

Ngātahi Education Initiative  
Summer Scholar Report



Summer Scholar Report for  
I Have A Dream Charitable Trust

# Do Māori students' feel supported by their Navigators, school, whānau, and friends?

## THANK YOU

The Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Auckland would like to thank the I Have A Dream Charitable Trust (IHAD) for supporting the evaluation of the Ngātahi Education Initiative, based in four Northland Schools in low socioeconomic communities.

For the third year running the Faculty of Education and Social Work allocated a Summer Scholar to complete research over the summer to add value to the IHAD programme.

The 2019/2020 Summer Scholar was Zak Devey who worked for approximately 400 hours on this report under the supervision of Professor Christine Rubie-Davies, Dr Mohamed Alansari and Dr Hana Turner-Adams from December 2019 to March 2020. Reflecting on this opportunity, Zak wanted to share that:

*This opportunity has allowed me to take theoretical skillsets attained during my undergraduate studies and locate them in meaningful research practise. Tangible skills I gained during this research project include effective data analysis, thematic coding, and how to call upon academic literature effectively when commenting on data. These skills have taken my curiosity in academic research and shaped it into enthusiasm to pursue it as a profession. However, I am conscious what I learnt throughout the research process is applicable to a range of careers. For example, my time spent thematically coding findings has already improved my ability to code market validation and feedback from creative writing workshops I facilitate at Mt Eden Prison.*

*[I am pleased to have] engaged in a project making tangible social impact in the populations we investigated. This is something I am extremely grateful for, and which has inspired me to further dedicate myself to crafting my own research. In this way, I hope to do justice by the skills imparted upon me by my supervisors, affecting similar change using research in the future.*

It is our pleasure to provide the Summer Scholar's Report (March 2020). For ease of reference we have highlighted some key findings throughout (in green boxes and using bold text) and summarised the findings at the end of the report (on page 18), with ideas for further research. If you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to talk them through with Maia Hetaraka. We can agree a final version/format for this report before you circulate it and we would like to reiterate our offer to hold a discussion session with your Board about its contents.

# **NAVIGATING SUCCESS: EXPLORING THE BELIEFS, ATTITUDES, AND ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH OVER TIME**

## **Summer Scholar Report**

**2019/2020**

**Summer Scholar: Zak Devey**

**Bachelor of Arts (Psychology and Sociology)**

|                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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## SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The project was a strengths-based longitudinal study exploring shifts in Māori student aspirations and support relationships as a result of a mentoring programme (the Ngātahi Education Initiative). Taking place in four schools in New Zealand's North Island, the study has and will continue to follow students, known as Dreamers, throughout their schooling careers. Open-ended questionnaire data has been collected annually since 2017; during this year's project, the 2019 data were analysed and compared to results in previous years. Analysis involved identifying the number of support people Dreamers were able to identify within and outside of school, as well as what types of support people they listed in either environment. The analysis also consisted of thematically coding Dreamers' answers relating to how they surmised others cared for their success. Finally, Dreamers were asked to list what they wanted to be when they grew up. These responses were coded relative to the tier of education necessary to realise that occupational goal.

**Key findings from the 2019 data indicated that Navigator intervention seems to have increasingly positive effects on Dreamers' perceptions of support and aspirational thinking.**

## AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The aim of this research was to explore how Māori students' support networks, perceptions of support, and future aspirations changed over time as a result of the IHAD Navigator programme. The research questions conceived to explore this goal were:

1. Whom do Māori students identify as their in-school and out-of-school support network?
2. For those students who identify significant support people, what types of support are received?
3. Are there any qualitative shifts in Māori students' aspirations and their significant support people over time?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Youth Mentorship

Youth mentorship is argued to be most valuable when targeting at-risk student populations (Dubois, et al., 2002). While Māori students are often identified as an at-risk demographic, local youth mentorship programmes have escaped critical evaluation that could assess their impact in different communities (Boden et al., 2018). Evans and Ave (2000) argue that, whereas mentorship is advocated for within academic literature, little is understood of the psychosocial mechanisms underpinning their effectiveness. This means that attempts to tailor mentoring experiences toward specific participant demographics, such as at-risk Māori youth, can become difficult.

### Māori Mentorship

The history of youth mentoring in New Zealand precedes its formalisation in the 1980's (Farruggia et al., 2011). The tuākana/tēina model of mentoring draws from Kaupapa Māori principles to focus on reciprocal relationship building between individuals of different age, status, or knowledge (Mead, 2003). A common and naturally occurring mentorship practise in Māori communities, the model encourages responsible transference of information by an experienced elder (tuākana) to a mentee (tēina) (Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010). A key quality to the model is that the perspectives of the tuākana and tēina are equally important to the exchange. Tuākana/tēina mentorship dynamics are key to the informal learning processes of New Zealand's Māori youth on account of their accessibility (Barnett & Te Waita, 2017). Thus, the success of western youth mentorship initiatives in Māori communities should be considered relative to such functional social systems, which call upon culturally conscious practice to mentor students.

Whereas Māori and Pākehā frameworks for youth mentorship bear parallels, clear divergences are also visible. Similarities between formal youth mentoring and the tuākana/tēina model include a desire to foster interpersonal relationships and belongingness to one's greater social system (Graham et al., 2010). However, two differences are that western youth mentorship practices typically mandate mentor-mentee relationships which are one-on-one in nature, and consist of a dynamic between an older individual and younger mentee (Evans & Ave, 2000). Under the tuākana/tēina model, a fluid and holistic understanding of what constitutes mentorship means group dynamics and two-way teaching are more welcome than they are in western programmes (Macfarlane et al., 2008). Therefore, adopting these strategies when facilitating mentorship within Māori communities would serve the impact a given programme stands to make.

### Mentorship Effectiveness

Systematic reviews of past mentorship programmes have presented youth mentoring as a valuable intervention strategy for at-risk students (DuBois et al., 2011; Tolan et al., 2014; Keating et al., 2002). However, the effectiveness of a given mentor-mentee relationship appears to be contingent upon the context to their interactions. For example, positive social behaviours were observed more frequently when mentorship was conducted by teachers instead of non-school personnel (Durlak et al., 2011). Also, Cummings et al. (2012) found student engagement in extra-curricular activity was only capable of increasing a students' educational aspirations when the experience featured a form of mentorship. Together, these findings imply that **familiarity with a mentor, and deliberate selection of the contexts in which they interact with a mentee, can maximise the value mentorship may offer a student.**

**The length of relationship between mentor and mentee also appears to be a proxy for a given mentorship's effectiveness.** Grossman and Rhodes (2002) conducted a study which categorised mentored youth into four groups depending on the duration of their relationship with a mentor. Results determined that most student improvement in academic, psychosocial, and behavioural outcomes occurred when the mentor-mentee relationship lasted a year or longer. Conversely, youth whose mentorships concluded within 3 months reported lowered self-worth and perceived academic competence.

When determining how to make a mentorship programme within a Maori community effective, methods to ensure the programme is culturally accessible must also be considered. One method often explored within academic literature is the pairing of mentors and mentees by ethnicity. Raposa et al. (2019) found that mentor-mentee relationships lasted longer when paired by ethnicity, even if such pairing appears unrelated to student achievement (Farruggia et al., 2013). These findings suggest **using mentors who are ethnically representative of mentees can increase student exposure to mentorship, improving the programme's accessibility if not its effectiveness in impacting academic performance.**

### **Māori Aspirations**

The effects of structural inequities upon Māori student aspirations are often described using *deficit theorizing* (Rubie-Davies & Peterson, 2016). This is a phenomenon which can lead Māori students to internalise external expectations of their low educational attainment outcomes. Research into students of ethnic groups facing similarly inequitable treatment proves aspirational outcomes can be preserved, even when attainment is low relative to other demographics. For example, the aspirations of Pasifika students are less likely to be mediated by educational attainment than those of Pākehā students (Nash, 2000). Given Māori and Pasifika students are often subject to the same systemic inequities, obstacles to Māori success may also relate to a deficit of tools available for realising educational aspirations – not a deficit of aspirations (Nakhid, 2011).

To understand why Māori students face more obstacles when realising their aspirations than other ethnic groups, one must consider Prodonovich et al.'s (2014) proposition that aspiration is a cultural capacity (Bishop et al, 2004). Given New Zealand's colonial education system interpolates student identity using racial biases, student aspirations are inextricably tied to a social fabric which ascribes social expectations to different communities (Macfarlane et al., 2007). Subsequently, dialogue that encourages 'high-level' aspirational thinking is disproportionately distributed within Pākehā student populations, for whom the pedagogy of western education is more accessible (Bishop et al., 2009). **To support Māori student aspirations, the effort necessary to seek support and realise their goals must be comparable to that of other ethnic groups. Social equity in the form of mentorship targeting Māori students thus appears a valuable way to empower educational achievement and in turn aspirational thinking.**

## METHODS

### Participants

Questionnaire and demographic data were collected during 2017, 2018, and 2019 from students (Dreamers) at four New Zealand schools. A total of 287 Māori students completed the questionnaire in 2017. 238 completed it in 2018, while 270 did so in 2019. Data from students who completed the questionnaire in all three years ( $N = 86$ ) were analysed for this study. Students were aged 7–16 years and in Years 3–11.

### Data Collection

Data were collected using an open-ended survey aimed at exploring Māori students' support networks, their perceptions of support, and their future aspirations. The survey questions were:

- 1(a). Name up to three people inside school who care about your success.
- 1(b). How can you tell they care about your success?
- 2(a). Name up to three people outside school who care about your success.
- 2(b). How can you tell they care about your success?
3. Complete the sentence: 'When I grow up, I want to...'

### Data Analysis Plan

Dreamers responded to questions 1(a) and 2(a) by naming their support person(s), listing their relationship with the support person, or by providing the support person's job. The responses were coded into four categories: Navigator, school, whānau, and friends.

A response was coded to 'Navigator' when Dreamers named their Navigator or used the name of the mentoring programme. A list of Navigators was consulted to ensure that all Navigators were identified.

The 'school' category included all people who worked in the school, for example, teachers, principals, teacher aides, office workers, and sports coaches.

The 'whānau' category included people in Dreamers' immediate and extended family. The concept of whānau for Māori can also include non-blood relatives. Therefore, this group included parents/step-parents, siblings, grandparents, aunties and uncles, cousins, brothers/sisters-in-law, god-parents, caregivers, and other people with whom the Dreamers had close familial-type relationships. The friends' category were people the Dreamers listed either by name or by using the title of 'friend'.

The analysis of Dreamers' perceptions of support used a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a flexible method of analysing data related to people's experiences, perceptions, or viewpoints. The six phases outlined in Braun and Clarke's (2006) inductive approach for analysing qualitative data were followed. These are "(1) Familiarisation with the data; (2) Generating initial codes; (3) Searching for themes; (4) Reviewing themes; (5) Defining and naming themes; (6) Producing the report" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). All identifying data were removed to protect Dreamers' and their supporters' identities and each student was allocated an alpha-numeric code (S-xxx). Dreamers were given the same code across the three years of data collection.

Dreamers' responses about their future aspirations were coded into five categories, based on the education required. The five categories were: realising potential; university education; vocational training; high school; and unknown. In the 'realising potential' category, students identified a desired

personal quality rather than an occupation. University education referred to jobs that required degree-level study, whereas vocational careers involved post-secondary training at certificate or diploma level. Apprenticeships or military training were also included in the vocational category. 'High school' included jobs that required secondary school education or lower, and allocation of a response to the 'unknown' category meant the Dreamer did not know what they wanted to do, or they wrote a nonsensical answer (e.g., I want to be a bed). The categories were further broken down into specific occupation titles, lifestyles, or personal traits, and these are displayed in Table 1. Occupations were double-coded if access could occur through vocational or university pathways. For example, a performing arts career could be attained through a degree or on-the-job training.

**Table 1:** Coding for Responses to the Open-ended Question, 'When I grow up, I want to...'

|                                                          | Aspiration categories                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                          | <i>Realising potential</i>                                                                                                                                  | <i>University Education</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>Vocational Training</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <i>High School</i>                                              | <i>Unknown</i>                                                                                                                      |
| <i>Description and coding examples for this category</i> | Successful<br>Rich -<br>millionaire/<br>billionaire<br>Good job<br>Help people<br>Travel<br>Famous<br>Be like parent<br>Be a good person<br>Fit and healthy | Teacher/educator<br>Vet<br>Architect<br>Pilot<br>Lawyer<br>Nurse/Midwife<br>Surgeon<br>Scientist<br>Accountant<br>Banker<br>Social worker<br>Farmer <sup>1</sup><br>Fashion designer<br>Artist <sup>2</sup><br>Singer<br>Movie star<br>Dancer <sup>3</sup> | Caregiver<br>Sportsperson<br>Chef<br>Builder<br>Plumber<br>Police officer<br>Army/navy<br>Makeup artist<br>Truck driver<br>Motor cross racer<br>Hairdresser<br>Farmer<br>Fashion designer<br>Artist<br>Singer<br>Movie star<br>Dancer | Parent<br>Retail worker<br>YouTuber,<br>Rubbish truck<br>Worker | The student answered that they did not know what they wanted to do when they grew up.<br><br>The student gave a nonsensical answer. |

<sup>1</sup> Entry to farming industry may occur through on the job training, vocational and university courses.

<sup>2</sup> An artist or Fashion Designer may obtain university qualifications (e.g., Bachelor of Fashion Design or Fine Arts) or vocational qualifications.

<sup>3</sup> Careers in the performing arts such as singer, movie star (actor) and dancer may be accessed through obtaining university qualifications, or through vocational training.

## RESULTS

### In-school Support Network

Dreamers' in-school support networks were comprised of individuals from four categories: Navigators, school, whānau, and friends.

The numbers and percentages for each category of in-school support identified by Dreamers during 2017, 2018, and 2019 are presented in Table 2.

**A significantly larger number of Dreamers named their Navigator as in-school support during 2019 compared to 2017 (an increase from 13.87% to 56.98%).**

Almost twice the proportion of Dreamers chose a member of school staff (teachers) as an in-school support person in 2019 compared to 2018. Given the proportion of school staff identified as in-school support people in 2017 was half that reported in 2018, the data reveals a consistent increase from year to year. However, one must note that over 20 Dreamers still did not identify any school staff as their in-school support person.

From year to year, the number of Dreamers who identified a whānau member as their in-school support person has decreased. The percentage change between 2018 and 2019 (14.98% to 8.14%) was statistically significant.

The proportion of Dreamers who listed their friends as in-school support people has varied across each year of recorded data, but we saw a statistically significant increase from 21.43% in 2018 to the highest recorded percentage in 2019 at 69.77%.

**Table 2: Numbers and Proportions of Student-Identified In-school Support**

| Type of In-School Support Person |               |               |          |        |               |        |        |              |         |        |               |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|--------|---------------|--------|--------|--------------|---------|--------|---------------|
| Navigators                       |               |               | Teachers |        |               | Whānau |        |              | Friends |        |               |
| 2017                             | 2018          | 2019          | 2017     | 2018   | 2019          | 2017   | 2018   | 2019         | 2017    | 2018   | 2019          |
| 33                               | 44            | 49            | 64       | 111    | 75            | 54     | 43     | 7            | 114     | 51     | 60            |
| <b>13.87%</b>                    | <b>18.49%</b> | <b>56.98%</b> | 26.89%   | 46.64% | <b>87.21%</b> | 22.59% | 14.98% | <b>8.14%</b> | 47.90%  | 21.43% | <b>69.77%</b> |

### Out-of-school Support Network

The numbers and percentages for each category of out-of-school support identified by Dreamers during 2017, 2018, and 2019 are presented in Table 3.

**The category most frequently identified as out-of-school support across 2017, 2018, and 2019 was whānau, with the highest proportion of whānau members listed occurring in 2019 (95.35%).**

**‘Friends’ was also a frequently selected out-of-school support category, its proportion increasing from 9.66% in 2018 to 11.63% in 2019. While these proportions are both decreases from that identified within the friends’ category in 2017 (18.49%), they are only a small decrease.**

**There was a slight increase in the proportion of Dreamers who referred to Navigators as out-of-school support in 2019 compared to previous years (0.84% in 2018 to 3.49% in 2019).**

School staff were also rarely selected as out-of-school support people, with the proportion decreasing from 3.36% in 2018 to 1.48% in 2019.

In 2017 and 2018, between 30% and 35% of all Dreamers did not list in-school support people or out-of-school support people. The proportion of Dreamers who did not list support people in either category in 2019 decreased significantly, to between 2% and 4%.

**Table 3: Numbers and Proportions of Student-Identified ‘Out-of-school’ Support People**

| Type of Out-of-School Support Person |               |              |          |       |              |        |        |               |         |       |               |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------|-------|--------------|--------|--------|---------------|---------|-------|---------------|
| Navigators                           |               |              | Teachers |       |              | Whānau |        |               | Friends |       |               |
| 2017                                 | 2018          | 2019         | 2017     | 2018  | 2019         | 2017   | 2018   | 2019          | 2017    | 2018  | 2019          |
| 1                                    | 2             | 3            | 4        | 8     | 1            | 179    | 151    | 82            | 44      | 23    | 10            |
| <b>0.42%</b>                         | <b>0.84 %</b> | <b>3.49%</b> | 1.68%    | 3.36% | <b>1.48%</b> | 75.21% | 63.45% | <b>95.35%</b> | 18.49%  | 9.66% | <b>11.63%</b> |

**Table 4: Numbers and Proportions of Students Who Did Not List 'In-school' or 'Out-of-school' Support People**

| Support People                   |                                      |                                  |                                      |                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2017                             |                                      | 2018                             |                                      | 2019                             |                                      |
| No "In-School"<br>Support Listed | No "Out-of-school"<br>support listed | No "In-School"<br>Support Listed | No "Out-of-school"<br>support listed | No "In-School"<br>Support Listed | No "Out-of-school"<br>support listed |
| 85                               | 75                                   | 79                               | 79                                   | 2                                | 3                                    |
| <b>35.71%</b>                    | 31.51%                               | <b>33.19%</b>                    | 33.19%                               | <b>2.32%</b>                     | 3.49%                                |

### STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPORT

The following section presents results from the thematic analysis and identifies Māori students' common perceptions of support related to their success. The qualitative data in this section came from responses to the open-ended question, "How can you tell they care about your success?".

Four themes were established which fit within an overarching theme of relationships. These themes were emotional support, academic support, support of student aspirations, and high expectations. It is valuable to note that similar themes were found within the qualitative data in 2017 and 2018.

**Theme 1: Emotional Support** The first theme identified within the qualitative data was emotional support, which was demonstrated through expressions of love and kindness. One Dreamer said of her family and friends, *"They care about me when I'm hurt, when I'm alone and when I have nobody to play with or joke around with"* (S-242). Dreamers also acknowledged emotional support in the form of distinct actions taken to improve their emotional wellbeing. For example, *"They let me go out to a special place for the whole day"* (S-230).

Whānau appeared to be a significant source of emotional support in Māori student's lives, often in the form of routine interaction. For example, many Dreamers said they could tell their family supported them, *"because they spend time with me"*, or *"(because) they play with me"* (S-150, S-172). The data also suggests that many Dreamers felt that support from their family was inherent, as seen in recurring responses such as *"because they are my family"* or *"they just do"* (S-09, S-137). This implies that many Dreamers perceived family and care for success as interdependent concepts.

**Theme 2: Support of Student Aspirations** A second theme identified within Dreamers' responses was interest in one's current aspirations, and support of their future aspirations. One student said she knew school staff cared about her success because *"They are happy for me when I do something successful and they encourage (me)"* (S-210). Many Dreamers reported active whānau discussion inquiring into their schoolwork and current tasks; *"I can tell because they always say while we are on the phone "How was school? What did you learn?"* (S-192).

While the data suggests aspirational support by school staff tended to focus on academic work, several responses related to their encouraging Dreamers to explore novel goals. One student wrote regarding their teacher and principal, *"Because they always encourage me to do new things in life and push me to do my best."* Another Dreamer said, *"Because they like to help me with my rugby career"*. These responses demonstrated the presence of diverse Dreamer aspirations within the data, as well as support of Dreamers' non-academic goals by school staff.

**Theme 3: Academic Support** The third theme identified within Dreamers' responses was academic support. Dreamers appreciated assistance with, and validation of, their schooling efforts. This could be expressed through assistance in academic tasks. For example, many Dreamers mentioned learning from their whānau, *"They teach me, and they guide me through things"*. Other students spoke to how different support people were able to offer different types of academic support. For example, one student responded *"Mum helps me with maths. My papa and nana teach me te reo Māori."*

Academic support was also offered through verbal and physical affirmations from Navigators, teachers, and whānau. One Dreamer said ***"(Navigators) give me high fives when I do something right"***, while another reported *"(my family) say good job"*. These responses suggested that **affirmation of effort and guidance are both effective ways to demonstrate support for students' academic success.**

**Theme 4: High Expectations** The fourth and final theme identified within the data was expectations of achievement placed upon Dreamers by their support people. One Dreamer responded, *"They always want me to do my best in school and work hard so that I can get a good education"*. Sometimes, Dreamers were posed with consequences if they did not realise the expectations placed upon them. One Dreamer responded, *"because they always ask me am I doing the right thing, and if I'm not they come and visit my teacher to make sure I do the right thing"*. Another student wrote, *"They tell me off all the time to do well in school"*.

Dreamers also reported occasions in which whānau investment in their success was contingent on their academic performance. For example, one Dreamer answered, *"I know that they care about me because I get good reports and little messages that say I'm doing good by the deputy and official principal in my report"*. Another Dreamer responded, *"Because I'm doing my best at writing and reading"*. **These answers suggested that Dreamers believed care for their success was related to their performance.**

### **STUDENTS' FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND GOALS**

This section will explore the future aspirations and goals of students. Aspirations have been categorised by educational requirements, as displayed in Table 5. **Consistent with the 2017 and 2018 data, the largest category in 2019 was vocational jobs.** These are skills-based occupations which required training beyond secondary-school education but do not depend on tertiary study. Jobs in this category included police officers, chefs, and professional sports players.

As with data collected in 2017 and 2018, the second largest category students' aspirations fitted within was professions requiring a university education. The margin between the first and second most common aspiration categories were significant; **the number of Dreamers who listed professions which required tertiary study was less than half that of those who listed professions which required vocational training (26.74% versus 59.33%).**

The number of Dreamers who did not know what they wanted to do decreased slightly, from 5.88% in 2018 to 4.65% in 2019.

**As in previous years, a significant number of students reported personal qualities, lifestyles, and goals instead of practical professions.** These included travelling the world, leading a wealthy life, and **being a good person**. The number of students who fitted into this category increased from 7.14% in 2018 to 13.95% in 2019.

**The number of students who did not list an aspiration decreased drastically, from 34.03% in 2017 and 2018 to merely 3.49% in 2019.**

Several students reported aspirations which could fit in multiple categories. Professions such as fine artistry or photography, for example, could require either vocational training or tertiary education. Some answers had more than one clause, meaning that two occupations or personal aspirations could be coded separately from a single answer. For example, S-126 answered, ***“Be successful as a person,\* and I want to be a chef”***. Answers such as this suggest many students believe that reflection on personal qualities is as important an aspirational pursuit as deciding an occupation.

**\*On reading this report IHAD’s new Evaluation Researcher Dr Maia Hetaraka highlighted a subtle cultural difference in perspective that could be explored.** She says: “In terms of some of the analysis around aspirational thinking and what students want to do when they grow up, there is room for thinking around the cultural mismatch between the question and the responses being seen (that students are responding with potential rather than occupational aspirations).

Māori don’t tend to aspire to “become” something. Our parents do not necessarily want us to grow up to “be” something. A more “Māori” approach is to ensure we have the skills and attributes needed to fulfil any/many roles because **success is not measured by the type of job we have, but by the type of person we are**. The responses, to me, are what would be expected from Māori students.

Many students responded by listing several future occupational aspirations which shared a common theme; one student said that they wanted to *“be a doctor, nurse, dentist or a vet, because you help others”*. Answers like this allude to many students bearing a range of future goals, and being concerned with what type of impact a given occupation allows them to make.

A small number of students located their aspirations in Māori and Pasifika forms of expression and occupation, such as Kapa Haka.

A significant number of students also aspired to represent New Zealand nationally in different sports. S-192 reported that they wanted to *“Be part of the New Zealand Gymnastics team”*, while S-184 said they aspired to be a *“Kapa haka legend and a silver fern”*. These answers speak not only to the occupational preferences of students, but the high standard to which many students wish to perform in the occupation they choose.

**Table 5: Students' Future Aspiration Categories: 2017, 2018, and 2019**

|                                     | Number of Students in each<br>Aspiration Category |                 |                |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Aspiration Category                 | 2017                                              | 2018            | 2019           |
| Realising Potential                 | 18<br>(8.82%)                                     | 17<br>(7.14%)   | 12<br>(13.95%) |
| Tertiary-qualified occupation       | 52<br>(21.85%)                                    | 38<br>(16.81%)  | 23<br>(26.74%) |
| Vocational-level occupations        | 99<br>(41.60%)                                    | 100<br>(42.02%) | 51<br>(59.3%)  |
| High School level occupation        | 15<br>(6.30%)                                     | 5<br>(2.10%)    | 14<br>(16.28%) |
| Don't know                          | 8<br>(3.36%)                                      | 14<br>(5.88%)   | 4<br>(4.65%)   |
| Did not list a future<br>aspiration | 81<br>(34.03%)                                    | 81<br>(34.03%)  | 3<br>(3.49%)   |

## DISCUSSION

This research project aimed to explore Māori students' experiences of support, identification of support networks, and aspirations for the future. The following section will discuss the results for each of the aforementioned areas, as well as limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

### Students' Support Networks

**In 2019, school staff were the largest source of in-school support identified by students.** While this was also the case in 2018, the proportion of students who identified school staff as in-school support has increased dramatically. **This finding may relate to a change in teaching behaviour onset by the arrival of Navigators,** given the largest source of in-school support in the study's first year was friends rather than school staff. This proposition is supported by Meirink et al. (2009), whose findings suggest **teachers' learning experiences are guided largely by experiences with colleagues.** This shift is markedly positive given many teachers are often unable to identify the impacts of their practice on the educational experiences of Māori students (Townsend & Bates, 2007).

**The proportion of friends identified as in-school support by students was highest in 2019,** following a significant dip in 2018 when compared to the year prior. This could suggest that the number of natural peer-support relationships forming between students is increasing. Like relationships with school staff, **this increase could relate to the introduction of Navigators.** Reio et al. (2009) found that there was a positive link between the strength of student-instructor

relationships and student-student relationships. **This suggests that an increase in mentor-student relationships could also have a positive effect upon students' own ability to establish support dynamics with their peers.**

The significant proportion of students who listed friends as in-school support can be explained within a Kaupapa Māori context by using the concept of Ako. This refers to a collaborative and reciprocal learning process where the ideas of teacher and learner interact fluidly (Glynn et al., 2010). Observing the data with Ako in mind, it is plausible many students look toward their peers for a mutual support relationship, exchanging assistance on a malleable and informal basis.

**The proportion of students who identified Navigators as in-school support increased dramatically in 2019 when compared to 2018 and 2017.**

This finding could speak to students' understanding the purpose of Navigators more clearly over time.

Alternatively, this increase could relate to Navigators themselves building more effective mentorship dynamics with students due to familiarity.

Grossman and Davis (2012) discuss how familiarity between mentors and students arises from active personalisation of mentorship relative to specific initiatives and social structures within the school. **Taking time, this process could explain the latent increase in Navigators being identified as an accessible in-school support resource.**

**It is notable that the identification of Navigators as in-school support showed the largest increase of any category.**

**Consistent with previous years, the proportion of students who identified Navigators as out-of-school support was small relative to the proportions of friends and whānau listed.** Navigators were given frequent opportunities to interact with students outside of school. Thus, *investigation is needed to identify why students are less likely to list Navigators as support outside of school than within.* One possible reason could be that Navigators were considered in-school support people, even when interacting with students in other environments. A reason for this could be that students still perceived interactions with Navigators in out-of-school contexts to be facilitated in part by their school. Alternatively, students could simply be more likely to engage with Navigators within school than outside due to opportunities to interact out of school being less consistent.

**The number of students who identified Whānau as their out-of-school support increased in 2019, after already being the most significant support group outside of school in both 2017 and 2018.** *This is a positive finding which begs inquiry, particularly given Navigator and school staff support numbers have remained relatively stable.* The proportion of students who identified friends as out-of-school support people in 2019 increased slightly from 2018, after a significant decrease when compared to 2017.

### Students who did not identify support people

**One of the most significant findings in the 2019 data is the dramatic decrease in the number of students who did not list any in-school or out-of-school support people.** This result could reflect students becoming more familiar with the IHAD programme over time, in turn gaining a better understanding of what constitutes a “support person”. However, Rhodes (2006) posits that a positive impact of mentor-mentee relationships can be a reappraisal of how students think their parents, peers, and teachers see them. Thus, one can understand how the introduction of Navigators could be responsible for students identifying other support people beyond their mentors.

**A similarly significant finding was the decrease in the proportion of students who did not list an aspiration.** Ungar (2013) found that youth-adult relationships were integral to student aspiration, as well as their resilience in the face of obstacles to those aspirations. As for peer relationships, positive interactions have been found to increase academic achievements and facilitate co-operative goal setting structures (Roseth et al., 2008). Considering both pieces of literature, it is plausible that **increases in the number of friends and Navigators that students listed as support people could correlate with greater aspirational responses.**

The ability to identify in-school or out-of-school support people is argued to be as influential to student aspirations as key sociological determinants such as socioeconomic status. Modood (2004) posits that disadvantages posed by economic status can be compensated for using social capital. This can include community culture and familial values, but also refers to mentorship and sources of direct support. With this in mind, the increase in support introduced by Navigators could serve to counteract demographic-specific obstacles which would otherwise inhibit student goal setting. This could explain why the proportion of students who did not list support people and the proportion of students who did not list any aspirations decreased at the same time.

### Students’ perceptions of care and support

Thematic analysis revealed four main ways that participants identified care from significant others. These were emotional support, support for students’ aspirations, academic support, and high expectations for achievement. These themes align with Adams (2018), who found that “[Students] connected with teachers and other school personnel who could provide them with academic and emotional support, but who also had high expectations and encouraged them to succeed” (p. 12). Participants identified positive student-teacher relationships when they felt their aspirations overlapped, and when personalised connections developed (Durie, 2004). Together, Adams and Durie have suggested that students prefer a student-teacher dynamic that both encourages and challenges their academic and emotional aspirations.

**Support of student aspiration is particularly important within a Kaupapa Māori context,** as whānau aspirations for their Tēina and those encouraged within schooling can contradict (Hutchings et al., 2012). Over 1,700 Māori students were enrolled into Correspondence schools in 2005 alone, many so that their curriculum could be guided by whānau aspirations more closely. While one’s family is theoretically capable of offering all four forms of support identified above, key determinants of mental wellbeing in youth relate to forming meaningful bonds with peers (Rueger et al., 2008). This suggests that **a platform where teachers and whānau could co-operatively negotiate their hopes for students could benefit both parties.** This could also have a positive impact on students, ensuring expectations placed upon them are consistent between school and home.

**It is interesting to note that the increase in student aspirations is general – that is, all aspirational categories saw increases in 2019.** Cuervo (2019) posits that mentors are “critical informants of the availability of post-school destinations for youth in non-metropolitan areas that lack a diversity of further education and employment opportunities” (p. 3). The generality of increases in student aspiration may reflect Navigators choosing to advise students with the social and economic structures of Whangārei in mind. Interviews conducted by Crawford-Garett (2017) reveal the contexts in which mentors may feel inclined to encourage all aspiration, as opposed to “high-level” goal setting only, “Although [certain people] see ... agentic thinking and leadership as intertwined and logical extensions of the dissonance participants face ... Agentic thinking [can be] a willful denial of the complex social problems that shape classroom experiences” (p. 96). This could explain why Navigators may hesitate to push students toward unfair sociological obstacles, encouraging different aspirations depending on the Dreamer.

**Given the significant increase in Dreamers listing aspirations relating to human potential, Navigators may play a role in propagating holistic, Kaupapa Māori approaches to aspirational thinking.**

Townsend and Bates (2007) state that the ideal mentor is functional, meaning that their guidance responds to the needs of mentees across varying situations.

**Given Navigators may mentor Dreamers whose goals reflect Kaupapa Māori values, it is therefore possible Navigators have encouraged Dreamers’ holistic *and* occupational goals in order to serve as ‘functional’ mentors (meaning that their guidance responds to the needs of Dreamers across varying situations).**

The most common future aspirations category chosen by Dreamers was the vocational category; this included builders and police officers. Robinson and Williams (2001) posit that work within a Māori cultural perspective is embedded within concepts of *Manaaki* and *Tautoko*, which refer to support and reciprocal respect and protection.

When one considers that occupations within the tertiary aspiration category could require moving away from families to other regions of New Zealand, it is plausible that Dreamers see vocational professions as the most viable way to carry out Manaakitanga. This may explain why vocational occupations were the aspiration category most frequently listed by Māori students. **In future research, it would be interesting to investigate how Dreamers believe they can best carry out Manaakitanga, and which jobs they feel would best allow them to do so.**

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research in this study called upon a *qualitative research* methodology to explore Dreamers' perceptions. Thus, a *mixed methods* study that integrated student achievement data and teacher interviews into trend analyses could prove valuable. This would allow investigation into whether certain types of support facilitated greater academic improvement, as well as exploration of congruence between Dreamer and teacher perspectives on classroom support.

**While there was a significant increase in the proportion of Dreamers who identified Navigators as their in-school support, we are unable to identify what specific aspects of the mentorship process facilitated this increase.**

Further research could invite Dreamers to share what parts of their interactions with Navigators made them feel the most supported.

The number of Navigators who were identified as out-of-school support in 2019 did not increase the same way as in the in-school category, begging inquiry into how the effectiveness of mentorship differs across environments. To investigate this, further study could ask Dreamers directly about Navigator interactions outside of school, and how those interactions differ to time spent with Navigators within school.

While academic literature shows that ensuring mentor-mentee compatibility is a complex task, **giving Dreamers the autonomy to engage with Navigators who they believe can best support them is encouraged.** To offer this choice, researchers/the IHAD leadership team could provide Dreamers the chance to choose which Navigator they engage with, or facilitate selective events where Dreamers get to engage with all Navigators individually.

**It is promising to see such a large increase in Dreamers identifying Navigators as support in 2019. This speaks to the strengthening of students' support networks as a result of I Have A Dream's efforts.**

Desire to inquire into students' support people first arose from research highlighting the difficulties students face when they have three or less such sources of support in their lives. **To find few Dreamers are unable to identify at least three support people is extremely positive, validating the impact the project stands to have on all Māori students who have taken part.**

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