



Thriving as gifted

Unleashing gifted Indigenous potential

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Ngāpuhi



Te Arawa



Theory One: Stereotype Threat (Steele, 1997)

...is the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype.

Gifted students are most affected and fare the worst because they identify more with school and academics and try hard to disconfirm the negative stereotype about their group. They are often plagued with a host of threatening distractions, obstacles, self consciousness, test anxiety, loss of motivation – all leading to a dramatic decreases in test performance, motivation and engagement

Decreased performance is the most recognized consequence of stereotype threat. However, research has also shown that stereotype threat can cause individuals to:

- blame themselves for perceived failures,
- self-handicap,
- discount the value and validity of performance tasks,
- distance themselves from negatively stereotyped groups,
- disengage from situations that are perceived as threatening.



Theory Two: Embedded Achievement (Altschul, Oyserman & Bybee, 2006)



Embedded achievement refers to believing that ethnic group membership involves valuing and achieving in academics (Oyserman & Lewis, 2017). A gifted Indigenous student with a sense of embedded achievement would believe that succeeding academically is a key part of being Indigenous and a way to enact their Indigenous identity. They would also believe that their success helps other Indigenous students to succeed



“...a youth's attention to group values and norms with regard to school... the belief that achievement is an in-group identifier, a part of being a good in-group member, and the related sense that achievement of some in-group members helps other in-group members succeed”



Theory Three: Successful Intelligence (Sternberg, 1997)

Sternberg contends that successful people learn to combine and use aspects from three main forms of intelligence: **Analytical forms** comprise the ability to examine, plan for and solve problems. **Creative forms** allow one to examine experiences in ways that offer insights and solutions. While the **Practical forms** of intelligence offer the ability to examine and adapt to the contexts and challenges of everyday life. Sternberg contends it is not enough to be proficient in just one area – **there has to be an interplay between all three forms of intelligence.**

Successful intelligence is the kind of intelligence used to achieve important goals. People who succeed, whether by their own standards or by other people's, are those who have managed to acquire, develop, and apply a full range of intellectual skills, rather than merely relying on the inert intelligence that schools so value. These individuals may or may not succeed on conventional test, but they have something in common that is much more important than high test scores. They know their strengths; they know their weaknesses. They capitalize on their strengths; they compensate for or correct their weaknesses.” (Sternberg, 1997 p.12)

Successful intelligence places emphasis on one's ability to succeed in life according to one's own definition of success, within one's sociocultural context

Sternberg also speaks of “wisdom” – defined as the use of your successful intelligence, creativity, and knowledge for a **common good**. In today's world, we often need wisdom more than intelligence.



An Indigenous perspective – Māori

(Bevan-Brown, 2011; Macfarlane, Webber et al, 2014; Mahaki & Mahaki, 2007; O'Neill, 2002; Webber & Macfarlane, 2018)

Components of a Māori Concept of Giftedness (Bevan-Brown, 2011)

1. Giftedness is widely distributed in Māori society. It is not bound by social class, economic status, lineage or gender
2. Giftedness can be exhibited in both individual and group contexts. Also, an individual's gifts and talents can be 'owned' by a group
3. The areas of giftedness and talent recognised are broad and wide-ranging
4. Importance is placed on both 'qualities' and 'abilities'
5. The concept of giftedness is holistic in nature and inextricably intertwined with other Māori concepts
6. There is an inherent expectation that a person's gifts and talents will be used to benefit others
7. The Māori culture provides a firm foundation on which giftedness is grounded, nurtured, exhibited and developed
8. Mana tangata ² is frequently accorded to people with special abilities especially in the areas of traditional knowledge and service to others

- Rangatira – the Māori word for leader means “a weaver of people” – and is considered someone able to weave people together for a common purpose

(Webber, 2020)

“We first and foremost recognise that their Māori values are the ones that matter, their language, culture, mana and identity are the things that keep them strong and anchored in the first instance. Everything else from the Pākehā world is an absolute add-on and something that they need because that’s just the world that we live in, but we recognise where their inner stuff comes from – their mana.”

- A parent speaking of their gifted Māori children

(Macfarlane, Webber, McRae & Cookson-Cox, 2014).



An Indigenous perspective - Australian

(Chaffey, 2011; Christie, 2011; Cooper, 2005; Gibson, 1994; Gibson & Vialle, 2007)

Gifted Indigenous Australian students “are the ones who help the other kids when the teacher is not watching. They are not competitive. They already know that they are people with destiny. They know the authority of their elders (each in a specific and significant kin relationship with them). They also know how to pay attention to significant people, and also places, things and moments.”

(Christie, 2011)

That from an Aboriginal perspective, giftedness is a measure of your knowledge of your ancestry, your land, your kin, and your respect for your community and elders. That is what giftedness is. And with being identified as a leader or a gifted person of any kind, comes an enormous responsibility. You are expected to care for certain family groups, you’re expected to care for certain totems, and for your natural environment. This is a big weight on anyone’s shoulders.

(Chandler, 2011)

- Giftedness is associated with **leadership**. The gift is not there for the child. ‘It belongs to everybody’. **Giftedness is inherited. “People do not have gifts by themselves or for themselves”.**
- **Young people are born with their gifts and talents, derived from their embodiment of ancestral connections.** The Yolngu word for this embodiment is **gakal**.
- ‘Gakal’ – knowledge of cultural ways of knowing and ceremony that enable the individual “to become one with their ancestors” Kinship and a connection, respect and responsibility to the land is central.
- Linguistic, physical, and spatial intelligence – particularly learning through observation, engagement with land, and mentoring from elders
- **Giftedness is neither a head thing (mulkurr) or a guts thing (jayaṇu) but an effect of the two coming together.**



An Indigenous perspective – Pasifika

(Frengley-Vaipuna, Kupu-MacIntyre & Riley, 2011; Fuamutu, 2008; Faaea-Semeatu, 2011)

Pasifika giftedness will manifest when students can “utilize their innate sense of selves to master and navigate through their conflicting worlds”

(Faaea-Semeatu (2011, p. 121).

A Gifted Tongan must become “... poto [which] involves being able to match behaviour to context – knowing what to do, being able to do it, knowing when to do it and doing it well. Being poto means both learning the rules and learning how to manipulate them to one’s advantage. “

(Frengley-Vaipuna, Kupu-MacIntyre & Riley, 2011)

1. **Adaptability**
2. **Memory**
3. **Church affiliation**
4. **Commitment to excellence**
5. **Relationships**
6. **Resilience**
7. **Lineage/Birthright**
8. **Language Fluency**
9. **Leadership**
10. **Representation**

Faaea-Semeatu (2011)



An Indigenous perspective - Native American

(Begay & Maker, 2007; Fisher, 2007; Gentry et al, 2014; Tonemah, 1991; Wu, 2011, Brokenleg, 1999)

- Strengths in naturalist, spiritual, leadership, visual-spatial, art, music, creative problem solving, and communication domains
- A commitment to their Native language and self-determination
- Knowledge and memory for Native knowledge, history, social expectations and cultural values
- Awareness and sensitivity to kinship, community and nature.
- Maturity, adaptability, intrapersonal skills and work ethic
- A spiritual connection to using Native visual arts, narratives, and oral histories in a contemporary context
- Strong Native community participation and collaboration with parents, elders, and other community members/resources

The "Circle of Courage" is comprised of four key components:

Belonging: children are surrounded by caring adults and peers in an extended kinship system that treats all significant others as relatives.

Mastery: children who are mentored by elders and skilled peers gain competence in social, physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual domains.

Independence: children are anchored in the values, knowledge, and skills of their culture can develop a stronger sense of autonomy and power over their own lives.

Generosity: the highest expression of courage is attained when children learn to show compassion for others and to give a higher priority to relationships rather than possessions.

(Brokenleg, 1999)

Some commonalities...

- **'Mana'** (Māori) - a quality, energy or consciousness in the world which can be harnessed and expressed in human activities through acts of generosity and wisdom
- **'Poto'** (Tongan) - able to match behavior to context – knowing what to do, being able to do it, knowing when to do it and doing it well
- **'Gakal'** (Yolŋu) - knowledge of cultural ways of knowing and ceremony that enable the individual “to become one with their ancestors
- **Ya Ne Dah Ah** (Chickaloon, Alaska) - Ancient teachings that provide students with the skills necessary for mainstream academic success and also helps students develop knowledge, pride and skills in traditional Athabascan culture.



2012-2014: Ka Awatea: An iwi case study of Māori student success 'as Māori'



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How do Te Arawa define giftedness?

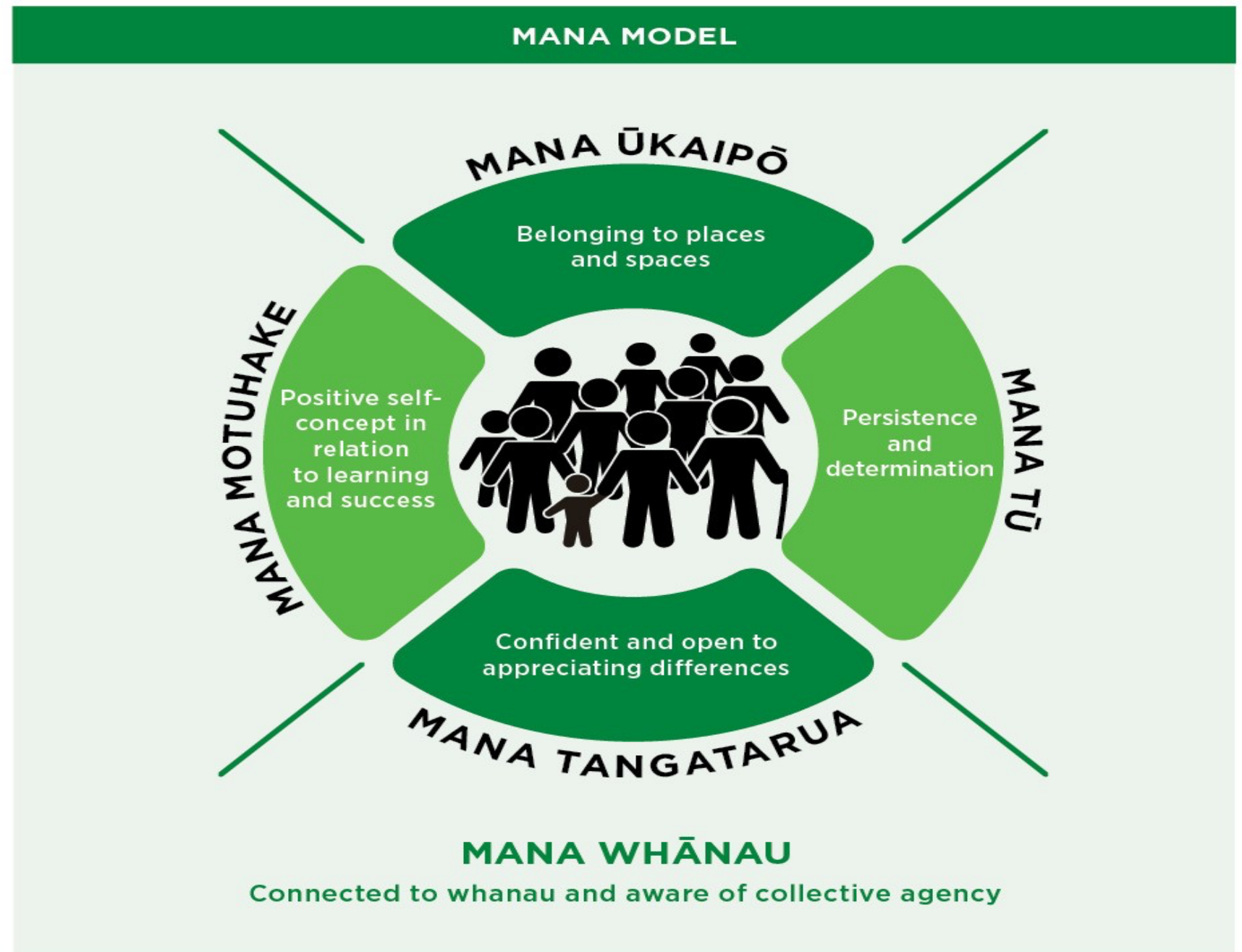
In what ways do whānau , teachers and the wider Te Arawa community foster conditions that enable the characteristics of giftedness to manifest?

How are the characteristics of giftedness enacted by gifted Te Arawa students? To what effect?

Table 1. Study Participants

	Questionnaire	Individual Interviews	Focus Group Interviews	Total
Participants	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	
Akonga	66	5	61	132
Kaiako	38	10	32	80
<u>Tumuaki</u>	5	7	1	13
Whānau	29	2	17	48
Kaumātua/Kuia	-	10	-	10
Total	138	35	110	283

The Mana Model suggests that gifted Indigenous student thinking and behaviour is motivated by the desire to achieve a sense of mana tangata - self-efficacy, purpose, pride, contribution and belonging



Mana Whānau: Connectedness to others and collective agency

Gifted students need to believe that they occupy a central and valued position in their family, including their school family, so they develop a positive sense of self esteem

Mana Whānau develops when gifted students know:

- that their family, peers, teachers and members of the wider school community care about them
- know what their gifts, academic strengths and interests are
- they can contribute meaningfully to the world around them
- that others recognise their innate mana tangata (unique gifts and talents)

Gifted students demonstrate Mana Whānau when they:

- have high expectations of themselves
- feel safe and connected to others
- have healthy relationships with their peers and teachers
- ask for help and feedback where appropriate
- believe that they make their family, school and others proud

Mana Ūkaipō: Belonging and relationship to place

Gifted students need to feel belonging and connection to their environment and to others in that environment.
Gifted students thrive when they know that their culture and history is important and valued.

Mana Ūkaipō develops when gifted students know:

- that they belong
- about where they live and go to school
- that their giftedness, cultural knowledge and history are important and valued
- feel connected to others.

Gifted students demonstrate Mana Ūkaipō when they:

- feel proud to go to their school
- understand how their actions affect others
- actively participate in school activities
- can talk about their whakapapa, history, culture and language
- can compare and contrast different points of view respectfully

Mana Motuhake: Embedded achievement and self-concept

Gifted students need to have a secure sense of cultural identity and positive role models that they can relate and aspire to

Mana Motuhake develops when gifted students know:

- who they are and where they come from
- they have positive role models that they aspire to be like.
- their language, culture and identity are an asset
- that many people from their cultural group have achieved success
- how to manage their time to get important work completed

Gifted students demonstrate Mana Motuhake when they:

- feel proud to be a member of their cultural group.
- communicate with clarity and confidence
- come to school regularly, on-time and ready to learn
- set goals and complete tasks to the best of their ability
- use creativity and imagination to problem-solve and innovate
- self-assess and make improvements

Mana Tū: Social-psychological competence

Gifted students need the skills to understand and deal with difference and adversity - such as courage, tenacity, self-discipline, humility, self-reflection, and kindness.

Mana Tū develops when gifted students know:

- they can learn and be successful
- what they are good at
- know what areas they need to work on
- they can achieve their goals with hard work, determination, and a “never give up” attitude.

Gifted students demonstrate Mana Tū when they:

- respect that everyone learns differently
- are a generous, kind and humble classmate.
- show gratitude when learning from others who think about the world differently to them.
- are self-disciplined and make good choices

Mana Tangatarua: A diverse knowledge base and skill set

Gifted students need the skills, knowledge and confidence to navigate two or more worlds with mental wellness, cultural competence, and an inclusive mindset.

Mana Tangatarua develops when gifted students know:

- they have something to teach others
- everyone else has something to offer and teach them

Gifted students demonstrate Mana Tangatarua when they:

- are interested in learning about other cultures and communities
- understand and reflect on Māori history, especially the history of their local area
- have some ideas about what they would like to do when they leave school
- try hard to pronounce peoples' names and place names properly
- are open to new ideas and doing things differently
- make decisions with moral courage and integrity
- are mindful of the values and needs of others



Gifted Indigenous students are more likely to express their giftedness if they...

- Are proudly Indigenous and have cultural efficacy and a sense of embedded achievement
- Operate from a position of mana by adding dignity to others and providing positive transformation back to communities and people.
- Are passionate, persistent, and aspirational – resistant to stereotype threat
- Are connected to others in their kinship groups
- Have positive Indigenous role-models in their lives, opportunities to learn, and a sense of embedded achievement
- Have ‘touchstone’ teachers who value/integrate Indigenous knowledge and worldview
- Are humble and demonstrate a service ethic – they seek out and acknowledge the support, assistance and expertise of others and receive correction, compliments and feedback gracefully. They work for the common good – demonstrating successful intelligence
- Are curious about the opportunities and possibilities of integrating Indigenous knowledge and ways of being with their other academic exceptionalities



Unleashing Indigenous potential

Purpose of gifted education: to help gifted Indigenous students, and their families and communities, understand that their languages, cultures and identities are valuable, and indeed critical, to the manifestation of their gifted selves

Power of gifted education: to rethink, rephrase and localise our definitions, identification procedures, processes and programmes to better match the aspirations of gifted Indigenous students and the communities they come from

Promise of gifted education: to create conditions that unleash Indigenous potential and ultimately serve all gifted students