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14. The role of cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging to the social-emotional wellbeing of diverse students

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Abstract Social-emotional wellbeing at school is related to students' connectedness to their cultural selves, their sense of ethnic group belonging and pride, and the ways they participate confidently as critical citizens who recognise and protect the rights, beliefs, values, and identities of others. Using a Kaupapa Māori approach, this chapter discusses the social-psychological conditions for cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging for primary school students (n = 2149) aged 5–12 years and secondary school students (n = 584) aged 13–18 years in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Keywords cultural connectedness | ethnicity | Aotearoa New Zealand | citizenship | social-emotional wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

Social psychology is a discipline that studies the cultural context of human behaviour (Sonn, Rua, & Quayle, 2019). In essence, it is the study of how and why people think, feel, and do the things they do depending on the context they are in. Cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging are social-psychological aspects of self that manifest differently depending on context. Cultural practices – socially patterned activities organised with reference to community norms and values – are important for the enactment and formation of ethnic identity, and it is through cultural practices – as people 'do' life – that cultural identities are shaped, constructed, and negotiated (Nasir & Saxe, 2003, p. 14). Culture is characterised by shared values, beliefs, behaviours, styles, and tool-kits of 'symbols, stories, rituals,

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and world-views' (Swidler, 1986, p. 273), practices ranging from speech styles and language to specific kinds of physical interaction, tastes in music, clothing, and food, and other symbolic ethnic cues (Gans, 1979). While the ways self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy affect the academic engagement of diverse students has been well researched (DiBenedetto & Schunk, 2018; Usher & Weidner, 2018; Webber & Macfarlane, 2018, 2020), few studies have examined the affective and social-psychological drivers of cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging to the social-emotional wellbeing of diverse students.

In this chapter, I contribute to this discussion by focusing on how self-perceptions about the value of cultural identity (as it relates to ethnic group membership) affects the social-emotional wellbeing of students in schools in New Zealand. In line with the views of Olsen and Sollid (see Introductory chapter, this volume), this chapter is interested in the ways diverse students 'act and make choices, are acted upon, and relate to each other in a variety of ways' based on their understandings of cultural identity and sense of cultural connectedness. Using a Kaupapa Māori approach, this study examined the social-psychological conditions for cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging for primary school students (n = 2149) aged 5–12 years, and secondary school students (n = 584) aged 13–18 years, from one regional cluster of schools (n = 16) in the northern region of Aotearoa, New Zealand. This chapter evidences the ways social-emotional wellbeing at school is related to students' connectedness to their cultural selves, their sense of ethnic group belonging and pride, and the ways they participate confidently as critical citizens who recognise and protect the rights, beliefs, values, and identities of culturally-diverse 'others' in a rapidly changing national context. Olsen and Sollid (see Introductory chapter, this volume) have argued that 'citizenship presupposes the individuals' sense of belonging to a larger collective, where people want to and are allowed to engage' and that 'citizenship can be expressed and negotiated through acts that create or recreate social belonging and relations'. This chapter illustrates the ways citizenship engagements and relations are negotiated and renegotiated with every inter-cultural interaction.

Student engagement in school contexts is dependent on a number of social-psychological factors: a) the skills, background knowledge, and resources available to students; b) the students' attributes including self-efficacy, motivation, mindset, and task commitment, c) how they are identified and identify as belonging to, or in, educational settings; and d) how the educational setting makes space, and provides support and opportunities for students to engage and persist (Webber, 2015). This sense of belonging and invitation to an educational space shapes students' engagement with, and willingness to, persist in that educational setting. In this sense, educational engagement can be said to be a function of developing both

a school-based social identity and an academic identity. And yet, other important social identities such as ethnic and cultural identities do not vanish when students enter schools. Therefore, important questions include: How do academic or school identities, necessary for educational engagement, intersect with these identities to support or constrain social-emotional wellbeing? How do cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging contribute to critical citizenship?

Research has shown that perception of one's ethnic identity can either promote or undermine social-emotional wellbeing depending on whether the content of that identity is positive or negative (Webber, McKinley, & Hattie, 2013). When a positive cultural stereotype exists, for example, the stereotype of Asian academic ability, then making the group membership salient has a positive influence on academic performance and social-emotional wellbeing (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). When a negative cultural stereotype exists, such as the case for working class (Croizet & Claire, 1998), gender, and Indigenous and minority groups (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006), making group membership salient has a negative influence on academic performance and social-emotional wellbeing.

Some researchers have argued that school failure is connected to the process of students doing 'identity work' in response to experiences of racism (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Webber et al., 2013). Whether students stay engaged at school or not depends on (a) 'the sense they make of themselves, their community and their future' (Smyth et al., 2004, p. 131) and (b) 'the adaptive strategies they use to accept, modify, or resist the institutional identities made available to them' (Fraser, Davis, & Singh, 1997, p. 222). Many Indigenous and other minority students must undertake extra identity work to cope with racism at school. This incongruity means that the choice to 'disengage' is easy if they are, as Smyth et al. (2004, p. 131) put it, 'living in one reality at home, in another reality with peers and then negotiating another reality at school'. In this situation, a lack of social-emotional wellbeing, academic demotivation, school disengagement, and underachievement are likely. In addition, if students are to learn think independently and participate confidently as critical citizens in a rapidly changing globalised environment, they need to be historically literate about controversial issues and accepting of the value diverse groups put on their ethnic and cultural identities.

RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL CONTEXTS

Educational research has documented the pervasive influence of schools' ethnic composition on the academic and cultural lives of students. Although this body of empirical work is large and contains its share of inconsistencies, studies have

generally found that inter-ethnic contact in schools promotes more positive cultural attitudes (Ellison & Powers, 1994) and greater inter-ethnic sociability and friendship (Johnson & Marini, 1998). Despite these beneficial outcomes, attending school with greater proportions of students from other ethnic groups may also pose additional challenges to students, making it more difficult to feel a part of the school community. Like adults, students show strong in-group preferences in social interaction and the formation of friendships (Hallinan & Williams, 1990; Johnson & Marini, 1998; Schofield, 1980). Ethnicity is a highly salient aspect of both social and cultural identity, and similarity with one's classmates along such dimensions is no doubt important in generating a sense of belonging and membership in a school. School ethnic composition may influence engagement behaviours in a number of ways. Being surrounded by students of one's own ethnic group may prevent disengagement indirectly through school attachment. When students do not feel comfortable at school or socially integrated with other students, they may withdraw – skipping classes more frequently and investing less in academic activities.

Consequently, understanding the process through which students come to see themselves as cultural beings and as belonging to particular ethnic groups is important because it can have a tremendous bearing on their school engagement and subsequent academic achievement (Phinney, 1989). For students in multi-ethnic secondary schools, cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging frequently takes on new significance with respect to peer interactions, friendship groups, and transition to university. It is not uncommon in multi-ethnic school settings for students to interact and form friendships easily across ethnic boundaries – if their parents or other adults allow them to do so (Killen, McGlothlin, & Lee-Kim, 2002). However, cultural boundaries can also become problematic as students become increasingly aware of the significance associated with ethnic group difference. In other words, students generally become more concerned with how their peers react to their participation in inter-ethnic relationships and, as a result, they may begin to self-segregate according to ethnicity (Schofield & Francis, 1982). Secondary aged students also become more aware of the politics associated with ethnicity, and more cognisant of ethnic hierarchies and prejudice (Way, Cowal, Gingold, Pahl, & Bissessar, 2001).

As such, schools are sites where students receive and begin to understand messages from society about their cultural identity and the value of their ethnic group membership. Minority and Indigenous adolescents in particular are subject to negative expectations that can have profound implications for their academic performance (Weinstein, 2002). Cross-cultural data focused on a variety of minorities in a number of contexts all over the world suggest that exposure to a negative

'social mirror' (Doucet & Suarez-Orozco, 2006, p. 168) adversely affects academic engagement. De Vos and Suarez-Orozco (1990) have demonstrated that the cultural messages minority students receive in school contexts are saturated with psychological disparagement and racist stereotypes. De Vos and Suarez-Orozco argue that this experience can have profound implications for the healthy ethnic identity formation of minority and Indigenous students as well as for their schooling experiences.

Research has also established that some Indigenous and minority students believe that they must choose between a positive ethnic identity and a strong academic identity to be successful at school (Nasir & Saxe, 2003; Webber, 2008). Not only are schools central places for forming ethnic identities, but the way teachers and students talk, interact, and act in school, both reflects and helps shape developing understandings about ethnic hierarchies. As such, students' experiences at school can influence how they choose to culturally or ethnically self-categorise, how boundaries between their ethnic groups are formed, negotiated, and interpreted, and how the processes of racialisation and boundary-forming affect students' interactions and opportunities.

THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

Although New Zealand schools strive to create equitable learning environments, the unfortunate reality is that many diverse students, particularly Indigenous Māori students, are underserved. It is evident that the existing educational provisions work less well for them. One of the core values of education in Aotearoa New Zealand is that through their learning experiences, students will learn about 'their own values and those of others, different kinds of values, such as moral, social, cultural, aesthetic, and economic values, the values on which New Zealand's cultural and institutional traditions are based, and the values of other groups and cultures' (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 12). However, this principle is not put into practice in many schools. For example, research suggests that the enduring problem of Māori educational disengagement more generally may be attributed to factors including: low teacher expectations of Māori (Rubie-Davies, 2015; Turner, Rubie-Davies, & Webber, 2015); deficit theorising about Māori student potential (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009); a paucity of Māori parent/family involvement in education (Berryman, Ford, & Egan, 2015; Rubie-Davies, Webber, & Turner, 2018); culturally irrelevant content and contexts for learning (Bevan-Brown, 2009; Webber & Macfarlane, 2018); and loss of cultural efficacy and pride (Webber, 2012). Additionally, research in Aotearoa New Zealand has shown that Pākehā (New Zealanders of European or British descent) and Chinese students are

less likely to see their cultural group membership as an important part of who they are, nor feel the need to find out more information about their cultural groups. In addition, Samoan students feel a greater certainty of belonging to their cultural group and involve themselves more often in finding out about their cultural group collective history, traditions, and protocols (Webber et al., 2013). Therefore, while cultural identity, connectedness, and ethnic group belonging are important for the social-emotional wellbeing of some students, it appears to be less salient for other groups of students. However, the need for social belonging, for seeing oneself as socially connected, is a basic human motivation (MacDonald & Leary, 2005), and a sense of social connectedness that predicts favourable outcomes (Stuart & Jose, 2014) is important for all students. Developing a sense of cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging is good for everyone – especially in increasing diverse schooling contexts.

Including learning about identity, language, and culture in the curriculum should be an integral part of catering to the social-emotional wellbeing of all students. The extant research shows that a positive sense of ethnic identity is important for students' self-esteem (Chavous et al., 2003; Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005), and it is therefore important for all students to recognise themselves as being cultural, to name themselves culturally, and to mark positive aspects of their culture. Positive cultural identity and ethnic group belonging can improve the academic motivation, achievement, ability beliefs, and career aspirations of students (Webber et al., 2013). It is therefore important to help students recognise and accept that all people are cultural, because this creates an awareness of the values and practices of their own culture(s), as well as an appreciation and willingness to learn about others – and this is a key part of critical citizenship. Our ability to live respectfully and peacefully alongside each other depends on it.

TE TIRITI O WAITANGI – A KEY CONSIDERATION IN THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM

New Zealand is a bicultural country, whose tangata whenua (Indigenous people) are Māori. The founding document of the country is Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) which was written and signed in 1840 as a means of partnership between Māori and the government (represented by the Crown) of New Zealand (Walker, 2016). The 2020 Education and Training Act (Ministry of Education, 2020) stipulates that even in contemporary times, Te Tiriti O Waitangi obliges schools, as government organisations, to ensure that they are bringing Te Tiriti into effect. The 2020 Act specifies that schools must give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by:

- working to ensure their plans, policies, and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori (protocols), mātauranga Māori (knowledge/wisdom), and te ao Māori (worldviews),
- taking all reasonable steps to make instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori, and;
- achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students.

These objectives put Māori identity, language, and culture at the centre of teaching and learning, with an expectation that Māori students should be engaged, challenged, and affirmed in their cultural identity at school.

In addition, the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2015) stipulates that schools should provide all students with opportunities to 'create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring' (p. 10). The New Zealand curriculum puts students' culture at the centre of teaching and learning, asserting that: a) students should experience a curriculum that acknowledges the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand, and b) that the curriculum should reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity and values the histories and traditions of all its people. The New Zealand curriculum asserts that all children should feel proud of who they are, where they come from, and what their culture has to offer the world. As the world around us diversifies, it will become more important to be aware of the values and practices of our own culture(s), in order to have an appreciation and willingness to learn about other cultures.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed mixed-methods surveys to gather quantitative and qualitative data from students over a two-year period. A concurrent nested qualitative/quantitative design was selected in the form of a survey, meaning that, although all data were collected simultaneously, there was an initial emphasis on quantitative data, while the qualitative data were embedded in the study (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The rationale behind this approach was to fulfil the research objective of triangulation: 'seeking convergence of findings' (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007, p. 284). Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data were deemed equally important. The survey comprised a combination of 49 open-ended and closed questions. Initially students were asked to provide demographic data and, then, complete multiple-choice questions, Likert scale items, and open-ended questions.

The 16 schools involved in the project had been working collaboratively for the past two years as part of a regional cluster. The project adhered to ethical principles and practices, including informed consent, protection of vulnerable students, anonymity, and confidentiality, as outlined by Kaupapa Māori protocols (G. Smith, 2012; L. Smith, 1999) and the University of Auckland Code for Human Ethics. Firstly, a Kaupapa Māori approach ensured a respectful, culturally responsive and appropriate pathway was used for undertaking this important work alongside school communities. I involved teachers and school leaders in the gathering of the data, liaison with students and families, and included their perspectives in the interpretation of findings for this study. This was critical in terms of ensuring that the study interpretations were presented from an authentically local perspective. Secondly, following ethical review, the project was lodged with the University and received ethical approval in 2018 (UAHPEC Approval Number: 021775).

The data used for this study were taken from a larger national research project led by Dr Melinda Webber titled: Kia tū rangatira ai ngā iwi Māori: Living, thriving and succeeding as Māori. This strengths-based research project investigated how students, but particularly Indigenous Māori students, learn, succeed, and thrive at school. This nationally representative project has large numbers of students (n = 18,996), family members (n = 6949) and teachers (n = 1866) who have completed the project surveys. This project was funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand, Te Apārangi.

The current study is a small component of that wider research project and is focused on examining the social-psychological conditions for cultural connectedness and belonging for primary school students (n = 2149) aged 5–12 years, and secondary school students (n = 584) aged 13–18 years, from one regional cluster of schools (n = 16) in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Thirteen primary schools and three secondary schools from a northern region of Aotearoa, New Zealand were part of the regional cluster.

Table 14.1: Study Participants

Participants	Māori	Pākehā	Other	Total n
Primary students	21%	64%	15%	2149
Secondary students	15%	64%	21%	584

The focus of this study is aligned with the broader ICE project in that it articulates the ways educational policy and curricula play an important role in developing citizens for the future. It also illuminates the ways students' cultural identities shape their understandings of citizenship – and its related values,

responsibilities, and relationships with (or not) the Indigenous peoples in their country.

Data collection

The student survey took between 15–20 minutes for students to complete. The students were not asked to write their names on the surveys, and any information they provided was made unidentifiable. I attended school staff meetings and parent meetings to explain the project and answered any questions about the project. After permission from the school principal and Board of Trustees was granted, parents were informed of their child's invitation to be involved in the project. Both students and parents had two opportunities to withdraw from, or decline participating in the study. I then distributed participant information sheets, or an electronic link to the online questionnaire, for all students at the school, inviting them to participate.

Open-ended question analysis

Participant answers to one open-ended question were coded and analysed for this particular study in order to answer the question – 'What aspect of your culture are you most proud of?' Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase thematic analysis process was subsequently followed and included: 1. Familiarising myself with the data; 2. Generating initial codes; 3. Searching for themes; 4. Reviewing themes; 5. Defining and naming themes; and 6. Reporting the themes. In relation to phases four and five, Saldana (2013) also emphasises that recoding and recategorising is generally inevitable as 'qualitative inquiry demands meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience' (p. 10).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, five key components concerning the personal, familial, school, and community conditions for secure cultural identity were identified in the student data. The five conditions, described below, are: Connectedness to Others, Belonging to Place, Positive Identity Markers, Cultural Protective Factors, and Cultural Navigation Skills (see Figure 14.1). The first condition, Connectedness to Others, was ubiquitous – it appeared with incredible regularity throughout the course of the study rendering it the most important condition of cultural

Figure 14.1: The social-psychological conditions supportive of embedded achievement and secure cultural identity.

connectedness, ethnic group belonging, and overall social-emotional wellbeing. It must be noted that although most students were able to answer the research question, 13% of primary-aged students, and 22% of secondary students wrote 'I don't know', 'not applicable', or 'I don't have a culture' on the survey form. Between 80–90% of those who could/would not answer the question self-identified as Pākehā New Zealanders.

Connectedness to Others. Scholars have emphasised the critical role of extended family members, teachers, and other role models in enhancing positive outcomes for children in the face of stress and difficulty (Morgenroth, Ryan & Peters, 2015; Webber & Macfarlane, 2020). The quality of these relationships is related to the development of competence in children, including academic achievement, cultural connectedness, and social adaptability (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Priest et al., 2014, Rubie-Davies et al., 2018). As such, community engagement in education, and inclusive school-family partnership practices are important to social-emotional wellbeing, cultural connectedness, and ethnic group belonging in students.

The students in this study placed high importance on their connections to a collective, including their wider community 'families'. The students' cultural identities were nurtured and encouraged by their family and teachers, and they consequently felt socially capable and had a sense of connectedness and efficacy across a range of contexts. The students commented that their families valued collective cultural activities like hunting, diving for seafood, and a range of cultural

celebrations like Waitangi Day and St Patrick's Day – which they associated with their cultural identities. Many students, particularly those from Māori and Pasifika backgrounds also indicated that 'representing your family and culture positively' was an important component of cultural identity because one's actions had wider repercussions for family and community members. The self-described expectation that students from Indigenous and minority groups counter negative stereotypes and misrepresentations of their cultural group as part of being a 'good ethnic group member' is well documented in the extant literature (Watson, 2020; Webber et al., 2013).

Many of the students believed that they were key members of their cultural collective, and were nurtured, protected, and guided from an early age to feel like they belonged. Students perceived that their role in 'staying connected' was integral to ethnic group membership and viewed this as a serious undertaking in terms of developing cultural efficacy and pride. One student stated 'We are proud islanders who spread the word and culture and support each other' (Tongan, Secondary). Another student commented 'when we do anything we do it with pride. We are always proud and really supportive and if something happens we are always together. We are related to everyone, we are related to chiefs and Māori kings' (Māori, Primary). Finally, one student stated 'I am proud of how close my family, and extended family stay together. All over New Zealand my family and I stay in contact with those from our iwi' (Māori, Secondary). In line with the extant research, this study has found that a secure home environment, strong relationships, and familial support can have a positive influence on the social-emotional wellbeing and cultural connectedness of students (Watson, 2020; Webber & Macfarlane, 2018).

Belonging to Place. Many of the students in this study were proud of their ethnic group membership and wanted to express their cultural identities across multiple contexts. They articulated that the value systems of their ethnic groups were crucial to anchoring a person to their homelands and genealogy. Students commented 'I am very proud of my heritage. I was lucky enough to visit Akaroa, where my late ancestors came from. My family taught me about the ups and downs of life back then' (Pākehā, Secondary), 'Even as a very small country, Ireland has achieved so much. We also have a very rich cultural background and amazing folklore that has been passed down through generations. I'm also very proud of the people who have managed to pass down the Gaelic language, even though it's dying out. Even though many people don't really recognise Ireland as having a very rich culture and history – we do, and I'm very proud of it' (Pākehā, Secondary), and 'I am proud of our culture and language. Tonga is an archipelago of one hundred fifty islands' (Tongan, Secondary). Finally, one student stated, 'I like telling people who

my iwi (tribe) are, where our marae (traditional gathering place) is, and how we have always stayed on our whenua (lands)' (Māori, Primary).

Students were keen to share their cultural knowledge, and many mentioned the places that they felt connected to. Being familiar with where their families originated from seemed to help students to anchor themselves to people, place, and histories associated with those places. This view aligns with Fogarty and Sollid's (this volume) assertion that student understandings of place are central to both their individual and collective identity formation and their ideas of 'belonging to "country" and customary learnings, based in place' form a central tenant in their conceptions of what a 'good' citizen may be. Affiliation to place appears to be a key element of cultural connectedness and ethnic group pride, and should consequently be integrated into classroom teaching and learning. Penetito (2009) has called such a pedagogy 'Place Base Learning' (PBL) and has argued that it can provide students with the answers to two essential questions: what is this place and what is my relationship to it? PBL essentially draws on the strongest features, characteristics, history, and personalities of the land or place where students are born, raised, and educated, thereby creating a synergy between school-based learning and the unique context of the surrounding ecology. It teaches 'through' rather than 'about' culture and encompasses ecological studies, biodiversity, community education and community relations, local history, and sustainable development (Barnhardt, 2005).

Advocates of PBL, such as Kawagley and Barnhardt (1999), Penetito (2009) and Kidman, Abrams and McRae (2011), believe that PBL can help alleviate the tension that currently exists between Western education pedagogies and holistic Indigenous education models. These authors assert that PBL can move the curriculum towards a new and exciting place where ownership by students over characteristics and features of classroom-based learning can be given heightened relevance. It should provide new meanings to enquiry and knowledge that draws upon students' cultural histories and languages.

Positive Identity Markers. Many students in this study were able to articulate a strong sense of cultural efficacy, connection, and belonging. Feeling a strong connection to their culture and other members of their ethnic group meant that they knew how to engage meaningfully with relevant cultural practices and protocols. Many students purported to have a keen sense of cultural pride, saying 'My cultural identity is what makes me who I am. The stories and hardships my ancestors faced to allow me to have the life I have now' (Pākehā, Secondary), 'EVERYTHING!!! Despite Pākehā taking over our land, Māori still strived and fought for our country. They stayed strong and showed great mana (pride) and kaha (strength) through it all. Our haka (war dances) and waiata (songs) are just

as amazing, but some just think that we are just here for a cultural performance. I love our reo (language). I am doing my best in school to improve my reo and help revive the language' (Māori, Secondary), and 'I'm proud of the cultural dances like the Siva Samoa, Sasa, Taualuga and the Fa'ataupati' (Samoan, Primary). According to the participants in this study, cultural connectedness and ethnic group pride was not simply about being a member of an ethnic group but also about knowing what that membership entailed. Students mentioned valued cultural attributes such as 'kindness and gracefulness' (Filipino, Primary), 'how forward thinking and business focused most Dutch people are' (Pākehā, Secondary), and 'taking care of our elders and our children … if you have the ability, help others' (Rarotongan, Primary). Some students also mentioned that academic achievement was a key marker of their cultural identity, stating 'We need to be different from others and show how our culture can achieve things that people don't expect us to achieve. Heaps of Māori are clever you know' (Māori, Primary).

In this study, cultural efficacy was demonstrated when students felt they had the personal resources to engage appropriately and 'live up to expectations' across a range of contexts. The findings show that making sure children are aware of their collective belonging, cultural connectedness, and responsibilities to others as ethnic group and community members is critical. Many of the students in this study asserted that any decisions about themselves were made while recognising their responsibilities to others – their family and communities. Therefore, healthy and supportive family and community contexts are fundamental to positive identity development and for promoting, modelling, and supporting cultural connectedness and ethnic group pride.

Cultural Protective Factors. Many of the students stated that they associated positive self-efficacy, knowledge of heritage languages, resilience, and a hard-working attitude as key elements of their cultural identity. They tended to be aspirational, 'we strive to go further than our ancestors did' (Māori, Secondary), determined, 'we are still here even though people tried to stop our language and culture' (Māori, Primary), and committed, 'everyone is hard working and aims to achieve their goals' (Pākehā, Primary). In contemporary times, many students are exposed to increasingly difficult home, neighbourhood and/or school environments that can significantly impact their sense of cultural connectedness and belonging. According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998), resilience largely consists of two components: the presence of significant adversity and the achievement of a positive outcome despite the threat or risk. However, resilience can also be thought of as a continuous interaction between the individual and characteristics of his or her environment (Ungar, 2011). In this sense, resilience is both context dependent and a collective action. Many of the students in this study who described themselves as

resilient, also believed that their communities were resilient, having successfully navigated their way through adversity according to the strengths and resources available to them. The data suggests that student resilience might be better developed when students are afforded opportunities to work alongside their families, teachers, and communities to learn about their cultural identities, languages, and histories in coordinated, continuous, negotiated, and culturally relevant ways.

Many of the students revealed a combination of personal and environmental characteristics that enabled them to maintain cultural pride in the face of educational and social adversity. Familial support, cultural self-efficacy, and an internal locus of control helped the students in this study to retain a sense of cultural connectedness. The concept of cultural connectedness was also closely linked to personal attributes such as pride, 'I am most proud to be culturally diverse, I am proud to be who I am, and I am proud of where I come from' (Pākehā, Secondary), persistence, 'our strong will to stay positive and push through hard times' (Samoan, Secondary), discipline, 'the aspects of my culture that I love the most is that we are very disciplined, hardworking, always caring for everyone in our families and many more' (Chinese, Primary), and knowledgeable about cultural history, 'the Scottish are resilient and tough' (Pākehā, Primary). The development of cultural connectedness was evident in many of the students and manifested as a well-developed understanding about who they were, what they wanted to achieve in life, and the direction they needed to take to realise their goals. These findings suggest that cultural connectedness is associated with a student's ability to cope with adversity and draw on perceived cultural protective factors to overcome difficulties. Cultural socialisation and connectedness can play a vital role in empowering students to function successfully in the milieu of the school culture while remaining grounded in their ethnic group identities.

Cultural Navigation Skills. Many students saw cultural connectedness and ethnic group pride as critical to their sense of self. However, they also indicated that particular navigational skills and attitudes were important for retaining strong and positive cultural identities. The students indicated that being inclusive was essential to success, stating, 'New Zealand is a very diverse and accepting. We welcome many different cultures into our country' (Pākehā, Primary), and, 'I have been told all my life to respect all people no matter their sexuality, religion or ethnicity' (Māori, Secondary). In addition, many of the students in this study asserted that serving their community and or 'making their ancestors proud' (Māori, Primary) lay at the heart of their sense of cultural connectedness. This required them to 'give back to others due to privileges I have been given' (Pākehā, Primary), 'do things to honour New Zealand's history and try to right past wrongs' (Pākehā, Secondary), and 'accept different languages and ways of

living' (Chinese, Primary). A strong understanding of one's own cultural identity, alongside a respect for the cultural identities of others is fundamental to students' sense of cultural connectedness and ethnic group pride. As seemingly difficult as making sense of diverse cultural identities and worldviews might be, the ability to successfully traverse them was dependent on the acquisition of navigational skills such as: cultural connectedness, ethnic group belonging, a broad knowledge base, a strong moral compass, and a commitment to learning about and living alongside others.

CONCLUSION

Cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging influences the thoughts and behaviours of many students, enabling them to act purposefully to achieve their goals, aspirations, and citizenship roles and responsibilities in an increasingly diverse world. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, due to their experience of colonisation and the attempted erasure of Māori identity, language, and culture, Māori have endeavoured to ensure their children continue to stand tall in the world – secure in their cultural identity (Webber & O'Connor, 2019; Webber & Macfarlane, 2020). Māori have learnt that maintaining cultural pride and connection in the ever-changing national context requires them to teach their children who they are, how they belong, and how they relate to other groups in this place. As Aotearoa New Zealand continues to diversify, all groups of students who call New Zealand home will need to understand who they are culturally and ethnically; the New Zealand curriculum will demand it of them. New Zealand education policy requires both students and teachers to know about, and integrate information about, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Indigenous history of Aotearoa New Zealand into their teaching and learning. The students' articulations of cultural identity in this study showed that they appeared to understand citizenship as involving political, civil, social, and cultural dimensions, which supports Calhoun's (1999) and Humpage's (2008) views that citizenship involves multiple modes of belonging. As Aotearoa New Zealand becomes more multi-ethnic, being able to understand and articulate your own place in the milieu of a future New Zealand will be even more critical.

Cultural connectedness and ethnic group belonging are crucial because they are profoundly powerful social-psychological constructs that affirm and advance student connectedness and belonging in the school context and beyond. These constructs are important for students' self-esteem and social-emotional wellbeing, and it is therefore vital that all students have opportunities to name themselves culturally, and to identify positive aspects of their culture. Schools must promote positive cultural attitudes, the rights, roles and responsibilities of citizenship, and

encourage greater inter-ethnic sociability and understanding. This is important if we are to genuinely create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and non-Māori recognise their responsibilities to each other as Treaty partners, and value each other for the contributions they each bring.

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