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**Young Māori males experiences in a secondary school
context as sporting, academic and cultural identities.**

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ERIN PORTEOUS



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Abstract

This research focused on the journey of male Māori through secondary school and the effect on their identities in terms of sport, culture and academia. The two key areas of focus were how the culture of the school, including cultural stereotypes, impacts on male Māori learner self-concept, and whether the effect of creating an all Māori boys form class has resulted in an increased sense of belonging and engagement.

The research was conducted as a case study underpinned by an interpretive methodology, using a focus group interview. The group was made up of five boys, chosen from a newly formed all boys' Year 11 Māori form class. The boys were selected in conjunction with their form teacher and the schools Kaitiaki, in order to reflect a range of sporting, academic and cultural levels.

The research findings found that although the boys view of their experiences in school seemed positive overall, they described common incidences and reactions to racial discrimination. The exposure to embedded racial stereotypes and behaviours caused them to create their own solutions, often through threatening violence or aggressive reactions. It appears that when young male Māori are more closely connected to Māori culture, they are more likely they are to create these responses.

Teachers remain integral to the engagement and belonging of a young male Māori in secondary school. In support of the findings from *Kia Eke Panuku* (2013), this study found that male Māori require positive relationships with their teachers to engage in the subject and school in a general sense. Relationships based on *ako* and *manaakitanga* are key to these students viewing their experiences in school as successful.

Another finding showed the importance of sport and physical activity to young male Māori, though success in this area has been a limiting factor in contributing to overall success in secondary school. The placing of male Māori as a 'physical being' (Hokowhitu, 2003a; Hokowhitu, 2003b; Hokowhitu, 2004) creates spaces where Māori can be successful, such as practical based subjects like physical education. This success is perceived as acceptable yet often isolates them away

from success in other areas (Erueti & Palmer, 2014), feeding into the stereotype itself.

The success of the all boys' Māori form class was scrutinised by this study, and found the intended outcomes had not necessarily been met. The overall impact was that the boys had been grouped with a Māori form teacher and the intentions of additional support had been overlooked due to time pressures and deficit thinking in terms of capabilities of the class members. For the Māori boys in this study, the challenges of overcome historical cultural stereotypes added to the challenge of succeeding at secondary school. The expectation that they walk successfully between the realms of Māori and pākehā to achieve in the current education system coupled with the feeling they needed to act 'pākehā' in order to achieve is particularly disturbing. The inequity for them in denying part of their identity seems a hefty price to pay for educational success.

This study highlights the need for schools, communities and individual teachers to recognise these racial and systemic inequities and work tirelessly to develop strategies to eliminate them, in order to create to take a giant step towards equity for all New Zealanders within education.

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Introduction

In 2005 Russell Bishop cautioned that the educational underachievement of Māori boys was a “ticking time bomb” (as cited in Flavell, 2015) for New Zealand. The warning seems to have been largely unheeded with lack of interruption to the destructive force of the educational crisis. The overall effect of this underachievement in the education system flows on to the potential future outcomes and prospects of young male Māori, and continues to reinforce negative stereotypes of the New Zealand male Māori. Nationally the trend is that Māori boys are overall underachieving (Marie, Fergusson & Boden, 2008) and this alarming trend needs to be urgently addressed. The issue of male Māori achievement is a national priority as is expressed in the Ministry of Education's Statement of Intent, with Priority One focusing on “Improving education outcomes for Māori students, Pacifica students, students with special education needs and students from low socio-economic areas” (Ministry of Education, 2012, p.16).

The divide between Māori and Pākehā¹ achievement in education remains vast even though research (Bishop, Ladwig & Berryman, 2014; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2009; Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, Peter & Clapham, 2012; McRae, MacFarlane, Webber & Cookson-Cox, 2010) has identified pedagogies and environmental scenarios that could support better outcomes. There has been little action toward the potential systemic upheaval required to facilitate change, or move toward dynamic versus deficit thinking to support the achievement for all New Zealanders.

There is no doubt that there have been some improvements to national results, though the discrepancy between 18 year-old males of Māori and New Zealand European (Pākehā) descent remains. Results for NCEA level two continue to be nearly 20% lower for male Māori than Pākehā students. Male Māori have moved from 54.5% to 65.9%, while male Pākehā have leaped from 75.6% to 82.9% in the timeframe from 2011-2014 (‘New Zealand social indicators - Education’, 2015). Whilst an overall shift has been made, the ethnicity gap has not closed at all. Prior to leaving school, male Māori are also over represented in truancy rates,

¹ Appendix 1: Glossary of Maori terms

stand down offences, and ‘not achieved’ grades (Marie et al., 2008; Flavell, 2015; Bishop, 2009). Trends from the last 5 years consistently show males are not achieving as high as females in senior NCEA results. To parallel this gender inequality, Māori as an ethnic group are underachieving as compared to their Pākehā counterparts. The compounding nature of being both a male and a Māori in a secondary school suggests the outcomes in terms of academic success are still relatively bleak.

The government has funded initiatives to counter this. The *Te Kotahitanga* program (Bishop, 2008) was rolled out to schools in 2008, introducing the Effective Teacher Profile as an observation method to highlight culturally responsive pedagogies and enable teachers to use a wider variety of tools to engage with Māori students. The current National Government pulled funding after a decade, despite there being clear evidence of improvements in educational outcomes (Gibson, 2015). This was followed in 2014 by a new initiative named *Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success*, a program which “brings together key findings from *Te Kotahitanga*, *He Kākano*, the *Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success* and the *Secondary Literacy and Numeracy Projects*” (Ministry of Education, 2013a, p.1). *Ka Hikitia*, (Ministry of Education, 2013b) or Accelerating Success, is another of these recent initiatives developed, as the Ministry of Education identified teachers needed to develop a greater understanding of the importance of culture. *Ka Hikitia* supports teachers to develop the ability of Māori to achieve as Māori, to embrace their culture and gain engagement and success in education through this, rather than despite of this. At the forefront of both initiatives is the concept of kaupapa Māori, to use reciprocal pedagogies and acknowledge the learner as central to the schooling process, overall increasing student ‘buy in’, motivation to succeed, and engagement. Each of these initiatives will be further explored in future chapters.

Māori boys ‘success’ in my schooling context/experience

In my role as a secondary school teacher I have observed, over many years, and have noted engagement in some areas of schooling clearly exists for Māori boys. When presented with specific challenges within the secondary school context, such as cultural or sporting leadership, various students will become enamoured

and rise significantly to the occasion. This form of engagement is situational and frequently stand-alone. A worthy example is the annual kapa haka competition held at this school, where all year groups and staff compete as house groups. Practices are formed throughout the weeks leading up to the competition and the rivalry is fierce. This regularly brings to the forefront, or lead positions, students who teachers have previously described with words such as difficult, disengaged, even plain 'naughty'. Teachers express their surprise at this ability to step up and motivate when leadership in the cultural domain is necessary. Culture is temporarily valued in this way, and those rich in culture are provided this temporary platform from which their knowledge can be shared and valued. This level of cultural competence is rarely valued in other areas of school, and therefore opportunities for young Māori boys to move beyond the preconceived 'stereotypes' ascribed to them are only temporarily suspended.

Māori boys in many school settings also typically gravitate to senior physical education, technology and other practical subjects, and schools may be liable in some ways for encouraging these pathways (Hokowhitu, 2003a; Hokowhitu, 2003b; Hokowhitu, 2004). The school sports teams are also bursting with engaged motivated male Māori, whose numbers here tend to over represent the total population of the school. It has been suggested that some New Zealand schools created Sports Academies or similar with specific intent to allow Māori and Pacific students some success through school. This in turn indicates these students are not deemed able to succeed in the academic realm as they are segregated away as purely 'physical bodies' (Hokowhitu, 2003a; Hokowhitu, 2003b; Hokowhitu, 2004). The concept of a gifted student has also become relatively linear in education and is usually equated with intelligence in literacy and numeracy, while sporting talent is generally accepted as lower on the hierarchy of importance within the education context. Intelligence in terms of cultural identity, awareness and efficacy is a poor cousin to either of the above. The hierarchy of subjects has also exacerbated the perception of male Māori as 'physical beings' (Hokowhitu, 2003a; Hokowhitu, 2003b; Hokowhitu, 2004), with subjects that male Māori traditionally enjoy such as physical education falling down the hierarchy of perceived importance and educational value.

Teachers in all subject areas can be heard bemoaning about getting their male Māori students to engage and complete work, at times to even just attend classes. Behavioural issues and clashes between students and some staff inevitably occur as frustrations from both parties are vented. Notably, through tracking the attendance of some of my male Māori students (in my role as form teacher and the schools Specialist Classroom Teacher) it is indicated they certainly favour some subject areas (or perhaps teachers). It would appear that students who have gained success in the academic realm at the school have more often than not completely disengaged with their Māori cultural identity, at least in the school environment. This is often not the case in sporting prowess, with ‘smart’ Māori boys also being able to participate as members of the First 15, or the A volleyball team, yet are less likely to be seen in the front row of a pōwhiri. These observations around cultural disengagement further highlight the importance of work such as Whitinui’s (2008), who found that student participation in kapa haka groups actually increased engagement throughout other areas of school. He suggests Māori students are happier overall through their school journey when embracing their culture. With findings such as this, it is perhaps a paradigm shift in the education systems definition of success that will enable Māori students as individuals to consider themselves as successful young New Zealanders. Academic success and increased attendance at school may piggy back on an increased level of engagement, and findings such as Whitinui’s indicates this is directly linked to cultural awareness and efficacy.

Finding a way to enhance achievement

The Māori education strategy: *Ka Hikitia - Accelerating Success* 2013 -2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013b) was introduced to recognise the education system does not suit everyone, and that in particular Māori students were being left behind and were disengaged prior to reaching their full potential at school. The program has five guiding principles: The Treaty of Waitangi; Māori Potential Approach; Ako- A two-way teaching and learning process; Identity, language and culture count; and Productive partnerships (Ministry of Education, 2013). These steer the program on its mission to provide enjoyment and achievement for Māori students achieving as Māori. *Kia Eke Panuku - Building on Success*, is the initiative working to ‘give life’ to *Ka Hikitia*, and “...brings together key findings

from *Te Kotahitanga, He Kākano, the Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success* and the *Secondary Literacy and Numeracy Projects*” (Ministry of Education, 2013a). Similar to *Te Kotahitanga, Ka Hikitia* uses data and evidence to effect change in teacher practice, and is underpinned by a cultural pedagogy and responsive approach that is individualized within schools to involve staff, senior leaders, students and whānau. Each participant (or teacher) is ultimately responsible for their own practice and change “...and to make the necessary personal and professional changes to ensure Māori students enjoy and achieve educational success as Māori” (Ministry of Education, 2013a).

The Ministry of Education had prioritised the improvement of educational outcomes for Māori and Pacifica students in its 2013 Statement of Intent, imposing this as a compliance issue for all state schools in New Zealand. School leaders have been required to respond to this in ways that best reflect their community and the needs of their students. Coast College (pseudonym), a suburban decile six secondary school, was above national averages in all levels of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) for 2014. One area the school continued to strive to make a difference in was male Māori academic achievement, whose results indicate they are struggling to meet targets set by both the school and through national goal setting. The challenge has required the school to identify further strategies to enhance academic success for this group of learners.

Coast College responded in part by initiating their own research on male Māori experiences in the school. This research study by Jodie Robertson and Stu McDonald was undertaken to build on one area already identified in a previous project, to “investigate ways to increase Māori male student achievement” (p.7, 2013). The school is reflective of national statistics of low achievement of male Māori in NCEA level years, coupled with a higher proportion of school leavers during Year 12, so a key focus was how to retain these students and further engage them in academic study. One recommendation of this research was to create a form class in 2015 as a method of support for the boys as they enter their senior NCEA (National Certificate in Educational Achievement) years. At the beginning of 2015 a class was formed, made up of Year 11 Māori boys who have been identified as underachieving or potentially not reaching potential for a

variety of reasons, or just those who may benefit from inclusion in the class. In this context, underachievement was deemed as academic, engagement, involvement, or a combination of these factors, overall students who would benefit from extra support. The students were invited to be members of the class and their caregivers were involved in the process. The benefits of being in the class were shared with the boys and their whānau, and the choice was given to the individual so they were able to make a clear and informed decision. Inclusion was not compulsory in any way. Two male Māori members of staff, who are passionate about each student reaching their individual potential, primarily support the class members. One is their form teacher, and the other is a Deputy Principal, who is the Kaitiaki, or caregiver of all things and people Māori within the school. The form class participants were offered extra opportunities from being involved in the class, including visits to the local gym, having access to te reo lessons, term trips as a class, and involvement in a Māori achievement course which is linked to NCEA credits.

How successful is a Māori boys class?

My research investigates the Māori boys' form class and seeks the voice of the members regarding their belonging to the school community and sense of identity, specifically exploring the importance of sport, academia and culture and their effect on engagement through secondary school. The new knowledge being sought is whether the introduction of this class achieves the intended goals of extra support culminating in increased attendance and engagement and ultimately achievement. There is also an attempt to identify if the Māori boys are achieving as Māori, or if there are other areas they feel are more valued by the school and its occupants, such as sporting and academic success. In this context I am defining Māori achieving as Māori as being able to identify as Māori and maintain cultural identity, while being supported as an academic learner and a successful sporting identity.

This research endeavours to listen to the voice of the male Māori student in this school, in how they perceive their learning experiences and identities. I will explore the idea of male Māori as having 'multiple' identities, specifically those of sporting, cultural and academic, and how these identities are nurtured at this school. Ultimately I am interested in whether a young male Māori in this school

feels they can walk with their feet firmly in different realms and whether they have been supported in their learning, as Māori achieving as Māori. As the Māori boys form class was an initiative to better support these students, a focus will be on the perceived success of this to the participants.

This research also intends to identify current areas of engagement for the participants. The focus is on culture and sport as primary identities for these boys as members of the school learning community.

The key areas to be explored are:

- How the culture of the school, including cultural stereotypes, impacts on male Māori learner self-concept?
- Has the effect of an all Māori boys form class created an increased sense of belonging and engagement?

Literature review

To research the existing literature on Māori boys experiences in secondary schools, searches were completed around academic, sporting and cultural success, and what this means to young male Māori. The concept of community and our sense of belonging were also investigated. A key aspect of the search was looking for major research on successful programs or initiatives that have been previously done in New Zealand.

The power of pedagogy – what works?

Perhaps one of the most intensive studies and interventions focused on enhancing Māori achievement in education has been the *Te Kotahitanga* project (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003). The project “seeks to improve the educational achievement of New Zealand’s indigenous Māori students in mainstream secondary schools” (Bishop, 2010, p.57). The program was designed to instil change in teacher practice through “...iterative cycles of implementation and evaluation and associated changes in Indigenous students’ educational performance” (Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, Peter & Clapham, 2012, p.694). According to Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy, (2009), the reality for Māori include higher unemployment rates, lower paying employment, higher incarceration rates, higher illness and poverty, and this is also reflected in education. There is a raft of educational disparities, including high drop-out rates, high early school leavers, lower overall achievement, and high negative behaviour representation. They claim racism is occurring in terms of our education system being geared towards elitist mono cultural and it is time to stop looking at the majority culture (who collectively are achieving), to the areas of the culture that have been marginalized (Bishop et al, 2009).

An Effective Teacher Profile (ETP) was developed based on the experiences of Māori students and their whānau and teachers in schools. The overwhelming majority of students initially interviewed for the *Te Kotahitanga* program stated that teachers displayed deficit thinking in expectations from young male Māori students. “Negative, deficit thinking on the part of teachers was fundamental to

the development of negative relations and interactions between the students and their teachers, resulting in frustration and anger for all concerned”(Bishop, 2010, p.58). The ETP reinforced agentic teaching, placing the teacher as an agent of change. The ETP also works to create a ‘culturally responsive pedagogy of relations’ in schools and classrooms, highlighting “the importance of teachers caring for the children as Māori” (Bishop, 2010, p.59). Power sharing with the student has been found as important in changing and eventually increasing academic achievement. However, it was also found that lot of teachers seem to come from a deficit angle and have struggled to change, as echoed by McRae (2009) who suggests that “there has been a history of deficit thinking of Māori student achievement. A poor schooling environment with minimal cultural acknowledgement has been a contributing factor” (p. 27). Low teacher efficacy and expectations, and ethnic stereotyping are contributing factor in reducing engagement in school, thereby limiting access to high achievement.

To assist in building Māori student engagement, Bishop et al. (2009) suggests

...that educators need to create learning contexts within their classrooms; where power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence; where culture counts; where learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals; where participants are connected to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes. (p.736)

This development in pedagogy was further investigated by Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, Peter and Clapham (2012) when looking at schools in the later phases of *Te Kotahitanga* when they explored how the teaching changes had improved outcomes. They found a high level of engagement in the classroom was critical to success.

Strong, Silver and Robinson (1995) essentially agree with these factors for student engagement, and argue that they are required for motivation to learn. “Students who are engaged in their work are energized by four goals - success, curiosity, originality, and satisfying relationships” (p.8). In terms of relationships, they claim “students want and need work that will enhance their relationships with people they care about” ... “..further, most of us work hardest on those

relationships that are reciprocal- what you have to offer is of value to me, and what I have to offer is of some value to you” (Strong et al., 1995, p.10). Essentially a culture of Ako in the classroom will generate individual engagement and enable potential to develop but there are limited recommendations in the research on how to achieve this.

In their 2009 study, ‘Māori students experiencing success: A pilot research project’, McRae, MacFarlane, Webber and Cookson-Cox’s findings mirrored many of those made in the *Te Kotahitanga* project, and the preferred outcomes of *Ka Hikitia* and *Kia Eke Panuku*. The research was based on one school in Rotorua and the investigation of Māori students and what are the influential factors that enable success. They found that a paradigm shift was required in changing “...deficit thinking (looking at the negatives - Māori educational failure) to affirmative repositioning (highlighting the positives - Māori educational achievement)” (McRae et al., 2009, p.7). Students in this project were in their final year of school and the study looked at all aspects of schooling including whānau support and teachers. To ensure educational success these factors were critical:

- value of education to parents high
- high discipline rates at home
- high teacher support
- some level of Ako at home from parents
- school environment crucial
- students believe home supported their success
- high expectations
- self-motivated
- high confidence
- high reciprocity rate (giving back sporting or otherwise) (McRae et al., 2009).

They also found the school provides individual goals for students, has Māori staff to support Māori students, has a robust Ako unit, and critically the school value Māori being successful as Māori. Many of these factors are mirrored in the *Te Kotahitanga* recommendations and have been adopted by *Ka Hikitia* and *Kia Eke Panuku*. The lag in research seems to be in presenting the ‘how’s’, as compared to

the ‘what’s’, with plenty of recommendations but much fewer examples for educators to follow, which in turn leaves the schools to create their own set of strategies in addressing the underachievement of male Māori.

McRae, MacFarlane, Webber and Cookson-Cox (2009) also point to high cultural value/ability as possibly being part of the broader gifted and talented definition. Success in the area of culture is important to different cultures and should be valued. “The concept of giftedness and talent varies from culture to culture and is shaped by each groups beliefs, values, attitudes, and customs. It also varies over time and in response to different experiences” (Ministry of Education, 2012, p.25). This perspective on gifted and talented is echoed by Herewini, Tiakiwai and Hawksworth (2012) who state that “Māori perspectives on giftedness are not finite and static, but rather dynamic and evolving” (p.41). These highlight a need to see ‘being Māori’ as integral to success, and being able to achieve excellence while identifying with culture yet also achieve success in the world by achieving as Māori. A key finding of McRae et al.’s study was that the students gaining success fight to NOT fit the Māori stereotype. This does not however, mean they are not being Māori or achieving as Māori, simply that they refuse to fall into the stereotypical view of what others expect a Māori to be.

In response to a Nationwide discrepancy in Māori achievement versus non- Māori, Coast College commissioned its own research, the Māori Male Achievement Study (Robertson & McDonald, 2013), involving a large group of male Māori students, their whānau and all teachers and senior managers in the school. This research was in response to low NCEA achievement levels for male Māori in the school in conjunction with a high leaving rate during Year 12. The key areas investigated were: Māori male underachievement; Māori male achievement; school culture; the teachers; whānau and external responsibilities; perceptions of Māori male success; and Māori male cultural identity and awareness. A key finding, and one to be further investigated, was that the data showed “...Māori students who are achieving at Coast College are achieving despite being Māori as opposed to “Achieving as Māori””(Robertson & McDonald, 2013, p.55). This was a clear indication from these students that it was necessary to compromise culture in order to be successful academically. Inclusion in the successful school community came at the price of cultural identity and belonging in that community.

The importance of culture

Hokowhitu, Sullivan and Williams (2008) contend that until the 1940's the education system "overtly discriminated against Māori" (p.5). There was a deliberate attempt at creating a "generational divide" within the Māori people in order to assimilate the Māori into Pākehā society. New Zealand is now an increasingly multi-cultural society but the dominant cultures remain Māori (14.9%) and Pākehā (New Zealand European) (69%), according to the 2013 census. The Māori population are the indigenous people, with the European settlement beginning in earnest at the start of the 19th century. Along with other areas, the settlers brought them the European education system. Prior to British colonization Māori children were often educated in whare wānanga, or Houses of Learning, rich in tikanga and Māori knowledge (Te Ara Encyclopedia, 2015). With the introduction of schooling by the British, including schools for Māori students, the whare wānanga approach slowly died away. By the end of the 19th century a compulsory education system, steeped in literacy and numeracy, was in place for all. Wally Penetito asserts this rejection of a Māori way of education as part of "... a disturbingly long trail of cultural imperialism and associated institutional racism" (2002, p.91).

With New Zealand schools having being based around European based pedagogies and content, traditional Māori learning was inherently removed from the school day and the value of cultural practices marginalized within education. Traditional Māori schooling included all aspects of the culture and was rich in movement, knowledge and ako. Ako, or reciprocal teaching and learning relationships, acknowledges both teacher and student as having knowledge to be shared. It was seemingly from this point in time that Māori students achievement in the new schooling system was an experiment likely to fail. From the onset of 'formalised' schooling, and as long as academic records have been maintained, Māori students have statistically lagged behind other students, and also have been over represented in truancy rates (Bishop & Glyn, 1999).

Even with ongoing interventions and initiatives, the Nga Haeta Matauranga: Annual Report of Māori Education (2006) made comment that Māori remain as the group most likely to disengage from school before they are 16 years old. Whitinui (2008) strongly suggests that the importance of including and

reintroducing culture into the curriculum and schooling is vital to engagement and retention of Māori students. Statistically Māori students are improving in their academic success at secondary school, but are still lagging behind Pākehā New Zealanders. Whitinui reminds us that Māori students need to not just cope in the school system, but also need to feel happier and more confident in attending school. This may require a “...major mind-shift towards understanding how culture (i.e. Māori ways of knowing, doing and being) connects with their unique abilities, talents, needs and aspirations” (Whitinui, 2008, p.2).

Whitinui’s research centres around the involvement of Māori students in extra and co-curricular participation of kapa haka groups. He found that the direct effect of participation in kapa haka was having positive impact on other areas of schooling for Māori students. This connection with culture helps to affirm identity and raise confidence, ultimately flowing into all areas of schooling from this one practice. He states that “... developing meaningful and purposeful curriculum that includes students prior knowledge, experiences, values, beliefs and practices are considered vital to protecting their identity” (Whitinui, 2008, p.3). The research implies positive results from these extra opportunities for involvement, but there is a lack of clarity around whether this overt culture is contributing to the overall culture of the school, and whether this is valued.

In contrast, Laurie and Rata (2014) argue that culturally embedded curriculum, one rich in socio-cultural knowledge, in fact limits the learner and serves to reinforce what they currently ‘know’ or ‘are’. Building a curriculum around this context may in fact be a backwards step in this modern society. So that being highly cultural and having a rich culturally connected curriculum is actually a disadvantage. They conclude that this is actually contributing to the underachievement of Māori students. So perhaps the argument here is the value of culture within the school/classroom as compared to an individuals’ sense of culture is the most important factor. The sense of self-identity and inclusion seems more crucial than the best intentions of school based educators to create a culturally responsive learning environment. If an individual is more culturally located and confident of their own identity, they are more favorably placed and likely to learn. It is unclear from this research as to whether the schools have supported this growth in identity or whether the responsibility has remained on the

shoulder of the individual. This is an area that requires more attention from researchers.

To reinforce the importance of self-identity and belonging, Webbers (2012) study on adolescents in Auckland found that racial ethnic identity is very important in shaping a young person, and “how they belong and their achievement aspirations” (p.21). She claims that teachers and schools have to acknowledge the ethnic and cultural differences in the classrooms and how this matters to all involved. So in contrast to including Māori culture and language directly into the curriculum, it is the acknowledgement of differing experiences, cultures and therefore the pedagogies required, that is important. *Ka Hikitia* and *Kia Eke Panuku* are both initiatives that have acknowledged these needs and aim to ensure Māori students are able to achieve success as Māori.

In her research, Webber (2012) found that “the underpinning assertion is that a positive sense of Māori identity, experienced as cultural competence, cultural efficacy and racial-ethnic group pride, may help to improve the educational outcomes of Māori by buffering or ameliorating the negative experiences of Māori students at school” (p.21). These negative experiences may be associated with stereotyping or poor academic outcomes. She defines strong and positive Māori identity as; having a positive self-identity as Māori; as understanding of Māori language and culture; involvement in Māori social and cultural activities; and a close attachment to other Māori (p.22). A key attribute of successful Māori students with strong identity is the desire to debunk and challenge negative stereotypes assigned to Māori. Webber also found that successful Māori students are able to be “flexible” in their culture (p.26) and are able to walk in the realms of Pākehā and Māori with relative ease. However, others contend that Māori students should not have to do this, rather by requiring them to be flexible in their culture they are becoming more distanced from their tikanga and therefore less able to achieve *as* Māori (Robertson, 2004; Whitinui, 2008).

The role of cultural identity and socioeconomic status in educational achievement is debated by Marie, Fergusson and Boden, as a result of their 25-year longitudinal study. They found that the imposed education system had created a sense of “...loss of cultural esteem” (2008, p.184). However, they concluded that

low academic achievement was more likely to be a result of a low socio economic situation rather than a high cultural identity. So therefore a high level of personal cultural identity can be maintained, and not at the expense of success in secondary school. A much stronger indicator of lack of success in secondary school is a low socio-economic environment, with specific factors such as a lack of pre-school education. However, they conclude that a major additional factor here is that Māori are economically more marginalised than others in New Zealand and so tend to over represent in the low socio-economic statistics. This study is not alone in identifying educational statistical ‘lags’ with negative sociocultural experiences, with Bishop (2009) also echoing these disparities. However, the relative ease in which these factors have been identified and repeatedly reported on, has so far failed to provide a definitive weapon in the fight to rectify the issues, despite the ongoing Ministry of Education support through *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2013b) and *Kia Eke Panuku* (Ministry of Education, 2013a).

Male Māori as the ‘physical being’

From as far back as the first settlers, Māori were described as ‘physical beings’ and Māori tikanga (culture) was seen as a menial way of life to the colonials, and something that needed to be ‘fixed’. This way of life was seen as savage and simple, and this required ‘normalising’, or to be taken over by the ‘superior’ European practices (Hokowhitu, 2003). In many ways, this historical construct has remained, with male Māori often portrayed as violent savages in movies such as ‘Once were Warriors’, or as sporting heroes as the pinnacle of New Zealand masculinity. In his work, Hokowhitu argues that masculinity is a social construct and therefore cannot be considered without this history in mind. From the reverence of the sporting hero to the grossly generalized portrayal of Māori family life, today's male Māori are rendered merely a more sophisticated version of the ‘savages’ found in Aotearoa by the settlers.

The rhetoric that places male Māori as a ‘physical being’ (Hokowhitu, 2003a; Hokowhitu, 2003b; Hokowhitu, 2004) has created an illusion of success being exclusively available in this area. The expression of physicality and being capable at physical activity or sport seems a widely accepted avenue for male Māori to experience respect and inclusion. According to Hokowhitu (2004) this marker of success of the dominant discourse of male Māori masculinity must be

deconstructed and reframed. He claims the construct established by early settlers remains essentially unchanged and has put the Māori male as experts in the physical realm, thereby essentially excluding them from success in other areas. To compound this Hokowhitu argues there are multiple barriers placed on Māori male when it comes to non-sporting success, which omit them further from success or recognition in the intellectual domain. The limiting stereotype of physical prowess has bled through generations of New Zealanders and become an integral part of the identity of the stereotypical Māori male, which in turn potentially contributes to the academic underachievement gap.

If historically Māori have been seen as first ‘simple’ and ‘practical’, and now as ‘physical beings’, awareness should be created around avoiding feeding this stereotype in schools. The permeation of this limiting belief, Hokowhitu believes, has been reinforced through schooling with a chain of deficit thought that makes teachers believe they are serving their Māori students by creating practical tasks. Conversely to their beliefs, he postulates this is contributing to the stereotype rather than challenging it. Erueti and Palmer (2014) describe the “physical/intellectual dichotomy” (p. 1063) that has served to limit male Māori success, was been created centuries ago and continues to confine common perception of where success gain be gained and is accepted. This discourse that Māori male are only good at the practical needs to be challenged as it originated in order to oppress Māori (Hokowhitu, 2003; Hokowhitu, 2014) and will continue to do so if allowed.

The dominant discourse of Māori men as being physical creatures, not academic or creative, has lost little traction with popular view “...and that has also gained hegemonic consent from many *tāne*” (Hokowhitu, 2004, p. 262). If Māori men continue to feed this physical stereotype it will become further embedded as reality. He describes sport as “positive” racism “...that acts as a contemporary conduit to channel *tāne* into the physical realm” (Hokowhitu, 2004, p.262). The key work is perhaps ‘temporary’, as importance must also be laid upon the education and success of the whole.

Māori boys and men who are steeped in their own culture realise the significance of whānaungatanga (family), hinengaro (intellect), wairua (spirituality), aroha

(love and compassion), and manaakitanga (support and concern for others). It is through Māori men's own culture that they will find what it truly means to be a Māori man, freed of the dominant construct, and permeated instead with humility, intelligence, creativity, love, and compassion. (Hokowitu, 2004, p.277)

Placing the 'Māori' in the New Zealand curriculum

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) has arguably included aspects of Māori tikanga over the years. The evolution of the physical education and health curriculum (2007) has now included Durie's (1982) concept of Hauora, a Māori philosophy of holistic wellbeing and health. However, Salter (2000) argues that this is actually adulterated somewhat in the curriculum and the correct meaning of the word 'hauora' has not been represented in its intent. He states that the individual contributes to the group in Māori culture, and the current 'Pākehā' education system does not cater well for this. Essentially the 'Māori' has been injected into the curriculum by 'non-Māori', and the integrity of kaupapa Māori has not been respected. Hokowhitu goes so far as to term education in New Zealand as the "...racist state education system" (2003a, p.192), one that disempowers and marginalizes success for Māori students. In resistance to this Pākehā system, Hokowhitu (2004) concluded that "...many tāne resist higher education because they see it as tantamount to assimilation into Pākehā values and attitudes" (p.261).

Along with this limitation, the subject areas where male Māori have stereotypically been placed as 'good' at have become embroiled in their own fight for legitimacy within schools. "Generally considered low status in schools, physical education (PE) and health education are positioned by teachers, school managers and in popular opinion as non-academic" (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p.35). However, she also states "in New Zealand these subjects also tend to attract students who are statistically low achievers in the educational system" (2011, p.35). In addition to this statement she also points out the higher school leaving rates, but the relatively high grades of Māori students in the health and physical education subject areas, of those who do stay at school. It is perhaps questionable as to whether this is due to a higher engagement toward the subject, or a higher ability as a physical being that predisposes Māori to achieve.

Sport is another area of perceived success for male Māori, and though Stothart (2000) described them as ‘uncomfortable bedfellows’, PE and sport remain synonymous in many schools. Brown (2015) identifies the opportunities afforded to students who are successful at sport at a secondary school level. This may be through inclusion in the school elite sports performance programs or class, or through high level sporting contribution within the school. Brown (2015) identifies that “elite athletes represented a privileged space in health and PE” (p. 234) and it would seem at times this is extended into other areas of the school, with leniency shown in the acceptance of lesser grades or lower attendance. With the commercialization of schools in New Zealand, and the need to create marketable successes to compete against other schools, high performing teams and individual athletes are a strong commodity. By creating an identity around sport and athleticism, students can forge a comfortable pathway through secondary school. In their 2015 case study, Burrows and McCormack discuss the context of sport as motivation in itself for some students. The power of sport as a ‘hook’ for students to remain at school and perform in other areas such as academically remains, though this is perhaps underutilized if students do not feel they can successfully belong in multiple areas within the school.

As discussed by Brown (2015) students are often catered for well in a secondary school if they are gifted in a sporting sense and these boys have been afforded multiple opportunities in this area. For the participants sport remains perhaps the most integral part of their identity and is a common link between them all. Hokowhitu (2008) describes sport as “positive racism”, as an area that young Māori can be channelled in order to express themselves. However, this in turn feeds the stereotype of Māori as purely physical beings. Hokowhitu (2003a, 2003b, 2004) had earlier explored the acceptance of male Māori as being good at sport, as it did not conflict with the historic image of Māori as savage and physical. Societally we accept Māori as being ‘good’ physically, but this can also work to confine the acceptable spaces that Māori can be successful within. This flows into schools, where it is not uncommon for senior physical education or recreation classes to be popular with Māori students. The popular perception that PE as an ‘easy’ subject further entrenches that male Māori are physical beings and most capable in less demanding practical subjects.

Pope (2002) also identifies sport as being an avenue for schools or the education system to develop character in students, ultimately “the outcome for students would be learning to accept defeat, striving for victory, and developing a desire to improve their physical and social skills” (p.91). The birth of school Sport Academies, or Sports Performance Institutes allowed schools to espouse the benefits of sport in developing better all-round students i.e. better motivation to be present when hooked in to an area of success. The link between inclusion in a Sports Academy and academic achievement requires further attention, as well as to the consequences of low academic achievement to ongoing involvement in the Academy. If we look at Hokowhitu’s work, from early colonisation “sport was seen as an area where the positive attributes of Māori physicality could be highlighted” (2008, p.4). A school Sport Academy has the power to nurture the male Māori as a complete learner, or to further exploit the social construct of creating a place where they are accepted as successful purely in the physical realm.

Community: Belonging and negotiating multiple identities

Whilst a sense of identity is perhaps an indicator of success in secondary school, another factor is whether this includes a sense of belonging within a community or communities. “Communities are marked by deep, familiar and co-operative ties between people that often involve a high degree of personal intimacy, moral commitment, social cohesion and continuity in time” (Skinner, Zakus & Cowell, 2008, p.255).

It would be simplistic to take a common definition of community as being the area in which we reside or are placed, and the people within in that zone. A geographical community such as this remains relatively fixed and is defined by a divisional boundary of physical space and environment, for example a town or a school. Skinner et al. (2008) definition above further implies that communities are more than simple geography, they also have clear beliefs, even set guidelines as to how the community functions, and what is acceptable within its confines in order to sustain it and its members. Communities have the potential to show us acceptable behaviours, and also the power to subtly or openly exclude those who cannot reciprocate this.

A community may be bound by common ideologies or culture, common beliefs or

religion, common goals or sporting prowess, not just by common living environment and proximity. “A sense of community arises out of the fundamental human need to create and maintain social bonds, to develop a sense of belonging and to further develop a self- identity. In other words, a social, affective (emotional) and/or a psychological need is met” (Skinner et al., 2008, p.255). So apart from belonging to our set communities bound by location, we can choose to involve ourselves in a myriad of other communities, with different areas perhaps meeting different needs for the individual.

Belonging to a community can have many benefits to the individual, in part contributing to a sense of identity and belonging, which are often passed on or shared with the wider group. Complex social interactions are a marker of functional communities and social capital is constantly being generated within the parameters of the community, and through these processes the development of social and emotional skills can occur (Burnett, 2006). Within these more complex communities, unbound by physical space but bound by perhaps more powerful forces, human capital and growth is occurring as each individual grows through social interactions (Skinner et al., 2008) and creates their own identity. Participants are arguably more likely to positively function in these communities by choice, as compared to a set community such as a school where some participants would likely prefer lack of involvement.

A student is a by proxy in a learning community. However, they also bring their own experiences and culture to this community. The multiple community layers faced by the learner include the set community found in the school they attend, the area or culture they are from, as well the community or communities they have located themselves within. In creating an all-male Māori form class, the school has endeavoured to create a smaller learning community, based on commonalities such as Māori culture and sporting interests. There has been little research or case studies in this area and the effect of segregating students in this way for better support.

Culture as community

Strong communities are also built on cultural ties and links, specifically in New Zealand the two dominant cultures are Māori and Pākehā, or New Zealand

European. As a bilingual and bicultural Nation, the two cultures are formally recognised as equal, though certainly in practice we are more embedded in a Pākehā way of living and learning. A feature of Māori culture is the concept of whānau, the embracing of the wider family and even non-blood related persons as being included in one large community, coming together to create support networks and provide resources. As Scheidt (2009) points out, the building of togetherness is often created from the “emphasis placed on ritual” (p.25). Many indigenous cultures such as Māori have rituals and customs embedded through centuries of time that has passed as knowledge through the generations, building cultural identity through time and place. Māori culture has its own hierarchies, for instance the respect of the kaumātua (Māori elder) who provides leadership and maintains the integrity of traditions and knowledge, and also the sharing of resources is valued and encouraged. For a young student who strongly identifies as Māori and with all things Māori, the modern school environment could present as a challenge. Elders (in this context teachers) are frequently challenged and schoolwork is commonly completed and assessed individually rather than collectively, at times prohibiting the sharing of skills and resources.

As cited in Craig, (2007, p.352) “the fundamental argument here – appropriate to other groups representing the powerless – is that ‘cultural difference is viewed as a weakness and not a strength, a capacity deficit to be rebuilt or a problem to be “solved”’(Tedmanson, 2003: 15)”. It is a slow evolution but at this time education is still essentially a ‘one size fits all approach’, and try as we might, every young person will not fit this cookie cutter mould and become a fully-fledged member of the community. Despite best efforts by many, it would appear that Māori continue to be challenged to identify as Māori, yet learn as Pākehā. In schools the identity created through culture may not be nurtured to its full extent. Much of this reviewed research has not indicated the value of Māori culture as being important at all times within the wider school culture, rather it looks at the individual contribution to their own sense of culture.

Community as sporting

The notion of sport as creating a sense of belonging (Skinner et al., 2009, Beacom, 1998) has long been used by Governments and smaller communities to provide a sense of development and identity. If communities are born from a sense of

common beliefs, goals, and values, then it is of interest to governments and local bodies to find these common areas and enhance them for its members. Common examples include sporting World Cups and Olympic Games, where governments provide funding for teams and individuals and align themselves closely with winners from their countries. As stated in Moser (2010) "...leisure activities are material practices introduced by the state as a nation-building strategy intended to change the bodies and minds of individuals and to bind the populace through creating a national consciousness" (p.54). Sport and fitness through this lens are used as a platform to build cohesion and common purpose within a community.

As a tool, sport is also a powerful tool in providing individual engagement to potentially disengaged members of a community. Sport can provide a space where an individual feels of value, and social worth is placed upon them. As Skinner, Zakus and Cowell(2008) recognises "...sport is employed as a platform to deal with societal issues and provides opportunities for disadvantaged members of society" (p.254). This recognises sport as more than just sport for the sake of it, rather as to "... how sport can contribute to members of a community developing socially through supportive relationships, education, training and employment (paid or voluntary)" (Skinner et al., 2008, p.262). Sport as a tool for engagement, to ensure and enable a sense of success, perhaps act as a springboard for the setting and achievement of wider goals. "Diana's (2000) study of the role of structured sport and recreation on the decline in delinquency among youth-at-risk" (cited in Burnett, 2006, p.285) indicates the positive impact sport can have in providing a more positive influence into the identity of youth who may have otherwise chosen a less desirable role in the community. In this role sport is seen as developing community spirit through more positive interactions and creating a space and identity that youth feel they can inhabit successfully.

Communities and Nations can also place symbolic capital on athletes or sports. In particular in New Zealand we place significant symbolic value on rugby players, and when they do not conform or perform we often feel let down. However, their real value is questionable. They are not contributing in a perhaps traditional sense, but are often central to the building of culture within the community. They may become a pivotal central point around which others are provided with motivation to succeed, with an icon or a source of inspiration. To a lesser value this occurs in

communities such as schools, where symbolic capital may be placed on sports people (think of presenting the First 15 rugby team with ties at assembly), which further embeds the person as a member of the sporting community.

For young Māori sport as a community may provide an avenue for success, and a sense of belonging. The reinforcement of Hokowhitu's (2003a, 2003b, 2004) 'physical being' manifests itself in this way with large numbers of male Māori identifying as sportsmen or as having affinity to sporting culture. As Hokowhitu (2008) points out, it is easy for a young male Māori to strongly identify with rugby and rugby league, with many Māori names and images associated with these sports. A young male Māori may be able to see themselves in the images of these sporting codes and their heroes.

However, there is a marginalization of PE as a subject in schools, with a public misconception that it is other core subjects that create academic rigor and challenge. PE is not readily acknowledged as an academic subject area, where "school subject hierarchies charge health and physical education with the maintenance of the body rather than the improvement of the mind" (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 39). It is increasingly hard to argue against the fact that PE is commonly given low status as a subject in schools. As Katie Fitzpatrick (2011) points out, "physical education (PE) and health education are positioned by teachers, school managers and in popular opinion as non-academic" (p35). This has created a culture of PE classes being a 'dumping ground' for students who have no other classes they can go to, and viewed as a subject that anyone can 'do'. Combine this with a high number of Māori students who do PE as a subject they enjoy, and the racial stereotype of Māori as 'physical beings' continues to flourish.

Chapter summary

This review has focussed on the areas of sport, culture and academia in relation to young male Māori, including some historical context into the development of surrounding social constructs. Each of these factors has bearing on an individuals' engagement and achievement in secondary school. Despite many efforts, young male Māori are still lagging behind their non-Māori counterparts in terms of academic success, attendance at school, and future opportunities. Research into why this is occurring is prolific, but the gaps appear when trying to find viable

solutions in resolving this issue. Specifically this study looks to gain knowledge on how Coast College can use student insight to identify and mitigate barriers on their journey to success.

Methodology

Theoretical framework

Qualitative research

This qualitative research focussed on a case study of the newly created senior form class of all Māori boys. The primary reason in using a qualitative approach was to gather information from the participants, while taking into account "...perceptions, interactions, processes, meanings and context" (Menter et al., 2011, p.144). The anecdotes and information from the boys could be grouped and analysed without need for quantitative statistical type data. Secondary data in terms of attendance and academic information was gathered from the school kamar system², to support the qualitative narrative from the boys.

Drawing from the interpretive paradigm in this qualitative study supported the notion that data is valuable at a local level and each situation as unique to the particular context, in this instance the school and more specifically the Māori boys form class. "Interpretive research is, at its core, a search for local meanings... It seeks to describe, analyse, and interpret features of a specific situation, preserving its complexity and communicating the perspectives of participants" (Borko, Liston & Whitcomb, 2007, p. 4). Through this paradigm or lens, we understand that the male Māori students at Coast College are individuals that differ from other male Māori students in other areas due to environment, social settings and a raft of other variables and experiences.

An interpretive paradigm seeks its place through valuing new knowledge as being a subjective process, where researchers gain an insight into participants (Markula & Silk, 2011). "Interpretive research is, at its core, a search for local meanings" (Borko et al., 2007, p. 4). This paradigm served my purpose and recognised the students at this school may achieve due to certain circumstances such as environment, relationships, prior knowledge and place. In contrast, the positivist paradigm places the observer as 'separate from the entities' that are actually being observed (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) so there is no placing of the researcher's values, beliefs or experiences on the situation. In my situation as an

² Kamar is the schools internal network system, which holds information including attendance and academic data.

educational practitioner, and as someone who has prior experiences with these students, I would find it difficult and indeed inappropriate to use this paradigm. For me as the researcher it was important to understand what works for this group of boys, in this environment, and getting this level of support, and what the implications for future practice are in this school.

Consideration was also made in relation to the Kaupapa Māori approach when interviewing the boys to gather information on the pedagogies and structures in the school that are preferred. The intention was to gain a Māori perspective, and also to identify the value of culture, academic achievement and sporting prowess to the boys, and the perceived importance to the school of these areas through a Māori lens or viewpoint. As a non-Māori I worked closely with Māori members of staff at the school, in particular the Kaitiaki to nullify any cultural differences and insensitivities that arose. Data was analysed from this viewpoint also, with information being used to reference back to the research questions and the views of the boys.

A case study

When looking at using a case study as a research method, it is through understanding the desire is to look at a smaller group in greater detail as compared to other methods such as action research where the focus is on reflection during practice. The concept was to capture the “complexity, embedded character and specificity of real life phenomena” (Gillham, 2000, p. 6) as it had occurred and was expressed by the boys. As discussed by Payne and Payne (2004), case studies occur in real world setting and have boundaries. These bounded areas are often time and space and can become a limiting factor in this research method. In regards to time, the boundaries of term times, timetables, and indeed a school year are potential limiting factors, but also provide a tidy outline for a single class case study.

The case study lends itself to in-depth investigation of a small number of participants, which suits the education context (Menter et al., 2013). The length of time of investigation in the case may vary considerably, with case studies able to range from short to long periods. A case study seeks to describe and understand a situation, or paint a picture of the participants with the view to increase

understanding or to focus future research. In this way the culture of this school was explored, and how the participants viewed this culture, which leads to exploration of the broader culture of education.

Case studies must also recognise secondary or incidental topics that are not the direct focus. Whilst this case study looks at engagement of students, it was also necessary to recognise the myriad of other factors integral to the study, such as culture given all participants are male Māori. The case study in question focuses on a bounded unit, a form class, and specifically at a small number of its participants. However, the case study could be broadened to look at the Māori culture, at least the culture or cultural identity of the students within the group. All participants in the case study were young male Māori, with the intent of the study to be identify what engages and motivates these participants to succeed and how this can be supported.

Vitally important to this case study is the qualitative approach, where the importance of hearing the voices and words behind the numbers has driven the study rather than the statistical information. Whilst the topic of the study was identified through quantitative data (National and school), the research was presented as qualitative in order to develop a rounder notion of the case in question. As Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin and Lowden (2011) discuss, it is the role of the researcher to summarise all the qualitative data and draw valid conclusions from this, primarily for the use of the school and possible wider dissemination.

Data collection

The participants

For this case study, five boys were selected from a range of academic, sporting and cultural backgrounds to be the focus group. The students were chosen in consultation with the form teacher and the Kaitiaki. The students were chosen based on their level of sporting and/or cultural ability, as well as their ability to communicate effectively. Five boys from the form class were included in the focus group:

Tāne – Identifies quite highly with Māori culture though doesn't speak te reo. Does not consider himself academic and sometimes struggles being motivated at

school, but intends to stay to end of Year 13 and gain NCEA level two. Plays rugby and rugby league and loves physical education.

Daniel – Does not consider himself highly academic but does achieve well at school. He intends to stay until the end of Year 13 and gain NCEA level three. Plays golf to a high level, and was in the Sports Performance class until this year. Does not identify strongly as Māori.

Harry – Little identity with Māori culture but shared some aspirations such as wanting to lead the school haka. Very academic and driven, intending to stay until Year 13 and gain NCEA level three. Plays many sport (also has come from Sports Performance class), but particularly successful at waterpolo.

Jai – Highly academic and successful in this area. Intends to gain NCEA level three and is already thinking about University options. Low Māori culture identity, though keen to learn pepeha and some te reo. From a sporting background and enjoys many sports successfully, particularly engaging with rugby.

Nikora – identifies very strongly as Māori and with Māori culture. He has Tā Moko on his arm and leg which he is very proud of. Does not consider himself academic at all, though intends to stay at school until end of Year 13 and hopes to gain NCEA level two. Has aspirations to be a professional league player in Australia and has been identified by ‘scouts’ for a training camp with a club this summer.

Data collection

The focus group participants were then involved in one interview, where a semi structured type interview took place. The advantage of a semi-structured interview is that “this allows us to understand better the meanings underpinning peoples actions and illuminates their attitudes, motivation and rationale” (Menter et al., 2013, p.127). In this way I was able to ask participants to expand on their answers or to gather further comprehensive explanations of some points and the opinions of the other participants.

Focus questions³ were developed and information gathered around several broad themes;

- Form class information
- Experiences and successes from the throughout the year
- Male Māori in communities
- Exploring belonging to communities of sporting, cultural and academic natures
- Role models
- School culture
- What they feel is valued within the school and by its community of students and teachers

Each of these themes were investigated depending on the participants interactions and ability to provide information through responses. The semi structured nature of the interview allowed freedom to introduce different lines of conversation if new themes arose. While it would have been ideal to follow the focus group interview with individual interviews, the scope of this study did not allow for this.

Data analysis

An inductive approach was used in analysing the data where data was initially grouped and then I looked for more complex relationships and patterns. The raw data from the interviews was thoroughly reviewed and concepts or themes were identified (Thomas, 2006). These concepts were drawn from the raw data in response to the overall research question. As pointed out by Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin and Lowden, "...the analysis process occurs as the information is being gathered and is not linear" (2013, p.219). Due to this there were some themes that were more thoroughly investigated during the interview as participants highlighted their importance.

The data was presented as a blend of narrative accounts and interview transcripts. Initially this was done as individual cases, with each participants responses being presented alone. The discussion then became a cross-case analysis, marrying all the individual representations into themes.

³ Appendix 4

Data was also collected from the school kamar system, which generates key information such as annual absences and academic results. This quantitative data was used to support the anecdotal evidence from the participants.

Validity and trustworthiness

To add to the maelstrom of the research process, research ethics “produces normative output – in essence, statements on what ought to be done” (Johnsson, Eriksson, Helgesson & Hansson, 2014, p.31). These guidelines on what ‘ought to be done’ provide a clear direction in determining whether a study is valid and trustworthy. In order to be valid, research must create new knowledge and this knowledge must be truthful. This is more challenging in the case of qualitative inquiry, where the focus should perhaps be more on trustworthiness than validity. In order to be ethically trustworthy, a thorough explanation of the processes and intended outcomes was outlined for the participants (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The experiences of the participants were also represented as accurately as possible and any new knowledge from these narratives was concluded with the participants views in mind. In this instance, the knowledge gained from the case study may be used to embed future strategies into classrooms to support these and other students. In this way the study will have element of action research, where teacher and student ongoing commitment are important in sustaining the success. Although the study is on a single class as “the purpose of a case study is not to represent the world, but to represent a case” (Qi, 2009, p. 22), others may be able to learn from this and adapt it for their own use with individual students or whole classes.

Ethical considerations

To be ethical in our actions is to fundamentally know right from wrong, and regard oneself and others from this moral platform. Whilst being ethical is often part of our own daily lives, when we enter the world of research, ethical conduct should be at the forefront of the study. Wilkinson (2001, p.13) highlights “the key topic in ethics is how we should treat others”, and whereas this may be autonomous for the individual, it becomes multifaceted when dealing with research participants and outcomes. “Protection from harm is a foundational issue in research ethics” (Miller, 2003, p.133). Conducting research on humans is complex in nature, though fundamentally is in place to minimise or eliminate any

emotional or physical harm to participants.

To overcome the ethical dilemmas in this case study it was important to thoroughly identify them. As a teacher at the school I had access to the research site with potentially little or no difficulty, and “access does not have to be negotiated in the usual way” (Menter et al, 2011, p.56). Both colleagues and students were reminded that the research was formal and the role the researcher could potentially be blurred with unclear boundaries if this was not addressed. The students are enrolled at the school, and in the chosen class, so could therefore have felt they were a ‘captive sample’ (Finch, 2005) and less able to withdraw from the study or not participate at all. To overcome this a thorough ethical review process was undergone to allow the students in the case study full disclosure and ability to withdraw with no consequence.

In addition to having access to the site, my role as a teacher at the school where the research was taking place was recognized in the consent process. In this situation, focus remained on freedom from coercion of the research subjects. A student in the class could have felt their participation was linked to their own grades or success, and may feel unduly coerced to participate. Participants needed assurance and ongoing guarantee that their participation in the study was not linked to any consequence in other areas of the school or their own course of studies. They were assured of this at the commencement of the interview and reminded at the conclusion.

Anonymity was also important to ensure the students, in particular if they spoke of specific incidences or people that could identify them to others. To assist in overcoming this pseudonyms were used, and the students were also advised that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Within a confined environment such as a school it may be easy to identify the ‘voices’ of the participants and protecting their anonymity was a valid issue to consider. This was also a credible issue in protecting any of the participants’ opinions that may have been critical of staff in the school.

Another issue surrounding this case study was the cultural difference between the researcher and participants. The research participants were young male Māori and I felt it was respectful to approach the research with a Kaupapa Māori perspective

in mind. This perspective rightly demands that we recognise the cultural differences and implications of those differences when collecting and interpreting data from Māori participants. “Māori people are concerned that educational researchers have been slow to acknowledge the importance of culture and cultural differences as key components in successful research practice and understandings” (Bishop, 1998, p. 199)

In recognising I do not strongly identify as Māori, I collaborated with the schools Kaitiaki in developing appropriate research questions. I worked closely with the schools Kaitiaki and the form class teacher to identify best possible candidates, and how these candidates will best be put into their interview groups. I have worked as a teacher in this school for many years, and have developed a specific passion in wanting to increase engagement in Māori students who are underachieving. I have worked closely in strategic teams on this issue and will continue to work with Māori teachers and the Kaitiaki to identify cultural aspects or insensitivities throughout the study.

Limitations

This research has worked to gather important information on the success of creating a class for young male Māori. The limitation of this is that the research was done in just one school, with the participants coming from one class. The information gathered will be relevant to the school but is potentially limited to that school only. There may be other findings that can be considered significant to other organisations or individuals, but the information regarding the form class will be limited to Coast College.

Although the study is within a single class as “the purpose of a case study is not to represent the world, but to represent a case” (Qi, 2009, p. 22), the information gathered could be used in a broader sense too. Lincoln et al. (2005) discusses new knowledge as being if we were “sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them” (p.120), though it would be remiss to develop school policy on a study of this size. However, perhaps not all of new knowledge needs to be so weighty, it may have rather more merit in creating insight and in providing recommendations for practice through looking at what has ‘worked’ for this group of boys.

This limitation focused on the small sample size in terms of the research participants. Five boys were included in the focus group from a class of 26 students. The boys were chosen specifically to represent the various areas of interest in the class. However, they are unable to give full opinions of the other class members. There was also the issue of the boys feeling they may not be able to express themselves in the group. However, the boys were comfortable with each other and generally able to express their opinions. There were times when some areas could not be fully explored due to the timeframe of the focus group interview. There was an advantage in having the smaller sample size as the interview process in terms of organisation was relatively short.

The difference in culture was also a potential limitation. I am Pākehā with a small percentage Māori and the boys had various percentages and affinities to Māori culture. I did not feel confident in adopting a Kaupapa Māori methodology but I did attempt to maintain the integrity of the boy's experiences and beliefs as young male Māori. Having not shared these life experiences, I have tried to portray these as accurately and sincerely as possible.

Several other disruptions presented themselves during the research collection period. The main issue for the group was getting the permission slips returned. Due to the age of the participants (15 and 16 years old), I required signed permission from both the student and their caregiver⁴. The delay in getting these returned meant that the interview was delayed by a week. I had initially decided to do two separate interviews, so this delay then became problematic as the school holidays meant I would have to do one interview in the last week of school, then another in the first week back. This was not ideal so I chose to do both after the holiday break.

The initial dates also clashed with the 'mock' exams for the students. The focus at this time was doing well in the exams and I did not want to interfere with study plans. By delaying until after the holidays the students were also beginning to focus their energies on the end of year NCEA exams. Therefore it was important to get the interviews complete as soon as possible at the start of the term. The

⁴ Appendix 3

timing ended up being a positive, as the students had the whole year to reflect on and were able to give more experiences from being involved in the class.

The final disruption was absenteeism. My initial list of boys chosen between the form teacher, Katitaki and myself had to be adapted as some of the students were unreliable at coming to school. This could have sabotaged my research if they did not turn up to the interview, so I decided to change two of the students.

Research findings

Introduction

This chapter outlines and presents the findings from the focus group interview. The findings are presented as narratives of each participant in order to thoroughly embody the character of each participant and their lived experiences. The excerpts from the interviews were chosen to best represent or highlight the themes through conversations had during the interview, as expressed by each participant. The boys end of year (2015) achievement and attendance data was also inserted into each individuals findings.

The participants

As outlined earlier, the participants were five students from the Māori boys form class. They have varying degrees of affinity with Māori culture, ranging from very little connection through to one student proudly wearing tā moko and speaks some te reo Māori. They also ranged academically, from one of the top students in the year group through to a student who spent Years 9 and 10 in the Assisted Learning Program (ALPs). All participants have experienced some success in sport and enjoy physical education as their favourite or close to favourite subject.

Tāne

Identities

Tāne is a confident young man with a strong sense of self. He contributes freely and has strong opinions, which he shares along with personal experiences. The others in the group listen to Tāne quite a lot and tend to agree with his statements. He has an element of leadership that exhibits at times.

Tāne was quick to acknowledge that there were certain behaviours associated with being successful at this school, such as being ‘good’. When asked what a successful students ‘looked like’ he said the name of the male Year 13 Cultural student leader, Wiremu (pseudonym), who is Māori. However, he later initiated a discussion around Wiremu acting like a Pākehā in order to be successful. His own views were:

It’s really who you are around how you act. If you are comfortable around them then you act like yourself. If you are around some white people, then you

have to change, how you talk and everything.

These variances in behaviour were so that others could see “*you’re not just a Māori naughty boy*”. Whilst he was clear that Māori students could be successful, the cost was that they needed to act less Māori. Interestingly he had named Tama Iti as a male Māori role model.

Tāne had experienced racial stereotypes at the school, and was able to articulate his experiences. In the week prior to the interview I had been at the school to collect permission slips from the boys and he had proudly shown me a photo of his new car on his phone. He explained how he had saved up for it and got his license the week prior, and flown to Auckland with his father to pick it up. He had already had much attention from others about the car.

Yeah that stuff kind of pisses me off. Yeah like people come up to me and laugh and like ‘you got a car?’ or something like that. And say “ooh where did you get that car from?” Stupid things like that they just cut straight to conclusions...yeah yeah yeah like stolen or something, shit like that, it just pisses me off.

Tāne had encountered another common gang stereotype, and he acknowledged that some people were just trying to be funny but that he didn’t think it was. “*Yeah like you can be rich as and you can be just a Māori and you still get ‘yeah you can be drug dealer when you’re older’*. In contrast to these statements, he was adamant that Māori and Māori culture are welcome in the school and he is comfortable being himself in the school environment. He goes so far as to say that in the school, Māori “*just dominate*”.

Tāne shares that when he is confronted with stereotypes, he reacts strongly at times, with threats of violence and bullying in order to get his own way or point across. The following examples of his responses demonstrate his frustrations.

When talking about getting others to do physical education Tāne says “*half my class. I just told them I would punch them in the face if they don’t do PE*” and “*search through their bags. If they say they don’t have their gear search their bags. If they don’t, chuck their bags on the roof.*”

These comments were in response to how he deals with others when there are stereotypical comments directed to him:

“Nah cos I tell them to jump on the rugby field”

“Tell them, one on one”

“Like are you gonna have a broken nose in a minute?”

These comments are actually reinforcing part of the stereotypical male Māori, as physical and aggressive.

Tāne repeated a few times through the interview that culture was linked to speaking Māori, so therefore he wasn't *“that cultural”*. However, he was the most animated when it came to talking about the school haka competition, especially when I mentioned I had seen some photos of him leading his house group. His response initially was light-hearted, saying he had done it *“for the hell of it, cos it was fun”*. This turned to more serious comments as he described Wiremu leaping in the air during the performance and how great his school house was. He was strongly encouraging of the other boys to get involved, and get up front to lead, especially next year since Wiremu was leaving school.

Although Tāne describes himself as ‘sporty cultural’, he didn't clearly articulate what sport means to him. He plays rugby and league, though has no aspirations as an elite athlete. PE is his favourite subject at school and he would like the school to include ‘sport’ as a subject, though he does not describe how this would look. He talked about doing the haka for his sport teams as *“way better”* than doing the school haka. This sense of unity and belonging was stronger in a smaller group, and his rugby league team is also predominantly Māori.

Achievement

Tāne has never been directly placed in my class but in my prior role I had assisted in several classes in which he was a participant. In this context I had seen him react and interact with staff poorly whenever he was confronted, and in the interview he had said that some teachers could be *“assholes”*. When talking about teachers he was very clear that his ideal teacher was Mrs Jones (pseudonym).

She was just so nice....and like when she knew you were just having a

bad day or something, she'd always like pick up on it. Just tell you to sit out or something.....yeah she actually like connected with her classroom, instead of some teachers just like...

It appeared that the relationship with his teacher directly affected the engagement he has in the subject. *"Yeah like even in PE, like you could love it but if you have like a real shit teacher that could change that."*

When asked if he considered himself academic, Tāne was pretty clear he was *"definitely not academic"*. He branded himself as low academic by announcing *"yeah nah I suck at all of that. ALPs (Assisted Learning Program) all the way"*. And yet, he was very clear that he staying to the end of Year 13 and planned to achieve NCEA level two and possibly three. He has future plans to attend an automotive course, a practical subject area that he enjoys at school. He did pass NCEA level one in 2015, this was despite a marked drop in attendance from his previous year, where attendance fell from 92% in 2014 to 78% in 2015.

Talking about the Māori achievement course in which they could get credits, he said *"oh, yeah nah that's cool"*. When another participant mentioned that students were only invited if they had a low credit count, Tāne was quick to counter the claim. *"No way, I've passed NCEA. I dunno why I'm in it."* He was somewhat defensive about his achievement and wanted to make it clear to the others that he was successfully passing the year.

The form class

Tāne highlighted two areas that he felt should have been included in the Māori boys form class, those being learning some te reo, and going on a class trip once a term. The boys had been told they would learn their pepeha and present this to their classmates, but this did not eventuate. *"Mr made us honestly freak out ay for weeks. That we had to bring them in and if we didn't we'd get punished. But we didn't end up even using them"*. He was confident in saying that he already knew it, and so it wasn't a 'big deal' for him to do it anyway. He did want to learn more te reo Māori and wanted this included in the form class if it continues next year.

His other area to improve was going on the planned class trips, and he was clear what these should and shouldn't be like. *"A trip is not staying at school on the*

weekend, that is not cool. A trip is going to redwoods". The Redwoods trip was a one-day mountain biking trip that I had guided the boys on in term two. For Tāne this was a new experience and one that he thoroughly enjoyed.

His future involvement depended on whether the promises could be followed through on. He suggested that I *"tell them to keep to their word what they said, from the beginning"*.

Daniel

Identities

Daniel had a varied and rich sporting background and now describes golf as his *"number one sport"*. He has had, and taken, many opportunities in sport and was in the school's Sports Performance Institute⁵ until this year. He advocates for regular exercise, outside of sport, and believes it should be part of the school day, *"and it should be twice a day, getting everyone active...do morning and in the middle of the day."* His academic journey in the school has been relatively straight forward, though Daniel does not give any impression of being an achiever in this area. His attitude to school seems to be something he 'has to do', but gaining a high level of achievement is not overly sought.

Daniel attributes success to certain traits in a student in the school in this way, describing successful as those with *"bags are heavy as. Our bags are light, just full of sports gear."* He also removes himself from being a successful student by referring to 'them' and 'us'.

Daniel has either experienced less, or is possibly less willing to share, his incidences of racial stereotyping. He listens intently to other participants experiences and agrees with many of their statements, adding comments such as *"they say something like "Chur cuz" and you just look at them like...?"* 'they' refers to those who make stereotypical or racial comments, in particular reference to slang language. In moving classes, Daniel had experienced some comments from others.

Cos everyone goes like "how come you went in that class" all the dumbasses.

⁵ Coast College has a Sports Performance Institute for Years 9 and 10. This is a form class of like-minded sporting and academic focussed students.

I was like oh what? But once I got to know everyone I realised they just being stereotypical and stuff.

It became clear he does not position himself as a ‘typical Māori’ in the school, but definitely sees himself as sporting.

There are tensions between Daniel opinion of himself as ‘not cultural’ and his considerable level of knowledge. This includes knowing his pepeha and his obvious confidence in tikanga that was evident through prior kapa haka group participation. He expressed to his house leaders that he wanted to lead the haka for the school competition, and did so on the day. He encouraged others in the interview group to get fully involved and thinks that the whole school should get into it. *“Yeah if you get into it its so much better than being up the back hiding”*.

Daniel has experienced the haka in a different context, for a sports team, and described the different feeling that occurred for him. *“Oh yeah when you do one for a rugby game it’s so cool...specially when you get real close to each other and you just start at each other.”* He is proud of his culture and willingly admits to this but still does not feel it’s a big part of his identity. Daniel seems to have potential to achieve a balance in terms of culture, sport and academic success, but is unwilling to put in the effort to do so, as *“it takes too much work”*.

Achievement

Daniel feels that teachers have a big influence on academic success. He added comments such as; *“It depends who the teachers are as well”*; *“Depends what teachers you have”*; *“Like I used to love maths but this year its just gone off me cos of the teacher I’ve had”*; *“See if people had the right teachers they could pass the year so easy”*. He does not articulate what a ‘good’ teacher would be like, but is very clear that his academic success is linked to the relationship with the teacher. His engagement has fallen dramatically in one subject, and another subject area, English, is somewhere he says he *“just wants to go there”* because of the teacher. It is now his favourite subject, even surpassing physical education.

Daniel does not describe himself as academic but aspires to stay to the end of Year 13 and gain NCEA level three. So far he has achieved well in NCEA but

does not consider that he is overly successful at school. He has some ideas on how the school could better support young male Māori to achieve academically.

Give us more opportunities...like if kids need help studying or things like that or like tutoring, they can help you with that... they should get a teacher to come around to all the people who are struggling in school. In one year group. And have one for each year group.

Daniel passed NCEA level one in 2015 with no endorsement. His attendance over his years at secondary school remains consistently over 90%.

The form class

Daniel describes his inclusion in the form class as “*fun*” and as “*way better (with all boys)*”, but interestingly neglects to recognise being all Māori boys as a factor. He would like to have learnt some Māori language as part of the form class, though says he remembers his pepeha “*from Intermediate and stuff*”. He also agreed with the others that he would like to have gone to the local gym as a group. Daniel is critical of some aspects of the form class, and he thought the learning of Māori language and going to the gym should have been left in for the year. However, Daniel was quick to remind the group that they had done the ‘trip per term’ as was promised, but that some people just had not attended. His highlight was the mountain biking trip to Rotorua, “*yeah that was so cool.*” He says the word “*fun*” to describe many things, and clearly needs to be enjoying himself to be engaged and successful in something.

Daniel insinuates that the teachers seemed to have a deficit expectation of members of the class, and this clearly offended him. The main reason he believed they weren’t going to the gym as expected was that they had other school-wide form class tasks to get through during the year. These included pastoral care and also completing the Dreamcatcher⁶ program. Daniel felt they could complete these tasks as well as do extra activities but that the teachers did not believe they were capable of this.

⁶ Dreamcatcher is an online careers program that all senior classes are complete, specifically looking at future university and career options.

Harry

Identities

Harry would generally be considered a successful student by others (his peers and teachers) as he is very capable academically and has spent his junior years at the school in the Sports Performance Institute. He has represented the school in several sports, specialising in water polo and volleyball, and also recently won the school cross-country. What is interesting is that, while others view him as successful, this is not reflected in level of confidence to engage in the first part of the focus group interview where he instead, remains quiet and offers comments only if directly asked. This is possibly because Harry, an observer by nature, is someone who chooses his words carefully and wisely, but is unafraid to be critical.

His own idea of what success means in this school is not based only in one area, and thinks the school does a good job of celebrating success across many different arenas. He attributes this to the student councils and a genuine culture of success. He mentions that the broad range of student's councils offered is really good for supporting all areas of the school and in making everyone feel connected.

Harry speaks about himself as both academic and sporting, but *“not cultural at all... [but] I did kapa haka in year 6. Ra whakangahau”*. Given that Harry does not identify himself as Māori and acknowledges that physically he does not look very Māori, it is not overly surprising that he also tries to distance himself. His view of the stereotypical Māori is...

Hangs out next to the... in between the canteen, in the umm (laughter from the others) ...it's just the majority, you walk past and it's like oh crap and you're just passing the rugby ball between you.

He acknowledged that he was not used to be culturally typecast as a Māori, so was surprised by comments made to him about joining the 'Māori Boys Class'. As he discussed ...*“I got heaps of shit...everyone said I was gonna be like a drug dealer or something just like taking the piss, like that kind of stereotype”*.

Harry disclosed to the group that he had wanted to lead his house group in the school haka competition. This gained a lot of attention from the other boys, who actively encouraged him to put up his hand to do so. He admitted he hadn't told

anyone except his best friend, so his frustrations from the recent haka competition were apparent.

It was so bad, such a joke. We have this formation and then like all the year 9s and 10s go to the back and it slowly comes up like this so they are all trying to hide behind each other and its only like half the house doing it. Like it doesn't change how you do it but it just ruins the whole atmosphere...we came last it was terrible. Everyone would just leave for that period.

These frustrations seemed to stem more from a lack of leadership and control, rather than a desire to express himself culturally.

So while being Māori is not central to Harry's sense of identity, sporting success is. He has been involved in various sports his whole life and has had success in individual and team sports, though has not played rugby or league like the rest of the group. He is critical of his physical education option this year and feels the practical content, rather than the teacher, is creating some disengagement for him. *"I just can't stand the games we do in general. They are so bad"*. He has strong opinions that some activities have not worked out and he is clearly agitated that some aspects of the course weren't right for him. He clearly wanted more of a sport and exercise focus, rather than the minor games they were playing that highlighted the variance in skill between class members.

Achievement

Harry is a high achiever academically and becomes animated in discussing potential improvements for the school. These included *"making long two-hour periods"* for learning, and also *"not backing up subjects such as science and math so my brain could 'recover'"*. He was very clear that students needed more individual support to enable success, and that assembly and class notices were not the best place to disseminate information to teenagers. *"Tell students individually, cos it gets put in the notices 'come to a tutorial' no one will go. You need to come talk to them, show them"*. Harry is critical of the hierarchy of subject areas in the school and feels all subjects should be accessible to all students. He specifically speaks about an automotive subject that he wanted to take this year because he is very interested in it. However, the subject was a 103 subject, which at this school is either made up of Unit Standards, or offers very few Achievement Standard

credits. He was very “put off” by the 103 brand and thinks subjects could attract a range of students by “*if they just changed the workbook so like not necessarily more bookwork but just better bookwork*”. In his view this could cater for more students.

Harry achieved his goal of getting NCEA level one with an Excellence endorsement in 2015. His attendance in secondary school has hovered around 90% for every year to date.

The form class

“*We did not learn any Māori*” and the lack of commitment to do so as part of the form class experience was a major frustration for Harry. While he had focused on learning his pepeha as promised (or as ‘required’) Harry did not feel like he had learnt this for himself, but he did try and find out “*a little bit but not much*”.

His experiences of being in the class had contributed to him become much more aware of the negative stereotypes that Māori students encounter and resulted in him developing a sense of pride in being Māori, and therefore for standing up for his culture. Likely this is the first time in his life that he has experienced this behaviour and attitude directed at him and he has attempted to develop his own strategies in dealing with confronting statements or negative beliefs. This is illustrated as he described how he now responds to stereotypical comments... “*you just cuss them out if they say anything*”.

Nikora

Identities

Nikora exudes confidence and sense of being comfortable with himself. He has several tā moko that cover his arm and leg which he proudly shows later in the interview. He contributes consistently through the interview, giving clear impressions of his own experiences in the school. Although I have never taught Nikora, I have heard him described by a colleague as one of the most naturally talented young athletes he has seen.

In describing success Nikora believes the school finds it important to “*believe in yourself*”. To him a successful student in the school, has a large school bag “*they walk around with their bags like full...of books. A suitcase*”. This reflects an

opinion that a successful student is academic and needs books to be this way, and that this is not part of his identity. He is adamant that the school celebrates success in all areas. He claims that a successful Māori student does not look and act the same as other successful students in the school, but sometimes they do *“to show you are responsible”*. Nikora believes that young Māori male in the school must change the way they act in order to fit the model of the ideal successful student.

Nikora believes that a typical Māori boy *“looks good. Yeah he has to!”*, this impression of the way Māori boys should present themselves is agreed with by the others. The group has a discussion around a typical male Māori in the school, describing them as carrying a ball, hanging at the canteen and carrying music, Nikora says, *“yeah, that’s me.”* Nikora believes that he is a typical Māori boy, and admitted that he thinks others therefore perceive him as irresponsible. He expresses this with a sense of resignation, like it’s a factor he can’t change.

He also had strong opinions on what the uniform in the school should look like, so that everyone could look *“way more slick and tidy”*. Presentation is important to Nikora, who is wearing his top button done up, with dress shoes on and hair very tidily done. He believes the uniform should be *“number ones”* for everyone all the time, including blazers and ties. He maintains a gendered approach in describing the girls new uniform, expressing they *“should have skirts that come all the way down here (indicating ankles)...and those stocking things underneath.”*

Interestingly, independence is a factor that Nikora would like increased for him and other students in the school. He believes there should be a full gym at the school for students to use whenever they can, in their free time or if they are having a ‘bad’ day or lesson. He calls this having “more rights” and thinks it would help students through the day. He tells the group about some Australian schools that have sports such as rugby league as school subjects, and his immersion in rugby league is significant. He also mentions that Bodene Thompson, a rugby league player, is the only male Māori role model he can think of, reflecting the groups inability to think of non sporting male Māori role models.

Culturally Nikora is the most connected in the group and is confident in knowing his pepeha and some te reo. He is openly proud of his culture, evidenced by the way he shows me his tā moko and is clearly passionate when speaking of the

haka. Interestingly he talks about being in the school kapa haka group as almost a form of punishment or bribery to him, suggesting “*yeah I had to do kapa haka or I was gonna get expelled from school.*” This was likely in an attempt to engage him, or to use his culture as the ‘hook’ back into belonging in the school. It is unclear if this worked for Nikora, or if there were other factors at play. He was proud of leading his house for the school haka competition and also proud of the contribution his whole house had made. He listens to others talk about negative experiences with the competition and seems disappointed that not everyone got involved.

He was irritated when claiming that some students in the school choose to make stereotypical comments to him or around him. In particular he describes how flippant some other students are when using the types of informal language he prefers when he suggests “*they mock our language!...They say like ‘ow’ and ‘cuz’*”. His reference to this colloquial language seems to lay claim to it actually being part of the Māori language. This ‘us’ and ‘them’ approach seemed to be normal to Nikora. However, he was absolute in believing that being Māori and being successful as a Māori male was acceptable and celebrated by the school. He felt his own connection to culture was well supported in the school environment and he was supported in his learning as a Māori student.

Achievement

The only time the feeling of confidence slips is when Nikora talks about his academic ability. He spent his junior years in the Assisted Learning Program and readily admits he may only achieve NCEA level one. This contrasts with his desire to stay and attend school until the end of Year 13. After encouragement from the group he concedes that he may be able to achieve NCEA level two, However, he would like to achieve this “the easy way”, though doesn’t divulge what this would entail. Nikora is potentially on track to achieve his goal of NCEA level two by the end of Year 13. He achieved 54 credits in 2015, and this was with only 65% attendance. This attendance mirrors his 2014 statistic and is a strong indicator of his current lack of engagement with the academic side of school.

Nikora seems stuck in a negative space when it comes to his own academic achievement. He makes a comment that “*I suck at Math and English and shit*”,

and that *“I wish you could like borrow some credits off the bros”*. He admits he does not strongly identify with the academic side of school, and is *“more of a cultural sporty guy”*.

Teachers are important to Nikora and he agrees with Tāne that Mrs Jones was his favourite, *“yeah she developed a strong relationship”*. When Tāne was talking about Mrs Jones, Nikora turned to me and said *“don’t get her fired ow”*, indicating the possibility that talking about her could be harmful to her position. He was fiercely protective and loyal toward her. He also talked about the effort teachers put in to ensure culture is accepted in the school. When talking about correctly pronouncing Māori words he said: *“Yeah like the teachers always try, like Mr Smith (pseudonym), perfect example, he tries.”*

The form class

Nikora is very keen to stay in the form class and his only condition being that they continue to do trips and stick to “their word” regarding promises. He sees the class as giving him support though says that no teacher would make him want to come to school if he didn’t want to.

Of the group Nikora is the closest to realising a dream of being a professional athlete. He plays rugby league and has been spotted by scouts from an NFL team. This has resulted in him being invited to attend a training camp in Australia over summer. He animatedly tells me the process it will take for him to get from the training camp to selection in a team. The major issue for Nikora is he is unsure if he can maintain a high level of behaviour required to make the team as he notes *“I gotta stay outta trouble first. (I’m) too naughty. Not good enough”*. He makes it clear it will be a struggle to realise his dream with so many other temptations in his way.

Jai

Identities

Jai takes time to warm to the interview process and is measured in his approach when contributing to the conversation. Academically he is the standout of the group and is one of the highest ranking of the whole year group, though he is humble about his achievements. This success has gained momentum over the last

two years, with a marked shift in attitude from Year 9. At the end of 2015, Jai achieved NCEA level three with an Excellence endorsement. His attendance increased in 2015 to 92%, reflective of a change in positive attitude to learning and achieving.

Jai does not contribute much information about his sporting interests. He listens and agrees at times to some ideas from others, such as the school needing a gym, but seems content that his sporting success is not clearly linked to school. He mentions rugby in the context of doing a pre game haka, but does not talk at all about the game itself. Jai thoroughly enjoys physical education, asserting it as his favourite subject and this appears to contribute to his belief that it should be compulsory all through school.

Jai is possibly conflicted in his cultural identity, contrasting “*yeah I’m definitely not cultural*”, with saying that he is proud of “*just being Māori*”. Jai is contradictory at times by removing himself from stereotypical type views of a Māori male, but then admitting “*you feel more comfortable, more comfortable around Māori boys yeah.*” He appears to have had less exposure to Māori culture than some others in the group.

Interestingly, though Jai has a high NCEA credit count already, he found it unfair that he was unable to participate in the Māori Achievement course, offered to some others in the Māori boys form class. Jai saw this as an opportunity to learn some tikanga and the te reo he had earlier been promised, and helped him to identify further with his culture through knowledge. He also suggested to the group that leading the school haka should be a class goal for next year.

Jai viewed a successful student as a “*good boy*”, a status that anyone can achieve if they just “*put their mind to it*”. In Year 9 Jai had some behavioural issues and his teachers were concerned he was not reaching his academic potential. His own shift in attitude during Year 10 had led him to develop better relationships with teachers and his academic grades began to soar. This shift may have included removing himself from Māori stereotypes somewhat, and he admits that he has felt ‘average’ at times when confronted with stereotypical behaviour and

comments from others.

Jai raised an interesting topic when talking about male Māori role models. He suggested that the only Māori male role models were from sporting contexts, and that the media didn't often show all successful Māori academics. *"Nah they don't really show them in the media much. It's just sporting"*. This stemmed from the boys only being able to identify sporting role models, and mostly rugby and league players. His belief was that it was media driven, and they simply did not well represent male Māori success in academic or cultural endeavours. This astute perspective displayed his sense of social justice, and that it was not always an 'even playing field'.

Achievement

His thoughtful, academic nature has led him to contemplate a way the school could set up a system to better support student learning, *"like there could be a sheet going round, you could put your name down. Book a time"* to access a one on one tutor, and ensure there was *"mentoring and tutoring available"*. Although his own academic success is likely secure, Jai noted that he would readily accept any extra support.

What was surprising is that even though Jai is academically achieving in terms of NCEA credits, he was not overly clear on assessment systems and structures and what this meant for his 'transcript'. He regularly asked questions to clarify what subjects we are talking about, and in doing so made it evident that he hadn't understood the difference between Unit Standards and Achievement Standards in NCEA. He chose a subject Automotive, lamenting *"yeah I took it and didn't realise you know what the unit standards were. I just got told but I had no idea what they were but I regret that now."* For Jai this was due to having fewer credits available to him and also that he was not challenged by the work, even though he was interested in it.

The future is clearly a focus for Jai and he is keen to discuss University life. He is openly curious about the structure of a University day and considers the cities he would be able to live in. He also emphatically states that schools should not have uniforms, as Universities do not. Jai's current reality appears to be reasonably entrenched in academic success, and focusing on how to achieve his future goals.

This currently excludes formal participation in cultural activities, though his sense of pride in being Māori is apparent.

The form class

Jai appears relatively anxious initially but his sense of justice overrides this as he makes it clear he would have liked to do things in the Māori boys form class that they were “*supposed to do*”. The most important omission to him seems to be that they hadn’t been to the local gym, stating “*we were supposed to do stuff. Yeah go to the gym every day...yeah but when we do PE we should go to the gym, that’s what we got told*”. This aligns with the other participants points of view, where they would like to remain in the class but strongly feel they should have access to the early promised activities.

Chapter summary

While each of the boys perspectives differ, there were several commonalities that are important to consider. These included the occurrences of stereotypical behaviours, the desire to have access to te reo Māori, tikianga and other cultural opportunities in the school, the importance of teachers, the lack of male Māori role models, and the desire to complete form class activities. These will be examined further in the discussion section following.

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions. Further excerpts from the interviews were chosen to best represent or highlight the conversations had during the interview. The discussion seeks to answer the questions:

- How the culture of the school, including cultural stereotypes, impacts on male Māori learner self-concept?
- Has the effect of an all Māori boys form class created an increased sense of belonging and engagement?

Being a male Māori at Coast College

As the literature (Marie et al., 2008; Flavell, 2015; Bishop, 2009) highlights, being a male Māori in the New Zealand education system is fraught with barriers to success. It is not unexpected that young male Māori would develop their own strategies to overcome these in order to create some sense of belonging and success within a school.

Stereotypes

All five Māori boys were confronted by deficit stereotyping as part of every day school life. This is evidenced in how Tāne described the flack he got when buying a new car, or how Harry, Jai and Daniel were judged for opting to be in the Māori boys class as opposed to the sports performance one. The implications of this type of stereotyping reaches as far as forging the self-identity of these boys. Self-perception is created through the repetitive and confronting situations that male Māori are constantly contending with through their lives. The cross-case analysis found that these young male Māori had each developed strategies to help them cope with these situations, however, these were often steeped in threats of violence or threatening behaviour. In doing so they are reinforcing the very stereotypes they are attempting to overcome. The findings indicated that these coping mechanisms fortified existing stereotypes as male Māori only reacting physically, rather than helping to reduce incidences from occurring.

According to the Ministry of Education, “there is no doubt that Māori students face a certain amount of discrimination in schools, mainly in the form of teacher or school discrimination and racism from other students” (2001, p. 16). There is an indication that teachers need to be the initiators of changed way of behaving, that they are required to check their own set of beliefs and be honest around the presence of racist stereotypes that may be occurring. Even if this racism is not explicit, it can be in the form of deficit thinking, of lowered teacher expectations and ignoring lack of student achievement as acceptable. Erueti and Palmers’ (2014) “physical/intellectual dichotomy” (p.1063) has long helped to limit the success of male Maori and appears to have contributed to lowering teacher and student expectations in terms of academic success. Teachers need to expect the highest possible achievement from all students, regardless of their culture, and work hard to suppress any negative racial stereotypes from students or colleagues.

Being Māori is not always celebrated in the school community, except in what appears to be at times tokenistic ways. This presents certain barriers for young male Māori when creating their own cultural identity. The participants lived experiences as young male Māori were very different in terms of their links to Māori culture, and this affected their ability to negotiate this part of their identity. An overt expression of Māori culture in the school is the school haka competition, which is performed annually in the four schools houses. Several of the boys had been fully involved with their house and were proud of the efforts that had been made, but Harry was very disappointed and somewhat angry about the effort his house had put in. Performing a haka is a form of representation, to represent the people and community with pride and solidarity. Unfortunately a school haka may not always capture this same sense of belonging as for example a rugby team or cultural group would. In its current state the school haka competition is more about the ‘competition’ than any strong link to cultural connection, tikanga or belonging. If some of the student body do not feel this sense of belonging or full inclusion they will feel unable and unwilling to participate. The sense of coming together and expressing themselves in this overtly cultural manner can also make some students uncomfortable and the continuation of normalising these type of cultural events is important to this process. The normalising of the school haka in terms of a competition may not be ideal in the current format, where there is a

danger it becomes more tokenistic than beneficial. Whitinui (2008, 2010) claims the positive benefits to Māori students who are involved in kapa haka groups, but the benefits from a whole school haka competition would be diluted in the least.

Involvement in the school kapa haka group was linked to a sense of coercion and negative consequence.

Yeah I got forced to be into the kapa haka this year. (Tāne)

*Yeah I had to do kapa haka or I was gonna get expelled from school.
(Nikora)*

Yeah they told me I couldn't play league unless I done kapa haka. (Tāne)

Whitinui's (2008) findings that indicate participation in kapa haka as having positive flow on impact of other areas of schooling would rely on the feeling of belonging to this group. If there is a feeling of coercion, even if this is only sensed by the boys, the positive by-products of participation are less likely to occur.

These forms of cultural expression are explicit, while cultural connection can be much more intrinsic than becoming involved in practical activities. Bevan-Brown (1992, 2005) also points to a "gifted" Māori as having a culturally valued area and also having the ability to give back in some way of this skill. In this sense the boys taking leadership roles in doing the haka, and other suggestions such as mentoring are a natural way for the boys to give back to their culture and enhance their own personal connection. Schools have the potential to be a forum for Māori to showcase their culture, to create opportunity for young Māori to show how powerful their cultural identity is, and in turn to challenge negative social constructs that linger, around being Māori.

Role models

The presence of strong male role models for young Māori is crucial in reducing deficit type stereotypical attitudes and beliefs. The role modelling from the Kaupapa Māori student leader Wiremu has had a strong influence on the interview participants and there is little doubt there has been the same effect on others in the school. All the participants viewed Wiremu as being successful in every realm of the school life, including sporting, cultural and academic whilst he

maintained a strong leadership presence as well as positive relationships with teachers. The boys were aware of the male Māori teachers in the school and attribute much of the success of culture endeavours within the school to them. They named several male Māori teachers who have been a large influence on the positive culture in the school. For these students teachers who make an effort to pronounce Māori words and student names correctly help the participants feel valued as Māori. This type of behaviour from staff is in response to the awareness created from being involved in the *Kia Eke Panuku* programme, where the focus is on valuing Māori language in enabling Māori to achieve and excel as Māori (Ministry of Education, 2013).

In contrast, there appeared to be a lack of positive Māori role models for these boys beyond the school gates and sporting contexts. In line with Hokowhitu's (2003a, 2003b, 2004) work, there is a danger that these boys only view Māori success as linked to being physically able. While the students blamed the media for not presenting with other options (e.g. authors or artists), their views reflect an enduring societal issue in New Zealand, where successful male Māori are predominantly represented as the 'physical being' ((Hokowhitu, 2003a; Hokowhitu, 2003b; Hokowhitu, 2004) reinforced by media through television, movie and online coverage. McRae, MacFarland, Webber and Cookson-Cox (2010) identify a lack of role models as a factor in male Māori becoming disengaged at school. Whilst Coast College clearly has male Māori teachers who are potential role models, perhaps there is a need to highlight this more often, and also to introduce other role models within the school through guest speakers or mentors. The mere presence of male role models may not be enough if young male Māori cannot find attributes in those people that make them strive to be better.

The damage done by movies such as "Once were warriors" and the creation of characters like Jake the muss, portrayed as the savage Māori, has only worked to reinforce the negative social construct of the male Māori (Hokowhitu, 2003, 2004). There were several times through the interview that violence was mentioned as a way to solve problems. Tāne mentioned that if people in his class didn't bring PE gear, he told them he "*would punch them in the face if they don't do PE*". His second idea was to "*search through their bags. If they say they don't*

have their gear search their bags. If they don't, chuck their bags on the roof". These expressions of violence and physicality feed the stereotype they are working to overcome. Even Harry, who prior to being in the form class professed to having no cultural connection, was now using aggressive responses to cultural slurs from others, *"you just cuss them out if they say anything"*. This begs the question as to whether the behaviour is learned and expected, and if so how does the school culture reinforce these behaviours? The students are likely learning this from peers who are integral in helping to form responses to incidences of racial discrimination they have encountered their whole lives.

Trying to be successful

Academic success is valued over sport and culture at Coast College. Despite the boys expressing their opinion about multiple areas of success being valued, there was still a strong feeling that a successful student was academic. A successful student had heavy bags because they carried so many books. All participants felt they were not included in the group with heavy bags, rather their own bags were either non-existent or full of sports gear. Jai included himself here, even though he is among the highest performing academic students of his year group.

McRae, MacFarlane, Webber and Cookson-Cox (2010) found that successful Māori students work hard to fight against negative stereotypes. When discussing their perceptions of what a typical male Māori looked and acted like in the school, it became clear that Harry did not wish to identify as Māori in this way. His description of a typical male Māori at the school is:

Hangs out next to the... in between the canteen, and the other it's just the majority, you walk past and it's like "oh crap" and you're just passing the rugby ball between you.

In this sentence Harry appears to disassociate himself from being typecast as a typical male Māori in the school. He speaks of the male Māori as 'other', specifically acknowledging some of the other boys as "you". This fluidity in cultural connection supports Erueti and Palmer (2014), where feelings of cultural inferiority created by colonial constructs have led male Māori to deny their inclusion within the culture at times. This statement contrasts with others he makes, which include him expressing increased cultural inclusion through moving

into the form class. This is an expression of young Māori males feeling they must be fluid in their culture, an ask not required of their Pākehā counterparts who do not adapt in this way to ‘fit in’.

The boys contrasted what a successful student in the school looks and acts like versus a successful Māori student and generally agreed that they were not the same. While Wiremu, the Year 13 cultural leader, was acknowledged as being a successful student in their view. Interestingly, Tāne claimed he achieved this by “*acting Pākehā*”. Describing Wiremu in this way affirms Webbers (2012) findings, that successful Māori students are able to be flexible in their culture, yet as the year progressed he showed he was actually not achieving academically, so perhaps he was indeed playing the part of Pākehā in order to appear successful. Although Wiremu strongly identifies as Māori and is fully involved in cultural pursuits within the school, he is also aware of the requirements to succeed academically in the education system. This is perhaps the parody of the successful male Māori, that in order to be successful he must act Pākehā. At the time of the interview the boys were unaware that Wiremu was actually not going to pass the year and returned in 2016 to gain his final NCEA level three credits.

Male Māori adapt to the point of discarding their culture in order to be successful, and what it means to be ‘good’ also shapes students sense of what it is to be successful at Coast College.

It’s really who you are around how you act. If you are comfortable around them then you act like yourself. If you are around some white people then you have to change, how you talk and everything. (Tāne)

Is that to... why is that? To fit in ?. (me)

I don’t know. Make a good impression. (Tāne)

To show you are responsible. (Nikora)

You’re not just a naughty Māori boy. (Tāne)

The concept of seeing themselves as ‘naughty Māori boys’ was generally accepted in the group, and appeared to make them all a little uncomfortable to admit. Even though the boys talk otherwise (i.e. that they feel success culturally

sporting etc.), success in this environment still defaults back to being academic and also at least acting Pākehā, if not actually being Pākehā. The association is that being Māori is to be ‘naughty’ and to be successful in the school a student needs to be ‘good’. Although they appear to be confident that multiple areas are celebrated as successful in the school, they still have a default view of a successful student as a Pākehā, book carrying, ‘good’ boy. The ability of the participants to adapt to situations, or act to Pākehā, highlights the lack of support for the boys to succeed as Māori, where students must deny their own culture to be to be viewed as and feel truly successful within the school. Ultimately Māori are unable to succeed as Māori, only as a culturally flexible individual, something we do not ask of successful Pākehā in the school.

Success in this school is viewed as varied and achievable in many realms by these boys. School culture was examined in terms of whether it allowed and enabled Māori students to feel successful, regardless of whether this was academic, sporting or cultural, or if success was more highly valued by the school in just one area. Regardless of the actions of staff, it was important to see this as interpreted through the eyes of the students. All participants felt that the school valued and celebrated the three focus elements equally, and there were multiple opportunities for success. However, the inclusion of the character trait of being ‘good’, was a limiting factor in everyone’s ability to be an overall successful student. Success is achievable in terms of sport, culture and grades, but a constant barrier to this is having to maintain a high level of behaviour.

An area of acceptable success for young male Māori is sport and physical activity. Sport is a powerful tool in engagement and is deemed necessary, even non-negotiable in their daily lives, feeding the Hokowhitu’s stereotypical ‘physical being’ (2003a, 2003b, 2004). They all considered themselves successful at sport. They had strong opinions on what should be included in the school day and ‘why’, including the benefits of increased oxygen flow to the brain and therefore heightened concentration through the day. Exercise and sport was seen as a form of relaxation and balance to the day and a key link between the boys. Sport as a community, creates a sense of success and belonging (Skinner et al., 2008) and this is further entrenched for the male Māori, with cultural practices that are prevalent and acceptable in sport e.g. the haka. Erueti and Palmer (2014) identify

the increase in ethno-cultural identity in Māori athletes when encountered with culturally synonymous values, symbols and rituals. New Zealand sporting teams are often emblazoned with Māori symbols or representations, such as the “Chiefs” rugby team using warrior type symbols. Belonging to sporting communities for male Maori seems accepted and almost assumed, and identity is often created around this.

At Coast College senior physical education classes are popular with Māori students, and all of the focus group participants are in one of these classes. The creation of the all-male Māori form class was an attempt to further support these students but having a focus on the physical, in terms of rewards and extra activities, is likely to be reinforcing early stereotypes from the British. The colonised perspective that Māori are physical beings is built upon through continuing to offer rewards for the physical male Māori body.

Herewini, Tiakiwai and Hawksworth (2012) maintains that to be a truly successful Māori student, excellence in the two worlds (Māori and Pākehā) must be achieved. This seems a lofty goal and the presence of those who have achieved this, such as the current members of the staff who are male Māori, is integral to acknowledging that this is possible. Being a male Māori in the current Education system is fraught with challenges and it seems only those who can successfully adapt to the Pākehā world truly succeed. The lack of equity in educational outcomes for Māori are mirrored in the inequities we place on them by requiring them to adapt and succeed in two worlds.

The role of the school

There are multiple barriers that must be overcome in order for male Māori to achieve success in the school. Academic achievement in this school is celebrated and students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and set achievable goals. Jai and Harry are both high achievers academically and initiated a discussion around ways the school could improve the path to success in this area of academia for young male Māori. This included a better system of getting information out to students, and also the introduction of one on one tutoring or mentoring. The ideas they had were robust and constructive, with clear objectives to make things easier and more accessible for students in the school. The inclusion

of an extra staff member per year group, who's role it was to individually assist and get to know each student affirms Webbers focus on the importance of using identity and knowledge for students to see "how they belong and their achievement aspirations" (2012, p.21). Currently the boys feel the lack of individual attention does not support them in reaching academic potential, and in supporting them in negotiating various issues they may have around the school.

Teachers role in supporting Māori to be Māori

Teachers are a defining factor in how young male Māori view themselves and achieve 'success'. For young male Māori to achieve academically positive relationships with their teachers is essential (Bishop et al., 2009, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007a). This was reinforced by Daniel who suggested "if people had the right teachers they could pass the year so easy". For Tāne and Nikora their best teacher, the one they enjoyed the most, formed positive relationships and 'connected' with all the students in her classroom. In contrast participants talked about how a 'bad' teacher could make them disengage with a subject, primarily based on the lack of positive relationship between student and teacher.

The participants in this research mirrored the responses of the students in the research of *Te Kotahitanga* (2007), all noting the importance of relationships to Māori students and learning. Teachers remain the pivot point around which engagement lies. A good or bad relationship with a teacher can be the difference between engagement and complete disengagement. Achievement is strongly linked to engagement, and the boys also indicated a strong desire to attend when a teacher engages with them. The concept of whakawhānaungatanga, or reciprocal learning relationships as being key to engagement of Māori learners is integral to the programme. In particular *Kia Eke Panuku* (2008) seems underpinned by the concept of whakawhānaungatanga, where positive and genuine learning experiences are formed through relational trust between all participants. Anecdotal evidence from the boys suggests the relationships they have with the teachers are fundamental to their engagement but there was little evidence that this directly transferred to increased achievement.

Nikora and Tāne did not identify as successful academically but had identified that the smaller classes they were involved in during the junior school had helped to forge better relationships with teachers as their time in class was more likely to be one on one. However, this did not culminate in them feeling more successful academically, rather they felt valued as they were.

Nah, I suck at math's and English and shit. (Nikora)

Yeah nah I suck at all of that. ALPs all the way. (Tāne)

ALPs all the way. (Nikora)

ALPs is the Assisted Learning Program that is for the students who have been identified as needing extra support in their learning. Tāne and Nikora were using it as a 'brand', or to show they were classified as less able academically. The lower ability classes at Coast school have a disproportionate number of Māori students, which is concerning and an area of focus for the school.

Planning for the future was important to the focus group participants. Despite a range of academic ability, all boys were determined they were staying at school until the end of Year 13, though both Nikora and Tāne felt their achievement would be to NCEA level two. The other 3 boys were aiming for NCEA level three. All boys expressed their desire to achieve whatever their secondary school goal was. Whitinui (2008) found that preparing for the future was a key area that young Māori focus on, and these boys reinforce this view. They had quite clear ideas about their future after school and see school as a vehicle to their future, and an integral part of why they attend is to secure these futures. To support these students in their various career paths is surely a challenge for the school and there is currently an indication that this could be improved. The boys describe wanting better ways of gaining information about future careers and general information to assist them. Again for the boys this stems from a lack of individual attention and points to them requiring more support from the schools teachers and leaders.

Student access to subject choices

Māori students are disproportionately represented in 'practical' subjects and those that have lower expectations for student success in NCEA. From the anecdotal evidence the boys produced, it would seem the teachers in this school are not

viewed as having deficit thinking, perhaps it is rather some subject areas are in a deficit position, merely due to their ranking within the subjects. These subjects are possibly loaded with a disproportionate number of Māori students as they have 'failed' in the Pākehā education system up to now and so have been 'dumped' on subjects such as PE. This could also be said of many of the technology subjects, which are often branded as 102, or 103 and are lowered down the subject hierarchy.

Student access to subjects is also restricted. This can be due to timetabling, entry requirements and often academic streaming. The participants strongly felt there should be access to all subjects for all students. There are limitations on lower ability classes in getting into more 'academic' subjects, as well as the higher ability students who are wanting to follow their interests and do subjects such as Automotive. Participants from both groups felt this was unjust and that learning could be catered to their needs within any subject. In years 9 and 10 there are opportunities for students to access these courses and then this is denied them by restrictive school and department policies in their senior years.

As discussed by Brown (2015) students are often catered for well in a secondary school if they are gifted in a sporting sense and these boys have been afforded multiple opportunities in this area. For the participants sport remains perhaps the most integral part of their identity and is a common link between them all. Hokowhitu (2008) describes sport as "positive racism", as an area that young Māori can be channelled in order to express themselves. However, this in turn feeds the stereotype of Māori as purely physical beings. Hokowhitu (2003a, 2003b, 2004) had earlier explored the acceptance of male Māori as being good at sport, as it did not conflict with the historic image of Māori as savage and physical. Societally we accept Māori as being 'good' physically, but this can also work to confine the acceptable spaces that Māori can be successful within. Teacher perception may also be jaded in terms of a compartmentalising Māori students as good at practical subjects, and reinforcing this limitation. The popular perception of physical education and other practical subjects as 'easy' further entrenches that male Māori are physical beings and most capable in less demanding practical subjects.

The form class

Though the boys expressed positive attitudes regarding being in the form class, they failed to see how this was supporting them as to their cultural identities. Interestingly they were unable to express the exact reasons why they had been asked and their answers to this were simplistic, like Harry saying “*cos I’m year 11 Māori boy?*” This was the response limited to all the boys, who could think of no other reason they may have been included. This is despite the information evenings and meetings they had with family members, the Kaitiaki and the form teacher prior to the class commencing. The boys talked more about being together as males (the “boys”), rather than as Māori, but there were subtleties in their discussions that led the interviewer to believe their identification as part of the group was based at least in part through culture.

Te Kotahitanga (2007), *Ka Hikitia* (2008) and *Kia Eke Panuku* (2013) are consistent in recommending strengthening and developing cultural understanding, looking to create a platform for Māori to embrace their culture as integral to success, not despite of it. All focus group participants felt there were discrepancies between what was promised and what was delivered in terms of their involvement in the form class. When the boys and their whānau were initially told about the class in 2014, there were several extra opportunities they had been offered as part of the year. They all clearly indicated they wanted to have these extra ‘opportunities’ and did express some disappointment that some areas they had been ‘promised’ with the form class had not been followed through on. Specifically these were learning some te reo Māori; going on term trips; and the Māori achievement course. The learning, or extension in some cases of their te reo was very important in particular, with a lot of disappointment expressed that this had not occurred. When the opportunity had arisen for the participants to create and embed cultural knowledge, they had been able to recognise the importance to them as individuals, yet the school missed the opportunity.

Learning about Māori culture and strengthening personal identities as Māori is essential to student engagement. Coast College has introduced a Māori achievement course where learning centres around tikanga and te reo, however, there are a large number of NCEA credits attached to this. This was offered

initially as a full class course for all of class members, but ultimately only some boys were invited. There was some confusion around why this was, with Nikora saying it was only for those with few credits, therefore in danger of not passing the year. However, Tāne had been invited to attend and he claimed to have already passed NCEA level one. Several of the other boys indicated they wanted to do the course, regardless of the credits involved, more so for the learning around their culture. This supports the work of Whiting (2008) in suggesting in order to fully engage Māori students in school, it is necessary to introduce culture into the curriculum. However, in doing so for a limited amount of learners compared to a whole school initiative, it likely marginalises it and contributes to deficit attitudes to Māori culture.

High credits for the Māori achievement course appeared to reinforce deficit thinking about Māori student achievement. This particular course offered a very high amount of credits to the students who participated, and this could potentially have removed some focus from the learning itself. The volume of credits coupled with the exclusion of those with an existing high credit count gave the perception that these were 'easy' credits and offered to those who required them to pass NCEA level one. This had a negative connotation to some of the boys, and almost certainly sent a message to students in the school that Māori students had another way to achieve their NCEA credits. This reinforces the notion that Māori are not as capable as other learners so allows for the further reproduction of deficit theorising by others. The impact on other students and teachers and how they perceive these students is compromised. *Ka Hikitia* and *Kia Eke Panuku* strive for Māori to achieve as Māori, and high credit courses such as this create a sense that achievement of these is limited to those who are Māori. Ultimately the concept of learning and accessing the Māori culture through courses such as this is extremely valuable, though should be accessible by all students and be more learning focused than credit driven. The confines of a school structure could restrict the implementation of this in a practical sense. In its current state, the Māori achievement course serves to further the deficit thinking behind Māori achievement, that an 'easy' option can be created for those not capable in the current system.

In terms of addressing underachievement or engagement of male Māori in secondary school, it would appear that being in a segregated form class has not initiated the change that was intended. Support has occurred in terms of being with like-minded peers and form teacher, but financial and time restraints that come with the reality of a school system have limited further successes.

Chapter summary

Cultural inequality still exists in Coast College. The focus group participants had many insights and were able to express their personal experiences in the school in a positive light. However, the lived experiences of the boys reflected a different picture, one fraught with racial discrimination and stereotypes that are embedded into school systems and personal attitudes. The ability of the boys to overcome barriers to success displays their capacity for flexibility, specifically in their culture. It is no doubt that success is celebrated in the school and the boys have experienced this themselves. However, their cultural identity is compromised if they desire be viewed as successful in the school.

The boys had valuable recommendations that the school could credibly endeavour to review. The power of student voice is underutilised, and should be listened to more often by school leaders seeking programme development. From these young male Māori there is a current indication that culture and learning about culture was not afforded the time they had wanted, and so their self-identity as Māori was not affected by being in the class. The class became more of a grouping of male Māori students with a male Māori teacher, and there was further potential for this to be enhanced within the confines of the school structure.

Conclusion

This study has looked at the experiences of the male Māori in the school and how inclusion of an all-male Māori form class has contributed to engagement in school, and supported students' ability to negotiate multiple identities. While this research is limited by the size of the small case study, and therefore should not be viewed as generalizable, the information gathered for the school is rich. Drawing on the experiences and voices of five Māori boys, the findings and discussion addressed the questions:

- How the culture of the school, including cultural stereotypes, impacts on male Māori learner self-concept?
- Has the effect of an all Māori boys form class created an increased sense of belonging and engagement?

School culture

While it has become apparent that the form class in its initial year has not necessarily achieved its intended goals, this study has highlighted some key areas where change could occur.

Stereotypical attitudes are still present, likely in reflection of New Zealand society. There is potential to investigate 'no tolerance' strategies or develop programmes to overcome stereotypical or racial based behaviours, without further reinforcing those stereotypes through threats and violence. Some male Māori, for example Harry, remove themselves from being regarded as Māori when in the stereotypical sense. A danger being, that when male Māori fight against the stereotyping, there is a risk they will 'throw away the baby with the bathwater' and remove themselves completely from Māori culture as part of their identity.

In terms of Māori culture it appears the boys have not taken advantage of many avenues to express themselves in terms of participation within the school, likely due to lack of variety on offer by Coast College. The cultural expression opportunity in terms of the school haka competition does not fully envelop Māori male in the school, even at times polarises their opinions as to its value and

importance. In this sense these opportunities are likely viewed as tokenistic by some students, further devaluing culture in the school.

The school haka in its current format of a competition has potential as an important school activity and the boys do want to be fully involved as leaders amongst the houses. However, the development of the haka into a more meaningful experience for all students could also help to overcome the frustrations expressed in participation levels. This leads on to the development of tuakana-teina system for cultural endeavours, where members of the form class, and others, could work as cultural leaders in the school. They also identified this system as having potential within their academic education, recognising the value of mentors from their peer group.

From talking with these boys, it seems the schools culture of success is accepted as being varied and the school is supportive of sporting, cultural and academic successes. The general feelings of success are spread amongst a raft of activities and areas of the school, and the boys agreed that success was not limited to academic arenas. However, on further investigation it was clear that academic success, coupled with good behaviour, is still the most important factor for the school and among the students. They feel they must act in a certain way to be successful, they must act and speak “Pākehā”. In essence they must deny their culture to be a successful student in the school.

The form class

All boys were happy about their inclusion in the all Māori boys for class and were keen to be involved in the future. The strong sporting and physical activity focus of the form teacher, which is in common with the boys, could be utilised further but it is necessary to promote non-physical rewards also. In giving the class access to only physical rewards such as gym visits, Hokowhitu's (2003a, 2003b, 2004) male Māori as a 'physical being' is being played out. Alternatives could be offered as rewards, such as building a hāngī for others students or whānau, or visits to local marae.

The overall effect of a Māori boys form class will not be realised until Māori culture is valued equally in all areas of the school. The irony of this attempt at creating equality, at least in terms of educational underachievement, is that a

culturally segregated form class will only work to highlight the ‘us’ and ‘them’, and may need to be abolished.

The overall impact of the form class has been a supportive environment of grouping male Māori students with a male Māori teacher with similar interests. Other intentions of the form class have not necessarily been met and although the boys are content to stay in this environment, the focus on further-reaching school-wide strategies for enhancing male Māori success may be more beneficial. Reduction and eventual elimination of incidences of racial discrimination, coupled with discarding the social construct of limiting male Māori capabilities within the school are areas requiring immediate attention. The unexpected effect of the form class for Harry was developing a new behaviour that hints at aggression in an attempt to defend his culture. For him the impact of segregation may not have been ideal and other avenues to explore culture and feel safe in doing so are vital within the school.

Implications for practice in this school

This research highlighted a range of systemic factors that impact on Māori male student ability to experience academic, cultural and sporting success as Māori. If Coast College is committed to addressing the inequities that this research has highlighted then a range of strategies must be introduced and enforced to create a true culture of success for all students.

Staff and school leaders

A positive or negative relationship with a teacher affects student engagement and achievement in a subject area dramatically (Bishop et al., 2014, Bishop, 2010). It would appear that the key factor in increased engagement and belonging in the school is relationships with teachers. The boys expressed their willingness to learn through teachers who were engaging and motivating, regardless of whether the boys were sporting, academic or cultural. It is as small as getting to know each student, as normalising Māori culture in the classroom, celebrating successes and helping to overcome failures. This will culminate in an increased level of whakawhānaungatanga, from which a reciprocal and positive teaching and learning relationship can occur.

To ensure Māori students are supported the school will need to commit to Professional Development and staff mentoring programs, ensuring student teacher relationships are central to learning. An analysis of courses and teachers who have lower rates of Māori achievement may be necessary to create focal points in which to initiate change. Individuals being held accountable to the requirements of Tātaiako, with supporting evidence, should also be integral within the teacher appraisal process.

Having good relationships that support Māori learners to be successful as Māori also requires that teachers (and the school more broadly) embed the use of te reo Māori in their practice. While this may be a challenge for many teachers, making an effort signals to Māori students that their culture is valued and the normalising of all things Māori is important to the school.

Individual attention

Students need opportunities to access individual support and key information in order to support them to be more successful. The forum of a large assembly, or even a smaller form class, does not lend itself to effective dissemination of information. Jai, Daniel and Harry all talked about wanting to have a teacher allocated per year group who could work with students one-on-one. This could be support in any area and seems a valid suggestion, though financially challenging for the school. Jai in particular talks about this, even though from the outside he is academically achieving at the highest level of the participants. He still has many areas that he is unsure of in a practical sense, such as the difference between Unit and Achievement Standards. This is the role of the year level Dean, but it is clear there are a number of students who are not getting support, perhaps as they are deemed to be already achieving. The Dean is limited by time allowance and therefore likely unable to get around all students and remain acutely aware of all issues students are confronted with. When Tāne and Nikora were talking about their favourite teacher, this staff member was a teacher of the ALPs program. A feature of the ALPs program is smaller class sizes and often teacher aide involvement. Overall the effect is more individual attention and potential for one-on-one time. This is vital for teacher student relationships, and for students to fully access learning.

Student identity

Expectations of male Māori capabilities that have been constructed by the world they live in have helped to forge an identity where success has been limited, often to the physical (Erueti & Palmer, 2014). To create a sense of belonging and success in the education system, male Māori appear to see the best option as acting Pākehā and discarding cultural identity, and despite the participants claims to being accepted and included, Coast College is no exception to this. To achieve the pinnacle the school desires of male Māori achieving as Māori, they must feel able to carry their culture as a strong symbol of identity, rather than a token they must leave at the gates.

It is difficult to measure being ‘good’ at culture, versus the relative ease through which we can measure our sporting and academic ability, and it is here a potential issue arises. Being culturally connected may mean for some they will lead a haka, for others they will learn te reo Māori, and others may desire a rich knowledge of tikanga. Having access to these opportunities, and placing value on them as a school is integral to the development of each students cultural identity.

Within the school the notion of the male Māori using their physicality as an ‘asset’ needs to be challenged. The construct of Hokowhitu’s (2003a, 200b, 2004) ‘physical being’ limits success to the physical realm and there is pervasive acceptance of this. Physical education and technology or practical based subject areas are fighting for their own place in school subject hierarchies, and through limiting access to all subjects there is a reinforcement of success being available and confined to areas such as these. In these spaces physicality can be used as a resource to achieve success, all be it within narrow and accepted constraints.

A key to strong student identity is exposure to opportunities, and one way this could be achieved is to allow all students access to the Māori achievement course. This could scaffold through the year groups as compulsory learning for all students as bi-cultural New Zealanders. In doing this, and to assist in reducing stereotypes associated with being Māori, decreasing the volume of credits available should be considered. There is an awareness that the unbalanced number of credits (potentially deemed ‘easy’ credits) are only available to those who need extra credits, rather than all those who desire the opportunity to learn. The

learning of tikanga from this course could be valuable in supporting young Māori to achieve success as Māori, but currently it stands to support the notion that Māori need another, easier way to achieve NCEA credits.

Further areas for research

This study did not focus at all on whānau or home life and there is potential for another study looking at these factors. As supported by studies such as McRae, MacFarlane, Webber and Cookson-Cox (2010), the influence of the whānau is also integral to success, in particular areas such as high levels of both discipline and ako in the home with caregivers. However, this study has highlighted that both these factors are important in the school environment as well. The characteristics of a strong and supportive home environment are mirrored in a strong and supportive school one. In this sense the role of the form class and the form teacher to male Māori in a secondary school is integral to forming a primary relationship between student, staff and school.

This research also highlighted how prioritising sport enables or constrains academic success for Māori, and how the colonial construct of the ‘physical being’ (Hokowhitu, 2003a; Hokowhitu, 2003b; Hokowhitu, 2004) continues to have implications for Māori in secondary school education. More research is needed across education, and more specifically school sport and physical education, to consider how school polices, programming and practices contribute to reinforcing narrow perceptions of Māori capability.

Final comments

There is no doubt that negotiating secondary school is a challenge for Māori boys, as National statistics continue to convey. However, these boys are managing their journey and can individually be regarded by self or others as successful in at least one area of their young lives. They are comfortable and confident, and can seemingly act as chameleons, walking between their world as Māori, and the Pākehā world, consciously adapting. Nevertheless, it is in the very act of having to adapt, in feeling they must ‘act Pākehā’ that the inequity lies. When challenged to be flexible in their culture, young male Māori are in effect being asked to leave their culture behind, as it appears that in order to fit in and succeed in the current Education system they must cast aside this part of their identity. The all boys

Māori form class was created as a potential platform for the boys to begin to, or continue to explore their cultural identity. If evaluated in these terms, the class did not deliver on expectations, rather it created a supportive space for male Māori students with a male Māori form teacher. Despite the good intentions of those involved, the value of the class in its current state is debatable without further financial and time contributions for the support staff members, from the school. Rather, more attention could be afforded to reducing stereotypical behaviours and embedded deficit expectations of male Māori capabilities. Coast College has a responsibility to nurture the identities of these boys and their successes. Integral to this is ensuring they feel able to travel their journey through the school being supported as young male Māori, rather than adapting to the Pākehā world which the education system currently operates within.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary of Maori terms

Ako – To learn, study, instruct.

Aotearoa - Used as the Māori name for New Zealand

Haka – A cultural dance or performance

Hángí – Earth oven to cook food

Hinengaro – Mind, thought, intellect, consciousness

Kaitiaki – Trustee, minder, custodian, guardian, caregiver

Kapa haka – Māori cultural group

Kaumátua – Elderly or aged person

Kaupapa Māori – Māori approach, Māori principles, Māori philosophy

Manaakitanga – Hospitality, kindness, generosity, support

Pākehā – English, foreign, non- Māori

Tá moko – Traditional tattooing

Tikanga – Correct procedure, custom, habit, method, protocol

Wairua – Spirit, soul

Whakawhanaungatanga – Process of establishing relationships, relating well to others

Whánau – Extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people

Appendix 2: Letter to Principal

55 Orkney Road

Mount Maunganui

Tauranga

3116

Email erinp@mmc.school.nz

Cell phone: 021 543 052

Date: 30 August 2015

Dear Russell Gordon,

As you are aware I am on study leave and am enrolled in the Masters programme in the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato.

I am interested in conducting my research on the new male Māori form class that has been set up at Year 11 level. The form class was initiated in response to research conducted by Jodie Robertson on Māori male achievement in our school. The members of this class have continued access to extra support and are monitored closely for their achievement and attendance, and other pastoral care areas as required. My research will gain student voice on the effect of the form class, and whether this change in school structure has had an impact on developing and nurturing their identity as a learner in our school. This is based on the student's feelings and opinions.

My study centres around looking at how the change in school 'structure' is felt to contribute to fostering 'multiple identities' and towards changing young male Māori attitudes and engagement towards school, and how they see themselves as Māori achieving as Māori. The study will investigate the participant's identity in terms of sport, culture and academia.

In looking to gain insights I would like to pursue the below areas:

How the culture of the school impacts on male Māori learner self-concept.

Can Māori male in our school negotiate their cultural, academic and sporting identities successfully or do feel they must be segregated from one or more areas in order to be successful in other/s.

How do young male Māori (according to genealogy) see themselves as Māori,

sportsmen and learners?

Overall has the effect of creating an all Māori boys form class created a feeling of support in achieving in the realms of academia, sport and culture.

In order for me to collect data to investigate whether this form class initiative has been successful I would like permission to complete the data collection phase of my studies with students from the class. The activities I would like to be involved in are interviews with students in 11Oc. There would be two separate interviews of two groups, with each made group up of 4-5 students. They would be interviewed once only.

I will guarantee that I will observe good ethical practices throughout; I will also gain informed consent from the parents and students who will be involved with the research project. I will respect confidentiality and promise that no names of school or students will be made public without seeking your permission and that of the participant involved.

Thank you for giving this matter your due consideration. If you have any further queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I would be grateful if you would sign and return the slip at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully

Erin Porteous

PERMISSION FORM

I, _____, Principal of _____

School.

I agree to the school to take part in this research project and that a pseudonym will be used to help protect the confidentiality of the students and the school.

I agree to students from 11Oc participating in group interviews, which will be audio taped.

I agree for the form teacher and the Kaitiaki to be involved in the support of the research

SIGNED: _____

NAME: _____

(please print clearly)

DATE: _____

Appendix 3: Student and caregiver permission letter

Student Participant and Parent Information Sheet: Masters of Education- Data Collection

My name is Erin Porteous and I am a physical education and health teacher at Mount Maunganui College. This year I am on study leave and am enrolled in the Masters programme at the Faculty of Education department at the University of Waikato.

As a result of previous research in our school, the form class (110c) that you are involved in this year was set up. This is the first year for this initiative and I am interested in looking at the impact you feel this class has had so far. This will be helpful information for the school and for the future in supporting our learning culture. My study is looking at how this form class has changed or affected attitudes toward school. To do this I would like to interview you as a group with two other members of your class and myself. I will be conducted three group interviews like this, with a total of nine participants from the form class 110c.

If you agree to participate, I would need approximately one hour of your time for the interview, during your timetabled study period, and your consent to using an audio recorder so I can have an accurate record of the interviews. The audio recorder can be turned off at any time.

The audio recording and consent form will be stored in a locked cabinet at my home and then destroyed five years following the completion of the thesis. I will ensure that any information or names that may identify you will be altered or deleted to ensure confidentiality is maintained in anything I write. I will not disclose to anyone any information you have given me.

If you think of any questions later on, you could contact me through my email at erinp@mmc.school.nz, or alternatively I can phone you with further information. Please supply contact number below.

If you have any concerns which you would prefer not to discuss with me, you can contact my supervisor;

My supervisor is: Dr Kirsten Petrie
 Department of Sport and Leisure Studies
 Faculty of Education
 The University of Waikato
 Private Bag 3105

Hamilton 3240
Tel: 838 4500 ext. 6544

If you agree to participate in the above stated activities please sign the Informed Consent form below and return to Erin Porteous. Your parent or guardian will also need to provide consent to you participating in this research. There is an area for them to give permission on the return slip attached

Regards

Erin Porteous

**Student Participant and Parent Informed Consent Form:
Masters of Education Data Collection**

I have had explained to me the purpose of this request.

I agree to assist as requested but understand that I may withdraw myself until the commencement of the group interviews, after which information cannot be withdrawn.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project and they have been answered.

I understand that my name will not be used in any form within the thesis.

I also understand that the interviews will be audio recorded, and that data and this form will be stored in a secure place and destroyed five years from the time of the completed thesis.

I understand that any information I provide will be used for this research project

- I agree to take part in this research project.
- I agree for the information to be used in the thesis and any other publication in the future.
- I agree to participate in a group interview, which will be audio taped.

Participant (student) consent

SIGNED: _____

NAME _____
(please print clearly)

DATE: _____

Parent or caregiver consent

SIGNED: _____

NAME _____
(please print clearly)

DATE: _____

Please phone me regarding the study Yes/No

Phone Number _____

Appendix 4: Focus questions for group semi structured interview

Focus Questions

Form class information

You have been invited to be a member of the first all boys Māori form class, how is this experience going for you?

Why do you think you were invited to be in the class?

(Explore themes)

What kinds of things did you think you would get out of being in this class?

How do young male Māori (according to genealogy) see themselves as Māori, sportsmen and learners?

When you think of yourself do you consider you are cultural? Sporting? Academic? All?

Do any of those in particular give you a sense or feeling of belonging? Or do you think you can belong to all three maybe?

How the culture of the school impacts on male Māori learner self concept?

Do you feel you have to act a certain way in order to be successful at this school? How can the school structure the classes so it better supports male Māori to feel successful?

How do you feel this school prides itself? Do you get a feeling that being good at some things is more important than others?

(Explore yes, no, why)?

Do you think the culture of this school positively supports your own self concept/who you are as an individual?

Are there things some teachers do that make you feel motivated to learn and be in class?

What else do you think the school could do to better support you as a young male Māori?

Can Māori male in this school negotiate their cultural, academic and sporting identities successfully or do feel they must be segregated from one or more areas in order to be successful in other/s.

When you think of a successful male Māori who do you think of? Role models?

What do you think a typical male Māori in this school 'looks and acts like'?

What do you think a successful student in this school 'looks and acts like'? do you think they look and act the same as a successful male Māori student?

Do you consider yourself as being successful in academic 'stuff'? Cultural?
Sporting?

Do you feel you can be successful in all three of these areas?
(Explore yes, no, why)?

What engages you the most about being in this school? What motivates you or would motivate you to stay and achieve?

Has the effect of creating an all Māori boys form class created a feeling of support in achieving in the realms of academia, sport and culture?

Do you think culture is valued in the school?

How could/does this class support or enhance your culture/Māori culture?

How could a class such as this support culture better in the school?

If there is another class like this next year would you like to be involved, or what would you like to change?

