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EQUITY FOR PASIFIKA LEARNERS

Developing Equity for Pāsifika Learners Within a New Zealand Context: Attending to Culture and Values

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Abstract Many Pāsifika students start their schooling fluent in their own language and with a rich background of knowledge and experiences. However, very quickly they join high numbers of Pāsifika students failing within the education system. The reasons are diverse but many link directly to the structural inequities they encounter which cause a disconnect (and dismissal) of their cultural values, understandings, and experiences. In this article we share the findings across multiple studies of the role that language, family, and respectful relationships hold as enablers or barriers to Pāsifika students' access to education. We illustrate that when educators consider the language and culture of Pāsifika students and explicitly establish respectful and reciprocal relationships with the students and their family, learning is enhanced and their cultural identity positively affirmed.

Keywords Culturally responsive pedagogy · Equity · Language · Pāsifika values · Relationships

Achieving equity in education for all learners is an urgent challenge placed on educators within the current political climate. All learners within our schooling systems are expected to achieve across all areas of the school curriculum and leave school literate and numerate (Ministry of Education 2010). For teachers this means that they are positioned within the constantly changing context of education with responsibility to equip *all* students to be knowledgeable and able to succeed within diverse global communities (Alton-Lee 2011). New Zealand, like many other countries, has an increasingly diverse and changing student population including the largest group of Pāsifika students in the Western world. This group of Pāsifika students are characterised by unenviable statistics; statistics in which a large

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percentage are underachieving and disengaged within the education system (Civil and Hunter 2015; Ministry of Education 2012; Young-Loveridge 2009).

Some researchers (e.g., Ferguson et al. 2008; Nakhid 2003; Vaioleti 2001) argue that Pāsifika students have a long history of marginalisation through inequitable schooling practices—these include a curriculum positioned within the cultural capital of the dominant European group, cross cultural misunderstandings, and deficit theorizing by educators. These practices result in a lack of effective pedagogical actions for Pāsifika learners and their loss of identity as Pāsifika learners able to achieve in New Zealand schools (Nakhid 2003; Spiller 2012). To disrupt the ongoing underachievement and disengagement of Pāsifika students in our education setting we argue that it is urgent that new models of culturally responsive pedagogy are enacted—models which propel *all* students to engage and achieve higher levels of success.

Pāsifika people within New Zealand are a complex multi-ethnic, heterogeneous group of individuals who speak different languages and have differing cultural identities (Ferguson et al. 2008). The term Pāsifika does not refer to a single ethnicity, nationality, gender, language, or culture (Ministry of Education 2009). It includes a diverse group including some born in New Zealand, and those who have migrated from the Pacific Islands, or who identify themselves with the islands and/or cultures of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and other Pāsifika, or mixed heritages (Coxon et al. 2002). Despite these differences, Pāsifika peoples share a set of common values which are recognised and identified within the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Pāsifika Education Plan (2012). These include reciprocity, respect, service, inclusion, relationships, spirituality, leadership, love, belonging, and family. We argue that by acknowledging and drawing on these values within educational settings, educators can enact culturally responsive pedagogical practices which engage Pāsifika learners and provide them with opportunities to achieve academically.

Previous research studies (e.g., Averill and Clark 2012; Bills and Hunter 2015; Civil and Hunter 2015; Hawk et al. 2005) illustrated that drawing on students' cultural backgrounds significantly engaged them in learning and participating within classroom settings. Hawk et al. (2005) urged educators to attend to the cultural well-being of Pāsifika students by building on their cultural capital. Averill and Clark (2012) in a study of secondary school students' perceptions of how the cultural value of respect was enacted in their schooling illustrated its importance in contributing to their identity. The students explained that respect was evident when teachers had high expectations of their learning and belief in their ability to achieve. This included teachers providing students with time to think and problem-solve during mathematics lessons rather than telling and explaining solutions to them directly.

Cultural ways of 'being' enacted through building on and embedding classroom activity within a Pāsifika setting and drawing on the core Pāsifika values has had an influence on student achievement in a number of studies. Hunter and Anthony (2011) showed the positive outcomes for Pāsifika students which emerged when they were positioned to engage in inquiry discourse and develop collective mathematical practices. The teacher drew on the students' concepts of respect and reciprocity to provide them with opportunities to actively listen, question, and

support each other during the learning of mathematics. Through his actions, embedded within core Pāsifika values, the students learnt to engage in higher cognitive levels of thinking and reasoning. More recently Civil and Hunter (2015) drew attention to the importance of "learning from and building on students' cultural ways of being" (p. 296) when establishing environments which support non-dominant learners to participate in high levels of reasoning. Civil and Hunter drew on data from two classrooms with predominantly either Pāsifika students or Hispanic students. They illustrated that when these diverse students drew on their home language(s) and their social ways of talking, their use of humour and their cultural values, they were able to mathematically reason at sophisticated intellectual levels.

In this article we examine a range of contexts and illustrate ways in which educators can draw on the Pāsifika culture and core Pāsifika values to develop models of culturally responsive teaching that support equitable learning opportunities for Pāsifika students. Our aim is to use the findings of five independent research studies to show how the culture and values influenced the learning and engagement of Pāsifika students. The intent is to extend previous research in this area using the voices of multiple participants (educators, Pāsifika students and their families) to suggest ways Pāsifika students' educational experience can be enhanced.

Our Study Context

From 2013 to 2015 we have been involved in five year-long research studies (e.g., Bills and Hunter 2015; Cheung 2015; Hannant 2013; Kritesh 2014; Lachaiya 2015). These studies involved a range of Pāsifika participants including students, ex-students, and parents as well as teachers, teacher aides, resource teachers of learning and behaviour (RTLB), and school leaders. Data from the studies included classroom observations, surveys, questionnaires, and open-ended interviews. A summary follows.

Hannant (2013) investigated factors which positively influenced academic achievement for Pāsifika secondary school males. Six academically successful Pāsifika men who had attended the same secondary school in urban Auckland participated in focus group and individual interviews. Hannant's study sought to ascertain the educational factors the participants identified as key contributors of their academic success.

Kritesh (2014) explored strategies effective in supporting Pāsifika students with high learning needs (HLN) used in the home and school environment. Questionnaires were used to obtain the key actions identified by a sample of 50 parents of students with HLNs and professionals involved in working with HLN students. Kritesh aimed to understand appropriate strategies used in the home and school settings which supported the learning of HLN Pāsifika students.

Bills and Hunter (2015) and Cheung (2015) examined how teachers supported Pāsifika students to engage in mathematical discourse in culturally responsive ways. Cheung's study in a Year 7/8 classroom drew on observations and open-ended

teacher interviews to provide evidence that when the teacher carefully considered and integrated the beliefs and values of his Pāsifika students their engagement in mathematical activity was heightened. Likewise Bills and Hunter (2015) drew on interview data to examine classroom practices used by three Pāsifika teachers of year 7/8 students. These studies offer educators a window on culturally responsive teacher actions which support student engagement.

Finally, Lachaiya (2015) focused on the challenges experienced by ten families of Pāsifika children diagnosed with Autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The *talanoa* (Nabobo-Baba 2006; Vaioleti 2006) research method used with interviews engaged parents and extended family in dialogue about their experiences with their children's schooling. An exploration was made of how educators can work with Pāsifika parents of children diagnosed with ASD to support their participation and learning.

In the next section we provide an integrated summary of key themes which emerged from the findings of the five studies. While these studies focus on the schooling experiences reported by students, their families, and educators they draw our attention to ways culturally responsive teaching for Pāsifika students can be enacted in New Zealand school settings.

Findings and Discussion

Many of the values and elements of Pāsifika culture identified in the Pāsifika Education Plan (2012) were evident within the five studies. However, for the purpose of this paper we have selected three themes; language, family, and respectful relationships, to explore in more depth, because these are central components from which strong identity is built. In this section, we explain how language enabled or constrained Pāsifika students and parents' access to education.

Language

Language is a key aspect of cultural identity. It has an important role in the formation and maintenance of strong Pāsifika identities within the New Zealand education system (Ministry of Education 2012). Bills and Hunter (2015) illustrated the importance of teachers drawing on the language of their Pāsifika learners as a way to deepen their conceptual understandings while also enhancing their self-esteem and mathematical disposition. One teacher explained:

> It's really powerful if they can use their own language because sometimes it might just be that they don't understand the question or even the ones that speak English there might not be a word in English that represents what they are talking about or they might be more confident speaking Samoan or Tongan and then others can translate. Without that, like in the past those kids didn't have a voice and you would just think they couldn't do it. It really helps transfer the power as well, as I don't always understand and they have to

> translate for me and their understanding really improves when they do this. (p. 7)

The teacher in Cheung's (2015) study also positioned students, who were English as additional language learners, as experts within their own culture and language. He expected them to explain terms and cultural concepts as part of their role in the learning community. For example, in one lesson he asked a Samoan student to translate and explain the meaning of the word 'Sunday feast' in Samoan. The context was made relevant for all listeners through explanation: "It is Tona'i pronounced as Kona-a –ii, which is just like a Sunday lunch" (Cheung 2015, p. 60). The teacher in Cheung's (2015) study emphasised the importance of students choosing to use their home language. He would remind them, "You can talk about this problem in Samoan or your home language so you can have a better understanding" (p. 60). Through such statements he recognised and affirmed the students' right to use language they considered provided them with richer and deeper ways to access reasoning.

Teachers who affirm the use of their students' home language as a valuable tool for learning along with English, ensure equitable learning opportunities. Two studies illustrated the considerable tensions for Pāsifika students and parents related to the use and maintenance of the home language and English. Lachaiya (2015) reported that some parents were advised by teachers and other educators that they must use English at home. One Tongan parent stated:

> I have problem with English. My whole family speaks Tongan at home….the teachers in school told me to only speak English to my son if I want to see him talking well in English. Because they talk in English in school to him, I should speak in English to my son at home. (p. 15)

Kritesh (2014) also described how a RTLB lacked understanding of the rich gains students have access to, when they use two or more languages. The RTLB stated, "One of the problems of Pāsifika students' low achievement is their lack of English proficiency. Parents at home speak mother tongue so children find it hard to learn English in school" (p. 41). The RTLB framed the use of home languages as a reason for underachievement of Pāsifika students rather than considering the problems caused by institutionalised school practices.

The views of parents and extended family contrasted sharply with views of some teachers and support workers related to use of the home language in the school and home setting. Lachaiya (2015) reported conflicts caused by more importance being placed on English than the first language of students with ASD. Parents explained their use of the first language to communicate at home:

> My son can talk. He speaks good. I want him to learn more Tongan words to talk. I am doing my best at home. I want the same thing to happen at school. I know his class teacher can't speak Tongan but they do have Tongan teacher aides. They can be of some help. The class teacher can use some of the Tongan words to teach my son. (p. 14)

She recognised that English was a barrier which presented her son with difficulties in accessing learning. The lack of use of the home language left her having to argue her son's intellectual capabilities. But, she presented avenues which could be used to overcome difficulties if the school had taken a more flexible approach.

Many parents of Pāsifika students are themselves English as additional language users, or English language learners (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga 2001). In discussions and meetings, use of the first language is central to families being able to access information and support their children's learning and engagement. Kritesh (2014) and Lachaiya (2015) reported the many difficulties parents described when educators used educational and medical jargon to describe their child's learning and needs without checking that these words were understood. For example, a parent in Kritesh's (2014) study outlined the barriers caused by language and formal meeting structures:

> While the idea of having the IEP meeting was great, we felt quite misplaced and uneducated about what was happening. We appreciate the support my boy was getting but felt embarrassed that we were not understanding what medical and educational words being used and the types of strategies they were planning to use. (p. 29)

Other parents described difficulties they experienced due to their limited English language proficiency and feelings of discomfort in formal meetings at school where they solely represented their child, while a larger number of education representatives spoke on behalf of the school. Lachaiya (2015) reported a parent described her response to school meetings:

> I always find IEP meetings very frightful. When I see so many educated people sitting around and talking proper English…..I feel ashamed……I feel frightened. Sometimes when they explain things, I don't understand as the English words are big ones. I don't understand these words. Because I can't get most of what is said by so many people, I just remain quiet and say 'yes'. I can't ask much questions. I only explain what I know. (p. 14)

Clearly, there are many tensions and difficulties posed by cross-cultural communications and the meeting structures and use of English language reduced Pāsifika family members' voice and precluded them from developing a shared perspective. A grandparent in the same study by Lachaiya (2015) described her exclusion from advocating for her grandson:

> My English is not good and I don't know much what services I can get for my grandson…..I call people, they talk English to me and I don't understand. The school helps me this way but I want people to understand us first…..what we want for grandson and not what they want for them. (p. 15)

Evidence was provided in the studies that show that when teachers and educators drew on the language of Pāsifika students they provided rich opportunities for them to engage in learning and build positive identities. In contrast, when Pāsifika

students and their parents were not able to use their home language their opportunities to engage, contribute and feel valued diminished.

In the next section we look at the role of family within a Pāsifika context. We examine and explore how the teachers' understanding of Pāsifika concepts of family acts as an enabler or barrier to engaging and supporting Pāsifika students to achieve.

Family

Family is central to Pāsifika peoples. The concept of family within the Pāsifika context extends beyond the immediate family to include grandparents, extended family, but also other people like neighbours and local members of the community. Embedded within the concept of family are other core Pāsifika values including notions of reciprocity, communalism, collectivism, and service (Civil and Hunter 2015).

Evident in the findings of two studies was the powerful use of family, within a Pāsifika perspective, as a tool which shaped positive classroom interactions. Cheung (2015) illustrated how the teacher accelerated his Pāsifika students' achievement and ensured their engagement through explicitly drawing on family as a way of 'acting and being' Pāsifika in the classroom. He explained:

> One of the biggest things, or the norms that I established, is that we are a family. The concept of family means to say that we are in this together. If someone doesn't understand, we are there to help her or him. Just like the context at home: if you struggle with something at home you ask a family member to help and build on that. That's how we work in the classroom. (p. 61)

Through drawing on the Pāsifika students' notions of family he built on the collaborative responsibilities that the students knew they held within a family to ensure that equitable participation was enacted in small group work.

Bills and Hunter (2015) showed how the teacher also used 'family' as a bridge to build connections between the home and school culture to shape the social norms of interaction in the mathematics classroom. He described metaphorically how they were a Pāsifika family and how this frame shaped their interactions:

> Family is big, it's everything. The way our classes are set up now everyone has a chance to share ideas, and like a family everyone helps out, and nobody is left out because everybody has a job to do and that's the Pāsifika way and the Māori way. We talk about that a lot as a class, like if you are doing the housework everybody helps or if you are making an umu or hangi everybody has a job to do. It might be dig the hole or peel the spuds but you have a job… and like with a vaka everybody has got to paddle in the same direction, in time if you are going to move and the kids can relate to that because that's their world. (p. 5)

Pāsifika families are strongly committed to education and cite educational opportunities for their children as a key reason for migration to New Zealand (Cahill

2006; Siope 2011). The Pāsifika parents and students across the research studies emphasised the importance of education to their families. For example, a young Pāsifika male in Hannant's (2013) study outlined:

> All my motivation comes from family. There are times at uni when I feel like giving up but I always look back at my parents and their love and that's where I pick myself up. They remind me of how we came to New Zealand from the Islands to get a better education. At times when I feel like giving up I think back at that and my family. (p. 20)

He illustrated how family was integral to his motivation to remain engaged and achieve. However, there were some circumstances described in the studies which excluded some families from involvement in their children's education. Some factors related to economic circumstances, language difficulties, and a lack of knowledge of the New Zealand education system. Pāsifika parents' lack of participation in school events caused tensions and misunderstandings between home and school. For example, a teacher in Kritesh's (2014) study stated, "Some Pāsifika families are very reluctant to attend school parent teacher meetings because they are less interested about their children's learning" (p. 40). The statement illustrated a misunderstanding of the tensions many Pāsifika parents face in balancing family and work commitments, particularly because Pāsifika as a group are the lowest paid workers in New Zealand. A Pāsifika male in Hannant's (2013) study clarified:

> School was something she pushed because she didn't get an education herself. All the media saying parents should be more responsible. I think pay the parents a decent living wage and then lay some responsibility on them but don't expect them to be able to do it all when they are working 60 h a week for $13.50 an hour and barely making enough to feed their families. (p. 21)

Other family-related obligations were also described as a source of tension in home school relationships. For example, a participant in Hannant's (2013) study explained the tensions Pāsifika students encounter to balance family and school needs:

> It is important to realise that there is a huge amount of family stuff that needs to be done with Island kids. There is lots of family responsibility. Say someone dies, it is a week-long affair with family over every night and it is about supporting the family. So you may not be able to get homework done. Some teachers don't understand this and they think that school should be more important. The teachers who taught me understood this. It is important to understand or even being open to want to understand. (p. 24)

Family holds an important role for Pāsifika people (Ratliffe 2010). As the young Pāsifika male outlined, teachers who understood their commitment and responsibility to their family demonstrated respect for the world they inhabited and were better able to support them.

Drawing on the value of family can benefit educators and Pāsifika students. The partnership in shared knowledge and support for children is enhanced when educators draw on immediate and extended family knowledge. For example, Kritesh (2014) reported how a RTLB worked with a family:

> I was informed by the family about my case students' difficulties in her learning needs during the early years. This was very vital for my understanding of the underlying difficulties faced by the student. I might not have been able to get all this information if I hadn't made the effort to interview the child's grandmother. (p. 27)

Family engagement in the school life of Pāsifika students, through valuing their cultural knowledge, supported the teachers to provide appropriate learning experiences for the students. It also showed respect of their cultural identity. Kritesh (2014) outlined how a teacher engaged with family:

> I have invited the parents of my students to the Samoan and Tongan week celebrations. Having parents in class raised my student energy level and excitement to participate in our class dance performance. The parents helped me to teach the dance and prepare the costumes for their children. (p. 30)

Family is important within a respectful relationship if equitable partnerships are to be established. The educators illustrated how drawing on family provided them with a powerful learning tool. Closely aligned were the respectful relationships. In the next section we examine respect and relationships. We inquire into how respectful relationships act as enablers or barriers to Pāsifika student's achievement and engagement in education.

Respectful Relationships

Pāsifika cultures place importance on respect within reciprocal relationships. This includes valuing and respecting others' knowledge, experience, and culture (Hawk et al. 2002). A common thread across the studies linked the need for Pāsifika students' diverse cultural backgrounds to be acknowledged. Recognition of differences was interpreted as respect. For example, a young Pāsifika male stated in Hannant's (2013) study:

> It is important that the teacher knows where I come from, where my country of origin is. I don't want to be lumped into a general category. I want to be known as different from Māori boys as well because we might all be brown but we have different styles of learning and different things happening at home for all of us. (p. 24)

Affirmation of cultural heritage and simple things like correct spelling and pronunciation of names was positioned as a significant indicator of respect. An educator in Kritesh's (2014) study explained:

> Being able to pronounce their names is the Pāsifika way and identifying them by their correct cultural heritage puts a smile on these students' faces. One of my case students once said to me that "You said my name right, even my last name. No one in school says my name right. (p. 33)

All studies showed the importance of teachers knowing their students and where they were culturally and socially located. In Bills and Hunter (2015) and Cheung's

(2015) study, learning activities that were embedded in the lived life of the Pāsifika students enhanced relationships and deepened engagement in schooling. The teachers described how they constructed learning situations which were important to their Pāsifika students (for example, church or family celebrations) as a means to develop respectful relationships. The teacher in Cheung's (2015) study explained:

> …another popular cultural situation is ula lole, the ceremonial lolly leis that are given out at a celebration or graduation which consist of a mixture of chocolates or lollies, and in some cases money. Students need to buy in that mathematics is real and it is in their everyday lives. (p. 59)

The teacher in Bills and Hunter's (2015) study further elaborated on how he understood the need for Pāsifika students to see their schooling experiences as part of their 'lived world' rather than as disconnected from it. He explained:

> Until we started to bring these types of problems they didn't make those links and they saw maths as something they did at school that was not relevant. The biggest concept for our kids to know is maths is everywhere……it is not just for maths time. That's the hook in…. we practise that with our family… we practise this in our church and in our community so when they make those links and can tie it into…. Maths is part of my culture… the value of maths changes and the idea that maths is hard or alien or random changes as well. (p. 6)

In turn, his Pāsifika students affirmed the importance of his use of relevant contexts and seeing themselves in the mathematics problems. As two students explained:

> Josef: The maths is about us, about the community. The problems relate to our cultures and celebrations which makes it more understandable.
>
> Grace: When the problems are about us you can see that maths is real and it's useful……not just something random you do at school. (p. 6)

More importantly, two Pāsifika students in Bills and Hunter's (2015) paper also described how the teacher's use of problems set within their world normalised them as citizens within their own culture:

> Sione: When the maths is about us and our culture it makes me feel normal, and my culture is normal.
>
> Luana: Yeah like it is normal to be Samoan or Tongan. (p. 6)

These provided powerful exemplars of how respect and relationships were developed through constructing relevant tasks that were embedded within the known cultural or social contexts of Pāsifika learners.

Kritesh (2014) illustrated another way respect and relationships were constructed. A teacher aide described the space provided for Pāsifika students to share important cultural artefacts:

> I encouraged my students to bring artefacts from home that are unique and important to their culture or Island nation. Students talk about these in class to share their knowledge with the rest of us. It helps them to feel culturally accepted when they see that we all appreciate the richness of their cultural artefacts. (p. 36)

Such actions respectfully affirmed their culture, but also provided other students and educators with knowledge to build relationships with. Hannant (2013) described how the Pāsifika men in her study linked respectful relationships with teachers to having their opinions and thoughts acknowledged as valid, and contributions valued. An educator in Kritesh's (2014) study stated:

> One must be willing to listen and understand these learners. Participate in their stories and show that you genuinely care about their lives and cultural values. All these little gestures help to build a better relationship with the learners which in turn helps you to connect with their world at a much deeper level. (p. 32)

Evidence was also provided across the studies of problems caused when teachers and educators did not connect with their Pāsifika students. Some lacked understanding of the rich experiences that Pāsifika families engaged in beyond school. For example, an educator from Kritesh's (2014) study stated:, "Pāsifika students have a lack of life experiences than students from other cultures. Most Pāsifika students do not get opportunities to visit lots of places or go on holidays to overseas" (p. 40).

In contrast, when teachers were able to address their lack of knowledge through professional development their perceptions changed:

> Being from another culture and trained overseas, this PD gave me some insight into the cultural lives of my Pāsifika students. I began to make links as to why some of my low achieving students were disadvantaged by my lack of skills to draw out their hidden knowledge and abilities (Kritesh 2014, p. 38)

This statement illustrates recognition that teachers are responsible for knowing their learners if the learners are to be engaged and achieve academically. Evident in this section is the way respectful relationships provide the foundations for culturally responsive teaching which enables Pāsifika students to experience success in New Zealand schools while also retaining their cultural identity.

Discussion and Conclusion

Maintaining a strong cultural identity while engaging and achieving in New Zealand schools is an ongoing challenge for many Pāsifika learners. The three components; language, family and respectful relationships—are all embedded within the core Pāsifika values. They support culturally responsive teaching and construction of a positive cultural identity and bridge the home school partnership.

The preservation of language is a fundamental tie to maintaining culture (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga 2001) but, as shown in this paper, it also provided a powerful

tool for students to gain deeper and richer understandings in the class room. Civil and Hunter (2015) also found that when teachers affirmed students' right to use their first language, their levels of engagement increased. Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) argued that Pāsifika peoples' immigrant status in New Zealand has resulted in others not understanding their right to maintain their first language.

Importantly, the studies highlighted the use of Pāsifika languages as central to development of a shared partnership between home and school. Both Cahill (2006) and Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) argued the importance of schools drawing on Pāsifika languages to support families to access information about, and support, their children's learning and engagement. Furthermore, they argued that school administrators should not assume the ability of parents and family members to understand English.

Family and respectful relationships are central to cultural identity as a Pāsifika person. We have illustrated that when teachers acknowledge students' cultural capital, including the concept of family with its own roles and responsibilities; they are directly supporting cultural identity and creating bridges from home to school. Affirming cultural capital and making links across the home-school context and its effect on achievement has been recognised by many scholars (e.g., Alton-Lee 2003; Tuafuti and McCaffery 2005). Our findings indicate need for educators to actively seek meeting points in which Pāsifika students and their parents are reciprocal partners. This was exemplified across the studies as the culturally responsive educators built respectful relationships with their students, having them share important aspects of themselves as cultural beings. Other researchers (e.g., Moll et al. 1992; Siope 2011) previously argued that such actions enable educators to understand their students' cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences in order to respect and acknowledge their differences as strengths. As we have illustrated, culturally responsive relationships between teachers and students are based on respect, value, sincerity and attentiveness.

We close by referring to the Pāsifika education plans. These were developed with the goal that educators would respect Pāsifika students and their communities. This included respecting their language, culture, values, and identities (Ministry of Education 2009). Despite successive iterations in 2009 and 2013, the findings from these different studies continue to show tensions caused by cross-cultural misinterpretations which result in inequitable practices. However, this paper has also provided some clear exemplars which illustrate the equitable outcomes for Pāsifika students and their families when educators relate to them as culturally located people with rich funds of knowledge to contribute.

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