



The Development of Mana: Five Optimal Conditions for Gifted Māori Student Success

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Contents

Introduction	2
The Affective and Psychosocial Needs of Gifted Māori Students	3
Ka Awatea: An Iwi Case Study of Māori Student Success	6
Mana: The Five Optimal Conditions Required for Gifted Māori Student Success	10
Conclusion	16
References	17

Abstract

There are a growing number of gifted Māori students not just attaining educational success but thriving in the schooling context. Educational psychology has much to learn from these students, and it is incumbent upon researchers to empirically analyse the drivers of their success. While it has been acknowledged that self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy affect the academic engagement of Māori students (Meissel & Rubie-Davies, *Br J Educ Psychol* 86(1):92–111. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12103>, 2016; Webber, Look to the past, stand tall in the present: the integral nature of positive racial-ethnic identity for the academic success of Māori students. In: Vialle W (ed) *Giftedness from an indigenous perspective*. University of Wollongong Printery, Unanderra, pp 100–110, 2011; Zdrenka, Yogeewaran, Stronge, & Sibley, *Int J Intercult Relat* 49:114–120, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.07.003>, 2015), few studies have examined the affective and psychosocial drivers of success, or the role of cultural factors, in the academic performance of gifted Māori students. In this chapter, the author contributes to this discussion by focussing on how self-perceptions about the value of their racial-ethnic identity and family support affect the motivation and

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academic engagement of gifted Māori students in New Zealand. It will be argued that little will be done to improve gifted Māori students' academic engagement and social-emotional wellbeing, until educators focus specifically on the development of students' connectedness to their racial-ethnic identity and their sense of *mana* (pride, status, and esteem). The importance and manifestation of *mana* in gifted Māori students' lives and other psychosocial issues facing them will be highlighted. Solutions for change will be offered using a *mana* model developed as part of the 2014 Ka Awatea study (Macfarlane, Webber, McRae, & Cookson-Cox, Ka Awatea: an iwi case study of Māori students' success. [Manuscript]. University of Auckland, Auckland. Retrieved from http://www.maramatanga.co.nz/projects_publications, 2014).

Keywords

Gifted Māori · Cultural efficacy · Mana · Connectedness · Racial-ethnic identity · Educational success

The aims in this chapter are to:

1. provide an overview of the affective and psychosocial needs of gifted Māori students
2. outline the findings of Ka Awatea: An Iwi Case Study of Māori Student Success
3. reiterate five key components concerning the optimal personal, familial, school, and community conditions for gifted Māori students' success that are discussed in context of the *mana* model: *Mana Whānau* (familial pride), *Mana Motuhake* (personal pride and a sense of embedded achievement), *Mana Tū* (tenacity and self-esteem), *Mana Ūkaipo* (belonging and connectedness), and *Mana Tangatarua* (broad knowledge and skills)
4. provide an unapologetically Māori-centric model of gifted students thriving
5. present a strength-based model that utilises indigenous positive psychology principles (see Craven et al., 2016) and Māori worldview to reveal how gifted Māori students can thrive and flourish when a broad range of academic, cultural, and social opportunities are afforded to them
6. use this model to broaden the research theorising of those researchers, educators, and other stakeholders who desire to see Māori gifted students attain their full potential

Introduction

Gifted student engagement in school contexts is dependent on a number of factors: (a) the skills, background knowledge, and resources available to students; (b) the students' psychosocial attributes including self-efficacy, motivation, mindset, and task commitment, how they are identified and identify as belonging to, or in, educational settings; and (c) how the educational setting makes space and provides

support and opportunities for gifted students to engage and persist. This sense of belonging and invitation to an educational space shapes gifted students' engagement with, and willingness to, persist in a particular educational setting. In this sense, educational engagement can be said to be a function of developing both a school-based social identity and academic identity. And yet, other important social identities such as racial-ethnic identity do not vanish when students enter schools. Therefore, an important question is how academic or school identities, necessary for educational engagement, intersect with racial-ethnic identities to support or constrain gifted student educational engagement, persistence, and achievement? In light of this important educational question, Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius and Worrell's (2011) definition of giftedness is useful in terms of thinking about the multiple influences on giftedness and talent development. According to Subotnik et al. (2011, p. 3), 'Giftedness: a) reflects the values of society; b) is typically manifested in actual outcomes, especially in adulthood; c) is specific to domains of endeavor; d) is the result of the coalescing of biological, pedagogical, psychological, and psychosocial factors; and e) is relative not just to the ordinary (e.g., a child with exceptional art ability compared to peers), but to the extraordinary (e.g., an artist who revolutionises a field of art)'. As such, in this chapter the author seeks to advance the knowledge of Māori student giftedness as a culturally located and developmental process whereby the deliberate cultivation of psychosocial variables, most notably the development of mana, plays an essential role in the manifestation of Māori student giftedness.

The Affective and Psychosocial Needs of Gifted Māori Students

Although New Zealand schools strive to create equitable learning environments, the unfortunate reality is that gifted Māori students remain under-identified and underserved. It is evident that the existing approach to gifted identification and provision works less well for them. One of the core principles of gifted education in Aotearoa/New Zealand is that 'Māori perspectives and values must be embodied in all aspects of definition, identification and provision for gifted and talented learners' (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 3). However, research has shown that this principle is not put into practice in many schools (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind, & Kearney, 2004). Other research suggests that the enduring problem of Māori educational underperformance more generally may also 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). This author insists that including Māori identity, language, and culture in curriculum is an integral part of catering to the academic and social-cultural development of mana in gifted Māori students.

Indigenous scholars in the field of gifted education have provided useful insights in terms of understanding how giftedness is defined and identified in their communities (Christie, 2011; Faaea-Semeatu, 2011; Webber, 2011). In general, across the majority of the research, it is argued that gifted indigenous students must be encouraged to value their culture and see it as a meaningful and relevant part of their academic learning. Bevan-Brown (2005) and Macfarlane and Moltzen (2005) have found that those children whose Māori assets were utilised and developed in learning, appeared to thrive in the educational context. The New Zealand research suggests that culturally responsive learning activities increase self-esteem and confidence, resulting in gifted Māori students being more likely to develop their gifted potential (Bevan-Brown, 2005; Webber, 2011). The overarching argument is that to engage gifted Māori learners, teaching and learning strategies need to be culturally appropriate, and the focus should be on a curriculum that is culturally meaningful and relevant.

In a study of indigenous Australian conceptions of giftedness, Christie (2011) argued that giftedness is associated with leadership. The indigenous Australian elders who participated in his study stated that gifted indigenous Australian students ‘are the ones who help the other kids when the teacher is not watching. They are not competitive. They already know that they are people with destiny. They know the authority of their elders (each in a specific and significant kin relationship with them). They also know how to pay attention to significant people, and also places, things and moments’ (p. 6). Similarly, in work undertaken by Faaea-Semeatu (2011), ten Pasifika—indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands—cultural identifiers were developed to illuminate Pasifika understandings of giftedness. Faaea-Semeatu concluded that gifted Pasifika students are culturally flexible in both Pasifika and non-Pasifika contexts as needed; can formally recite customs, protocols, family/ancestral history, and links to honorific addresses for village genealogy; and transfer their skills and experiences from church to the school context, for example, public speaking, showing respect, behaving in accordance to social norms, and questioning for understanding or clarification. In addition, gifted Pasifika students seek opportunities to excel and pursue excellence for family pride and also personal achievement; actively use their talents in music, sport, academic achievement, and social experience and create events for themselves to showcase their abilities; see setbacks as opportunities to aim even higher and achieve their personal best so that they are able to react more positively in any given situation; and, endeavour to excel and maintain cultural connections that will advance the status of their families, village links, and community. Finally, Faaea-Semeatu (2011) states that gifted Pasifika students speak, understand, or write in their mother tongue, serve faithfully in church and family contexts, and work to raise the status and prestige of their parents by virtue of success in job pathways and career opportunities. Faaea-Semeatu (2011) concludes by stating that Pasifika giftedness will manifest when students can ‘utilize their innate sense of selves to master and navigate through their conflicting worlds’ (p. 121).

As such, gifted education providers must work harder to cultivate a climate in which family, tribal, and wider cultural community organisations can feel comfortable to initiate involvement in education and should provide them with the

appropriate opportunities to do so. Research has shown that genuine school/family/community partnership is critical because ‘students learn more and succeed at higher levels when home, school, and community work together to support students’ learning and development’ (Epstein & Sanders, 2006, p. 87). The educative process for indigenous students must include family participation in terms of designing culturally responsive curriculum material that simultaneously strengthens gifted students’ cultural connections, increases their cultural competence and connection to their communities of interest, and improves their academic motivation to learn and succeed.

Many scholars and researchers have asserted that a number of psychological characteristics such as drive, grit, and motivation are as or more important to gifted student achievement than ability, particularly at the later stages of talent development (Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Berstein, & Ericsson, 2011; Subotnik et al., 2011). Other characteristics that have been suggested as having a significant role include intellectual risk taking, self-confidence, academic self-concept, self-discipline, a growth mindset, self-efficacy, and resiliency in the face of failure or disappointment (Subotnik et al., 2011). These characteristics, and the beliefs that underlie them, impact the willingness of Māori students to participate in gifted programmes of learning and put forth the effort to succeed in them.

An important variable affecting the achievement of gifted Māori students is their belief about intelligence and ability—or their mindset (Dweck, 2006; Webber, 2015). Gifted Māori students who believe that their ability is flexible rather than fixed are more likely to be focussed on learning, growth, and improvement and embrace academic challenge because of the opportunity to grow intellectually and gain competence. They are more likely to persist in the face of adversity and believe determination and study can positively impact their academic performance (Good, 2012). Aronson and Juarez (2012) found that culturally diverse gifted adolescents’ vulnerability to stereotype threat is lessened if they hold a growth mindset about intelligence, a view that can be actively promoted by teachers and parents. Schools that place more emphasis on a growth mindset, and accentuate effort rather than innate intelligence, are more likely to create a sense of belonging for culturally diverse gifted adolescents, which is critical to retaining them in education.

Embedded achievement, racial-ethnic identity, and Māori students. The extant research suggests that gifted Māori students need to develop and maintain particular affective and psychosocial strengths in order to reconcile their gifted selves with their Māori selves (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018; Rata, 2012). This is particularly important for gifted Māori students because most educational settings do not make sufficient use of Māori language or culture. Many do not include Māori scientific knowledge in the curriculum, and nor do they celebrate Māori role models of academic excellence (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018). It is therefore unsurprising that many gifted Māori students feel that school success has nothing to do with their racial-ethnic selves.

Other researchers have suggested that there are two critical questions affecting the academic choices that students make, that is, ‘can I do it’ and ‘do I want to do it?’ (Eccles, 2006; Graham, 2009). If gifted Māori students believe that doing well in

school is important to their future selves and will reap the same rewards for them as for other cultural groups in society, they are more likely to work hard and excel. Similarly, if gifted Māori students believe that they can succeed in programmes for gifted students, despite negative racial-ethnic stereotypes, they are more likely to have a strong sense of embedded achievement (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006) and put forth the effort needed to thrive academically.

Embedded achievement refers to believing that racial-ethnic group membership involves valuing and achieving in academics (Oyserman & Lewis, 2017). A gifted Māori student with a sense of embedded achievement would believe that succeeding academically is a key part of being Māori and a way to enact their Māori identity. They would also believe that their success helps other Māori to succeed. Because negative stereotypes about Māori students include low academic achievement, disengagement from school, and lack of academic ability (Webber, 2011), Māori students may be less able to recruit sufficient motivational attention to override these messages and stay focussed on school success. By viewing achievement as part of being Māori, identification with this goal may be more easily facilitated. If gifted Māori students have a sense of embedded achievement and believe that their teachers expect them to do well, they are more likely to persevere with challenging learning activities with increased effort and tenacity (Macfarlane, Webber, McRae, & Cookson-Cox, 2014). When gifted Māori students experience success, they simultaneously develop and enhance their self-confidence, self-efficacy, and growth mindset and increase the perceived value of academic tasks and opportunities. In this way, the psychosocial characteristics supportive of embedded achievement can be cultivated (Macfarlane et al., 2014).

Ka Awatea: An Iwi Case Study of Māori Student Success

Te Arawa people are a confederation of Māori tribes that occupy the Rotorua Lakes district and part of the central Bay of Plenty coastline in New Zealand. In 2014, the Ka Awatea project examined the connection between Māori identity and the perceived characteristics of educational success among a selection of nominated gifted Māori high school students from Rotorua, New Zealand (Macfarlane et al., 2014). In a time when ‘Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori’ was the catch phrase of New Zealand educational practice and policy (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 5), the Ka Awatea study researchers sought to understand the role that various academic, social, interpersonal, and cultural influences have on educational engagement of gifted Māori students. In the Ka Awatea study, a social-psychological perspective on questions of gifted Māori student success was undertaken to articulate gifted Māori student achievement as a concept which is always situated in, and mediated by, social contexts, cultural settings, and social group memberships (Macfarlane, Macfarlane, & Webber, 2015).

Using a Māori-centric case study approach, researchers in the Ka Awatea project conducted interview/focus groups and a qualitative questionnaire to examine the conditions for success, and the perceptions of success, from gifted Māori secondary

students ($n = 132$) aged between 15 and 18 years, their family members ($n = 48$), their teachers and principals ($n = 93$), and tribal elders ($n = 10$). The gifted Māori students were nominated by their school principals for a number of reasons, most notably, high achievement, leadership, and cultural expertise. All but one student could identify their tribal affiliations, and 47% of the student participants identified as members of the local iwi—Te Arawa. All students in the Ka Awatea project attended schools in the Rotorua district. The Ka Awatea project consequently uncovered five optimal individual, family, school, and community conditions that enable gifted Māori students to mobilise their sense of efficacy and pride (a cultural construct called ‘mana’ in the Māori language) to achieve their educational, social, and cultural goals.

The Ka Awatea study was informed by Kaupapa Māori methodology. See Smith (1997, 2005) for elaborations on the method. Kaupapa Māori theory, which underpins Kaupapa Māori research methodology, has been summarised by Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) as a local theoretical positioning related to being Māori, which presupposes that:

- The validity and legitimacy of Māori is taken for granted.
- The survival and revival of Māori language and culture is imperative.
- The struggle for autonomy over our own cultural wellbeing and over our own lives is vital to Māori survival.

These features align with the positive psychology approach taken in the Ka Awatea study in that they speak to Māori aspirations, transformation, philosophies, processes, and values. While Kaupapa Māori-informed research can be viewed as having underlying principles or philosophies that are based on a Māori worldview, methods may be drawn from a wide range of approaches (Moewaka Barnes, 2000). An important feature of Kaupapa Māori research is that one must undertake research that will have positive outcomes for Māori (Cram, 1997). As such, Kaupapa Māori research methodology provided a clearly defined cultural approach for the strength-based Ka Awatea work. The research capitalised on and prioritised Māori ways of knowing, being, and doing to explicate, measure, and augment the drivers of thriving that result in gifted Māori student success.

The Ka Awatea research team were all of Te Arawa descent, based their research activities on Te Arawa tikanga (local tribal protocols), and ensured that tribal expertise was included in decision-making at all stages of the project. All data collection took place in Rotorua, New Zealand, which is the Te Arawa tribe’s homeland. In the project answers to the following three research questions were elicited:

1. How do Te Arawa define giftedness?
2. In what ways do gifted Māori students, their families, teachers, and the wider Te Arawa community foster conditions that enable students’ gifts to manifest?
3. How is giftedness enacted by gifted Te Arawa students? To what effect?

Table 1 Study participants

Participants	Questionnaire (<i>n</i>)	Individual interviews (<i>n</i>)	Focus group interviews (<i>n</i>)	Total
Māori students	66	5	61	132
Teachers	38	10	32	80
School leaders	5	7	1	13
Parents/family	29	2	17	48
Elders	–	10	–	10
Total	138	35	110	283

Selection of participants for the Ka Awatea study. Eight high schools, including one Māori-medium high school, from the Rotorua area agreed to participate in the Ka Awatea study. To answer our research questions, the main methods of data collection were student, teacher, principal, and parent questionnaires and, student, teacher, tribal elder, and family semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The questions used in all data collection approaches were designed to elicit information related to the three main research questions. An outline of the study participants can be seen in Table 1.

Data collection procedure for the Ka Awatea study. All of the gifted Māori students who completed the questionnaire were Year 11–13 students (aged 15–18 years) who were given consent from their parents/caregivers to participate and who themselves agreed to participate. All students were informed that their participation was voluntary and any information they provided would be confidential. The entire questionnaire took about 25 min to complete, and most interviews and/or focus group discussions took between 30 and 90 min. Most of the data were collected within an 8-month period between mid-2012 to early 2013.

Students were nominated by school leaders by way of a relatively basic criterion: they identified as Māori and were senior students (in the final 3 years of high school), gifted, and preferably but not necessarily of Te Arawa tribal affiliation. The school leaders then provided the names of the students' parents, other family members, and elders who were subsequently invited to participate. Principals responded to the questionnaire or the one-to-one interview, and teachers likewise contributed by either completing the questionnaire or participating in an individual interview or focus group. Teachers from the schools were recruited on the basis of their proximity to the students, nomination from participating students, and/or their enthusiasm for Māori pedagogies.

Ka Awatea study data analysis techniques. The two techniques used were NVivo and thematic analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package that has been designed for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based and/or multimedia information, where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required. NVivo was used in the Ka Awatea study to organise and descriptively analyse the unstructured data. The software was used to

classify, sort, and arrange information; examine relationships in the data; and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modelling. This process enabled the research team to identify trends and cross-examine information in a multitude of ways using its search engine and query functions. NVivo was used to analyse both the study questionnaire and interview/focus group data. Through this process a body of evidence was built up to inform the research findings.

Thematic analysis was also used in this project. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative data analysis method. It is one of a cluster of methods that focus on identifying patterned meaning across a data set. The six-step method has been widely used across the social, behavioural, and more applied sciences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The main purpose of thematic analysis is to identify trends and patterns across a data set that inform the research question being addressed. Patterns were identified in the Ka Awatea data set through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision. Thematic analysis was undertaken after the data had been organised and categorised using NVivo.

Mana: Māori students' sense of being, motivation to achieve, and identity. Māori scholar Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (2006) has argued that it is *mana* (honour, pride, and esteem) that lies at the heart of Māori positive self-image and the degree to which we feel empowered and good about ourselves. As such, the concept of mana is important for understanding gifted Māori students' participation, engagement, and achievement at school because it relates to their motivation to achieve personal and collective identity and sense of mattering (Elliott, 2009). Mattering is associated with the belief that we matter to others, 'to know that in some way we are a significant part of the lives of those around us is essential to the way we value ourselves and understand our place in the social order' (Elliott, Colangelo, & Gelles, 2005, p. 224). Mana tangata, or a secure sense of mana, can be likened to a sense of mattering, in that it influences gifted Māori students' thoughts and behaviours, enabling them to act purposefully in the world to achieve their goals and aspirations (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018). In this way, the development of mana is crucial for gifted Māori students because it is a profoundly powerful psychosocial construct that affirms and advances their connectedness and mattering in the school context, undoing the potentially ruinous impact of negative societal stereotypes and academic underperformance (Macfarlane et al., 2014).

Many philosophers, academics, and educators have tried to offer succinct definitions of mana. Dell (2017) has described mana as 'an elusive concept, difficult to define concisely' (p. 93), and Royal (2006), redefining mana for a modern context, described it as a 'quality, energy or consciousness in the world which can be harnessed and expressed in human activities through acts of generosity and wisdom' (p. 8). Based on these explanations, and in line with Dell (2017), in the Ka Awatea study, mana was perceived as 'a person's influence and profound ability to impact upon, affect and positively transform the lives of others' (p. 93).

Mana, as an achievement-orientated concept (Bowden, 1979), can only be attained through the enactment of dignified behaviour, extraordinary achievement, and generous actions. Dell (2017) has argued that people who demonstrate mana add dignity to others and positively transform communities and people. In discussing the

role of mana, Royal (2005) argued that a key purpose of education is to ‘facilitate the flow and experience of mana in the individual and in his/her community’ adding that the ‘outward expression of mana in the life of the individual is evidenced not only in their skills, attributes and talents . . . but in their ‘spiritual authority’, their intuitive and wisdom filled knowledge and insight of knowing what, when, how, and why to do something’ (p. 68).

Royal (2005) has also argued that the purpose of education is not so much the acquisition of knowledge but the growth of mana in the student. He suggests a number of attributes or qualities are essential for the development of mana in the individual, including that he/she does not boast about his/her own prowess or abilities; when faced with an issue or problem, they understand traditional lore and extended discussions as a process, a way of addressing an issue/problem in order to seek an answer, outcome, or direction; they are gentle and humble; they listen to what the spirit is telling him/her; he/she is supported by his/her people, is a quick thinker, and has an alert mind; they adhere to their thoughts and beliefs; they are industrious, knowledgeable, and have a repository of knowledge.

Mana: The Five Optimal Conditions Required for Gifted Māori Student Success

In the Ka Awatea study, five key components concerning the personal, familial, school, and community conditions for gifted student success emerged. The five conditions, described below, are Mana Whānau, Mana Motuhake, Mana Tū, Mana Ūkaipo, and Mana Tangatarua (see Fig. 1). The first condition, Mana Whānau, was central—it appeared with incredible regularity throughout the course of the study rendering it the most important condition of gifted Māori student success.

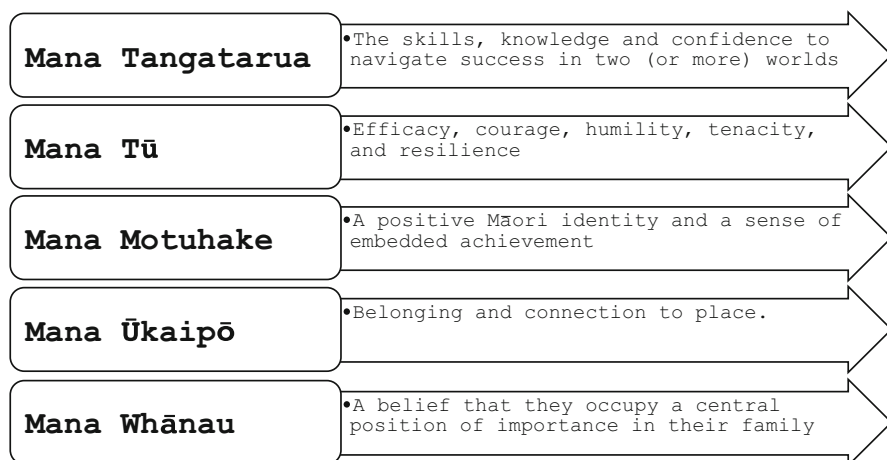


Fig. 1 The five optimal conditions for Māori student success

Mana Whānau: Child-centric family environments. Scholars have emphasised the critical role of family (including extended family members) in enhancing positive outcomes for children in the face of stress and difficulty (Masten & Monn, 2015). The quality of parenting is related to the development of competence in children, including academic achievement, racial-ethnic connectedness, and social adaptability (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Priest et al., 2014). As such, family wellbeing and engagement in education and supportive parenting practices are important to the social-psychological and educational development of gifted Māori students.

The gifted students in the Ka Awatea study occupied a central position of importance within their family, including their school and community ‘family’. The students were nurtured and encouraged by their family, teachers, and peers and were consequently socially capable and had a sense of connectedness and efficacy across a number of contexts. The students knew that their families valued education and that their school success was important because it had the potential to be a driver of success for others within their family.

The gifted students were held in high regard by their family, their peers, teachers, and members of the wider school community. Most of these students were placed at the heart of the family and were nurtured, protected, and guided towards success from an early age. Family members perceived that their role was integral to the formation of healthy lifelong attitudes and learning behaviours and viewed this as a serious undertaking if their children were to realise their potential as gifted students and emerging adults.

This child-centred positioning of the students was evident from the comments made by both the students and parents/family members. Many students were quick to praise their parents for providing them with a safe and nurturing environment where encouragement and support for all their endeavours never wavered. This constant presence of care and concern in their lives encouraged them to persist at school and strive to achieve their academic potential. Students saw educational success as a means of repaying their parents for their steadfast support and making them proud. Parents on the other hand were forthcoming about placing their children’s needs first and their own second. They recognised the vulnerability of transitioning from childhood to young adulthood and were committed to ensuring their children were advantaged by having their physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural needs met. Parents saw this task as their primary responsibility, and many sought educational opportunities themselves to ensure that they were equipped to support their children in learning. Gifted Māori students who were raised in child-centric home contexts reported that they felt compelled to respond in kind and reciprocate parental behaviours like respect, humility, thoughtfulness, and compassion. These qualities were viewed as crucial in order to become a socially capable and identity-secure individual across a range of contexts. They were also considered essential in terms of the students achieving their gifted potential.

In line with the extant research, researchers in the Ka Awatea study found that a secure home environment, valuing education, and familial support can have a positive influence on the long-term educational, social, and cultural outcomes

of Māori students (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008; Winner, 2000). Despite the parents of these students facing many of the very same parenting challenges that all parents have to face (Pfeiffer, 2013), the parents in the Ka Awatea study also had to deal with additional concerns associated with their gifted Māori child's social-psychological, cultural, and academic development. Furthermore, to reconcile these challenges, many of the families tended to be remarkably child-centred and family-focussed. They engaged in many learning-centric practices 'as a family' and many parents attended learning activities alongside their children as a means of 'keeping them on track'.

Mana Motuhake: A positive sense of Māori identity. Mana Motuhake (positive identity) was experienced by the gifted Māori students in the Ka Awatea study by way of their developing sense of cultural efficacy, positive connection, and belonging. This included their ability and knowledge of how to engage meaningfully with Māori culture. The students purported to have a keen sense of belonging and connectedness to others in their family, tribe, school, and community. All participants also agreed that knowledge of one's genealogy and descent lines were critical to their sense of self. Kāretu (1990) has described whakapapa (genealogical knowledge and belonging) as the glue that connects individuals to a certain place or space, locating them within the broader network of kin relations. According to the participants in the Ka Awatea study, whakapapa was not simply about self-identifying as Māori but also knowing about that descent and having a meaningful relationship with it. Knowledge of whakapapa had a major part to play in the academic resilience of the gifted Māori students, their developing cultural efficacy, and their ability to stay focussed, as well as being committed to achieving their aspirations at school for the collective benefit of their family, iwi, and community.

Family played the most important role in terms of socialising their children into the Māori world and helping them to develop cultural efficacy. In the Ka Awatea study, cultural efficacy was conceptualised as the extent to which Māori students felt they had the personal resources to engage appropriately 'as Māori' across a range of contexts (Houkamau & Sibley, 2011). The findings of the Ka Awatea study suggest that the most important developmental asset a parent can instil in their gifted children is to ensure that they are aware of their collective belonging, cultural connectedness, and responsibilities to others as a tribal and community member. Many of the students in the Ka Awatea study asserted that any decisions about themselves were made while simultaneously recognising their responsibilities to others. Therefore, healthy and supportive family contexts are fundamental to positive gifted Māori student identity development and for promoting, modelling, and supporting educational advancement.

The shaping of student attitudes towards Māori identity and the associated languages, values, and cultural worldviews needs to be a fundamental function of family (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018). Constructive and supportive relationships between members of family, including (importantly) extended family, are important determinants of gifted Māori student thriving and lay the foundations for positive relationships in later life (Macfarlane & Moltzen, 2005). Modelling the establishment and maintenance of supportive relationships is also a critical family function that contributes to overall student success at school.

Mana Tū: A sense of courage and resilience. Many gifted Māori students stated that they had positive self-efficacy, positive self-concept, resilience, and academic motivation to thrive in the school context and, eventually, beyond it. They tended to be aspirational, have high expectations of themselves, and enjoy overall physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Family members insisted that they needed to ensure their children had a healthy home environment that nurtured their physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Family members also stated that they needed to model practical resilience strategies—for example, work ethic, perseverance, determination, and discipline—because many students looked to family as their ‘first teachers’ and ultimate motivation for academic persistence.

In contemporary times, many Māori students are exposed to increasingly difficult home, neighbourhood, and/or school environments that can significantly obstruct their path to academic success (Borell, 2005). The gifted Māori students in the Ka Awatea study thrived at school despite having to overcome adverse personal and contextual factors and were often labelled as resilient by their teachers and parents. According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998), resilience consists largely 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. Gifted Māori students who self-identify as resilient and are seen by their communities as resilient are those who successfully navigate their way through adversity, each in his or her own way and according to the strengths and resources available to the student as well as his or her family, community, and/or culture (Webber, 2017). The findings from the Ka Awatea project suggested that gifted Māori students’ resilience is developed when they are afforded opportunities to work alongside their families, teachers, and learned others in coordinated, continuous, negotiated, and culturally congruent ways.

Many of the students in the Ka Awatea study stood out because of their desire to learn, their generally positive attitude towards school, and their motivation to pursue a career that would improve the wellbeing of their family. More specifically the majority of the students:

- were intrinsically motivated and did homework regularly
- were described as being resolute and tenacious and said they were confident or were able to encourage and push themselves towards success
- were goal-oriented and future-focussed
- saw a strong relationship between school and work and had chosen a possible career
- had received consistent support and guidance from their family
- appreciated extra academic support, both in the classroom and outside it, and valued parents and teachers who took a personal interest in them as individuals
- saw choosing ‘like-minded’ friends as critical to their ability to stay focussed at school (Macfarlane et al., 2014)

The gifted Māori students in the Ka Awatea study also had individual characteristics that they associated with academic success such as cognitive abilities, motivation, and self-efficacy. Although many students may possess these individual characteristics, the students in the Ka Awatea study seemed to rely on these capabilities to help them overcome adverse circumstances at school, home, and in the community. The development of embedded achievement (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018) was evident in most 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. Common personal characteristics demonstrated by the students, in addition to resilience, included tenacity, motivation, and inner will, independence, realistic aspirations, and an appreciation of Māori language, culture, and identity as cultural assets. Other protective factors included support networks that existed within and outside of the school to develop their achievement, including peers, family, supportive teachers, and other encouraging adults which was essential to their academic success and persistence (Macfarlane et al., 2014). The gifted Māori students who expressed a strong connection with their culture also tended to utilise Māori identity as a support structure, calling on family and their cultural beliefs/traditions when facing difficulties in their lives. Positive Māori identity, and the associated sense of connection and embedded achievement, served as a buffer to protect them from deficit stereotypes and negative school and/or home difficulties.

In line with the extant literature, the development of students' self-esteem, positive sense of racial-ethnic identity, and educational resilience was notably linked to positive familial, cultural, and social supports. Like Priest et al. (2014), researchers in the Ka Awatea study found that parental attitudes and beliefs are clearly strong predictors of positive prosocial behaviours and cultural efficacy, in that not only do family members and other significant adults act as influential ethnic-racial socialisation agents, but connectedness with family members has also been associated with a student's ability to cope with adversity and develop cultural pride (Stevenson, Reed, & Bodison, 1996; Webber, 2017). Family socialisation also played a vital role in empowering the gifted Māori students to function successfully in the milieu of the school culture while remaining grounded in their Māori identity and culture.

The findings in the Ka Awatea study showed that families need to ensure their child strengthens their resilience by providing a healthy home environment that supports the gifted student's emotional, cultural, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Many of the participants in the Ka Awatea study believed that a sense of accomplishment and interconnectedness led to a state of overall wellbeing.

Mana Ūkaipo: A sense of place and belonging. The gifted Māori students sought a synergy between their school-based learning and the unique Rotorua context. They wanted to see tribal role models of success made visible and utilised in schools to inspire cultural pride and aspiration. The students explicitly stated that they wanted Māori knowledge to have some resonance with their educational activities and expected Māori knowledge and history to occupy a position of importance in their school curriculum. They perceived traditional Māori scientific

knowledge in particular to be a viable platform for their future aspirations and achievement. Other participants in the study were also keen to see tribal knowledge underpin relevant educational and recreational activities. Information about Te Arawa icons and special features of the area such as the many lakes, geothermal landmarks, forests, and mountains were considered by the majority of students and family members as crucial to anchoring a person to their homelands and genealogy.

Penetito (2009) has described this as place-based learning (PBL) and argued that this educational model focusses on two essential questions: what is this place, and what is our relationship to it? PBL essentially draws on the significant features, characteristics, history, and personalities of the land or place where students are born, raised, and educated, thereby creating a synergy between 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).

Family were especially keen to ensure that their children were steeped in tribal knowledge and were informed about their environment as well as the people who have and continue to influence the changing natural and social landscape of the area. Being familiar with their ancestors and understanding the history over time was perceived to anchor students and enable them to develop a sensitive awareness of who they descend from and the potential they hold for the future (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018). The development of a strong cultural identity and affiliation to a place was described as a protective factor.

Family strongly believed that having knowledge of their lands, people, and language was a strong foundation upon which to acquire other knowledge, other languages, and other ideologies. Advocates of PBL, such as Kawagley and Barnhardt (1999), Penetito (2009, 2010), and Kidman, Abrams and McRae (2011) believe such a model can help alleviate the tension that currently exists between Western educational pedagogies and holistic indigenous education models. These authors also assert that PBL should provide new meanings to enquiry and knowledge that draws upon local examples. Many Ka Awatea participants asserted that PBL was the key to strengthening the relationship between gifted Māori students and their local area.

Many participants in the Ka Awatea study supported the view that tribal role models of success, either living or dead, should be promoted in schools as a strategy to stimulate aspiration, cultural pride, and achievement. Gifted Māori students with a strong identity and historical link to iconic features and people of the land are best placed to draw on this relationship and to emulate the successes of those icons (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018).

Mana Tangatarua: Navigating success in many worlds. Academic success should never come at the expense of Māori identity. All Ka Awatea participants saw both identities as vital to overall success. However, students need the appropriate ‘navigational skills’ and ‘role models’ and a strong sense of emotional and spiritual wellbeing to retain the dual identities successfully (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018). Ka Awatea participants indicated that supportive relationships were essential to success. Families were primarily responsible for ‘success as Māori’ and often

modelled what this should look like. Schools contributed largely to gifted Māori students' 'success in the non-Māori or academic world' because they offered students additional opportunities to be innovative and courageous, to take risks in their learning, and to go to new places (which many Māori families could not afford). Schools were seen to offer students new experiences that 'unleashed their potential' to bridge multiple worlds and increase their 'range of opportunities' in terms of 'possible futures' (Macfarlane et al., 2014, p. 175).

While academic achievement was considered a crucial indicator of success, it was considered to be only one feature of a gifted Māori student's evolving suite of skills. Many of the gifted Māori students in the Ka Awatea study asserted their Māori identity lay at the heart of all things important and their educational attainment was considered complimentary to this. Together these two constructs, Māori identity and gifted identity, were viewed as fundamental to their personal growth, transformation, and journey from one developmental stage to the next—and from one world to the other. Academic success and cultural efficacy were viewed by all participants as requiring a nurturing family, a responsive school community, and a learning environment which includes the provision of educational and cultural experiences beyond the classroom. As seemingly different as two (or more) worlds can be, the ability to successfully traverse them was dependent on the acquisition of navigational skills such as determination and motivation, a broad knowledge base, diligence, and forbearance, a healthy self-esteem, resilience, a strong moral compass, and a sense of embedded achievement (Webber & Macfarlane, 2018). The expression of these skills is articulated in the Māori world as one's 'mana'.

Conclusion

A secure sense of mana can influence Māori students' thoughts and behaviours, enabling them to act purposefully in the world to achieve their goals and aspirations. In this way, the development of mana is crucial because it is a profoundly powerful psychosocial construct that affirms and advances gifted Māori student sense of purpose, drive, and belonging in the school context. It has the potential to undo the impact of negative societal stereotypes in New Zealand that speak of Māori underperformance in education as a problem located with Māori themselves (Torrance et al., 2015).

The five optimal conditions that emerged from Ka Awatea propose a hopeful stance on gifted Māori success and illustrate a clear correlation between the recognition of and support for gifted Māori students' cultural identity and their subsequent ability to translate that into the attainment of knowledge and skills and overall academic motivation. The Ka Awatea study illustrates that gifted Māori students can improve their chances of educational success if the five optimal mana imperatives are nurtured and developed. Durie (2001) has emphasised the role of schools in affirming Māori students' identities by asserting that if formal education does little to help prepare Māori students to interact within their own communities, then no matter what has been learned their education would have been incomplete.

Like Penetito (2010), the Ka Awatea study proposes that there are two main ways that schools can help gifted Māori students to thrive: ‘firstly if it holds up a mirror to them and they can see themselves growing and developing in a way that is personally meaningful for them; and secondly, if it helps them to project themselves into the immediate world around them as well as into the world at large’ (p. 35). Gifted Māori students require opportunities and encouragement to develop their talents in responsive family and school environments, which simultaneously nurture their cultural identities alongside their gifts and talents. When gifted Māori students are strong in their cultural identity and learn in contexts where their culture is valued, they are less likely to succumb to negative peer pressure and negative academic stereotypes, which undermine academic attainment and talent development.

The Ka Awatea study evidences findings which support the idea that gifted education programmes should link gifted Māori students’ learning to the physical and cultural environment in which students and schools are situated. Place-based educational practices and programmes should integrate scientific, historical, and cultural knowledge associated with local environments as a critical ingredient for developing what Cajete (2000) has termed an interdisciplinary pedagogy of place. The ways of constructing, organising, using, and communicating knowledge that has been practised by Māori for centuries must be recognised as a form of science with its own integrity and validity and utilised in schools to ensure gifted Māori students learn in a manner that validates their language, culture, and identity.

The outcome of the Ka Awatea project indicated that when families, iwi, and the wider community are invested in education, positive school behaviours and gifted Māori student commitment to school completion and success improve. The most important developmental asset a Māori parent can teach their gifted child is to ensure that they are aware of their mana tangata—their unique leadership potential, collective belonging, cultural connectedness, embedded achievement, and responsibilities to others.

Finally, the mana model proposed in this chapter differs from mainstream psychology approaches in that the focus of research is grounded in Māori realities, knowledge, and epistemologies even as it applies the most current psychological models of motivation, academic achievement, racial-ethnic identity development, and self-concept. It focusses and esteems what gifted Māori students and their families, communities, and teachers are already doing to keep these students engaged in an education system not designed with them in mind.

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