Mai i te Ao Rangatahi ki te Ao Pakeke Ka Awatea: A Study of Māori Student Success Revisited

Authors: Macfarlane, Sonja1; Duckworth, Fiona2 and Gibson, Marie 3

1 Te Whare Wananga o Waitaha
2 Ministry of Social Development
3 Ngā Pae scholarship winner in 2019.

The need to reinterpret, reframe and restructure thinking and action towards Māori potential and success (rather than deficit and failure) is critical. Māori students should be seen as bearers of the rich, unique and dynamic cultural assets inherent in Indigenous peoples. This presentation responds to the paucity of literature on Māori success. The research project in which this presentation sits was funded by Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga from 2018 – 2020.

In this study follow-up interviews were undertaken with eight Māori young adults (pakeke), six years after they participated as secondary students (rangatahi) in an initial study titled Ka Awatea: An Iwi Case Study of Māori Students’ Success (2014). The Ka Awatea project was funded by Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga and the initial data was gathered from 2012 to 2013. Emerging outcomes from the follow-up study reveal the central role of Māori culture and identity in their transition to adulthood. Secondary school strengthened their confidence and self-efficacy, but did not contribute to development of positive Māori identity, instead whānau were the key source of cultural nourishment. However as school-leavers approaching adulthood, they drew on their cultural efficacy and cultural assets to navigate dominant culture environments. In doing so they demonstrate that traditional Māori developmental paths have contemporary relevance, and that their roles - as cultural bearers, passing on the gifts of their ancestors - are fundamental to their aspirations and achievements. When referring to directionality, the pakeke in this research had shifted from drawing on the supports that were around them in order to strengthen their inner wellbeing, to drawing on their own inner cultural strengths for the greater good. The pakeke in this study are succeeding because of their culture; their identity, their whakapapa - not despite it.
Biography of presenting authors

Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane
Sonja affiliates to the iwi of Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Waewae Her research focuses on culturally responsive, evidence based approaches in education, psychology, counselling, health and human development in order to enhance the social, cultural, educational and health outcomes that are achieved by Māori. The importance of exploring 'what works well' for Māori as a pathway to responding to disparity and unlocking potential guides her research endeavours.

Fiona Duckworth
Fiona is Pākehā and a former youth and community development worker. She currently works as a policy analyst in central government and also with Te Rū Rangahau (Māori Research Laboratory), Te Whare Wananga o Waitaha. Fiona’s work focuses on embedding culturally responsive approaches into policy and practice and on how Aotearoa New Zealand can make progress with decolonisation.

Marie Gibson
Marie’s affiliates to the iwi of Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau a Ruataupare me te Aotawarirangi. She works on Te Rū Rangahau research projects, and has been involved in the data gathering, data analysis and co-writing for the Ka Awatea follow up research investigation. Marie won the Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga scholarship in 2019.