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The influence of shifting Pacific identities in
learning: The experience of parents raising
children of mixed Pacific ethnicities

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Abstract

Identity construction for the Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand remains a politically and contextually contested arena that shifts according to the socio-cultural interactions within the immediate and external environment of an individual. This study views parents as agents of change and explores ethnic transmission and cultural identity development through the eyes of parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities.

This qualitative study employed both Western and Pacific methodologies to collect and analyse data and used the *talanoa* method to engage the insights and experiences of five couples. Social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory provided a framework to explain the dynamics of social interactions and external conditions that influence the constructs of peoples' lived realities. This study found that families, peers, and schools influence interactions that shift and impact the cultural identity development and resiliency of children with mixed Pacific ethnicities. In addition to this, societal perceptions, racism, and stereotypes are external environmental conditions that further impact cultural identity development and resiliency.

The metaphor of a balancing act illustrates the challenges and strategies parents use to manage family and cultural expectations as well as the efforts required to maintain access and opportunities to cultural knowledge, values and practices. The findings suggest that a culturally responsive education can work to minimise intolerance, exclusion, and racism experienced by an individual. Key recommendations include the promotion of identity development education that serves to empower individuals and parents to nurture positive identities and resilience in the mixed Pacific generation.

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Glossary

<i>Fa’a Samoa</i>	The Samoan way of life (of doing things)
<i>Hui Aranga</i>	Easter gathering – refers to the annual Māori Catholic gathering held during Easter
<i>Kakala</i>	Fragrant flower used in the making of a Tongan garland. The context of <i>kakala</i> used in this research is in the <i>Kakala</i> research framework
<i>Kapa Haka</i>	Māori performing arts – refers to a group performing Māori song and dance
<i>Kohanga Reo</i>	Māori language nest for young children (birth to five years of age)
<i>Kura Kaupapa Māori</i>	Māori language immersion school (primary to secondary school)
<i>Lavalava</i>	A printed material worn as a wrap-around garment for both sexes
<i>Luva</i>	Giving away of garland; refers to the presentation of findings stage in the <i>Kakala</i> research framework
<i>Mālie</i>	Good, to agree; refers to the relevancy and worthwhileness of a research project
<i>Māfana</i>	Warm; refers to the application and transformation purposes of a research project
<i>Moepī</i>	A slang/derogatory word used by older people to refer to younger people generally when they misbehave
<i>Mokopuna</i>	Grandchildren
<i>Pākehā</i>	Māori term for white/European people
<i>Palagi</i>	Samoan term for white/European people
<i>Poly club</i>	Abbreviation for Polynesian Club – a group performing Pacific song and dance
<i>Talanoa</i>	Discussion; to tell a story
<i>Tapu</i>	Sacred
<i>Tangi</i>	Funeral
<i>Te ao Māori</i>	The Māori world

<i>Te reo Māori</i>	The Māori language
<i>Teu</i>	Refers to the preparation stage of the <i>Kakala</i> research framework and considers
<i>Teu le va</i>	A directive expression to cherish and look after the space (nurture the relationships)
<i>Tikanga Māori</i>	Māori customs, method, traditions, general behaviour guidelines
<i>Toli</i>	Selection and collection of flowers; Refers to the data collection stage of the <i>Kakala</i> research framework
<i>To'onai</i>	Generally refers to a Sunday lunch/feast considered important in bringing family together
<i>Tui</i>	Weaving of <i>kakala</i> ; refers to the data analysis stage of the <i>Kakala</i> research framework
<i>Urupā</i>	Cemetery
<i>Whakapapa</i>	Family genealogy/bloodlines

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