group” (Osterman, 2000, p. 342). When people cared for and supported each other, they expected to meet their needs through their shared commitment. Similarly, the findings showed that the characteristics of the school social setting strongly influence the social embeddedness of learning and teaching. Likewise, the marginalisation of relationship building in the classroom was challenged by calls for provisions to promote relationship building as equally important to academic achievement. The emphasis was on fulfilling the human needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness in student-teacher relations. Moreover, relatedness was stressed as a psychological need that is prevalent in human growth and development. Relatedness concerns emotions associated with strong social bonds to a community through being loved and respected – the essence of belongingness. It was suggested that teachers are in a pivotal position to facilitate student belonging through classroom leadership approaches

geared explicitly towards encouraging students to build relationships with peers alongside pursuing academic endeavours (2000, p. 357).

The “need to belong” is a precursor to explain cognitive, motivational processes and emotions that affect student actions and behaviour in the section above. For example, when students feel that they matter to another person or a social group in a specific social setting, such as the classroom, it is likely to increase their identification and involvement with their classmates. The following section brings us to research that examines the nexus between students in their relations with peers and teachers against the backdrop of belonging.

3.3 Interactions and social relationships

The research findings of Roeser, Midgley and Urda (1996, p. 412), generated through quantitative research with 296 middle-school students, showed the quality of the teacher-student relationship to be a strong predictor of students’ sense of student belonging. In addition, when students perceived a caring and supportive school environment, this positively correlated with student adaptive behaviour and academic achievement. The study looked at student motivation and goal-related school structures and support systems and the effect of school rewards on academic achievement, which indicated a positive effect on some students – the reward receivers – while demotivating others.

Anderman (2003, pp. 9–10) conducted a longitudinal study on the association between teaching methods and student motivation with 618 students in seven government-funded middle schools, three in urban areas and four in rural areas in the United States of America (USA). The majority of the students were Caucasian (88%), while a smaller percentage were of African American or ethnic minority heritage. The survey questionnaire was based on the PSSM scale (cf. Subsection 3.2) developed by Goodenow (1993, pp. 79–80). The questions concerned classroom climate, peer and teacher relationships and the students’ academic motivation. The findings showed that student belonging declined as time progressed because the longer students attended school, the less they felt accepted in class. It was shown to be significantly linked to the decline in student academic motivation. In addition, teachers’ promotion of respect in the classroom positively affected student belonging even though their feeling of belonging within the school generally declined over time. Goal-directed instruction increased student academic motivation, which positively affected the students’ feeling of belonging in class because it increased their self-worth. Hence, teachers were identified as having a pivotal role in promoting student belonging. This role includes academic instruction that fosters task-orientated goals, emphasises that all students can succeed academically and engages in interpersonal relationships to encourage a classroom climate of mutual respect

and support. Although this study was undertaken almost two decades ago, the findings remain consistent with contemporary studies on student belonging (Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters, 2016, p. 98).

Faircloth and Hamm (2005, pp. 298–301) investigated the link between friendship and belonging in semi-structured interviews with high-school students from four ethnic groups. Belonging was established along with the following main domains: bonding with teachers, having a place within the network of peer relationships, extracurricular involvement, and perceived ethnic-based discrimination. The data showed mutually consensual friendships linked with feelings of being valued, respected and worthiness. Similarly, friendship was identified as a strong contributor towards student belonging at school. The function of friendship was identified as a motivator for students attending school and as a buffer to prevent disaffection if school was perceived as boring. Friends had a common ground in their intimacy and understanding. Friendship was shown to function as a catalyser for student belonging when students felt marginalised or less valued. However, friendship was assessed to harm school interest if one friend was disaffected or showed disinterest in school because it negatively impacted the other friend's school motivation. It resulted in the mutual loss of school interest.

A later study conducted by Singh, et al. (2010, pp. 166–172) developed a questionnaire-based survey to assess the underlying causes of low academic achievement at high school in the State of Virginia, United States of America (USA), with relation to student self-concept, student belonging and school engagement. The researchers sought to determine if there was a negative correlation between the ethnic background of students and student belonging. A total of 1 157 high-school students identified as Caucasian American and African American students took part in the study in 2002. The findings showed that belonging was a strong contributor towards student academic achievement. In particular, student belonging, affiliation, and teachers' support were crucial issues for African American students and those with low academic scores. There was a significant correlation between the school community and student belonging. This indicated that teachers and social workers needed to focus on policies and practices that contributed to a school environment conducive to community building and fostering teacher-student and student-peer relationships. However, the findings showed that the school did not significantly influence students' self-concept. There was a significant correlation between student belonging and their academic achievement, particularly for African American students and students struggling with academic or behavioural problems in class.

In a quantitative study, Zullig, et al. (2010, pp. 143–149) investigated the predictors of student belonging. A tool was developed to measure school climate in a secondary school that focused on the relational aspects of student-peer and student-teacher interactions. In an exploratory analysis, items from

five school climate measures were combined to a total of 184 items and grouped to fit the domains of order, safety and discipline. Structural equation modelling was used to develop the measurement in two stages: exploratory and confirmatory data sets. Non-probability convenience sampling was used, and 2 049 students from three school districts completed the questionnaire. The findings showed that student-teacher relationships were paramount to a positive school climate. The class teacher and then the school principal were identified as key figures in determining students' academic and social success at school.

Similarly, Law, et al. (2013, pp. 119–124) conducted quantitative research in eight government schools in Queensland, Australia, recruiting 563 students from the Year 6-7 and Year 9-11 levels. Subscales were developed from a theoretical model to test students' perception of family, peer and school connectedness. School connectedness was measured based on the PSSM scale (cf. Subsection 3.2) developed by Goodenow (1993, pp. 79–80) to assess students' perception of their feelings connected to the school. The scale covered other areas including the dependant variables: student wellbeing, ego resiliency and self-esteem (ibid., 1993, pp. 123–124). The peer connectedness measures were used to assess the quality of student-peer relationships, i.e., peer closeness and whether there were indications of risk-taking behaviour in school or deviant behaviour such as drug use or stealing outside of the school. The findings showed school connectedness to be more significant to students than peer relationships or group membership. The results were set in the ecological framework because school was seen as broader and more consistent than peer friendships which are less stable than the school environment (ibid., p. 134). Hence, the school sets the framework within which students do different things, including having relationships with peers. In addition, school connectedness and the connectedness to peers positively affected students' emotional wellbeing and their positive adjustment to different school situations.

The section above discussed the nexus between students' relations with peers and teachers against the backdrop of belonging. In the following section, the research literature that addressed group membership is positioned as a determinant of belonging.

3.4 Membership as a determinant of belonging

The finding of intergroup research undertaken by Tajfel and Billig (1974, pp. 162–165) – to test their proposed hypothesis that discrimination was more likely to be practised against non-group or “unfamiliar” schoolboys aged 12-14 than towards in-group members or “familiar” schoolboys – was not confirmed. They expected group members to stick together and, in their behaviour

towards others, exclude someone who was not a member of the group (ibid., p. 159).

However, evidence from the experiments conducted with the boys showed this not to be the case. Instead, evidence was found to link in-group favouritism when the boys were randomly assigned to groups. However, a more robust emphasis on one's group could be salience to group membership (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). When the individual identifies as being affiliated with a social group that distinguishes them from members, or components, of other social groups, membership can be seen as a determinant of belonging.

In a qualitative study, Drolet et al. (2013, pp. 540–541) conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 students aged 12–14 years from different linguistic backgrounds in three Canadian schools. They examined student membership based on a school-based alcohol and drug prevention program. The traits of the students that emerged from the data set were: self-confidence; capacity for self-assertion; interpersonal relationship; group solidarity; and conflict resolution, which corresponded with the skillset that the program focused on in teaching students' capacity building in a group context. This study showed a strong correlation between positive peer relationships and wellbeing at school. The study's findings highlighted the role of social work in school to focus on interventions that made an immediate difference in the wellbeing of adolescents. Ecosystem analysis was stressed because of the potential to identify critical factors such as the connections between students and school in protecting adolescent wellbeing. This is linked to the relationships that adolescents form with their peers and teachers. The school was identified as key to preventative programs. The research gap that concluded the study write-up pointed to a lack of research on adolescents' views about belonging at school. Drolet, et al. identified that student-peer ties, which indicated the relationships between adolescents in the program, were central to student wellbeing. Hence, positive peer relationships enabled the students to participate in crucial processes of that group, such as defining and maintaining group values and beliefs.

In the section above, the research literature that addressed group membership was positioned as a determinant of belonging. The focus of the next section is on the role of teachers in facilitating student belonging.

3.5 Teachers fostering student belonging

Faircloth (2009, pp. 330–332) undertook an explorative qualitative study to assess belonging and identity, based on a classroom survey of 83 students in the USA between 14 and 15 years of age. It was an English assignment-based approach that took place in the classroom. A detailed analysis of the results focused on central themes, developing codes that a second coder triangulated.

The findings emphasised the teacher's role in fostering belonging in class which was identified as one of the dimensions of belonging, and the second was interacting with peers in class. The latter dimension was identified as central for students to feel supported and acknowledged as a learner by peers. The students mentioned that they preferred classes that related to their ethnic-cultural background. There was a strong correlation between students who felt negative about school and their perception of themselves. The criticism was a disconnect between school and their identity because self-identity was deemed necessary to change how they spoke or dressed to fit in. Faircloth's findings show that student belonging is closely related to the perception of self (2009, p. 341).

In a quantitative survey-based study with 283 secondary school students in the USA, Van Ryzin, et al. (2009, pp. 4–6) examined school-based autonomy, defined as self-direction and choice. They sought to identify the correlation between belongingness, hope and engagement with student wellbeing. The research was carried out in two stages and was set up as a short-term longitudinal study exploring the association between teacher-relatedness and student belonging. The survey instrument was designed based on the Classroom Life Scale to assess the correlation between teacher and peer academic support. The results showed a positive correlation between autonomy and belonging: students found that the school environment facilitated need satisfaction because supportive teachers showed high autonomy scores in self-direction and decision-making. This had a positive effect on student psychological adjustment because it promoted hope which, in turn, was beneficial for daily school adjustments and helped students develop academic autonomy. The authors positioned the findings within the self-determination discourse because it concerned the underlying mechanisms of student academic engagement and the nexus of belonging to the classroom community, i.e., peer and teacher interactions and social relationships (Van Ryzin, Gravely and Roseth, 2009, p. 10).

This section focused on research literature that positioned the role of teachers in the nexus between student belonging and academic engagement. The section that follows pertains to student academic engagement with student belonging.

3.6 Academic engagement

In analysing the data from PISA 2000 results, Willms (2003, p. 9) examined student participation and belonging to assess how school policies and practices influence them. The findings showed belonging as a psychological component closely linked and influenced by students' feelings that their peers and teachers accepted and valued them. It is fundamental to belonging when students feel

comfortable and safe at school – for example, feeling physically secure and able to express their opinion and finding the environment friendly. Something similar holds for protective factors at school that make a difference to student support and validation because this increases the likelihood of positive adaptation to difficult circumstances.

Aydiner and Kalender (2015, p. 3302) sought to establish a correlation between the students' belonging and academic resilience. The data they used were sourced from the Turkish PISA 2012, with 4 848 15-year-old students participating from 13 different school types and 12 regions. Nine school-focused indicators were applied in the assessment of student belonging. 45% of the students were identified as academic resilient and socio-economically disadvantaged. The researchers focused on two aspects of belonging: firstly, being valued by teachers and peers, and secondly, fitting in because of attributes and values that corresponded with those of teachers and peers. They examined belonging instruments to assess whether they helped distinguish between disadvantaged and resilient student performance. Findings showed a correlation between student belonging and resilience, with the predictors "liked by other students" and "make friends easily", indicating a strong link between resilience and belonging. It could not be established whether students were more academically active because they had friends or compensated for loneliness.

The section above focused on student academic engagement and student belonging. The following section is concerned with the school environment and ecological approach to assessing factors that influence student belonging in the school social system.

3.7 School environment

Anderman and Maehr compiled a review of research on the school environment and students' goal orientation. They examined the effect of the identified disconnect between school policy, procedures and practices on student motivation. It was suggested that this disconnect could be addressed using an ecological approach: to develop preventative programs that encourage student initiatives over correcting maladaptive behaviour, to focus on student motivation. Young adolescence, the period of transition from childhood to adulthood, was identified as a time of uncertainty for students because of the contextual and environmental changes that they experience. These changes correlate with a shift in student motivation – a decline in academic achievement and an upsurge in non-academic pursuits. It is a broad development ranging from high to the complete lack of motivation during student transition from elementary to secondary school, continuing for the first two years of secondary school. The shift alone does not per se indicate that students have problems at school.

Essentially, a decline in student academic achievement can be accompanied by an increase in their activities, such as sports and relationships outside of nuclear family, due to building relationships with peers becoming a priority. However, young adolescents may not yet have developed the higher-level decision-making skills necessary to select subjects for their future education and career trajectories. This highlights the correlation between students' problems in coping with a transition linked with the school environment, such as school structural issues on education policy and practice levels. Suppose a school fails to address the contextual and environmental changes and the interplay between them and student motivation. In that case, this can negatively affect the student's academic outcomes and mental wellbeing at school. Motivational theory is a beneficial approach to designing, implementing, and evaluating school changes and reforms because it addresses student motivation, the central focus for education. The impetus is the need to develop school policy and procedures that prevent over-redirecting, i.e., the teacher's excessive use of corrective measures to control problematic student behaviour as a way forwards to increase student motivation at school (1994, pp. 298–301).

In an enquiry conducted by Ma (2003, pp. 342–345), the correlation between student belonging, the school social environment and school climate was investigated. It was based on survey data from a school climate study conducted in Canada in 1996. 6 883 sixth-grade students from 148 schools and 6 868 eighth-grade students from 92 schools participated. The critical area of focus was the day-to-day student-peer and student-teacher interactions concerning students' sense of belonging. Items were selected to construct variables for student self-esteem and general health. The school level was indicated by academic press, disciplinary climate and parent involvement. The objective was to establish how schools affect the sense of belonging, which was the outcome variable. The enquiry was undertaken to address the gap in empirical research on the development of student belonging within the school context and social environment. In addition, the study sought to establish data to document the educational benefit of a strong sense of belonging. The research findings, generated through hierarchical linear modelling techniques, showed that teachers and the school administration played a central role in fostering student belonging at school (*ibid.*, pp. 345–347). In addition, cross-sectional data provided interesting results contrary to education and school leadership expectations that the variables' native status showed no significance in student belonging. The same applied to socioeconomic status, number of parents and siblings, academic achievement and sex. However, a correlation was found between the students' sense of belonging and physical and mental health. There was a circular link between student self-esteem and student belonging, which indicated that belonging at school could protect students against mental-health problems. This suggests that students' mental and physical health influences belonging over their personal and family background. The cross-sectional data

showed a difference between younger and older students. Their sense of belonging could be identified: younger students felt a stronger sense of belonging when they perceived their teachers cared about them. The disciplinary procedures at school affected the older students' understanding of belonging. The findings highlight that the teachers and administrators can influence the school climate, directly influencing student belonging. It was important for students that their classmates valued and respected them, while teachers praise was seen to encourage young people's academic and social performance at school (ibid., p. 348).

Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters (2016, pp. 98–101) undertook literature research on belonging to identify the individual, relational and environmental factors at school and how they contribute towards or hinder student belonging. The research focus was a set of 51 studies to analyse the interplay between factors in school that contribute towards or hinder student belonging, based on a layered socio-ecological framework. The dependence variables were student belonging and related terms such as involvement, acceptance and bonding. The range of independent variables was broad and spanned academic performance, ethnicity; self-concept; teacher and peer support and relationships; and social media. Their statistical analysis showed that the independent variables in the studies were linked to student belonging (ibid., pp. 113–114). Interestingly, teacher support in caring interactions and relations between teachers and students showed the strongest effect on student belonging. The second strongest effect was identified on the micro-level and concerned the student's characteristics, such as self-esteem, awareness, and positive outlook. They identified a gap in research on the school social system and the different social levels using a whole school approach to identify ways to facilitate student belonging in secondary school.

This section concerns the school environment and ecological approach to assess factors influencing student belonging in the school social system. The following section uses a constructivist lens to examine the intersection of social identities, racism and racist discrimination to identify possible juxtaposition with belonging.

3.8 Heterogeneity and difference

Theories of social identities, racism and racist discrimination inform the constructivist perspective in education. In line with this thinking, Mecheril (2003, p. 28) contends that research on belonging provides insight into

“[...] den Bedingungen, unter denen sich Menschen einem natio-ethno-kulturellen Kontext als fraglos zugehörig beschreiben.” “[...] the conditions under which peo-

ple describe themselves as unquestioningly belonging to the natio-ethno-cultural context.”[translation by the author].

Belonging is formed in the interaction between membership, effectiveness and bonds. Hence, the critical area of focus is the subjective experiences that constitute belonging and conditions for belonging to be met. This applies when a person is acknowledged by others as a member, can influence the context in a meaningful way and has a life history connecting them to the context (2003, p. 135). These aspects form the structural field where belonging is experienced, designated and negotiated. Education research is concerned with the deconstruction and reconstruction of multiple forms of belonging, referred to as “*hybride Zugehörigkeiten*” “hybrid belonging” [translation by the author], in comparison with the prevailing and fixed conceptions of identity (Mecheril and Hoffarth, 2009, p. 257). The crux of the matter is that heterogeneity is the norm compared to notions of fixed identity that are based on the rigidity of holding onto normality as something fixed or stagnant. However, membership is achieved by disregarding differences in the group and constructing uniformity and convergence. It emphasises specific characteristics to indicate the symmetry of elements and “*Nicht-gleich-Sein der Nicht-Elemente*” “non-symmetry of non-elements” [translation by the author] (Mecheril, 2003, p. 139). Membership creates a symbolic convergence, and therefore, symbolic difference. This is perceived as self-perception and the attribution of others to establish shared characteristics, or those lacking, which is the constitutive element for locating belonging. Hence, membership is a perceived characteristic of belonging – an option related to social-context attribution that is used to categorise the individual in a group that could be actual or imagined – through social categorisation. In the process, membership is realised as an unquestioned interplay between self-attribution and impersonation. The recognition and positioning by others are fundamental to an individual’s process of identification to develop a sense of self-understanding. Membership can be formal or informal, and it specifies criteria to access an affiliation. Nationality is an example of formal membership. Informal membership can be language, speech, or expression, emphasising that prevailing concepts of membership determine membership. In this sense, self-recognition and self-positioning are relational to the discourse on the level of intercultural membership. Although the social conditions established through discourse do not determine individuals’ actions, their involvement in prevailing conditions is considered. Hence, although people have opportunities for autonomous action, this is set within social contexts. It can facilitate the examination of subjective affiliations in self-perceived versus others’ perceived attribution. In addition, experiences of informal membership show situational dependence, which varies according to the context and the membership concept. When membership concepts are applied in the everyday context, they can conflict or contradict each other. This happens because belonging is viewed as a field of tension that can negatively affect how mem-

bers see their belonging, as it can arouse feelings of doubt about their position in the group. Against this backdrop, migration is prototypical of modernity accompanied by processes of nation-ethnocultural belonging which can be described as social differentiation (Trautmann and Wischer, 2011). Similarly, education research is mandated to question and critique the dominant ideals that dictate to people with immigrant heritage the expectation that they assimilate within the dominant or host society, whether it concerns normative expectations regarding the internalisation of mainstream cultural and social practices or moving away from established own-group cultural or social heritage. Accordingly, the notion that assimilation is the inevitable default condition for belonging and gaining the recognition of personhood and agency is rejected over conditions that facilitate multiple forms or hybrid belonging (Mecheril and Hoffarth, 2009, pp. 256–257).

In line with the above conception of heterogeneity and difference, Lang-Wojtasik (2013, pp. 17–18) identified the school as an institution that provides education to children and adolescents and, as such, is attributed the ability to appreciate diversity through the recognition and acceptance of difference. The acceptance of difference is perceived to provide a frame of reference on four dimensions: *Räumlich* spatial, *Zeitlich* temporal, *Sachlich* factual and *Sozial* social [original in italics, translation by the author] to structure and organise information about the world to reduce its complexity (Lang-Wojtasik, 2019). It concerns equal rights and the recognition of diversity, referred to as the egalitarian difference – the notion that students are entitled to the same rights and opportunities to participate. An organisational framework is an approach to acknowledge difference and to consider it. Therefore, Lang-Wojtasik (2008b, p. 18) contends that the function of school as a social system requires that it responds to changes that come about due to globalisation and that it can be developed using systems theory and evolutionary theory. The focus here is on the function and relationship between school and society in connection with globalisation. It is about schools finding ways to facilitate bridge-building between students and global society by responding to their requirements. In this sense, the “*Weltgesellschaft als Referenzrahmen*” “world society is a frame of reference” [translation by the author] (Lang-Wojtasik, 2008b, p. 52). Hence, the world society is a frame with boundaries that communicate the complexity of global learning. The premise here is that using world society as a referential frame to develop and organise education supports students to learn about a globalised world in the school context. According to Lang-Wojtasik (2008a, p. 14), this brings a global perspective to school education; it builds on the fact that students have a “universalised” existence already, due to the plurality of the exchanges they have with other people, access to goods and services that extend past the regional, national or other temporal, geographic and spatial boundaries (ibid., 18). Luhmann’s system theory of the world society is positioned as the metatheoretical concept of all social systems as functional sub-

systems of the world society which are distinct and engaged through communication (Lang-Wojtasik, 2008b). To describe the function of school as a social system situated in the theoretical tenets of Luhmann's universal world society theory means that inclusion and exclusion are the points where systems are functionally differentiated about their internal communication processes – the foundation of theoretically construction social reality (Lang-Wojtasik, 2014). Looking at how a system functions requires that systems and their environment be differentiated because they operate and self-renew (Luhmann, 1988). Hence, their elements have emergent properties and reproduce through auto-poiesis.

The section above illustrated the intersection of social identities and racism with belonging perceived through a constructivist lens. In the section that follows, non-belonging is discussed. It ranges from feeling left out to social exclusion – they are thus nuanced and not posited as a dichotomy of belonging versus not belonging because of the imminent flux in social systems, such as the school social system.

3.9 Non-belonging and social exclusion

Feigenberg et al. (2008, pp. 168–173) conducted a mixed-methods education study with 168 students aged 12-13 years from five USA public middle schools. The research was conducted to examine students' responses to an example of a girl being excluded by peers during break time. The impetus for the study was to explore the justification for students' response to this case example of social exclusion, the strategies they considered using, and the influences on the proposed course of action. The data analysis took individual and contextual levels into account. The data collected were analysed based on a grounded theory approach. The findings indicated that the social environment had a significant effect on students' choice of strategy – for example, social rules and norms affected the decision to navigate the observer role over that of the perpetrator in the proposed actions of social exclusion but did not influence their decision to act beyond the role of observer. However, help for victims of social exclusion was more likely to be suggested when students thought their action would promote social change. In addition, when the social environment was perceived to welcome participation, it was more likely they would be actively involved. The social environment accepted the student response, or it reflected their social standing in the group. In one way or another, the justification for choice and action was determined in terms of the student's sense of belonging or the relationship with another individual student or social group. The conclusion was that the strategy chosen was only one part of the picture, as the students' actions also needed to be considered. It was recommended that

the school environment – i.e., teachers, school leadership and support staff – support the students in thinking about their moral choices and the implications of their actions. The onus was on teachers and researchers to develop practical approaches conducive to fruitful discussions about complex issues and the choice of measures to facilitate both a positive classroom and broader school environment (2008, pp. 178–181).

In a position piece written by Crisp (2010), belonging is situated alongside social connections, both of which are subsumed under the generic term of social exclusion. The aim is to distinguish between the concepts of belonging and connectedness to disrupt the binary of either social inclusion or social exclusion. In this sense, belonging is related to subjective identity because a person’s affiliation with other people, or social groups, is part of their subjective state of distinctiveness. This is because

“belonging involves becoming an insider within a group, organisation or a somewhat less structured network of people with common attributes or beliefs” (ibid., 2010, p. 124).

Hence, the distinctiveness of association with others is at the core of navigating in-group and out-group relationships. Thus, people can have a sense of belonging without connections or have connections without having a sense of belonging. By thinking about the possibility of a disconnect between belonging and connectedness, we are alerted to the degree of gradient between the two concepts and the implications of focusing on the one or the other, not where the two converge. Because this perspective can shed light on some of the problems of the one without the other, it is helpful to consider both concepts and how they are interlinked. The author’s perspective of belonging as an emotional attachment leaves the social aspects, such as membership to a group, out of the picture.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter, the cross-disciplinary research literature on human needs and belonging was synthesised. It provided an overview of international research on belonging as a need, belonging in the classroom, school community and non-belonging. Across the literature, the findings show that belonging is achieved through student-peer and student-teacher interaction and social relationships to contribute to positive academic outcomes. A thread throughout highlights the ambiguities around the concept of belonging, such as the term “belonging” applied loosely or synonymously with social bonds, affiliation, connectedness and relatedness. A gap in education science research was iden-

tified that pertains to young people's needs, in general, and their subjective perspectives of childhood.

Similarly, research into young people's health and wellbeing in Australia showed data gaps concerning student relations at school. Consequently, research on needs in combination with the UNCRC is suggested as a viable approach to make general statements about the conditions of childhood in the social spaces that they occupy, i.e., the school social system and the different social levels to empirically determine how need satisfaction takes place (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). A key area of concern was wellbeing when students disconnect from the education system and present academic and behavioural problems linked to the lack of access to resources for needs satisfaction.

It was shown that friendship functions as a catalyser for student belonging if students feel marginalised or less valued in class. Similarly, belonging suggests that students feel comfortable and safe at school – for example, feeling physically secure and able to express their opinion and finding the environment friendly. Thus, protective factors at school make it more likely for students to use positive coping responses to work through difficult and stressful circumstances.

To be accepted into a social group means that students fulfil the requirements of that group. Hence, group membership was shown to correlate with group rights and duties. Access to group membership was also shown to be influenced by the perception of group members. This can be based on a student's biological and social-cultural properties or actions that serve as a baseline to gauge the fit of a potential group member or its rejection of them. These markers were suggested to relate to students' ethnic-cultural heritage, skin tone and complexion, academic achievement and behaviour. In this sense, it is not sufficient to belong to a specific group because group members expect to comply with group norms and values. However, the notion that assimilation is the inevitable default condition for belonging and gaining the recognition of personhood and agency is rejected over conditions that facilitate multiple forms or hybrid belonging. Membership in a group was shown to facilitate student belonging and correlate with academic achievement, i.e., group focus on educational attainment can enhance the members' academic performances. In contrast, groups that focus on norm-breaking and classroom rebellion can negatively influence academic performance.

Teachers were perceived to be central to fostering student belonging when students enjoyed the class and felt supported and acknowledged as a learner. Student belonging is promoted when teachers emphasise that all students can succeed academically and that engaging in interpersonal relationships would encourage a classroom climate of mutual respect and support. Younger students were shown to seek teachers' acceptance over older students. It was sug-

gested that a socio-ecological framework could have the potential to identify facilitators of student belonging.

Non-belonging was identified as a gradient that ranges from occasionally feeling left out of something in class to social exclusion. Thus, the problems that come about when students feel a disconnect to school (for reasons such as social exclusion, for example) are shown to harm their school interest which requires interventions on the individual and the different social levels of the school. It was suggested that a lack of social relationships results in social isolation and alienation, which can impede belongingness. Students differ in their drive to gain acceptance and to belong from others because some are invested in interpersonal relationships and express feelings of anxiety concerning being valued by others which do not apply to everyone. It was indicated that the social environment significantly affected students' actions, with social rules and norms influencing their behaviour in situations that socially excluded others. However, the perspective of belonging as an emotional attachment tends to leave the social aspects of belonging, such as membership in the class, out of the picture. This puts the onus is on teachers, education researchers, and social workers to develop practical approaches to support individual students as class community members.

4 A conceptual framework based on theories of human need

This chapter introduces the tenets of four human needs theories that inform the current study's conceptual framework. It clarifies the commonalities and differences across the theories to highlight "belonging" as a human need and delineate the "need to belong". The theories are introduced in chronological order and do not suggest that the development was linear or that linkage between the theories is always a given but based on the year they were published.²¹ The four authors share the understanding that human needs are a universal fact, i.e., requirements of all human beings, irrespective of their social, cultural, economic or geographical context.

The chapter comprises nine sections. In the first section, the terms "theory", "system" and "mechanism" are introduced as key concepts of the current study. The second section provides a glimpse into the early theory developments by outlining the historical perspectives on human needs. Section three provides a sketch of human needs and welfare science towards poverty eradication. This section introduces *the first* of the four needs theories developed by *Ilse Arlt* (1921, 1934). The rationale for referencing her theory is threefold: a) she distinguishes between the root causes and the consequences of the lack of resources on need fulfilment, b) Arlt postulates that over-saturation can thwart human flourishing, and c) that needs are perceived relative to a person's age, sex, life cycle and socio-cultural living condition. In section four, the *second needs theory* of human motivation which *Abraham Harold Maslow* developed, is presented (1943, 1954). The rationale behind the interest in Maslow's humanistic theory is that belongingness is featured explicitly as a need. The fifth section discusses the *third needs theory* developed by *Jutta Mägdefrau* (2006) as a needs-based approach for education research. The rationale for the interest in the theory is the emphasis on satisfiers for human need fulfilment from a humanistic phenomenological perspective with a cross-disciplinary need-theory focus. Section six outlines the *fourth needs theory* – the biopsychic and socio-cultural model of human needs by *Werner Obrecht* (2005a, 2009). The rationale for using Obrecht's theory for the conceptual framework is threefold: a) the rigour in the definition of "need" regarding need elasticity, b) the theory is empirically based, and c) it is developed on the foundation of ontological materialism, and epistemological realism, the philosophical position of the current study. The seventh section draws up a synopsis of human needs across the *four theories* to develop the "need to belong" concept. In section eight, the

21 The need theories discussed in this chapter are not necessarily linked; it is pointed out when this is the case.

conceptualisation of the “need to belong” for the current study is discussed. In section nine, the objections to human needs theories are critically reflected. The chapter closes with a summary of the key points, and the assertions drawn from the four needs theories discussed are put forward.

In the next section, two ontological positions are outlined that determine how researchers see reality – and view human needs. The terms “theory”, “system”, and “mechanism” are discussed along with theories of human need.

4.1 Key concepts: theory, system and mechanism

The research and development of human needs theories expand across the natural and social science disciplines. It is grounded in different ontological positions which depend on the researchers’ philosophical stance. I am referring here to realism and idealism. From the standpoint of realism, the world consists of different kinds of concrete or material things with emergent properties. Hence, needs are things that exist. They are tangible and identifiable in the human organism and exist independently of external social influences. Idealism asserts that reality is mind-dependent, signifying that needs are internal drives that motivate human beings to need satisfaction in a self-constructed social environment. Our philosophical positions influence what we know about the world and our epistemology. We acquire knowledge that determines our research design and the theories that develop from our findings (Bunge, 2003b, p. 202).

Bunge (1999, pp. 125–134) asserted that *theory* is a general term for a conceptual system. It explains the workings of specific structures performing a particular function based on formulated rules and laws. It unearths the relations between ideation, the formation of a concept in the human brain, and the concept itself. Theory comprises a systematic structure of concepts, prepositions, and hypotheses explaining and predicting a specific fact or thing. A scientific theory is an in-depth explanation of facts or things and the underlying dynamics. It is based on logical thought about the workings of the fact or thing, its processes, concepts and their linkage. In comparison, concepts are the practical outcomes and consequences of theory (Bunge, 2003b, p. 49). Concepts can be developed without a knowledge-based connection, depending on how the goals are set. However, to ensure scientific rigour, a concept would need to be theory-based (*ibid.*, p. 53).

A scientific theory is substantiated through empirical investigations that validate or refute its claims – to examine the world in search for the truth about what makes something (for example, a social system) “tick” by revealing its structures and mechanisms (Bunge, 2004a, p. 377). A *mechanism* is a process within a system, with the system being the concrete thing itself. *Bunge* defines

a *system* as “a complex object whose parts or components are held together by bonds of some kind” and structure as the “collection of all such relations among a system constituent is its structure (or organisation, or architecture)” (2004b, p. 188). Thus, a system is a category to describe different levels of reality. In this sense, systems are made up of parts that add up to more than the individual parts because new properties develop from the sum of their parts. Social systems comprise human beings as components that are part of the systems environment and reliant on it to survive. This translates to the premise that a concrete thing is either a system or a component (member) of a concrete system that comprises the components (Obrecht, 1996, p. 129). Hence, a system has internal and external structures, i.e., structures that are intrinsically part of the concrete thing and those outside of it (Bunge, 2004a, p. 373).

This brings us back to the issue of theory, and, in particular, “mechanismic” theory – not to be confused with “mechanistic” which refers to mechanical devices and machines (Bunge, 1997, p. 410). Mechanismic theory offers deeper explanations of how the biological and psychic (emotional-cognitive brain) processes of human organisms’ function intrinsically and about human interaction with the external world. An *example* is the case of Robert,²² who attempted to make friends with classmates, who responded by rejecting him socially. Their reactions were related to specific physical characteristics of Robert that they found repellent – strong body odour, physical dirtiness and abscesses in the skin. These are examples of microsocial problems associated with poor personal hygiene which hindered the classmates from engaging in positive interactions. Upon closer examination, the underlying causes of the problems related to personal hygiene revealed that Robert did not have adequate sanitation facilities at home. The family did not have the financial means to buy items required for basic hygiene. Similarly, foul body odour and skin infections indicate health problems precipitated by an inadequate diet low in nutritional value. The family was in a precarious financial situation that led to food restrictions. The socio-economic deprivation of the family was linked to the sole parent’s long-term unemployment and mental health disability, a microsocial problem. The factory that had previously employed the parent had been sold and, in accordance with the Austrian Disability Employment Act *Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz* (BEinstG) § 9a. compensation tax *Ausgleichssteuer*,²³ the new owners opted to pay monthly compensation – a penalty – over

22 The student’s name and details about the situation have been changed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

23 Article II, Employment obligation § 1 (1) All employers who employ 25 or more employees (§ 4 para. 1) in the federal territory shall be obliged to employ at least one beneficiary disabled person (§ 2) for every 25 employees[...]. § 9. (1) The Federal Office for Social Affairs and the Disabled shall prescribe the payment of a compensatory tax annually for the preceding calendar year by means of a notice if the employment obligation is not fulfilled. Federal Law Gazette No. 677/1977

employing workers with a disability; a macrosocial problem (Bunge, 1999, pp. 77–78). The interplay between the micro- and macro-system levels in Robert’s above example helps explain the mechanistic relations between biological, biopsychic human needs and socio-cultural processes and structures – how they are formed, maintained, transformed or dismantled (Bunge, 1997, p. 447).

This brings us to the term “need” which is broadly used in the social sciences to mean different things that range from universal mechanisms and processes that regulate human survival to wants, desires and wishes that legitimate or violate social norms and rules – issues that are discussed in the following section.

4.2 Research on the historical perspectives of human need

Human need has been a topic of scientific interest and enquiry across disciplines that can be traced back to debates around the 17th century. The distinction between the subject and object marked the early interest in human need that stems from various branches of philosophy, politics and economics (Obrecht, 2005b). The subject is understood as a separate entity from the object used to reinstate an organism’s preferred state. In enlightenment economics, need became the condition in which something is lacking (Kämper, 2013, p. 192). The absence of the means required to satisfy biological needs, such as food and clothing, was referred to as indigence (Latin: *indigentia*). The English language dictionary from 1755 defines “need” as lacking something “the noun Need. exigency; pressing difficulty; necessity” and elaborated as “to need: to want; to lack; to be in want of; to require” (Dictionary of the English Language, 2012). In comparison, an entry from the 1774 German vernacular dictionary refers to need as the condition in which you need something (Obrecht, 2005b, p. 5). This language-specific semantic variation reveals a differentiation in how the term “*Bedarf*” “need” is applied concerning necessity that requires external validation and *Bedürfnis* need [original in italics, translation by the author] as the state of an organism that lacks something that the individual becomes aware of and articulates (Diffey, 1997, p. 148). Need can be used as a transitive

1977 [translation by the author]: “Artikel II, Beschäftigungspflicht § 1. (1) Alle Dienstgeber, die im Bundesgebiet 25 oder mehr Dienstnehmer (§ 4 Abs. 1) beschäftigen, sind verpflichtet, auf je 25 Dienstnehmer mindestens einen begünstigten Behinderten (§ 2) einzustellen. [...]. § 9. (1) Vom Bundesamt für Soziales und Behindertenwesen ist die Entrichtung einer Ausgleichstaxe alljährlich für das jeweils abgelaufene Kalenderjahr mittels Bescheides vorzuschreiben, wenn die Beschäftigungspflicht nicht erfüllt ist.” BGBl. Nr. 677/(Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz (BEinstG) Österreich, 1970).

verb “to be in need of, to require” (Merriam-Webster, 2003) or as a statement that indicates need before the noun, or as a noun which is the concept. In short, the conundrum to distinguish need as a verb from need as a noun exposes the conflicting usage of the term within and across academic disciplines. For example, as the sociologist Johan Galtung points out in his human need theory: “The problem is that the term ‘need’ is used for non-subjects; there is talk about ‘national needs’ (for the prestige of a country), ‘social needs’ (e.g., for a good urban sewage disposal system), and ‘group needs’ (e.g., for a place to meet, to be together)” (1980, p. 60). However, the term “need” itself which remains vague, ambiguous and, in some need theories,²⁴ undefined, and the role need satisfaction plays in determining human wellbeing and existence, are as diverse as various disciplines engaged in researching need.

In the 19th century, Karl Marx conducted a sociological enquiry into the plight of the labourer and the effect of low wages on the individual’s ability to satisfy needs. Hunger is a naturally occurring need, part of the human condition (Marx, 2005, p. 336):

“*Hunger is a natural need; it therefore needs nature outside itself, an object outside itself, to satisfy itself, to be stilled. Hunger is an acknowledged need of the body for an object existing outside it, indispensable to its integration and the expression of its essential being*” [emphasis in original].

Drives predispose human beings to respond to the organisms’ internal impulses to obtain something required from outside of themselves. Marx’s perspective of human needs is ontological in that humans are beings that require objects from outside of themselves to maintain their life activity. Human activity is inherently linked to the human condition – for example, the performance of labour to engage in self-expression and create objects to satisfy needs.

In the early 20th century, scholars of sociology, psychology and social work science examined the relationship between human needs, survival and human development. For example, Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis viewed need as a closely related internal drive, impulse, or urge within the body. He used the term “satisfier” for the factor that compensates the drive which he stated as follows:

“Wir heißen den Triebreiz besser “Bedürfnis”; was dieses Bedürfnis aufhebt ist die “Befriedigung”. “We had better call the impulse stimulus “need”; what compensates this need is “satisfaction”. [translation by the author] (Freud, 1915, p. 82).

Single disciplines investigate classes of things, or processes, relating to parts, or specific aspects of physical, biological and social systems that constitute areas specific to different disciplines. However, suppose the scope of the investigation is solely focused on a particular discipline. In that case, a silo men-

24 For example, Maslow’s motivation theory lacks a clear definition of need (1943, 1954).

tality or stance,²⁵ or not wanting to share knowledge or cooperate with other disciplines – cross-disciplinary interaction is restricted or limited altogether. Such a stance is counterproductive for research on human needs because cross-disciplinary cooperation is required to grasp the complexity of human beings and the biopsychic mechanisms and processes – and the interaction with the environment. Understanding the dynamics and complexity of needs requires multifaceted approaches to theory development, exchange, testing, rejection and revision. While there are similarities across disciplines in the knowledge on human needs, differences in perspectives stem from a disciplinary lens. This is because human needs concern human biological and biopsychic composition, and different disciplines specialise in a facet. This is the rationale for the decision that cross-disciplinary perspectives are fundamental to theory building. It can facilitate the shift of perspective and share and compare insights and knowledge integration for a more comprehensive understanding of science. Social work science has a tradition of consulting cross-disciplinary theories to address the human organism’s complex biological and biopsychic processes. This approach is key to identifying, explaining and addressing social problems when individuals – as members of different social systems – are hindered from access to satisfiers to meet their needs. Similarly, it is an approach that helps to explain the root causes of social ills that range from social injustice to human rights violations based on rights entitlements linked to thwarted human need fulfilment (Arlt, 1921; Towle, 1945; Wronka, 1998; Obrecht, 2005c; Gil, 2008; Ife, 2012; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). This is further expanded in the next section, where four needs theories provide an overview of needs and belonging from different perspectives and theoretical underpinnings.

The first human needs theory to be introduced is Ilse Arlt, developed in the early 1920s. It was based on research on poverty that was associated with unemployment. It was the incentive for developing welfare policies and practices that facilitate human flourishing in Austria.

4.3 Human needs and welfare science – Arlt, 1876-1960

Ilse (von) Arlt²⁶ contributed to the advancement of social work science through empirical research on poverty – the basis of her human need theory (1921, 1932, 1934). The impetus was to identify the root causes of individual and social maladies and identify the linkages with unmet human needs and poverty

25 A “silo mentality” is an unwillingness to cooperate and share knowledge with other disciplines. Eine "Silo-Mentalität" ist eine mangelnde Bereitschaft, mit anderen Disziplinen zu kooperieren und Wissen auszutauschen

26 Her full name was Ilse von Alt but the “von” was omitted in her publications.

(Arlt, 1921, p. 34). Arlt defines poverty as complex socio-economic problems that hinder people from meeting their needs. This was a clear divergence from the distorted misrepresentations of adolescents prevalent in welfare policy at the time that sought to generalise young people as a group. Similarly, the widespread misconception that poverty was something that had to be endured failed to address the needs of the individual. Consequently, social problems that stemmed from a lack of resources to meet human needs were negated to the private sphere, away from the public domain, and the obligation of the state to enact welfare policies that address and remedy social ills.

Arlt founded the first Austrian *Fürsorgerinnen Schule* welfare school [translation by the author] in Vienna in 1912 – where her extensive research into human need deprivation was conducted. Although the concept of human need was not explicitly defined, Arlt sought to unearth factors grounded in her research that facilitate human development, flourishing and wellbeing centralised around a value theory of a good life (1934). To gain deeper insight into the causes of poverty and its effects, human need fulfilment was identified as a standard measure for all human beings, poor and wealthy alike. For example, economic resources were necessary to buy food, which meant that people with little or no access to money had difficulties surviving. Even so, access to financial means alone did not ensure that the food purchased was nutritious. If a person lived an indolent lifestyle and consumed luxury food high in fat and sugar, adverse health effects would result. From this standpoint, Arlt's theory was based on needs interrelated with intrinsic biological and psychic properties that facilitate human flourishing and wellbeing – across the spectrum of financial wealth, limitations or deprivation. Her research showed that human needs are triggered by mental and biological processes within the human organism and external influences, such as conditions and satisfiers. Thus, needs are neither static nor hierarchical (Arlt, 1921, p. 37).

Arlt's research focused on measuring the lowest level of human suffering endured by society. The poverty tolerated by a society determined the exact location of need, i.e., the threshold of human deprivation (1933, p. 1638). When this threshold is crossed, it can have devastating effects on the wellbeing of individuals and their dependants and can impact society negatively as a whole. A need assessment was about an enquiry into the neediness of the individual alongside the tolerated threshold of poverty in society (Arlt, 1958, p. 46). Because of the complexity of human beings, this entailed the components: genetics, biographical data and social context, alongside financial means, skills and availability of time. Correspondingly, research on poverty commenced with the assessment of need as the requirement of wellbeing. This could be determined and measured by differentiating and measuring the extent of each need's satisfaction:

“The distance between *the normal satisfaction* of a need and the *satisfaction given in a certain case* indicates the amount of want, and the sum of those 13 distances

gives a pretty accurate description of the person’s state of poverty.” [emphasis in original] (Arlt, 1934, p. 6).

In other words, the level of deprivation tolerated in society would serve as a blueprint for the Austrian welfare state in alleviating poverty.

Table 1: Arlt formulated a list of 13 needs (bracketed numbers). The needs are classified into biological, biopsychic and social needs [differentiated by the author based on Obrecht’s need classes].²⁷

Table 1: Needs according to Arlt (1934, p. 6; 1921, p. 45)

Biological Need	Biopsychic Need	Social Need
1) air/light/heat/water	9) education	12) family life
2) nutrition	10) training in economic skills and efficiency	13) legal aid
3) housing	11) mental and spiritual development	
4) hygiene		
5) Clothing		
6) medical assistance and nursing		
7) accident prevention and first aid		
8) recreation (rest, amusement and exercise)		

Table 1: The differentiation of Arlt’s needs list into Obrecht’s biological, biopsychic and social need classes (2009, p. 27) was a helpful starting point to theorise about needs and the potential link to belonging for the current study. The 13 classes of need (Arlt 1934, p. 6; 1921, p. 45) start with the essentials for human survival and physical integrity, protection and personal safety such as the [biological] need for: 1) air/light/heat/water, 2) nutrition, 3) housing, 4) hygiene, 5) clothing, 6) medical assistance and nursing, 7) accident prevention and first aid and 8) recreation (rest, amusement and exercise). The need for 9) education [biopsychic]. The need for 10) training in economic skills and efficiency [biopsychic need]. The need for 11) mental and spiritual development [biopsychic need]. The needs for 12) family life [social need] and 13) legal aid [social need].

Arlt’s theory was based on the foundation that needs (Table 1) are properties innate to all human beings – as an anthropological given (1934, p. 6). Needs were distinguished from satisfiers and resource requirements and determined by age, sex, developmental stage and socio-economic condition – with the needs varying accordingly. If a person had one or more of the needs unsat-

27 The classification of biological, biopsychic and social needs (Obrecht 2009, p. 27) is used to facilitate comparison of the four need theories featured in this chapter.

ified, this was referred to as the state of neediness. This statement resulted from Arlt's research over two decades, analysing divergent need satisfaction to show that all 13 needs' satisfaction was essential for human wellbeing. The key position here is that welfare research should view human beings from the perspective of need satisfaction to establish an anthropological basis for the economics of daily life. It would serve as a guide towards creating consumer behaviour that encompasses the ideas that acquisition, consumption of food-stuffs and other goods are requirements for human need satisfaction. The difference between *wants* and *needs* was that the former concerned the moral influence of culture on the satisfaction of needs.

At the time of Arlt's enquiry into poverty, research in Austria comprised descriptive studies using unreliable research methods. Arlt criticised this because the lack of empirical evidence about the root causes of poverty perpetuated the belief that it was either self-inflicted or determined by fate. These ill-informed claims overshadowed the unequal distribution of wealth, appalling living conditions and the negative implications of the Austrian social class system. Her research showed that poverty was attributable to multiple causes of *unmet human needs linked to the wrong distribution of essential resources*. To further explore what this meant, Arlt's students learned to recognise and understand the correlation between human needs and human flourishing and explain the connection between unmet needs and social problems. For example, physical and intellectual disability in adulthood were correlated to undernourishment as a child, substandard housing, pollution, exposure to illness and disease without medical assistance. Similarly, poor work performance resulted from a lack of rest, low-quality food, or poor food preparation. Hence, the key to understanding and remedying poverty was measuring and comparing its ratio to human flourishing. Human needs, based on the comprehensive understanding of needs, alongside the conditions under which needs were met, and the impact of under-satisfied needs, formed the cornerstone of the research. It was grounded on the premise that research must be conducted about society as a whole and its different distribution of goods and not be restricted to the poverty (Arlt, 1932, p. 1638).

The prerequisite of need satisfaction comprises economic means, knowledge and skills, and time – one's own and others. Access to these requirements was the basis of Arlt's proposed self-care and welfare approach hinging on the form of consumption: for example, creative consumption: a person's lifelong development and cultivation of skills applied to consciously regulate needs and interests combined with careful use of time, means and abilities. In addition, the effects of the social and environmental influences on human wellbeing were considered alongside the core of human flourishing. The state and extend of a person's needs fulfilment determined their level of flourishing. However, when a person is unaware of their needs, they are susceptible to consumerism. Being conscious of one's needs was seen as the equivalent of

emancipation and freedom. A priori assumptions were made about the links between goods and the underlying human needs served, which functioned in two ways: firstly, focus on the adequate satisfaction of needs so that individuals can survive. Secondly, identify the appropriate social work response towards alleviating unmet needs. The measurement for unmet needs and the remedy for their satisfaction was the distance from the normal or optimal state of need fulfilment.

In the following section, the second of the four needs theories, namely, the psychological perspective on human needs of Abraham Maslow, is introduced (1943, 1954). It provides an insight into his conception of human needs as a universal set of properties inherent to the human condition.

4.4 Humanistic psychology and needs – Maslow, 1908-1970

In the 1940s, humanistic psychologist Abraham H. Maslow developed a motivational theory of mentalistic conceptions that attracts attention in contemporary undergraduate social work, psychology, nursing and business courses and market research (Gambrel and Cianci, 2003; Stillion, 2015). His incentive was to develop a holistic and humanistic model of human beings that integrated the abilities and creativity of the individual (Maslow, 1943). It was an alternative to the dominant stimulus-response mechanistic models of behaviourism in the psychology discourse on motivational behaviour. The model was a means to challenge the mechanistic and deterministic models of human beings. Similarly, it was set as an intended divergence from Freudian psychoanalysis because of the focus on human needs intrinsic to the human condition.

The critical area of focus was on relationships and effects of cognitive-emotional and outward behaviour. This resulted in Maslow's assertion that human needs are structured in a hierarchy of five independent motivational systems in the form of a pyramid. These were subdivided into five needs, with lower needs prioritised over the higher needs (1943, 1954). However, the proposed hierarchy of needs was not empirically robust. It lacked the scientific evidence to show that biological needs take precedence over the higher mental and self-actualisation needs. Against this criticism, Maslow's theory is relevant for the current study because "belongingness" is specified as a need in itself. However, I refute the notion of belongingness as the third order of dominance because it opposes the definition of belonging and "need to belong" in the current study (cf. Subsection 1.1). Nonetheless, there are elements of Maslow's theory that help grasp the underlying theoretical bases of human needs, which is the focus of the following section.

Maslow's motivational theory refers to need as an internal state that sets human beings in action to alleviate an imbalance signified by needs. Access to

resources is dependent on external circumstances. Maslow contended that need satisfaction is an ongoing process throughout the human lifecycle. A human need is satisfied, and the organism becomes conscious of another desire that requires satisfaction or gratification. However, the term “need” is vague because it is not precisely defined and thus remains an inconclusive concept. Similarly, need is used interchangeably with desire, motivation, wish, human urge and impulse, adding to the lack of clarity about need. This points to the importance of a clear definition of need that distinguishes needs from the human cognition concerning appropriate satisfiers, i.e., wants and desires. Given Maslow’s claim about a hierarchical needs structure to illustrate the dominance of some needs over others, the most basic needs are the physiological drives of the human organism concerned with maintaining:

“[...] a constant, normal state of the bloodstream” (1954, p. 50).

Table 2: Maslow’s motivational hierarchy of needs (1943, 1954). The needs are classified into biological, biopsychic and social needs [differentiated by the author based on Obrecht’s need classes]. Needs and possible satisfiers are distinguished with satisfiers in italics [author]. [“sustenance” in square brackets, author]. Bracketed numbers signify Maslow’s order of dominance according to his motivational hierarchy signified by the figures 1–5.

Table 2: Needs according to Maslow (1943, 1954)

Biological Need	Biopsychic Need	Social Need
1) Physiological needs [Sustenance] <i>Water and foodstuff</i>	2) Safe and orderly life	3) Belongingness romantic love, affiliation and familial care. “One of a group, of identification with group class and triumphs, of acceptance, or having a place, at-homeness.” (1943, p. 72).
	4) Self-respect	4) Respect
	5) Self-actualisation	

As illustrated in Table 2, the first order of dominance in the motivational hierarchy concerns the first-level 1) physiological needs for [sustenance] *water and foodstuff* [satisfiers]. Once the nutritional needs are met, the dominance needs of the second-level 2) needs for a safe and orderly life [biopsychic need] follow. The first- and second-level needs in the hierarchy are essential for human survival. The third order of dominance is the need for 3) belongingness [social need]. Belongingness is a higher-order need to form and maintain interpersonal relationships – considered a non-essential need for human survival. In this sense, belongingness differs from the physiological and safety needs that Maslow claimed must be met first. Maslow subsumed in the belongingness need romantic love, affiliation, and familial care – described as a:

“feeling of belongingness, of being one of a group, of identification with group class and triumphs, of acceptance, or having a place, at-homeness” (Maslow, 1943, p. 72).

The fourth-order of dominance in Maslow’s hierarchy is the fourth-level need for 4) esteem needs for respect [social need] and self-respect [biopsychic need]. His fifth and most advanced order of dominance is the level with the 5) need for self-actualisation [biopsychic need]. Prepotency is central to the hierarchy notion and means that the need that is not satisfied dominates because the person seeks to gratify it. This is an ongoing process, with the organism continually seeking to satisfy needs and achieve a state of equilibrium. Hence, his needs theory represents a mentalistic conception of need. Needs are interdependent and connected in ascending order on the hierarchy. Once a need is satisfied, the individual becomes aware of another need requiring satisfaction. This process continues throughout an individual’s life as proof of being alive (ibid, p. 55). The conditions to satisfy these needs are, for example, freedom, complete information and order. Maslow sought to structure human needs, motivations and goals to understand the drivers of human behaviour. In addition, he proposed age- and preference-related differences in the satisfaction of needs.

Maslow argued for a hierarchy of needs over a needs list because a list was perceived to imply that all needs require the same degree of satisfaction (1943, p. 51). This indicates a theoretically flawed misconception about the extent and equality of needs satisfaction. I disagree with his assertion about need lists because it signifies a system of classification based on the elasticity of needs and not on behaviour. However, I agree with Maslow’s statement about the risk of behaviour incorrectly assessed – it could simply be the course of action through which the individual becomes aware of another need. Hence, motivated action is not sufficient to determine behaviour because it is only one class of behavioural determinants – for example, the desire for food – but the person seeks safety, not food. A need can be different from the desire that causes motivation. Maslow criticised the arbitrariness of a need list because it could reflect the researcher’s intention to research a specific way, thus focusing on particular needs above others (ibid., p. 25). Similarly, he noted that a list gives the impression that needs are isolated and separated, which is not the case. Subsequently, it was put forward to encapsulate needs as a set, category or collection because of their interrelatedness. Conversely, an imbalance may not be specific to one need only because the human organism is complex, with different needs becoming conscious and simultaneously affecting its state of balance. Maslow contended that “it is not easy to distinguish the drive from the goal object when we talk of a desire for love. Here the drive, the desire, the goal object, the activity seem all to be the same thing” (ibid., pp. 25–26). This indicates that he was aware of the lack of precision regarding the definition of

needs, how they could be distinguished from satisfiers, and the actions taken to access resources for need satisfaction.

In developing his need theory, Maslow used data collected in his clinical practice as a psychotherapist working with patients from the middle and upper socio-economic classes. He sourced biographical material from renown people such as Ellen Roosevelt and Albert Einstein to distinguish the characteristics associated with self-actualisation and identify traits that would contradict or support self-actualisation (1954, p. 152). As stated at the beginning of the introduction, it is to be borne in mind that Maslow's research lacked empirical validity. The statement about the effect of cultural differences on the satisfaction of needs contradicts his claim that needs are felt on the sub-conscious level and are therefore not affected by social or cultural peculiarities. However, as no reference was made to social justice and fairness, this concept of needs addressed individuals with financial resources and security, perceived as high-functioning and in a state of good mental health. Hence, their interests and concerns were to satisfy the fifth level of need, "self-actualisation". Subsequently, Maslow's need theory offers an individualistic conception of humanity which emphasises the subjective preferences of need satisfaction, with little concern for the social context. As need satisfaction does not occur in a vacuum, the social context – a person's living conditions, alongside the institutions and cultural context – constitutes the framework within which human interaction occurs. These different social levels fall short in Maslow's conception of human needs.

In the following section, the theory developed by Jutta Mägdefrau (2006) as a needs-based approach for education research is outlined. It emphasises satisfiers for human need fulfilment from a humanistic phenomenological perspective with a cross-disciplinary need-theory focus.

4.5 Human needs in pedagogy – Mägdefrau, 1960

The education scientist Jutta Mägdefrau (2006) developed a needs framework for pedagogy from the syntheses of cross-disciplinary needs theories, especially those of Norbert Huppertz (1992), Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2000). She asserted that education research in Germany is seldom conducted on issues relating directly to human need because an explicit need term and concept is not yet established. This is evident in the unclear conceptual boundaries of what constitutes need and the different factors measured regarding human needs and the related concepts. It is perpetuated when the term is used incorrectly and excessively – for example, in association with the requirements of organisations and systems, where needs apply only to the human organism. Similarly, it is rare for a distinction between need, desire, craving and needs

satisfiers. In response to these concerns, the primary focus of her research design was to define needs clearly and thus narrow the semantic broadness of the term.

The lack of empirical evidence on needs and satisfiers in pedagogy drove Mägdefrau to examine need theories from disciplines outside of education science. This was the basis for her quantitative research on human needs that examined the implications of different social environments and social-exchange relationships on the need-satisfaction of 3 500 students at *Hauptschulen* secondary schools [translation by the author] in Germany. In particular, she was concerned with conditions faced by disadvantaged youths (2006, pp. 109–112). The study was conducted over six months at 60 Baden-Württemberg secondary schools. The focus was on the extent of psychological need satisfaction and the consequences of needs not being met based on three research aims:

- 1) to define human needs specifically for pedagogy;²⁸
- 2) to develop educational provisions to facilitate students' need satisfaction at school; and
- 3) to identify the consequences of unmet needs and the implications for pedagogy.

The nexus between needs and the means of satisfaction was examined based on the assumption that needs can be operationalised using items that contain satisfiers with which the respondents agree or disagree. The research findings show the importance of the structural and social environment on students' prospects of need satisfaction at school. She concluded with recommendations to implement the needs-based approach in pedagogy (2006, pp. 267–272).

The next step towards understanding human needs in pedagogy is to delve into Mägdefrau's theoretical conceptualisation of need and its implications for the current study. The basis of her approach is to characterise needs as psycho-physical determinants of human behaviour. In this sense, needs are experienced as feelings and ideas that compel us to seek ways and means – referred to as satisfiers – to meet our needs. In comparison, satisfiers are influenced by cultural, ethnic, sex and age-specific and individual psychological conditions. Hence, the conditions above affect the satisfier used for needs fulfilment. Needs are innate and universal but transformed through socialisation because

28 Pedagogy can be traced back to the ancient Greek word *paideia* which translates to education, upbringing and socialisation comprising intellectual, moral and physical human development through scholastic and socio-cultural educational processes (Provenzo, Renaud and Provenzo, 2009, p. 599). Harney and Krüger (2005) view pedagogy as theory-based reflection or experiential action science that contributes to the improvement of educational processes which pertain to learning and socialisation by providing practical knowledge for practice. In the contemporary education discourse, the terms pedagogy and educational science are used synonymously.

of the influence of the variables above on our selection of satisfiers. If basal needs remain permanently unsatisfied, this has negative consequences for the individual in social disintegration, illness or death. Both needs and instincts are subjected to negative states of tension. However, Mägdefrau regards instinctual behaviour as reactive and set within a non-changing pattern that may vary slightly.

In contrast, instinct is a causal relationship between an initial drive and the resulting behaviour. Because of its proximity to mechanistic or deterministic theories of behavioural control, instinct lost ground in the theoretical debate on needs. In comparison, Mägdefrau characterises needs as having invariant properties and being less deterministic and reactive than instincts, with contemporary needs research emerging due to anthropological assumptions in psychology. Need consciousness is intercepted by free will, which means that people can modify their actions through thought and language to satisfy or suppress their needs. Hence, the link between a need tension and the action for its satisfaction is not strictly causal. Needs are directed towards a specific means or object for their satisfaction. A person becomes aware of a need through consciousness, a psychic or physical representation, as an instinctive urge or desire. In this process, the notion of a means to satisfy the need is formed with human action directed towards obtaining a specific means or satisfier. Hence, the person is directed towards a means they perceive as accessible because of various things, such as experiences of needs, satisfaction or frustration.

If a need remains unsatisfied, the human organism uses active goal-seeking behaviour in different stages, called appetitive behaviour. In this sense, a need deficiency is a state of being without, and a human organism strives to overcome need tension to restore its state of equilibrium. However, some needs take precedence over others, and the individual does not have multiple needs simultaneously unless they are directly linked. If this is not the case, the need satisfied first usually generates the most pressure. A pleasant state of satisfaction is reached after the onset of need satisfaction. However, the positive feeling of need satisfaction gives way to a new deficient state of need tension. Need tension and the anticipated pleasure-oriented satisfaction of tension relief drive the human organism to action. Mägdefrau iterates human beings derive the most pleasure from the process of need tension reduction and not from the actual tension-free-state. Therefore, pedagogy should focus on reducing needs tension and not on complete satisfaction. Because needs cannot be determined by overt human behaviour, only the activities around need satisfaction, the reaction to, and consequences of, need-deprivation are observable. For example, food intake is not always a response to hunger. People eat for the satisfaction of longing and craving as a displacement activity symptomatic of stress or boredom, and not to ensure that the organism obtains the nutrients necessary for survival. To distinguish between the appropriate types of action for need satisfaction, Mägdefrau analysed students' opportunities to meet their needs.

Because the resources to meet needs are endless, the means used by research participants to satisfy their needs were the baseline to operationalise students' basic needs.²⁹

Mägdefrau developed a list of questions to conduct pedagogical research based on the following needs groups: *Valitätsbedürfnis* vitality needs, *Zugehörigkeitsbedürfnisse* belonging needs, *Sicherheitsbedürfnisse* safety needs, *Achtungsbedürfnisse* needs for respect, *Kompetenzbedürfnisse* competence needs, *Erlebnisbedürfnisse* experience needs and *Fürsorgebedürfnisse* care needs [*original in italics*, translation by the author] (2006, pp. 105–106). The needs groups were adapted by being grouped [as suggested by the author] under Obrecht's (2009, p. 27) biological, biopsychic and social needs categories. Satisfiers were distilled in association with the needs that range from nutrition, recreation and rest, for the vitality needs, to recognition for achievements, having responsibility and being loved for the care needs. These are illustrated in italics in Table 3.

Table 3: Adaptation of the seven needs (bracketed numbers) distinguished by Mägdefrau (2006, pp. 105–106) into the suggested classification of biological, biopsychic and social needs [differentiated by the author based on Obrecht's need classes]. Satisfiers are in italics [translation by the author].

Table 3: Needs according to Mägdefrau (2006, pp. 105–106)

Biological Needs	Biopsychic Needs	Social Needs
1) Vitality <i>nutrition, recreation, rest, sleep, exercise, hygiene, temperature regulation</i>	2) Competence <i>understand environment and others, learn new things, to explore and act, to change things, to feel competent</i>	3) Belonging <i>friendship, sociability, celebrations, contacts, conformity to norms, imitation, equality</i>
4) Safety <i>security, protection, sufficient material goods, protection from violence, sufficient money, family life</i>	5) Experience <i>entertainment, suspense, excitement, thrill, sensuality, pleasure and play</i>	6) Respect <i>Accepted, recognised, successful life, fulfil duties, reliable, recognition for achievements, popularity</i>
		7) Care needs <i>helping, being needed, caring for others, having responsibility, being loved</i>

According to Mägdefrau, belonging is a perceived generic term for needs generally associated with interpersonal relationships. It emphasises the importance of adolescent membership in peer groups. Need satisfaction is learned, which makes need satisfaction a central issue for pedagogy because it is a discipline concerned with all aspects that shape students' learning. In this sense, the stu-

29 Since the hierarchy of needs is not based on transempirical facts, I would propose "need elasticity" instead of "basic needs".

dent has an active role in knowledge acquisition about satisfying needs based on value-orientated, socially accepted forms of action.

The starting point of Mägdefrau's needs enquiry is the pedagogical-humanistic notion of a good life, a normative statement that raises questions about what children and adolescents require to develop their physical, mental, spiritual and social capacities. Responding to these questions requires knowledge that transcends across disciplines. Hence, to define and conceptualise human needs, Mägdefrau proposed that a cross-disciplinary framework be developed that transcended the educational science boundaries to include anthropology, philosophy, sociology and psychology. Her needs definition is based on the anthropological perspective of needs alongside the sociological need theory of John Galtung (1980, p. 93) and the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (2000, p. 228). She proposed that needs are psycho-physical determinants of human behaviour that operate as feelings and notions striving for gratification. The satisfaction of needs occurs using need satisfiers which vary because the individual geographical and spatial context, socio-cultural circumstances, sex, age, and psychic state influence the type of satisfier to meet a specific need. In addition, the individual-psychic rationale for engaging in activity to satisfy needs is linked to the variables mentioned above, which in turn influences the satisfiers (Mägdefrau, 2006, p. 26). In childhood and adolescence, young people are taught to articulate and satisfy their needs through behaviour consistent with social and societal norms. Aggressive and violent behaviour indicates the lack, or absence of, resources to meet needs. Mägdefrau regards it the task of pedagogy to show that negative behaviour results from a lack of resources to satisfy human needs rather than to centre around young peoples' deficiencies. The link between negative student behaviour and unmet needs helps determine the underlying mechanisms of the negative behaviour. She argued that this approach in pedagogy would benefit the teacher-student relationship because it is geared towards unearthing social norms that are harmful and hinder young people from satisfying their needs, rather than advocating for compliance and conformity, with little regard for the implications of social norms on need satisfaction. Teachers would focus on determining the standards for need satisfiers and deciding on the morally acceptable forms of satisfaction against the backdrop of facilitating needs satisfaction. When psychological needs are not satisfied over time, the resulting deficiency leads to adverse consequences for individual students and the cohort. If physical needs are not satisfied, in the long term, there is the risk of physical damage and the risk of death which Mägdefrau stressed can cause the collapse of smaller and larger social systems, such as society as a whole (2006, pp. 25–26).

The cyclic notion of needs assumes that needs disappear when satisfied and re-emerge when the individual becomes aware or conscious of a need tension. However, Mägdefrau argued that there is no linear relationship between behaviour and need: behaviour may denote a different need than the actual

need tension – for example, when the need for closeness and attention is unmet and the person attempts suicide as a form of compensatory behaviour. This action is contradictory to needs satisfaction and can result out of compensation for a different unsatisfied need. Individuals can regulate needs satisfaction by delaying or deliberately interrupting need fulfilment. In addition, the action does not always correspond with one specific need because behaviour is learned by past experiences and is not necessarily directly linked to the present situation.

The underlying need tension drives the human organism to seek need gratification. The more intense the tension, the higher the urge to satisfy the need. The satisfier depends on individual requirements, preferences and access to resources. Hence, need satisfaction is not fixed or restricted to a particular means but is open to an almost unlimited means to meet the same need. This is dependent on the geographic and social conditions, ethnic-cultural origin, age, sex, or social origin regulated by a person's control over their actions. Mägdefrau referred to this as the plasticity of satisfiers, or the means for satisfaction which change with experience, access to resources, such as power or personal preference of a means over another, and so on. Because human beings depend on each other and social groups to meet their needs, socialisation is an essential factor that influences the fulfilment of needs. The plasticity of needs refers to the changeability of satisfying needs in a lifetime, whether through membership in a group, trends, or fashion, for example.

Empirically invisible needs are listed in needs categories based on the visible actions to satisfy those needs. Mägdefrau asserted that needs themselves are not observable but are perceived through the observation of the activity to satisfy them which is empirically conceivable. Human perception is affected by needs in different ways. Providing there is a direct link between needs, more than one need can be satisfied simultaneously. However, even when needs and the actions to satisfy needs are connected, there is no guarantee that a type of behaviour links to a specific need.

There is a close connection between need and behaviour which is the closest when a pattern of behaviour is institutionalised and is converted to meet external role expectations, such as in school. The school sets the behaviour norms that demand satisfaction and is adapted to fit these norms. In contrast to the animal whose activity ends when the instinctive action achieves the necessary effect, humans strive to establish conditions that relieve them of the necessity to constantly provide the means for need satisfaction – for example, the stockpiling of food to provide a reserve of essentials available for future need satisfaction. Mägdefrau differentiates between *Bedürfnissen* or needs and *Bedarf* or requirements [*original italic*, translation by the author], the latter being controlled and influenced by social and cultural norms, which is the terrain of pedagogy coming into play concerning a discussion on need requirements. Hence, needs have a normative dimension because they are considered essen-

tial, which requires further clarity in defining what is essential and who decides if something is necessary.

Correspondingly, from what point onwards is a need addressed as a deficiency that requires means to restore the state of need tension to equilibrium? People make social comparisons in their fulfilment of needs, resulting in dissatisfaction if an individual has less than others, and the tension motivates the person to achieve internal equilibrium. The human organism strives to reach a tensionless state through tension relief or homeostasis.

To advance human needs in pedagogy, Mägdefrau contends that needs are taken as a given fact, an anthropological starting point that is not up for debate (2007, p. 76). The fulfilment of needs is essential for all human beings because they are innate and universal, with the needs being:

“Das Bedürfnis ist ein psycho-physisches Geschehen und zugleich ein soziales Phänomen, das somit individual-psychologische und sozialpsychologische Komponenten vereint.” “A need is a psychic-physical event and at the same time a social phenomenon that combines individual psychological and social psychological components” [translation by the author]. (Mägdefrau, 2006, p. 26).

However, the universality of human needs does not apply to the satisfiers or resources to meet needs because people have different access to satisfiers to satisfy the same need for nutrition, love, etc. Similarly, an individual can personally preference the fulfilment of specific needs over others, possibly at the expense of satisfying other needs.

In principle, any social context can become problematic if it impedes need satisfaction. Children and adolescents can face stereotypes or prejudices that cause age-related restrictions on their need satisfaction. Mägdefrau contends that pedagogy is obligated to resolve the lifecycle-based problems that inhibit the fulfilment of student needs because research shows the negative consequences when student needs are not met.

In contemporary education science, particularly pedagogy, Marshall Rosenberg (2015) and Carl Rogers (1951, 1961) are leading figures in the humanistic needs discourse. They both collaborated as founders of humanist psychology. Rosenberg developed a needs-based approach to non-violent communication. He regarded human needs as involuntary drives that can cause adverse physical or psychological harm for the individual if not satisfied. At the core of the needs model, is the concern about recognising and expressing needs so that they can be satisfied. Need satisfaction leads to peaceful coexistence. Needs are universal and their satisfaction gives rise to pleasant feelings, whereas the negative consequences of unmet needs range from unpleasantness to pain. Rosenberg associated an increase in awareness of one’s own needs with self-determination. It increases the awareness about the needs of others because they are universal – everyone has needs but not everyone is aware of their needs (Rosenberg, 2015, pp. 52–56). Rogers developed a model of self-actualisation based on human self-control (1961). The individual was deemed

capable of using their abilities to satisfy needs intrinsic to the human condition. Human beings, according to Rogers, are dependent on their environment for need satisfaction which makes their actions goal-driven (*ibid.*, p. 183). In line with humanistic principles, he refuted human beings as *bad per se*. However, the reaction of others, i.e., the influence from external sources, has an impact on human behaviour and could cause someone to act in a destructive way.

The pedagogical discourse on needs that is centred around the theory of Mägdefrau (2006), Rosenberg (2015) and Rogers (1951, 1961) is relevant for school social workers. It could benefit cooperation across the disciplines to facilitate student need fulfilment. Social workers and teachers have different sets of tasks. The development of a compatible framework, a transdisciplinary approach could lead the way to an integrated school model that supports students in their need fulfilment on the different social levels of the school.

The following section introduces the biopsychic and socio-cultural theory of human need developed by Werner Obrecht ((2005a, 2009). Needs are intrinsically regulated and motivated, have different elasticities depending on the classification in three need classes, and rely on the external social environment for fulfilment. Belonging is specified with the social need for membership through participation in social systems. Needs, wants, and desires are differentiated. The consequences of need frustration range from the individual's practical problems in the interaction with others – influenced by factors such as social status – and social problems and the more extreme form, societal problems.

4.6 Biopsychic-social & cultural need theory – Obrecht, 1942

Werner Obrecht, a sociologist engaged in social work science research, developed a biological, biopsychic and social theory of human needs (BPS-THN). It draws on the ontological emergent systems theory of Bunge which states that the factual properties of things are part of the physical environment and its mechanisms (cf. Subsection 4.1). The BPS-THN is a transempirical theory that draws on cross-disciplinary scientific knowledge to explain the complexity of social problems,³⁰ their composition or system parts. The social environment is the area where the interaction between the system parts occurs. Social problems come about when an individual is unable to meet their needs – a practical problem which, with time, becomes a social problem if they lack the means to

30 Transempirical are non-observable things such as the structure and processes of a thing; molecules, organisations, societies and ecosystems (Obrecht, 1996, pp. 140–141).

gain access to resources or satisfiers. As the individual is a member of one or more social systems, the BPS-THN explains the relations among the properties of social systems, i.e., the individuals that make up the system and their relations with each other and other systems. These are known as the *Gesetzmäßigkeiten* or causalities, patterns and laws [translation by the author] that regulate the system functions or how it ticks. The BPS-THN is helpful to explain the mechanisms and processes related to the “need to belong” for the current study because of the differentiation between needs, practical and social problems, and how they relate.

The BPS-THN conceptualises human organisms as a specific self-conscious, biopsychic organic system with a highly complex central plastic nervous system, i.e., brain and cerebral cortex. Human beings are systems in themselves and members of social systems, subsystems, alongside their objects and human-made artefacts. The school building is an example of a human-made artefact or place for students to engage in learning activities. In comparison, learning involves specific processes and mechanisms of the brain. Mechanisms are ontological categories that describe levels of reality; hence mechanisms are real processes. The human organism and processes of motivation in the central nervous system that interact with each other are the foundation of the BPS-TH (Obrecht, 2005b, pp. 20–22). Human needs are conceptualised as:

“Davon ausgehend kann nun unter einem Bedürfnis ein interner Zustand weit weg vom für den Organismus befriedigenden Zustand (Wohlbefinden) verstanden werden, der innerhalb des Nervensystems registriert wird und davon ausgehend den Organismus zu einer Kompensation des entstandenen Defizits ein nach aussen gerichtetes (overtes) Verhalten «motiviert»” “(...) the nervous system registers an internal state far removed from what the organism regards as a satisfactory state (wellbeing) that «motivates» the organism to compensate for the deficit through an externally directed (overt) behaviour.” [translation by the author]. (Obrecht, 2005b, p. 36).

Needs are concrete operations in the human nervous and neurological system. They can be detected, analysed, classified and explained as vital functions at the centre of all emotional processes to maintain a stable condition that favours psychic wellbeing and biological health. The organism’s mechanisms use functional behaviour in compensating for deviations in its preferred value or state. As half-open bio-systems, the human organism is selective and regulates its self-renewal. Due to evolution and natural selection, the human organism mutates and adapts heritable characteristics in an ongoing process. The internal state of the human organism is its intrinsic value. It is crucial to assess the organism’s properties, conditions and maintain the precise range of its desired state. As internal regulatory processes of organisms with a central nervous system, needs are equipped with internal (within the organism itself) and external receptors and sensors. At the same time, they have the specific function of de-

tecting internal and external stimuli in a feedback loop to maintain a stable internal environment.

Needs operate as an internal signal for the organism through internal communication pathways indicating a current versus target value imbalance. They are processes that regulate and control the organism's values such as body temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, blood-sugar levels and sensory stimulation. Needs are a safeguard against values becoming too high or low. When the organism is aware of an imbalance, for example, hunger or thirst, it is motivated into overt action to gain access to food or water. Therefore, it is a learned response to compensate for the registered deficit to bring the value of a parameter, such as blood-sugar level by ingesting foodstuff, back to the set point of its preferred state. This means that the organism's overt behaviour is directed towards regulating needs by interacting with the external environment to maintain a stable internal environment. Hence, the organism's mode of conscious awareness about a desirable state is need-driven. However, the internal response of the organism towards an imbalance in its current versus target value could be to suppress a need and not engage in overt behaviour with the external environment. In addition, the set point at which need the tension of an organism (or other like organisms) is to be relieved is not always rigidly fixed.

A class of biological regulatory processes and properties within the central nervous system are primarily related to the functional relationship between motivation, cognition and action. Biological laws govern the emotional-cognitive brain processes such as perception, concept formation, decision-making and planning. These are distinct processes in the plastic neuronal systems of the brain. The cortex regulates human capacity for speech. This facilitates the development of human self-consciousness, which distinguishes individuals and renders humans inherently separate from the environment. Cognitive processes in the cerebral cortex transfer impulses from the sensory apparatus in direct contact with the environment to the cortex. The nervous system registers an imbalance or tension that the organism might not be consciously aware of. The nervous system signals the imbalance between the desired state and the actual state or need to the cerebral cortex.

The perceptual and sensory apparatuses process information about the organism's external environment. Human beings have the ongoing cognitive capacity and ability to learn from experiences. The cognitive processes interpret the information through various operations, including perception, language, memory, reasoning, etc. The sense organs – skin, tongue, nose, ears, and eyes – receive sensory stimuli from the external environment. These signals are converted to electrical impulses and conveyed to an area of the brain, such as those responsible for touch, taste, odour, hearing, balance and visual image. Perception, conceptual formation, decision-making, thinking and planning are emotion-cognitive processes that originate as neural activity in the brain. External

sensory receptors, including neuromuscular processes controlled by psychic emotional-cognitive processes in the brain, enable us to engage with the environment in goal-orientated action to achieve needs satisfaction. The human organism prefers to be in a state that maintains its intrinsic values or properties. However, external environmental factors can cause the intrinsic values to deviate from the preferred state, resulting in need tensions. The nervous system recognises and registers this tension as an imbalance. The regulatory processes and properties operate under laws of causation, controlling internal processes in the organism such as those of the nerves and neurons in the nervous system. The nuclear processes occur in the nervous system, and emotion and motivation are sub-processes that function independently to keep the organism alive. Human beings are motivated to restore their homoeostasis through compensation by engaging in goal-orientated external directed and purposeful behaviour. When the human organism becomes aware of an imbalance in an intrinsic value, this need tension is communicated to the outside environment through a cultural code because to maintain its specific internal state, the human organism is reliant on exchanges with its social environment. The organism relates the resources required for need satisfaction to the need itself. For the current study, the fact that human beings are dependent on, and part of, their social environment means that the student-peer and student-teacher social exchange relations are an interesting nexus to identify and explain student “need to belong” fulfilment.

Needs are processes in the brain developing before humans evolved as self-conscious beings. They are inherent to the human condition and universal. Human beings have needs irrespective of whether they are consciously aware of them or not. Different needs can require simultaneous satisfaction and therefore compete in a type of internal conflict. In contrast, the structure of the plastic part of the brain gives rise to our wants and desires. They are the contextually determined conscious expression of needs influenced by external factors, i.e., the social, temporal and physical environment and socio-cultural socialisation. Hence, compared to needs, wants and desires are value-laden and culturally learned. Wants and desires run the risk of increasing at an unlimited, inflationary rate, regardless of social regulations. Ethically speaking, wants and desires are legitimate if their fulfilment does not prevent others from satisfying their needs – which is the object of the current study to examine and explore need fulfilment in the social environment. Hence, needs are to be distinguished as the organism’s responses to an unfulfilled set of internal values and the means to satisfy the needs influenced by wants and desires. For example, the need for socio-cultural group membership can be met by forming relational bonds with group members. Hence, the relational bonds are the resource to satisfy the need for socio-cultural membership in a group. However, suppose a student does not achieve qualitative and quantitative relational bonds. In that case, although they desire social bonds with their classmates but instead are

rejected and socially excluded, it could lead to a range of pathological and self-destructive behaviours.

The groundwork for conceptualising human needs entails identifying and classifying needs based on the mechanisms that regulate their functioning. When individuals experience difficulties satisfying their needs, it correlates with physical, chemical, biological (body), psychic (emotional-cognitive interactions in the brain), social and cultural external factors. Following this assertion, three needs classes – biological, psychic and social – are associated with intrinsic human values or states of need tension.

Table 4 sets out three classes of needs, as distinguished by Obrecht (2009, p. 27):³¹

- 1) biological needs which constitute the functional integrity of the organism as a whole to renew and repair itself;
- 2) biopsychic needs which concern the nervous system as an organ that controls and regulates the organism; and
- 3) social needs which enable the organism to function effectively in its social environment.

These three classes encompass a list of 19 different types of needs (bracketed numbers) which are grouped as follows:

Table 4: Needs classes according to Obrecht (2009, p. 27)

Biological Needs	Biopsychic Needs	Social Needs
1) physical integrity	5) sensory stimulation	11) love, friendship
2) substances for self-renewal and maintenance (autopoiesis)	6) aesthetic needs	12) support
3) regeneration	7) information	13) membership
4) sexual activity and reproduction	8) aims, goals and hope	14) identity
	9) meaning of life	15) autonomy
	10) skills, rules, social norms	16) social recognition
		17) reciprocity and social justice
		18) fairness
		19) cooperation

In Table 4, biological, psychic and social need classes are the basis of an opened-ended list of 19 needs – open because evolution is an ongoing process, making it likely to distinguish and identify needs in future research. The needs listed are associated with research findings generated in the natural and social

31 The needs classes in the current study are based on Obrecht’s classification (2009, p. 27) [translation by the author].

sciences and, in particular, the affective and cognitive neurosciences.³² Although the analytical framework within which these needs are precisely defined has not yet been developed, I would argue that the need classes and list of needs are a starting point to examine student wellbeing, i.e., their access to resources for need fulfilment in the school social system. However, it is yet to be determined whether and to what extent the needs set out in this list could be further differentiated.

The biological nature of needs means that regularities govern their existence. In other words, the inherent relations between their properties and their behaviour are regulated by laws and patterns. Needs are elastic which Obrecht refers to as the elasticity of a need. This differs across the three need classes. The elasticity of a need means the length of time between the point when the organism becomes consciously aware of a need tension and when the need is satisfied. Depending on the need, the length of time in which the organism can delay need satisfaction without causing biological or biopsychic harm differs. When a need has low elasticity, the tension must be satisfied within a few minutes. Human beings can usually survive for up to five days without water but must have oxygen within three to four minutes to prevent brain injury. The elasticity of the need for oxygen versus water indicates the distinction in the timeframe to meet the two biological needs. However, both are essential for autopoiesis which is the organism's self-renewal. The elasticity of social needs is greater than that of biological needs. Human beings can survive for months, and in some cases years, without satisfying their social needs. For example, the need for social justice is of higher elasticity than biological needs, such as the need for regeneration. Social needs are subjective mental states of emotional tension. Individuals become aware of tension within themselves and seek to restore their biological, mental and social wellbeing through social interactions with others. Mental activities are concrete processes of the nervous system – the subsystems of the human organism.

In addition to identifying the processes that regulate how human beings experience everyday life, the BPS-TH focuses on the effect of the environment on the perceptible neuronal stimulus-response pattern of individual sensors and the mechanisms of their transformation in the sensory areas of the cortex. Motivation and cognition play key roles in initiating human action to meet needs. The physical and social environments influence the type of human action and the outcome.

The human organisms' ability to survive is regulated and monitored by needs and tensions. What this means is that the biological needs regulate the intake of oxygen, fluids and nutrients. When the organism runs out of energy, the brain signals that an action is required to restore the body's energy by tak-

32 Detailed version of the list of 19 needs (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27) [Appendix A, translation by the author]

ing in food. Hence, Obrecht refers to need tensions as endogenous processes that regulate human survival (2009, p. 24). Need tension signals an imbalance, a call for action, to find satisfiers and restore the bio-value. At the same time, the external environment stimulates how this is done because human beings rely on the environment to access resources to satisfy their need tensions. Individuals have needs that necessitate the reliance on other human beings to meet (Obrecht, 2005b, p. 24). This is illustrated in the physical exchange of biological genetic matter from the sperm (male) and ova (female) cells known as deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) of two human beings that can reproduce a new organism. After around 40 weeks' gestation, an autonomous, living and functioning organism of the same genus, *Homo sapiens*, is expelled from the female internal organ, the uterus. This origins-of-life scenario shows human beings to be reliant on others for their existence, embryonic development and foetal maturation before birth. After birth and throughout the lifespan until death self-renewal or autopoiesis is an ongoing generative process linked to the satisfaction of social needs. Hence, social needs are a central mechanism in socialisation and social cohesion, even more so than cooperating with others to attain instrumental values, resources or satisfiers to satisfy biological needs. The fact of the matter is that students, as (involuntary) members of the school social systems, are reliant, to a greater or lesser extent (depending on their social-exchange relationships with the other members of the school's different social levels) for their need fulfilment.

Central to BPS-TH is that human needs are universal, which posits that needs are inherent and innate to the human condition because of our shared, evolutionarily evolved biological and psychic make-up. Thus, all human beings are compelled to satisfy the same needs. To put it in a slightly different way, we are conceived, born and survive, providing that our needs are met throughout our lives, i.e., during all development stages from infancy to adulthood. However, the universality of needs applies only to the needs themselves and not to the means, such as the things, point in time, context and conditions of need satisfaction. This is because the geographic, climatic, social and economic conditions impact the selection and availability of satisfiers. Consider the following example: the geographic and climatic conditions differ in Austria and Australia and therefore have impact on the satisfiers used to meet the students' biological need for food. The students from the Austrian school involved in the research for this book mentioned the meals they ate on a class skiing trip. The main meal of the day was served at lunchtime and consisted of three courses: cream soup, dumplings and cheese with cabbage, carrots, potatoes and pork, and flavoured yoghurt. The evening meal was a snack of wholemeal bread, cheese and ham. In comparison, the students in the Australian school spoke about the food they ate on a bush camping trip with the class. Lunch consisted of sandwiches with vegemite, peanut butter, Heinz sandwich spread and a piece of fruit. The main meal of the day was served in the evening:

barbequed beef, chicken and fish, a white bread roll, tomato salad, lettuce, green beans and watermelon. On closer examination, meals at these schools differ in two respects. Firstly, the time of day when warm or cold meals were served. The alpine region in Austria is climatically cold. Hence, a warm lunch is served so the students can warm up after a morning of outdoor activity. A snack is served in the evening because the students remain indoors after their meal. Secondly, there is a prevalence of dairy products in Austria, as opposed to a prevalence of meat, vegetables and fruit in Australia. The different climatic and physical characteristics of the two continents determine, but not exclusively, the availability of plant and animal species used as food staples. In Austria, the colder temperature and shorter periods of daylight in winter means that although fruit and vegetables are grown principally in the spring and summer months, domestically produced and stored cabbage, carrots and potatoes are available throughout the year. Dairy farms that supply the domestic market operate on the pastures of the Alps all year round. In Australia, fruit and vegetables are grown locally throughout the year alongside domestically raised livestock and seafood. In summary, needs are tangible and exist as intrinsic human motivations independent of external influences – the commonality between the four need theories sketched out in this chapter. The above example of the different food types in school excursions shows that the biological need for sustenance is universal. By contrast, while needs are identifiable in the human organism and individuals might share similar characteristics, all humans differ. Similarly, the desires and wishes about the preferred resources or satisfiers for need fulfilment depend on the geographical, social, economic environment or context.

4.7 Synopses of human need across four need theories

The outlines of all four theories were discussed above in chronological order. For the current study, it was relevant for developing the research design to contrast the key similarities and differences of the theories. In this section, the key elements of the four theories are summarised and discussed along the lines of three synopses. Table 5, Synopsis I, illustrates the key commonalities inferred from the four theories to develop the conceptual framework.

Table 5: Synopsis I: commonalities and differences of need theories

Commonalities:

- 1) Needs are universal – inherent in the human condition;
- 2) Needs are psychic (emotional-cognitive) and biological processes of all human beings;
- 3) Needs are requirements to sustain the life of the individual;
- 4) Needs motivate to external action or behaviour for their satisfaction.

Differences

- a) Needs are not clearly defined (Arlt, 1921, 1934; Maslow, 1943, 1954).
 - b) Needs are biological and biopsychic (emotional-cognitive) covert processes in the human organism (Obrecht, 2005b, 2009).
 - c) Needs are physical determinants of human behaviour and focus on the function and purpose of human behaviour to satisfy needs rather than to explain their features and composition.
 - d) Arlt (1921, p. 206) differentiates needs according to age, sex, mental state, health and socio-cultural conditions. Mägdefrau (2006, p. 114) stipulates that age, sex, and socio-cultural conditions determine need classifications.
 - e) The dominant focus is on the needs of vulnerable people, i.e., individuals affected by poverty (Arlt, 1921, 1934), disaffected youths (Mägdefrau, 2006) and facing social problems (Obrecht, 2009).
 - f) The dominant focus is on clients from the middle and upper social class – Maslow (1943, 1954).
 - g) The normative focus is on need satisfaction for a better/good life (Arlt, 1921, 1934; Obrecht, 2005a, 2009; Mägdefrau, 2006).
 - h) The normative focus is on need satisfaction for self-actualisation – Maslow (1943, 1954).
 - i) Needs are different from wants and desires (Obrecht, 2005b, 2009; Mägdefrau, 2006).
 - j) Cross-disciplinary research is required to examine needs because of the complexity of the human organism (Mägdefrau, 2006; Obrecht, 2009).
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Table 5 illustrates the commonalities among the four theories that pertain to needs as 1) universal, 2) physical-mental processes that motivate the human organism towards overt behaviour to seek satisfaction or needs fulfilment in the environment, 3) sustain life and 4) motivate humans to engage in action or interaction with the external world. The differences comprise a) Arlt and Maslow do not clearly define needs; in comparison b) Obrecht defines needs as biological and biopsychic covert processes in the human organism. c) Mägdefrau defines needs as physical determinants of human behaviour and focuses on the function and purpose of human behaviour to satisfy needs rather than to explain their features and composition. d) Arlt (1921, p. 206) differentiates needs according to age, sex, mental state, health and socio-cultural conditions, whereas Mägdefrau (2006, p. 114) stipulates that age, sex and socio-cultural conditions are the determinants of need classifications or system of order. e) There is a dominance of focus on vulnerable groups in the theories of Arlt (1921, 1934, 1958), Mägdefrau (2006) and Obrecht (2005b, 2009). f) I would suggest that this does not apply in Maslow's theory because the focus is predominantly on his clients from the middle and upper social class – Maslow (1943, 1954). This is deduced from his focus on self-actualisation when the primary two need levels are satisfied. g) There is a normative focus

on need satisfaction for a better/good life (Arlt, 1921, 1934; Obrecht, 2005b, 2009; Mägdefrau, 2006). h) Maslow's normative focus of need satisfaction is on self-actualisation (1943, 1954). Of the four theories, i) Obrecht and Mägdefrau distinguish between needs, wants and desires. j) To research need, cross-disciplinary research is required because of the complexity of the human organism (Mägdefrau, 2006; Obrecht, 2009).

Table 6 sets out Synopsis II of satisfaction needs across all four theories which illustrates the four theorists' positions on belonging/non-belonging (Arlt, 1921, 1934; Obrecht, 2005b, 2009; Mägdefrau, 2006)

Table 6: Synopsis II: the satisfaction of needs across the needs theories

Order of need satisfaction:

- 1) biological/basal/vital: must be met sooner or survival at risk;
 - 2) priority of needs intrinsically determined;
 - 3) individual characteristics can influence need preference;
 - 4) external factors can influence need fulfilment;
 - 5) access to satisfiers marked by instability because satisfiers and life situation change; and
 - 6) access to satisfiers is dependent on the socio-cultural context and the availability of resources or satisfiers (Arlt, 1921, 1934; Maslow, 1943, 1954; Obrecht, 2005b, 2009; Mägdefrau, 2006).
 - 7) Needs elasticity signifies the length of time that can be tolerated until a need is satisfied before detrimental harm is caused to a person (Obrecht, 2005b, 2009).
 - 8) Claim of a hierarchy of needs with lower order needs to be met before the middle and higher needs are relevant (Maslow, 1943, 1954).
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In Table 6, Synopsis II indicates the order of need satisfaction with the 1) biological/basal/vital as the needs across the four theories that must be met to ensure human survival; 2) priority indicates the urgency of need satisfaction; 3) need preference is associated with the type of resources or satisfiers to meet needs and/or individual prioritising of need fulfilment and the need tension to be met in the case of competing need tensions; 4), 5) and 6) indicates that the external world influences the priorities and preferencing of need fulfilment through the availability of resources or satisfiers. 7) Obrecht coined the notion of needs elasticity which signifies the length of time that can be tolerated until a need is satisfied before detrimental harm is caused to a person. 8) Maslow (1943, 1954) used the notion of a hierarchy of needs with lower-order needs having to be met before the middle and higher needs are relevant.

Table 7 provides an overview of the four need theories discussed in this chapter (Arlt, 1934, p. 6; Maslow, 1943, pp. 388–389; Mägdefrau, 2006, pp. 103–105; Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). [Author translation of Mägdefrau and Obrecht's list of needs].

Table 7: Overview of the need theories of Arlt, Maslow, Mägdefrau and Obrecht

Obrecht (2005a)	Arlt(1934, p. 6) (cf. Subsection 4.3)	Maslow (1943, pp. 388–389) (cf. Subsection 4.4)	Mägdefrau (2006, pp. 103–105) (cf. Subsection 4.5)	Obrecht (2009, p. 27) (cf. Subsection 4.6)
1) Needs according to the human dimensions • Biological • Psychic • Social • Social-cultural	1) air/light/heat/water 2) nutrition 3) housing 4) hygiene 5) clothing 6) medical assistance and nursing 7) accident prevention and first aid 8) recreation 9) education 10) training in economic skills and efficiency 11) mental and spiritual development 12) family life 13) legal aid	1) physiological needs 2) safety needs 3) belonging needs 4) esteem needs 5) self-actualisation needs	1) vitality 2) competence 3) belonging 4) safety 5) experience 6) respect 7) care needs	1) physical integrity 2) substances for self-renewal and maintenance 3) regeneration 4) sexual activity and reproduction 5) sensory stimulation 6) aesthetic needs 7) information 8) aims, goals and hope 9) meaning of life and life goals 10) skills, rules, social norms 11) love, friendship 12) support 13) membership 14) identity 15) autonomy 16) social recognition 17) reciprocity and social justice 18) fairness 19) cooperation
2) Social context-regarding their satisfaction: • individuals • group members • family/members • organisation members, their sub-systems and social levels.	Village/family Marienthal as a result of unemployment the collapse of "village life", and the events of political involvement (Zeisel, Jahoda and Lazarsfeld, 1933)	Conflicts between people Family members and/or psycho-therapeutic setting of two or more people.	School system Students, teachers, department coordinators, school principal/management, school authorities, and politics as sub-systems.	Philosophers of Science as a meta-theory is based on empirical research of human needs, their development and the consequences of not fulfilling these needs.
<i>Diagnoses of hindered needs fulfilment and its consequences</i>				
3) Main general methodological indications	Community work political interference	Psychological support for individuals, groups and families; psycho-therapeutic-orientated approaches	School social work on different social levels	Scientific methodology
<i>Conflict resolution and mediate</i>				

Table 7 holds an overview of the need theories of Arlt, Maslow, Mägdefrau and Obrecht. In the second, third and fourth columns after 1) **needs**, the list of needs of each of these theorists is provided. The second row, 2) **social context**,

shows a summary of the social context that the theorist addresses with their particular need theory. The third row, 3) **main general methodological indications**, indicates the target population/social system and/or subsystem for interventions that address needs fulfilment. Arlt's **social context** for her need theory is the "village/family". As shown in her study, conducted between 1931 and 1932 with unemployed residents of the Austrian village Marienthal, the social context influences village life (Zeisel, Jahoda and Lazarsfeld, 1933). Arlt's focus is on community work and political interference. Maslow's need theory is directed towards addressing conflicts between people with the **social context** of family members and/or psychotherapeutic setting of two or more people. The **main general methodological indications** of Maslow's theoretical approach are psychological support for individuals, groups and families, i.e., psychotherapeutic-orientated approaches. The **social context** of Mägdefrau's need theory is the school system, and the social actors – students, teachers, school departments, principal, school management, authorities and politics – as subsystems. The **main general methodological indications** of Mägdefrau's need theory is directed towards school social work on different social levels. The **social context** of Obrecht's need theory is the philosophers of science as a meta-theory that is based on empirical research of human needs, their development and the consequences of not fulfilling these needs. The **main general methodological indications** of Obrecht's need theory is a scientific methodology which describes and explains the practical problems of individuals concerning their need fulfilment. The **main general methodological indications** and commonality *across all four need theories* is the diagnosis of hindered needs fulfilment and its consequences.

Table 8, Synopsis III of belonging across all four theories is set out. It illustrates the four theorists' positions on belonging/non-belonging (Arlt, 1921, 1934; Obrecht, 2005b, 2009; Mägdefrau, 2006).

Table 8: Synopsis III: the theorists' positions on belonging/non-belonging

Arlt (1921, 1934, 1958)	Maslow (1943, 1954)	Mägdefrau (2006)	Obrecht (2005a, 2009)
Membership [belonging] in a social group is associated with family life and school education.	Belonging: "[...] love, affection, warmth, acceptance, a place in the group." (1954, p. 63)	Belonging needs to connect through friendship, sociability, celebration, adaptation to norms (ibid., 2006, p. 103).	Socio-cultural belonging through participation as a member of a social group and/or social system (2009, p. 27)

The commonalities across the need theories:

- the satisfaction of belonging need is non-essential for survival;
- satisfiers for belonging, interaction and social-exchange relationships with others;
- belonging need is interdependent with other social needs;
- belonging is signified by positive psychic feelings of attachment;
- belonging frustrated by external changes, the person lacks the power to influence;
- the frustration of belonging need can lead to pathological and self-destructive behaviour; and non-voluntary non-belonging through social exclusion and alienation.

In Table 8, Synopsis III, Arlt makes no direct reference to belonging as a need. She focuses on the family as the primary social group for support, care and love. She discusses the social problems of families, particular the disintegration of family structures based on strong evidence that poverty increases the risk of loneliness and social exclusion. In her development of school curricula, communication skills and the abilities to engage with others through interpersonal relationships is briefly mentioned. Hence, social and attachment relationships are taken as a given. She reiterates the importance on focusing on the individual and their needs, and positions individuals within a framework of family and school life, but without directly referencing the importance of belonging in this sense (1921, 1934, 1958). Maslow makes clear reference to belonging as a second-order need, thus it is not vital for survival, and this is signified by positive psychological feelings of attachment (1954, p. 63). Mägdefrau (2006, p. 103) references belonging as a social need which is a generic term for other needs such as friendship, community and strong interpersonal relationships, in direct reference to school. Obrecht makes direct reference to belonging as a social need for socio-cultural membership in social systems which is ontologically materialist – explained as a biochemical process in human organism. He contends that social problems relate to a person's interaction and structural position (status) in a social system. This can hinder their social-need satisfaction, irrespective of whether their membership in that system is voluntary, such as the friendship group, or involuntary, such as the class or school. Belonging need is frustrated by external changes which strongly indicates the person lacks power to influence the actions of others. If this is long-lasting and the person has little or no real chance to effect positive change, it could lead to pathological and self-destructive behaviour – such as in the case of non-voluntary non-belonging through social exclusion and alienation (Obrecht, 2005b, 2009).

Human beings organise themselves around kinship affiliations and interest groups. In this vein, belonging is interdependent with the social needs for friendship, support, socio-cultural group membership, recognition, social justice, fairness and cooperation. For example, the need for socio-cultural group membership can be met through interpersonal relationships of emotional closeness with another individual or group of individuals in the classroom or extend to peers in the year-level cohort during recess, art and drama classes, sports and so on. Weak social ties in one social system do not inevitably mean that the student's need for social socio-cultural belonging through participation is generally not met. If a student has weak social ties or exchange relationships with the classmates, they could have strong cross-classroom emotional ties or bonds with other peers outside of the classroom or friendships with students from other year levels. However, social rejection by classmates could undermine the student's social recognition by peers and result in an unfavourable or disadvantaged position on different social levels of the school. Suppose the

classmates attach a negative stigma to affiliation with the minority language group and discriminate against a peer because of their affiliation with the group. In that case, this could result in the rejection of the student. Hence, for a student who simultaneously identifies with a minority language group, the status of the minority language group can affect their social need for socio-cultural belonging being met by peers in the class cohort or on the different social levels of the school. Rejection by peers could result in conflict with majority-language peers associated with other practical and social problems. In this sense, social rejection by classmates suggests that a student lacks a positive emotional response from their classroom peers. Because of the elasticity of social needs, the needs for social recognition and socio-cultural group membership can be substituted provisionally through satisfying other needs. When the person forms relations with peers in class, their social need for socio-cultural group membership can be met. Other satisfiers for this need could be given when a student is accepted and included by individuals or subgroups of the class cohort. However, further incidents of social rejection could confirm the person's feelings of rejection and fortify unstable concepts of self-worth and poor self-esteem (Mägdefrau, 2006, p. 178). Long-lasting need frustration such as the previously mentioned social needs for socio-cultural group membership and social recognition can prevent positive identification with the different social levels of the school. This in turn could impede developments of a positive self-image and peer/teacher relations, as well as compromise the student's ability to interact with others and form healthy relationships (Maslow, 1943, pp. 380–381; Obrecht, 2009, p. 33). Hence, reciprocal social-exchange relationships – the access to, and maintenance of them – are central for student belonging which is the baseline for the definition of the “need to belong”.

4.8 Conceptualising the “need to belong”

The conceptualisation of the “need to belong” for the current study is broader than “belonging” (Maslow, 1943, 1954; Mägdefrau, 2006, pp. 76–77) or “belonging” as a state which is achieved through motivated behaviour directed towards relieving need tensions intrinsic to the human organism. Satisfying our needs is a requirement for human psychobiological wellbeing, and in the case of less autonomously functioning human beings such as infants, it is the requirement for their survival (Obrecht, 2009). To belong has two sides: firstly, it drives individuals, partly independent of external conditions, e.g., recurrent hunger, partly depending on such conditions as aggression in the case of threat, to a range of behaviours. Hence, needs are properties of individuals (*ibid.*, p. 43). Secondly, to belong means the ability of individuals to meet their needs and, in particular, their social needs, within their natural and social environ-

ment. In this sense, the social need for socio-cultural membership through participation in social groups and state of belonging. Maslow (1943, 1954) and Mägdefrau (2006, pp. 76–77) indicates that the access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment at school is a precursor to student belonging.

In the current study, the “need to belong” is conceptualised as universal human biopsychic and social need tensions, based on Obrecht’s list of needs (2009, p. 27). These need tensions drive people to establish and maintain strong emotional bonds through which the individual can access reciprocal peer and teacher exchange relationships as resources for their need fulfilment. The requirement to form and maintain social relationships with others is owed to the fact that human beings are self-knowledgeable. Belonging can be seen as a feeling, i.e., a mental state that is achieved because the student’s “need to belong” fulfilment is facilitated. However, the existence of needs cannot be measured by overt behaviour but the biological and biopsychic consequences, such as stress because a student has been unsuccessful in their attempts to satisfy their “need to belong” at school. For the individual student to achieve “need to belong” satisfaction as a member of school social system, there are two main conditions:

- 1) the prerequisite is access to reciprocal peer and teacher social-exchange relationships; and
- 2) the ability of the student and at least one individual to maintain their social relationship/s.

An indication that conditions 1) and 2) are given is when a student has formed a social relationship with another individual and/or group of individuals that is marked by mutual support and active interest in one another’s need fulfilment through caring, affection, cooperation and feeling that they matter to each other.

4.9 Objections to human needs theories

The lexical term “need” symbolises the concept of need which must be implicitly defined for the properties of need to be distinguished (Bunge, 2003, p. 49). However, the myriad of cross-disciplinary research and debate is marked by difficulties in precisely defining human needs.

Similarly, there is criticism about the lack of scientific rigour about developing and empirically substantiating needs categories and lists. Human need theories span the social science disciplines to include human development, wellbeing, and flourishing indicators. The indicators of these concepts are contested because of their normative value base, which confuses need with wants and desires. Mägdefrau (2006, pp. 17–18) points out that the concept of need

can be inflated if the term need is not clearly defined. Against this backdrop, the precise definition of the need and concept of human need is essential to ensuring robust and unbiased research.

Nonetheless, the lack of consensus within and across disciplines concerning what needs constitute prevails. The result is that the term need is used loosely, i.e., indistinct and fussy, or omitted, based on an a priori presumption that it is pre-defined. Without a clear definition of needs, academic coherence and scientific rigour are challenging to achieve, thus impeding empirical research, theory development and welfare and education policy development around needs. Instead, the focus is placed on their functions, or a hypothesis is made based on limited evidence, suggesting the purpose and consequence when needs are not met. Although theorists viewing needs in this way may not necessarily subscribe to the separation of mind and body, it is not uncommon to find mind-body dualism in their definitions and conceptualisations. This is grounded in perceptions of psychic processes marked by a lack of scientific knowledge on concrete physical-biological and emotional-cognitive brain processes.

The objection to needs theory as biologism is levelled at the theory that brings the biological nature of human beings into play. However, such an objection that fails to distinguish between need theory that brings neuroscientific descriptions and explanations into play by mixing this up with hereditarianism is a short-sighted argument. Because human needs are universal, this means that they transcend different spatial-temporal, geographic, climatic, social and cultural contexts as the fundamentals of our existence that substantiate the human condition in its entirety. Human beings are highly complex organisms with elaborate biological and psychic compositions. Describing and explaining the complexity of the underlying mechanisms and processes that keep the human organism alive requires need theories to evolve as a multifaceted transdisciplinary undertaking from across disciplines and within the disciplines themselves. For example, from within psychology, human needs are seen differently in the two schools of thought, functionalism and behaviourism. Functionalism focuses on the mental or cognitive processes of the mind to understand human action, function, and behaviour. This means that functionalism would agree to associate human needs with mental processes in the brain. In comparison, behaviourism, the study of human actions as observable facts to understand the mind, would reject the notion of human needs as mental – neural – processes of the mind. From the standpoint of behaviourism, knowledge is derived from facts observed through human actions, which is not the case with human needs because they cannot be observed through human actions.

Similarly, Mahner (2017, p. 195) contends that “mental properties are not physical properties (in the sense of physics); they are still material properties of material things” because they are neurological processes, i.e., electro-chemical reactions in the brain, shown as such through the use of brain-imaging

tools. Mental properties are facts, regardless of whether they are real or perceived. According to the Thomas theorem, whether facts are real or perceived as such, in our subjective imagination, they have the same effect in consequence – because of the persons’ behaviour, the consequences are real (Merton, 1968, pp. 475–476). Hence, the social scientific interest features perceived subjective experience and objective actions. Briefly put, functionalism studies the mechanisms of the mind or human mental states. At the same time, behaviourism focuses on behavioural mechanisms or the responses to something through actions to predict and control behaviour (Bunge, 1999, pp. 413–414). However, to assess the causes and functions underlying concrete mental processes requires an understanding of actual mechanisms, how they work and the very nature of needs themselves. The critical issue here is to describe needs as an object base so that the underlying complexity that drives an organism to action is reflected. When theories are based on vague and imprecise definitions of needs, they cannot accurately capture the complex biological mechanisms of action, actual state and sequence of operations that make up human needs.

4.10 Summary

In this chapter, four needs theories were introduced as the basis on which to develop the theoretical framework to conduct empirical research on student “need to belong”. To belong has two sides: firstly, it drives a person to a range of behaviours to form and maintain social exchange relationships with others that facilitate needs fulfilment. Secondly, to belong means the ability of individuals to meet their needs within their natural and social environment is given. In this sense, the need for socio-cultural membership through participation in social groups, as formulated by Obrecht (2009, p. 27), and the state of belonging (Maslow, 1943, 1954; Mägdefrau, 2006, pp. 76–77), indicates that the access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment at school is a precursor to student wellbeing. Consequently, there is an overlap between belonging – as a need according to Maslow and Mägdefrau – and Obrecht’s perception of the social need for socio-cultural membership through participation in social groups.

The fundamental consensus across the four need theories is that human needs are an anthropological given, intrinsic to the human condition. This does not apply to the resources or satisfiers for need fulfilment because, in comparison to the needs, their fulfilment is context-dependent. The four assertions that follow are made about human needs based on each theory. The assertions help to tease out the theoretical similarities and differences between needs and satisfiers and the relevance for researching student “need to belong”.

Assertion 1: Student access to satisfiers in the school context should be measured. This means setting benchmarks that enable access and the right to access, alongside guidelines and rules to limit access to prevent overindulgence – to regulate access through rights and duties.

Need fulfilment is hindered through poverty or excessive luxury associated with greed (Arlt 1933). Arlt's description of poverty positioned on one end of a scale, with luxury or the abundance of wealth on the other, brings an interesting perspective to the means of need fulfilment. Poverty hinders people's access to resources due to financial problems that stem from different causes. The age, health and economic situation determines their needs because this makes a difference to what people require. Hence, need fulfilment depends on a person's financial means – whether poor or excessively rich, both extremes can be detrimental to human flourishing, as well as age and life cycle – babies, children, adolescents, the elderly or ill of health, or otherwise infirm individuals. Although Arlt does not always clearly distinguish needs from desires, it is interesting that needs require satisfiers. Both poverty and abundance of wealth impact a person's life – through deprivation versus over-saturation. Bluntly said, not to have enough or to have too much threatens human flourishing, although in different ways (Arlt, 1921, 1934). In addition, the effects of early life deprivation (a lack of resources) can impede a person's development in childhood and continue to negatively affect the quality of life in adulthood.

Assertion 2: Students need social interaction and exchanges with peers, teachers and school staff. It is through these means that their belongingness need can be met. According to Maslow, needs are universal requirements of human beings which range from biological needs that regulate our survival to needs that drive self-actualisation (1943). He perceived needs as being in a hierarchical model and contended that human beings are motivated to action depending on the order of needs. It is a humanistic model that distinguishes from the technical representations of human functioning that were prevalent in the social sciences at the time. However, need is not defined and thus it remains unclear as to what needs are. This is problematic because without a definition or clarifying the concept of need, the mechanisms and process that regulate human action remain unclear. Maslow's hierarchical model of needs lacks scientific rigour and evidence to back the claim. Hence, the notion that different needs are positioned in a hierarchical structure – with survival needs as the foundation that must be met before the person could tend to higher-order needs, such as belongingness – is flawed. It was later reconsidered when Maslow introduced the notion of fluidity and flux between the levels. His focus on belongingness as a substantial need that is integral to human beings highlights that the individual is reliant on other human beings and social groups for their need fulfilment. Although it is not about the state of wellbeing as such, it puts

cooperation and/or competition for limited resources in the foreground of the human condition.

Assertion 3: The state of belonging is evident through actions of mutual support and interest in each other's biological, psychic and social need fulfilment in reciprocal acts of caring, affection, cooperation and the feeling of significance in interactions and social relationships. Individuals have needs and cooperate and/or compete for satisfiers to meet their needs. Depending on the individuals' structural position in a social system, they have greater or lesser access to the resources that they need in their interaction with others. Needs are mechanisms and processes within the human organism that we become conscious of when there is an imbalance in our bio-value or need tension. Depending on the elasticity of a need, it must be met within a certain time span. Wants or desires are driven by need mechanisms and processes and are not needs themselves but emotion-cognitive processes in the brain that alert us to action. The bio-psycho-social and cultural need theory is used as the baseline for the current study because of the precise definition of human needs, the distinguishing of needs into three classes and the open list of 19 needs that correspond with each class (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). The social needs and, in particular, the need for membership in social systems (and the associated rights and duties pertaining to membership) is central to the current study because it positions belonging, the state when an individual has access to membership and the rights and duties that correspond.

Assertion 4: The "need to belong" is broader than belonging which is a state that is achieved through motivated behaviour directed towards relieving need tensions intrinsic to the human organism. On examining needs in pedagogy, human needs discussions extend across disciplines because of the complexity of needs, on the one hand, and, the lack of research in education science pertaining to human needs, on the other. This offers a perspective on human needs that borrows and builds on existing need theories developed in sociology and psychology – with reference to developmental psychology. Hence, needs are positioned as motivators for human actions. Notably, there are two factors that belonging is juxtaposed between. One factor is that the human-need discourse focuses on the emotio-cognitive state of the individual in the context of their social need fulfilment (Obrecht, 2009) and that belonging, love and affection are psychological drives (Maslow, 1943, 1954). Two is that belonging is positioned within the dynamics of human interactions, with needs perceived as hypothetical constructs (Mägdefrau, 2006, p. 93). Mägdefrau's quantitative research design that was developed to conduct an enquiry to examine student access to satisfiers for need fulfilment is based on phenomenological approach. It looks at how need is defined as anthropological and universal and focuses on access to satisfiers from the student perspective. For the current study, it is an interesting perspective on belonging because it highlights issues of student-peer and student-teacher cooperation alongside competition for satisfiers, and

thus positions everyday school at the centre of such negotiations. At the same time, it holds educators accountable for setting up schools that facilitate student access to resources irrespective of their ethnicity/culture, sex, age or language. It links disaffected student behaviour to a lack of access to resources for need fulfilment.

The four assertions discussed in this summary lay the groundwork for the theoretical foundations of student “need to belong” informing the research design. This is the focus of PART II of the book.

Part II: Research design, data collection, analysis and findings

Part II of this book comprises four chapters that discuss the research design and fieldwork data collection, data analysis, the theory model “need to belong”, and research findings. It begins with introducing the philosophical position underlying the current study and discusses the research design based on a qualitative methodology. Two case studies, observation and focus group interviews, were used for the data collection (Hennessy and Heary, 2005; Finch, Lewis and Turley, 2013; Krueger and Casey, 2014; Ritchie, Elan, *et al.*, 2014). It was anticipated that the data collected through focus group interviews would assist me in identifying and explaining the links and barriers between student access to resources to satisfy their “need to belong” at school. The theoretical model of “need to belong” is the basis for the transformative three-step approach to formulating theoretical hypotheses from student statements extracted from the transcriptions (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp. 288–292). It is the groundwork for developing a working hypothesis on the different social levels of the school social system, used to address possible social problems of the students. From this, guidelines for action are developed to address social problems. The social problem of prejudice illustrates possible actions to be taken by school social workers on different social levels of the school system. Conclusions are drawn from the findings, and suggestions for future research conclude the book.

5 Research design

This chapter constitutes the research design, methodology and fieldwork for the current study. From a metatheoretical standpoint, the ontological position that frames the research design takes its theoretical cue from Bunge's tradition of evolutionary materialist emergent systemism (2010, pp. 131–132).³³ It is an ontological view of the world, as things exist, as either a system or a component of a system. It is a theoretical position that postulates the existence of reality not dependent on human experience, thought, feeling or perception for verification or falsification.

As students are affected and affect the school social system this is the rationale behind collecting data verbalised as their feelings, thoughts and views generated through material emotion-cognition processes in the brain. It is through the parameters of verbalised feelings, thoughts and views that I sought to identify the things that were related to practical and social problems, i.e., related to the lack of access to resources or satisfiers for the “need to belong” fulfilment at school (Obrecht, 2005a, pp. 97–99). While material systemism focuses on students as individuals and simultaneously members or components of the school social system, epistemological realism concerns our knowledge about a mind-independent reality and how knowledge is generated. As student voice was at the core of the research process, a qualitative methodology and focus group interview method was applied for data collection in the field. As mentioned previously, students' feelings, thoughts and views (subjective experiences) are factual, i.e., real, because tangible brain activities connect to subjective experiences.³⁴ Based on the fact that data are generated through the individual student's emotion-cognition brain processes – verbalised in response to the researcher questions and exchanged with the other participants – a qualitative methodology is compatible with the materialist systemism ontology and realism epistemology.

Specifically, the data collection comprised student statements that addressed one or more of Obrecht's (2009, p. 27) list of needs or empirically met their needs. The list of needs was generated from a comprehensive theory of needs that is empirically supported and distinguishes between biological, psychic and social needs. The robustness of the list of needs and complexity of the supporting need theory makes it a suitable theoretical framework within which

33 Emergent refers to the properties exclusive to a system, but not found in its individual components (Bunge, 2003b, p. 83).

34 For example: human brain activity can be directly observed through the application of cognitive neuroimaging technologies to validate their existence (Bunge, 1993, p. 226).

to develop and conduct research on students' "need to belong" at school. In doing so, the research design addressed the overarching research question:

How do students describe their positive and negative feelings about the possibility or impossibility to satisfy the "need to belong" in class and in the school system?

The sub-questions leading the research were:

- 1) *How do students describe the satisfaction of their "need to belong" in relation to their classmates, teachers and the school social system?*
- 2) *Do the students have plans or strategies to overcome the frustration of their "need to belong"? What social level is referred to and in what way does it matter?*

This chapter encompasses seven sections. The first section introduces evolutionary materialist emergent systemism as the ontological position of the current study (Bunge, 2010, pp. 131–132). In the second section, the epistemological foundation is discussed in consideration of what counts as knowledge. This is informed by an abductive approach to reasoning. This means that there is an external reality which we try and explain based on the information at hand. Abductive processes are creative because they start out as an incomplete set of observations about the real world. They are used to describe reality external to the human mind which is incomplete and thus fallible because knowledge is provisional and needs to be improved and revised which is the interest of the current study (Bunge, 1993, p. 231). The third section, methodology, addresses the reasoning behind the qualitative approach that informed the data collection methods. The fourth section concerns the methods of data collection which comprises the case study, structural observation and focus group interviews. Section five outlines the ethical guidelines, quality criteria and the school selection process. In section six, the secondary school in Austria, referred to as case study one (CS_1), is introduced alongside a detailed account of the fieldwork and data-collection process. Section seven introduces case study two (CS_2), the secondary school in Victoria, Australia, alongside the fieldwork and process of data collection as it unfolded. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key issues within the context of a realist framework, and linkage to the following chapter which addresses the data analysis.

5.1 Ontology

Ontology is a sub-branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality, human existence and being. It is concerned with what exists on different ontological levels, such as system, structure and process. Because reality is more complex and multi-layered than our human senses and cognitive faculties can grasp

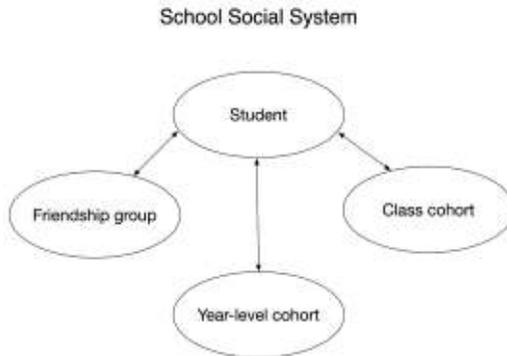
in entirety, we are partially aware of the concrete, or material, external world. The baseline of an evolutionary materialist emergent ontology is a mind-independent (Bunge, 2006, p. 29). More specifically, the ontological position of this book is evolutionary materialist emergent systemism ontology because it holds that “every entity is material (concrete), and every ideal object is ultimately a process in some brain or a class of brain processes” (Wan, 2011, p. 41). This begs the question of how complexity is dealt with in research predicated on ontological systemism. In response to this question, we can take the theoretical cue from Ervin László’s general systems theory, developed in the 1970s. László sought to connect scientific theories from across disciplines to explain the complexity of the natural world. The different ontological real-world systems, structures and process levels were distinguished to comprehend complexity by depicting different structural dimensions as multi-level (László, 1975, p. 16, 1996). For example, our human make-up encompasses different ontological levels that range from physio-chemical, biological and psychic to social and cultural (László, 1975, p. 23; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp. 160–161). Causation takes place in an upwards and downwards motion on each of the physical, chemical, biological and social levels respectively. However, the level below comprises less than the level above because of the new emergent properties that develop on the higher level. In this way, the lower level relates to the next, higher level because of the emergent properties of new things that cannot be reduced to the sum of the parts or elements on a lower level. Emergence can be explained as the appearance of a new thing that comes into existence because of its mechanisms which make it the way it is or appears to be (Bunge, 1997, p. 416).

Concerning the “need to belong”, based on Obrecht’s (2009, p. 27) need list (cf. Table 4), the individual student is the target respondent: they have needs, i.e., systems do not have needs. At the same time, the individual student is dependent on membership in social groups or systems to satisfy their needs. The behaviour of the individual causes changes to the group and social system because of new emergent properties which affect the other members of the group.

Hence, everything is in a state of being or existence—either a social system or part of a system which is to say that things do not exist in isolation because everything is connected or linked in one way or another (Bunge, 2011, p. 429). Systemism opposes a holist- or individualist-only stance because these two extreme positions neglect that individuals are components of social systems and their subsystems. From the perspective of systemism, people are self-understanding biological systems that are components or members of real social systems. In this sense, I combined the insight as offered by Bunge’s (2010, pp. 131–132) social-systems perspective, systemism, with Obrecht’s (2009) theory of needs about the requirements of the individual student.

In Figure 1, the theoretical model illustrates the student as being an individual and, at the same time, a member or component of different social subsystems—for example, friendship group, class cohort and year-level cohort—of the school social system.

Figure 1: The student as an individual and member of different social systems [author's own illustration]



In Figure 1, the arrows indicate the student as an individual, i.e., a biological and biopsychic half-open organic system, and simultaneously, as a member of the school social system and its different social subsystems, i.e., friendship group, the class cohort and year-level cohort (Obrecht, 2005a). Conversely, social systems have emergent properties that apply to the system, but not to each of its individual members or components. Hence, students are members or components of social systems and satisfy their needs and pursue their goals within the structural framework of the respective system. If the possibility is not given to satisfy their needs, then the social structure of the system is obstructive. Thus, it lacks in legitimacy because access to resources for needs satisfaction is hindered. Such a social system fails to facilitate what is required for the purpose of life, namely, to flourish, grow and develop.

Similarly, Klassen (2004, p. 27) contends that the response of the individual can impact how the other members or components of that system respond, i.e., whether the members seek individual or collective, system-conform or non-conform solutions. Accordingly, the critical realism position of Wan (2011, p. 42) argues that things, their properties (unobservable and observable) and complex systems are the key area of research focus. Systems have one or more emergent features or properties that the components of that system do not have. This is the rationale for emergentist ontology opposing reductionism which is seen to reduce things that exist to the sum of their parts. The aim of this ontological stance is to make an approximately true account of the physical world, for example, a system of norms in social science or class system which have properties that the individual components lack (ibid., pp. 22–24). In this

sense, emergentist materialism is a version of materialism that includes the mental (phenomena) because the human mind is recognised as part of the material. This is a stance that requires ontological commitment. In doing so, it broadened my perspective on the external world which influenced the approaches to examining it, i.e., the research methodology, methods and techniques that were applied in the fieldwork (Bunge, 2006, p. 27).

For clarity, the concept of mechanism should be considered in light of the material systemism ontology. The concept of mechanism (cf. Subsection 4.1) is central to the ontological position because it is a process in a concrete system that can produce or inhibit change in the system and its subsystems (Bunge, 1997, p. 414). Correspondingly, in understanding mechanisms, we can explain how they work, which helps to elucidate the linkages between real scientific theories because of their lawlike generalisations that are approximately true descriptions of the mind-independent world.

The position of the current study draws from materialist emergent ontology in agreement that the perceptions in the human mind about the nature of the external world are approximately true descriptions of the external world. The human brain and its biological and biopsychic mechanisms and processes drive these perceptions; thus, they are not viewed as constructions. Human beings seek to understand the external world and hence the mind. The mind is the sum of the mental states and properties of the human brain. Through the senses, the brain is in contact with the external world, from which it receives signals, or clues and, through trial and error, learns to navigate and understand the external world and our places in it. Specifically, my interest is in the nature of various entities and properties of the social world external to the self, such as the social interactions and social-exchange relationships that took place between student-peers and student-teachers in the context of daily school. Throughout the investigation, Bunge's (2004b, p. 191) ontological systemism emergentism was borne in mind. This theory posits that the whole is more than the sum of its parts and their intrinsic properties which means that the whole is not completely reducible to its parts because of their absence in the parts. Hence, the objective was to clarify whether the student-peer and student-teacher social exchange relations were ontological – to establish whether their social interactions were ontological (part of going to school), or causal (caused by going to, or being at, school).

The next section examines what counts as knowledge, or the epistemological considerations of realism, and uses this to lay out the foundations of the research design, in line with an evolutionary materialist emergent systemism ontology.

5.2 Epistemology

The philosophical classification of the current study is evolutionary materialist emergent systemism ontology and realist epistemology. The latter is primarily concerned with the source of knowledge, and what counts as scientific evidence about the external world (Wan, 2011, p. 16). In other words, if knowing something about reality is possible, how do we know it is possible and to what extent does this knowledge exist independently of the human mind? This is where scientific theory brings structure into our examination of the world that is independent of the human mind (Psillos, 2006, p. 689). Hence, realism stands in opposition to idealism which holds that everything is conceptual and thus is based on human ideas, thoughts and notions. My critique of idealism is that it opposes the existence of an external mind-independent world or reality.

As Maxwell (2012, pp. 3–4) contends, realism provides a lens through which to look at issues from a different viewpoint: it contributes to new insights into the object under study, particularly concerning the connection or relation among the things being investigated Maxwell (2012, p. 13). To use realism as a lens meant to distinguish between the different forms of epistemological realism which includes “naive, critical and scientific realism” (Bunge, 2006, p. 29). In doing so, in the current study, the term empirical signifies the scientific observation of concrete things, objects and artefacts. However, because we can only derive partial knowledge of reality, the descriptions and explanations we make are incomplete and fallible (Scott, 2010). Through science, we pursue ways and means to accurately observe, describe and explain the external world. Even if we are unable to observe some things, objects and artefacts, this is not confirmation that they do not exist, but rather an indication of the limitations of research methods.

The current study starts with general questions about reality to examine social complexity. Forging such questions in the early stages of the research would have been detrimental to structured thinking about the external world because some idea or notion of reality is inextricably linked to our conceptualisation of the external world. To facilitate the theoretical and empirical examination of things in the external world entails clarity and reflection on our epistemological assumptions about the external world. As Travers (2008, p. 11) contends, in general terms, realism concerns a deep dive into mechanisms when attempting a detailed explanation of human behaviour towards taking action. This is confirmed by Maxwell’s (2012, p. 47) specification that realism is concerned with how things are connected and affect one another. As such, I would argue that realism is compatible with qualitative research. This is a given because research methods can be applied to locate and examine mechanisms and their processes to identify and explain the underlying workings of different systems, such as the school social system and its different social lev-

els. Hence, epistemology was fundamental to the current study as it aligns the elements of the research design and corresponding research methods and techniques to generate scientific knowledge. It affects research feasibility, with different types of research requiring distinctive data types. Realist epistemology maintains that knowledge depends on how reality manifests itself over human cognitive functioning, experiences and abilities. In other words, how is the knowledge that is independent of the human mind discoverable? In thinking about how knowledge is derived, ontological systemism – as an alternative to the opposing individualism and holism – means that knowledge is derived from individual and social properties because it takes the individual (agency) and social system (structure) into account (Bunge, 2000, pp. 156–157). Hence, systemism is a complex theory about the structure, dynamics, and integrative and conflicting correlation between the individual and society in change processes (Staub-Bernasconi, 2007b, p. 180). Correspondingly, human beings are psychic-biological systems with needs that must be met in an ongoing dynamic process of biological and psychic change owing to their development, growth, and regeneration. From an epistemological viewpoint, realism views the external world and knowledge about it as mind-independent, which corresponds with the material systemism ontology (cf. Subsection 5.1). Thus, our knowledge is gained through our interactions with the external world, perceived through our sensory organs and the emotional-cognitive processes in our brain.

When knowledge about the world is gained through scientific methods, it enables us to establish approximate truths about the entities external to the self. Although knowledge is tested as evidence to identify and explain the link between reality and theory, the external world exists outside of how we think and talk about it, which is causally influenced by our thinking. For example, at school, the physical classroom, desks and students are real material entities. If we continue along this track, students' thoughts are real mental processes in the brain that are expressed to the world through physical gestures and verbalised. In this sense, the current study research examines verbal communication, the spoken words of the students as sources of description about the external world. This includes the social norms integral to student-peer and student-teacher social-exchange relationships as individuals and as members of the school social system and its different social levels, such as the class (cohort). A realism epistemology postulates that the world consists of concrete material entities, be they ideas or actual and possible sense-data, which is the unanalysed mental operations in the brain that are distinct from concrete objects outside of it. An example of this is the image of a school desk in the human mind and the actual desk. We can be mistaken about a concrete entity such as a school desk in our cognitive thoughts about something outside of the self. Bunge (2010, p. 174) contends that the mental processes in the human brain are seen in the context of qualia which is the way things seem to us, the way an experience is remembered, bearing in mind that things change and evolve.

Something new can emerge from a remembered experience. However, this presents a conundrum concerning the research design because describing an entity does not give the full experience of it – for example, describing a school desk from the visual perspective to a blind person. This is due to the fact that human beings assess what exists outside of the self to determine what and how the world is and their place in it. The concern here was how to deal with the divergence between what is in the extrinsic world and how we conceive or think about it. Conversely, because the extrinsic world is mind-independent, we cannot completely distinguish our cognitive thoughts about something outside ourselves, such as a desk and the desk itself (Psillos, 2005).

The crux of the matter is that an enquiry about reality has its limitations because there is no absolute way of separating social science research from an entity's external approach to human cognition and thought. To define "observe" and "facts" in line with realism is to describe the mechanism of human functioning. For example, when students look for social contact or interactions with others, this is motivated or driven by human needs because human beings require other people to thrive. However, because individuals differ, there is fallibility in research with human beings (see Subsection 5.8.1 for the discussion on research reliability). This stems from differences in how research participants feel, think and express themselves.

To best obtain proximity to an accurate knowledge of the world, it should be borne in mind that theory is not perfect or entirely rational, i.e., it is equated with partial truth. This corresponds with Bunge's definition (2003b, p. 105) of moderate fallibilism: "the thesis that error can be detected and corrected". In this sense, the foundation of epistemological realism is that there is an external world that can be identified and examined. Thus, the foundation of knowledge is the real world, factual and material. However, knowledge generated about facts is incomplete. In part because of the constraints of our sensory abilities that limit the human capacity to examine the real world in its entirety. This sets limitations that can give rise to infallibility or inaccuracy because the external world is in a state of flux, through which new emergent properties arise (Scott, 2010). It is a work in progress because human beings cannot comprehend everything in its entirety, and enquiry tends to be indirect, i.e., not congruent with the object of examination. Hence, scientific enquiry is fallible and incomplete Bunge (2006, p. 29).

In line with this thinking is the stance of moderate fallibilism: external things around us change, and so do we, which gives rise to ongoing events. Hence, the external world influences people and is influenced by people. This is to be considered when theorising about the external world as mind-independent – bearing in mind that factual knowledge starts with experience. The methods used to explore that experience set boundaries on what is being researched (Rescher, 2010, p. 109). Hence, Psillos (2008, p. 644) contended that scientific realism matches scientific practice because it is based on a mind-

independent reality. Scientific realism can clarify what knowledge is because it is verifiable through scientific research compared to radical constructivism. I agree with this statement because realism is widely recognised and acknowledged as a scientific position that opposes radical constructivism's negation of the existence of a mind-independent world. This means that radical constructivism is limited or reduced to examining the fluidity of radical subjectivism (2008, p. 693). A realist epistemology regards the opinions and intensions of students as material (concrete) emotional and cognitive processes in the brain that come about due to chemical processes. As such, the chemical and structural processes in the brain can be identified through neurological methods such as magnetic resonance imaging and brain mapping, hence confirming their real existence (Pandya, 2011, pp. 130–135). Knowledge is a product of human thinking. We interpret the external world using our sensory apparatus and the underlying brain activity to form mental representations of our environment. Consequently, emergentist materialist ontology and epistemological realism correspond with the qualitative methodology applied in the current study to examine student statements about their external reality. More specifically, these student statements address one or more of Obrecht's needs (2009, p. 27) or empirically meet students' "need to belong."

5.3 Methodology

The methodological stance ties together with realism epistemology, i.e., how knowledge about the object of the current study can be obtained and what counts as knowledge. Thus, there are normative properties in the pursuit of scientific knowledge because of the questions concerning what counts as knowledge, as this implies a weightiness on how it is obtained and justified and on the underlying rationale or logic in support of knowing (Bunge and Mahner, 2004, p. 210). As human emotion-cognitive processes are concrete, I infer that they can be studied using scientific methods to investigate the underlying mechanisms related to students' feelings, thoughts and views.

The development of the methodological approach applied in the current study can best be described as cyclical. It started with the problem identification, research aims, focus, and *prima facie* questions (cf. Subsection 1.3) reviewed for ontological, epistemological, and methodological congruence. This triggered the refinement of the *prima facie* questions and modifications to the research design. Adaptation was necessary to narrow down the research focus³⁵

35 The changes involved the focus on data collected through the focus group interviews because this method positioned student voice at the foreground of the empirical research. Hence, student portraits, the first part of the data analysis (cf. Sub-

and gain clarity by specifying the research purpose and aims to fit within the scope of the research paradigm. In this process, the compatibility of qualitative research with realism epistemology was a key area of focus. This is in line with Maxwell's assertion (2012, p. 64) that qualitative research focuses on the specifics of the research object by facilitating a deep dive into the topic under study. This is the case with a qualitative methodology that incorporates rich data sources within ontological materialist emergentist systemism and epistemological realism. From a methodological standpoint, using a qualitative approach to data collection enabled a dovetail view of students as individuals and members of a focus group. This is in agreement with Hennink et al. (2011, p. 10), who contend that the strength of qualitative research is that it examines the complexity of people's lives and, in doing so, alludes to the depth of the enquiry. In the context of the current study, depth was reflected in examining student-peer and student-teacher interactions and social relationships to define and explain the possible linkage with need fulfilment.

However, the generalisability of the findings gleaned from a qualitative methodology can be limited, which raises questions as to whether the findings could be replicated in a study outside of that specific context, i.e., if similar results would be achieved using the same methods and procedures across settings (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p. 359). This concern was deliberated when the research design was developed. It was concluded that the merit of qualitative methodology positioning student voice in the centre of the research enquiry outweighed the limitations of generalisability of the research findings. That said, there are different methods to examine the complex social questions around students' "need to belong" facilitation, where "method" is understood as a course of action, practice, modus operandi and approach (Bunge and Mahner, 2004, p. 210) – or as Bunge (2003b, p. 180) contended, the method is the application of structured and specified procedural steps to achieve an objective. Because student voice was pertinent to the current study, at the early stage of the research design, consideration was given to developing a qualitative data-analysis approach that would fit with a materialist emergent systemism ontology and realist epistemology.

Given the ontological, epistemology and methodology considerations, three data-collection methods were selected to facilitate deep saturation in the object of the research, reliability and robustness: 1) case study, 2) structured observation and 3) focus group interviews. The latter dominated that data-collection process because the enquiry focused on the complexity of the individual student as a member of the school social system and its different social levels.

section 6.2), replace the questionnaire developed to collect quantitative data about student wellbeing/feeling bad. The socio-demographic information about the focus group participants' age, first language and sex, and the number of students in the class cohort and their first language distribution were derived from the questionnaire.

This was about students' verbally expressed feelings, thoughts, and views about social-exchange interactions and relationships with their peers and teachers. In this sense, focus group interviews are a method to generate data on the individual student, group interaction and the emergence of concrete things and their properties (Bunge, 1997, pp. 437–439).

The following section introduces the three methods applied in the current study. This commences with the case-study approach, which was used to distinguish commonalities and differences between the two schools used in the research. Structured observation and focus group interviews round up the introduction to the three methods.

5.4 Case study

Yin (2014, p. 4) defines a “case study” as a method to undertake an empirical enquiry and gain in-depth knowledge about the distinctiveness of a specific case, such as an individual, group of people, social system and its subsystems. So, I infer that it is a practical approach for structural and procedural reasons because boundaries distinguish the object of research from its context and the research process itself. However, the lack of consensus concerning the definition of case study in the social sciences is problematic because of its usage in multiple ways and contexts that are not, per se, concerned with research rigourousness. Instead, this would require clear structure and transparency about the reasons and aims of the research, the research object and the process. This point is important because if this is not the case, it can lead to a situation where there are no limits or boundaries to the investigation, the application of the method and the contexts in which it is used.

Easton (2010, p. 118) contends that a case study is conducted as a means to an end. It is about the epistemological foundation, in line with the current study's focus on knowledge about a mind-independent world and how knowledge is generated. I agree with this stance because the case-study method is a viable approach to generate data about the object of the research, set within the context of generating knowledge about it. Although Easton's reference is to market research, it follows the same line of logical reasoning as the research design by addressing the research object and the type of knowledge generated in learning about it. In particular, the case-study approach is suitable for researching social systems such as organisations and the social-exchange relationships among the different social actors. Hence, it is consistent with the enquiry into individual students as members of the school social system and its different social levels, i.e., class (cohort).

Three strengths of the case-study method were identified for the current study. The first is the flexibility in the sources that were used. This means the

data to describe each of the schools were collected from multiple sources, i.e., students, teachers, school management, other staff members, school social workers, the school's website, archival records, newsletters, and annual reports. The second is the flexibility in the timeline for data collection to describe the school, which started prior, during and post fieldwork. Although the case descriptions were primarily written during the fieldwork, it was necessary to add information after the fieldwork to give a well-rounded description of each school (cf. Table 9). This cycle of confirmation and refinement of the school description at different stages of the research enabled openness and reflection on the school's geographical and social context. The third strength of the case study approach is consistency in the research process and data analysis. Hence, the same research design and data collection procedures were used in both schools, functioning such that the specificity of each school could be inferred because the research procedures were the same.

The two schools or case studies were reviewed as individual units of analysis referred to as case study one (CS_1) in Austria, and case study two (CS_2), in Australia. Each case study unit of analysis is specific, with distinct features on its geographical and social context – a generic term for the processes and mechanisms developed and applied in each school social system and its different social levels. Correspondingly, the research design involves two case studies as separate entities to detail each case study's sociodemographic characteristics (cf. Table 9). This individual focus was extended to the data collected from students that addressed their “need to belong” in daily school. Hence, an identical research design was implemented in both case studies. For example, a sociodemographic questionnaire was used to collect data from the focus group participants before each focus group interview. It was developed in English and translated to German for CS_1. The sociodemographic data were exclusively student self-reported and took around 15 minutes to be completed. The data were the students' age, sex, nationality, place of birth and first language – defined as the language spoken at home with parents or grandparents. The data were used to verify the constellation of the focus groups about the student's: 1) age, 2) language spoken at home, as either the first (majority) language of Austria/Australia or a second (minority) language, and 3) sex. In data analysis, individual student portraits were developed and included data extracts from the sociodemographic questionnaire to contextualise the student portraits. The sociodemographic data extracts referenced the student's age, majority or minority language, sex and number of students in the class cohort. The rationale behind implementing the identical research design in CS_1 and CS_2 was to identify tendencies in the satisfaction of students' “need to belong” among the different focus group participants. This served as an indication of possible similarities and differences in student belonging between the two schools.

Consistency in the research enquiry and data collection provided a baseline to draw a rough comparison of CS_1 and CS_2 and identify the complementary aspects of the findings across the schools as individual units of analysis (cf. Table 9). Bearing this in mind, the focus of a case study is to describe each case as an individual unit. It is unlikely that the exact configuration of items and events would materialise across the two schools by this virtue. This is criticised in case studies because the findings refer to that individual unit at a given point in time, limiting their generalisability. Correspondingly, as the data collection is qualitative, attention is paid to rigour to achieve deep data saturation. While the findings of the current study can be generalised on rational grounds of the universality of human biopsychic and social needs, which is transferable to other contexts, the resources or satisfiers for the “need to belong” fulfilment are context-specific and thus too diverse to serve as a baseline for an exact comparison. Consequently, the case-study method is utilised as an individualised approach, set within a specific unit of study to facilitate an in-depth enquiry to describe and examine the structures, mechanisms and processes at work in each school. My main point in this section is that the case-study method generated theoretical and practical insights, which helped garner in-depth knowledge about two distinct and real school social systems and their different social levels.

5.5 Observation

Classroom observation facilitates first-hand insight into the physical environment and the student-peer and student-teacher interactions at a particular time. As I wanted to familiarise myself with CS_1 and CS_2, an observation schedule was developed to get closer to specific aspects of the classroom. It included factors that would be interesting to observe and reflect on to get a bigger picture of the daily happenings in the two schools that extended beyond observing students at recess and lunchtime. The classroom was selected for observation because students generally spent the bulk of their school day there. Thus, overlaps and differences could be identified in classrooms in the same school and across the two schools.

The observation schedule was drafted before conducting the classroom visitations. It was intended as a guideline about what to observe and a baseline for comparison across the different classrooms—the physical and social context featured prominently in the design, i.e., the student-peer and teacher-student interactions. The focus of the initial schedule design was to tease out the specifics of the physical and social context and the way things are done, i.e., the social norms and rules operating in the classroom. For an observation to fit within the realist paradigm, the researcher speculates about student and teacher

feelings, decisions and motivations based on student and teacher actions and their responses to the actions of others (Bunge, 2017, p. 39). In this sense, developing an observation schedule means preparing by considering what should be observed and the rationale behind the observations, i.e., what sort of actions are interesting and why. Thinking about the aims and purpose of classroom observation in association with the research questions before entering the classroom sharpened my focus on the physical classroom, student-peer and teacher-student interactions, and the possible interplay. The schedule set an agenda for orientation in different classrooms, at other points in time and different stages of the fieldwork. It was an important step to facilitate researcher immersion in the classroom – through observing the physical features and social interactions (Martin-Forbes *et al.*, 2010).

There are different observation forms and how it is done depends primarily on the research questions and aims. Based on the concept of White and McBurney (2012, pp. 222–224), observation is a non-participant approach conducted unobtrusively. This is in line with Bunge’s statement that to advance scientific knowledge; scientific enquiry should be focused on the task at hand and detached from the researcher, thus requiring clarity and accountability about the researcher’s role and possible influence on data collection (2017, p. 59). It is a matter of the fact that the presence of a researcher causes some interruption which can be something positive – such as a break from routine – or negative, i.e., somewhat intrusive, uninvited, disturbing. As the observer, I remained detached and distant from the students and teacher in the classroom by refraining from involvement in discussions or other social activities. This is not to say that the researcher’s presence should be disguised or obscured, but rather, my influence on classroom interactions should be minimised, as pointed out by Cohen, et al. (2011, pp. 457–460).

The observation schedule included a set of fixed items relating to the physical characteristics of the classroom alongside student and teacher interactions (cf. 0). There are four categories with statements/questions next to the corresponding checkboxes. The system of checkboxes was introduced after piloting the observation schedule to make it easier to conduct the observation while being present in the classroom. The overarching categories assess the physical climate of the classroom, the seating arrangement of the students; student-peer interactions; and teacher-student interactions. Because researcher senses were used to conduct the assessment, these categories are qualitative. Hence, a subjective assessment using a five-point scale – 1) strongly agree; 2) agree; 3) neutral; 4) disagree, and 5) strongly disagree – was employed to record the following:

5.5.1 *Physical set-up of the classroom*

The physical aspects of the classroom were observed to gauge: the seat/desk comfort; the thermal and air quality based on sensory evaluation teaching/learning equipment and technology; lighting; decorations; display of student work; materials to support learning; and visibility of classroom rules. Based on sensory evaluation, student density and classroom noise level (Berglund *et al.*, 1999, pp. 10–12), were also assessed.

5.5.2 *Student order of seating in the classroom*

This observation category assessed the setting arrangements in the classroom. Items included the visibility of the student seat-order plan, chair position and space, sex-specific seating arrangement, the impact of seating on student mobility when seated, and the presence/absence of a clear path to exit the classroom.

5.5.3 *Student-peer interaction in the classroom*

This observation category focused on capturing student-peer interactions upon entering, during, and exiting the classroom to give an overall measurement at that moment in time. The interactions observed among the students included physical gestures, coupled with positive facial expression; verbal greeting; display of social etiquette by waiting or stepping aside; eye contact; laughter; and smiling. During classroom discussion, receptive interactions observed among the students included students nodding, body language, and verbal engagement in open and friendly conversation. Cooperative on-task behaviour among students was noted in vocal support and physical gestures; turn-taking; gestures of excitement; enjoyment coupled with positive facial expressions; and display of verbal social etiquette. Student distraction in class was observed in students looking around the room, playing with mobile phones, not responding to teacher questions, not joining a class discussion, and verbally interrupting peers and teachers. Students using verbal aggression towards peer/s were observed through gestures towards peers, negative calling out at peers, and laughing at peers when an incorrect answer was supplied to a teacher's question. Physical acts of aggression by students towards peer/s were observed as pushing; shoving; hitting; punching; kicking, and tripping peer/s. On leaving the classroom, friendly interactions between students were observed through physical gestures, positive facial expressions; greetings; displays of social etiquette; eye contact; laughter and smiling.

5.5.4 Teacher-student interaction in the classroom

This observation category sought to record the interactions between students in the classroom. Observation commenced when students entered the classroom and in friendly interaction between the teacher and students on entering the classroom – gestures, coupled with positive facial expression; greetings; displays of social etiquette; eye contact; laughter; and smiling. Student compliance in response to the teacher’s questions was measured by observing hand-raising, nodding, calling out answers, and note-taking. Students’ confidence was assessed through hand-raising responses to teacher questions, turn-taking; excitement; enjoyment; gestures coupled with positive facial expression; and displays of social etiquette. The teacher’s positive reactions to student answers and questions were observed through verbal praise, gestures associated with positive facial expressions, and collections of social etiquette. The teacher’s positive responses to student distraction were measured in their gestures coupled with positive facial expressions and displays of social etiquette. At the end of class, the teacher’s goodbye greeting was observed in gestures associated with positive facial expressions, greetings, displays of social etiquette; eye contact; laughter; and smiling.

In summary, although McNaughton Nicholls et al. (2014, p. 244) contends that observation could be used as a stand-alone data collection method, I disagree with this position. In the current study, observation as the sole method would be insufficient to delve deeply into the mechanisms and processes in everyday school that facilitate or hinder student access to resources to meet their “need to belong”. If observation were used as the data collection method, the information gathered would have depended on the expertise of the researcher to separate external reality from their mental perception – a process within the cortex that is sensitive to external signals as well as internal stimuli (Bunge, 2004b, p. 184). With such concerns in mind, it meant that careful consideration had to be given to planning, conducting the observation and completing the observation schema to exercise as little intrusion, contribution or disturbance as possible to the classroom routine in the process.

The observation time varied between 40 and 60 minutes, including waiting time outside the classroom and the students and the teacher spent in the classroom until they left at the end of the period.

5.6 Focus groups

As a research method, focus groups are used in the social sciences to generate data on specific topics of interest that participants have in common. This

method can be traced back to the early 1920s when it stimulated exchange between the group moderator and participants – research findings showed that people were more comfortable talking with each other in a group setting than in an individual interview with a researcher. It was valued as a cost-effective method to generate data because the views of a group of people were elicited in the same amount of time needed to conduct an individual interview. Hennessy and Heary (2005, p. 236) noted that in the early days of focus groups, the size of the groups was significant. They would range up to more than 40 people in a group session. In comparison, the average size of the groups in contemporary research ranges between four and 12 participants (Lamnek, 2005, pp. 109–111). When conducting focus group sessions with children, Hennessy and Heary (2005, pp. 237–239) recommend four and eight participants. A small group setting has the advantage over a larger group in facilitating discussion among the participants without crowding anyone out of the conversation. A crowded setting shows adverse group-size constraints, such as inhibiting the active participation of children from voicing an opinion in an overly competitive social environment.

From the 1950s onwards, the size of the groups became smaller, and researchers conducted focus groups for follow-ups and in-depth explorations of topics that surfaced in quantitative studies. In market research, from the 1970s onwards, focus groups were conducted in applied settings to explore consumer choices and the reasons behind their decision-making (Krueger and Casey, 2014, p. 7) In the past two decades, focus groups have gained a central position as a qualitative research method in the fields of social work and education studies. This is the case particularly in research with children and adolescents, as a means to generate hypotheses for quantitative research, and for social and education policy development (Hennessy and Heary, 2005, p. 239). In the research literature, focus groups are predominantly seen as a platform for discussion among the participants, more or less along with a question guideline, with variations in the moderator's level of involvement (Finch, Lewis and Turley, 2013, pp. 213–215).

In the current study, the term “interview” is used in conjunction with focus groups to emphasise the power disparity between myself as the adult researcher and the students (John, 2003, pp. 69–71). However, it is not an indication that the researcher steps in when natural conversations occur between the participants, but rather refers to the role of an adult having authority, owing to the hierarchical social structure of school. Although the students were encouraged to discuss issues within the group and not with me, the role of adult authority was a given. “Focus group interview” is an appropriate term because participants on the sideline of the group were encouraged to actively participate and exercise their voices by sharing their points of view. In such instances, the researcher role extended to include moderating and facilitating interaction

among the group participants (Mullis, 2011, p. 214; Wainer and Islam, 2011, p. 166).

Focus group interviews align with the research paradigm of materialist emergent ontology and realism epistemology used in the current study because knowledge is developed through social action by members of social systems and their subsystems. A clear advantage of the focus group method over that of individual interviews is emergence which can be understood as the property of social systems – in the current study; this is the school social system and the focus group as a subsystem. The question-and-discussion process, which begins with the individual participant and their statements on an issue, alongside the range of ideas discussed in the group, influences the conversation and how the individual participants think and discuss a topic. Similarly, the participants can challenge, question, confirm or ignore a statement, prompting them to define their position or consider it from a different perspective. In this way, different opinions and intentions become apparent without the need for group consensus or influencing participants in a specific direction or without having to terminate the session if a participant does not respond or withdraws completely. This process continues with participants in other focus group interviews until their statements or verbalised cognitive ideas, opinions and intentions reach the point of saturation. This happens when there is no new information of interest for the research enquiry because the topics and themes are repeatedly discussed without adding anything new in the depth or scope of participant statements (Hennessy and Heary, 2005).

Ideas generated in the exchange between the focus group participants and the researcher, in response to the question guideline and the evolving discussion, are emergent properties of that focus group. Emergence, in reference to the state of being, is a high-level property of a social system or subsystem (Bunge, 2010, p. 75). It is not derived from a fact about one of the focus group participants but is generated in the exchange in the group. For example, an idea developed in the discussion between the participants to get support for a conflict with the teacher is a property of a particular focus group that the individual components or members lack. In the same way, as saltiness is an emergent property of salt, the idea of how to respond to a conflict with a teacher is an emergent property of a specific focus group (Gordon, 1997, p. 85).

As put forward by Hennink et al. (2011, p. 148), the question guideline was developed in English and translated into German. He contends that the question guideline must be translated into the colloquial language before carrying out the focus groups to minimise confusion for the students and translation-related stress for the moderator. The English and German versions of the question guideline were piloted in two group interviews, in CS_1 and CS_2 respectively, and adapted to ensure that the concept of the questions was the same in both languages. The revised question guideline was used to conduct

20 focus group interviews: 10 in each school, conducted in the official language of each school – German in CS_1, and English in CS_2.

The focus groups were set up in an environment that replicated the familiarity of the classroom. This stimulated participants to talk about issues of shared relevance, experiences, and points of view, with myself as the moderator and the other participants to generate statements that addressed one or more of Obrecht's (2009, p. 27) or empirically meet needs. The participants discussed various topics concerning the "need to belong" at school, including social norms and rule-breaking. The key focus was to stimulate responses from the students to generate statements that addressed the "need to belong" in daily school. Five topic areas were covered: 1) positive experiences, 2) difficulties and barriers, 3) support, 4) social interaction and relationships, and 5) strategies [or goals] to meet needs. Conceptually, the questions reflected a needs-perspective, maintaining that human beings have biological, psychic and social needs and how these needs are satisfied has an influence on our perception and behaviour and that the social context and its characteristics affect the extent to which these needs are met. In the context of school, the classroom, peers and teachers can directly influence each student's quality and quantity of needs satisfaction by facilitating or hindering their access to resources or satisfiers. The questions were designed for data comparability between the different focus group interviews. They comprised four parts: 1) a warm-up, 2) the main questions, 3) the end questions, and 4) a wrap-up of the session with open questions. The questions were used in both schools, with the question and prompt adaptations in line with the course of the focus group interviews to generate responses concerning the research questions and aims.

Vignettes stimulated discussion among the focus group participants (Bloor and Wood, 2006, p. 183). These were six pictorial representations, or drawings, of fictitious students. It included verbally narrated scenarios about these fictional students joining the participant's class. The related question was about how the fictitious students could find friends in the focus group participant's class. This scenario was constructed as a prompt to bring the focus group participants' thoughts and views of student diversity to the group interview. It was intended to indicate the diversity of the heterogeneous student body at school. The students can have different ethnic-cultural heritage/s, names, skin tones and complexions, hair colour, coloured clothing, footwear etc. In this sense, the other colours were prompts for the possible associations or expectations that focus group participants verbalised concerning the names and colours used in each of the drawings of the fictitious students' (Clark, Hocevar and Dembo, 1980, pp. 332–339). The drawings depicted the male/female binary and a name for each drawing obtained from *A Dictionary of First Names* (Hanks, Kate and Hodges, 2007). These were attributed to the six countries – Austria, Australia, Turkey, China, South Africa and Serbia – which were selected to indicate the ethnic-cultural/language heritage of the students enrolled in CS_1 and CS_2.

The names of the fictitious students were Rashida (cf. Appendix M: Vignette – drawing example 1), Patricia, Melanie, Abi (cf. Appendix N: Vignette – drawing example 2), Jan and Peter. The same stencil was used for all the drawings that depicted a fictitious student wearing trousers and a shirt. The colour of the clothing, hair and shoes varied. The drawings were on separate pages, each with a name at the top. Each drawing was coloured in using different coloured pencil tones that ranged from purple-pink to pink-orange, pinkish-yellow and orangey-yellow. Different colours were used for the hair, ranging from black and brownish-orange to yellowish.

The use of stimuli in interviews is well documented and has been shown to increase adolescents' active participation around the topic they associate with the stimuli. Hennessy and Heary (2005, pp. 241–243) contend that a group setting encourages discussions between the participants, making it an effective method to reduce adult domination in an interview. The free association with the stimuli was seen to build trust with the researcher. This approach is supported by Oppenheim (1992, pp. 174–175) in applying different techniques to examine the effects of stimuli on data collection. In particular, drawings or pictorial representations are beneficial in research with adolescents because they facilitate discussions about complex or controversial topics (*ibid.*, pp. 220–221). Hence, the drawings were used as prompts to set off a debate among the participants about their possible beliefs, values and social norms relating to sex, associations with a person's name and the colour palettes used. It was intended that the focus group participants would feel less obligated to directly reference their situation or experience by providing a framework and point of focus. With this in mind, the drawings of the fictitious students were introduced, and participants could discuss their associations with these drawings. The focus group participants were stimulated to predict how their classmates could react or reflect on past responses when a new student joined the class. In some instances, statements were made about how a participant was new in class felt.

The use of stimuli in the focus group interviews was limited to its application as prompts and not the data analysis. This was because the stimuli depicted six fictitious students in constructions referred to as scenarios. As such, the students interpreted the fictional scenarios and, in doing so, speculated about the characteristics of these fictitious students, their circumstances and how the classmates would react to their joining the class. Including this data in the analysis would stand in contradiction to a realist epistemology: the knowledge generated was based on interpretations because the students and scenarios were interpretations of people (fictitious students) who do not exist and events that did not occur.

There were language compatibility issues in discussions between participants about their access to resources for needs fulfilment at school. The terms were primarily colloquial, acronyms or code-switching, which connected par-

ticipants with subsystem membership and identity. This was visible in a variety of ways because students used abbreviations, acronyms, euphemisms and jargon instead of German or English words or phrases to depict a person's social status and social class, group affiliation, descriptors for people, ethnicity, type of interaction between people, places, foods, beverages, activities, subjects and electives. *Hausi* is an abbreviation for *Hausaufgaben* homework [translation by the author], commonly used by focus group participants in CS 1. "Ranga" is a term used to reference a person with red hair in CS 2. The terms were clarified with participants at the end of the focus group interview and in follow-up conversations during recess and lunchtime for data coding and analysis accuracy.

As student belonging is not cut and dried or static, the data collected represented a snapshot in time of the students' statements used for the data analysis, and as a rough indication of the "need to belong" across the two schools, sourced through the interpretation of the data after the student statements were assigned to the individual needs in Obrecht's list (2009, p. 27). The following questions guided the data analysis: 1) Which student statements indicated that peers facilitated or hindered the fulfilment of the "need to belong" in daily school? 2) Which student statements indicated that teachers facilitated or hindered the fulfilment of the "need to belong" in daily school? 3) Were there similarities in the students' statements across focus group interviews in the same school and across the schools? If so, was there a correlation between sex, first language, or ethnicity, and how could they be explained? And 4) How did students describe strategies that they used to fulfil the "need to belong"? The indicators for need facilitation or frustration applied to the data analysis were theory-driven. The reason for this is that the current study aimed to identify and examine the factors in the school social system and its different social levels that facilitate or hinder student access to resources for "need to belong" fulfilment.

Focus group interviews have their limitations and, in some instances, disadvantages. Kumar (2012, pp. 160–161) contends that interviews can be costly financially and in terms of the time required. It requires consistent self-reflection on the researcher's part to be aware of their influence on the interview process. This helps to establish a relationship between the researcher and the participants, which influences the quality of the data. Self-reflection means being attuned to any form of biases in the interactions with and among participants about the research topic. Similarly, the researcher's bias can affect the quality of the data when it functions as a filter to select certain participants' views over those of others on an issue. A way to respond to the limitation mentioned above is to address and reflect on the focus group method to ensure transparency and accountability are maintained throughout the research process. This is discussed in more detail in the sections on each school in 5.5. and 5.6. In summary, focus group interviews effectively generate data, providing

that the use of this method is transparent, accountable and reflected upon to ensure that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. In this sense, there can be ethical implications of conducting research that requires close inspection, as discussed in the following section.

5.7 Ethical guidelines

Guillemin and Gillam (2004, pp. 263–266) developed a framework for reflexivity in social science research based on three dimension subtypes: 1) procedural ethics, 2) ethics in practice, and 3) research ethics. The current study drew on this framework *for two main reasons: firstly*, to facilitate a process of deep consideration on how to conduct the proposed research in school and in dealings with school management, staff and students in ethically appropriate ways by reflecting on the researcher role and gauging if the enquiry could cause any unforeseeable harm. *Secondly*, to inform the ethical guidelines by identifying the procedures at the forefront of the current study, such as practices that could lead to ethical tensions and implications for the researcher and the participants.

In line with the first-dimension subtype, procedural ethics, a pragmatic approach was used to locate two schools to undertake the research and obtain the necessary approval for the current study from the local school authorities. This meant securing consent from the school leadership and then applying to the respective Austrian and Australian school authorities. In addition, an ethics approval was required from the University of Siegen, where I was based at the time of the fieldwork. The University of Siegen agreed to enrol the doctoral students, such as myself, who had been accepted to the International Doctoral Studies in Social Work (INDOSOW) Erasmus programme.

The formal procedures to conduct research in the two schools were different, requiring individual approaches and personal finesse to access the schools. Before the fieldwork in Austria, the district school inspector and school principal approved the research proposal. State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development approved the fieldwork for the school in Australia. In both countries, it proved successful first to find a school open to research and then submit the application to the local school authority – the district school authority in Austria approved the application because the school principal was keen to participate in the research. In Australia, the State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development processed my application submitted six weeks prior. The research proposal was drawn up to ensure transparency by detailing the level of risk (low) for the participants because it was of crucial interest to the State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Develop-

ment. Hence, the local authorities grant a research approval if the school management/principal agrees to the research and the risk for the school is assessed as low. They seek assurance that the confidentiality of the research participants and the schools where the fieldwork was undertaken is kept while also providing rich and detailed accounts of the school social systems and their different social levels. Correspondingly, procedural ethics ensures transparency and accountability in the research design, fieldwork analysis, and writing up the findings.

As discussed above, transparency is key to ensuring professional conduct and reflecting on the researcher role. Likewise, this applies to the second-dimension subtype: ethics in practice. Guillemin and Gillam (2004, pp. 264–265) set the dimension of ethics in practice within research. This positions transparency and accountability as key elements in research practice. The first issue mandated by ethics in practice is that although participation in the focus group interviews was voluntary (students could decide whether to take part by signing a waiver to formalise their consent), it was unclear if they would feel good responding to the questions and discussions and enjoy the focus group session. Being transparent and accountable translated to talking about these issues before students decided about participating in a focus group interview. The research description, including details about the focus group interview, was made accessible by using common words and straightforward syntax and talking about informed consent in the context of the current study.

Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study without consequences because participation was voluntary. In practice, if a student decided to retract their consent during a focus group interview, they were expected to return to the classroom. The concern with this is that by having to return to class, a student might feel pressured into completing the session against their will. Although there was no criticism from students regarding this matter in initial discussions about the research, there was transparency about the rationale behind returning to the classroom if they were to retract. This amounted to the teacher's obligation to be aware of students' whereabouts while on campus – not to know would fail in the duty of care. The students did not find this out of the ordinary or a reason not to participate in the focus group interviews. The students in CS_1 pointed out that as teachers do not keep track when they go to the bathroom or school social worker's office, it was an acceptable stipulation because the focus group sessions were something out of the ordinary. Similarly, students in CS_2 agreed because it was like the hall-pass system (when a student walks around the school without adult supervision, they require a permission slip from the teacher to be on their way or return to the classroom).

A second issue mandated by ethics in practice is the estimated level of risk when students respond to the researcher questions. To clarify this, the question guideline was reviewed and gauged if the questions presented a low, medium

or high risk for participants to estimate the possible impact of questions on the students. Although the risk level of the questions was gauged as low, there was little way of knowing how the group discussions could impact the participants. As a cautionary measure, a risk plan was devised with the resident school social worker and principal in CS_1 and the wellbeing team in CS_2. The risk plan was put forward to the focus group participants before the interview started and mentioned again at the end of the group session. The impetus was to identify possible scenarios that might give rise to ethical concerns and dilemmas during the fieldwork in general, and more specifically, in the focus group interviews with the students. The Key was developing an ethically sound approach to guarantee participant safety and confidentiality. It ensured that focus group participants were informed about the steps they could take after the focus group session to obtain psychological support if needed, i.e., if the focus group interview shed light on issues that they felt uncomfortable with or were concerned about.

The third-dimension subtype of research ethics concerns the conditions required to undertake ethically responsible and justifiable research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p. 263). This involves the requirements for the conception and implementation of research to be ethically justifiable, which entails taking the ethical aspects into account while developing and piloting the focus group question guideline, arranging the setting and confidentiality of the student participants. A further issue around research ethics was student autonomy and confidentiality. This is in line with the “Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles” in social work, which stipulates that the ethics used in social work that position human rights and social justice at the core of ethical decisions and guidelines correspond with IFSW and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IAASW) (IFSW, 2018). The UNCRC substantiates those human rights at the core of ethical decisions and guidelines in social work research with children and young people until age 18. This is consistent with Article 3, the best interests of the child and Article 12, the right to participation and to be heard (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) (cf. Chapter 2).

5.8 Student voice

Over the past three decades, research with children and adolescents has undergone a paradigm shift. This has seen researchers moving away from the notion of young people as a data source in the direction of incorporating them as autonomous and self-determined subjects in the research process itself. In this sense, students’ statements informed the research, which provides insight into how schools operate – the insider perspective. The shift opened the gateway for researchers to gain in-depth knowledge through authentic exchange with

young people about what makes the school social system and its different social levels tick. More specifically, the re-alignment moves researchers closer to identifying factors that facilitate or hinder students in satisfying their “need to belong” at school. The shift in the way researchers perceive and respond to the subjecthood of young people is happening across a range of disciplines. The notable prominence of this shift in social work and education sciences is linked to researchers’ interest in how young people perceive protection and participation in welfare and education policy and practice.

From the 2000s onwards, the change in perception of young peoples’ role in research has included their involvement as co-researchers in participatory action research (Bland, 2011, pp. 390–392). This is a development that is beneficial for both the students and the enquiry because they are taken more seriously and provided with the space and power to reflect, discuss and question the actions of peers and teachers in the school social system and its different social levels. This partly hinges on the variations in how young people’s statements are received and acknowledged. Similarly, the researcher’s interest, research design, methods, data analysis and dissemination of findings differ within and across disciplines. Transcending these divides, student voice concerns the involvement of young people in their education through transparent and accountable research practices and the development of ways and means for genuine participation in research. Wisby (2011, p. 31) contends that the shift to the forefront of young people’s statements in the research continuum corresponds with the UNCRC because it is based on the fundamental principle of children and adolescents as subjects within their right (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). The practical and ethical implications of authentic student voice – a concept that embodies autonomy, self-determination and democratisation – are a conducive approach to data collection because young people are invited to participate, share their views, and discuss things about school that are important to them.

Compared to top-down and dictatorial research approaches, authentic student voice focuses on adolescent-friendly ways to actively participate, be heard, and be taken more seriously. It concerns the scope of student influence on decision-making processes and the power that facilitates their access to resources for needs fulfilment. This is a central thread through the early developmental stage of the current study because of the deep consideration that student voice could be incorporated. Ongoing reflection about the benefit for students actively participating in the research was key to incorporating authentic student voice in the current study.

As rightly critiqued by Fielding (2011, p. 15), student voice carries the risk of being instrumentalised for market-driven purposes that assist the privatisation of education. Used in this way, student voice is devoid of meaningful benefit for young people because it concerns consumerism instead of genuine participation or democratisation. The power differentials between the researcher

and respondent are neglected, which emphasises that genuine participation is unlikely under these circumstances. Alternatively, student voice should be embedded in the broader discourse that subscribes to democratic principles of shared responsibility in learning communities that cultivate solidarity and reciprocity as core values. In this way, students are taken seriously as autonomous and self-determined research participants when exercising their voice, irrespective of the outcomes.

Student voice has taken a dominant position in research with young people internationally but is not yet a widespread concept in the German-language research literature. Paulo Freire (2006, pp. 94–96), the leading proponent of grass-roots education, contends that the purpose of research in the educational setting is to improve people’s lives. Freire critiques the helpers, whether educators or social workers, if they presume to know what the person who requires help needs or what is [allegedly] best for them. He advocated for a different approach to helping others which starts by active listening and working together in a horizontal-exchange relationship to improve people’s lives through education – not to educate in the matter perceived as that needed without consultation. The same can be said for research conducted “with” instead of “on” participants. In the same vein, Thomson (2011, pp. 27–28) contends that language is a code used to express voice: in the case of the current study, it is the language that students use to talk about their feelings, thoughts and views on school from the perspective of an insider or a member of the school social system and the different social levels. Creativity and sensitivity were applied in the current study – for example, the introduction of vignettes or drawing and text-stimulus postcards to engage the quieter or hidden student voices. Otherwise, a powerful student could replace an adult authority, and the quieter young person is sidelined. In this sense, student voice becomes an echo chamber of adult voice.

5.8.1 Quality criteria: rigour, accountability and plausibility

The elements that make up the research design, such as the philosophical stance or paradigm (cf. Subsection 5.1), are critical to the research process because they determine how we see the external world and our knowledge of it. In essence, the point of a paradigm is to contribute to the research aims and the research questions. Hence, an effort was taken to demonstrate that the research methodology and methods fit within the frameworks of materialist emergent systemism ontology and realist epistemology – in terms of the current study’s robustness in the relationship between its conceptualisation and operationalisation. This process can best be described as a profound reflection to clarify that the ontological and epistemological position informs the data-collection methods and vice versa. The core issue here is to demonstrate transparency that

ensures rigour, accountability and plausibility at all stages of the research – during the design, fieldwork, data analysis and findings. Transparency for rigour, accountability and plausibility are crucial to verifying that the data-collection methods were fit for purpose, i.e., generated data from the students as individual social actors while simultaneously being members or components of the school social system and its different social levels. In this sense, conducting a scientific inquiry from the perspective of materialist emergent systemism and realism means using theory to inform data collection and generate working hypotheses. In Bunge’s (2003b, p. 132) tradition, hypotheses are propositions or statements, or “educated guesses” associated with the theory. The aim is to facilitate enquiry into the not-directly-observable structures, processes and mechanisms of the school social system and its different social levels.

No blanket approach ensures rigour, accountability and plausibility in qualitative research per se because of the spectrum of methods applied in data collection, analysis and writing up the conclusions from the findings. Hence, with particular reference to the qualitative methodology, Maxwell (2012, pp. 144–145) contends that threats to the validity of research are prevalent at all stages of the research process, i.e., during the research design, fieldwork, data collection, analysis and the findings. The basic tenet here is that rigour is central to securing plausible research results. In thinking about ways to tackle the issues of rigour, accountability, and plausibility issues in the current study, methodology and method literature were consulted to identify benchmarks that evince rigour. Rigour is achieved through measures that alert to and address threats to validity. An example of this is researcher bias because of one’s interest in the research topic and preconceived expectations or views about the object of the study. However, this is not to say that researcher bias can be eliminated. A contribution could be made towards researcher reflexivity that, if not addressed, would be an unchecked influence on the research process and possibly skew the results.

The discussion about the validity of studies that use a qualitative methodology is ongoing and marked by different stances on how it can be regulated. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 40), for example, use the terms “trustworthiness” and “authenticity” in qualitative research concerning how the researcher interprets the data. Here, research reflexivity proves a valuable way to target and keep track of assumptions and the reasons behind decision-making. This is in line with the case-study approach used in the current study because of the focus on systematic and rule-guided strategies pertinent to rigour, accountability and plausibility.

Similarly, Austrian social scientist Philip Mayring, known for his inductive and deductive data analysis approach – content analysis – developed *Gütekriterien* quality criteria [translation by the author] applicable for qualitative research. Interestingly, quality criteria concern validity and reliability, traditionally associated with quantitative research methodology. The main point is

that quality criteria need to fit with the methods used for data collection and analysis, which can lend from quantitative and qualitative research designs. This means that the criteria are elemental to the credibility of the research process because they focus on transparency about the accountability and rigour of qualitative research (Mayring, 2002, pp. 19–39). The quality criteria in the current study were implemented through six steps which served as a guideline because they were fit for purpose, i.e. they were practical, feasible and supported rigour (Mayring, 2010, pp. 140–148): These are:

- keeping records
- validation of the data interpretations
- rule-guided procedure
- proximity to the object under study
- communicative validation
- triangulation through different data-analysis strategies

The six criteria put forward by Mayring (2016, pp. 140–148) stand in alignment with the focus group interview method used to garner student statements that addressed one or more of Obrecht’s needs (2009, p. 27). The sequence and focus of Mayring’s criteria formed a cogent set of components applied for rigour in the current study. The following section discusses the techniques used in the current study that correspond with Mayring’s six quality criteria.

Keeping records

The criterion of keeping records, referred to by Mayring as the research documentation, was applied in the current study to document the research process from the beginning of the research interest to writing up the research findings, i.e., from start to finish (2016, p. 144). This includes descriptions of the data collection tools, piloting, adaptation and implementation in the research schools. Similarly, records were kept about developing the theoretical underpinnings of the two-part data analysis. Keeping a record of the research process as it evolved over a decade enabled the different stages of the research process and the conclusions derived from the findings to be transparent and coherent. Considering the length of time that transpired from the fieldwork in 2011 until the completion of the thesis, the notes were indispensable for keeping track of the rationale behind decision-making. Hence, the records included difficulties encountered in the research process and their resolution.

Validation of the data interpretations

Data interpretation in qualitative research is not straightforward. There are different approaches, techniques, and views related to the context and focus of the research that necessitates discussion around crucial issues. At the same

time, there are different threads or lines to debate. A central thread is how to maximise the validity through closeness to the data in the description and interpretation of students' feelings, thoughts, and views associated with the research object. This issue here is the consistency of the argument in support of the data interpretation to regulate and monitor how the analysis is adapted for the specifics of the research aims and questions. The two-part data analysis was developed for congruence with the ontological levels of systemism: the different social levels of the school social system to describe and explain the relationship between the interacting subjects and their state of being (belonging) versus their state of need, the "need to belong". Cross-checking interpretations with external references, i.e., exchanges with peer researchers, focuses on the adequacy of the data interpretation for data convergence that gives a rich picture of student possibilities and concerns in the "need to belong" fulfilment at school. It generates descriptions of the linkage between different points in the data. Intercoder reliability was used in Part One of the data analysis (cf. Subsection 6.2) to verify that the categorisation of the individual student statements according to Obrecht's list of needs (2009, p. 27) – the three-prong classification of 1) facilitation, 2) hindering, or 3) no statement about belonging on the different social levels (cf. Table 15) – was congruent and substantiated the interpretation. In Part Two of the data analysis (cf. Subsection 6.4), the codebook (cf. Figure 3) was the basis for intercoder reliability to verify the system of ORG-categories. In addition, the intercoder exchange enabled other perspectives on the object of the research and research process, which aided the in-depth examination of the object of the research. Two peers coded the material based on the developed category system, and the results were compared to discuss overlaps and differences in the categories. This process allowed peer coders to compare and verify the congruence of the categories to ensure the validity of the category system and the coding rules.

Rule-guided procedure

Both standardisation and consistency in the research process are crucial to the project's success. This applies to the start, the design and concludes with the findings – to generate descriptions of a possible linkage between different data points. However, this is not to be confused with data comparisons that lead to tensions around incompatibility issues with a comparative approach in the data analysis. The risk here is that the rule-guided approach to data analysis could standardise the data to fit with rules. In doing so, the essence of the data would be compromised. While rules are a requirement of rigour, concerns about standardisation that could compromise data collection, analysis and conclusions generated from the findings should be addressed. In essence, the quality of a qualitative methodology lies in achieving the balance between a rule-

guided approach and retaining the quintessence of student voice about the different social levels of the school social system.

Proximity to the object under study

The object of the study or subject under investigation, which is student “need to belong” facilitation at school, concerns student statements that address one or more of Obrecht’s list of needs, i.e., student belonging (2009, p. 27). The focus of data collection and analysis was the in-depth examination of the object under study: not to draw generalisations, but rather to engage with the complexity of social exchanges and relations from the self-reported views of student research participants. Designing the research and carrying out the data collection and data-analysis transparency about my assumptions concerning the object under investigation is central to ensuring the study’s rigour, accountability, and plausibility (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, et al., 2014, p. 12). Everything changes according to law-like processes that are not strictly deterministic or causal, as changes can be random – which, in turn, is governed by law-like processes. This requires that the mechanisms and processes of the object under study are considered in an in-depth examination of the object under investigation (Bunge and Mahner, 2004, p. 56). The mechanisms and processes underlying the complexity of something, such as the object under investigation, can be captured in-depth via a qualitative methodology and a description of the origins of barriers or exactly how they deter students from needs satisfaction. In doing so, the underlying problems that students in focus group interviews vocalised can be better explained. In comparison, a quantitative methodology would be helpful to identify barriers, but not in facilitating the in-depth study of complexity, of which mechanisms and processes are a central part.

Communicative validation

Research is not value-free. Thus, engaging in ongoing reflection as a researcher is key to ensuring rigour, accountability and plausibility at all stages of the research process. This is because research is not conducted in a vacuum, but through discussions, feedback and debate with cross-disciplinary peers and supervisors. In addition to the exchange with my supervisors, communicative validation requires an exchange with peers that was facilitated in scientific colloquia from 2011 until 2021:

- INDOSOW colloquia hosted by Prof. Darja Završek, PhD. at the University of Ljubljana, Social Work Faculty, in June 2011;
- The *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziale Arbeit* German Association for Social Work [translation by the author] hosted by Prof. Dr Phil. Silvia Staub-Bernasconi and Prof. Dr Phil. Albert Mühlum at the ASH, January 2011;

- The doctoral colloquia for *Bildungsgangforschung* education science [translation by the author], the late Prof. Dr Phil. Meinert Meyer, emeritus of *Allgemeine Didaktik* general didactics [translation by the author] from the University of Hamburg at the Universities of Siegen and Magdeburg initiated the colloquia twice annually from 2011 until 2014;
- INDOSOW colloquia hosted by Prof. Dr Bettina Hünersdorf at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences (ASH) in Berlin, May 2013; and
- Colloquia at the University of Education in Weingarten 2015-2021, initiated and run by Prof. Dr Phil. Gregor Lang-Wojtasik.

The previously listed doctoral colloquia provided opportunities to discuss and review the progression of the current study with academics from across different disciplines. My presentations were debated in other scientific communities, and practical suggestions were put forward. This aided in the specifics of the research focus, reflection on the researcher role and consideration of the possible implications of the research on student focus group participants and other members of the school social systems. Similarly, the exchanges with supervisors and peers focused on the consistency between the different philosophical components, research design, fieldwork, data analysis and writing up of the findings. It was an incentive to find ways to identify and address possible researcher interests and biases. The assumption here is that if bias were to go unreflected, it could compromise the research process and results. In particular, the constructive feedback the University of Education in Weingarten was valued, as it afforded open exchange on the methods of qualitative data analysis and the triangulation of data (Kuckartz, 2012; Mayring, 2016; Flick, 2018b).

A further issue concerning the quality criteria is methodological trustworthiness, set within the realism epistemology. Yin (2014, pp. 43–44) contends that analytic generalisation is focused on the complexity of the real world in theory building. This is based on the criterion of its usability in social science research before conducting tests and experiments to prove its generalisability. Thus, it concerns theory-building about the real world, but not the generalisation of the theory. As the focus group interviews represent a snapshot of reality at a specific time, the focus of the research is the statements of the individual students that address the fulfilment or hindrance of “need to belong” at school, and not a statistical generalisation.

Triangulation through different data-analysis strategies

There are different ways to conduct triangulation in qualitative research (Flick, 2018a, p. 188). Over four decades ago, Denzin introduced four strands to facilitate the triangulation of qualitative data (1973, p. 301). The idea was to develop categories that validate qualitative research and establish the theoretical richness of the findings. The strands specified by Denzin are as follows:

- data triangulation;

- investigator triangulation;
- theory triangulation; and
- methodological triangulation.

The current study applied theoretical triangulation in the data analysis to examine the complexity of the data. A technique was developed that enabled in-depth theoretical examination and interpretation of the focus group data from two perspectives: the individual student and the whole group analysis. As the research object was the same across the two schools, theoretical triangulation was used to focus on the complexity and richness of the data collected using the same method in both case studies. The current study was developed using a theoretical framework based on materialist emergent systemism ontology (Bunge, 2003b, p. 286) and epistemological realism (ibid, p. 242-243). Hence, both data-analysis techniques were based on the same theoretical framework, with two distinct methods used for the data analysis – referred to as the first part and the second part of the analysis. Individual student statements were distinguished from developing student portraits for the focus group participants in the first part. The second part of the data analysis was about interpreting the conversation threads about access to satisfiers or barriers to satisfiers, referred to as (dis)satisfiers.

In summary, misconceptions about qualitative research concern dispute about rigour, accountability and plausibility. In response to this, the areas of research that could jeopardise the quality of research should be identified and addressed. In this section, six criteria were proposed (Mayring, 2010, pp. 140–148) as a cogent set of components to ensure rigour in the current study. The criteria stand in alignment with the focus group interview method used to garner student statements that addressed one or more of Obrecht’s needs (2009, p. 27). The criteria thus served as a basis for developing concrete steps towards transparency of research validity in the current study.

5.8.2 Locating and accessing the school sites

Web-based school databases were consulted to locate potential research schools in Austria and Australia. The platforms proved helpful for comparing school populations, curricula specialisations, educational pathways and school authorities. The Austrian province, where CS_1 is located, has physically smaller schools and fewer students than Victoria, where CS_2 is situated. For example, in 2011, based on data from the Bundesanstalt Statistik Österreich (Statistik Austria, 2011), the Austrian province had a population of 370 440. According to the 2011 State of Victoria census of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), the state of Victoria had a population of 5 354 042.

As anticipated, it took about three months to locate two schools to conduct the fieldwork. In Austria, it proved helpful to draw on the networks established

in my former role as a school social worker. As these were trust-based networks, there was openness towards the proposed research. This was confirmed in exchange with other researchers in the area because they found it difficult to find schools open to research without trust-based networks. I contacted four Austrian school principals by telephone and met with them in person to discuss the proposed research. The schools were selected according to the size of the student population and proximity to a large-sized town with population size in the range of 15 000 to 50 000. The rationale was to approach the largest schools in the area, as the schools in Australia had student populations of 600 and 1400 students. The Austrian school principals agreed to the fieldwork within a one-week waiting period. Similarly, the Austrian provincial school board granted permission to discuss the current study and methods with the district school inspector after a meeting. To match the two schools as closely as possible, it was arranged that the final Austrian school selection would take place after the confirmation from the school in Australia.

It proved more challenging to locate a school to undertake the proposed research in Australia. The school principals that were contacted reported research fatigue as the rationale for rejecting the proposed research, which seemed the common thread across the schools. In addition, they expressed hesitancy towards granting an overseas-based researcher school access. After three months of Skype calls and email exchanges with 12 schools, a secondary school in the State of Victoria agreed to the proposed research. It was helpful to have a member of the school's parent committee, a social work colleague and a friend agree to write a character reference submitted with the research proposal. Likewise, my nomination as a research fellow at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne for three years under the leadership of Prof. Sheryl Ann Hemphill, PhD, provided a credible second local reference for the school. Specifically, school management reported agreeing to the research because of interest in the focus on student belonging. As changes to their education practice through the introduction of fortnightly rotating schedules and new school uniforms were planned for the following year, interest was expressed in possible concerns that might surface in the research with the students about the said changes.

Adjacent to locating a school for the fieldwork in Australia, an application for ethics approval was submitted to the University of Siegen, where I was based. There was a lack of clarity about the research-ethics guidelines for submitting education research proposals which meant the application had to be worked out from the ground up. Thanks to the support of my supervisor at the time, Prof. Dr Matthias Trautmann, the ethics approval was processed and granted within three weeks. In addition, a second application for ethics approval was submitted to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria, Australia. It took one month to be granted as it was mandatory to complete a criminal background check referred to as a "Working

with Children Check”, an application was made on my arrival in Australia (Victorian State Government, 2010). Temporary clearance was granted until completion of the screening process at the end of the first week of the fieldwork.

5.9 Characteristics of the research schools

Table 9: Overview of the main characteristics of the two case studies where the fieldwork for the current study was conducted in 2011.³⁶ The commonalities of the two schools CS_1 in Austria and CS_2 in Australia, are sevenfold: 1) public schools, 2) culturally and ethnically and linguistically diverse student body, 3) zoned³⁷, 4) coeducational, 5) gentrification of the geographical catchment areas due to economic growth over the past five to 10 years and the related rise in the number of students, and 6) curricular specialisation for market-related purposes, i.e., increase the attractiveness of the school for students outside of the school zone, alongside a restructured policy and practice, with related curriculum distinctions marked by a focus on the improvement of student academic performance. In CS_1, the gentrification was a shift in manufacturing jobs in the metal and textile industry to administrative and service-based occupational jobs in technical fields and professional occupations.

36 I was granted a one-year educational sabbatical to conduct the fieldwork in 2011. From 2012 onwards, the current study was pursued on a part-time basis. It can be best described as a cyclical process from start to end, with the change of university and one of the supervisors in 2015. The data analysis culminated in a two-part complex coding process (cf. Chapter 6). The qualitative data collected in 2011 were generated to gain deeper insight into students’ “need to belong”. They were based on focus group participants’ statements at a specific moment and therefore had limited applicability to other students and school contexts. Thus, the findings are not compromised by the length of time between data collection in 2011 and project completion in 2021.

37 *Schulsprengel* is the German term for school zone which is the geographically bound catchment area of the school.

Table 9: Key characteristics of the two research schools

Case study one (CS_1) Austrian school ³⁸	Case study two (CS_2) Australian school ³⁹
1) Regional public secondary school;	1) State public secondary school;
2) Socio-economic working and middle-class background	2) Socio-economic middle-class background;
3) Cultural and ethnic and linguistic diverse student body of around 50%;	3) Cultural and ethnic and linguistic diverse student body of around 25%;
4) 389 students enrolled	4) 1 380 students enrolled
5) Class cohort between 21 and 25 students	5) Class cohort between 24 and 30 students;
6) Secondary school opened in the 1940s;	6) School catchment area or zone population 57 035;
7) School catchment area or zone population 6 900;	7) Secondary high school opened in the 1920s;
8) The students were separated according to their sex: male students were in one part of the school and female students in the other;	8) Opened as a boys' school.
9) Changed to lower co-educational secondary school in the 1970s;	9) Changed to co-educational post-World War II;
10) 1970s change in the demographics with an increase in foreign-born textile industry workers from former Yugoslavia and Turkey (Matuschek, 1985; Zahn, 2017);	10) 1960s change in the demographics with an increase in foreign-born industry workers from Greece and Italy;
11) Gentrification of the school catchment area in the early 1990s due to the shift from manufacturing jobs in the metal and textile industry to service-based occupational jobs in technical fields and professional occupations;	11) Gentrification of school catchment area in the late 1990s due to location and low property costs. Related drop in English as a second language (ESL) students from 50% to 30% at the time of the fieldwork in 2011;
12) School management developed curriculum distinctions that focused on sports and information technology;	12) School leadership developed curriculum distinctions that focused on academic, sports or vocational tracks;
13) 85% of the teachers, school social worker and school management ethnically homogeneous non-immigrant heritage.	13) 70% of the teachers, wellbeing team and school management are ethnically homogeneous, predominantly of Anglo-Celtic heritage.

CS_1 had new sports facilities and focused on improving students' reading and comprehension. CS_2 had planned extensions to the school building, new school uniforms and changes to middle management to clarify the tasks of the year-level coordinators and faculty heads. For both schools, the main incentive for school management in permitting the research for the current study was their interest in finding out how students gauged the school about fulfilling their needs. Because the focus was on student belonging the school management, teachers, and the resident school social workers/wellbeing support team were interested in finding out about school as a centre of learning and what could be done to strengthen student retainment and combat bullying. Student

38 CS_1 fieldwork took place from 2.5.2011 to 17.6.2011. The data is based on information derived from the school management and school reports.

39 CS_2 fieldwork took place from 18.7.2011 to 31.8.2011. The data is based on information derived from the school management and school reports.

belonging was widely regarded as a central issue in daily school. It was associated with strong student attachment relationships, such as inclusive policies for diversity and welcoming new students with a teacher and school social workers.

The following section concerns the socio-geographic details of CS_1, with an in-depth reflection on the fieldwork conducted for the current study.

5.10 Fieldwork at the school in Austria

The fieldwork was conducted over six weeks from 2.5.2011 to 17.6.2011. The time frame was selected to ensure first-year students had spent a minimum of seven months in secondary school before participation in the focus group interviews. The school was based in a region of Austria with a socio-economic working and middle-class and an ethnically and linguistically diverse student population. It is zoned, which means that enrolment depends on the students' residential addresses. At the fieldwork time, 389 students were enrolled, with the size of the class cohorts ranging between 21 and 25 students (cf. Table 9).

The school was transitioning from a lower secondary (the curricula were focused on vocational career pathways), to a middle school (which offers an academic curriculum). This accompanied a shift towards parental (and student) preference of high technical and educational pathways. This development started in the early 2000s, when factories on the outskirts of town closed, reducing the demand for unskilled factory jobs and tradespeople. The occupational background of parents ranged from factory workers, administrative and service-based employment in technical fields to professional occupations such as teachers, nurses and social workers. The school was 8km from the town centre, with easy access to public transport.

As I had worked with three teachers in my former position as a school social worker two years before the fieldwork, it was unclear whether the teachers still associated me with a social worker role. In the first week at the school, the role-change from social worker to researcher was discussed on three occasions with the school principal, resident social worker and the teachers. One teacher, whom I had counselled in the past as a school social worker, expressed interest in support with issues concerning classroom conflict. This was openly addressed based on the rationale that it would be contrary to the researcher role and unethical due to conflicting boundary issues such as a breach of confidentiality. Informal exchanges with teachers about the research purpose and focus were helpful to substantiate the role change. Although these discussions positively contributed to the transparency of the researcher role, some ambiguity remained. Towards the end of the first week, two teachers requested social work support responding to student rule-breaking. This indicated that distin-

guishing the research role from that of social worker required ongoing reflection and exchanges with the teachers. At the beginning of the second week of the fieldwork, classroom visitations were conducted with the principal. Students were informed about the research and invited to participate in the focus group interviews.

In general, teachers had little experience with researchers at the school and were keen to engage in conversation around the purpose of the research and the focus. Rapport was established with four teachers in discussions about researching student belonging. The researcher role was strengthened in conversations with the school principal on research ethics and the importance of parental consent as a prerequisite for student participation in the focus group interviews. The prevailing consensus among teachers was that consent is only necessary if the research is invasive. I met with some surprise because signed permission slips were a prerequisite to participate in the focus group interviews.

Aside from these researcher-social worker role issues, the exchanges with the teachers presented a valuable way of finding out how the school social system worked. The teachers responded openly to questions about everyday school and their interactions with the students – ranging from activities that they enjoyed and the increase in administrative work to classroom management, curriculum development and future trends in education. These exchanges afforded me the possibility of conducting classroom observations with eight different teachers.

The teachers supplied an overview of the students' routine, such as break times, timetable, additional curriculum programs and school library visits. On three occasions, meetings were held with the principal and the resident social worker to agree on recruiting students for the study. As there was no protocol to establish and monitor the risk of student participation in the research at the school, this was discussed with the school social worker and the school principal. The result was drafting guidelines for future research based on my recommendations. Throughout the fieldwork, there were weekly meetings with the principal and resident social worker to check-up on timetable changes, inform them when the focus group interviews would take place and talk about school development, curriculum changes, policy and practices of the provincial education board, parent involvement at the school and trends in student development and education in Austria and other member states of the European Union.

According to the school principal, 50% of the students enrolled spoke a language other than formal German and/or the provincial Almanac dialect at home. Due to the lack of externally available statistical data on the first language students speak at home, the percentage that the principal provided served as an indication. The principal and teachers referred to students with German as a second language as students with migration heritage, depending on the level of their German language skills. Teachers assessed these skills

based on how well the student coped with the German language in class. If a student was assessed as having a low-level grasp of the German language, this was referred to as *Deutsch als Zweitsprache (DaZ)* German Second Language [translation by the author]. There are four school levels: A – sports and high-achiever classes with academic curricula that enable students to continue their education in a higher secondary or equivalent school after the fourth year at the current school. B, C and D classes were geared towards a vocational career path and the integration class. The timetables for each class differed across the year-level cohorts. Students in the D class were generally older because of repeating a school year in primary or secondary school, or they had moved from another country and were assessed as *DaZ* students with difficulties learning the German language, coupled with low academic achievement.

The provincial government funds the school, and the provincial education board governs it. German is used as the language of instruction, with foreign language courses offered in English, French and Turkish. English is compulsory at all school levels. Education follows the new middle-school curriculum, which was in the third year of a test phase during the fieldwork. The school was undergoing education policy and practice reforms. There was a consensus between the principal and teachers about a lack of research regarding students and the social environment, which concerned student-peer and student-teacher interactions and social relationships. The proposed research was welcomed as an opportunity to gain insight into student perspectives on daily school, with a view to discussions with teachers and parents. The school has an after-care program for students that covers homework supervision. High value is placed on keeping up with the latest trends in technology.

The resident school social worker provides support services for 10 hours a week to students, parents and teachers, and was employed by a regional social services organisation. Support targeted truancy prevention, included bullying prevention strategies on micro-and meso-level interventions, general one-to-one counselling, support for students at risk of dropping out of school, and referrals to out-of-school substance abuse and school suspension policies. The guidance teacher, employed by an agency for school psychology services, assisted students with learning and academic performance difficulties. Linkage with other external social services was provided to the parents and students on request or recommended when student-support requirements exceeded the school social worker's or guidance teacher's capacity. The school principal and the school social worker made the joint decision to refer students to the district division of child welfare for evaluation, foremostly with parental consent. On average, parents were reputed to show low engagement in parent-teacher meetings, parent forums and other school-related projects. Similarly, teachers and school management described the conversations with parents about their child's school-related progress as being tricky.

Classroom discipline was applied by sending students to stand outside the classroom in response to disruptions considered to be minor. If the behaviour persisted, the student was instructed to leave the classroom and sent to a time-out classroom. The parents were notified about the infraction. Students were suspended [out of school suspension] for infractions such as repeated incidences of classroom disruption and the use of physical force in altercations. The duration of a suspension ranged from one day to four weeks. For suspensions of three days and longer, the student was referred to an out-of-school social work agency. If the infraction was considered severe, the school social worker referred to the district division of child welfare. This could lead to out-of-home placement and transfer to a different school.

5.10.1 Classroom observation

To conduct the observation, teachers were approached in the staffroom before school, at break and after school with the request to observe the student-peer and student-teacher interactions in the classroom. All the teachers who were approached agreed to the classroom observation. The role of classroom observer was distant and disconnected, which meant other than my physical presence, there was no involvement in activities or discussions. The teacher informed the students and parents about the classroom observation via email a few days prior, allowing time to ask questions and decline their permission. To my knowledge, apart from three requests for details about the aims of the study, neither parents nor students denied their permission. The classroom observation was systematically noted on an observation schedule developed and completed in English. The schedule was piloted by observing student-peer and student-teacher interactions from the back row of a first- and second-year student classroom. The schedule was adapted to simplify completion with the addition of tick-boxes next to the text for each observation. Piloting was undertaken two weeks before the start of the fieldwork in two observation sessions in a different school from the research school.

In summary, eight classroom observations were conducted. Other than to inform the students about the purpose of the observation, the prior arrangement with the teacher was that no attention was to be paid to the researcher on the backbench. The observation time ranged between 40 and 60 minutes, including waiting time outside the classroom and the students and the teacher spent at the school until they left at the end of the period. The lessons were German grammar and reading, mathematics, biology, history and gym. The observation in the classroom provided an opportunity for research familiarisation with the physical classroom, the seating arrangements and the interactions that took place there at that time. Information about the type of peer-student and teacher-student social interactions in the naturalistic setting of the classroom were rec-

orded first-hand, i.e., as observed by me. Observation assisted in detecting the workings of the classroom, but it required ongoing reflection about possible bias, as observation is not per se value-free (Maxwell, 2012). The observer influences what is observed because sensory data goes through the receptors and is processed in their brain. The memory of past events stored in the brain could be triggered through the impressions of the external reality observed. Memory is part of a complex network of brain activities, including triggers that can be alerted when a person observes something that is not necessarily related to what they observed – which is the point at which there could be bias.

The classroom-observation data was used to assess and compare the physical, seating, student-peer and student-teacher interactions across classes and to identify trends that emerged from the observation schedule in each of the classrooms where the observation was undertaken. The focus of the observation was determined before I entered the classroom – which gave focus to what was being observed. It was helpful to observe the critical area of focus beforehand because so much went on in the school that it would have been difficult to stay focused on the task at hand without a schedule. At the end of the period, all items were filled out. It might have been interesting to record room temperature in the early morning or late afternoon to check for fluctuations. This was not done because the cost of interrupting students and teachers outweighed the gain in data about possible room-temperature changes. It was a short recording which means that there were variations in factors such as noise level, which focused on the presumed effect of noise on the classroom environment and was not recorded as a decibel measurement. The day of the week, time of the day, subject and workload were not theorised about their possible influence on the experimental factors. The purpose of the observations was to structure the researcher familiarisation, i.e., focus, on the physical school and student-peer/student-teacher social interactions. Hence, the observation schedule was the tool developed and applied solely for this purpose.

5.10.2 Sampling and recruitment

Ritchie et al. (2014, pp. 112–114) contend that inconsistencies and ambiguities mark sampling strategies. To ensure consistency and clarity about the fit between the research aims the sampling strategy, it was in focus from the onset of the current study. The research aims were to determine the basis for the focus group constellation and three criteria: age, sex, and student self-identified first language, i.e., using the binary terms majority or minority language. This was borne in mind in the communication with teachers and students about the rationale behind the sampling to ensure transparency and accountability in the research process. Information about the decision for the sampling strategy was conveyed. In addition to purposive sampling, a second strategy, “snowball

sampling,” came into effect after conducting the first two focus groups. This sampling method was used with caution because it does not represent the student body, nor does it balance students with low risk or high risk of not belonging. Out of concern that the snowball sampling method would lead to disappointment for students who were not selected, the method was used as a last resort, for example, when seven participants were unable to attend a focus group session on short notice. Students who came via the snowball sampling method were informed that they were registered as a back-up for those participants who had formally registered by either the first or second deadline. Three students who registered via the snowball sampling method were able to participate because they shared the same characteristics – age, sex and language – as one student who dropped out through illness, one student who forgot to attend, and one who had a change of mind.

The recruitment of students for the focus group interviews was time-consuming because it required three and, in some instances, four classroom visits. The first classroom contact with the students took place together with the school principal and the class teacher. The students were informed about the research objectives and invited to participate in a focus group interview during class time. Students would be expected to catch up on schoolwork in their own time. Double-sided A4 pages were handed out to the students. They contained a summary of the current study and a clause emphasising that participation in a focus group interview was confidential, anonymous and voluntary (Ritchie, Elan, et al., 2014, p. 109). The cut-off strip at the bottom of the page functioned as a student/parent permission slip. To participate required the signature of a parent and the student to be deposited in a cardboard shoebox sticky-taped closed, with a slit for the permission slips. The box was marked with my name and positioned on a table close to the staffroom doorway. As participation was voluntary, students were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

The second return to the classrooms took place two days after the first visit to respond to student questions about the focus group interviews and anonymity in the transcriptions. Arrangements were made with the class teacher as to how to notify them about the students participating in the focus group interview, which included an estimate of the duration of the session of 60 to 90 minutes. The third visit informed the students about the room and date for their focus group interview.

The permission slips were collected from the sealed box at the entrance to the staff room. Students were allotted a focus group based on their language at home, sex, and age. The deadline for the permission slips was extended twice for students who forgot their permission slips or for those who decided later to participate.

5.10.3 Piloting and adaptation of data-collection tools

Students were selected to participate in two focus group interviews to pilot the sociodemographic questionnaire, question guideline and pictorial and postcard text stimuli in the second week of the fieldwork. The composition of both groups was mixed first language and sex. The two groups differed in the age of the students. The age range was 12-13 years in one group, and the second was 14-15 years. Careful attention was paid to maintain the same function for questions translated from English to German. A pre-test of the interview was conducted with the German-language version of the question guideline. The question guideline, visual stimulus, and text postcard stimuli were piloted in the second week of the fieldwork and proved helpful in stimulating discussion between the students because students freely associated with the fictitious students and narrated scenarios.

The two focus group interviews conducted to pilot the sociodemographic questionnaire, the question guideline, visual stimulus and postcard stimulus resulted in the changes described in Table 10.

Table 10: Adaptations to the research instruments

Focus group question guideline	Pictorial stimulus (vignettes)	Postcard stimulus	Sociodemographic questionnaire
Start question-wording changed from "extra-curricular school interests" to hobbies which did not distinguish between school and leisure-time activities.	Each of the six drawings was tabled with a letter of the alphabet. Students reported that it was abstract and that each drawing should be given a name.	No changes	Fill-out time extended from 10 to 15 minutes. There was a 10-minute break between questionnaire completion and the focus group interview
Access to beverages during the focus group interview to promote a relaxed atmosphere.	Students requested background information about the "fictitious" new students coming to their class, country of origin, language and skill set.		

5.10.4 Preparation for the focus group interviews

The composition of the focus groups was based on the participants' self-identified 1) first language – German or another language – which was not further differentiated, 2) sex (binary male or female), and 3) age 12-13 or 14-15. The

indicators for language are based on Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) criteria to define the first language.⁴⁰ In the current study, a minority language speaker:

- 1) self-identified as speaking a minority language as their first language;
- 2) spoke a minority language with parents or guardians (in the case of foster care or adoption).

The group blueprint for case study 1 (CS_1) concerning the language, sex and age of the students participating in the focus group interview is displayed in Table 11.

Table 11: Group blueprint for case study 1 (CS_1)

First language	Mixed majority and minority		Majority		Minority	
	Age					
Sex	12-13	14-15	12-13	14-15	12-13	14-15
Male & Female	Group 1	Group 6	Group 2	Group 7	Group 3	Group 8
Female					Group 4	Group 9
Male					Group 5	Group 10

The number of participants in a focus group ranged between four and seven students and totalled 55 students. The constellation of the focus groups included up to two students from the same class. Siblings were not placed in the same focus group, as displayed in Table 12.

Table 12: Focus group interviews case study (CS_1)

Age	Sex	Language	Students	Duration
12-13	Male/female	Minority/majority	6	68 minutes
12-13	Male/female	Majority	5	60 minutes
12-13	Male/female	Minority	7	70 minutes
12-13	Female	Minority	6	63 minutes
12-13	Male	Minority	6	65 minutes
14-15	Male/female	Minority/majority	6	70 minutes
14-15	Male/female	Majority	5	68 minutes

40 “Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, p. 106) defines the first language as the “the language one learned first (the language one has established the first long-lasting verbal contacts in) a. the language one identifies with/as a native speaker of b. the language one is identified with/as a native speaker of, by others the language one knows best the language one uses most. Similarly, Benson and Kosonen (2013, p. 6) contend that “The term first language or L1 refers to a language a person speaks as a mother tongue, vernacular, native language, or home language. It should be noted that bi- or multilingual people may consider several languages their home or first languages.”

Age	Sex	Language	Students	Duration
14-15	Male/female	Minority	5	62 minutes
14-15	Female	Minority	5	70 minutes
14-15	Male	Minority	4	58 minutes

5.10.5 *Conducting the focus group interviews*

The principal allocated a classroom to conduct the focus group interviews, which took place from the third week of the fieldwork. The students approached me in the hallway, on the way to the classroom or during recess, to register for the focus group interviews. On four occasions, students showed up after the break without prior registration. However, eligibility to participate required a permission slip that a parent and student signed. If a student showed up without the permission slip or missed the registration deadline, they could not participate. On three occasions, students returned to the research classroom a few days after participation in a focus group interview and requested to re-participate, which was denied. Generally, the casual exchanges with students who had participated in a focus group interview in the hallway and playground during recess and after school were beneficial to get their feedback on the focus group interview and the moderation techniques.

The timetable determined the timeslots for the focus group interviews, which took place during school, i.e., during regular class time. Participants requested that the focus group interview not occur during their gym or sports classes or tests. Ten group interviews were conducted on different weekdays. Seven sessions took place in the morning and three after lunch. A spare classroom around 25 m² in size was used for the duration of the fieldwork, which included conducting the focus group interviews. The room was situated on the second floor, at the start of a corridor leading to four classrooms, with two adjacent classrooms in regular use. The door was kept closed to muffle the sounds of students passing by. There were six double-seater desks. Three were pushed together to make a large table. Six chairs were positioned around the table and faced inwards towards the tabletops. Two separate desks were placed along the front end of the room for the refreshments and snacks. A table was on the opposite side of the room that was used as a desk for the duration of the fieldwork. The door was locked when the room was not in use.

The students were met at the set time, entered the room, and checked the list of names to verify that they were in the correct focus group. Their permission slips were checked to confirm they had been signed by a parent and the student, ensuring that consent to participate in the research was vetted. The session commenced with a demographic questionnaire that each participant filled out. The students sat at the table and filled out the form. They asked

questions about whether a pen or pencil could be used. Of the 55 students who took part in the focus group interviews, eight students were unsure about the ethnicity or first language of a parent. Six students were uncertain of their citizenship and returned a few days later with the information. It took between 10 and 15 minutes for questionnaire completion. A ten-minute break followed to position the chairs around the table. Soft drinks, water and snacks were provided. The students were encouraged to feel comfortable, and we engaged in small talk during the break. Before starting the focus group, students agreed to switch their mobile phones off and leave them in their bags until the session was over.

At the start of each focus group session, the participants were asked why they decided to participate in the research. In the order of the most frequent to least common, the reasons they told me were: time away from regular classes; snacks and beverages; interest in the research topic of belonging; curiosity about what research is; because a friend agreed to participate; not wanting to miss out; interest in the point of view about the school from other students they hardly knew or did not know; school fatigue; to try something different; and curiosity about participating in something different with a person they did not know.

The opening question was about the participants' hobbies. It was an open question used to prompt participation in the focus group interview, establish rapport and gauge students' response to the moderation style.

There was the initial challenge of balancing dual roles – moderator and note-taker. After conducting two focus group interviews, a change was made from note-taking during the interview to writing a summary at the end of the session. The main reason for the change was that students reported that note-taking gave the focus group interview a formal character. They preferred me to observe, ask questions, and prompt responses from the less active participants. Experience in moderating group discussions as a social worker in counselling sessions proved to be a transferable skill that assisted me in establishing rapport with the participants. This also required finesse because the social worker and researcher roles differed and needed to be differentiated. For example, it was necessary to exercise as little influence as possible on the focus group participants in the researcher role – a stance integral to facilitating discussion. At times, however, it did prove somewhat challenging not to remark on something that a participant said. For example, a student made discriminatory remarks about peers with Turkish heritage. It was a relief when one of the participants called him out on his discriminatory comments. The verbal interaction between the students was a vital element of the focus group interviews. Other interactions worth noting but not used for the data analysis included physical gestures such as eye-rolling, lifting arms, shrugging shoulders, avoiding eye contact, getting up to get water to drink and riding the chair.

In general, the moderation of the focus group discussions went smoothly. I capitalised on skills that proved effective as a school worker, such as the expression of calmness when participants took time to respond to a question or discussion thread. They were equally effective in addressing silence, gauging when to use prompts to delve deeper into a topic, and steering the conversation when holiday or leisure time activities and out of school sports events dominated the discussion among the participants. Sensitivity was required to draw the reserved or quieter participants in the debate so that they did not feel forced to engage or respond to the questions. The participants spoke a mixture of the regional Alemannic dialects, colloquial Austrian German, standard Austrian German and formal German. Four of the participants had immigrated to Austria around one year before taking part in the focus group interview and had limited German-language skills. Two of these participants were in the same focus group interview. This led to me and the other participants having to repeat some of the questions and statements to keep up with the discussion. It did not impact the flow of the focus group discussion. Each of the third and fourth participants was in separate focus group interviews. The third participant was reserved in the focus group session and reluctant to join in discussions with the other participants. The fourth participant was lively and quick to respond to the questions and the group discussion.

The first three focus group sessions had a snowball effect on the recruitment of participants for additional focus group interviews (Ritchie, Elan, *et al.*, 2014). The participants told their friends and classmates that they had fun, refreshments were available, and it was interesting to participate in the group discussions. The students who completed a permission slip and brought it to me after the permission box had been removed from outside the staffroom were allotted to a group.

The questions that could stimulate the participants to talk about difficulties at school were reserved for mid-time in the interview, i.e., once rapport was established. As spontaneity over structure was applied to pick up the responses of participants as they occurred, when a participant spoke about difficulties in the early stage of the focus group interview, I took on the observer role, waiting for the other participants to respond. This proved effective to regulate (limit) my influence as the researcher on the discussion. The participants were encouraged to discuss the topics in the group through prompts, such as asking them if they would like to add to the conversation or their opinion or experience of the topic being discussed.

The researcher-drawn vignettes or drawings of six fictitious students were introduced to the focus group participants (cf. Table 10). They were asked what could happen if the fictional students arrived as new students in their class. The drawings were used as stimuli to engage the participants in free association with the fictitious students' sex, name, hair, clothing, and shoes. The drawings were intended to stimulate the students to hypothesise about what could happen

and how their classmates could respond. Although systemic emergent properties were generated in the discussion among the participants about the drawings because their thoughts and views were exchanged, they were not rooted in reality. The participants exchanged their mentally constructed images of fictitious scenarios that were researcher-led. Hence, the verbal exchanges among the students about the drawings were based on what they guessed/imagined and not real events – they were mental processes in the brain about a possible reality. The discussions after the stimuli were introduced were not based on real students, their feelings, thoughts or views. The drawings were a practical approach to stimulate participant engagement in free association. And, they had fun. This aided in establishing rapport with the participants.

The four postcards with the text from the stimulus – four Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – showed mixed results in the piloting phase (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). When the postcards were piloted at a different secondary school in Austria, it was noted that the focus group participants responded positively to (1) and (2). This was found to correlate positively with participants that attended workshops on the UNCRC. Hence, for the postcards to be used as stimuli in the focus group interviews, the student's required prior workshops and training in the UNCRC. This was not the case. The students responded positively to (1) but did not differentiate between the UNCRC and rights for their age group in general. Thus, they were likely to agree without giving their responses informed reasons. Because the focus group participants lacked information about children's rights, discussions were researcher-led and prompted. This conflicted with the research purpose to generate student statements about their "need to belong" at school. The data was not included in the focus group data analysis, a decision made after data transcription.

In two focus groups, the participants quarrelled about the lack of fairness when teachers did not listen to students' views. Another group member pointed out that they were not listening to each other and doing precisely what they criticised. The participants laughed and talked about how this had happened. They both wanted to have their say first – it was essential for them to talk about things that teachers did that made them feel unimportant and unable to influence decision-making in class in a goal directed way. It slowed the discussion down and allowed other group members to join in. Generally, social interactions and relationships with classmates, the class teacher and teaching staff featured as prominent topics dominating the focus group interviews. The use of prompts proved helpful to elicit data on how students experienced the quality of their bonds with others. There were contradictions in individual responses to other students in three groups. Participants answered questions of belonging with responses that incorporated their experiences of discrimination, racism and sexism.

Focus group participants were surprised that their participation was limited to one focus group only. This applied if they brought a second permission slip which was criticised because a signed permission slip was regarded as similar to a ticket to partake in a group activity. It was explained that the focus group interviews were about collecting data on student statements about belonging at school, which meant that students could only do so in one group. The response was interesting because a student contended that the dynamics of the focus group change, which changes the way she talks about her opinion on things but does not change her outlook. From the third week of the fieldwork, students knew where the focus group interviews were conducted and showed up after the break, requesting to take part without a signed permission slip. Several participants asked if they could take part in another focus group interview. Such requests were denied. Conversations took place with students in the hallways, playground and before school started. These were beneficial because they were informal chats that helped to understand school social norms, processes and mechanisms, and to hypothesise about the correlation with students' "need to belong" at school.

To achieve a sense of completeness, i.e., data saturation, two additional focus group interviews were conducted with students that exceeded the number of focus group sessions that had been planned (10 sessions in each school). Data saturation was achieved with ten sessions because there were no new insights or knowledge relevant to the research questions. The additional focus group interviews were not transcribed or used in the data analysis.

The following section concerns the socio-geographic details of CS_2, reflecting on the fieldwork conducted for the current study.

5.11 Fieldwork at the school in Australia

The second part of the fieldwork for the current study was conducted from 18.7.2011 to 31.8.2011 at a secondary school in southeast Australia, which enrolled a middle-class, ethnically and linguistically diverse student population. The school was zoned, functioning such that enrolment depended on the students' residential address. At the time, 1 380 students were enrolled at the school, with 25-30 students in a class. The school catchment area, the residential neighbourhood that falls is eligible for enrolment, had a population of 57 035.

The school was geographically located at a close distance to the city centre. It started as a large brick building in the 1920s, initially operating as a boys-only school. Later it became a co-educational school. Over the years, the school was physically extended to accommodate more students. It diversified to include extramural activities such as art classes, drama and sports. The lay-

out of the school building was based on a symmetrical plan with corridors, a courtyard and verandas leading to the classrooms. From the 1990s onwards, grants were received to develop classroom-learning technologies and introduce new subjects such as music, French and Chinese, plus a high-achiever programme. The number of student enrolments increased in the 2000s, and training programs were introduced for national and international teachers. Two international partnerships were formed with schools in Asia. The school-policy guideline stipulated heterogeneity as a core value, set out as such in the student engagement and wellbeing policy (2011) which was based on the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006) and Equal Opportunity Act (2010).

Before the start of the fieldwork, Skype exchanges with the school-leadership team were made to arrange the duration of the fieldwork and meet my point of contact to discuss the research design. Although it took longer to find a school that agreed to the fieldwork, not having previously collaborated with the teachers in the role of school social worker meant that the role as a researcher was clear from the outset.

The school starts at Year Level Seven, the post-primary school level, and ends at Year Level Ten or Year Level Twelve, with the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). There were eight cohorts in Year Levels Seven and Nine, the year levels of the student focus group participants. In the first year of secondary school, students could apply for a select entry track with a higher workload and academic specialisation based on the standard curriculum for years seven and eight, respectively. In Year Nine, Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects were offered, putting students on a work-related pathway with literacy and numeracy skills. The school has a curriculum-based middle and senior years pedagogy. From Year Levels Seven to Nine, students were foremostly engaged in project-based learning. The formalised structure for student participation in school development runs through the Captain Councils. The student-elected representatives' present ideas and feedback about how to improve the learning and social environment of the school at regular council meetings. The student's voice was foremostly exercised through this formal channel.

At the fieldwork time, a reworked tutorial program to benefit the students' health and wellbeing was in the pipeline for the following year. The program was centred around facilitating daily contact between the students and their homeroom teacher, referred to as a pastoral care tutor. The program aimed to enable student-student and student-teacher interactions and social relationships. The program running at the time of the fieldwork would be discontinued at the end of that year. The students and teachers regarded it as largely ineffective. There was criticism about the lack of objectives, structure and short duration of the sessions – set at 50 minutes fortnightly. The teachers doubted that the new program would be effective and regarded it as a waste of time. The

program was seen to be “flawed, with the best of intentions” (the comment of a Year Seven English teacher at a staffroom morning tea discussion).

In connection with students’ “need to belong”, a leadership team member mentioned that some staff members did not look at student relationships as their responsibility because they were more focused on their subject area. The students were seen to find their spaces or a niche at school, which meant they could interact and form social relationships with peers outside the classroom, whether it was on the oval, during sports, or in the library. One of the flags concerning a lack of belonging was when a student stopped attending school or often arrived late to school. Topics that the wellbeing team focused on were the student-peer and student-teacher interactions and social relationships, and how these played out, and whether students were completing their schoolwork (Department of Education, Victoria, 1998).

The school’s discipline policy went through an escalation process. Minor infractions were written as a report for the year-level program leader or coordinator and were discussed with the student within the framework of expected behaviour. If a student causes class disruption, they are sent to the assistant principal as an out-of-class suspension. The main reason for out-of-school suspensions were persistent negative acts of the same nature that disrupted the class. It could be something minor that was seen to be part of a pattern of behaviour of classroom noncompliance. Problems such as unprovoked violence, aggression or sexual harassment automatically resulted in the student’s suspension because the schools have zero tolerance for violence. If an incident was brought to the attention of the subhead because of violence, the student was suspended. Before coming back to the school, a meeting with the family and targets for what the student would be doing was set. If a student re-offended and racked up ten suspensions in a year, they could be permanently excluded from the school, which the teachers noted, comes with caveats because suspensions and expulsions are generally not seen as long-term solutions for the teacher or the student. The focus of the suspension was considered not to concern the students’ academic progress but their ability to function within the school. Negative student behaviour or their lack of attendance correlated with students not passing their subjects because of a lack of literacy and numeracy skills.

The school leadership team was in the early stage of implementing a restorative justice model sourced from an external provider. It was perceived as a lynchpin to resolve conflicts at school and strengthen the social interactions and relationships between the students, teachers, school management and the parents. The aim was to emphasise the shift from an authoritative style in communication to a participative one by working in direct relationships with the students. Hence, the focus of restorative justice would be the impact of student behaviour on the classroom climate. Similarly, it was embedded in the school social system and its different social levels. The impetus was to initiate a cul-

tural shift in the monitoring practices around student behaviour and provide a framework that teachers could work (Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2004, 2009; Morrison, 2005). The school leadership team perceived practices before restorative justice, such as suspension or community service because of negative student behaviour, as not matching the student behaviour that required the corrective intervention. The cultural shift, which meant the change in how teachers and students communicated, was expected to be participative and democratic instead of authoritarian.

From the end of 2009 until the beginning of 2011, the leadership team collected data on a range of issues concerning student academic outcomes, dropout rates and student wellbeing. For the implementation phase of restorative justice, a sequence of leadership guidance sessions and staff training, such as school toolbox sessions on conducting discussions, was planned for the following year. In addition, the Victorian Department of Education and Training collected data in an annual Attitude to School Survey on students' feelings of safety, parents' perception of student safety and teachers' perception of student safety (Victoria State Government Education and Training, 2011). The survey findings were valuable for teachers and the leadership team because they indicated the changes to improve the form and quality of education and relations between student-peers and student-teachers.

Teachers and student wellbeing counsellors voiced their regard for the school's culture of tolerance about issues concerning ethnicity and language, religiosity and sexual orientation, which was viewed as conducive for students to learn about student equity and equality. In addition, the school was a member of a safe-school coalition which was visible through posters displayed throughout the school. Similarly, anti-racism, sexual harassment, school-based violence and mental health posters and events were displayed. The teachers referred students to the student wellbeing team, which comprised site guidance counsellors, social workers and a psychologist (Department of Education, Victoria, 1998). The libraries were regarded as safe havens for students who did not seem to fit in with any group, i.e., individual students were reputed to spend their breaks and lunchtime in the libraries.

The teachers distinguished between teaching local English as a second language (ESL) students and international students. The former students were reputed to have higher English language ability, a more comprehensive vocabulary, and comfortable speaking English. They immigrated with their parents from Greece, Italy, Lebanon, China, Vietnam, Serbia, Somalia, India, Pakistan and Sudan and were associated with middle-class socio-economic backgrounds. In particular, the European immigrant ESL students were viewed as multilingual because of their exposure to English in their home countries. In comparison, the international students were considered to have low English written skills and reserved, i.e., they avoided speaking English. They were seen

to have little contact with other languages before transferring to school in Australia.

The amount of administrative work outside of the classroom was seen to have dramatically increased over the preceding three years. This was associated with teachers' accountability levels or the perception of how teachers were accountable, increasing accountability to the education department and the parents. There was a general tendency among the teachers to connect the increased level of accountability with school authorities, school leadership team and the parents losing trust in their professionalism. The teachers' expectations to be more accountable was linked with the school management's compulsion to document and disseminate information which eroded time for lesson preparation and teaching.

A small percentage of parents were considered disinterested or disengaged. Correspondingly, a recurring topic for teachers was to obtain the support of school management in communication with parents. At the fieldwork time, the school was undergoing managerial, education policy and practice reforms. Teachers referred to this as general confusion and more management leading to more confusion. Teachers ended up spending a lot of time with parents to clarify their demands and justify students' grades. To engage with the parents of students referred to by teachers as high-risk because of school refusal, absenteeism, truancy or tardiness, teachers had regular meetings and put a plan of action to support the student. If the support offered by a teacher received no response, there was a follow-up process, and support mechanisms were put in place for the students. If that failed, teachers worked their way up the school-management hierarchy.

5.11.1 Classroom observation

The classroom observations depended on the teacher's prior consent, which was sought during break-time exchanges with the teachers and my point of contact. The teachers approached with the request to observe the class during their lesson agreed to the observation. However, because of the large size of the school and the distance between the classrooms, this had to be considered by drawing up a timetable for the observations before confirmation and information for parents and students.

The classroom observation was systematically noted on the observation schedule, piloted in one classroom and did not require any additional adaptation. Twenty-two observations were conducted in the classrooms, selected for observation because students generally spent the bulk of their school day there. The observation time varied between 40 and 60 minutes, including waiting time outside the classroom and the time the students and the teacher spent in the classroom until they left at the end of the period.

The students paid little attention to my presence at either the back or along the side of the classroom. Eye contact and other forms of communication with the teacher and students were avoided. The observation schedule was a good way to focus on the task at hand and not engage actively in classroom activities or communication with the students or the teacher. All the classrooms where the observation took place, 22 in total, were carpeted. The size of the classrooms varied between 45m² and 60 m². The decorations, i.e., posters, classroom rules, student artworks, differed. Three classrooms had no decorations. Privacy from an activity outside of the classroom, i.e., sounds and movement by passers-by, varied, depending on its physical location. Six classrooms were hosted in a shed or container-like blocks with little privacy (inviting outside distractions) because the windows faced the yard. Ten classrooms had small windows facing the hallway, allowing medium privacy (5-6 outside distractions). Four classrooms were situated in areas of the main school building where there was low-level outside activity and thus a high level of privacy (2-3 outside distractions). Five classrooms had a very high level of privacy (0-1 outside distractions). On two occasions, teachers sought to engage the researcher in a class discussion. The observer role was not compromised by responding, "Thank you, I prefer just to observe what's going on".

5.11.2 Sampling and recruitment

Sampling strategies are marked by inconsistencies and ambiguities in the research literature, which means that the rationale for the sampling strategy needed to be comprehensible and communicated as such to prospective participants and teachers. As the criteria for the constellation of the focus groups were predetermined in the current study, a purposeful sampling strategy was used. There were three selection criteria: sex, age and language spoken at home, either the majority language English or a minority language, i.e., any language other than English or a language spoken by First Australians. There were two deadlines for registration on a first-come, first-served basis, providing that the students fulfilled the criteria. The same research design was used in both case studies. Snowball sampling was used as a second strategy to increase the number of registrations. Students who registered through this sampling strategy came after the second deadline. The snowball strategy led to an increase in the number of student registrations which ensured that if participants cancelled at the last minute, they could be replaced. One participant was not permitted to leave the classroom because of a high absentee rate and a second participant got the dates mixed up and did not show up. As in CS_1, the snowball-sampling strategy was used with caution by using the same criteria (sex, age and first language) to select the participant and ensure that the constellation of the focus groups was the same in both cases studies. Both sam-

pling strategy methods were mentioned during class visits to provide transparency about the participation selection process. The snowball method was introduced as the backup for purposeful sampling that would apply if a registered participant did not attend a focus group session on short notice and a replacement was selected (Ritchie et al., 2014).

The teacher assigned as the support person, i.e., the school's point of contact with the researcher, agreed to conduct the classroom visits to introduce the research project to the students and teachers. There were 12 cohorts in Year Level Seven and nine in Year Nine. The visits were conducted in Year Seven's first period, with 15 minutes allocated for each cohort. The visits were central to the success of the research, i.e., I could respond directly to student and teacher questions and inform students about the underlying value of student voice in the current study. The rationale was to give students information and the opportunity to discuss the research project to make informed decisions as to whether to participate. Participation was presented as the opportunity for exchange with peers about everyday school through voluntarily taking part in focus group interviews. The visits were a lengthy process that took around 15 hours to complete and included organisational aspects, such as printing out information for the students and follow-up visits to nine of the cohorts across both year levels. The benefits outweighed the costs. Apart from being a good way to familiarise the students and teachers with the research, it served as an introduction to the school complex – on the way to each classroom, it was possible to get an overview of the physical structures of the school complex, i.e., the location of the classrooms with the main school building, and its amenities, such as the library, cooking classes, gym, sports facilities and computer rooms. As the same research design was used in both schools, the same number of focus groups was required, limiting the number of participants. Bearing this in mind, students were informed that places were available on a first-come, first-served basis with sex, age, and language criteria. To register for participation, they were required to bring a permission slip signed by a parent and themselves.

5.11.3 Piloting and adaptation of data collection tools

In the first week of the fieldwork, students were selected to participate in two focus group interviews to pilot the sociodemographic questionnaire, question guideline and pictorial and postcard text stimuli. The composition of both groups was mixed first language and sex. The two groups differed in the age of the students. The age range was 12-13 years in one group, and in the second, 14-15 years. A pre-test of the interview was conducted in the original English language version of the question guideline. Because students reported being dual citizens, there was some uncertainty regarding the demographic question-

naire. This was resolved by selecting the citizenship that students felt most affiliated with. No changes were made to the question guideline translated into German and used in CS_1.

The drawings of the fictitious students proved helpful because they stimulated free association and verbal exchange among focus group participants. However, data directly generated concerning the drawings was not used for the analysis. After all, they were not based on student accounts of actual events and thus fictitious. The participants had fun which aided to establish rapport with the group.

The postcards with four Articles from the UNCRC meant that discussions on children's rights were solely researcher-initiated, as they were not mentioned in the discussions among the participants before the introduction of the postcards (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). To use the data from the focus groups about children's rights would have required that a workshop on children's rights be held before sensitising them about their rights. In the piloting stage, students who had taken part in a UNCRC workshop participated in the focus group interview and brought Articles from the UNCRC into the discussions. In the focus group interviews, participants lacked information about the UNCRC and confused children's rights with wants and desires to have no homework, more leisure time, purchasing mobile phones and unlimited use of the internet at school and home. Because the focus group participants lacked information about children's rights, discussions were researcher-led and prompted. This conflicted with the research purpose to generate student statements about the "need to belong" at school, and the data was not included in the focus group data analysis. This decision was made post-data transcription.

5.11.4 Preparation for the focus group interviews

The composition of the focus groups was based on the student's self-identified 1) first language, English or another language not further differentiated, 2) sex (male or female), and 3) age 12-13 or 14-15. The criteria for language were based on Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) criteria to define first language.⁴¹ In the current study, a minority language speaker:

41 Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, p. 106) defines the first language as the "the language one learned first (the language one has established the first long-lasting verbal contacts in) a. the language one identifies with/as a native speaker of b. the language one is identified with/as a native speaker of, by others the language one knows best the language one uses most. Similarly, Benson and Kosonen (2013, p. 6) contend that "The term first language or L1 refers to a language a person speaks as a mother tongue, vernacular, native language, or home language. It should be noted that bi- or multilingual people may consider several languages their home or first languages."

- 1) self-identified as speaking a minority language as their first language,
- 2) and/or spoke a minority language with parents or guardians (in the case of foster care or adoption).

The group blueprint for CS_2 concerning the language, sex and age of the students participating in the focus group interview is displayed in Table 13.

Table 13: Group blueprint for case study 2 (CS_2)

First language	Mixed majority and minority		Majority		Minority	
	Age					
Sex	12-13	14-15	12-13	14-15	12-13	14-15
Male & Female	Group 1	Group 6	Group 2	Group 7	Group 3	Group 8
Female					Group 4	Group 9
Male					Group 5	Group 10

The number of participants in a focus group ranged between four and eight, totalling 55 students. The constellation of the focus groups included up to two students from the same class. Siblings were not placed in the same focus group as displayed in Table 14.

Table 14: Focus group interviews case study (CS_2)

Age	Sex	Language	Students	Duration
12-13	Male/female	Minority/majority	6	60 minutes
12-13	Male/female	Majority	5	58 minutes
12-13	Male/female	Minority	7	90 minutes
12-13	Female	Minority	6	58 minutes
12-13	Male	Minority	6	56 minutes
14-15	Male/female	Minority/majority	6	59 minutes
14-15	Male/female	Majority	5	58 minutes
14-15	Male/female	Minority	5	60 minutes
14-15	Female	Minority	5	60 minutes
14-15	Male	Minority	5	56 minutes

5.11.5 Conducting the focus group interviews

The point of contact, a teacher who introduced the school buildings, facilities and teachers, assisted in organising a room to conduct the focus group interviews. The size of the focus groups ranged between four and eight. In total, 55 female and male students participated in group sessions conducted over four

weeks during school time on the premises, with five sessions in the morning and five in the afternoon.

The room used was for staff meetings and was not linked with any prior associations for the participants. It was 18m² in size, with two large tables pushed together, allowing for a large conference table. Eight cushioned chairs were arranged around the tables. Three spare chairs were stacked in one corner. An additional table along the side of the room was used for refreshments and snacks. A basin and tap were next to the door. The room was behind a large staff room at the back end of the school administration block. There was no lock on the door, and the room was solely used to conduct the focus group interviews.

The students were received upon entering the room at the set time. Their names were ticked off the list to verify that they were in the correct group. The permission slips were rechecked to confirm they had been signed by a parent and the student, ensuring that consent to participate in the research was vetted. The session commenced with a demographic questionnaire that each participant at the table filled out. It took 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire, and a 10-minute break followed. Soft drinks, water and snacks were provided. The students were encouraged to feel comfortable, and we engaged in small talk during the break.

The students were asked about the reason/s for agreeing to participate in the research. In the order of the most frequent to least common, the reasons cited were: time away from class; interest in discussing school issues; curiosity; interest in the research topic; because of a friend; for fun and doing something different; refreshments and snacks; and not sure.

Before starting the focus group interview, the students were briefed about the ground rules. They were asked if they agreed to participate, that one person spoke at a time, and told that they could ask questions and clarify something they might not understand. During the briefing, participants were asked to say their names to check the sound/volume control of the recording.

In four focus group interviews, the issue of political correctness surfaced on numerous occasions. Across age, sex, and language background, the participants spoke of sensitivity to discrimination and expressed concern about saying the wrong thing. Techniques such as prompts were used to draw less responsive participants into the interview.

In one focus group session, tension arose between two participants when they disagreed on the teacher's role in class. As they could not agree, they remained silent when the other participants participated in the discussion. After three minutes, they joined in by verbalising their thoughts and views about the following topic that the group was discussing. The tension subsided when a participant made a joke about classmates' responses when the teacher misunderstood something a classmate had said during a class discussion. The group members laughed, and the humorous interlude reduced the tension.

On two occasions, I switched briefly into the role of children's rights educator in response to a participant's question about what children's rights are. This role conflict was noted in two focus group sessions and reflected in a post-focus group interview. To my knowledge, this did not impede the data collection as the Children's Rights postcards were used as prompts which means that the participant's responses (and questions) about the postcards were omitted from the data analysis. The rationale behind omitting these data generated through Children's Rights postcards was that the participants in CS_2 had not attended a UNCRC workshop or other forms of training before the focus group interview, in comparison to the focus group participants in CS_1. Hence, including their comments and questions could skew the data. This decision came about after reflecting on CS_2 participants' responses.

Similarly, at the end of each day, the notes on the focus group interviews and exchanges with students and teachers were reviewed by listening to the focus group recordings. This technique proved useful to facilitate reflection on the documented events and exchanges from the researcher's point of view. This involved investigating and developing hypotheses concerning the observations of the different activities and interactions between the students and the students-teachers. Ritchie et al. (2014) contend that the social interaction between the researcher and the research participants affects the data collection, analysis and findings. This interaction needs to be reflected upon alongside the issue of the power differentials between the researcher and participants for transparency. This requires ongoing researcher introspection to be aware of bias and retain transparency concerning possible threats to the credibility of the research process (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011; Krueger and Casey, 2014).

The researcher-drawn vignettes of six fictitious students were introduced to the focus group participants. The participants were asked to imagine that the fictional students had arrived as newcomers in their class. The scenarios stimulated the discussion among the participants about their classmates' responses and whether the homeroom teacher would inform them before the new students' arrival. Although systemic emergent properties were generated in the discussion among the participants about the drawings, because their thoughts and views were exchanged, they were not rooted in reality. The participants exchanged their mentally constructed images of fictitious scenarios that were researcher-led. Hence, the verbal exchanges among the participants about the drawings were based on what they guessed/imagined and not actual events. The discussions after the stimuli were introduced were not based on real students, their feelings, thoughts or views. As the rationale behind the drawings was to stimulate free association, the data were not analysed. The drawings were a good way to establish rapport with the participants. For example, the discussion amused two reserved students, and they joined in. They appeared to be more engaged in the focus group interview after introducing the prompts.

At the end of the session, we chatted before students returned to the classrooms while the students ate the remaining snacks. Most of the participants spoke about the fun they had. Overall, they found it interesting to participate in a focus group interview. Five participants reported having participated in other research projects outside of school. It was said that to do so in school was a valuable experience. It gave them ideas about how they could talk about things at school in a less formal setting than the classroom, which is how they perceived the focus group interview.

As the same number of focus groups were conducted in both schools where the research for the current study was undertaken, and the number of students was three times as high in CS_2, the call for participation closed at the end of the second week of fieldwork. The shoebox for the application slips was removed from the reception desk at the school's main entrance, and six students approached during lunch break to ask if they could participate, a request that had to be declined. Correspondingly, 15 students who had registered with the point of contact did not join because eight forgot their permissions slips after two deadline extensions, three were sick on the day, two had the date mixed up, and one student failed to attend. Other students who had registered took their place as participants. This meant not all students who wanted to participate had the chance to do so. However, to achieve a sense of completeness, i.e., data saturation, four additional focus group interviews were conducted with participants over the planned focus group sessions (10 sessions). As data saturation was achieved in 10 sessions because no new insights or knowledge relevant to the research questions were gained, the additional focus group interviews were not transcribed or used for the data analysis.

The question guideline was central to structuring the discussions and staying on the topic. Moderation was crucial to the success of the groups, as was the setting and time of day. For example, four teachers suggested avoiding the time before lunch for focus group interviews, as students were more likely to be restless and easily distracted – an aspect that could be considered when the time frame was planned. However, the limited time framework, combined with the question guideline with open-ended questions, meant that the discussion went off track at times, which means that specific areas of interest were not discussed in detail but, instead, on four occasions superficially. There was inconsistency among the younger participants (age 12-13) in distinguishing between things that happened in the classroom and the school. This necessitated finesse and careful listening to clarify whether they were referring to the school or classroom. The interaction between the participants was recorded in a research journal, and notes were taken at the end of each focus group session.

As the participants were enrolled in cross-cohort electives, at times, they would not be in their homerooms or with the class cohort. This necessitated clarification concerning which class they mentioned in the focus group interview. As I listened to the recorded interviews in the evenings after the sessions,

issues that required follow-up with the participants were noted. At the end of the focus group interview, it was arranged that the participants could be contacted if clarification were needed at a later stage of the fieldwork. The focus group interview featured the school's structural changes, which meant that the thoughts and views of the participants on school-generated new themes could be identified in each of the focus groups. The power differential between the participants and the moderator was reflected before and after the focus group session. Notes were compared across the focus group sessions to locate possible similarities and differences.

5.12 Summary

This chapter laid out the current study's research design, fieldwork and data collection in two secondary schools in Austria and Australia. The research design is based on the philosophical position of evolutionary materialist emergent ontology. This holds that objects, things or entities are concrete and that everything is a system or a member of a system that is larger than its parts or individual components (Bunge, 2004b, p. 191). The epistemological foundation is realism, which maintains an external world independent of the human mind. The rationale behind the philosophical stance of emergent systemism ontology and realist epistemology, combined with qualitative research methods, was to facilitate an in-depth examination of students' "need to belong" fulfilment at school. It bears consideration that the interpretation of conscious thought has its limitations because the focus group participants' inner workings, i.e., processes in the brain, were unobservable. Hence, in the focus group interview, the participants' statements about daily school were factual and taken at face value, as they were generated through their narrative.

Notably, the focus group participants communicated through different types of physical movement that included acts of verbalisation or speech, which could be observed as something mind-independent and real. In doing so, their verbal utterances were strung together to form words, phrases and sentences – the means to voice their feelings, thoughts and views on the school. Hence, the focus group interviews afforded insight into the complexity of the students' verbalised feelings, thoughts and views about the school social system and its different social levels. Hence, the group-interview method allowed participants to agree or disagree with and question each other (Czerniawski, 2011). Doing so fostered reflection and abstraction of the narrative content that came to the foreground when participants clarified an event or narrative during a group interview session.

In conclusion, the gain from conducting focus group interviews with the students, and thus position student voice in the centre of the data collection –

i.e., the rationale for conducting focus group interviews was to position student voice at the centre of the research – outweighed the formerly mentioned limitation. In doing so, student statements were elicited that addressed or empirically met one or more of Obrecht’s list of needs and student “need to belong” when the research was conducted (2009, p. 27).

6 The “need to belong” – the search for empirical evidence

This chapter is concerned with analysing the data elicited from focus group interviews with secondary school students (cf. Subsection 5.10.5 and 5.11.5). The aim is to describe the structuring techniques of the analysis and elucidate its rationale. The data was triangulated, which means that there are two different analyses, each with independent data-structuring methods and coding systems. In essence, the first analysis of the focus group data was the micro-level data analysis, i.e., the individual student-based data analysis. The second analysis focused on the exchange among the participants as the whole group – the meso-level analysis. Although human interaction with the external world is regulated through our sensory organs, these inner mechanisms and processes are not directly observable (Bunge, 2010, p. 14). Hence, my position is that it is a biological and psychic fact that students’ feelings, thoughts and views exist, irrespective of whether they can be directly observed or not.

To recap, the fieldwork was conducted in 2011 in two secondary schools, one in Austria (CS_1) and the other in Australia (CS_2). The rationale for conducting focus group interviews with the students was to position student voice in the foreground of the research. In doing so, the participants’ verbalised feelings, thoughts, and views on their “need to belong” fulfilment at school were investigated (Czerniawski, 2011). The group sessions were conducted in German in CS_1 and English in CS_2. The group sessions were conducted in German in CS_1 and English in CS_2. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using a convention adapted from Kuckartz et al. (2008, pp. 27–28). At the core of the data analysis were the emergent properties elicited from the student statements that indicate their sensory experience in the school social system and its different social levels. This is in line with the philosophical position of the current study, that of emergent material systemism and realist epistemology (cf. 5.1 and 5.2).

The first analysis considered the student statements that described their feelings, thoughts, views, strategies and plans (objectives) in their social exchange with the classmates, class teachers and teaching staff. The individual student statements relevant to the research aims and questions were identified and coded. This pertained to the statements that addressed one or more of Obrecht’s list of needs⁴² which were categorised and interpreted along the lines of the tendency towards “needs satisfaction” or “needs frustration” (2009, p. 27). The interpretations of the data were summarised as indicating the individ-

42 The list comprises 19 bio-psycho-social needs which are mechanisms and processes that regulate human behaviour and bio values (cf. Subsection 4.6).

ual students' feeling of student belonging across three social levels: student-classmates, student-class teacher and student-teaching staff (Obrecht, 2009; Krueger and Casey, 2014; Spencer et al., 2014).

The second analysis was of the focus group interview as a whole group. This approach was built on that of Spencer et al. (2014, pp. 340–341) to analyse the focus group participants' discussion threads. The verbal exchanges in the focus group interviews comprised participants' responses to the questions and the discussions that followed. This made up the core of the discussion threads among the students that were related to their access to resources or satisfiers, strategies (goals) to access resources for “need to belong” fulfilment, or problems encountered if their access to resources or satisfiers was hindered by other members of the school social system and its different social levels. The analysis entailed the selection of text segments from the focus group transcriptions that were relevant to the current study's aims and research questions. Kuckartz (2016) seven-phase approach was adapted to structure the content analysis process (cf. Table 20). The data review process was comprehensive because the phases were geared towards detecting patterns, i.e., similarities, differences and contradictions in the data. In this process, data reduction was achieved to its essence.

6.1 Summarising the analyses as a methodological procedure

This chapter comprises three steps. The first step entails transcribing text from audio recordings and issues related to conducting focus group interviews with secondary-school students in two languages, i.e., German in CS_1 and English in CS_2. An outline of the data-sorting process follows it. The second step concerns the first part of the data analysis, which was conducted to develop the participant-based student portraits. The grid designed for this analysis is introduced. It was applied to locate and sort text extracts from student statements on three social levels: student-class, student-teacher and student-teaching staff. Indicators were developed to code this data for the “need to belong”, defined as biological, psychic/psychological and social need tensions: 1) biological, 2) psychic/psychological, 3) social, and 4) socio-cultural dimensions. It is followed by a discussion with examples of student statements to illustrate how the dimensions of belonging were applied to sort the data alongside the coding process. The third step is the second data analysis – the whole group analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key points.

6.1.1 From audio to transcription

There is no single method of data analysis for focus group interviews which means there is flexibility when it comes to analysing the data (Lamnek, 2005, p. 177). The research's methodological, theoretical and conceptual stances influence how the data are analysed, both in the use of the data analysis technique and its focus. Compared with surveys or personal interviews, Lamnek points out that focus groups are marked by a communicative and reflexive design that seeks to capture everyday communication as closely as possible. This assumes that the social environment influences the individual, which requires that the students' social context in the current study – the class, the teachers and the school – is the research object. Much the same, Bunge (2003b, pp. 286–287) contends that individuals are components of social systems, both influenced by and influencing, the social systems of which they are members. Subsequently, human behaviour is the result of integration between human internal mechanisms and processes, and external socio-cultural circumstances and processes.

The audio recording of the focus groups was played repeatedly for in-depth familiarisation with the content and the contributions of the individual students in discussions around the topic areas of the question guideline. The direction of the data analysis shaped the iterative process of transcribing audio to text as it determined the level of detail, for example, to omit the non-verbal interactions and distinguish the repetitive “yeah” from “yes”. The transcription software f4transkript was used because of its range of user-friendly options, such as hotkeys to slow down and replay an unclear section of the recording. These features were helpful because, over time, working through the audio with these simple backwards and forwards selections became an automated response for less audible audio sections and did not distract from the content. For transparency and clarity about the transcription process from audio to text, the four sequences used to prepare the transcriptions for data analysis were as follows:

In the *first sequence*, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and not summarised. The transcriptions were edited to improve the reading and comprehension (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, pp. 211–215). This mainly addressed grammatical speech errors, word repetitions, filler words and expanding phrases when a sentence started with a conjunction, and basic punctuation. The focus of the data analysis was the content of the focus group interview – the phonemic, phonetic or phonological aspects of the students' recorded speech. Pauses, pitch and intonation, were not the object of the data analysis or interpretation and were thus omitted from the typed transcriptions. The focus group interviews were conducted in German in CS_1 and English in CS_2. Participants in CS_1 spoke either high German or Alamanac dialect, with varying levels of language competence. In the audio recordings of the focus

group interviews in CS_1, there was a tendency for the participants who self-identified as German second-language speakers to omit the articles *der/die/das*, compared to the self-identified German first-language participants. For the sake of text comprehension, the missing articles and incorrect articles were replaced or corrected in the edited transcriptions. In addition, sections of the audio recording were challenging to understand, owing to the participants' tendency to speak dialect faster than high German. Some word endings were indistinguishable or cut off. Dialect and sentence-structure errors were corrected. In the audio recordings of the participants in CS_2, there was a notable prevalence of the filler words "like" and "yeah". These words were omitted for the sake of comprehensibility unless they added information to or changed the goal direction of the student statement or data text extracts, i.e., phrases and sentences. A transcription convention was developed along that of Kuckartz et al. (2008, p. 27) to ensure consistency in and across the focus group transcriptions. The rules devised for the transcription of the audio recordings in German, Almanac dialect and English added to transparency concerning the edits to the transcriptions. The rules were drawn up as a transcription convention (cf. Appendix R: Transcription convention).

In the *second sequence* and for accuracy, a first-language Almanac dialect speaker cross-checked the transcriptions against the audio recordings. This was unnecessary for the English audio recordings in CS_2, as the focus group interviews were conducted in standard Australian English, which is my first language.

In the *third sequence*, the transcriptions underwent cross-checks while I listened to the audio recordings and compared them with the text transcriptions. Through focusing on the themes and concepts in each of the transcripts, familiarity with the content and coverage of the group interviews was further extended. This entailed rereading the edited transcripts and taking notes about what was said and by whom. The transcriptions were checked for conformity with the transcription convention (cf. Appendix R: Transcription convention).

In the *fourth sequence*, the data in each transcription were reduced, which means that student statements outside of the topic scope of this research were crossed through; the transcription was reread to double-check that the text extract was not relevant and was then deleted. For example, in CS_1, students talked about the time during the school holidays spent with extended family in Turkey and their increased level of autonomy while there, compared to living in Austria. Their parents permitted them to stay out late or choose to have meals with extended family members without organising to do so with them in advance. This topic surfaced in a discussion about student association with their Turkish migration heritage. Still, it focused on student leisure time, family rules and social norms, which was outside of the scope of the research aims and questions regarding the students' "need to belong" facilitation at school.

In addition, the first question stated in the focus group interview was explicitly formulated as a warm-up question to establish a rapport with the group (Lamnek, 2005; Krueger and Casey, 2014). Hence, data from the first question were not used for the analyses because they were broad and concerned with short references to activities and hobbies that were mainly leisure-time pursuits, ranging from sports, drama and dance classes to reading clubs and socialising with friends and family. The focus group transcriptions were printed on A4 pages and sorted according to case study one or two and the chronological sequence of the sessions.

The audio recordings were replayed to become familiar with the data, and the transcriptions were re-read several times. This helped identify interesting topics in the data. The following steps were to sort, code and analyse the data. An approach to data sorting was sought to enable an overview of the content. This means that the themes and topics that were discussed about the question guideline included the statements of each focus group participant within the group and across the groups. This process is discussed in the following section.

6.1.2 Data sorting

The first two focus group interviews were transcribed and then roughly coded during the fieldwork to assess the suitability of the question guideline and the yield of the data in response to the research aim and questions. After that, the data from the transcriptions were sorted during different time intervals. This intermittence rendered the process somewhat disjointed, in addition to the large amount of data derived from the focus group interviews. To return to the data-sorting process, to gain further clarity on the students' statements and refine skills to locate relevant data for the analysis, a way was sought to delve into the data and obtain an overview of each transcription, within each school, and across the schools.

The software program *f4analyse* was used to structure and code the qualitative data. The rationale for using this software over others (for example, NVIVO or MAXQDA) was that good results had been achieved with *f4transkript*, the same company's software used to transcribe the data. *f4analyse* and *f4transkript* are designed to complement each other, thus eliminating compatibility issues around importing the transcriptions into the analysis software. The transcriptions could be edited directly, categories developed, and the text sorted into categories. Large amounts of data could be structured and organised into categories, and the structure remained visible and easy to move around. The search function proved helpful for contrasting data across focus groups, within and across the schools, and sorted the data into a "code" – written in inverted commas to indicate that the term is "f4analyse-specific" for themes. The question guideline for the focus groups interviews was used to sort the

data into themes. This proved helpful for me to obtain an overview of the themes and concepts and data reduction, i.e., to cross-check the previously discarded text sections from the early review of the data (because they were outside of the topic scope of the research interest). Similarly, the data was examined to locate superfluous student statements and discussion threads that were not identified in the initial data-sorting process. This helped identify emerging themes and concepts from within each focus group and across the groups (Lamnek, 2005).

The data underwent theoretical triangulation (cf. Subsection 5.8.1) through two different focuses, each with their methods to analyse the focus group data: 1) an individual participant-based or micro-level analysis, and 2) a social group or meso-level analysis. This corresponds with Spencer et al. (2014, p. 340). They contended that there are two dominant approaches to analysing focus group data: a “participant-based approach”, which is the analysis of the individual contributions of each participant, and a “whole group analysis”, conducted to locate the themes in the discussion threads of the participants within the group as the unit of analysis. The whole group analysis (cf. Subsection 6.4) focused on the discussion threads related to participants’ feelings about access to satisfiers or (dis)satisfiers as a requirement for need fulfilment. The rationale behind the decision to distinguish between needs and satisfiers in the analysis is that the individual has needs, but groups and social systems do not (Obrecht, 2005b). It was the rationale for conducting a two-part analysis of the same data.

To analyse students’ statements about the “need to belong” required a participant-based approach referred to in the current study as the individual student-based, micro-level data analysis. This analysis focuses on the “need to belong” fulfilment of the individual participants, set within the focus group context. The analysis is theoretically framed by Obrecht’s (2009) theory of human need. This is the focus of the following section.

6.2 Individual student-based data analysis

The individual student-based data analysis culminated with student portraits for each focus group participant. The student portraits provide an overview of the data extracted from the participants’ statements implicitly associated with the “need to belong” generated through the focus group transcriptions analysis. The framework for the analysis was developed and applied to describe, interpret and explain student accounts of the interactions and social relations on three different social levels: 1) student-class level, 2) student-class teacher level, and 3) student-teaching staff level. The coding system was based on Obrecht’s need categories which were applied to detect and analyse the data relevant to one of four dimensions (2009, p. 27).

The student statements that addressed the facilitation or frustration of the “need to belong” in the school social system and its different social levels were collected at that moment in time when the research took place. The qualitative nature of the research means that it is unlikely that the findings from the current study, designed to contextualise rich descriptions of students’ experiences of student belonging, can be generalised. Bearing this in mind, a systematic content analysis was undertaken. The basis for the analysis is text extracts with participants’ verbalised feelings in association with their thoughts and views about the interactions and social relationships with others at school, and the statements implicitly associated with the “need to belong” (definition: cf. Chapter 1, Subsection 1.1). This decision is made before transcribing the audio recording because the focus of the analysis determines what to transcribe and what to omit (Kuckartz et al., 2008).

The student-based data analysis was conducted by tracing each participant’s statements (Spencer et al., 2014, pp. 340–341). In this way, individual student portraits were developed by allocating phrases and sentences in their row. The rationale behind this analysis method is to identify statements that address the facilitation or frustration of needs on the micro-level of the individual student. The overarching research question and sub-questions are the basis for selecting the students’ statements for the analysis. This facilitates data reduction because student statements outside the scope of the research questions were not included. For example, the focus groups were initiated with a general question about the students’ hobbies to establish rapport (Yeo et al., 2014, p. 185). Their responses to this question were about their leisure-time activities and thus not used in the data analysis.

6.2.1 *The data-coding process*

To recap, the current study’s overarching research question and sub-questions are:

How do students describe their positive and negative feelings about the possibility or impossibility to satisfy the “need to belong” in class and in the school system?

And the sub-questions:

- 1) *How do students describe the satisfaction of their “need to belong” their classmates, teachers and the school social system?*
- 2) *Do the students have plans or strategies to overcome the frustration of their “need to belong”? What social level is referred to and in what way does it matter?*

Obrecht’s list of human needs (2009, p. 27) is the basis for the data-coding process (cf. Table 4). Human need theory integrates transdisciplinary knowledge from biology, neurosciences, psychology, sociology and culture

theory encompassed in the empirical basis of the three need classes: 1) biological, 2) psychic/psychological, and 3) social. Each comprises needs specific to that class because of need elasticity, i.e., the period within which a need is to be met to prevent harm or other forms of ills to the individual.

In the data-coding process, text extracts of the student statements were systematically assigned to one of the four dimensions that were developed based on Obrecht's list of human needs (2009, p. 27):

- 1) Biological level with the subcategory a) facilitating belonging b) hindering belonging.
- 2) psychic/psychological level with the subcategory a) facilitating belonging b) hindering belonging, or no category.
- 3) Social level with the subcategory a) facilitating belonging b) hindering belonging, or no category.
- 4) Socio-cultural level with the subcategory a) facilitating belonging b) hindering belonging, or no category.

A participant statement in the data not concerning one of the four levels is indicated using "no statement". In interpreting the text extract on the concept level, reference was made to whether the statement suggests that belonging is facilitated or hindered. In addition to the four dimensions, the text extracts were coded according to the three social levels referred to 1) student-class level, 2) student-class teacher level, or 3) student-teaching staff level.

Table 15 illustrates the student-class level, the type of student statement, i.e., text extract, and differentiation between facilitating or hindering belonging. This is the basis for interpreting a text abstract to indicate need facilitation or hindrance with the indicators for the four dimensions (biological, psychic/psychological, social and socio-cultural), listed individually

Table 15: Student-class level and indicators for the four dimensions

Student statements about the interaction and relationship with the classmates
<p>a) facilitating belonging "wellbeing", or b) hindering belonging "feeling bad".</p> <p>Interpretation of concept level; interpretation categorised into either</p> <p>a) facilitating, or b) hindering belonging, or c) no category.</p> <p>The student statements regarding the class teacher were assessed as to whether they indicated interactions and/or relations that a) facilitated or b) hindered the biological, psychic/psychological, social and social-cultural dimensions of student need fulfilment.</p> <p>The classmates characterise the values and norms of a social system that give the individual and collective orientation as the basis of the class teacher's relationship with students and the teaching practices.</p>

Table 16 illustrates the student-class teacher level, the type of student statement or text extract, and differentiation between facilitating or hindering be-

longing. This is the basis for interpreting a text abstract to indicate need facilitation or hindrance. The indicators that follow are the four dimensions (biological, psychic/psychological, social and socio-cultural) summarised as facilitating or hindering belonging or no statement.

Table 16: Student-class teacher level and indicators for the four dimensions

Student-class teacher level

Student statements about the interaction and relationship with the class teacher

- a) facilitating belonging "wellbeing", or
- b) hindering belonging "feeling bad".

Interpretation of concept level; interpretation categorised into either

- a) facilitating, or
- b) hindering belonging, or
- c) no category.

The student statements regarding the class teacher were assessed as to whether they indicated interactions and/or relations that a) facilitated or b) hindered the biological, psychic/psychological, social and social-cultural dimensions of student need fulfilment.

The student-teacher level characterises the values and norms of a social system that give the individual and collective orientation as the basis of the class teacher's relationship with students and the teaching practices.

Table 17 illustrates the student-teaching staff level, the type of student statement or text extract, and differentiation between facilitating or hindering belonging. This is the basis for interpreting a text abstract to indicate need facilitation or hindrance. The indicators that follow are the four dimensions (biological, psychic/psychological, social and socio-cultural) summarised as facilitating or hindering belonging or no statement.

Table 17: Student-teaching staff level and indicators for the four dimensions

Student-teaching staff level

Student statements about the interaction and relationship with the class teacher

- a) facilitating belonging "wellbeing", or
- b) hindering belonging "feeling bad".

Interpretation of concept level; interpretation categorised into either

- a) facilitating, or
- b) hindering belonging, or
- c) no category.

The student statements regarding the class teacher were assessed as to whether they indicated interactions and/or relations that a) facilitated or b) hindered the biological, psychic/psychological, social and social-cultural dimensions of student need fulfilment.

The student-teacher level characterises the values and norms of a social system that give the individual and collective orientation as the basis of the class teacher's relationship with students and the teaching practices.

The interplay across and between the four dimensions, notably the social and socio-cultural, presented some problems about allocating specific student

statements to Obrecht's list of 19 biological, psychic and social needs (2009, p. 27). This was resolved by first adding the text extracts of student statements to the applicable dimension. Then the text extracts were checked against the transcription concerning the conversation thread between the participants/researcher. This was done to facilitate transparency concerning the context of the text extract (derived from a student statement) to resolve the ambiguity of a text segment that could be coded to more than one of the four dimensions. In addition, the process of rechecking the text segment against the transcriptions benefited from the in-depth analysis while shedding light on issues related to consistency and coherency throughout the analysis process. In addition, the rechecking of text extracts against the transcription aided in retaining the authenticity of student voice in the analysis. Peers cross-checked the interpretations of the text extracts to test the rigorosity of the categorising system. This was mainly for transparency about decision-making in the case of an overlap, i.e., when a text segment could be coded to more than one dimension. During this reflective process, researcher bias could be identified because of the nature of the student statements, i.e., the text segments extracted from the student statements remained at the centre of the analysis. Thus, the peer review of my interpretation of the text abstract was a measure of ensuring that the interpretation corresponded with the text abstract extracted from the transcription.

6.2.2 Questions guiding data sorting for the participant-based student portrait

In addition to the overarching research question and sub-questions, additional questions were formulated about the biological, psychic/psychological, social and socio-cultural factors to structure the data-sorting process. The same questions were applied across three social levels to locate students' statements that addressed positive or negative factors connected to social-exchange relationships.

Table 18 illustrates the three social levels: 1) student-class, 2) student-class teacher and 3) student-teachers, and the questions that guided the data-sorting process.

Table 18: Questions guiding data-sorting for the participant-based student portraits

Social level	Questions
Student-class level	What biological factors (health, physical integrity, regeneration, sexual activity) facilitate or hinder belonging?
Student-class teacher level	What psychic/psychological factors (sensory stimulation, cognitive code to grasp and understand information, skills, rules and social norms) facilitate or hinder belonging? What social factors (e.g., values or action and decision-making criteria and norms) facilitate or hinder belonging?
Student-teaching staff level	What socio-cultural factors (e.g., language/code, ethnicity, religion/faitn/myths) facilitate or hinder belonging?

6.2.3 Data analysis

The student statements relevant to this study's aims and research questions were highlighted. By interpreting the words, phrases and sentences as an indication of mental operations, the analysis was theory-driven, i.e., deductive. The analysis was conducted by identifying, describing and interpreting the text extracts from the students' statements associated with needs (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). This depended on whether the text extracts were positive expressions of need fulfilment (associated with feeling good) that were interpreted to indicate that need fulfilment is facilitated or negative expressions of need frustration (associated with feeling bad) that were interpreted as an indication of a need frustration.

Overview of the participant-based student analysis

- Transcriptions were converted to Microsoft word documents and imported into f4analyse.
- Units of analysis were text extracts that comprised a phrase, sentence or paragraph.
- Relevant text extracts were marked in colour and sorted into one of the three social level categories: 1) student-class, 2) student-class teacher, or 3) student-teaching staff.
- Text extracts were coded by underlining in the specific colour of one of four need-dimension categories: 1. biological level, 2. psychic/psychological level, 3. socio-level, and 4. social-cultural level. The software program f4analyse displayed text extracts with codes.
- Text extracts were cross-checked for topics outside of the social levels and need-dimension categories.
- Inconclusive and incomplete text extracts with missing word/s were re-checked. Missing word/s were added in parentheses to comprehend the goal direction of a phrase, sentence or paragraph.

- Text extracts were entered into a search function to cross-check against the social level categories.
- Text extracts were entered into a search function to cross-check against need-dimension categories.
- Text-extract coding were cross-checked against social-level category and need-dimension category. The text extracts were recategorised if they were inconclusive or interpreted on a different social level or for two needs simultaneously.
- Text selections were coded by underlining as positive (need facilitation) or negative (need frustration).
- Text from f4analyse (which included the discussion thread before the word, phrase or sentence, when necessary for comprehension in parentheses) was coded to the categories' social level and the need categories, either a) facilitating belonging or b) hindering belonging.

From f4analyse, the copy-paste technique was applied by selecting text extracts to create the participant-based student portraits in a Microsoft Word document. The socio-demographic information, class size – i.e., the number of students in the class cohort – and the classmates' majority language, which were collected from the focus group participants before the focus group interviews, were added to the heading section of the student portrait.

6.2.4 Summarising “wellbeing” and “feeling bad”

The text extracts were categorised as positive where the student statement indicated possible facilitation of needs (of “wellbeing”) or categorised as negative statements (“feeling bad”) where they indicated possible needs frustration. After completing the data-sorting and categorisation process, the data were interpreted and explained. This was substantiated by theory-driven explanations in line with the four dimensions used for the data sorting:

- 1) biological explanations: positive “wellbeing” vs negative “feeling bad”;
- 2) psychic/psychological explanations: positive “wellbeing” vs negative “feeling bad”;
- 3) sociological explanations and social psychological explanations: positive “wellbeing” vs negative “feeling bad”; and
- 4) cultural explanations: positive “wellbeing” vs negative “feeling bad”.

6.2.5 Dimensions of belonging: indicators for categorisation

The data for the student portraits were analysed based on text extracts from the transcriptions that indicated needs promotion or needs frustration, according to one of the three categories of biological, psychic and social needs based on

Obrecht (2009, p. 27). The four categories that signified the dimensions of belonging were the:

- 1) biological dimension of belonging;
- 2) psychic/psychological dimension of belonging;
- 3) social dimension of belonging; and
- 4) socio-cultural dimension of belonging.

The difference between the three need categories, and the four dimensions of belonging derived from these need categories, lies in the distinction between the social dimension and the socio-cultural dimension of belonging. As culture is a property of social entities, human beings do not have cultural needs but rather psychic and social needs. There are, however, cultural facts, such as language (code) and all artefacts, which distinguishes symbolic (code) from material (artefacts) culture. The social dimension encompasses students' statements concerning interactions and social-exchange relations in general in the data analysis. In comparison, the socio-cultural dimension alludes to student statements concerning cultural codes, such as language and ethnicity and religion.

Table 19 illustrates the indicators for sorting the text extracts, i.e., the distinctness of the categories. The indicators for the biological dimension concern the distinction of physical activities, body integrity and physical and mental (emotional-cognitive) rest and regeneration. The psychic/psychological dimension includes concentration (and deficits), aesthetic encounters, functional perception-related occurrences, thinking, planning, decision making, seeking solutions, psychic/psychological violence and trauma. The social dimension covers the social exchange between persons, giving/accepting and missing/absence of social exchange (interaction), such as isolation and alienation. The socio-cultural dimension of belonging pertains to text extracts that refer to the exchange (interaction) or lack of exchange (interaction) between persons' regard to cultural codes, such as language and ethnicity and religion. There were overlaps in the assignment of the empirical data to the categories. These were dealt with by discussing the allocation and rationale with peers, thus resolving ambiguities. This was essential because it aided transparency about the coding categories and their clear distinction.

Table 19: Dimensions of belonging indicators

Biological dimension of belonging	Psychic/ psychological dimension of belonging	Social dimension of belonging	Socio-cultural dimension of belonging
Text extracts referring to actions such as physical activity body integrity rest and regeneration	Text extracts referring to concentration (and deficits) aesthetic encounters functional perception-related occurrences thinking, planning, decision making seeking solutions psychological violence trauma	Text extracts referring to the exchange (interaction) between persons giving help, accepting help missing exchange (interaction) such as isolation and alienation	Text extracts referring to cultural, ethnic, religious dimension of belonging: This concerns text extracts that refer to the exchange (interaction) or lack of exchange (interaction) between persons in connection with cultural codes such as language and ethnicity and religion

6.3 Categories within four dimensions of belonging

The categories are set out within the four descriptive dimensions of belonging, with examples of text extracts from student statements drawn from the focus group interview transcription. The student statements were sorted by distinguishing between negative statements that describe “feeling bad” (hindering students’ “need to belong”) or positive statements that describe “wellbeing” (facilitating students’ “need to belong”).

Examples of student statements in line with the dimensions of belonging:

1) Descriptive category: biological dimension of belonging

Examples of text extracts for body expressions/wellbeing

“[...] ein Junge, der war in der Klasse voll cool und so beliebt, [hat] mir blöd getan [mich herumgeschubst] und auch weh getan. Damals war ich zwölf. Irgendwann [in dem Schuljahr] habe ich ihn dann verschlagen. Danach habe ich auch Freunde in der Klasse gehabt.” (1_1:285)

“The best thing about school is there’s run [around time] so you get to play soccer or footy with friends and stuff. That it’s real choice.” (2_4:64)

“In sports and PE [physical education] those kinds of subjects that are physical, like when you’re not sitting all the time cause I reckon that’s heaps better for you.” (2_7:154)

Examples of text extracts for body expressions/feeling bad

“[...] [Klassenkamerad] war voll aggressiv und hat mich herumgeschubst und auch weh getan.” (1_1:285)

"Es gab eine Schlägerei und der eine aus seiner Klasse, der wurde suspendiert, weil er gegenüber seiner Mitschülerin sexuelle Anspielungen gemacht hat. Es geht bei uns schon wild zu, und manchmal fühle ich mich unsicher, in Gefahr irgendwie."(1_7:143)

"I'm carrying a lot of books and sports stuff backwards and forwards to school every day. It gets really heavy which makes my neck sore and back ache." (2_2:58)

"Mr Pike [pseudonym for teacher] he literally gets the girl and pulls down her skirt it's so gross ('cause he reckons they wear them too short)."(2_4:26)

2) Descriptive category: psychic/psychological dimension of belonging

Examples of text extracts for psychic expressions/wellbeing

"Ich fühle mich bis jetzt [in der Klasse] gut und noch nicht wie ein Außenseiter."(1_1:284)

"Ich fühle mich wie ein Einheimischer, weil ich das Gefühl habe, dass ich dazu gehöre. Es geht um meine Gefühle. Ich komme eigentlich in die Schule, um mit meinen Freundinnen zusammen zu sein und fühle mich gut."(1_2:84-86)

"I love the sports uniform. They're a good design and feels good [when I wear them] [...]." (2_1:90)

"You just try out for whatever sport you want then usually it's a day you go play all these different schools and stuff which I really feel good about doing a lot. Yeah, PE, lunchtime and camps and doing stuff with class-mates' rules." (2_5:7)

"It can also feel good when you fit in with people who aren't exactly the same as you. You feel different, but in a good way sometimes." (2_9:94)

"I kind of like maths. That's actually great because it's very interesting." (2_6:3)

Examples of text extracts for psychic expressions/feeling bad

"Es macht mich auch sauer, wenn andere in der Klasse angemotzt werden." (1_1:265)

"Zu mir sagt man [Buben in der Klasse] Pferdefresser. Ich hasse das." (1_2:18)

"Herr Präg [pseudonym Klassenvorstand] hat gesagt, wir machen eine Wanderung, jeder hat gesagt: gehen wir mit dem Fahrrad. Er hat gesagt, wir müssen Helme anziehen. Dann hat er gesagt: „Ihr zieht keinen Helm an, Du hast eh schon einen Helm an. [Damit meinte er mein Kopftuch]. Dann hat jeder gelacht. Ich habe mich schlecht gefühlt." (1_6:42)

"Herr Simon (pseudonym teacher) sagte, dass ich eine Zicke bin, weil ich mich drei Minuten zu früh angezogen habe. Herr Lätte [pseudonym teacher] bewirft uns mit Kreiden. Manchmal fühle ich mich auch ungerecht behandelt von den Lehrern." (1_8: 51)

"Ich heiße Kadit (pseudonym for participant). Aber der Schuldirektor (der unserer Lehrer ist) sagt zu mir Max [pseudonym], dass fühlt sich echt scheiße an." (1_8:56 – 57)

"I came to this school, there's all these bunches of changes like the 10-day timetable and the new uniform which I don't like cause it's confusing and though there is structure it's all very chaotic." (2_1:70)

"I feel they (the classmates) don't care about you, they don't really care about your problems if you tell them something, they'll [act] nice but just walk off." (2_1:120)

"I hate it when teachers, you're not talking, other people are talking and they make the whole grade stay in, and yeah." (2_3:45)

"I feel that some of the other teachers, they don't care at all [if people get picked on in class]." (2_4:164)

3) Descriptive category: social dimension of belonging

Examples of text extracts for social expressions/wellbeing

"Ich finde an unserer Klassengemeinschaft toll, dass wir alle zusammenhalten [...]" (1_1:15)

"[...] Gerechtigkeit ist in unsere Klasse an der obersten Stelle." (1_1:107)

"In our class, hanging out with girls is regarded as a good thing, if not, you're seen as a bit weird." (2_1:131)

"If you're nicer to people, then they get along with you. That's kind of popular when people really like you. You can become unpopular, instantly, if you say something mean." (2_2:96)

"She's a good teacher 'cause she can discipline the class and she's fair and kind as well and one who listens to you. She's a good teacher." (2_3:43)

"By doing stuff, we find other people, and they know other people, 'cause I know only a few people from my school. Simon [pseudonym for classmate] introduced me to his friends and so now I know all loads of people." (2_4: 159)

"Tim [pseudonym for classmate] and a lot of my friends had problems with Miss Daintree's [pseudonym for teacher] seating plan, and she goes "this is not ever happening, no picking on each other". It's not happening any more in her class. She cares lot about bullying and stuff, we really like her 'cause she cares." (2_4:166)

"If you have a kind teacher that just tells you off and speaks to you kindly. Everyone will stop misbehaving because they're fine." (2_4:180)

"To belong is when you feel you can join into anything. Say if you've got some classmate eating or sitting down, you can just sit with them and feel comfortable. 2_4:155)

"I just like hanging out with friends and that because you notice when you're in [different elective] classes where you maybe don't know as many people. It's a lot more boring [when you don't know that many people]." (2_5:6)

4) Descriptive category: socio-cultural dimension of belonging

Examples of text extracts for socio-cultural expressions/wellbeing:

"Mit Türken kann man sich auch voll gut verstehen. Ich habe voll viele Freunde [in der Klasse] aus der Türkei und man kann sie voll nett verstehen. Ich war auch in der Türkei vor ein paar Jahren und sie sind voll nett." (1_1:192)

"Some person I know, [I] won't name them, of course, because this is for study purposes, but they're from a different country and they're wearing a sort of burka, but they get along really well and they're regarded as one of the cool kids." (2_1:114)

"Our class is pretty good [and nice to one another]. There are always kids having a go at one kid, you know sitting next to a friend [saying] oh, he might be gay, happens to everyone. It's not bullying, it's just joking around with your mates. You know there is no actual discrimination, people acting racist or anything. I haven't seen any of it." (2_4:175)

"I think the one reason people can mistake racism is if there's a guy from Australia, and a guy from South Africa, you're most likely going to pick the guy from Australia. Not because of their race, or background, but because they know more stuff. You can talk about football with them, and games that are released, and Australian movies, and stuff like that. I found a lot of people have mistaken that for racism. It's just, you know them better and stuff." (2_9:73)

Examples of text extracts for socio-cultural expressions/feeling bad:

"Es gibt ein Junge in unsere Klasse, der Albaner ist. Er nutzt immer andere Sprachen und sagt zu uns: "Scheiß Türken" oder Scheiß [...]" (1_1:181)

"Die Türken sind schuld. Das stimmt aber so nicht. Sie [Österreicher] schieben es auf alle Türken." (1_1:189)

"Sobald es sich um einen Türken handelt [in einem Konflikt], tun die Lehrer etwas, aber wenn es sich nicht um einen Türken handelt, wird nichts gemacht. 1_1: 238)

"[...] Es gibt einen Jugendlichen in unsere Klasse und er hasst Türken. Ich frage ihn immer: „wieso hasst du Türken und so?“ (1_1:270)

"Also, immer bei den schlechten Sachen (sind es die) Muslime und bei den guten Sachen sie [Inländische Klassenkameraden] selbst." (1_2:224)

"Ich finde es auch blöd, dass ich nicht Türkisch reden kann. Im Unterricht würde ich manchmal sagen, dass es okay ist, weil wir Österreicher sind und Deutsch reden müssen. Mit den Freunden ist es doch egal, wenn wir Türkisch reden. Das macht doch nichts aus." (1_2:38)

"Vorkurzem hat man im Spar eingebrochen. Sehr viele [Mitschüler] hoffen, dass es ein Türke war, weil sie sagen: Türken sind so und so. Es war dann kein Türke." (1_2: 228)

"In unsere Klasse motzen Türken nie mit den Klassenkameraden. Alle sind still. Es geht um gute Noten und nicht mit anderen in der Klasse irgendwie Streit haben." (1_2:61)

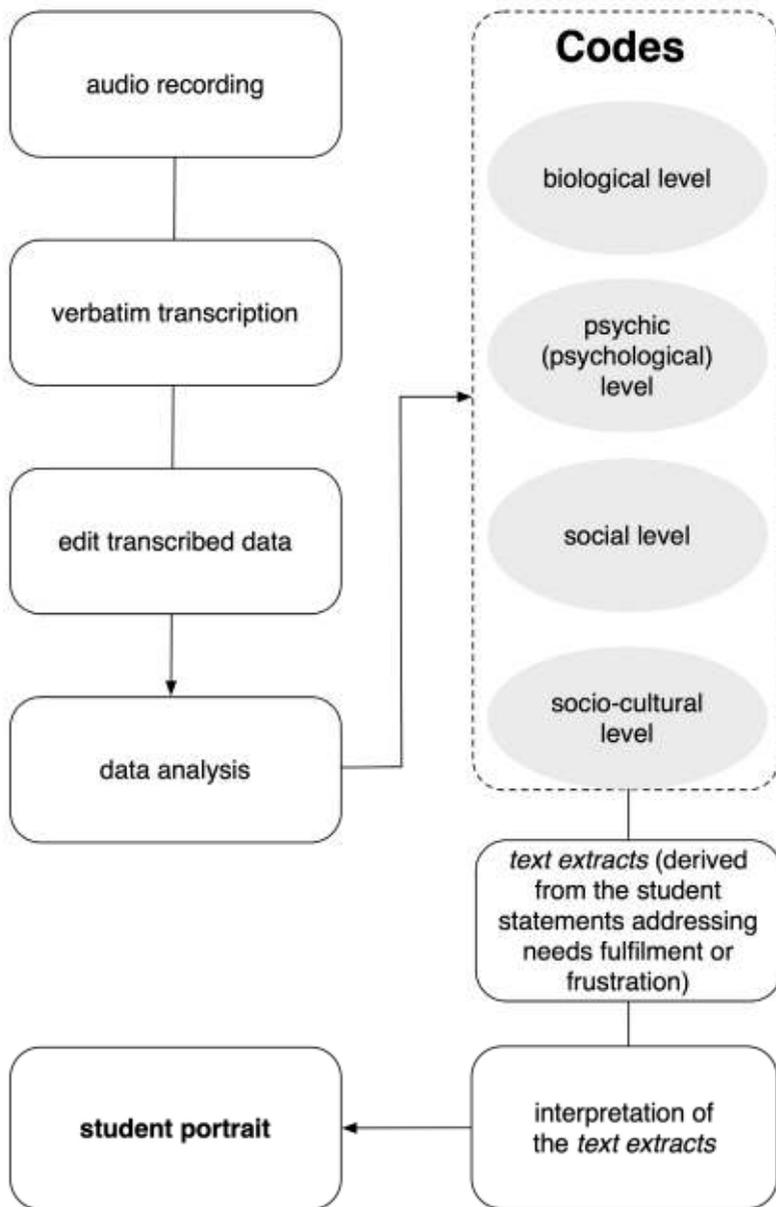
"In der Pause [dürfen wir Türkisch] auch nicht [sprechen]. Aber ich mache es trotzdem." (1_3: 245 – 247)

"[Konflikte in der Klasse werden gelöst] durch mit manchen reden. Bei Türken eine Schlägerei machen. Türken sind in unserem Land insgesamt voll dämlich. (1_9:194)

"[...] there are so many racist people at this school, who are mean to classmates from other countries. [...] There was a girl and at the beginning of the year and her surname on Facebook was "I eat Indians". They're this group that holds their breath when walking past Indians and stuff." (2_10:99 – 101)

In Figure 2, the workflow of the participant-based student analysis is illustrated. Step one is the audio recordings of the focus group interviews, as displayed in the top left rectangular box. In step two, the recordings were transcribed verbatim to keep the participant voice in the centre of the analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2009) (Ritchie, et al., 2014). In step three, the transcriptions were edited in preparation for the analysis. The edited transcriptions were analysed in step four using the software program f4analyse. They were sorted and labelled according to the school, i.e., 1_1 – 1_10 school Austria (CS_1) and 2_1 – 2_10 school Australia (CS_2). The text extracts were coded with the deductive category, shown in the grey box. The four need dimensions are displayed in the oval shapes sequenced from the top down. In step five, text extracts were exported to Microsoft Word and structured according to three social levels – student-classmate, student-class teacher and student-teaching staff – and assessed for reference to students' needs facilitation or hindrance. In step six, the text extracts were paraphrased and interpreted to bio-psycho-social and socio-cultural needs (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). A summary of the students' feelings of "belonging" or "not belonging" was drawn up from the interpretation of the text extracts from the student statements to complete the student portrait. It made the data manageable because it reduced it to the core issues demonstrated in the student portrait.

Figure 2: Process of the participant-based student analysis [author's own illustration]



The student portraits show that the text extracts from the student statements are distinguishable on three social levels (classmates, class teacher and teaching staff) and across the four dimensions (biological, psychic/psychological, social, or socio-cultural). This means that the coding system used was a reliable approach to sort, code, and reduce the data and detect patterns of “need to belong” fulfilment at school. Because the data analysis is qualitative, it is about a deep dive into the student statements. In the first data analysis, there were interesting trends which, in brief, show the following tendencies:

- text extracts foremostly coded in the psychic/psychological and social dimension on the student-classmate levels. The coding of text statements to the socio-cultural dimension of the student-classmate level followed. Notably, this tendency is similar across the focus group interviews in the same school and across the schools.
- text extracts are foremostly coded on the social levels of the classmates. Notably, this tendency is similar across the focus group interviews. There are age-related differences in the second social level: the age group 12-13 in CS_1 indicates text extracts foremostly coded on the social level of the class teacher. The age group, 14-15 in CS_1, indicates text extracts foremostly coded on the social level of the teaching staff. In CS_2, across both age groups 12-13 and 14-15, text extracts are foremostly coded on the social level of the teaching staff.
- text extracts foremostly coded to biological needs facilitation in CS_2 in the age group 12-13.
- text extracts foremostly interpreted as needs hindrance about the social level of the classmates in CS_1. This concerns the focus group interview with second-language German participants about the psychic need for orientation and social norms or rules.
- text extracts where the main actors relate to the participants’ feelings of “belonging” (as captured in the student portrait summary) are indicated as the classmates.

The following section addresses the second part of the data analysis. It focuses on the whole group analysis, a meso-level analysis of the focus group data.

6.4 Whole group analysis

“Whole group analysis” is the term used by Spencer et al. (2014, pp. 340–341) for analysing the focus group participants’ discussion threads on the meso- or social group level. These verbal exchanges between the participants concern explanations about their ideas, opinions and intentions in association with access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment, as expressed in response to the question framework. In a practical sense, this meant examining the focus

group interview transcripts and identifying text segments relevant to the aims of the current study and research questions. In contrast, the first part of the data analysis discussed in subsection 6.2 was concerned with tracing each student statement that involved the individual students' "need to belong" in the context of facilitation or hindrance. As such, it is because individuals have needs that necessitated a data-analysis approach to identify and trace statements in the focus group transcriptions concerning the needs of each student. The first part of the data analysis was the development of participant-based student portraits, with a summary of the students' feeling of belonging.

The second part of the data analysis, as previously mentioned, borrows from Spencer et al. (2014, pp. 340–341), employing the term whole group analysis as the process of structuring the data from the focus group transcriptions into theory-led main categories – these are referred to as organisation (ORG) categories, and subcategories. The categories and subcategories were generated deductively from the research question and sub-questions. It was about developing a rigorous data-analysis process and the related techniques to render more manageable the large amount of data generated through the focus group interviews. In doing so, the data was sorted and structured through a series of phases (Table 19). Similarly, the structured content-analysis approach developed by (Kuckartz, 2016) proved helpful in structuring and reducing the amount of data by identifying key themes relevant to the aims and research questions. In addition, this data-structuring process allowed for a combination of deductively driven categories derived from the research question and sub-questions and inductively generated conceptual themes derived directly from the data.

The whole group meso-level analysis proceeded through seven phases adapted from Kuckartz's (2016, p. 100) sequence of structured-content analysis. It commenced with the initial coding of around 25% of the data to test the robustness of the analysis coding framework. This was modified through a second review of the data while checking for overlaps and duplications of conceptual themes. The aim was to develop a structured and transparent approach and as objective as possible in identifying similarities, differences and gaps in the data concerning the research question and sub-questions. The structure allowed for a concise and rigorous analysis which helped get to the core of the participants' issues. Similarly, the discussion threads took centre stage in the analysis, which meant that much care was required in identifying and reflecting on the assumptions at different stages of the analysis. For example, to determine the participant's discussion threads, it was necessary to completely shift the focus from the individual student statements to the discussions around these statements.

Table 21 illustrates the seven phases of the whole group analysis structuring technique that I used that were based on Kuckartz (2016). The basic idea of content analysis is a category-based analysis which means the analysis of

the empirical material to reduce the amount of data and form categories of the core themes (Kuckartz, 2012, pp. 72–77). It comprises researcher familiarisation with the data and culminates with the answering of the research questions and sub-questions. Kuckartz’s (2012, 2016) approach to data analysis is structured and clear because it distinguishes between the steps that are required to undertake an in-depth examination of the data, sorting, categorising and data reduction to locate the core themes. The trial run at sorting and establishing themes from the transcriptions showed that the “paraphrasing” step did not benefit the data analysis process or facilitate a deeper dive into the core of the text (Mayring, 2010; Kuckartz, 2016). Thus, the paraphrasing step of the structuring technique was omitted. As the text extracts were not complicated in their semantic structure or content, this was the rationale behind this decision. Hence, the text segments were extracted from the transcriptions used directly to develop themes and categories without the additional step of paraphrasing. This approach is supported by Kuckartz (2016, pp. 92–93) in his example of establishing categories directly from the data.

Table 20: Seven-phase whole group analysis-structuring technique [author’s own illustration of Kuckartz (2016, p. 100)]

First phase	Second phase	Third phase	Fourth phase	Fifth phase	Sixth phase	Seventh phase
(re)familiarisation with the data	main categories, subcategories and conceptual themes	testing the category system	modification of the category system	coding all data with the revised category system	focus group related thematic summary	presentation of results, explanations and answer the research questions

In Table 20, the *first phase*, according to Kuckartz (2012, 2016) concerns (re)familiarisation with the data, with the (re)set in parentheses for transparency purposes to show prior familiarisation with the data used to trace the individual student statements that addressed Obrecht’s (2009, p. 27) list of needs:

- 1) interview transcriptions were (re)read.
- 2) data relevant to the research questions and aims were selected (participant responses to warm-up questions about hobbies were omitted, as they were not relevant to the research questions or aims).
- 3) eye-catching data; irregularities were identified.

The *second phase* of the analysis shifted to the verbal exchanges between the participants, which required a period of (re)familiarisation with the data before the initial development of the main categories, subcategories and the conceptual themes. Point 7) extends Kuckartz’s (2012, 2016) content analysis approach to establish if the participants agreed or disagreed. This was an additional point of reference to identify possible patterns in the conversation threads:

- organisational categories (ORG) (names or “*Bezeichnung*”, (Kuckartz, 1999, p. 77) were developed from the overarching research question.
- subcategories were developed from the sub-questions.
- definitions were specified for each ORG and the subcategories, with examples of prototypical quotes from the focus group transcriptions.
- the unit of analysis was the threads of discussion between participants. The smallest text segment was a portion of a coherent text line, for example: *Everyone’s different in their own way [...]. (2_2: 63).*
- the same text segment was assigned to more than one subcategory, the cross-checked to determine the category that best suited the content of the text segment.
- the data coded to ORG and subcategories were checked to identify inductive conceptual themes.
- insight was gained into the discussion among participants about satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment. The points they agreed or disagreed on were checked to identify patterns in the data.
- confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms for people and places the participants spoke about.
- data were coded and analysed in the original language, German (CS_1) and English (CS_2), so that the original statement was not compromised through translation, and to maintain the validity of the data (Maxwell, 2012, pp. 144–145).

The *third phase* concerned the testing of the category system Kuckartz (2012, 2016):

25% of data were coded by sorting and allocating the relevant text segments to ORG and subcategories.

- a check was done to ensure data was coded to identify inductive conceptual themes.

Coded text segments related to each other were grouped, and an applicable term was identified for the inductive conceptual themes. This was referred to as a generic term because it fitted as a broad label to group text segments into a common theme – thus reducing the number of inductive conceptual themes and rendering the analysis of the data manageable.

The *fourth phase* entailed modification of the category system:

- data predicted not to fit was examined, thereby checking the inductive conceptual themes.
- inductive conceptual themes were modified.

The *fifth phase* was coding all data with the revised category system:

- the remaining data (75%) was reduced into manageable chunks.
- an analysis coding framework (ORG, subcategories and inductively generated conceptual themes) was applied and theme fit was checked by examining the data predicted not to fit.

The *sixth phase* was an in-between step that entailed the focus group related thematic summary. This step was tried out on data text segments in the test phase. As the text segments from the discussion threads among the focus group participants in the transcriptions were short, i.e., not complicated in their semantic structure or content, no additional benefit for the data analysis process by paraphrasing each text segment in my own words could be identified. It was thus feasible to keep the text segments in their original form, i.e., get to the core of the content of the text segment and allocate the segment to a category (Kuckartz, 2016, pp. 91–92)

The *seventh phase* concerned the presentation of results, explanations and answers to the research questions:

- identify linkages between the social system structures⁴³ of the school: the class (class-level), the teachers (teacher level and teaching staff level) and school social system (school management level and school social work level) to generate hypotheses about the interrelation of the participants and the members of these social system levels (on the meso-level) concerning text segments about participants' access to satisfiers (the inductively generated conceptual themes).
- identify, describe and explain aspects of student language, age, sex and satisfiers for “need to belong” in and across the schools.

6.5 Whole group analysis coding framework

In a first step towards developing the content analysis coding framework, the following overarching research question and sub-questions were the basis for the three main categories, referred to as organisational (ORG) categories and the subcategories:

How do students describe their positive and negative feelings about the possibility or impossibility for the satisfaction⁴⁴ of the “need to belong” in the class and in the school system?

43 Structure is the property of systems (Bunge, 2003b, p. 227).

44 Requires access to satisfiers which is the focus of the second data analysis.

- 1) *How do students describe the satisfaction of their “need to belong” the class, the teachers and the school system?*
- 2) *Do the students have plans or strategies to overcome the frustration of their “need to belong”? To what social level do they refer: class – teacher – school?*

ORG 1 and subcategories 1a and 1b are about the social conditions for students’ “need to belong” at school. The term “social conditions” means access to satisfiers, i.e., resources such as the interactions and social relationships with peers, teachers and school staff. Text segments in the transcripts that refer to the **participants’ feelings** were sorted and coded in the process of content analysis:

ORG 1: student positive or negative feelings about satisfiers for the “need to belong” on two social levels

- 1) subcategory 1a feelings about satisfiers on the social level of the classmates
- 2) subcategory 1b feelings about satisfiers on the social level of the school

ORG 2 and the subcategory 2a, 2b and 2c concern student **access to satisfiers** on three social levels: classmates, teachers and the social system which comprises school management, school social work (CS_1) and the wellbeing counsellors (CS_2):

ORG 2: students’ description/s of the “need to belong” satisfaction on three social levels

- 1) subcategory 2a access to satisfiers on the social level of the classmates
- 2) subcategory 2b access to satisfiers on the social level of the teachers
- 3) subcategory 2c access to satisfiers on the social level of the school

ORG 3 and the subcategory 3a, 3b and 3c concerns student **plans or strategies** to overcome the “need to belong” frustration on three social levels: classmates, teachers and the social system. The latter comprises school management, school social work (CS_1) and the wellbeing counsellors (CS_2):

ORG 3: student plans or strategies to overcome the “need to belong” frustration on three social levels

- 1) subcategory 3a strategies and plans on the social level of the classmates
- 2) subcategory 3b strategies and plans on the social level of the teachers
- 3) subcategory 3c strategies and plans on the social level of the school

The students in both schools spoke about interactions with peers from outside their class cohorts, such as their year-level peers, friends from other year-levels and peers in senior year levels. The decision not to make a separate social level for this data, but rather to include it in the social level of the school, is because few such data segments warranted a standalone subcategory for “other stu-

dents”. Similarly, students expressed their feelings in discussions about their interactions and social relationships with classmates but less about the teachers in ORG 1. Hence, two subcategories were determined: classmates and the school social system. The latter concerns text segments regarding the interactions and social relations with other students, class teachers, teaching staff, school management, school social work (CS_1) or the wellbeing counsellors (CS_2).

Figure 3 illustrates the whole group analysis-coding framework. The text box in the first row from the top of the figure downwards defines the focus of the analysis. The second row displays ORG 1, student feelings about satisfiers, ORG 2, student access to satisfiers, and ORG 3, the strategies or goals the participants discussed to overcome hindrances to their access to resources for “need to belong” fulfilment. The third row displays the subcategories linked with arrows to the different social levels, i.e., class, school, teacher. The subcategories are connected with arrows to the fourth row. This row contains the themes that were generated inductively from the data to indicate the resources or satisfiers for “need fulfilment” and the (dis)satisfiers or hindrances of “need to belong” fulfilment.

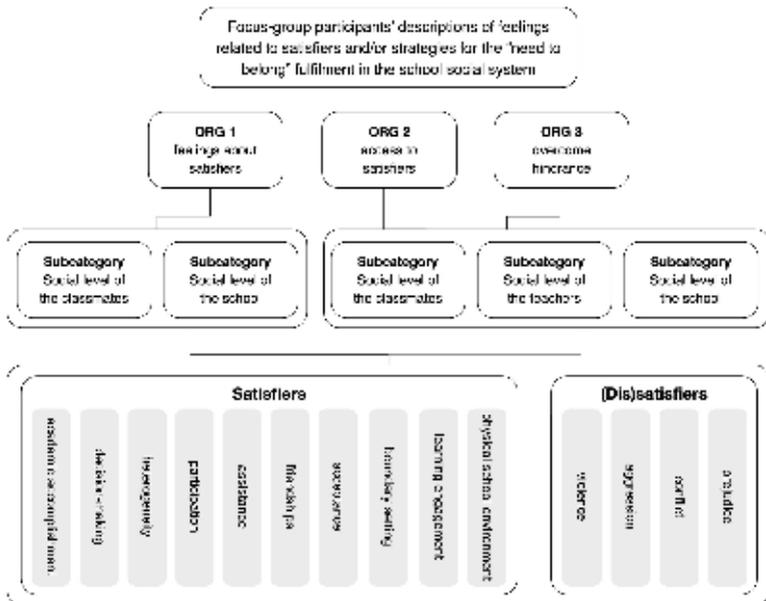
In Figure 3, the overarching topic of this second data analysis was the students’ descriptions of feelings related to satisfiers and strategies, structured into ORG 1-3 and subcategories deductively generated from the research question and sub-questions. In this way, the data were sorted by looking for social patterns and allocating the relevant text segments to the ORG and subcategories. The data that cohered were clustered under a broad label. In the process, the text segments were sorted into manageable clusters to reduce the data. The focus was discussion threads that concerned the exchange among participants about everyday school. Topics outside of school, such as leisure time or other out-of-school activities, were irrelevant and were omitted from the analysis. Broad labels for similar data were grouped under a clear and distinct conceptual theme. This resulted in the fusion of conceptual themes. The data were cross-checked for fit with the conceptual theme.

Table 21 illustrates the conceptual themes that were inductively generated from the data that indicated the satisfiers and (dis)satisfiers of student “need to belong” fulfilment.

Table 21: Indication of the satisfiers and (dis)satisfiers of “need to belong” fulfillment.

Satisfiers	(dis)satisfiers
1) physical school environment	11) prejudice
2) learning engagement	12) conflict
3) boundary setting	13) aggression
4) acceptance	14) violence
5) friendships	
6) assistance	
7) participation	
8) heterogeneity	
9) decision-making	
10) academic accomplishment	

Figure 3: Whole group analysis structure of the codebook with satisfiers and (dis)satisfiers [author's own illustration]



The following sections clarify definitions and prototypical examples of the organisational categories. Prototypical examples from the transcriptions are included in each of the ORG tables (cf. Table 22–Table 24), which were selected because they were unambiguous, i.e., they are clear examples from the transcriptions for the respective category.

ORG 1: Students’ descriptions of positive, indifferent and/or negative feelings about satisfiers for the “need to belong”.

Definition: ORG 1 comprises statements and discussion threads among student participants in the focus group interviews about feelings associated with satisfiers for the “need to belong”. Satisfiers or the means of satisfying the “need to belong” refer to the social conditions for satisfaction, understood as material and immaterial resources. The “need to belong” is biopsychic and social need tensions that encompass emotions self-described by at least one participant to indicate how they feel about the interactions and social relationships with the class cohort or school system. Feelings are defined as emotions that are triggered by mental processes in the limbic system (Bunge, 2003b, p. 83) and indicate the person’s mental state concerning pleasure – for example, joy, gratitude or enjoyment – or concerning anger – for example, agitation, annoyance or fear.

Table 22 illustrates the operationalisation of students’ descriptions of their feelings about satisfiers for the “need to belong”. The coding guidelines are presented for: 1a) feelings about satisfiers on the social level of the class, and 1b) feelings about satisfiers on the social level of the school. Similarly, definitions are provided for the term’s satisfiers, class cohort, interactions and social relations. The original text segments generated in CS_1 are italicised in German. This is followed by non-italicised English translations labelled “[translation by the author]”. The original text segments generated in CS_2 are italicised in English.

Table 22: Students' descriptions of feelings about satisfiers for the "need to belong"

Definition: Statements and discussion threads among student participants in positive, indifferent and/or negative feelings about satisfiers for the "need to belong".		
Definition	1a) feelings about satisfiers on the social level of the class cohort	1b) feelings about satisfiers in the school social system
	<p>Comprises statements related to student feelings about satisfiers on the social level of the class in the interactions and social relationships with the other classmates as members of the class cohort.</p> <p>Satisfiers are resources for need fulfilment, e.g., the social condition for the satisfaction of individual needs (Obrecht, 2005b, p. 41).</p> <p>Access to satisfiers can be facilitated through the exchange relationship between two or more classmates.</p> <p>The class cohort is a social level or social subsystem of the more extensive school social system. It comprises individual classmates, who, in turn, are the students in the same homeroom. The constellation of the class (as a social system) changes for some of the electives, as not all students in a homeroom class take the same electives. The class has emergent properties, which means the spontaneous development of new properties owing to the interaction of the components of a social system that the individual students, or members, do not have as individuals. Each student has a limbic system that triggers mental processes (Bunge, 2003b). This is not the case with the class cohort, a social system, and not a biopsychic individual with a brain.</p> <p>Interactions are physical and social acts of two or more individuals when they are mutually focused on each other (ibid., p. 150). The acts can be in-person or through notes or letters, telephone calls or texts, or social media.</p> <p>Social relationships refer to the bonds between people formed and maintained because human beings are social beings. Social systems are formed through the formation and maintenance of social relationships between individuals. Through the structure of a social system, the positions of the individuals in that system are determined.</p>	<p>Comprises statements and discussion threads among students about access to satisfiers to meet the "need to belong" in the interactions and social relationships within the school system.</p> <p>The term school social system is used interchangeably with social level of the school. It is understood as a social system with the components or members: students (other than the class cohort members), social workers/wellbeing counsellors and school management which comprises the year-level coordinators, faculty leaders, administrative staff, vice-principal and the principal.</p>
Prototypical examples	<p>MARTIN: <i>Unsere Klassensprecherin will alles nur ausnützen. [...] Das finden wir einfach nicht gut.</i></p> <p>ERIKA: <i>Es geht mir auch so, dass ich mir Sorgen mache (weil unsere Klassensprecherin sich überall einmischt).</i> (1_1: 57 – 58)</p> <p>MARTIN: <i>Our class representative just wants to take advantage of everything. [...] We just don't think that's good.</i></p> <p>ERIKA: <i>It's the same for me, I'm worried (because our class representative interferes in everything).</i> (1_1: 57 – 58) [translation by the author]</p>	<p>DILAY: <i>Außerdem finde ich es voll blöd, dass in der Klasse, dass wir in der Schule, neben dem Lehrer oder in der Pause, nicht Türkisch reden dürfen.</i></p> <p>NURAY: <i>Wir reden trotzdem [...]</i></p> <p>EMEL: <i>Da kriegen wir Hausordnung [...].</i> (1_2:24 – 26)</p> <p>DILAY: <i>Also, I think it's really stupid that we're not allowed to speak Turkish in the class, at school, next to the teacher or at recess.</i></p> <p>NURAY: <i>We talk anyway [...].</i></p> <p>EMEL: <i>That's when we get [to write out] the school rules [...].</i> (1_2: 24 – 26) [translation by the author]</p>

ORG 2: Student descriptions of the possibility or impossibility to access satisfiers for the "need to belong".

Definition: ORG 2 comprises statements and discussion threads among student participants in the focus group interviews that relate to descriptions of

their thoughts, the understanding and comprehension about the possibility or impossibility to access satisfiers for the “need to belong” concerning the classmates, teachers and the school social system.

Table 23 illustrates the operationalisation of students’ descriptions about access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment. The coding guidelines are presented for: 2a) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” concerning the class, 2b) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” pertaining to the class teacher, and 2c) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong”, concerning the social level of the school. Similarly, definitions are provided for the terms satisfier, class teacher, school system/social level of the school.

Table 23: Students’ descriptions about access to satisfiers for the “need to belong”

Definition: Statements and discussion threads among students about access satisfiers for the “need to belong” in reference to the class, class teacher and the school system.			
	2a) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” with reference to the class cohort	2b) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” with reference to teachers	2c) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” with reference to the social level of the school
Definition	Comprises statements and discussion threads among students about access to satisfiers to meet the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships with the classmates as members of the class cohort.	Comprises statements and discussion threads among students about access to satisfiers to meet the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships with teacher/s. Teacher is the term for an educator who is appointed and responsible for teaching compulsory, optional and extracurricular subjects. This includes educators in various roles and levels of responsibility such as Klassenvorstand or Klassen- vorständin (CS_1) or home- room teacher (CS_2), teachers of one or more subjects, electives and includes substitute teachers in their locum capacity as freelancers or contract workers who are place- and time-bound.	Comprises statements and discussion threads among students about access to satisfiers to meet the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships with students (other than the class cohort members), social workers/wellbeing counsellors and school management, which encompasses the year-level coordinators, faculty leaders, administrative staff, vice-principal and the principal.
Prototypical examples	ASTUR: <i>We all bond in a way [...]</i> LAARNI: <i>No one hates each other. [...] you can talk to anyone in the class. [...]</i> ASTUR: <i>[...] Whenever we have this discussion, we're all on the same page. I think that's a way how we can bond. (2_6: 122 – 124)</i>	AZEM: <i>Wenn ich was sage, kann ich gleich hinausgehen. [...] Aber jeder redet. BORO: Dann sage ich. „nur, weil ich Ausländer bin“ dann sagt er [Klassenlehrer] „ja genau“. (1_7: 71 – 72)</i> DARAN: <i>[...]Wenn man was Schlechtes macht, wird man gleich beurteilt [...]</i> BORO: <i>Das stimmt schon, [...] der Lehrer redet mit [...] ich soll gleich nachsitzen am Freitag oder die Hausordnung abschreiben, [...]. Er lässt uns gar nicht reden [...]. (1_7: 255 – 256)</i>	KADIR: <i>[...] Beim Unterricht, wenn man ein bisschen schwätzt, tun die Lehrerinnen nichts, schreiben sie halt, aber wenn der Direktor kommt und ein Ausländer so quatscht, dann tut er etwas Brutales [...]. ASIL: Was hat er gemacht? KADIR: Ich wollte etwas sagen, er [Direktor] hat mich nicht ausreden lassen, und er hat mich bei der Hand gepackt und vollhinausgezogen. ASIL: Ja, wir wissen wohl, wer der Direktor in der Schule ist. (1_4: 150 – 153)</i> KADIR: <i>[...] In class, when you talk a little bit, the teachers</i>

Definition: Statements and discussion threads among students about access satisfiers for the “need to belong” in reference to the class, class teacher and the school system.			
Definition	2a) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” with reference to the class cohort	2b) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” with reference to teachers	2c) access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” with reference to the social level of the school
	Comprises statements and discussion threads among students about access to satisfiers to meet the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships with the classmates as members of the class cohort.	Comprises statements and discussion threads among students about access to satisfiers to meet the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships with teacher/s. Teacher is the term for an educator who is appointed and responsible for teaching compulsory, optional and extracurricular subjects. This includes educators in various roles and levels of responsibility such as Klassenvorstand or Klassen- vorständin (CS_1) or home- room teacher (CS_2), teachers of one or more subjects, electives and includes substitute teachers in their locum capacity as freelancers or contract workers who are place- and time-bound.	Comprises statements and discussion threads among students about access to satisfiers to meet the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships with students (other than the class cohort members), social workers/wellbeing counsellors and school management, which encompasses the year-level coordinators, faculty leaders, administrative staff, vice-principal and the principal.
		<i>AZEM: If I say something, I am sent right out. [...] But everybody talks. BORO: Then I say, “just because I’m a foreigner” then he [class teacher] says “yeah right”. (1_7: 71 – 72). DARAN: [...] If you do something bad, you are judged right away [...]. BORO: That’s true, [...] the teacher talks to [...] I’m supposed to have detention right away on Friday or write the school rules, [...]. He doesn’t let us talk at all [...]. (1_7: 255 – 256) [translation by the author]</i>	<i>don’t do anything, they just shout, but when the principal comes and a foreigner talks like that, he does something brutal [...]. ASIL: What did he do? KADIR: I wanted to say something, he [principal] didn’t let me finish and he grabbed me by the hand and pulled me out. ASIL: Yeah, I guess we know who the principal is in the school. (1_4: 150 – 153) [translation by the author]</i>

ORG 3: Student strategies and plans to overcome hindrance in access to satisfiers for the “need to belong”.

Definition: ORG 3 comprises statements and discussion threads among student participants in the focus group interviews. They relate to descriptions of student aims, goals and hopes for need satisfaction, as well as the skills and knowledge about the social norms to manage new and repetitive situations that impact their access to resources to meet the “need to belong” in association with the classmates, teachers and the social level of the school.

Table 24 illustrates the operationalisation of students’ descriptions of plans and strategies for access to resources to meet their “need to belong”. The coding guidelines are presented for: 3a) strategies and plans to access satisfiers on

the social level of the class for the “need to belong”, 3b) strategies and plans for the “need to belong”, regarding the class teacher, and 3c) strategies and plans for the “need to belong”, concerning the school system. Similarly, definitions are provided for the terms plan and strategy.

Table 24: Student descriptions of strategies and plans for the “need to belong”

Definition: Statements and discussion threads among student participants in the focus group interviews about plans and strategies for access to satisfiers with reference to the class, teachers and the school system.			
Definition	3a) plans and strategies to access satisfiers on the social level of the class cohort for the “need to belong”	3b) plans and strategies for the “need to belong” satisfiers on the social level of the teacher	3c) plans and strategies for the “need to belong” on the social level of the school
	<p>Comprises statements and discussion threads among students related to plans and strategies for the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships with the classmates.</p> <p>Plan is a sequence of steps geared towards conceptual or practical problem-solving (Bunge, 2003b, p. 214).</p> <p>Strategy concerns the realisation of an objective and shapes the plan’s details because different trajectories are considered in selecting the most viable option to obtain the desired result.</p>	<p>Comprises statements and discussion threads among students related to plans and strategies for the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships with the class teacher.</p>	<p>Comprises statements and discussion threads among students related to plans and strategies for the “need to belong” in the interactions and social relationships on the social level of the school.</p>
Prototypical examples	<p><i>EREN: [...] wir nehmen es auch nicht so ernst [wenn die KlassenkameradInnen über uns lachen], wir lachen einfach zusammen, hinten in der Klasse.</i></p> <p><i>DARAN: [...]. Nicht ernst nehmen. Deswegen sage ich nichts. (1_7: 50 – 51)</i></p> <p><i>EREN: [...] we don't take it so seriously either [when classmates laugh at us], we all just laugh at the back of the class.</i></p> <p><i>THERE: [...]. Not taking it seriously. That's why I don't say anything. (1_7: 50 – 51)</i> [translation by the author]</p> <p><i>SHELLY: [...]. You just have to go on with it [and be nice to the popular girls], or else [they can be mean].</i></p> <p><i>DANI: But if you feed it to them then they get bigger headed</i></p> <p><i>SHELLY: Yeah. DANI: They know but if you are mean, then you're in for it.” (2_10: 154 – 157)</i></p>	<p><i>DILAY: Ich finde eigentlich Noten [sehr wichtig]. [...] Man sollte schon lernen.</i></p> <p><i>SILA: Auch, wenn du gelernt hast und schlechte Noten bekommst?</i></p> <p><i>DILAY: Dann müssen wir mehr lernen [wenn wir schlechte Noten haben]. Es gibt Nachhilfe. Es gibt ein Notenschlüssel und auf dem Notenschlüssel schauen sie [die Lehrpersonen]. (1_2: 125 – 127)</i></p> <p><i>DILAY: I actually think grades are [very important] [...] You should study.</i></p> <p><i>SILA: Even if you studied and get bad grades? DILAY: Then we have to study more [when we get bad grades]. There is tutoring. There is a grading scale and they [the teachers] focus on the grading scale. (1_2: 125 – 127)</i> [translation by the author]</p>	<p><i>ZOE: Go to the coordinators, they should know; they can tell you why the changes are happening [school time].</i></p> <p><i>SANITE: Why is it happening?</i></p> <p><i>ZOE: Who knows. If it's going to be better for us, but I don't think it is. (2_8: 61 – 63)</i></p>

Table 25 illustrates the conceptual theme number, label, definition, and prototypes of inductively generated conceptual themes.⁴⁵ These range from theme 1 to 7. They were generated from the focus group transcriptions on the social levels of the class cohort, teachers, and the school’s social level, which is made up of the other students who are not members of the class cohort and school social work/wellbeing counsellors as well as the school management. Prototypical examples from the transcriptions are included in each of the conceptual themes (Table 25–Table 29), selected because they were unambiguous, i.e., clear examples from the transcriptions for the respective category.

Table 25: Conceptual themes identified through hypothetical induction

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7
Physical school environment	Learning engagement	Boundary setting	Acceptance	Friendship	Assistance	Participation
Is characterised as the school building and its contents – for example, the classrooms, furniture, fixtures, technology and playground and facilities such as bathroom, library, canteen, gym and oval.	Is characterised as student involvement in the learning process which includes issues around class and homework assignments.	Is characterised as social norms and rules that set limitations on the actions of the individual student and members of the class cohort as a social level or social subsystem of the school social system.	Is characterised as the tacit understanding or agreement between two individuals or an individual and members of a social group about each other’s actions. The social exchanges are positive and largely reciprocal.	Is characterised as mutual engagement and interest in each other, marked by concern and voluntary interdependence.	Is characterised as supportive action by two individuals or an individual and members of a social group.	Is characterised as goal directed involvement in actions and decisions that affect all aspects of their lives.

Table 26: Prototypical examples of the conceptual themes 1-7: Classmate social level

Theme 1 Physical school environment	<p><i>LEX: It’s crowded in class ‘cause everyone’s talking and not really paying attention during class time.</i></p> <p><i>JUN: When there’s more people, then it’s quieter outside. It’s better in the smaller classes. (2_7: 107 – 108)</i></p>
Theme 2 Learning engagement	<p><i>MARTIN: Es gibt Schüler, wenn sie schlechte Noten haben, tun sie immer so cool. [...] Aber, danach motzen sie andere an nur, weil sie wegen den schlechten Noten sauer sind.</i></p> <p><i>MARIA: [...] Sie sind nur neidisch auf dich. Aus dir wird mal was aber, was wir aus denen? (1_1:128 – 129)</i></p> <p><i>MARTIN: There are students, when they get bad grades, they always act so cool. [...] But, afterwards, they bitch at others just because they’re mad about the bad grades.</i></p> <p><i>MARIA: [...] They are just jealous of you. You’re going to be somebody, but what will they become? (1_1:128 – 129)[translation by the author]</i></p>

45 The term “induction” refers to the themes 1-7 that were data driven, i.e., determined by the data. The themes translate to the satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfillment.

Theme 3 Boundary setting	<p><i>BARIS: Manche Schüler [in der Klasse] halten einfach die Regeln für unwichtig.</i></p> <p><i>MARTIN: [...] [Klassenkameraden] machen bei Wahlen mit. Wenn man einen Stimmzettel macht oder so, tun sie einfach voll blöd. Sie machen zum Beispiel etwas extra, damit jemand nicht als Klassensprecher wählt wird. Dann macht derjenige nichts. Nur damit jemand anders es nicht werden kann. (1_1:52 – 53)</i></p> <p><i>BARIS: Some students [in the class] just don't think the rules are important.</i></p> <p><i>MARTIN: [...] [class-mates] participate in elections. When you do a ballot or something, they just act full of silliness. For example, they do something extra so that someone doesn't get elected as class president. Then that person doesn't do anything. Just so that someone else can't be it. (1_1: Paragraph 52 – 53) [translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 4 Acceptance	<p><i>MARIA: Das ist wurscht [ob alle denselben Meinung sind]. Man kann doch alles ausdiskutieren.</i></p> <p><i>PATRICK: Wieso ist es wurscht?</i></p> <p><i>MARIA: weil der eine seine Meinungen hat und der andere eine andere Meinung und er lässt es halt so.</i></p> <p><i>PATRICK: Na, das müssen wir machen.</i></p> <p><i>MARTIN: Na ja, jeder hat seine eigene Meinung.</i></p> <p><i>MARIA: Ja eben. (1_1:81 – 87)</i></p> <p><i>MARIA: It doesn't matter [whether everyone is of the same opinion]. You can discuss everything, can't you?</i></p> <p><i>PATRICK: Why doesn't it matter?</i></p> <p><i>MARIA: Because someone has his opinion and someone else has a different opinion and he just leaves it that way.</i></p> <p><i>PATRICK: Well, we have to do that.</i></p> <p><i>MARTIN: Well, everybody has his own opinion.</i></p> <p><i>MARIA: Yes, exactly. (1_1:81 – 87) [translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 5 Friendship	<p><i>DUC: If [...] English is not your first language, it's hard to make a conversation [...] it's hard to find a friend in class.</i></p> <p><i>LEX: You need to know something about the person to have something in common.</i></p> <p><i>MATE: [...] People have good friendships have a few things in common [...] or it'll just be boring.</i></p> <p><i>LEX: You need something to talk about.</i></p> <p><i>DRACO: If [...] you and him or her got the same interests, you can talk to them. (2_7: 89 – 93)</i></p>
Theme 6 Assistance	<p><i>HERA: [...] Everybody's nice to you. They're all the same and everyone gets you. It feels really good to have people who actually know that there are people that like what you like, and that are like you. Not just people that are completely different.</i></p> <p><i>BONG: [...] When you do something wrong and they [...] might encourage you or support you. It really helps. It's like you can talk to them and everything. (2_2: 169 – 170)</i></p>
Theme 7 Participation	<p><i>MATE: The whole class gets involved in the argument and takes sides.</i></p> <p><i>JUN: It would be if someone had valid response to it, or whatever. People would go with them and say: "Oh, he's right".</i></p> <p><i>MATE: If you agree with one person's idea, you'd go to them. If you disagreed with their idea, and the group of the other person, then you go to them.</i></p> <p><i>JUN: If you disagree with both, you just sit there and watch. (2_7: 100 – 103)</i></p>

Table 27: Prototypical examples of the conceptual themes 1-7: Teacher social level

Theme 1	Physical school environment	<p>BELEM: Die Schule ist voll hässlich. Man fühlt sich nicht wohl so. ANDRE: Ich fühle mich, wie im Gefängnis. BELEM: Wenn man so das Gymnasium so kennt, so weiß und sauber, voll schön.</p> <p>MICHAEL: Dort gibt es eine Cafeteria [...]</p> <p>BELEM: Die Lehrer sagen immer, dass die Stadt kein Geld hat [...] (1_5: 278 – 282)</p> <p>BELEM: The school is completely ugly. You don't feel well like that.</p> <p>ANDRE: I feel like I'm in prison. BELEM: If you know the high school, it's so white and clean, so nice.</p> <p>MICHAEL: There is a cafeteria [...].</p> <p>BELEM: The teachers always say that the municipality has no money [...] (1_5: 278 – 282) [translation by the author]</p>
Theme 2	Learning engagement	<p>MIKE: [...] In high school I'm dying with homework. I've got six projects at once.</p> <p>JENO: [...] They gave us about 50 things to do in about five minutes and they are all for homework.</p>
Theme 3	Boundary setting	<p>MONIKA: Du hast gar keine Chance. Die Lehrer sind einfach viel zu streng [...].</p> <p>SOPHIA: Du hast die Arschkarte gezogen mit diesen Lehrern. (1_9: 270 – 271)</p> <p>MONIKA: You don't stand a chance. The teachers are just too strict [...].</p> <p>SOPHIA: You've got it all wrong with these teachers. [translation by the author]</p> <p>TINA: I hate it when teachers [...] make the whole grade stay in.</p> <p>FRED: [...] It's like the homeroom teacher couldn't be bothered to work out who's making the noise and who's doing their work. Everyone just cops it. (2_3: 45 – 46)</p>
Theme 4	Acceptance	<p>THOMAS: [...] The teachers are good. They let you talk about stuff (with friends) [...].</p> <p>JULIAN: Some of the teachers let us listen to music (...) that helps me be focused on the things we're doing like learning and reading and that. (2_4: 83 – 87)</p>
Theme 5	Friendship	<p>THOMAS: I learn more from teachers that you kind of have a friendship relationship (with). You seem to respect them. THOMAS: But when they (teachers) usually just yell at you, and just say you feel this is fun, let's do it more. (2_4: 181 – 182)</p>
Theme 6	Assistance	<p>THOMAS: There will be a teacher who would always be "stop it", and another (teacher) who will just ignore it [...].</p> <p>BALE: That's Mr Mint, he doesn't care, Miss Trout does care.</p> <p>FARID: (Miss Daintree) cares lot about bullying and stuff, we really like her 'cause she cares. (2_4: 165 – 167)</p>
Theme 7	Participation	<p>THERESA: Man lacht, nur zum Spaß eigentlich. Wir können schon was sagen in der Klasse. Es Kommt darauf an, was man sagt.</p> <p>JULIAN: Man ruft eh meistens hinaus (während des Unterrichts). (1_10: 57 – 58)</p> <p>THERESA: You laugh, just for fun actually. We can say something in class. It depends on what you say.</p> <p>JULIAN: You call out most of the time anyway (during class). (1_10: 57 – 58) [translation by the author]</p>

Table 28: Prototypical examples of the conceptual themes 1-7: Social level of the school – other students

Theme 1	Physical school environment	<p><i>NUNG: I think it's because of the Year 12s running there, full on pushing and shoving. [...].</i></p> <p><i>TABATHA: [...] canteen sometimes you don't want to go there by yourself 'cause there could be people there [seniors] that shove when you're in line and stuff. (2_3: 18 – 19)</i></p>
Theme 2	Learning engagement	<p><i>SANITE: [...] High achievers stops this year. I'm going to be mixed up with everyone else next year. [...] I'd like to be in different classes with different people and make new friends (...).</i></p> <p><i>SORE: The people I hang around with at lunch, aren't the same people in my class. [...] They do their homework at recess. I just go on the oval (2_8: 202 – 203)</i></p>
Theme 3	Boundary setting	<p><i>THERESA: Ja viele Schüler wurden dieses Jahr suspendiert. [...]. JULIAN: Es sind Buben [...].</i></p> <p><i>THERESA: [...] Die [Mädchen] werden nicht suspendiert, weil sie sind halt nicht so schlimm. (1_10: 77-81)</i></p> <p><i>THERESA: Yes, many students were suspended this year. [...]. JULIAN: They are boys [...].</i></p> <p><i>THERESA: [...] The [girls] are not suspended because they are just not that bad. (1_10: 77 – 81) [translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 4	Acceptance	<p><i>AGNES: You feel happy when you're hanging around with new people that you've met at school kind of generally.</i></p> <p><i>KIM: [...] You feel that you fit in well because no one's being mean to you and you're getting along really well. (2_2:166 – 167)</i></p>
Theme 5	Friendship	<p><i>THERESA: [...] Ich habe schon immer andere Freunde aus anderen Klassen. (1_10: 128)</i></p> <p><i>THERESA: [...] I have always had other friends from other classes. (1_10:128)</i> [translation by the author]</p>
Theme 6	Assistance	<p><i>COOPER: I generally find that (when someone from another class gets picked on) [...] I just go and play with something else, friends and stuff.</i></p> <p><i>ROBERT: That's what a lot of people usually do. They don't want to lose their friendship because of a fight that you know someone else having. (2_9: 114 – 115)</i></p>
Theme 7	Participation	<p><i>DANI: Not even the year-level captains have say.</i></p> <p><i>SHELLY: [...] They never even got asked that. [...] went up to our year-level captains and told them to tell the principal we don't want to change it [uniform]. They were like, "We don't even have a say in it." (2_10: 35 – 39)</i></p>

Table 29: Prototypical examples of the conceptual themes 1-7: School social work/wellbeing counselors, school management social level of the school

Theme 1	Physical school environment	<p>LAARNI: <i>I like that you get more choices to choose what kind of club you want to join. So, there's music, sports and others [...]</i></p> <p>RES: <i>Can you go to extra tuition at this school?</i></p> <p>HUAN: <i>Yes, mostly it's on doors, windows around the school. It's written out. (2_6: 107 – 111)</i></p>
Theme 2	Learning engagement	<p>BELEM: <i>Wir müssten andere Lehrer haben, weil wir jeden Tag drei Stunden den Direktor haben, der uns nicht mehr unterrichten wollte.</i></p> <p>MICHAEL: <i>Herr [Direktor] ist voll schlimm. (1_5: 88 – 89)</i></p> <p>BELEM: <i>We would have to have other teachers because we have the principal every day for three hours who didn't want to teach us anymore.</i></p> <p>MICHAEL: <i>Mr. [principal] is totally bad. (1_5: 88 – 89)</i></p> <p><i>[translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 3	Boundary setting	<p>SUSAN: <i>Suspendiert.</i></p> <p>EVA: <i>Suspendierung, Trainingsraum.</i></p> <p>BELEM: <i>[...] die Schulsozialarbeiterin, dann übt sie mit uns, wie wir uns in der Klasse verhalten sollen. (1_5: 124 – 126)</i></p> <p>MERK: <i>Das Trainingsraum ist ein Raum in der Schule für Leute, die sich nicht benehmen</i></p> <p>CEM: <i>Ja, da war ich.</i></p> <p>MERK: <i>Oder [für Leute die sich] anscheinend nicht benehmen können.</i></p> <p>KATY: <i>Wenn jemand schon oft ermahnt wurde, füllt er einen Zettel aus und dann muss man dort etwas schreiben. (1_8: 43 – 46)</i></p> <p>SUSAN: <i>Suspended.</i></p> <p>EVA: <i>Suspension, training room.</i></p> <p>BELEM: <i>[...] the school social worker, then she practices how to behave with us in class. (1_5: 124 – 126)</i></p> <p>MERK: <i>The training room is a room in the school for people who don't behave themselves.</i></p> <p>CEM: <i>Yeah, that's where I was.</i></p> <p>MERK: <i>Or [for people who] can't seem to behave.</i></p> <p>KATY: <i>If someone has been warned a lot, they fill out a slip of paper and then you have to write things when you're there. (1_8: 43 – 46) [translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 4	Acceptance	<p>ZOE: <i>Go to the coordinators, they should know; they can tell you why the changes are happening.</i></p> <p>SANITE: <i>To find out why timetable changes are happening. (2_8: 61 – 62)</i></p>
Theme 5	Friendship	<p>PANG: <i>The wellbeing teachers go around to the classes and introduce themselves. They're like student friends and that's good because we kind of know who they are that way.</i></p> <p>ASTUR: <i>At the start of the year. LAARNI: They put up signs everywhere. It's all over the school, every room. (2_6: 75 – 77)</i></p>
Theme 6	Assistance	<p>FARID: <i>[...] coordinator and tell them and not just the normal teachers.</i></p> <p>THOMAS: <i>[...] They'll get suspended or something.</i></p> <p>FARID: <i>They (teachers) don't have enough power to stop older students from bullying us younger ones. They won't listen to them. [...] THOMAS: [...] They only send them to the coordinators. (2_4: 128 – 131)</i></p>
Theme 7	Participation	<p>SORA: <i>Yeah, [we have] a newsletter.</i></p> <p>FRAN: <i>Students get to write articles in that?</i></p> <p>SANITE: <i>If they're involved in something, they can report back on it, so the parents can read about it.</i></p> <p>ZOE: <i>That's so awesome [that we could write an article for the newsletter] and talk about stuff that's important for us. (2_8: 249 – 252)</i></p>

Table 30 illustrates the conceptual theme numbers, label, definition and prototypical example of inductively generated conceptual themes. These range from theme 8 to 14. They were generated from the focus group transcriptions on the social levels of the class cohort, teachers and social level of the school which is made up of the other students who are not members of the class cohort and school social work/wellbeing counsellors, as well as school management. Prototypical examples from the transcriptions are included in each of the conceptual themes (cf. Table 31– Table 34), selected because they were unambiguous, i.e., clear examples from the transcriptions for the respective category.

Table 30: Conceptual themes identified through hypothetical induction

Theme 8	Heterogeneity	Is characterised as variation in students' age, sex and socio-cultural background, i.e., language, ethnicity and citizenship/s that is perceived as positive in the class cohort and social level of the school by students and/or teachers and/or members of the school social system.
Theme 9	Decision-making	Is characterised as the engagement of two or more individuals or the members of a social group about views, opinions and expectations in a coordinated effort to achieve a shared goal.
Theme 10	Academic accomplishment	Is characterised as students' social and educational learning outcomes, such as subject and elective test results, and grades. Social learning outcomes applies to grades for behaviour CS_1 and teamwork grades.
Theme 11	Prejudice	Is characterised as the uncritical acceptance of an idea and/or belief about the attributes and/or behaviours of an individual and/or the member of a social group related to stereotypes about their ethnicity, language, citizenship, sex, age, etc.
Theme 12	Conflict	Is characterised as a serious dispute or disagreement between two and more individuals or members of social groups.
Theme 13	Aggression	Is characterised as implicit subtle gestures such as the cold shoulder or explicit actions of overt hostility by an individual or the members of a social group towards another individual or the members of a social group by teasing, ridicule, purposefully excluding them and/or picking on them.
Theme 14	Violence	Is characterised as a serious dispute or disagreement between two and more individuals or members of social group that incorporates the use of physical force that results in physical and/or psychic/psychological harm and injury.

Table 31 refers to the themes 8-10 that were data-driven, i.e., determined by the data and identified through hypothetical induction. The themes 8-10 translate to the satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment. The themes 11-14 translate to (de) satisfiers that hinder or obstruct “need to belong” fulfilment.

Table 31: Prototypical examples of the conceptual themes 8-14: Classmate social level

Theme 8	Heterogeneity	<p>SILA: [...] Ich spreche locker Deutsch und Türkisch mit meinen Freunden aus der Klasse und das heißt, dass wir uns ganz normal verstehen. Ab und zu sprechen wir auch Englisch, einfach so. NURAY: Manche [in meiner Klasse] sprechen voll viele Sprachen [...]. (1_2: 22 – 23)</p> <p>SILA: [...] I speak German and Turkish casually with my friends from class and that means we understand each other normally. Now and then we also speak English, just like that.</p> <p>NURAY: Some [in my class] speak full lots of languages [...]. (1_2: 22 – 23) [translation by the author]</p>
Theme 9	Decision-making	<p>MARTIN: Jeder darf meinen was er will [...]. BARIS: Aber, die Mehrheit [in der Klasse] sollte entscheiden.</p> <p>PATRICK: Es geht um das. Wenn irgendwas ist, sollen alle [Klassenkameraden] dazu die selber Meinungen haben [damit es eine Mehrheit gibt, um Entscheidungen zu treffen].</p> <p>MARTIN: Ja, aber wenn jemand eine eigene Meinung hat kann man es ausdiskutieren. Dann kann man vielleicht sagen, „ja dann machen wir halt das so“ aber zumindest hat jeder seine eigene Meinung darüber. (1_1: 88 – 91)</p> <p>MARTIN: Everybody can believe what he wants [...].</p> <p>BARIS: But, the majority [in the class] should decide.</p> <p>PATRICK: It's about this. If there is something, all [classmates] should have their own opinions about it [so that there is a majority to make decisions].</p> <p>MARTIN: Yeah, but if somebody has their own opinion you can talk it out. Then maybe you can say, "yeah then we'll just do it this way" but at least everybody has their own opinion about it. (1_1: 88-91) [translation by the author]</p>
Theme 10	Academic accomplishment	<p>DANI: My class is too smart to fight with each other.</p> <p>TAM: They're high achievers but still they're just idiots. (2_10:121 – 122)</p>
Theme 11	Prejudice	<p>JENO: We're a really mixed bunch in class, but I know there are lots of people that are xenophobic.</p> <p>COLLIN: From experience.</p> <p>JENO: From experience. My name is Adamos [Greek-origin pseudonym]</p> <p>COLLIN: Some person I know [...] they're from a different country and they wear a sort of burka, [...] They're not teased at all [...] (2_1: 111 – 114)</p>
Theme 12	Conflict	<p>MATE: The whole class gets involved in the argument and takes sides.</p> <p>JUN: It would be if someone had valid response to it, or whatever. People would go with them and say: "Oh, he's right" [and take sides].</p> <p>MATE: If you agree with one person's idea, you'd go to them. If you disagreed with their idea, and the group of the other person, then you go to them.</p> <p>JUN: If you disagree with both, you just sit there and watch. (2_7: 100 – 103)</p>
Theme 13	Aggression	<p>IRIS: [...] There's a lot of bullying that goes on, you wouldn't really call people nerds and stuff.</p> <p>MARIOS: Suppose only in Year 7 classmates call each other nerds and that it happened because everyone's still immature, but there's no bullying now that we're in Year 9. (2_5: 90 – 91)</p>
Theme 14	Violence	<p>ANDRE: [...] Er [Klassenkamerad] war leicht ausländerfeindlich, hat einer Türkin das Kopftuch herunter-gerissen.</p> <p>BELEM: Oh weh, ich hätte ihn voll verschlagen [wenn ich mitbekommen hätte, wie er einer Türkin das Kopftuch heruntergerissen hat].</p> <p>ANDRE: Hat sie auch, ein Kollege von ihr war daneben, er hat den Verband gebrochen und sie ihn die Nase gebrochen. (1_5: 148 – 150)</p> <p>ANDRE: [...] He [class camera] was slightly xenophobic, tore off a Turkish girl's headscarf.</p> <p>BELEM: Oh dear, I would have beaten him up [if I had seen him tear off the headscarf of a Turkish girl].</p> <p>ANDRE: She did, a colleague of hers was next to her, he broke her brace, and she broke his nose. (1_5: 148 – 150) [translation by the author]</p>

Table 32: Prototypical examples of the conceptual themes 8-14: Teacher social level

Theme 8	Heterogeneity	<p><i>FARID: In school, I reckon it's good that aboriginals get special treatment [...] RES: What do you mean by special treatment?</i></p> <p><i>FARID: They get special stuff, [...] special aboriginal camps [...]</i></p> <p><i>JULIAN: [...] 'cause teachers accept everyone else's culture and respect it.</i></p> <p><i>FARID: Teachers will specially give the immigrant students extra treatment after school classes and more ESLs classes and stuff. (2_4: 142 – 146)</i></p>
Theme 9	Decision-making	<p><i>MIKE: Teachers usually make the decisions in break, and also class captains because they meet with the teacher about [...] changing class rules or excursions and stuff.</i></p> <p><i>COLLIN: [...] They do a lot of the decisions we get to do what they decide. (2_1: 2 – 3)</i></p>
Theme 10	Academic accomplishment	<p><i>ZOE: [...] ACE (advanced curriculum extension) have to sit in an exam to get in. They're meant to be a bit smarter than everyone else [...] SANITE: Yeah, it's meant to be the teachers approach us differently, [...] I wouldn't know any difference. (2_8: 190-191)</i></p> <p><i>MAREK: [...] Herr Jürgen bei uns in Turnen, er hat uns Würfel gegeben [...] Wir ein eins, zwei, drei, vier oder fünf gewürfelt, der kriegt ein Zeugnis mit dieser Note. DANILO: [...] eins würfelst, dann hast Du im Zeugnis eins, wenn Du zwei würfelst, dann zwei, [...]. MAREK: Zwei, drei Leute haben Einser bekommen. Zwei, drei Leute haben fünfser bekommen, haben geweint, sind nach Hause gegangen. Dann hat er gesagt, was ist jetzt, und dass jeder im Zeugnis Einser bekommt. (1_4: 339 – 341)</i></p> <p><i>MAREK: [...] Mr. Jürgen with us in gymnastics, he gave us dice [...] We rolled a one, two, three, four or five, you get a report card with this grade. DANILO: [...] if you roll one, you get one on your report card, if you roll two, you get two, [...]. MAREK: Two, three people got ones. Two, three people got fives, cried, went home. Then he said, what now, and that everybody gets A's on the report card. (1_4: 339 – 341) [translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 11	Prejudice	<p><i>TIMUR: In Turnen oder Basketball [...] lässt der Lehrer, obwohl alle mitspielen, die Buben sich nicht ausruhen, nur die Mädchen. PATRICK: Die Buben müssen immer alles tun und die Mädchen sie dürfen alles. Wir Buben haben auch Rechte. Wir dürfen auch einmal uns ausruhen. Die Mädchen sollen auch mal was tun nicht immer die Buben. (1_1: 358 – 359) TIMUR: In gymnastics or basketball [...], even though everyone plays, the teacher doesn't let the boys rest, only the girls. PATRICK: The boys always have to do everything and the girls they are allowed to do everything. We boys have rights too. We are also allowed to rest once in a while. The girls should do something too, not always the boys. (1_1: 358 – 359) [translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 12	Conflict	<p><i>MARTIN: Sie [die Lehrer] tun gar nichts [wenn SchülerInnen schlägern]. MARIA: Die ignorieren es und wenn du es ihnen sagst, dann sagen sie: „[...] ich mach Mal ein anders Mal“ und das anders Mal kommt nie. Oder sie nehmen alles so ernst, dass sie gleich den Schüler suspendieren oder so. Dann stehst du wieder als Vollidiot dar, wenn er zurückkommt, bekommst du wieder ärger von ihm und Schläge. (1_1: 228 – 229) MARTIN: They [the teachers] don't do anything [when students beat each other]. MARIA: They ignore it and when you tell them, they say, “[...] I'll do another time,” and the other time never comes. Or they take everything so seriously that they immediately suspend the student or something. Then you look like a complete idiot again, when he comes back you get trouble from him again and get beaten. (FG 1_1: 228 – 229) [translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 13	Aggression	<p><i>PATRICK: Überleg ein Recht wo die Lehrer freundlich sein sollen und nicht wie unsere Lehrer [die] uns mit Kreide bewürfen und Pfuscher sagt und so.</i></p> <p><i>BARIS: Und Penner.</i></p> <p><i>MARTIN: Das haben sie zum ihn gesagt [Baris]. (1_1: 325 – 327)</i></p> <p><i>PATRICK: Think about a right where teachers are supposed to be friendly and not like our teachers [who] throw chalk at us and say idiot and stuff.</i></p> <p><i>BARIS: And flunkers.</i></p> <p><i>MARTIN: That's what they said to him [Baris]. (1_1: 325 – 327) [translation by the author]</i></p>
Theme 14	Violence	<p><i>BELEM: [...] Sie [Frau Klaut pseudonym teacher] schlägt fast.</i></p> <p><i>SUSAN: Kennst du Simon? Der Lehrer hat ihm geschlagen, hat ihn so aufgezogen und er hat fünf Minuten länger rennen müssen, weil die Schuhriemen immer aufgegangen sind. Der Lehrer hat ihn gepackt, gestoßen, mit dem Knie in den Hintern rein.</i></p> <p><i>EVA: Das war ein anderer Schüler?</i></p> <p><i>ANDRE: Ja, das war ein anderer Schüler. EVA: Zwei Schüler haben sich gegenseitig [...]</i></p> <p><i>ANDRE: Nein, es war ein Lehrer und ein Schüler. (1_5: 216 – 222)</i></p>

		<p>BELEM: [...] She [Mrs. Klaut pseudonym teacher] almost hits [people].</p> <p>SUSAN: Do you know Simon [pseudonym classmate]? The teacher hit him, teased him like that, and he had to run five minutes longer because the shoe straps kept coming undone. The teacher grabbed him, pushed him, knee in the butt.</p> <p>EVA: That was another student?</p> <p>ANDRE: Yes, that was another student.</p> <p>EVA: Two students were hitting each other [...].</p> <p>ANDRE: No, it was a teacher and a student. (1_5: 216 – 222) [translation by the author]</p>
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Table 33: Prototypical examples of the conceptual themes 8-14: Other students social level

Theme 8	Heterogeneity	<p>LUKAS: Wenn sie herkommen, müssen sie unsere Sprache können, ein bisschen.</p> <p>SOPHIA: Welche ist es dann, österreich-isch oder deutsch?</p> <p>LUKAS: Deutsch, weil österreichisches kann man gar nicht dazu sagen. (1_9: 149 – 156).</p> <p>LUKAS: When they come here, they have to know our language, a little bit.</p> <p>SOPHIA: Which is it then, Austrian or German? LUKAS: German, because you can't say Austrian at all. (1_9: 149 – 156) [translation by the author]</p>
Theme 9	Decision-making	<p>MATE: If you agree with one person's idea, you'd go to them. If you disagreed with their idea, and the group of the other person, then you go to them. JUN: If you disagree with both, you just sit there and watch. (2_7: 102 – 103)</p>
Theme 10	Academic accomplishment	<p>FARID: VCs should stop being so uptight, so weird. EMIL: you walk near them and they're so uptight, like they're more intelligent and stuff cause they're older they think they know more, achieve more and that. THOMAS: VC wreck your games and stuff. Some of them are really wicked to other students. (2_4: 291 – 293)</p>
Theme 11	Prejudice	<p>KIM: That's how I felt when I was coming into high school (older students were going to pick on me). You really want to come, but I got really sad and everything.</p> <p>HERA: [...] having name tags on you, [...] is it's a bit embarrassing. (2_2: 211 – 212)</p>
Theme 12	Conflict	<p>MONIKA: [...] Er ist nicht bei uns in der Klasse, sondern in der Parallelklasse. [...] Er glaubt voll, er ist der Player, er streitet mit uns auch deswegen.</p> <p>LEO: Er hat was Blödes zu so einen hässlichen Türken gesagt, ist egal. (1_9: 245 – 246)</p> <p>MONIKA: [...] He is not in our class, but in the parallel class. [...] He totally thinks he's the player, he fights with us about that, too. LEO: He said something stupid to some ugly Turk, it doesn't matter. (1_9: 245 – 246)</p> <p>[translation by the author]</p>
Theme 13	Aggression	<p>HERA: If we get picked on, we can pick on others [...] KIM: That's how I felt when I was coming into high school. You really want to come, but I got really sad and everything. (2_2: 210 – 211)</p>
Theme 14	Violence	<p>BARIS: [...] Jeder sagt gleich, wenn jemand einen anderen angreift, dass es ein Türke war. Das nervt voll dauernd.</p> <p>TIMUR: Sie lügen manchmal [...]</p> <p>BARIS: Sie sagen, dass sie Türken sind, oder? TIMUR: [...] Er ist mal gegen eine Wand geschlagen worden glaube ich. Das war mein Freund wo geschlagen wurde. (1_1: 222 – 225)</p> <p>BARIS: [...] Everyone immediately says when someone attacks someone else that it was a Turk. It's annoying all the time.</p> <p>TIMUR: They sometimes look [...]</p> <p>BARIS: They say that they are Turks, right?</p> <p>TIMUR: [...] He was once beaten against a wall, I think. That was my friend who was beaten. (1_1: 222 – 225) [translation by the author]</p>

Table 34: Prototypical examples of the conceptual themes 8-14: School social work/wellbeing counsellors, school management social level of the school

Theme 8	Heterogeneity	<p>FRED: [...] It doesn't really matter what culture you are [...] we still lead our lives every day with each other. [...] It doesn't matter if you're Australian, or not, you can still fit in this school. NUNG: Nationality [...] it's random and artificially made up by humans.</p> <p>FRED: [...] We're [...] one massive society, just artificially divided up into different countries. (2_3: 117 – 119)</p>
Theme 9	Decision-making	<p>MATT: [...] The principal is an asshole and is not interested in what students have to say unless we just agree. IRIS: They did a survey thing, and everyone was putting all this stuff, we don't want a blazer and we don't want to have to wear school shoes and all this stuff</p> <p>MATT: They still did it. Everything that people (students) said they didn't want with the new uniform (school management ignored). (2_5: 69 – 71)</p>
Theme 10	Academic accomplishment	<p>MATT: [...] Every other school's just excelled, and ours hasn't sort of [...]</p> <p>SCOTT: Our school has gone backwards.</p> <p>MATT: Our school image has gone backwards. (2_5: 113 – 115)</p>
Theme 11	Prejudice	<p>MATT: You can go to them (wellbeing teachers) but not many people [...] then the school will know everything. SCOTT: the only time you can go (to the wellbeing teachers) is lunch time [...] people ask where you went and stuff it would just be weird. (2_5: 150 – 151)</p>
Theme 12	Conflict	<p>SUSAN: [...] Ich bin [...] zu [Schulsozial-arbeiterin] gegangen. Das hat auch nichts genützt [...] ATTILA: [...] da sind von jeder Klasse Klassen-sprecher [...] mit der Sozial-arbeiterin in einem Raum [...] dann konnte man sich wünschen, was sich ändern soll. Da ist auch nichts passiert [...]. (1_5: 103 – 104)</p> <p>SUSAN: [...]. I went [...] to [school social worker]. That didn't help either [...]. ATTILA: [...] there are class representatives from each class [...] with the social worker in a room [...] then you could wish what should change. Nothing happened there either [...]. (1_5: 103 – 104) [translation by the author]</p>
Theme 13	Aggression	<p>EROL: [...] den alten Direktor wiederhaben, weil der neuer ist einfach nur schieße.</p> <p>DANILO: Der [alter Direktor] der war echt gut. EROL: [...] er [ehemaliger Schuldirektor] hat es immer so erklärt, richtig klärt, damit immer Frieden war.</p> <p>EROL: Bei dem [jetzigen Direktor], da bekommen wir immer Strafen, einfach nur Blödsinn. KADIR: Er [Schuldirektor] lässt uns nie ausreden. Er bleibt nie still. (1_4: 302 – 305)</p> <p>EROL: [...] have the old principal back, because the new one is just crap.</p> <p>DANILO: The [old principal] was really good. EROL: [...] he [former principal] always explained it like that, clarified it properly, so there was always peace.</p> <p>EROL: With the [current principal], we always get punish-ments, just stupid. KADIR: He [school principal] never lets us finish. He never keeps quiet. (1_4: 302 – 305) [translation by the author]</p>
Theme 14	Violence	<p>KADIR: [...] Beim Unterricht, wenn man ein bisschen schwätzt, tun die Lehrerinnen nichts, schreien sie halt, aber wenn der Direktor kommt und ein Ausländer so quatscht, dann tut er etwas Brutales, das hat er mal gemacht. ASIL: Was hat er gemacht?</p> <p>KADIR: Ich wollte etwas sagen, er [Direktor] hat mich nicht ausreden lassen und er hat mich bei der Hand gepackt und voll hinausgezogen. ASIL: Ja, wir wissen wohl, wer der Direktor in der Schule ist. (1_4: 150 – 153) KADIR: [...] In class, when you talk a little bit, the teachers don't do anything, they just shout, but when the principal comes and a foreigner talks like that, then he does something brutal, he did that once. ASIL: What did he do?</p> <p>KADIR: I wanted to say something, he [principal] didn't let me finish and he grabbed me by the hand and pulled me full out. ASIL: Yeah, I guess we know who the principal is in the school. (1_4: 150 – 153) [translation by the author].</p>

6.6 Summary

The focus of this chapter was the analysis of the data generated in focus group interviews with students. The analysis was conducted in two parts, the individual or micro-level, and the social group or meso-level. The theoretical underpinnings encompass theories of human need (Obrecht, 2009, p. 48).

The first part of the analysis discussed in this chapter focused on individual student-based data analysis. It was a micro-level analysis of student statements collected during the focus group interview. The statements addressed the “need to belong” in the school social system and its social level, the class cohort. This presented a snapshot of the individual students’ verbalised feelings, thoughts and views concerned with the “need to belong” fulfilment at school. The process of data analysis entailed tracing the contribution of each focus group participant by allocating the words, phrases and sentences in the transcription applicable for the analysis and putting them in a column. A framework for data analysis was developed and applied to students’ accounts of the interactions and relations on three different social levels: 1) student-class level, 2) student-class teacher level, and 3) student-teaching staff level. The coding for the data analysis was based on Obrecht’s (2009, p. 27) need categories and a list of needs used to analyse data relevant to each category. The student statement was coded as either a biological, psychic/psychological, social or socio-cultural dimension of belonging, reduced to its core to indicate need facilitation or hindrance. The overarching categories and list of needs were the framework for the data analysis, with dimensions of belonging as the basis for describing and interpreting the student statements that addressed need facilitation or frustration or empirically met their needs (Obrecht, 2009, p. 57). The student portraits provide an overview of each focus group participants statements about the positive fulfilment of needs (“wellbeing”) and negative frustration of needs (“feeling bad”).

The second part of the analysis focused on the whole group analysis, a term applied by Spencer et al. (2014, pp. 340–341) for analysing the focus group participants’ discussion threads. It is concerned with what participants say in their verbal exchanges. This entails examining the focus group interview transcripts and identifying text segments relevant to the aims and research questions. The structuring process codes the data to theory-led main organisation (ORG) categories and subcategories generated from the research question and sub-questions. The impetus is to develop a rigorous data-analysis process and the related techniques to make the large amount of data generated through the focus group interviews manageable. In doing so, the structured content-analysis approach developed by Kuckartz (2012, 2016) proved helpful to structure and reduce the amount of data by identifying key themes. The second part of the data analysis combined categories derived from the research question and

sub-questions and inductively generated conceptual themes drawn directly from the data. Inductive conceptual themes were developed through the deductive structuring of the data. Fourteen conceptual themes were identified and defined about feelings, access and strategies and plans for need satisfiers on the social levels – class cohort, teachers and school social system. Example quotations from the focus group transcriptions illustrated the conceptual themes from the data.

7 Theoretical model and principles of general action

This chapter presents the theoretical model of the “need to belong”. It was developed from the two-part data analysis (cf. Subsection 6.2 and 6.4). The model contrasts the trajectories of students’ “need to belong” in analysing the focus group participant statements that addressed one or more of Obrecht’s (2009, p. 27) list of needs. It is the basis for elaborating the empirical findings derived from the analysis of student statements from the focus group interviews.

In the course of this section, a set of procedural questions – referred to as the *Wissensformen* questions of knowledge and *W-Fragen* w-questions [translation by the author] (Geiser, 2015, pp. 304–307) – are worked, using examples from the data. It is an approach used to clarify the core mandates, principles and the related tasks of school social workers, as formulated in the Global Definition of Social Work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). The w-questions corresponds with the triple mandate of the social work profession and discipline outlined as the basis for the theoretical framework guiding the current study (cf. Subsection 0) (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016, p. 44; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp. 121–123).

The first section of this chapter presents the theoretical model of the “need to belong” developed in the data-analysis process. The model situates the individual student’s biopsychic and social needs and access to satisfiers in their social environment⁴⁶. An outline of the procedural w-questions follows this. Seven examples of student statements extracted from the data are structured to describe, explain, and make forecasts and value judgements about social problems related to inadequate or the absence of “need to belong” fulfilment. Hence, social problems are defined as a range of practical problems that an individual is confronted with in association with the “need to belong” fulfilment associated with a student’s unsatisfactory integration in the social systems of the social environment (Obrecht, 2005b, p. 44). This is put forward as a basis for developing principles of general action in social work. The procedural questions comprise ten steps geared towards generating working hypotheses in correspondence to the different social levels of the school system (cf. Figure 4). Hence, the w-questions complement the theoretical model of the “need to belong” and make hypothetical forecasts about how matters could develop based on their current state, i.e., the moment in time when the data

46 The term environment is used for the things (in totality) with which the members of the school social system have relationships – taking cognisance of the fact that social systems comprise different parts. In addition to the members/components, they are made up of the systems’ structures, mechanisms and processes of the mechanisms (Bunge, 2010, pp. 84–85).

was collected. The impetus is to offer suggestions on how to develop and implement school social work interventions that are geared towards remedying social problems in different-sized social systems, such as those at micro- (individual, teacher, parent/s), meso- (social group, i.e., class cohort, school social system) and macro-levels (governments, national, and global social systems) (Obrecht, 2005a, p. 130).

The second section focuses on aligning the empirical findings with the research literature review on human needs and student belonging (cf. Chapter 3). The critical issues around school social work in Austria and Australia (cf. Chapter 2) are synthesised and discussed to position the current study in the international discourse on human needs and student belonging. The chapter closes with a summary of the key issues in focus.

7.1 Theory model of the “need to belong”

The theoretical model of the “need to belong” is consistent with the results of the two-part data analysis because it represents the individual student’s biological, psychic, social needs, which are universal, i.e., constitute the human condition (Bunge, 1997, p. 466). Need tensions arise when there is an imbalance in the individual’s bio values which pertain to one or more of their needs. To restore their bio values and attain the desired state of wellbeing, human beings require resources or satisfiers.

I propose “need to belong” as an umbrella term for student biopsychic and social need tensions. To relieve this tension requires social-exchange relations with peers, teachers and school management and other school staff to access resources that facilitate their sense, or state, of belonging at school. In comparison to the universality of our biological, psychic and social needs, satisfiers differ because of the type and availability of resources that the geographical, economic and social-cultural factors, such as a student’s interactional and structural position in the social system and its subsystems, influence. Hence, facilitating students’ “need to belong” at school is through the interactions and social relationships between the individuals and the other members of the school social system. They play a crucial role in determining their access to satisfiers. To differentiate between the individual student, the school social system and its different social levels, the theory model presents two trajectories and the social levels that can facilitate or hinder student access to resources for their “need to belong” fulfilment in everyday school. As members or components of the different level social systems, the individual student is confronted with practical problems that they try to solve (i.e., biopsychic and social need tensions) in their social exchange with classmates, teachers, and other school system members. To this end, the student seeks access to satisfiers for “need

to belong” fulfilment. The theoretical model of “need to belong” was the starting point for consideration about the individual’s access to satisfiers which may be unrestricted or restricted by social actors on one or more of three social levels. These levels make up the social environment of the student who engages with the other social actors in complex, dynamic and ongoing “cooperative or competitive” interactions and exchanges at school (Staub-Bernasconi, 2007a, p. 4553).

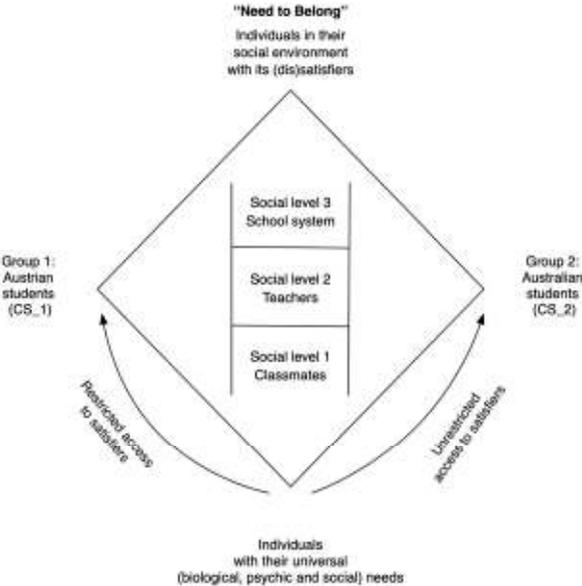
Figure 4 depicts the theoretical model of the “need to belong”. The baseline at the bottom of the quadrangle represents the individual student’s biological, psychic, and social needs. It shows two directions for the “need to belong” trajectory. One direction that the arrow on the right represents shows unrestricted access to satisfiers. The other direction that the arrow on the left represents shows that access to satisfiers is restricted or thwarted altogether. The social levels in the centre of the quadrangle are depicted as a symbolic hierarchy of the possible power disparity between the three levels. There are social actors on each of the levels. The first social level comprises the classmates. The second social level includes the teachers. The third social level consists of the school system (school management, school social worker/s and other staff members). On the left side of the quadrangle, Group 1 indicates the data collected from students in the Austrian school, CS_1. On the right side of the quadrangle, Group 2 indicates the data collected from students in the Australian school, CS_2. Positioned at the top of the quadrangle are the students in their social environment, which they depend on to access satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment.

A caveat to be borne in mind is that these social-exchange relations with the other actors can determine a student’s access to satisfiers in one of two directions, i.e., facilitate or hinder their “need to belong” fulfilment, or not impact it.⁴⁷ Hence, the individual interacts and negotiates with other social actors who are members of the different social levels. The objective of these interactions is for the individual to gain access to satisfiers to meet their “need to belong”, which is an essential part of their daily school activities. It is a dynamic process influenced by myriad different things that can facilitate or hinder the student’s access to satisfiers, for example, through the sources of power and power structures (Staub-Bernasconi, 1991, pp. 42–43). In this sense, power is a resource that can be applied as the just means to constrain the negative actions of individuals or groups in their dealings with others. Roughly said, power can restrict access by establishing and maintaining boundaries through

47 As my focus is the impact of the school social system and its different social levels on the “need to belong”, data that indicated no impact was not relevant for the research aims, research question and sub-questions. This is important because there is no sole dichotomy of facilitating or hindering the “need to belong”, as every action (the description or explanation of an action is given in the focus group data) does not automatically translate to needs facilitation or hindrance.

social norms and rules. When boundaries are fair and developed through democratic processes, this represents a positive form of power that, under certain conditions, works to constrain or limit access to something.

Figure 4: Theory model of "need to belong" (Dis)satisfiers [author's own illustration]



Conversely, power can be used against someone to hinder access to satisfiers for need fulfilment. Hindering power structures are a negative or illegitimate form of social control that is used against someone or a social group in an unjust manner – for example, acts of discrimination related to the student’s ethnic, cultural/language heritage on an institutional level, i.e., the school system (Gomolla and Radtke, 2009). In this case, power is used to obstruct a person’s access to need satisfiers. It translates to a destructive power form, with negative consequences for the student’s “need to belong” fulfilment at school.

Similarly, the student is dependent on others for their need fulfilment because all human beings are reliant on others for need fulfilment in different ways. This gives cause for the examination of issues concerning the students’ access to power at school concerning their age and related lifecycle, which is reflected in their position within the social structure of the school social system. While constraining power structures set legitimate boundaries that regulate the mechanisms and processes of everyday school, hindering power structures can increase student vulnerability by justifying, i.e., not raising questions about the validity of their dependency on adults for access to satisfiers for their

“need to belong” fulfilment. An example of this is constraining power structures that seek to eliminate student voice in decision-making processes that affect student access to satisfiers at school, either not enabling student involvement or doing so tokenistically (Hart, 1992; John, 2003).

In essence, the theoretical model of the “need to belong” positions practical problems, i.e., biopsychic and social need tensions, in the social environment of the individual student. Human existence inevitably depends on a person’s access to satisfiers to solve practical problems. This translates to a natural and ongoing process of need fulfilment, in which case the individual relies on social exchanges with other social actors. However, this is not to say that “need to belong” fulfilment is a state of equilibrium that can be reached because, in reality, there are no balances but only tendencies towards such states. If this were to happen, it would mean that reality has reached a stable state in every area. Hence, as we saw earlier, it is not a matter of establishing an optimal state of equilibrium because, in reality, there are no such equilibria. There are only tendencies towards such states, which are usually opposed by processes that result in an equilibrium or so-called stable or static states not being reached (Obrecht, 2005a, p. 100). This brings to mind the ontology of to be, is to become. All things are in a state of change or flux over varying time periods.

Similarly, the different social levels of the school system can influence student need fulfilment by facilitating or restricting access to satisfiers. The concern here is that if the access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment is inhibited, it could negatively affect the students’ biopsychic wellbeing. Should this be the case, an everyday practical problem could develop into a social problem. The social structure of social systems determines the type of social problems. It distinguishes between two social problem types that of the interaction structure, e.g., the lack of a goal directed friendship with another person, and the form of interaction, e.g., powerlessness, with a related lack of control over resources for need satisfaction, and with possible indication of exploitative social structures (Obrecht, 2009, p. 54). Instead of the term “equilibrium”, the term “wellbeing” is more suitable, as it concerns the expression of sufficient regulation of a need.

Figure 5 illustrates the “need to belong”, belonging and wellbeing as a proposed cycle. This is intended to represent the linkage between “need to belong” tension/s, state of belonging – when resources for need fulfilment are availability/assessable and wellbeing, which indicates the tendency for the individual student to have achieved biological and psychic wellbeing. It is important to note here that this cycle is not about a state of equilibrium because it is not realistic, as that would indicate a state of stagnation which is the opposite of life. *To be alive means to be in a continuous process of change.* Wellbeing is a term used for the biopsychic state of a person with sufficient need regulation or satisfaction. Wellbeing is a better fit because the organism does not seek to regulate a sufficiently regulated need, as it is not in a state of ten-

sion. Hence, sufficient satisfaction of needs leads to wellbeing. Need tension triggers the desire for something or to experience something which seeks to reach the state of wellbeing, not pleasure. This signals that the organism has what it requires for physical and psychic/psychological health, which can be a resource to maintain or restore a level of social integration in the social environment experienced as a satisfactory state (Obrecht, 2009, pp. 19–20).

Figure 5: Cycle of the “need to belong”, belonging and wellbeing [author’s own illustration]



7.2 Transdisciplinary knowledge in response to social problems

A social problem is understood in conjunction with emergent systemism and realism epistemology. Suppose the individual student cannot regulate their “need to belong” tensions through their means because of lack of access to resources or satisfiers for need fulfilment. In that case, it can lead to social problems.

Human beings are confronted with practical problems at the interface where the individual and their social environments interact, i.e., cooperative human interactions occur as part of everyday life. An important factor about a need tension is its elasticity: the duration of a need tension – the length of time that the need tension can go unmet without negative implications on the person’s wellbeing (cf. Subsection 4.6). The concern here is that the individual student’s interactional and structural position in the school social system, and its different social levels, can determine their access to resources or satisfiers

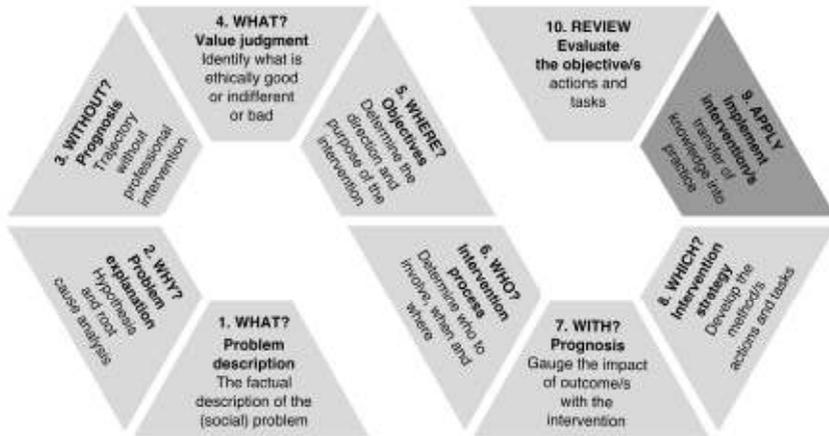
for “need to belong” fulfilment and hinder or thwart it, which can result in social problems. In this sense, social problems are the object base of school social work as a profession and discipline. They are in line with the professional triple mandate (cf. Subsection 2.3) because the individual student is faced with a collection of practical problems in association with their unsatisfactory integration into the social systems of the social environment (Obrecht, 2005c, p. 44). This is where the w-questions arise. They are a set of procedural steps that build on scientifically supported and ethically rigorous transdisciplinary knowledge to identify and explain the structures, mechanisms and dynamics that take place between the school social system and its different social levels concerning the individual student and their “need to belong” fulfilment (Staub-Bernasconi, 2009, p. 4553; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp. 234–235). In discussing the w-questions, social problems are described and their root causes hypothesised. The mechanisms and processes are explained using explanatory knowledge sourced from social work science and cognate disciplines.

Figure 6 illustrates the w-questions,⁴⁸ a set of ten procedural questions used to generate different types of knowledge. They are as follows:

- 1) Problem description focuses on the nature of the problem (“what” it is). This requires a factual description of the (social) problem.
- 2) Problem explanation clarifies the reason/s for the existence of the (social) problem – the “why”, and how it came about. It centres around generating hypotheses and integrating transdisciplinary explanatory knowledge to explain the underlying causes of the (social) problem.
- 3) Prognosis to consider whether (“without”) professional social work intervention is necessary by forecasting how the (social) problem could develop.
- 4) Problem value judgment focuses on “what” the ethical aspect of the (social) problem is, assessing the factors that facilitate or hinder “need to belong” fulfilment.
- 5) Objectives concern the direction and purpose (“where”) of the professional social work intervention.
- 6) Intervention process looks at “who” is involved.
- 7) Prognosis identifies the expected outcomes “with” the intervention in place.
- 8) Intervention strategy concerns the selected methods (“which”) of intervention.
- 9) Intervention implementation focuses on the transferral of the knowledge developed in w-questions 1-8 to practice (“apply”). The focus here is on bridging theory and practice.
- 10) Evaluate the objective/s actions and tasks concerning the final stage of the intervention to review the theoretical process and its implementation in practice (“review”). It requires close examination to assess whether the intervention was successful or not, alongside the explanations for the result/s. Evaluation determines either the next steps or the termination of professional support.

48 “w” stands for “Wissen” – the German for knowledge [translation by the author].

Figure 6: W-questions of the problem and resource framework (Geiser, 2015; Du Plessis-Schneider, 2020a, p. 59) [author's own illustration]



As a set of procedural steps, the w-questions (cf. Figure 6) integrate scientific knowledge from social work and cognate disciplines in the context of practice (Geiser, 2015; Du Plessis-Schneider, 2020a, p. 59). The purpose is to describe social problems in terms of unsatisfied needs, such as the injustice of violating established rules for fairness or toxic social-exchange relations that obstruct the need for the physical integrity of the actors, i.e., individuals and members of social groups (Obrecht, 2009, p. 54). The impetus is to formulate working hypotheses (assumptions about how something works) and use theories to explain the root causes of those above (social) problems. Similarly, predictions about the possible adverse consequences are made if there is no professional intervention under the consideration of social work ethical values. The professional criteria and values of social work developed through global consensus on ethical practice (that the IFSW and the International IASSW spearhead) are applied in making value judgements about the direction of the intervention (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014, 2018).

In summary: in the current study, the objective of using the w-questions was to exemplify a structured approach directed towards developing interventions to remedy the social problems indicated in the data analysis. Specifically, the ninth step (“apply”) illustrated in the darkly-shaded box (cf. Figure 6) refers to the implementation of knowledge into practice, or the three-step transformative approach (cf. Subsection 7.3). This is done by generating working hypotheses as the basis for defining the three transformative steps. The overall objective is to enable students to access resources or satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment.

In the following section, based on the description of the w-questions above, the ninth procedural step (“apply”) (cf. Figure 6) is demonstrated with examples of student statements from the focus group transcriptions.

7.3 Principles of action: three-step transformative approach

This section illustrates the steps to practical action – based on the scientific and ethical-moral forms of knowledge about hindrance of access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p. 288). The example used to illustrate the steps is taken from the data analysis findings. It concerns satisfiers and methods applied, according to objectives formulated in support of affected students and other social actors at school (ibid., p. 292). Once the problem analysis, formulation of hypotheses and the need for professional intervention are determined, the goals, intervention form and methods should be developed. The purpose of an intervention is problem reduction which requires a problem solution-focused approach to identify the factors that facilitate need fulfilment.

The principles of action are based on a series of directives formulated as guidelines to bridge the social work theory and practice divide. Principles of action are driven by formulating scientifically based working hypotheses and include ethical evaluations of social problems to determine the methods and resources required for interventions, ultimately to work towards problem-solving (Bunge, 1997, pp. 427–430; Staub-Bernasconi, 2007b, p. 208). This step links theoretical knowledge from social work science that describes, explains and makes predictive statements about the possible trajectory of social problems, using the knowledge of practical action to develop intervention strategies in response to social problems in the school social system and its different social levels. The central focus of the transformative three-step approach is to develop scientifically based guidelines for action, implemented using other pre-existing methods. The transformative three-step approach applied is complementary to the w-questions (cf. Figure 6) that guide the early stage of the problem description and analysis, generating predictive statements about the outcomes without professional intervention, questions around ethical values and formulating objectives. More specifically, the three-step approach is the w-question about operationalising the intervention and gauging the type of intervention methods. In the school context, the principles of action assist social workers in identifying student abilities and skills to meet their needs within their social environment.

The transformative three-step approach is conducted to develop principles for action guidelines that suggest ways to resolve the theory-ethics-practice

problem on the three social levels of school, as illustrated in the theoretical model for the “need to belong” (cf. Figure 4). The first step is to formulate theoretical statements or hypotheses. The second step is to develop action-theoretical working hypotheses. The third step is to develop general principles for action: definitions of the connection between problems and explanations of the underlying causes of the problems. Together with statements about value, along with questions as to how and with which factors, this leads to the development of guidelines for action, this leads to the development of guidelines for action. These are formulated as imperatives: B to induce A to do or get A to do, to change, to stop, or prevent. Or B to prevent, stop, avoid or to change A. Once the intended direction of the necessary change is clarified, the appropriate resources can be determined (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p. 292).

The transformative three-step approach is demonstrated using selected quotes as examples from the data elicited, i.e., student statements, as a preliminary problem description. The statements from the first part of the data analysis resulted in developing the individual student portraits (cf. Subsection 6.2).⁴⁹ As these statements are short, it is to be borne in mind that further details about the problem, i.e., differentiation between the interactional and positional structural levels, would be required for implementation in the practice context. The rationale behind selecting these quotations from the text material is that they illustrate the text contents assigned to a social level and serve as an indication that student belonging is facilitated or hindered.

The transformative three-step approach used to illustrate how social workers could bring about change is presented using examples for socio-cultural expressions/feeling bad (cf. Subsection 6.3). These examples concern prejudice (dis)satisfiers which are characterised as the uncritical acceptance of an idea or belief about the attributes or behaviours of an individual and the member of a social group related to prejudice, specifically school-based prejudice and stereotypes concerning minority language and ethnicity:

Table 35: Examples of prejudice (dis)satisfiers

Category	Quote from the focus group data
STUDENT CLASS LEVEL Socio-cultural Level; hindering belonging	BARIS: Es gibt ein Junge in unsere Klasse, der Albaner ist. Er nutzt immer andere Sprachen und sagt zu uns: „Scheiß Türken“ oder „Scheiß“ [...]. (1_1:181). [...] Die Türken sind schuld. Das stimmt aber so nicht. Sie [Österreicher] schieben es auf alle Türken. (1_1:189) [...] Es gibt einen Jugendlichen in unserer Klasse und er hasst Türken. Ich frage ihn immer: „wieso hasst du Türken und so?“ (1_1:270)
STUDENT TEACHING STAFF LEVEL hindering belonging	ERIKA: Sobald es sich um einen Türken handelt [in einem Konflikt], tun die Lehrer etwas, aber wenn es sich nicht um einen Türken handelt, wird nichts gemacht. (1_1:238)
STUDENT CLASS TEACHER LEVEL hindering belonging	SILA: Ich finde es auch blöd, dass ich nicht Türkisch reden kann. Im Unterricht würde ich manchmal sagen, dass es okay ist, weil wir Österreicher sind und Deutsch reden müssen. Mit den Freunden ist es doch

49 All names used are pseudonyms.

	egal, wenn wir Türkisch reden. Das macht doch nichts aus und soll auch für die Lehrerin verständlich sein. (1_2:38).
STUDENT CLASS LEVEL Socio-cultural Level; hindering belonging	SILA: Manche Leute meinen, dass, wenn so was passiert [wenn es Probleme in der Klasse gibt], sind es gleich die Muslime. Okay, es machen schon manche Muslime, aber nicht alle. Auch Deutsche oder jemand anders macht so was. (1_2:224).
STUDENT TEACHING STAFF LEVEL hindering belonging	SERDAR: Man darf nicht andere Sprachen [in der Klasse und Schule] sprechen. (1_3: 241). [...] In der Pause [dürfen wir Türkisch] auch nicht (sprechen). (1_3: 245) [...] Aber ich mache es trotzdem. (1_3:247)
STUDENT CLASS LEVEL Socio-cultural Level; hindering belonging	LEO: [Konflikte in der Klasse werden gelöst] durch mit manchen reden. Bei Türken eine Schlägerei machen. Türken sind in unserem Land insgesamt voll dämlich. (1_9:194)
STUDENT CLASS LEVEL Socio-cultural Level; hindering belonging	MIKKIE: [...] there are so many racist people at this school, who are mean to classmates from other countries. [...] There was a girl and at the beginning of the year and her surname on Facebook was "I eat Indians". They're this group that holds their breath when walking past Indians and stuff. (2_10:99 – 101)

7.4 Formulation of theoretical hypotheses

In this first step, hypotheses are formulated about school-based prejudice, identified and described as a (di)satisfier of students' "need to belong". This requires the analysis of student statements or facts about their direct or indirect experiences of school-based prejudice to explain the mechanisms and processes. The knowledge generated serves as the basis for the second step, which concerns the roles of social actors in the school context on the three levels of classmates, teachers, and other school system members. It looks at their contributions to alleviating school-based prejudice through acts of solidarity towards the affected students, alongside language and ethnic heterogeneity as normalised elements of social-exchange relations. In addition, it addresses and changes school-related acts of prejudice and other forms of discrimination by demonstrating accountability for need-hindering actions and structures.

7.4.1 *Hypotheses and regularities on the individual level*

The rationale behind selecting these quotations from the text material is that they illustrate the text contents that were assigned to a social level and serve as an indication that student belonging is facilitated or hindered.

Example BARIS (hypotheses formulated about school-based prejudice)

BARIS: [...] Er [Klassenkamerad] nutzt immer anderen Sprachen und sagt zu uns: „schieß Türken“ oder „schieß“ [...]. (1_1:181). [...] Die Türken sind schuld. Das stimmt aber so nicht. Sie [Österreicher] schieben es auf alle Türken. (1_1:189) [...] Es gibt ein Jugendlichler in unsere Klasse und er hasst Türken. Ich frage ihn immer: 'wieso hasst du Türken und so?' (1_1:270)

BARIS: [...] He [classmate] always uses other languages and says to us: "shit Turks or shit [...]. (1_1:181)." [...] The Turks are to blame. But that is not true. They [Austrians] blame it on all Turks. (1_1:189) [...] There is a young person in our class, and he hates Turks. I always ask him: 'Why do you hate Turks and so on'? (1_1:270) [translation by the author].

Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
Baris expressed negative feelings about a classmate's derogatory verbal comments and unfair claims targeting students of Turkish ethnic-cultural heritage. The boy's comments were related to an under complex notion that students with Turkish heritage are a homogeneous group. Baris' approach to resolving the problem of the classmate's defamatory intent was to confront him with questions concerning the legitimacy of his purported contempt of "Turkish" students.	The psychic-/psychological consequences of school-based prejudice in classroom conflict are why Baris responded by verbalising the problem to gain access to satisfiers for the "need to belong" in his social exchange relations with his classmates.	The psychic/psychological consequences of school-based prejudice in classroom conflict are why Baris responded by verbalising the problem to gain access to satisfiers for the "need to belong" in the social exchange relations with his classmates.

Example ERIKA (hypotheses formulated about school-based prejudice)

ERIKA: Sobald es sich um einen Türken handelt [in einem Konflikt], tun die Lehrer etwas, aber wenn es sich nicht um einen Türken handelt, wird nichts gemacht. (1_1:238)

ERIKA: As soon as it is a Turk [in a conflict], the teachers do something, but if it is not a Turk, nothing is done. (1_1:238) [translation by the author].

Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
Erika expresses negative feelings about the teachers' response towards student conflict that she perceives as unfair. Her concern is that teachers are biased against students of Turkish heritage when they only get involved in a classroom conflict if they are involved.	Erika assessed teachers bias against students of Turkish ethnic-cultural heritage as wrongful (illegitimate) practice. This assessment corresponds with the ethical stance of social work towards teachers who ethnicised student conflicts.	The social consequence of teachers' bias against students of Turkish ethnic-cultural heritage is that their access to satisfiers for the "need to belong" could be hindered if classmates regard the teachers' behaviour as just. It could encourage students' expectations of teachers to be biased against students of Turkish ethnic-cultural heritage.

Example SILA (hypotheses formulated about school-based prejudice)

SILA: Ich finde es auch blöd, dass ich nicht Türkisch reden kann. Im Unterricht wurde ich manchmal sagen, dass es okay ist, weil wir Österreicher sind und Deutsch reden müssen. Mit den Freunden ist es doch egal, wenn wir Türkisch reden. Das macht doch nichts aus. (1_2:38). [...] Also, immer bei den schlechten Sachen [sind es die] Muslimen und bei den guten Sachen sie [die inländischen Klassenkameraden] selbst. (1_2:224)

SILA: I also think it's stupid that I can't speak Turkish. In class, I would sometimes say that it's okay because we are Austrians and have to speak German. With our friends, it doesn't matter if we speak Turkish. It doesn't matter. (1_2:38). [...] Well, always with the bad things [it's the] Muslims and with the good things it's the [local classmates] themselves. (1_2:224) [translation by the author].

Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
Sila criticises not being permitted to speak Turkish with her friends at school. She identifies as Austrian and regards it as legitimate to be expected to speak German in class. She talks of a negative bias in class against Muslims because they are held responsible for the bad things that happen while the local students are viewed positively.	Sila's criticism that she is not allowed to speak Turkish at school corresponds with social work's triple mandate (cf. Subsection 2.3) in conjunction with Article 30, UNCRC (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) stipulating the child's right with others in the group: "[...] shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language". She sees a negative bias against Muslim students compared to local students.	The social consequences of teachers bias against students speaking Turkish with their friends at school impedes her access to satisfiers for the "need to belong" due to unfair and discriminatory social rules and norms at school.

Example NURAY (hypotheses formulated about school-based prejudice)

NURAY: In unsere Klasse motzen Türken nie mit den Klassenkameraden. Alle sind still. Es geht uns um gute Noten und nicht mit anderen in der Klasse irgendwie Streit haben. (1_2:61)

NURAY: In our class, Turks never grumble with their classmates. Everyone is quiet. We're all about getting good grades and not having any arguments with others in the class. (1_2:61) [translation by the author].

Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
Nuray and other Turkish- ethnic-cultural heritage classmates avoid altercations because they value academic achievement.	Nuray and her Turkish-ethnic-cultural heritage classmates avoid classmate altercations by not getting involved in disputes. On the one hand, when students focus on their academic achievement, it corresponds with social work values. On the other, social workers would address the exchange relations between the Turkish-heritage students and the classmates to assess if they are reciprocal.	The social consequences of Turkish-ethnic-cultural students avoiding altercations with their classmates might enforce power structures that hinder their access to "need to belong" satisfiers if there is a conflict, they are afraid of or lack the self-assurance to address.

Example SERDAR (hypotheses formulated about school-based prejudice)

SERDAR: Man darf nicht anderen Sprachen [in der Klasse und Schule] sprechen. (1_3: 241). [...] In der Pause [dürfen wir Türkisch] auch nicht [sprechen]. (1_3: 245) [...] Aber ich mache es trotzdem. (1_3:247)

SERDAR: Students are not allowed to speak other languages [in class and school]. (1_3: 241). [...] During the break [we are also] not allowed [to speak Turkish]. (1_3: 245) [...] But I do it anyway. (1_3:247) [translation by the author].

Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
Serdar criticises not being allowed to speak Turkish in class or at break time but does so nonetheless, which indicates social norm and rule-breaking on the one hand and, on the other, autonomy in exercising his right to communicate in his language.	Serdar's criticism because he is not allowed to speak Turkish at school corresponds with social work's triple mandate in conjunction with Article 30, UNCRC (1989) stipulating the child's right with others in the group: "[...] shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language".	The social consequences of students not being allowed to speak their language at school impede his access to satisfiers for the "need to belong" because it is unfair and discriminatory. By speaking Turkish at school, he engages in rule-breaking behaviour, which is not a predicament that confronts majority-language students as they can speak their language at school without engaging in rule-breaking behaviour.

Example LEO (hypotheses formulated about school-based prejudice)

LEO: [Konflikte in der Klasse werden gelöst] durch mit manchen reden. Bei Türken eine Schlägerei machen. Türken sind in unserem Land insgesamt voll dämlich. (1_9:194)

LEO: [conflicts in the class are solve] by talking to some [classmates]. But [when it comes to] Turks [I] bash [them]. Turks in our country as a whole are totally stupid. (1_9:194) [translation by the author].

Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
Leo resolves conflicts with classmates by speaking to them. He brawls with classmates of Turkish-ethnic-cultural heritage. His rejection of peers with Turkish heritage is expressed by devaluing them as a homogeneous group and by using negative descriptors.	Leo expresses bias against Turkish-ethnic-cultural heritage classmates, ethnicises classroom conflict and thus seems not to resolve disputes peacefully. Physical violence is used in altercations with Turkish-ethnic-cultural heritage classmates. He appears to reject peers based on their heritage and generalises negative feelings towards Turkish-heritage people residing in Austria. The discrimination that Leo expresses goes against the social work ethical principles and standards of practice.	The social consequences of Leo's bias against students with Turkish- ethnic-cultural heritage could stem from his feelings of rejection which indicate a lack of access to satisfiers for the "need to belong" at school and the community level outside of school.

Example MIKKIE (hypotheses formulated about school-based prejudice) school-based prejudice)

MIKKIE: [...] there are so many racist people at this school who are mean to classmates from other countries. [...] There was a girl and at the beginning of the year and her surname on Facebook was "I eat Indians". They're this group that holds their breath when walking past Indians and stuff. (2_10:99-101)

Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
Mikkie expresses negative feelings about schoolmates' nastiness towards immigrant students, particularly those from India. It pains him to hear them say nasty things and devalue students with Indian ethnic-cultural heritage by suggesting that the students smell unpleasant.	Mikkie assessed schoolmates' prejudice towards classmates with immigrant heritage as nasty behaviour. The criticism of prejudice towards others based on their ethnic-cultural heritage complements social work ethical principles and standards of practice.	The social consequences of Mikkie's criticism of the schoolmates' prejudice towards his classmates indicate that he has access to satisfiers for "need to belong" fulfilment. By calling out the actions of schoolmates who devalue others, he addresses social wrongs. This is an indication that he values symmetrical exchange relations with his classmates.

7.4.2 Hypotheses and regularities

Hypotheses and regularities at the level of prejudice-affected students

Hypothesis 1: students affected by school-based prejudice at school can either have psychobiological problems because prejudice is used to legitimise hindering power forms that force others to bend to their will or because they are victims of power abuse by other students.

Hypothesis 2: students with Turkish as a first language suffer from identification problems because their first language and cultural practices in "need to belong" fulfilment might not correspond with the local students' perception of the "other".

Hypotheses and regularities at the level of teachers

Hypothesis 2: Due to the lack of knowledge about prejudice, students affected do not receive sufficient information and assistance.

Hypotheses and regularities at the level of the school system

Hypothesis 1: school-based prejudice against students with minority first language/s lead to segregation. This prevents interventions from protecting students from school-based prejudice.

Hypothesis 2: the biopsychosocial problems of students affected by prejudice are not sufficiently addressed by social workers owing to uncertainties in dealing with

hindering power structures at school. This results in a lack of support to facilitate student access to satisfiers for the “need to belong” at school. Insufficient knowledge about student problems concerning prejudice thwarts understanding between affected students, teachers and school staff. It thus justifies and possibly promotes the separation of students who speak a minority first language at school. Intervention based on social work ethical principles and standards of practice could face difficulties.

7.5 Formulation of action-theory working hypotheses

The *second step* concerns the formulation of action-theory working hypotheses on three different social levels. It entails statements about the social actors involved in the problem description and knowledge acquisition regarding the root causes of school-based prejudice, which is defined as a hindrance to gaining access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment. The working hypotheses aim to bring about a change by developing remedies for social problems such as school-based prejudice (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p. 292). The tabular format of the second step follows that of the first step above.

7.5.1 Action-theory working hypotheses

Action-theory working hypotheses at individual level

Social worker	Social worker and Leo	Social worker and Baris
Working hypothesis 1	Working hypothesis 2	Working hypothesis 3
If the social worker is knowledgeable about the adverse biological and psychic/psychological effects and social consequences of prejudice, they would be aware that the statements of Baris, Sila and Serdar about school-based prejudice are indications of negative implications for their access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment. It indicates the professional support required to facilitate student access to satisfiers to meet the “need to belong” in the school context	If Leo cannot resume cognitive thought processes about the prejudice he has experienced, the social worker’s rejection of him because of his views of students with Turkish heritage would impede their working relationship. It would render redundant (or not possible) the establishment and maintenance of a working relationship based on value and trust. If the social worker establishes a cooperative social relationship with Leo, they could engage in verbal exchanges about his ideas, experiences and values. This could assist the social worker to achieve consensus with Leo through the reflection on school-based prejudice and the underlying suspicion, fear and anxiety.	If the social worker and Baris discuss the problem of school-based prejudice based on a solid social-exchange relationship, it could enable him to learn new skills that facilitate peaceful conflict resolution and strengthen his self-worth.

Action-theory working hypotheses at the level of prejudice-affected students

Social worker and students	Social worker and teachers, members of the school system
Working hypothesis 4	Working hypothesis 5
<p>If social workers develop support systems for students affected by school-based prejudice, they could exchange their experiences with discrimination. Through this, students could gain confidence in discussing what works well for them. They would be supported in accessing constraining power forms because they would be provided with an equal exchange with peers and teachers in the school environment.</p>	<p>If teachers and other members of the school system dealing with issues of prejudice exchange information on a professional level, it improves the quality of the interventions. In addition to the teachers and members of the school system, guidance teachers, psychologists and healthcare workers could collaborate and establish a network in response, thereby being pro-active and not reactive to school-based prejudice. The reliability and impact of social work increases through networking with interdisciplinary professionals. By defining their mandate based on the statements of ethical principles in social work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018) and the resulting code of ethics, and the integration of empirical research findings of school-based prejudice, social workers would direct their practice based on the triple mandate (cf. Subsection 2.3).</p>

Action-theory working hypotheses on the social level

REACHING General CONSENSUS	Social worker
Working hypothesis 6	Working hypothesis 7
<p>If school-based prejudice is reduced in school and a consensus of affected students, parents, teachers, and other school system members is established, support and protection can be available to vulnerable students through commonly shared practice standards.</p>	<p>If the biopsychosocial needs of affected students are considered, there is the possibility of maintaining their self-determination at school. If the unfair conditions for school-based, prejudice-affected students is specifically addressed and questioned by social workers, this could give rise to broad awareness among the school system that could initiate reflection and rethinking. Due to their third mandate, social workers are obligated to be unbiased against students and support them when they experience prejudice.</p>

7.6 Formulation of general guidelines for action

This *third step* combines theoretical knowledge from social work science with knowledge about professional action and methods of intervention, in working towards remedying social problems on the three levels of the school system (cf. Figure 4). Guidelines for action are developed from the formulation of hypotheses and working hypotheses. Hence, they are scientifically founded and contain an ethical evaluation of the problem in order to locate suitable methods

and resources to remedy social problems (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p. 289). In this process, consideration is given to the proposed direction of social-work intervention and its effect on the values (Borrmann, 2006, pp. 229–230).

Guidelines for action at the individual level

Social worker and Baris	Social worker and Leo	Social worker and Baris
Guideline 1	Guideline 2	Guideline 3
Baris reflects on his self-image with the social worker's support using pre-existing methods that engage him in creative and playful activities sourced from social work, social pedagogy, psychology, etc. The focus is on facilitating his participation as a satisfier for "need to belong" fulfilment.	The social worker informs Leo about the possible consequences of physical violence in peer altercations and offers support to develop conflict-resolution skills. In this way, a relationship of trust and validation can be established and maintained with Leo.	The social worker addresses Baris' experience of school prejudice based on his Turkish heritage and minority language, seeks ways to be validated on the different school levels, and works on how to involve him in this process directly.
The proposed social work intervention affects the values of non-discrimination and social justice.	The proposed social work intervention affects the values of non-discrimination and social justice.	The proposed social work intervention affects the values of non-discrimination and social justice.

Based on the knowledge gained about school prejudice as a social problem, the relationship between Baris and the social worker is subject to a power differential (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p. 244). The social worker respects Baris' need for recognition to establish a sustainable relationship. They distance themselves from the notion of victimhood in connection with school-based prejudice. Similarly, strategies to access satisfiers for "need to belong" fulfilment can be the subject of social-work support to reduce social need tensions. At the forefront is the support of Baris with skills he has developed, such as his self-image as a student. Raising awareness about non-discrimination and the negative implication/s of discrimination for students, teachers, school management, and school staff is a high priority (Gomolla and Radtke, 2009; Fereidooni, 2016). In this context, the desires and goals of Baris are connected to the ethical view of discrimination as a breach of the UNCRC Article 2, the right not to be discriminated against (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

Guidelines for action at the level of students affected by prejudice

Social worker	Social worker	Social worker
Guideline 4	Guideline 5	Guideline 6
The social worker establishes a working group for students affected by school-based prejudice to exchange their experiences.	The social worker stimulates interdisciplinary collaboration with professionals familiar with the problems of school-based prejudice.	The social worker provides students affected by school-based prejudice professional psycho-social support as a direct intervention in problem reduction and creates opportunities to prevent school-based prejudice.
The proposed social work intervention affects the values of solidarity and social justice.	The proposed social work intervention affects the values of solidarity, social responsibility and equality.	The proposed social work intervention affects the values of solidarity, social justice, non-violence and reciprocal human relations.

The social worker uses knowledge about school-based prejudice in cooperation with Baris to exchange information about the situation of students affected by discrimination with students, teachers, and other school system members. In consultation with the teachers and school management, approaches to engage parents would be developed.⁵⁰ The group work method effectively engages young people affected by school-based prejudice to build positive relationships between students, teachers, and other school system members. The group could provide a common basis for intercultural communication among students affected by discrimination. Through participating in joint activities and talking about their experiences in a safe environment, students would be supported in finding alternative ways to identify with the group, aside from being victims of discrimination, which initially brought the students together (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p. 276). In a further step, cooperation between students – affected by discrimination and those not affected – on a classroom community issue would be a constructive approach towards respecting all opinions, building consensus and achieving a joint outcome.

50 The focus in the examples of developing action guidelines is on the three levels of the school system. Hypotheses and action guidelines to address the concerns and interests of parents are thus not included in these examples. The guidelines would require review to facilitate the participation of parents, and members of the community where the school is based, to implement goal directed change processes in the school's social environment.

Guidelines for action at the social level

Social work	Social work	Social work
CAPACITY BUILDING	CAPACITY BUILDING	CAPACITY BUILDING
Guideline 7	Guideline 8	Guideline 9
<p>The social worker in an advisory capacity to address concerns about students' "need to belong" hindrance associated with school-based prejudice. The private troubles of students become public issues of the school social system (Staub-Bernasconi, 1991, pp. 49–50). The objective is to present arguments based on the descriptions and explanations of the root causes of school-based prejudice, with a scientific and ethical basis—theory-practice-ethics transferral.</p>	<p>The social worker expresses commitment to dismantling social norms that legitimise practices of school-based prejudice. The objective is to raise collective awareness about the possible consequences of school-based prejudice for the affected students and the school social system.</p>	<p>The social worker advocates for the rights of students affected by school-based prejudice. The objective is to develop and implement classroom-based workshops with teachers and develop and host capacity-building training and workshops for the professional development of teachers and other members of the school system (cf. Figure 4) by including activities that raise awareness about school-based prejudice. An outcome could be the development of top-down and bottom-up strategies, a whole-school approach, to initiate change geared towards facilitating student access to satisfiers for "need to belong" fulfilment. In doing so, the focus of interventions would be grounded in school policy and practice that builds capacity on the three levels of the school system (cf. Figure 4) for UNCRC implementation at school.</p>
<p>The proposed social work intervention affects the values of solidarity, social responsibility, non-violence and reciprocal human relations.</p>	<p>The proposed social work intervention affects the values of democracy, non-discrimination and social justice.</p>	<p>The proposed social work intervention affects the values of equality, democracy, non-violence, social responsibility and social justice.</p>

A lack of reciprocal peer and teacher-exchange relations for students affected by school-based prejudice could cause reluctance to challenge school policy and practices that hinder affected students' access to satisfiers for the "need to belong" at school. Factors such as not being taken seriously at school and low German (CS_1) or English (C_2) language proficiency can reinforce this. For this reason, social work, based on a globally and nationally developed code of ethics for professional practice, would advocate for the elimination of school policy and practices that seek to justify discrimination on the grounds of minority language and ethnicity. The objective is to engage and provoke critical reflection that raises questions about school policy and practices that hinder students' "need to belong" through the justification or legitimisation of school-based prejudice (Fereidooni, 2016).

7.7 Aligning the empirical findings with previous research

This section concerns the synthesis of the empirical findings and their alignment with the research literature on human needs and student belonging (cf. Chapter 3). It addresses critical issues around school social work in Austria and Australia (cf. Chapter 2) to position the current study in the international discourse on human needs and student belonging.

In the research findings on student “need to belong” fulfilment and research on belonging, a notable commonality was that problematic social-exchange relationships and the lack of reciprocal student-peer exchanges (marked by devaluation and social rejection) among individuals and members of social systems were associated with a lack of belonging. This is identified as having negative implications on student wellbeing, as it hindered student access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment. Hence, the student’s social environment is crucial in social research (Law, Cuskelly and Carroll, 2013). In particular, it concerned the social-exchange relations between the students and their peers (Faircloth and Hamm, 2005) and students and their teachers (Singh, Chang and Dika, 2010). Moreover, the importance of student affiliations at school, explicitly concerning students with a minority first language and migration heritage, was influenced by interactions and social relationships with peers and teachers.

Correspondingly, social acceptance can be challenging to attain if there is prejudgement around minority language and ethnicity because belonging is experienced, designated and negotiated in multiple or hybrid forms associated with their nation-ethno-cultural context (Mecheril, 2003; Lang-Wojtasik, 2013). From this standpoint, belonging was seen as being multifaceted. Membership, however, was understood as the embodiment of shared characteristics – a means of social categorisation. It creates a symbolic difference because it is achieved by disregarding differences within the group or rejecting those without the specific characteristics required for group affiliation.

When membership in the classroom is restricted because an individual student is viewed as lacking specific characteristics associated with, for example, age, language, ethnicity and sex, they have little possibility of changing, or participating through democratic means, in the process of (re)defining the requirements for classroom membership. This would negatively impact their psychobiological wellbeing. Students’ socio-cultural membership in the classroom is affected by external factors, such as the values and norms of other individuals or a social group that the student endorses to be accepted – a resource or satisfier for the “need to belong” fulfilment at school. It can give rise to alienation and school disaffection if negative power forms and structures are used in conjunction with student socio-cultural membership in the classroom, hindering their access to satisfiers to meet the “need to belong” at school.

Along this vein, findings from the research reviewed (Anderman and Maehr, 1994; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Deci and Ryan, 2000; Osterman, 2000; Faircloth and Hamm, 2005; Faircloth, 2009; Singh, Chang and Dika, 2010) were found to be conclusive about the negative psychic/psychological and social consequences when students lack a sense of belonging at school.

Similarly, the self-determination theory was used to examine issues related to social learning, based on findings that were generated through research on intrinsic and extrinsic human motivation, such as when students felt a psychic/psychological and social disconnect from their peers and teachers (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2000). The tendency to either internalise or externalise the negative emotions associated with social rejection was identified as a determinant of student alienation. While the trajectory related to internalisation was suggested to evoke mental-health problems, externalisation was linked to psychic/psychological and physical aggression directed against another individual and social groups. Similarly, the research findings indicate that students who self-identified as having Turkish ethnicity were shown in some student statements to have internalised, and in others, to have externalised the negative emotions associated with lack of socio-cultural membership in the classroom.

School is a social system comprised of different social levels with individuals as its members or components (cf. Figure 4). As a result, the focus of school-based social work interventions should look at the social relationships, i.e., the nexus between student-peer and student-teacher interactions. This is grounded in the fact that human beings are the constituents of social systems which comprise more than the sum of their parts. However, belonging in this sense is not as simple as it sounds because membership in a social system comes with certain conditions, such as adhering to its social norms (with duties and rights specific to that social system). Likewise, hindrances to students' "need to belong" fulfilment can be associated with external changes that the individual is powerless to influence. This makes the issue of power constrained and thus regulates fair access to resources or hindering power that prevents or thwarts access to resources for need fulfilment, a central topic for research on students' "need to belong" at school. This is an interesting perspective because it is seen to indicate that if the members of the different social levels use hindering power sources, students either reject it entirely or distance themselves from the other students, i.e., "local" students become less attractive for social-exchange relationships when the interactions between "local" students and minority-language students frustrate student social needs – in particular, the need for socio-cultural membership in the class cohort.

Hence, social problems are defined as a range of practical problems that confront an individual in association with the "need to belong" fulfilment and are linked with the student's unsatisfactory integration into the social systems of the social environment (Obrecht, 2005a).

7.8 Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical model of the “need to belong”, developed in the data analysis process. It situates the individual student’s biopsychic and social needs and access to satisfiers in their social environment (cf. Figure 4). This is followed by an outline of the procedural w-questions (Geiser, 2015, pp. 304–307) selected to focus on the transformative three-step approach and applied to seven examples of student statements extracted from the data (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). The impetus was to demonstrate how exemplary action guidelines could be developed, which suggest the focus of professional social-work interventions on the different social levels of the school social system. At the micro (individual) level, for example, the focus would be on supporting the student through in-person counselling, with the general objective of facilitating their access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment at school, applicable to the different social levels. The overall aim of the interventions is to facilitate intercultural understanding and the empowerment of affected students. In light of the emergent properties of social systems, this would focus on bringing about a change on three social levels – the class, teachers and school system (cf. Figure 4). This illustrated how social-work interventions that can be developed to support and empower students who experience prejudice at school requires multi-professional cooperation with peers, teachers, school staff and parents.

Similarly, this would include examining power forms and structures on the different social levels to empower and protect students against school-based prejudice and other forms of discrimination. When students are reprimanded or punished for speaking their first language, i.e., the minority language at school, social workers are obligated by the triple mandate (cf. Chapter 2), of the social work profession and discipline to address such school policies and practices in the direct reference to the UNCRC (United Nations General Assembly, 1989; Staub-Bernasconi, 2016, p. 44). The latter provides the school with the basis and structure – which are legitimate and have legal standing in both Austria and Australia (next to the national legal frameworks) – to develop policies and practices that are targeted towards facilitating student access to satisfiers to meet their “need to belong” at school.

8 Findings and recommendations for the “need to belong”

This chapter concludes the book. It begins with a recap of the rationale for researching students’ “need to belong”, the research questions and sub-questions. The current study’s conceptual, theoretical, and methodological contributions for social work and social pedagogy follow. The findings from focus group interviews with students and the two-part analysis that examined their “need to belong” will be discussed. In doing so, the transformative three-step approach that addressed the social problem of school-based prejudice by transforming theory into practice guidelines is outlined. The linkage between the triple mandate and the UNCRC in school social work is reflected (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). In thinking back to the start of my research interest in examining the association between students’ majority or minority first language, a discussion about how heterogeneity facilitates student belonging follows. To conclude, suggestions are put forward for future research in alignment with school social work’s triple mandate (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016, p. 44; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp. 121–123).

The rationale for researching students’ “need to belong” was to elicit students’ statements that addressed, or empirically meet, one or more of Obrecht’s list of needs (2009, p. 27) on the one hand, and on the other, to identify the responses if students’ access to resources was hindered. The data were generated through focus group interviews with students in two secondary schools in Austria (CS_1) and the other in Australia (CS_2). Two-part data analysis was conducted: *firstly*, the individual student-based analysis (cf. Subsection 6.2), and *secondly*, the whole group analysis (cf. Subsection 6.4). Content analysis was used to analyse the students’ statements (Kuckartz 2012, 2016). These consisted of their verbalised feelings, thoughts and views on “need to belong” fulfilment sorted along the lines of Obrecht’s need categorisation (2009, p. 27) in response to the overarching research question:

How do students describe their positive and negative feelings about the possibility or impossibility to satisfy the “need to belong” in class and in the school system?

And the sub-questions:

- 1) *How do students describe the satisfaction of their “need to belong” in relation to their classmates, teachers and the school social system?*
- 2) *Do the students have plans or strategies to overcome the frustration of their need to belong? What social level is referred to, and in what way does it matter?*

The overarching objective of the current study is to identify the possible association between “need to belong” facilitation, hindrance and potential obstruction or thwarting. Focus group interviews were conducted to position student voice in the research centre (John, 2003; Hart, 2008; Czerniawski, 2011, p. 18). The data were analysed using a two-part approach, the individual student-based analysis and whole group analysis, i.e., in the theoretical triangulation of data ((Denzin, 1973; Kuckartz, 2012; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, *et al.*, 2014; Mayring, 2016; Flick, 2018b). The incentive for the data analysis was to identify structures and determine possible changes that could facilitate students’ “need to belong”. This entailed identifying processes to explain the plausible social mechanisms that could facilitate (or hinder) the students’ “need to belong”. The findings suggest an association between the students’: 1) age, 2) language spoken at home as either the majority language – German or English (in Austria) – or a minority language, i.e., a language other than these two majority languages, and (3) sex (binary, male or female).

8.1 Conceptual, theoretical, methodological contributions

The conceptual contribution made by the current study is distinguishing between two key concepts of “need to belong” and student belonging. Belonging is the biopsychic state that a student can achieve – when resources or satisfiers for the “need to belong” are accessible. Thus, the “need to belong” is broader than belonging because it encompasses students’ psychic and social need tensions. By distinguishing between a student’s “need to belong” versus the state of belonging, the practical problems of the individual student are in focus. It is about their need satisfaction due to the accumulation of persistent and unresolved practical problems, such as a lack of social recognition and a loss of socio-cultural membership in the class cohort.

Similarly, social problems can be linked to unfair social-exchange relations and alienation by peers concerning the student’s problematic structural and interactional position and lack of social embeddedness in the school social system (Obrecht, 2005a, pp. 109–110). As we saw in the previous chapter, the consequences of school-based prejudice associated with students’ ethnic heritage and minority first language could negatively affect their structural and interactional position. Thus, for the student to resolve practical problems before social problems arise requires that they have access to satisfiers such as social-exchange relationships with classmates who validate and recognise them. This is suggested as key to a student achieving the state of school belonging.

The theoretical contributions start with the standpoint that human beings, as biopsychic half-open organic systems, engage in an ongoing exchange with

the external world. Hence, research was undertaken to examine students' verbalised feelings, thoughts and views on "need to belong" satisfaction in their social-exchange relationships with peers, teachers, school management and school staff, such as school social workers. Pertinent to the research was that human needs are universal, i.e., the students in CS_1 and CS_2 have the same needs – but this does not apply to the resources or satisfiers. However, the social-exchange relationships with peers and teachers played a central role in students' access to resources to satisfy the "need to belong". As a student is an individual and at the same time a member of the school social system and its different social levels, the social levels can influence their access to resources to satisfy their "need to belong" by either facilitating or hindering it. Much the same, the other members or components of the school social system, i.e., peers, teachers, school management and school staff, such as school social workers, require access to resources for their need satisfaction. In this sense, the different social levels are connected, leading to László's (1975) system theory. This infers that things in existence are bound by their ontologies and properties. Thus, this systems theory is a general guideline to explain the complexities of human beings and their relationships. Similarly, emergent systemism ontology focuses on the complexities of human beings as individuals and members or components of social systems and their subsystems. This was applied in the current study to identify and explain the mechanisms and processes in social systems to detect how they "tick" (Bunge, 1997, 2004a).

The social system core to the research was the school social system and its different social levels. Interestingly, the data analysis indicates that each social level has emergent properties – an indication that the complexity could increase from one social level to the next, i.e., the complexity of the "lower" social level is less than the next, "higher" social level. It would be interesting to examine further the intersections of the different social levels (cf. Figure 4) to explain the underlying relational mechanisms and processes. In this sense, the social systems theory of Luhmann – the basis of Lang-Wojtasik's (2021) educational transformation approach that focuses on the interplay between environmental and social justice – is a lens with which to examine these interactional spaces between the different social levels. Such an examination would be along the lines of Lang-Wojtasik (2008a, 2021), stance – that school development is focused on the individual student and their brain development through learning, which is geared towards global social equity and justice. This is compatible with school social work's triple mandate because it is scientifically developed and incorporates the SDGs consistent with the UNCRC (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

The methodological contributions of the current study include focusing on student voice specific to the participants in the focus group interviews (Czer-niawski, 2011). In taking part in the research, the participants could discuss topics (in a protective setting). In addition to the focus group interviews, the

two-part data analysis contributed to the theoretical triangulation of data ((Denzin, 1973; Kuckartz, 2012; Mayring, 2016; Flick, 2018b). The participant-based analysis focused on the needs of the individual students, which entailed sorting and reducing the data to identify central themes, categorising them into the different social levels, and interpreting the student statements about possible need facilitation or hindrance. The whole group analysis focused on the conversation threads amongst the focus group participants, categorised according to the different social levels to identify the satisfiers or (dis)satisfiers using content analysis. From the findings, examples of possible guidelines for practice were drawn up using the transformative three-step approach (cf. Subsection 7.3). Text examples were used to illustrate how to transform theory to practice using the transformative three-step approach (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). This further demonstrated how a social problem – school-based prejudice – could be addressed by developing working hypotheses. This resulted in the draft of action guidelines for school social workers to engage with students, the cohort, and teachers to facilitate “need to belong” fulfilment in the school social system. In doing so, suggestions were put forward for school social work practice. I suggested that the different social levels of the school play a central role in students’ access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment. The triple mandate obligates school social work to support students in accessing satisfiers at school for “need to belong” fulfilment through a legitimate means, i.e., not to impede the need fulfilment of classmates, teachers, and other school members (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016). This means that social workers engage with the different social levels of the individual students’ social environment (cf. Figure 4) to facilitate student access to satisfiers. It concerns addressing practices and policies on the three social levels – classmates, teachers and school system – that obstruct student access to satisfiers and developing and implementing action guidelines (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018).

Overall, the data analyses identified possible social problem/s, i.e., an accumulation of practical problems of an individual student in satisfying their “need to belong” which are associated with their integration, or lack thereof, into the school social system and its different levels (Obrecht, 2005a, p. 132). The data analysis was unique in four ways. Firstly, a needs list was applied as the theoretical basis for analysing focus group interview transcripts. Secondly, student statements were interpreted in conjunction with their “need to belong” to specifically examine the statements to identify need facilitation or hindrance tendencies. Thirdly, portraits were developed for the focus group participants. These facilitated the interpretation of their statements in line with the “need to belong” to expose events, likely mechanisms and structures in daily school that possibly facilitated, or hindered, the individual student’s access to resources for need satisfaction (cf. Subsection 6.2). Fourthly, an analysis of the conversation threads of the participants in the focus group interviews indicated the

satisfiers and (dis)satisfiers of students' "need to belong" in the school social system and its different social levels (cf. Subsection 6.4).

8.2 Discussion of the individual student-based analysis

The *individual student-based analysis* (the micro-level) drew from Obrecht's biopsychic and social need categories (Obrecht, 2005a, 2009, p. 27). The findings of the individual student-based analysis pertained to the different social levels of the school social system and their possible effects on student belonging (Spencer *et al.*, 2014, p. 340). A summary of the key findings from this analysis are presented as follows, concerning the way the different social levels – class level, teacher level and teaching staff level – a matter which is set in conjunction with the school social system.

On the *biological level*, findings show that the biological need for physical integrity was addressed in conjunction with the participants' concerns about classmates' use of physical aggression, which was seen as a problem when it threatened student safety. Similarly, it shows that physical aggression hindered students' biological need for physical integrity. The student statements in CS_1 and CS_2 addressed concerns about students' acts of physical aggression. In CS_1 and CS_2, there was a sex-related difference because male classmates were perceived by female and male interview participants (age groups 12-13 and 14-15) to use physical force in the classroom to resolve classroom conflict.

On the *psychic/psychosocial level*, findings generated from the student statements in CS_1 and CS_2 show concern about the lack of clarity around social norms in interactions with classmates. This was associated with classmates not being clear about social norms or following them. It can be deduced from these responses that the students' psychic/psychological need for information that guided orientation and action was hindered, which was linked to the tendency for the psychic/psychological need for control or competence, i.e., skills, alongside the social norms and classroom rules.

On the *social level*, findings generated from the student statements in both CS_1 and CS_2 showed students' concerns about destructive interactions with their classmates. They were devalued through mockery or teasing, taunting and bullying. This demonstrated a tendency to hinder the social needs for friendship, social recognition, cooperation and socio-cultural belonging through participation. Incidences of social rejection and related alienation indicated a sex difference. This was marked by female participants in CS_1 and CS_2 addressing concerns around being mocked and rejected, which was viewed as a strategy to differentiate between popular and unpopular students based on their physical attributes. The gender-related issues identified were the objectification of girls by male classmates and rivalry between girls and boys in their

academic achievements. Male participants in CS_1 and CS_2 addressed incidences of female classmates being teased about their physical attributes, regarded as unattractive or associated with an assumed physical impairment. In CS_1, female participants justified the social rejection of a male classmate based on his unpleasant body odour and general lack of physical hygiene. In addition, body odour and poor physical hygiene were seen as legitimate reasons for the girls to apply negative forms of power, i.e., hindering power sources, against their classmates.

On the *socio-cultural level*, CS_1 (among males and females in the age groups of 12-13 and 14-15) showed that participants with migration heritage felt social rejection by some of their classmates linked with their ethnicity, language and religious affiliation. This was particularly the case for students living in Austria who associated with the Turkish diaspora and self-identified as Turkish first-language speakers. Such findings showed interaction problems due to cultural differences, social contempt related to cultural characteristics and one-sided, or unequal social-exchange relationships. For example, students were not invited to after-school functions, such as birthday parties. Similarly, they could not meet with their classmates after school due to the parents' disapproval of their ethnicity and language. Student statements included name-calling, physical aggression and accusations of social-norm and school-rule breaking. In summary, there were indications that students' social needs for friendship, recognition, fairness and cooperation were hindered through their classmates' behaviour. The latter could negatively affect student belonging because of "need to belong" hindrance in social interactions with classmates. This indicated social problems, i.e., social need tensions linked to the student's lack of social integration in the class cohort due to social rejection and a lack of socio-cultural membership without the related rights and duties (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27).

The findings from CS_2 show student migration heritage in connection with the countries: Greece, United Kingdom, China, India, South Africa, United States, Poland, Lebanon, Croatia, Czech Republic, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Vietnam, Brazil and a respective self-identified minority first language. Students living in Australia who associated with the Chinese diaspora and self-identified as Chinese first-language speakers were found to feel socially rejected by some of their classmates in association with their ethnicity and language. It concerned incidences of name-calling, linked with immigration to Australia, social distancing at lunchtime and apprehension on the part of the participants to be socially rejected, should they attempt to make friends with local students. It can be further inferred that the tendency to either internalise or externalise the negative emotions associated with social rejection was identified as a determinant of student alienation. The findings show that this could negatively affect student belonging because of negative implications for their social needs for fairness, uniqueness, distinctive identity, and cooperation – all

examples of social needs that can be thwarted (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). It could negatively impact student belonging and give rise to alienation and school disaffection. This owes that student belonging is affected by external factors, such as the values and norms of other individuals or the social group that students endorse to be accepted and realise their need to belong.

On the *student-class teacher level*,⁵¹ an analysis of the data generated synopsis of the student statements referring to their biopsychic and social needs indicated in CS_1 the tendency for minority first-language students – particularly with Turkish ethnic-cultural heritage – to feel discriminated against by teachers. This was linked to not being permitted to speak their first language in the classroom and school. It demonstrates that a ban on speaking a language other than German (or Austrian dialect at school) negatively affects student belonging because it thwarts their social needs for fairness, uniqueness and distinctive identity and cooperation (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). In CS_2, the findings show participants’ feeling that the teachers do not listen to students or take them seriously, mainly when decision-making affects them. This suggested that the social the teacher’s actions towards the student thwarted the social needs for autonomy, recognition, and cooperation as unfair when teachers used collective punishment as a classroom discipline approach because, in doing so, they did not make a distinction between disruptive students and those who were not. This suggested the teacher’s use of collective punishment thwarted students’ need for social justice and fairness.

On the *student-teaching staff level*,⁵² the data analysed generated a synopsis of the student statements referring to their biopsychic and social needs, as shown in CS_1 incidences of teaching staff calling students names and throwing objects. This indicates that, through the behaviour of the teaching staff, the biological need for physical integrity, the psychic need for information that guides orientation and action that can be assimilated, and the social needs for support, reciprocity and social justice and recognition, were thwarted. In addition, it was suggested that the school social worker was biased towards the teachers because students felt they were not taken seriously in conflict situations with their teachers. This demonstrated that the social needs for support, fairness and cooperation were thwarted through student interaction with the school social worker (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). In CS_2, students pointed out that school staff, particularly school leadership, did not take students’ concerns regarding the school uniform or school time structure seriously. Their involvement was regarded as largely tokenistic – an indication that students’ needs for

51 The student statements associated with the *class teacher level* were summarised according to the level the statement referred. The statements were interpreted as “facilitating” or “hindering” belonging statements (cf. Table 16)

52 The student statements associated with the *teaching staff level* were summarised according to the level the statement referred. The statements were interpreted as “facilitating” or “hindering” belonging statements (cf. Table 17).

socio-cultural belonging through participation and cooperation were thwarted through the actions of the school leadership team. In addition, when teachers yelled in class, students perceived it as incompetence and a failure to carry out their classroom-management role responsibly. Students expressed that it made them feel anxious. Their responses ranged from submission to ignoring the teacher. This indicates that students' psychic need for information guiding orientation and action that can be assimilated was thwarted by loud reprisals from the teachers.

8.3 Discussion of the findings from the whole group analysis

The analysis of the key findings from *whole group analysis* drew from Obrecht's biopsychic and social need categories, referred to as organisational (ORG) and subcategories (cf. Subsection 6.4) (Obrecht, 2009, p. 27). The overarching topic of this second data analysis was the student descriptions of feelings related to satisfiers and strategies. These were deductively generated from the research question and sub-questions which concerned the discussion threads in the focus group interviews that were linked to need satisfiers or (dis)satisfiers, based on Obrecht's need categories – the four levels of classmates (class cohort), teachers and social level of the school.⁵³ The key findings from the whole group analysis (the meso-level) distinguished between different social levels of the classmates, teachers and the social level of the school. Overall, satisfiers for students' "need to belong" emerged as physical school environment, learning engagement, boundary setting, acceptance, friendships, assistance, participation, heterogeneity, decision-making and academic accomplishment. The findings showed that the salient issues affecting student belonging were related to student-peer and student-teacher interactions marked by prejudice, conflict, aggression and violence (cf. Table 21).

The theoretical model of the "need to belong" was developed through the two-part data analysis (cf. Chapter 6). It illustrates the nexus of the findings derived from the first and second parts of the data analysis. The model comprises the individual student with their biopsychic and social needs, which they seek to meet in their social environment of the school. This concerns the psychic, biological process of need fulfilment for which students require access to satisfiers which could be facilitated, hindered or not impacted in any way. Overall, the two-part data analysis indicates that when student access to satisfiers is unobstructed, it enables "need to belong" facilitation.

53 The social level of the school encompasses the year-level coordinators, faculty leaders, administrative staff, vice-principal and the principal.

In conclusion, from these findings, it could be deduced that when student access to satisfiers is hindered, it can thwart student “need to belong” fulfilment at school and have negative consequences for their wellbeing. Overall, the significance of the findings shows that social relationships are indispensable for satisfying students’ “need to belong” at school. This is a step towards addressing the first gap Osterman (2000) identified concerning the implications of teacher and student-peer relationship building and maintaining student belonging. Young people spend so much of their time at school, where the teachers are engaged in formal student education. This positions them in a leading role to influence student wellbeing (Mägdefrau, 2006). The second gap is about student voice. Fuhr (2002) and Drolet, et al. (2013) and Law, Cuskelly and Carroll (2013) identified the lack of empirical research on young people’s lives from their perspective. The current study consulted with young people directly about their perception of belonging at school to close this gap. The third gap is the lack of research on children’s needs, which is the focus of the current study. In addressing the three gaps, the current study’s findings are positioned in international scholarly discourse on student belonging. In addition, it provides insight into students’ “need to belong” from two perspectives: individual student experiences about what facilitates or hinders their “need to belong” fulfilment at school and a group analysis concerning student access to satisfiers.

The whole group analysis provides insight on student access to satisfiers that facilitate student belonging and, in contrast, (dis)satisfiers that hindered or thwarted student belonging. The two-part data analysis culminated in the theory model “need to belong” (cf. Figure 4), which illustrates the nexus of the findings from the individual student-based and whole-group data analysis.

8.4 Discussion of the transformative three-step approach

The findings from the two-part data analysis provide the basis for the transformative three-step approach. It is used to transfer theory to practice, i.e., to generate working hypotheses as a basis for school social work action guidelines. This was demonstrated on an example of school-based prejudice identified in the data analysis (cf. Subsection 7.3). The impetus of the action guidelines is to identify the structures and processes of the school social system that are conducive to students’ “need to belong” fulfilment in everyday school.

Using a (dis)satisfier derived from the whole-group data analysis findings – school-based prejudice – the transformative three-step approach was demonstrated (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p. 288). It was applied to generate working hypotheses – the basis for action guidelines. This procedure resulted in four suggestions that draw on a finding from the data analysis of (dis)satis-

fiers which are put forward for school social workers. The working hypotheses address the social mechanisms and processes in the school social system to indicate steps to resolve students' practical problems. This facilitates student belonging at school because it is conducive to students' "need to belong" fulfilment.

There can, however, be an overlap of the practical and social problems of the other members or components of the different social levels of the school social system that impedes students' "need to belong" satisfaction. This could be the focus of future research on need satisfaction and wellbeing of teachers, school management, school staff, school social workers, parents and guardians of the students. In this sense, the findings offer a basis for future school social work research geared towards the mission and tasks of social workers in line with the profession's triple mandate (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016, p. 44; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp. 121–123).

8.5 Reflections on the triple mandate of school social work

Social workers, teachers and other student support workers have different roles and tasks in the school social system. This is featured in PART I of the current study, in conjunction with the commonalities and differences between school social workers in Austria and Australia, focusing on social work's triple mandate (Staub-Bernasconi, 2009, 2016). In comparison, other school support staff, such as the guidance teachers and psychologists in CS_1 and the psychologists and pastoral carers in CS_2, tended to focus interventions on assessing and rectifying negative student behaviour. I would argue that the UNCRC is the possible nexus or common ground for implementing school policy and practice on the different social levels of the school social system (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). In this sense, the triple mandate could be extended across the various disciplines, and professions that range from teachers, school social workers, school psychologists and school management to other school staff obligated to implement the UNCRC as a baseline for school policy and practices. The impetus would be to develop a framework based on international human rights to facilitate student "need to belong" fulfilment globally. This is in line with Andresen and Albus' distinction between need tensions as universal and integral to the survival and flourishing of the human organism. Still, the actualisation of needs relies on external factors such as the person's socio-cultural and natural environment (2010, pp. 57–58). Correspondingly, Anderman and Maehr (1994, pp. 293–294) contend that knowledge and skill acquisition are determinants of student belonging, as reflected in the correlation between students' problems in coping with a transition linked with the school environment, such as school structural issues on

education policy and practice levels. Hence, the UNCRC would provide areas of overlap for teachers and school social workers as professionals engaged in student knowledge and skill acquisition – which, if aligned with the UNCRC, would provide a common baseline. The UNRCR articles concerned with knowledge and skill acquisition as a baseline would mean goal alignment to support the students in learning and enhancing their academic and social skills (*ibid.*). Therefore, my suggestion is that the guiding principles, or philosophy, of the triple mandate, extends to teachers, school management, and school staff – as the nexus between the student and school, by grounding knowledge and skill acquisition in the framework of the UNCRC, as a set of children’s rights entitlements for student need fulfilment at school.

Similarly, Herzog-Punzenberger and Schnell (2019, pp. 111–113) contend that school policy and practice to accommodate a diverse student population in Austria lagged behind the developments in Australia marked by an interest in the preservation of ethnic languages and practices of students with migration heritage. Hence, I would argue that equal-education opportunities facilitate student belonging. This indicates that equal access to educational opportunities at school – be it the relationships with other students or academic achievement – determines student belonging. Considering the above assertions drawn up in the research literature review (cf. Chapter 3), it is suggested that students “need to belong” falls under the school’s jurisdiction to ensure that access to resources for need satisfaction is prioritised. Hence the UNCRC is topical, and children’s needs are equally topical (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

8.6 Heterogeneity facilitates student belonging

The interactions with peers provide students with opportunities to form social relationships that validate and support them as learners. Hence, social-relationship building belongs in the curricula – it is core because it potentially strengthens student motivation to come to school and learn. It should be borne in mind that group membership means having rights and duties connected with that group, which means that students have rights and obligations concerning group acceptance (Tajfel and Billig, 1974). Group membership is a determinant of student belonging and is a positive factor that contributes towards academic achievement – students feel good within a group which improves the quality of their time spent in class. If, however, the group disaffects from learning – even if a student is a member – because their focus is elsewhere, this could harm school outcomes. The group might, for example, be distracted from schoolwork or possibly even disconnect from schoolwork because they consider it a pointless pursuit, deem it boring or otherwise display disinterest.

Correspondingly, assimilation is the inevitable default condition for belonging, and gaining the recognition of personhood and agency is rejected over conditions that facilitate multiple forms or hybrid belonging (Mecheril and Hoffarth, 2009, p. 257). In this sense, membership in a group is not closed because, although students expect something from another student when they join their group, there is less focus on markers such as skin tone, ethnic-cultural heritage, or academic achievement – as heterogeneity enables openness towards the characteristics of others. However, group membership can influence student academic achievement either towards excelling at school or disaffecting from learning or positive educational outcomes.

Because the school social system comprises distinct social levels, student belonging can be facilitated through social-exchange relationships when the mechanisms and processes of the different social levels (how they function) are identified. In this way, the different social levels can be addressed through policy and implementation to facilitate belonging through student-peer, student-teacher and student-school management and staff relationship building. When considering an approach, it is essential to review the role of the different professionals at school. An example of this is teachers, who are key in supporting students to reach the state of school belonging: they identify facilitators of student belonging and act as gatekeepers to resources or satisfiers. They also play a role in direct relationship building, as students seek positive social-exchange relationships with their teachers. In this sense, a socio-ecological framework could have the potential to identify facilitators of students’ “need to belong” because of the complex interplay in systemism – bearing in mind that the student is both an individual, and at the same time, a member of the school social system and its different social levels. However, the problems that come about when students feel disconnected from school – or worse, experience social exclusion – are shown to harm their school interest (Faircloth, 2009; Crisp, 2010; Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters, 2016). Such issues require interventions both at the individual level and at the different social levels of the school – such that not achieving the state of student belonging (when desired) does not become a problem. Teachers and other school staff need to be aware of such instances and intervene using a whole-school approach on different intervention levels.

Concerning need theory, belonging, or reaching the psychic state of belonging, has two sides: firstly, it drives individuals partly independent of the external world because need tensions are intrinsic properties of a range of behaviours or actions. Secondly, the ability of individuals to meet their needs and, in particular, their social needs is reliant on their natural and social environments. In this sense, the social need for socio-cultural membership through participation in social groups, as formulated by Obrecht (2009, p. 27), and state of belonging, as per Maslow (1943, 1954) and Mägdefrau (2006), indicates that the access to satisfiers for “need to belong” fulfilment at school is a precursor

to student wellbeing. To belong is a psychic state achieved when access to resources for the “need to belong” is accessible/available. To belong means that the individual student can get to this state because they have access to resources to relieve their “need to belong” tension. The need for socio-cultural membership through participation in social groups, as formulated by Obrecht (2009, p. 27), the need for sociocultural membership through participation in social groups sees need tension alleviation, i.e., need satisfaction, depending on the negotiation process with others, and the resulting rights and duties that pertain to a particular membership.

According to Maslow (1943, 1954), belongingness is an emotional need; to feel a positive connection and affiliation with others. He explicitly referenced belonging in human relationships and the psychological aspects of needs formulated to achieve the goal of self-actualisation. Mägdefrau characterised needs as psycho-physical determinants of human behaviour (2006). The difference here is that Mägdefrau regards needs as a hypothetical construct, a combination of individual psychological and socio-psychological components that are simultaneous psycho-physical events and social phenomenon. In this sense, needs are experienced as feelings and ideas that compel the student to access resources or satisfiers for their fulfilment. Need satisfiers are influenced by cultural, ethnic, gender and age-specific and individual psychological conditions, which affect the type of satisfiers used for needs fulfilment. Needs are innate and universal but are transformed through socialisation because of the influence of the variables above on our selection of satisfiers. Hence, Mägdefrau differentiates between different types of needs, vital or basal needs. The result – wellbeing – is core as a state that comes about because students feel they belong.

Consequently, there is an overlap with belonging perceived as a need from the theoretical viewpoint of Maslow (1943, 1954) and Mägdefrau (2006) and the social need for socio-cultural membership through participation in social groups, formulated by Obrecht (2009, p. 27). Against the backdrop of the theory of needs, it is interesting that student access to satisfiers in the school context should be measured. This means setting benchmarks that enable both access and the right to access, alongside guidelines and rules, to limit access to prevent overindulgence. Regulating access through duties, for example, corresponds with Arlt’s (1921, 1934) reference to luxury or too much of something which she deems destructive and damaging for human flourishing.

8.7 Suggestions for future research

To meet students’ “need to belong”, there is consensus across the need theories that they require positive interactions and social-exchange relationships with

peers, teachers and school staff. Student belonging is evident through mutual support and interest in each other's biological, psychic and social need satisfaction – this means reciprocal acts of caring, affection, cooperation and the feeling of significance in interactions and social relationships. It should be borne in mind that the “need to belong” is broader than belonging, which is a state that is achieved through motivating behaviour directed towards relieving need tensions intrinsic to the human organism. Also, scientific knowledge is fallible and is thus provisional and contingent upon additional scientific enquiries (Bunge, 2011, p. 433). Hence, I conclude by offering suggestions for future social work practice and research on secondary school students’ “need to belong” and student belonging at school.

The implications from the current study, as mentioned above, indicate that further research is required to examine the school social system and its different social levels to facilitate student “need to belong” satisfaction as the basis for student belonging. Specifically, addressing school social workers in their role as practitioners engaged in schools, I put forward three suggestions for future research:

Suggestion one: in accordance with social work’s triple mandate (cf. Chapter 2), school social workers support students in accessing satisfiers for need fulfilment through legitimate means (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016). Both as individual social workers and as members of the school social system, they navigate their tasks, roles and responsibilities given the triple mandate that concerns the association between social problems and human rights, i.e., children’s right entitlements (United Nations General Assembly, 1989; Du Plessis-Schneider, 2020b).

From the standpoint of the triple mandate, suggestions for future research are proposed using the UNCRC framework. Similarly, the satisfaction of students’ biopsychic and social needs is linked to the UNCRC rights entitlements. Without adequate need satisfaction, tension is created – this, in turn, has consequences for student wellbeing and negative implications for different social levels of the school. Children’s needs can be satisfied through participation, autonomy and cooperation (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2000; John, 2003; Mägdefrau, 2006; Hart, 2008; Andresen and Albus, 2010). This does not always involve projects that have been developed specifically for participation, but rather, it means the creation or further development of opportunities for goal directed social exchanges among students that encourage them to contribute their opinions and positions on how to ensure that student voice is heard in school, i.e., on the different social levels of the school social system. It would allow for the recognition of students as individuals, subjects and social actors who can think, plan and act, and are therefore able to demand their rights as embedded in the UNCRC (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). The research focus could be on how the cooperation between students, teachers,

school management, school staff, parents and school social workers can be enhanced to facilitate “need to belong” fulfilment at school.

Suggestion two: social work was mentioned in the data for both CS_1 and CS_2 and was associated with a lack of appropriate information for students about school social work objectives. There were negative connotations attached to social work. Exploring social work’s specific roles and corresponding functions would be beneficial. Social facts could be examined to describe and explain the underlying mechanisms that give rise to the negative connotations linked with school social work. An enquiry could be undertaken, using the UNCRC as a framework, for example, Article 3, the best interest of the child, and Article 12, the child’s rights to participate and be heard (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

Suggestion three: this concerns human needs as a basis for school social workers to examine the concerns of vulnerable individuals and social groups, who are deprived of resources (i.e., power, justice, and dignity) under the overarching perspective of an unfulfilled “need to belong” and the possible UNCRC implication/s (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) This would require an exploration of the structure and dynamics/transactions of and between biological, psychic/psychological, social and cultural systems – by building on the transdisciplinary explanatory base for social work. It would be beneficial to take a systemic view to define, explain and make (conditional) forecasts about the possible outcomes of social conditions that hinder students’ “need to belong” (Obrecht, 2005a; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018; Lang-Wojtasik, 2021).

The rationale for the focus of the current study on the school physical and social environment is that the social environment is where students spend a lot of their daily lives (Allen, Vella-Brodrick and Waters, 2016). In the research undertaken here, the focus was on student voice and thus young people’s expressed feelings, thoughts, and views about school (Czerniawski, 2011). Other pertinent individuals and social groups are associated with the school social system, such as the teachers, school management, school staff, social workers, and parents and guardians. For future research into “need to belong” fulfilment in the school social system, I suggest researching the target groups mentioned earlier. It is highly relevant to examine their feelings, thoughts and views on the mechanisms and processes of the school social system to facilitate a holistic approach to developing future directions in school development (Bunge, 1997, 2004a). Similarly, students are members of social groups outside of school, i.e., parents/guardians (family units), sports associations and youth clubs. In future research, it would be interesting to bridge the “need to belong” at school by exploring out-of-school memberships and social activities in associations or other formalised groups.

The current study’s findings indicate practices and policies on the different social levels of the school that facilitate or hinder student access to satisfiers

for “need to belong” fulfilment. Against the backdrop of human needs theory, future social work research can signpost the way forwards for the different social levels of the school to meet the requirements to facilitate students’ “need to belong” at school. For example, the focus of enquiry could be the differentiation of the social levels and the power sources, using the UNCRC as a baseline for the research (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). This entails emphasising the linkage between theory, practice and ethics, i.e., the triple mandate of the social work profession and discipline (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016, p. 44; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp. 121–123).

The current study was set in a specific multi-level ontology that distinguished between an emergentist systemism ontology and realist epistemology (Bunge, 2011). It integrated transdisciplinary knowledge by systematically linking the different biological, psychic, social and cultural levels to identify and explain social problems that arise when students are hindered from meeting their “need to belong”. Specifically, the findings provide insight, based on how the research was contextualised, i.e., the objectives of realism were used to define, explain, and make (conditional) forecasts about concrete biopsychic and social facts (Geiser, 2015, pp. 304–307). In doing so, student statements about possible hindrances to resources for “need to belong” fulfilment shed light on different social levels of the school, i.e., the concrete social systems that are made up of human beings (and their artefacts) as the components.

We are human beings with biological, psychic and social need tensions, i.e., practical problems. If a student cannot meet their needs, this can lead to social problems, which are the core focus or object-base of social workers – the profession and discipline that seeks remedies to reduce and prevent such problems. The latter is not to be confused with the means or satisfiers themselves which are influenced by a person’s geographical, economic and social-cultural conditions – their interactional and structural position which can facilitate the “need to belong” on the one hand, or, on the other, hinder their access to resources for “need to belong” fulfilment which could develop into social problems. It is not a matter of establishing an optimal state of equilibrium, because in reality there are no equilibria, but rather only approximations to such states – which are, however, usually contradicted by opposing processes, such that a so-called stable or static state is not attained (Obrecht, 2005a, p. 100). It is about the relationship between the feeling of belonging and the social needs for the student to feel that they belong to the social systems they are members of. Hence, the way forwards to facilitate student “need to belong” at school is through social-exchange relationships on all social levels that enable fair access to satisfiers by identifying ways to enhance the cooperation between students, teachers and other members of the school system.

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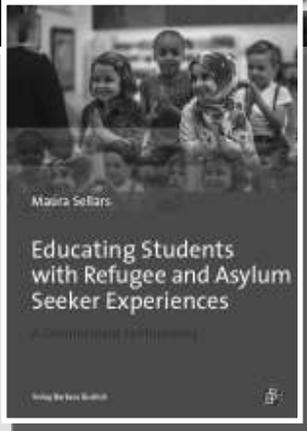
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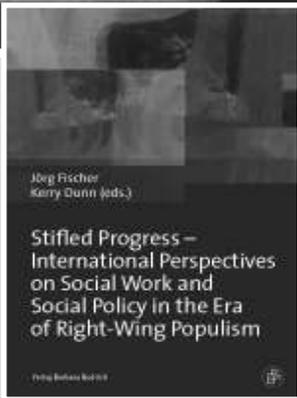
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