

Sym2PaperB1: Whaia te angitū: Indigenous Māori Students' career aspirations - Gendered stereotypes, supports and barriers

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Biography

Professor Melinda Webber is a former Fulbright/Nga Pae o te Maramatanga Scholar who has published widely on the nature of Māori identity. Melinda's research examines the ways race, ethnicity, culture and identity impact the lives of young people, particularly Māori students. In 2016, Melinda was awarded a prestigious Marsden Fast-Start grant to undertake a research project examining the distinctive identity traits of Ngāpuhi, New Zealand's largest iwi, and in 2017 Melinda was awarded an esteemed Rutherford Discovery Fellowship to tackle an important question facing educators – 'How can we foster cultural pride and academic aspiration among Māori students?'

Professor Melinda Webber is currently Te Tumu, Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, and is currently the University of Auckland Co-Director for the Atlantic Fellowship for Social Equity programme and Associate Director of the Woolf Fisher Research Centre.

ABSTRACT

Experiences across a Māori student's scholastic career are shaped by social and cultural beliefs, and contribute to the formation of personal beliefs, interests, and motivation that shape expectations of success, and career aspirations. Social cognitive career theory emphasises the interplay of intra-personal cognitive variables that potentially enables Māori students to influence their personal career choice and development, as well as extra-personal variables (contextual or environmental factors) that might either promote or limit personal agency in doing so. Differences in socialisation, performance opportunities, social encouragement, and modelling can either enhance or diminish the availability of career choice options. Understanding how these factors shape Māori students' career aspirations provides valuable information for educators and policy makers in Aotearoa New Zealand as career aspirations have been linked to academic engagement and future career attainment. Importantly, career barriers (e.g. structural and institutional discrimination and disadvantage) are especially salient for Māori students who have experienced various forms of oppression, but contextual supports (e.g. social encouragement from significant others), can enable such barriers to be overcome. Societal stereotypes serve multiple functions as they influence Māori students' goals and post-secondary school aspirations. Although Māori students are faced with various educational barriers, scholars contend that having a clarity about educational pathways into university and/or other career options can influence their educational persistence and overall engagement at school. Research from Māori and other Indigenous scholars also suggests that cultural pride and connectedness can help students to achieve beyond socially-ascribed expectations. This chapter considers the career aspirations of Māori students by exploring the influence of supports (e.g. key role models), and barriers (e.g. gender stereotypes). Quantitative and qualitative survey responses from 730 Māori secondary students are analysed to reveal interesting gendered patterns.