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Exploration of Global Consciousness through Lived Experiences of Diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

Global consciousness (GC) is increasingly being explored to understand how we navigate this interconnected and culturally diverse world. However, little is known about how GC develops through lived experience in everyday contexts. This research explored how lived experiences contribute to the development of GC using a qualitative case-based narrative approach. Drawing on relational ethics and a Kaupapa Māori-informed methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three participants from diverse cultural backgrounds: Toni, Amy, and Miguel. Narrative analysis accompanied by a creative response was used to examine how participants understood and made meaning of their lived experiences to inform their awareness of interconnectedness, moral responsibility towards others, and globally conscious actions. The findings suggest that GC develops through encounters with diversity, negotiation between multiple identities, opportunities for social leadership and ongoing processes of meaning-making. While each participant followed a unique journey and pathway to cultivate their GC, all three demonstrated that GC is a contextual, relational, and dynamic process shaped by social relationships, identity formation, and engagement with diverse perspectives. The findings further suggest that GC does not develop through mere exposure to diversity, but through individuals' interpretations and reflections of their lived experiences. Social responsibility and leadership emerged as an important pathway to GC development by providing opportunities for reflection, exploration, and contribution to collective outcomes. These findings have practical implications for creating environments that support reflection, meaningful engagement with diversity, and opportunities for social contribution to foster opportunities for GC development.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Advances in globalisation and technology have made it easier for people to access information across international boundaries (Arnett, 2002; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Through social media, digital communication, and rapidly advancing technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), we find ourselves living in a world where global information is increasingly accessible (Choi et al., 2025). While these developments have created opportunities for greater understanding of our connections with each other, they have also increased our exposure to global challenges, including growing political tensions, social divisions, environmental concerns, and international conflicts (Arnett, 2002; Choi et al., 2025). As individuals become increasingly connected to global issues and diverse perspectives, they challenge us to think critically about how we relate to others and respond to issues beyond our own communities and countries. In this increasingly interconnected world, global consciousness (GC) provides a way for us to understand how individuals make sense of these connections and develop a sense of responsibility towards others in a globally conscious way (Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

Research Question and Aim

The conceptualisation of GC was developed as a way of understanding this increasingly interconnected and culturally diverse world (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). GC refers to how individuals understand their connections with others and their responsibilities within an increasingly interconnected world (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). While previous research has quantitatively identified factors, such as education, exposure to diversity, intercultural engagement and travel experiences, as being associated with GC, less is known about how GC dynamically develops within real-world contexts (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2023). This study aimed to contribute towards this gap within the literature and thus explore how lived experiences contribute to the development of GC. This was to be achieved by examining how participants understood, interpreted, and made meaning of the experiences that shaped their awareness of interconnectedness, moral responsibility towards others, and ways of engaging with the wider world.

This study is inspired by my experience and positionality as a mental health practitioner working alongside people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, like me. These experiences inspired me to explore GC through the stories of individuals and to emphasise and document the wisdom in their lived experience. Given the limited research examining how GC develops in adults through lived experience within real-world contexts, this study sought to explore adults' GC development in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), a country that is characterised by both bicultural foundations and increasing cultural diversity.

Thesis Overview

Chapter One begins with a brief introduction of globalisation and the importance of understanding GC, the research question and aim of the present study and an overview of the thesis.

Chapter Two presents the literature review which introduces the concept of GC, including its definitions, scopes and dimensions, and how it emerged. The chapter will contextualise GC within Aotearoa NZ and review the key findings from existing literature on GC, highlighting current gaps and the need for further research to explore GC development through lived experience and contextualised approaches.

Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach and philosophical assumptions of the present study. This is outlined through a discussion of the conceptual frameworks, research design, research method and the analytical approaches used to examine participants' narratives.

Chapters Four, Five and Six are then presented as case studies in the following order: Toni, Amy and Miguel. Each case study begins with an introduction of the participants providing their background and basic information, the significance of the interview locations, narratives of their lived experiences and lessons learned, how they made meaning of these experiences in relation to GC, which was followed by an ending with my personal reflection, alongside a creative response of each case.

Finally, Chapter Seven presents the discussion through outlining the findings across all three cases, including a general discussion of the common themes in their narratives and interesting findings. This chapter also highlights the contributions of the

present study to the existing GC literature. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings are also discussed. Finally, the thesis concludes by addressing the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and summarising the key contributions of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Historical Context

To understand how global consciousness (GC) develops, it is important to first explore what GC actually is, how it has been conceptualised, and what previous research has identified as contributing factors. This chapter reviews the literature on the historical context and emergence of GC and examines the ways individuals come to understand themselves in relation to others and the wider world. It explores theoretical and empirical literature relating to interconnectedness, identity, and diversity, with particular focus on the contextual factors that shape GC development. The chapter concludes by identifying limitations within the current literature and outlining how the present research seeks to address these gaps through a qualitative exploration of lived experience.

Cosmopolitanism as a precursor to Global Consciousness

Contemporary theorising about GC is influenced by historical notions of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, which has roots in Ancient Greek philosophy and Western Enlightenment thinking, promotes the idea of global citizenship and shared human rights (Brock, 2013; Pogge, 1992). It is grounded in the assumption that all humans are fundamentally the same and are equal, that we all share the same values and understanding of the world (Brock, 2013). Being a cosmopolitan is most often characterised by being a citizen of the world, reflecting a sense of global responsibility and concern for the wellbeing of others regardless of nationality or cultural background (Brock, 2013; Leung et al., 2023). Rather than locating identity solely within a nation-state, cosmopolitanism emphasises the idea of a unified identity within a global community and the moral obligations that accompany this identity (Zhang et al., 2021). Essentially, cosmopolitanism focuses primarily on political and ethical relationships between people. By encouraging individuals to recognise this interconnectedness with others across the world, cosmopolitanism laid the important foundation for shaping how we understand global citizenship and global consciousness.

A common criticism of cosmopolitanism is that it reflects the perspectives of privileged individuals who have greater access to education, international travel, and

cross-cultural experiences (Brock, 2013; Furia, 2005; Liu & Xie, 2023). It is argued that global citizenship has been viewed as an ideal concept that is more accessible to social elites than to the general population. However, Furia's (2005) findings suggest that cosmopolitan values are not restricted to privileged or well-travelled individuals. Instead, his findings suggest that global citizenship was evident across diverse populations, demonstrating that globally oriented values and identities can develop beyond privileged groups. These findings are important because they challenge the assumption that identification with the global community is dependent on privileges (Furia, 2005). While cosmopolitan values may be accessible across diverse populations, this does not mean that individuals experience and express these values the same way. This highlights the Western-oriented assumption of "universalism" of cosmopolitanism and its tendency to overlook cultural differences and non-Western ways of understanding the world (Liu & Xie, 2023). In response to these concerns, recent research has increasingly emphasised the contextual and social nature of cosmopolitan orientations. For example, Zhang et al. (2021) found that cosmopolitan orientations coexist alongside national and religious identities across diverse societies, although the nature of these relationships varied across cultural contexts. Their findings challenged the assumption that globally oriented identities replace local identities and instead suggest that cosmopolitan orientations develop through diverse social, cultural, and historical experiences. In turn, Leung et al.'s (2023) findings demonstrated that cosmopolitan orientations shape how people respond to global challenges, with individuals with higher cosmopolitan orientation showing greater concern for collective wellbeing, support for international cooperation, and willingness to engage in behaviours that benefit broader communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both of these studies suggested that cosmopolitanism is not a fixed or universal identity, but a socially situated orientation that develops diversely across different cultural contexts. Therefore, cosmopolitanism provides an important foundation for understanding how people may come to recognise their interconnectedness with others and thus develop a more global orientation mindset (Leung et al, 2024; Zhang et al, 2021). In this increasingly globalised world, these ideas provided an important foundation for understanding the development of global consciousness.

Globalisation, Colonialism, and Interconnected Worlds

Before I discuss GC, it is essential to acknowledge the historical context of globalisation and how this is influenced by existing colonial structures that are embedded in our societies (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Globalisation refers to the increasing interconnectedness and the accessibility of information, people, countries, and international news across the globe (Arnett, 2002). Advancements in technology have shaped the way we access information, communicate and connect, such as international travel and social media. These advancements have transformed how individuals engage with the wider world, making international events and diverse communities more visible and accessible than ever before (Arnett, 2002; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Globalisation has also influenced the way individuals understand their identities. In this increasingly technological world, people's lives can be showcased anytime around the world on the internet. This provides opportunities for global connections and allows people to engage with diverse perspectives and communities, helping individuals to rethink their positions in the world and how they engage with those who are different from them (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). However, it also enables the spread of misinformation, harmful content, and social division. This may challenge individuals' wellbeing and create identity confusion, which refers to a state of uncertainty about one's sense of self that arises when individuals are exposed to excessive information through globalisation, making it more challenging to develop a stable and coherent identity (Arnett, 2002; Willins, 2025).

Liu & MacDonald (2016) further argued that being exposed to global issues such as climate change, international conflicts and social injustice may increase feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. At the same time, this awareness of global problems may also encourage people to act beyond national parochialism, creating greater awareness of the shared challenges facing humanity (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Moreover, Arnett (2002) argued that globalisation has contributed to the emergence of bicultural and hybrid identities, particularly among younger generations who are still making sense of their place in the world. Globalisation has therefore produced tensions between diversity, increased connectedness and growing social fragmentation, highlighting that

global connection does not necessarily result in shared understanding and cohesion or collective action (Arnett, 2002; Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

While globalisation has increased connectedness between people and the wider world, it is important to acknowledge that these connections have been shaped by histories of colonisation that are continuing to influence our understanding of cultures, identities, and how knowledge is formed, even today (Henrich, 2010; Liu, 2011; Paradies, 2016). Colonisation has shaped the movement of people, ideas, institutions, and knowledge, not only influencing our political, education and economic systems, but also how we understand knowledge to be 'legitimate' (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Liu, 2011; Love, 2008; Paradies, 2016). As a result, Western epistemologies became dominant across many academic studies, including psychology, where many theories have been developed within the traditional Western assumption of universalism (Henrich et al., 2010; Henrich, 2020; Liu, 2011; Love, 2008). Theories that emerged from Western contexts were often presented as universal despite being grounded primarily in the Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic populations (WEIRD, Henrich, 2020; Henrich et al., 2010). This has created immense material inequality across countries, as research participants were generally from countries with greater access to wealth, resources, political power and self-determination (Henrich, 2020; Liu, 2011). This Western-centred assumption has been increasingly challenged by many cross-cultural and Indigenous psychologists who argued that knowledge, identity, and human behaviour are shaped by cultural, historical, and social contexts, therefore requiring alternative ways of 'knowing' and understanding (Liu, 2011; Love, 2008). Differences in how societies emphasise individualism, autonomy, and personal achievement, compared with relationality, collective responsibility, and social interdependence, further demonstrate that people do not all experience or interpret the world in the same way (Liu, 2011; Oyserman et al., 2002; Smith, 2012). These differences have important implications for how people understand their relationships with others and their responsibilities towards others and wider communities. As such, colonisation influenced not only which knowledge systems became dominant, but also how people came to understand identity, morality, and their place in the world. Recognising these influences is important for GC because awareness of global

interconnectedness requires understanding how historical, cultural, and social contexts shape diverse ways of knowing, being, and relating to the world (Liu, 2011; Liu & MacDonald, 2016)

Overall, globalisation and colonisation provide important contexts for understanding GC. Globalisation has increased people's accessibility to broader perspectives and diverse cultures through global information, creating new opportunities to recognise interconnectedness. At the same time, colonisation reminds us that these global connections have developed within unequal historical and social conditions, shaping whose knowledge, values, and worldviews are represented and legitimised (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Liu & Xie, 2023). As understanding GC requires acknowledging both the similarities and differences that connect us and our diverse cultural, historical, and social contexts, it is important to explore how people understand their relationship with the wider world. These developments raised important questions regarding how people understand their relationship with the wider world, negotiate cultural differences, and develop a sense of responsibility towards others beyond local and national communities (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Such questions contributed to the emergence of GC as a framework for understanding how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to an increasingly interconnected world that is marked by important contextual and historical differences.

Emergence of Global Consciousness

Despite all the critiques and global developments, cosmopolitanism has provided an important foundation for the development of global consciousness (Liu et al, 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Its emphasis on transcending national boundaries and recognising interconnections within a broader human community provided a conceptual framework for understanding how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to an increasingly interconnected world, contributing to the emergence of global consciousness. The central idea of both concepts encourages individuals to look beyond self-interests and recognise the interconnectedness between people across cultures and around the world (Brock, 2013; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). However, while cosmopolitanism primarily focuses on morality and political obligations to others based on universal individual rights, global consciousness extends these ideas while

acknowledging cultural, historical and contextual differences (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Globalisation created the conditions, while colonialism and decolonial critiques complicated the assumption that global connectedness is always positive or equally experienced. GC shifted the discussion from what obligations people should have to how people understand, develop, and act upon those obligations with different means within different cultural and historical contexts (Liu & Macdonald, 2016).

Scope and Definitions

While GC emerged from cosmopolitanism, it differs in its recognition and contextual understanding of differences, emphasis on reflexivity and its collective approach (Chen et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2025; Liu and Macdonald, 2016). In contrast to cosmopolitanism, GC does not assume universality. Rather, it acknowledges that individuals understand and experience the world from within different social, cultural, and historical contexts (Choi et al., 2025; Graham et al., 2016; Fuller, 2023). Moreover, GC involves not only recognising interconnectedness but also engaging with the diversity of perspectives and taking intentional actions to contribute to collective wellbeing. Liu and Macdonald (2016) define GC as an awareness of interconnectedness, a sense of moral responsibility towards others and a willingness to act in ways that support the greater public good. In plain terms, GC is about how individuals understand *both* how our lives are connected and how our actions from our position within the world affect others.

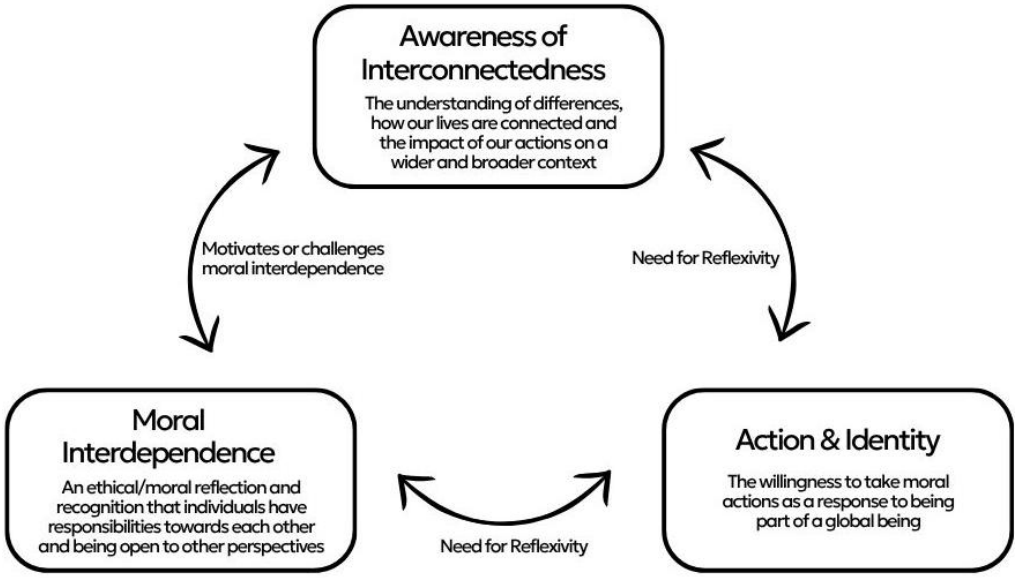
GC emphasises acknowledging one's connections with the global community but is more than a general awareness of global issues or an open-minded attitude. Rather than simply being aware, GC involves a deeper level of understanding that connects awareness to moral concern and actions (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). It requires individuals to reflect on how their beliefs, identities, worldviews and actions influence others, including people beyond their immediate social networks and national boundaries. Therefore, GC is about both understanding the world and engaging with it as a global being. Recent studies on GC have shown that individuals with higher GC tend to show traits like empathy, openness to culture, perspective taking and greater concerns for others (Choi et al., 2025; Fuller, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). These

characteristics are particularly important regarding overcoming global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, inequality, migration, and international conflicts. These issues require global cooperation, mutual understanding, and concern for the wellbeing of others beyond immediate social and national boundaries (Leung et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). GC therefore provides a useful framework for understanding how individuals develop awareness of their interconnectedness with others and their responsibilities on the planet we live on (Liu and MacDonald, 2016).

To better understand GC, Liu and MacDonald (2016) conceptualised GC as a networked cluster comprising three core components: awareness of interconnectedness**,** moral interdependence**,** and action and identity, see Figure 1. Liu and MacDonald (2016) emphasised that these components are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Awareness of interconnectedness may foster moral interdependence, which motivates further ethical actions. Similarly, engaging in globally conscious actions may trigger or further deepen individuals' awareness of their connections with others and strengthen their GC (Fraser, 2023; Fuller, 2023). The dynamics of these components are described as a multilayered, ongoing process that continues to evolve through experiences and social interactions (Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023).

Figure 1

The Three Components of Global Consciousness (own work)



Note. A dynamic networked system composed of three components: Awareness of interconnectedness, Moral interdependence and Action & Identity.

The first component, awareness of interconnectedness, refers to understanding that our lives are connected to others through relationships, communities, societies, and sharing the same ecosystem. This means understanding how our actions can have an impact on a wider and broader context. Liu and MacDonald (2016) suggested interconnectedness must sit alongside heterogeneity or differences, and that GC development requires recognition of these connections while also appreciating the diversity of perspectives and experiences that exist across different cultures and communities. Thus, interconnectedness involves recognising both shared humanity and human differences; how individuals understand themselves in relation to others and how their actions influence the wellbeing of other individuals and the wider world.

It is suggested that this awareness of interconnectedness helps us develop an ethical responsibility towards one another, which Liu and MacDonald (2016) referred to as moral interdependence. It is an ethical recognition that individuals have responsibilities towards each other beyond national boundaries. Liu and MacDonald (2016) argued that GC requires a form of "human-heartedness", characterised by empathy, compassion, benevolence, and concern for the wellbeing of others. However, they emphasised that moral interdependence is more than caring for people who are different. It requires ethical and moral reflection on how individuals relate to diverse

groups and being open to other perspectives. Furthermore, GC acknowledges that behaviours and worldviews are shaped by culture, religion, historical and social context. While human-heartedness is considered an important aspect of GC, Liu and Macdonald (2016) highlighted that individuals' perspectives and values may differ across different societies and communities. Hence, GC is not a single universal moral framework. Rather, it is a relational and experiential approach to developing ethical responsibility through dialogue, reflections, and openness to diversity.

The last component of GC is action and identity, which is the willingness to take moral actions as a response to being part of a global being. GC requires individuals to continually reflect on their beliefs, values, and relationships with others and take actions that promote collective wellbeing (Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Through ongoing reflexivity, individuals continue to re-position themselves in relation to others (Choi et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2023). This process of continual identity formation shapes the principal foundation for individuals' behaviours, informing the behavioural guidelines that support collective wellbeing, engagement with diversity, and responses to shared global challenges.

Liu and MacDonald (2016) suggested that GC involves more than simply understanding global issues or feeling concern for others. They argued that it is a recognition of a multi-layered identity within global communities. Therefore, action and identity refer to the enactment of GC values in everyday life, how individuals interact with others and their understanding of the world around them. Together, awareness of interconnectedness, moral interdependence, and action and identity provide a framework for understanding GC as a dynamic process that requires further exploration. These three components help us understand how individuals come to recognise their connections with others, develop a sense of responsibility towards humanity, and exercise these understandings into meaningful actions and social identity.

Building on Liu and MacDonald's (2016) conceptualisation, Chao et al. (2025) further conceptualised GC by proposing six psychological dimensions to understand GC: cognitive processes, core beliefs and values, social-relational and group dynamics, affective states, actions, and motivational drives (See Figure 2). Chao et al. (2025)

explained that GC is a multidimensional construct that integrates internal processes and experiences that shape how individuals perceive, interpret, and engage with global issues. These psychological dimensions underpin a globally conscious worldview that is centred on relational and group dynamics. They show how social connections can motivate others to learn about differences and diversity, turning awareness into moral commitments and actions (Chao et al., 2025; Heine, 2010; Zhang et al., 2023).

Figure 2

The Six Psychological Dimensions of Global Consciousness



Note. An integrative psychological system composed of six interrelated dimensions: Cognitive processes, core beliefs and values, affective states, motivational drives, social-relational and group dynamics, and actions (Chao et al., 2025, p.19).

Within the six dimensions, three are particularly relevant to the present study: core beliefs and values, social-relational and group dynamics, and motivational drives. Firstly, core beliefs and values refer to the moral principles and worldviews that guide how individuals understand the world and their responsibilities towards others. Second,

social-relational and group dynamics emphasise the importance of social relationships and interactions that foster prosocial and diverse perspectives. Chao et al. (2025) explained that, as GC relies heavily on social learning, our interconnections with others help turn awareness into collective actions, which in turn create psychological safety and a sense of belonging to a global community. Lastly, motivational drives focus on internal factors such as desire to help, to learn, and concerns for the environment that drive individuals to enact globally conscious values in everyday life. It is believed that these psychological dimensions help guide us to navigate the world, while social connections provide support and reinforcement. These actions feed back into the system of thinking, feeling and relating that contribute to continual GC growth (Chao et al., 2025). These dimensions complement Liu and MacDonald's (2016) framework by highlighting the psychological, relational, and motivational processes that contribute to GC development. Given their relevance to understanding how GC develops, these three dimensions provided a useful lens for interpreting my participants' experiences.

Together, Liu and MacDonald's (2016) framework and Chao et al.'s (2025) psychological dimensions provide a useful conceptual foundation for understanding GC as a relational, ethical, and action-oriented process. While Liu and MacDonald (2016) highlighted the interconnected relationship between awareness, morality, and action/identity, Chao et al. (2025) provided an additional lens to understand the psychological and social processes that underpin GC development. These conceptualisations demonstrated that GC is a multi-dynamic process shaped by how individuals understand themselves, relate to others, and respond to global challenges.

As GC requires consideration of the local cultural, historical, and social context, it is important to understand its relevance within the Aotearoa NZ context where the current study is set, before reviewing the key findings from the broader literature. The following section therefore discusses the importance and unique considerations of understanding GC in the context of Aotearoa NZ.

Global Consciousness in the Context of Aotearoa NZ

Understanding GC in Aotearoa NZ requires consideration of the country's unique historical, cultural, and political context, as these factors shape how individuals

understand diversity, belonging, interconnectedness, and their responsibilities towards others (Liu, 2011; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Aotearoa NZ provides a unique context for studying GC because of its bicultural foundations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its increasingly diverse population, creating opportunities and challenges for understanding how we engage with differences, navigate identity and form our relationships with others (Sibley et al., 2011; Spoonley, 2015). This section explores the historical context of Aotearoa NZ, including the impacts of colonisation, the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Smith, 2012), and the relationship between biculturalism and increasing cultural diversity, to illustrate why these contexts are important for understanding GC development (Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Colonial History

Māori arrived in Aotearoa NZ between the 12th and 14th centuries (Metge, 1964). During these times, Māori society was organised through interconnected whānau, hapū, and iwi, which provided systems of leadership, resource management, and social structures (Martin et al., 2024; Walter et al., 2017). These structures fostered collective responsibility and supported distinct cultural and societal systems that shaped Māori life across generations (Groot et al., 2017; Smith, 2012). These systems reflected Indigenous identities and relationships with whenua (land).

From the mid-1600s, British settlers began to arrive in Aotearoa NZ (Metge, 1964). As the number of British settlers increased, concerns arose regarding governance and relationship tensions between Māori and the settlers (Orange, 2004). As such, an agreement would be entered into between Māori chiefs and the British Crown through the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Māori version) and The Treaty of Waitangi (English version) in 1840 (Orange, 2004). This agreement is often considered the founding constitutional document of Aotearoa NZ, and it consists of three articles outlining conditions intended to establish a framework for ongoing peaceful relationships between tāngata whenua (people of the land) and the Crown. From many Māori perspectives, they were offering peaceful relations and hospitality (manākitanga) while coexisting with British settlers without giving up their sovereignty and autonomy (Mutu, 2018).

However, there were significant differences between the two versions of the treaty, which contributed to differing understandings of the agreement and later much conflict (Orange, 2004). In particular, the Treaty stated that Māori ceded sovereignty to the Crown, while Te Tiriti was supposed to guarantee Tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) for tāngata whenua and grant the Crown kāwanatanga (governance) over their own people (Mutu, 2018; Orange, 2004). This underpins important differentiations in which versions had been signed and what terms had been agreed upon, as translation and interpretation, particularly regarding governance and authority, were vastly different (Orange, 2004). Even though the Treaty was signed only by only a handful of iwi leaders, it became the "official" version that led to broader colonial impact on Aotearoa NZ.

The enforcement of the Treaty would set the scene for British control and thus colonisation to permeate throughout the country, sparking an intensive period of turmoil for Māori (Orange, 2004). Agreements set through the Treaty were breached, resulting in the loss of land through brute force, suppression and marginalisation of cultural practices and language through various legislative acts (Orange, 2004; Smith, 2012). Colonisation significantly disrupted Māori ways of being, knowing, and relating to one another and to whenua, fundamentally reshaping social, cultural, and political life (Groot et al., 2017; Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Mark & Lyons, 2010).

Despite the detrimental impacts of colonisation in Aotearoa NZ, it is important to note here that Māori communities have resisted assimilation and advocated for the recognition of Māori rights under Te Tiriti rather than the Treaty (Mutu, 2018; Paradies, 2016; Smith, 2012). Resistance would begin soon after the signing, through various land wars as Māori quickly realised that Ti Tiriti was being breached and land was being confiscated at alarming rates (Mutu, 2018, Orange, 2004). Resistance would continue throughout the years, notably the 1970s and onwards, Māori activists have been drawing attention to the context of Te Tiriti and the historical breaches that supported the ongoing effects of colonisation, contributing to greater public and political recognition of Te Tiriti (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Mutu, 2018; Smith, 2012). These movements formed the essential foundation for the ongoing efforts to reclaim Māori knowledge and practices today (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Paradies, 2016). These movements also contributed to the emergence of Kaupapa Māori approaches, which challenge colonial

assumptions and legitimise Māori knowledge within academia (Mahuika, 2008; Smith, 2021). To this day, conflict and disputes due to differences in Te Tiriti and The Treaty continue to influence legislation, public policy, education, and the wellbeing of tāngata whenua. Through ongoing Māori advocacy and resistance, Te Tiriti has increasingly been recognised as the founding document that guides this country (Orange, 2004; Mutu, 2018). This renewed recognition of Te Tiriti led to changes within institutions and government structures, strengthening the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa NZ, where Māori culture and rights are increasingly being acknowledged and respected by the public (Smith, 2012; Mutu, 2018).

Understanding this colonial history is important for GC because awareness of interconnectedness requires recognising how historical events continue to shape our society, identities, social relationships, and systemic power imbalances (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Within the Aotearoa NZ context, colonialism continues to influence experiences of belonging, inequality, and cultural identity of its people (Paradies, 2016; Smith, 2012). Thus, understanding GC involves not only how we are connected as humans in the present, but also the ability to critically reflect on the socio-historical events and impacts of these that have shaped those relationships. It is pivotal that we consider our responsibilities in response to these understandings (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Paradies, 2016).

Biculturalism and Multiculturalism in Aotearoa NZ

With Aotearoa NZ's social and economic growth, the country became an increasingly popular destination for migration throughout the 20th century, contributing to growing ethnic and cultural diversity (Sibley et al., 2011; Spoonley, 2015). Alongside this increasing diversity, Māori culture, language, and traditions continue to be practised and advocated for as part of the country's bicultural foundation. As a result, Aotearoa NZ provides a unique context in which Indigenous culture and increasing cultural diversity interact and are continually negotiated (Mutu, 2018). Importantly, Te Tiriti remains central to understanding Māori rights and status as tāngata whenua, highlighting that Māori should not be understood simply as another ethnic minority group (Mutu, 2018; Smith, 2012). This context is particularly relevant to GC because individuals living in Aotearoa NZ must often navigate multiple cultural perspectives,

identities, and understandings of belonging, creating opportunities to engage with diversity, difference, and interconnectedness in everyday life.

Despite Aotearoa NZ's bicultural and multicultural character, the relationship between these concepts is not without tensions (Sibley et al., 2011; Spoonley, 2015). Biculturalism and multiculturalism are not always viewed as complementary, as debates continue regarding how Te Tiriti should be understood and implemented within an increasingly diverse society. In particular, there are debates around the responsibilities of tāngata Tiriti (non-Māori people of Te Tiriti) and how Aotearoa NZ citizens can uphold our obligations to Māori as tāngata whenua while ensuring the inclusion of the migrant population. These discussions highlight that diversity in Aotearoa NZ is shaped not only by ethnic and cultural differences, but also by the ongoing influence of colonisation, unequal power dynamics and social positions (Smith, 2012; Mutu, 2018; Paradies, 2016; Mahuika, 2008).

Recent political debates have further highlighted differing understandings of Te Tiriti and the redefinition of the term “multiculturalism” as a political approach to create social division, demonstrating that Te Tiriti remains an active negotiation today. Diversity is not just about multiple ethnic groups living together, but also about understanding the overall colonial impact on indigenous rights, international migration, historical power dynamics, and cultural identities in a global context (Paradies, 2016; Smith, 2012; Spoonley, 2015). These complexities make Aotearoa NZ a particularly valuable context for studying GC. As individuals navigate multiple cultural perspectives, identities, and understandings of belonging, they are presented with opportunities to reflect on difference, interconnectedness, and their responsibilities towards others (Hodgetts et al., 2022; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Safa et al., 2021). These experiences align closely with key aspects of GC, including awareness of interconnectedness, moral interdependence, and engagement with diverse perspectives (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Therefore, in this thesis, instead of multiculturalism, the term “diversity” is used to encompass the broader understanding of the coexistence of multiple cultures, while still recognising the importance of Te Tiriti and Māori as tāngata whenua within the Aotearoa NZ context.

While Māori experiences continue to be influenced by colonisation and the ongoing debate of Te Tiriti, many non-European migrant communities also experience issues relating to inclusion, representation, and culturally responsive services (Kingi-‘Ulu’aveet al., 2016; Paradies, 2016; Williams & Cleland, 2016). Psychologists have argued for approaches that move beyond Western-centred perspectives and the importance of embodying Te Tiriti in our research to better reflect the increasingly diverse, non-Western population (Kingi-'Ulu'ave et al., 2016; Mark & Lyons, 2010; Smith, 2012; Williams & Cleland, 2016). These lived experiences of diversity demonstrate that a sense of national belonging and cultural identities are shaped not only by history, power dynamics, and social position but also by social relations with one another (Hodgetts et al., 2022; Safa et al., 2021; Sibley et al., 2011; Spoonley, 2015). Because of the significance of Te Tiriti, cultural identity in Aotearoa NZ cannot be fully understood without considering its unique historical context. As individuals develop their sense of belonging and cultural identity through navigating politicised and diverse environments (Hodgetts et al., 2022; Safa et al., 2021; Sibley et al., 2011), understanding this context is important when exploring how GC is developed through lived experience, providing a unique setting for the present study.

Key Themes and Findings

In this section, I will review the key findings from the existing literature on GC. In particular, the relationship between GC and identity, behavioural evidence of GC, and factors that facilitate GC development. These studies have demonstrated that GC is a multifaceted construct shaped by social relationships, life experiences, and cultural contexts, influencing how individuals understand and interact with the wider world (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Fuller, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023).

Understanding GC through an Identity Perspective

As discussed, identity matters because GC is about how people understand themselves in relation to others (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). Identity in this thesis refers to how individuals understand and define themselves through their relationships with their social networks (Choi et al., 2025). Social identity encompasses identification with groups such as religious, political, cultural, and community groups, while national identity refers specifically to individuals’ sense of

belonging to and attachment to their own countries. These identities shape how people interpret their social positioning, how they relate to others, and thus potentially develop broader global awareness (Choi et al., 2025). Furthermore, GC is more than a general form of global awareness; it reflects how individuals position themselves socially and culturally within wider communities, and how people navigate multiple identities in this increasingly globalised world (Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

Recent research has highlighted the importance of social context in shaping globally oriented identities. For example, Choi et al. (2025) and Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrate that GC develops through participation in social groups, education, and life experiences that shape how individuals understand their identity in relation to others. Factors such as level of education, religiosity, employment status, multicultural interactions, and group identifications appeared to provide opportunities for individuals to expand their sense of belonging beyond local groups and toward identification with broader communities (Choi et al., 2025; Zhang et al, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Together, these studies suggest that GC is not developed in solitude or isolation but emerges through meaningful shared identities within different social and cultural contexts.

The relationship between identity and GC is demonstrated in Choi et al.'s (2025) study. This study examined the influence of individual privilege, group identification, and societal perceptions on GC across cultural contexts, conceptualising GC as a multidimensional construct comprised of awareness, identity, and morality. They found that levels of individual privilege and group identification (national and religious) were significantly positive predictors of GC (Choi et al., 2025). However, privilege alone did not automatically predict higher GC. Instead, the findings indicated that while material privileges create opportunities for GC development across cultures, this can be further influenced by how individuals perceive and make meaning within their particular social and cultural contexts. Choi et al. (2025) found that the way individuals perceive and evaluate the country which they identify with, influences their global awareness. For example, a comparison between two relatively wealthy countries, China and the United States, showed a notable variation between GC levels among participants. Positive perceptions and evaluations of one’s own country were related to GC in different ways across China (through system-justifying attitudes) and the United States (through

perceptions of national progress). This variation suggests that individual-level privilege alone cannot account for differences in GC (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025). Although individuals living in prosperous societies and with more personal wealth may indeed have greater access to resources, education, and intercultural opportunities, *how* they identify with their nation and perceive their society also influences the development of globally oriented identities and perspectives (Choi et al., 2025). These findings suggest that group-level identities play an important role in shaping GC. Moreover, these further depend on how individuals perceive and make meaning of these identifications within particular social and cultural contexts. This reinforces the idea that GC is closely connected to identity dynamics, which is influenced by how people understand themselves, their place in the world and how they relate to others. It also raises broader questions about how other identities, such as religion, gender, and immigration status, may influence and interact with GC development.

While Choi et al. (2025) emphasised the role of national-level identification and perceptions, Zhang et al. (2023) focused on how both continuity and discontinuity in life experiences contribute to GC development. Continuities refer to ongoing experiences and social roles that provide stability over time, such as education, work life and religious practices. Discontinuities, on the other hand, refer to significant life changes such as marriage, becoming a parent or loss of a loved one, which require individuals to redefine their identities and social relationships. The authors suggested that identities are reshaped by major life events, thus shifting individuals' social roles, networks, and responsibilities, creating opportunities for people to reposition themselves in relation to their immediate social communities as well as the wider world. These major life events are proposed to expand people's social networks, empathy, and sense of connection to others, leading them to identify or be more open to new perspectives (Zhang et al., 2023). Their findings supported this idea that identity evolves through life experiences, and that those identity changes can create conditions for GC development. Furthermore, Zhang et al.'s (2023) findings showed that stable experiences such as occupation, ongoing social relationships, and socioeconomic position can also create opportunities for individuals to engage with diverse people and perspectives, predicting higher levels of GC. Though major life changes may disrupt stable experiences, it is

argued that these experiences lead to individuals challenging their existing belief systems and identities, which help them re-evaluate how they understand themselves and the world around them (Chao et al., 2025; Li et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). From this perspective, GC is not a fixed concept, but an evolving process shaped by changing identities, social relationships, and life experiences.

These findings support arguments that globally oriented identities are socially situated and may develop differently depending on an individual's access to resources, opportunities, and social experiences. Overall, Choi et al. (2025) highlighted how national and geopolitical contexts contribute to GC, and Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrated that GC may also evolve as individuals move through different stages of life and occupy different social roles. Individuals may simultaneously identify with local, national, religious, and global communities, highlighting the complex and multilayered nature of identity formation. Understanding GC therefore requires attention not only to global awareness, but also to the social and cultural contexts through which individuals come to understand themselves and their relationship to humanity. Next, I will review studies that have explored how global awareness and identification inform social and political attitudes as well as prosocial behaviour.

How GC Manifests in Behaviours

While the previous section highlighted the importance of identity and social context in shaping GC, this section examines how GC manifests in attitudes and behavioural implications. Research has demonstrated that GC is associated with prosocial, cooperative, and globally oriented behaviours. Studies have found that individuals with higher levels of GC are more likely to display empathy, concern for others, cooperation, and support for collective responses to shared global challenges (Chen et al., 2023; Fuller, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). To explore these behavioural manifestations of GC, I discuss Fuller's (2023) qualitative study on the early behavioural signs of GC among children, Liu et al.'s (2023) experimental tests of GC behaviour among adults, and Chen et al.'s (2023) large-scale quantitative investigation of behavioural responses during the COVID-19 pandemic across the globe.

Fuller (2023) explored the early development of GC among primary school children in Aotearoa NZ and examined the roles of parents and schools in its development. She conducted a qualitative study exploring early influences and indicators of GC among primary school children aged 10–11 in Aotearoa NZ. The study involved interviews with children, parents, and teachers, focusing on how family and school environments contribute to or hinder children's GC development. Fuller (2023) found that empathy, kindness, perspective-taking, concern for others, cultural openness, environmental concern, interest in global issues and willingness to problem-solve and help others seem to be early indicators of GC. These behaviours represent the early expressions of globally conscious thinking in the sense that they require children to consider the perspectives, wellbeing, and experiences of others beyond themselves. Fuller (2023) argued that GC is built on empathy, kindness, perspective-taking, concerns for others and prosocial behaviours.

Similar behavioural patterns have also been observed in adult populations. For example, Liu et al. (2023) explored how GC influences behavioural patterns and how GC may help individuals to think beyond their national identity and overcome ingroup biases. This quantitative study provided empirical behavioural evidence of GC through donation behaviour among adults. With experimental measures, Liu et al. (2023) examined whether GC translated into behavioural action by using scenario-based games such as the Prisoner's Dilemma Game to test individual altruism, cooperation and contributions to greater collective outcomes, particularly the differences in donations given to ingroup members versus outgroup members. They found that individuals with higher GC were more generous, more willing to cooperate, contributed more to global public goods, and were less likely to prioritise national interests over collective wellbeing (Liu et al., 2023). Their findings suggested that traits like empathy, concern for others, and openness to difference are consistent GC behaviours present in adulthood. Taken together, these findings suggest that GC may be expressed through a range of prosocial and empathic behaviours across different stages of life. While Fuller (2023) identified these prosocial tendencies in their early stages among primary school children, Liu et al. (2023) demonstrated how they may manifest in adulthood as actions that prioritise collective wellbeing.

Both Fuller (2023) and Liu et al. (2023) provided valuable behavioural evidence associated with GC among children and adults. However, both studies are limited in their ability to demonstrate how these behaviours operate in real-life situations, as these results are based on reported attitudes, qualitative accounts, or experimental measures. As such, Chen et al.'s (2023) study provided empirical evidence of how GC influenced individuals' behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on quantitative results from 35 cultures, this multinational study examined whether GC influenced how individuals respond to a real collective global crisis across the world. Chen et al. (2023) used self-report surveys to measure identification with all humanity, cosmopolitical orientation and global orientations, as well as actual prosocial behaviours and attitudes in response to COVID-19 among adults. They found that globally conscious individuals were more likely to express prosocial behaviours and show greater concern about COVID-19, such as wearing masks and helping others formally or informally. More specifically, individuals with higher levels of GC were more likely to engage in protective health behaviours as part of a collective effort to combat the pandemic. These findings are significant because global crises such as COVID-19 require cooperation, empathy, and concern that extend beyond personal interests and national boundaries. Responding effectively to a global pandemic requires individuals to recognise their interconnectedness with people around the world and to act in ways that contribute to collective wellbeing. Moreover, Chen et al. (2023) also found that people with higher national consciousness tend to have more defensive and group-protective responses, such as viewing 'outsiders' as threats and prioritising one's safety over global wellbeing. This means that people with stronger national consciousness were not necessarily less concerned about collective wellbeing, but their concern was often directed more toward protecting their own national group. These findings suggested that GC is more than an internal awareness or experience of an identity, it can be manifested into meaningful action when international cooperation is needed to address shared global challenges.

Altogether, these studies showed that across childhood and adulthood, individuals with higher levels of GC tend to demonstrate empathy, cooperation, cultural openness, and concern for collective wellbeing. These behaviours become particularly apparent

during collective crises such as the COVID-19 global pandemic, where thinking beyond individual interests and being responsive and cooperative to the needs of broader communities is required. Overall, Fuller (2023) provided rich qualitative insights into the early behavioural signs of GC among children, while Liu et al. (2023) demonstrated behavioural evidence of GC through experimental methods. Lastly, Chen et al. (2023) extended this behavioural exploration of GC by providing large-scale quantitative evidence of the relationship between GC and prosocial responses during the global pandemic. In the next section, I will return to Fuller's (2023) and Zhang et al.'s (2023) work and introduce Fraser's (2025) theoretical contribution to examine the more experiential and relational dimensions of GC development.

A dynamic experiential and relational perspective on the facilitation of GC development

While GC has been associated with prosocial and cooperative behaviours (Chen et al., 2023; Fuller,2023; Zhang et al., 2023), it is still unclear how these dynamic processes contribute to GC development. Existing research suggests that GC does not emerge on its own but is dynamically shaped through ongoing lived experiences and interactions with others in their social networks and wider communities (Fuller, 2023; Fraser, 2025; Zhang et al., 2023). It is indicated that while privilege and access to resources may facilitate GC development (Choi et al., 2025; Furia, 2005), the content of these resources matters. The social, cultural, and environmental contexts in which individuals engage with and make sense of these experiences are also important in the cultivation of GC development (Choi et al., 2025; Fraser, 2025; Fuller, 2023; Furia, 2005). It is suggested that intercultural engagement and significant life experiences provide opportunities for individuals to navigate new identities and develop openness to different perspectives (Fraser, 2025; Fuller, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Access to adequate education, family influences, intercultural experiences and identity exploration have all been identified as potential agents for fostering GC development (Fraser, 2025; Fuller, 2023). This section explores the factors that may facilitate GC development across different stages of life.

As discussed, Fuller (2023) identified some early behavioural signs of GC among primary school children, including empathy, concern for others, and cultural openness.

Beyond these findings, Fuller (2023) also provided insights into the social conditions that may facilitate GC development in young children. Parents and schools were identified as important socialising agents who are fundamental in facilitating opportunities for children to engage with diverse perspectives, global or environmental issues, and intercultural experiences (Fuller, 2023). These findings indicate that access to resources such as travel, technology and education is important for fostering early GC development (Fraser, 2025; Fuller, 2023). However, since children are not the ones who decide what resources they have access to, Fuller (2023) pointed out that it is then dependent on the adults around them modelling GC behaviours, such as discussing global issues and participating in community activities. From this perspective, adults become either the gatekeeper or the facilitator of early GC development in these children's lives. These findings strongly indicate that GC development is influenced by social relationships and how individuals are supported to engage and make meaning of their experiences and resources.

This emphasis on contextual and relational learning aligns greatly with Fraser's (2025) theoretical work. In this paper, Fraser (2025) proposed that GC may be cultivated through intercultural music engagement by reviewing and analysing literature on interdisciplinary research and theoretical literature on music, cultural identity, diversity and globalisation. Fraser (2025) argued that meaningful engagement with music from diverse cultures could create opportunities for people to develop curiosity, appreciation and openness to cultural and diverse differences. This suggested that creativity may provide an alternative pathway for cultivating GC development as it creates positive experiences and attitudes towards differences. Moreover, group activities such as intercultural music engagements seem to help foster a sense of collective identity, belonging and connections with diverse others, highlighting the importance of relational and experiential learning in supporting individuals to grow their openness to diversity. Both Fuller (2023) and Fraser (2023) emphasised that while access to resources and opportunity is important in GC development, a contextual understanding of these influences needed to be further examined. Their findings suggested that creativity, intercultural engagement, and meaningful experiences and socialisation play an

important role in fostering openness towards difference and cultivating globally conscious mindsets.

Following this emphasis on the importance of relational and experiential learning in GC development, Zhang et al. (2023)'s findings further highlighted how GC develop through significant life experiences and identity navigations. As discussed earlier, their findings suggest that significant life events change how individuals understand themselves, their role and position in relation to others, and the world around them, creating opportunities for the development of globally conscious perspectives. In addition, pre-existing contextual factors, such as education level, religion and types of job, also seem to have an influence on how individuals develop their worldviews and make meaning of their lived experiences (Zhang et al., 2023). This finding suggested that certain life experiences and long-term changes may expand one's social networks, expose individuals to new perspectives, and encourage multi-identity exploration, contributing to their GC development. However, the study was a quantitative, cross-sectional investigation of these variables and thus did not provide contextual insight into *how* these interpersonal factors lead to the enhancement of GC. It is also interesting to note that Zhang et al. (2023) also found that increasing age does not necessarily enhance GC. On the contrary, they found that GC tended to decline with age, which may be surprising as it challenges the common assumption that wisdom comes with age. Nevertheless, Zhang et al.'s study (2023) showed that GC is not simply a product of greater experience through aging but is developed through the underlying meaning-making of lived experiences that prompt individuals to re-evaluate their identities and relationships with others. This study further points to the importance of understanding the contextual, relational, and experiential influences on GC development.

As shown, intercultural experiences, social relationships, identity navigation, and meaningful interactions play an important role in understanding the development of GC, but the exploration of GC is still emerging, and more research still needs to be conducted to understand these dynamics in greater depth. While the above literature provided a fundamental understanding of GC, these studies are not without limitations, as most of the GC-related literature is predominantly quantitative or experimental in

their approach. Despite these valuable contributions to understanding GC, less contextual and experiential understanding of GC is known. Hence, further empirical research is required, particularly on the contribution of creativity in fostering GC development, how individuals experience GC in everyday life, and how they make sense of this process and translate it into actions. Further qualitative research is needed to explore the underlying contextual, relational, and experiential meaning-making processes that shape and inform GC in individuals. Next, I will address some of the gaps presented in the current literature and how my study may address these gaps.

Gaps in the Current Literature

While research on GC has grown over recent decades, it remains relatively new and is still emerging in the academic world (Choi et al., 2025; Fraser et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Existing literature has predominantly relied on quantitative approaches, including surveys, psychometric measurements, experimental designs, and large-scale cross-sectional studies (e.g., Choi et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). These studies provided valuable information in establishing the conceptualisation of GC, including the influences of cultural identity, social relations, cultural competency, prosocial behaviour, and its impact on global wellbeing (Choi et al., 2025; Fraser et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). These findings have contributed significantly to how we understand GC and why it is important to explore in this increasingly interconnected world. However, it is important to note that quantitative approaches can only provide limited insight into *how* individuals dynamically and reflexively experience, interpret, and develop GC within their everyday lives. While existing studies have begun to suggest that social relationships and cultural contexts play important roles in shaping GC development, very few qualitative studies explore how individuals understand these influences (Choi et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2023).

As discussed, social and cultural contexts play an important role in shaping GC and how GC influence people's behaviours (Chen et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023). However, less is known about how individuals make meaning of their experiences within these contexts, and how these contexts affect their understanding of themselves and others (Choi et al., 2025; Fraser, 2025; Fuller, 2023). For example, while Chen et al. (2023) suggested that GC influenced how people responded to global

crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the underlying internal processes that influence individuals' responses remain unclear. Few explanations have been provided regarding how participants interpret these experiences and why certain experiences may be more influential than others (Fraser, 2025; Fuller, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Using a qualitative approach, therefore, might help address these limitations by exploring the subjective meaning-making process that leads individuals to cultivate and enhance their GC (Liu, 2011; Liu & MacDonald, 2016), offering greater insights into how GC develops through everyday interactions, life experiences, and social relationships (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). A deeper contextual and experiential exploration of GC may provide greater understanding of how lived contexts and experiences influence GC, and how these factors dynamically contribute to GC development over time.

Lastly, the existing GC literature has limited research within the unique social, cultural, and historical context of Aotearoa NZ, with most studies being conducted in countries such as the United States, China, Hong Kong (HK), and Singapore, or within broader multinational and cross-cultural research programmes (Choi et al., 2025; Fraser et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). As discussed in the previous sections, Aotearoa NZ occupies a distinctive position characterised by both biculturalism and its increasingly diverse population (Sibley et al., 2011; Spoonley, 2015). The ongoing advocacy for Māori rights and the significance of Te Tiriti have contributed to the unique value of studying GC and diversity in the Aotearoa NZ context (Mutu, 2018; Smith, 2012; Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011). As individuals navigate these complex social, political and environmental contexts, their experiences may provide valuable insights into how GC develops through lived experience, shaping how individuals understand diversity, belonging, cultural identity, and their relationships with others around the world (Hodgetts et al., 2022; Safa et al., 2021; Sibley et al., 2011). Examining GC within the Aotearoa NZ context therefore may contribute not only to local understandings of GC development, but also to broader international discussions regarding the role of culture, identity, relationships, and social context in understanding GC.

Overall, the existing literature provides an important foundation for understanding GC, including its theoretical development, potential behavioural outcomes, and contextual influences. However, this topic remains limited by the lack of

qualitative research to explore how individuals understand and develop GC through lived experiences, within different social and cultural contexts. Little is known about how everyday experiences, social relationships, and other contextual factors contribute to GC development, especially within the unique context of Aotearoa NZ. The following chapter outlines the methodology adopted to address these gaps.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines philosophical foundations underpinning my research, which have informed the methodological approach. The chapter begins with a discussion of the epistemological and ontological assumptions guiding the study. Next, I introduce the integrated conceptual framework, drawing on relational ethics (Hopner & Liu, 2021) and narrative storytelling (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012), informed by Kaupapa Māori Theory and research principles (Smith, 2012; Smith, 2015), to provide a culturally responsive and relationally grounded approach to understanding GC. I then describe the qualitative research design, including the use of case-based narrative inquiry, before discussing my positionality as a researcher and the ethical considerations informing this study. The chapter then details the research methods, including participant recruitment, engagement processes, interviews, data collection procedures, and reflexive practice. Finally, I outline the analytical approach used to interpret participants' narratives, including case-based narrative analysis (Thomas, 2010) and creative response (Mace & Ward, 2002). Together, the methodological approach provided a framework for exploring how lived experiences contribute to the development of GC.

Philosophical Assumptions

The epistemological stance of this research is grounded in the understanding that knowledge is co-constructed through relationships and lived experiences (Hopner & Liu, 2021; Hodgetts et al, 2022). This epistemology emphasises how knowledge is formed through communication and intentional meaning-making (Hodgetts et al, 2022; Hopner & Liu, 2021; Liu, 2011). Within this stance, knowledge is intentionally constructed for the benefit of the community and its people, focusing on the ‘how’ and ‘why’, rather than just the ‘what’ (Liu, 2011). This way of knowledge seeking puts the focus back on the people, highlighting the importance of relational engagement, reciprocity and shared intentions in knowledge production (Bishop, 1999; Smith, 2012). This relational and experiential epistemological stance is a natural choice for examining GC, where human connectedness and meaning making are its central theoretical foundations (Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

The ontological stance underpinning this research is that realities can exist differently through different perspectives (Liu, 2011; Schiff, 2012). As such, it is important to distinguish this stance from the assumption that knowledge reflects reality and that there can only be one objective reality (Liu, 2011; Murray, 2015). The idea of emic and etic perspectives highlights that individuals can experience the same event but interpret it differently, and both are valid and real to the persons (Liu, 2011). This assumes that interpretation and experience can differ between individuals, resulting in multiple realities that co-exist and both can be equally true. Consider the emic perspective, where knowledge can be interpreted differently by individuals with different insights and frameworks of knowledge (Gaber, 2017), creating multiple realities of the same event. This approach is based on the relational and experiential epistemology that if knowledge is not absolute and is developed through relationships and experiences, then it can be interpreted differently based on people's diverse backgrounds and worldviews. In contrast, the etic perspective is about the researchers' interpretation of participants' realities. Using an emic perspective to understand GC allow us to really examine what GC means to individuals in their own words and through their own understandings informed by lived experience, identity, whakapapa (genealogy/lineage) and their diverse backgrounds (Gaber, 2017).

Conceptual Frameworks

Relational Ethics

Relational ethics provides the key framework for conducting this research as it recognises that knowledge is a relational process, co-constructed through relationships with people, rather than about them (Hodgetts et al., 2022). Relational ethics emphasises mutuality, responsibility, responsiveness, and interconnectedness between people (Hodgetts et al., 2022). Rather than viewing research as a neutral, objective process detached from human relationships, relational ethics acknowledges that researchers and participants are humans who build relationships and share responsibilities in the production of knowledge (Hodgetts et al., 2022). This approach foregrounds respect, care, reciprocity, and attentiveness to the needs and experiences of others throughout the research process.

The framework of relational ethics offers a suitable lens for analysing GC because both concepts emphasise interdependence, shared humanity and relational awareness across cultural contexts. GC requires individuals to recognise themselves as part of a broader global society and develop awareness of the connectedness between all things (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). It also requires individuals to engage with cultural differences with compassion and recognise shared humanity across diverse social and cultural contexts (Choi et al, 2025; Liu et al, 2023). Relational ethics therefore provides a complementary conceptual framework for exploring GC development, as it is anchored in an awareness of interdependence between researcher and participant.

Overall, relational ethics offers a relevant framework and conceptual lens for understanding and unpacking GC, because both are grounded in human connections. GC involves developing an awareness of interconnectedness and understanding our global impacts on each other, while relational ethics provides the framework to examine how individuals understand these connections through lived experiences and meaningful relationships (Hodgetts et al., 2022; Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

Drawing On Kaupapa Māori Theory to Inform the Application of Relational Ethics in Aotearoa NZ

Kaupapa Māori theory (KMT) and principles (Smith, 2012) offer a process for *applying* relational ethics into practice and engaging with participants in the context of Aotearoa NZ. While this study is not positioned as Kaupapa Māori research (KMR), I draw upon KMT to inform culturally responsive and grounded research in Aotearoa NZ. KMT provides an Indigenous, relational framework that understands knowledge as collectively constructed, culturally grounded, and embedded within relationships (Bishop, 1999; Hodgetts et al., 2022; Smith, 2012; Rappaport, 2000; Walker et al., 2006). The current research incorporates a broader relational and experiential stance (i.e., relational ethics) that is further informed and contextualised by a Kaupapa Māori framework. Both relational ethics and KMT acknowledge that knowledge is co-created through meaningful relationships between both parties (Love, 2008; Hodgetts et al., 2022; Smith, 2012).

Indigenous communities have historically been underrepresented or misrepresented in scientific research (Love, 2008; Smith, 2012). KMT (Smith, 2017) and Kaupapa Māori research principles emerged as a response to these limitations, addressing the power imbalance between researchers and participants (Smith, 2012). Across many Indigenous cultures, knowledge is understood as being deeply connected to one's worldviews, lived experience and "the people" (Bishop, 1999; Hart, 2010; Mane, 2009). Within KMT, lived experience is recognised as a legitimate source of knowledge, known as mātua ā-wheako (Te Pou, 2023), aligning with the experiential epistemology that values lived experience as valid knowledge. Drawing on KMT and principles to inform my relationally ethical engagements with participants reinforces the importance of relationships, lived experience, and interconnectedness in shaping how individuals understand themselves and the world around them.

This eclectic and integrated approach challenges the notions of mainstream Western-oriented frameworks, where knowledge is believed to be absolute and detached from context (Bishop, 1999; Goulding et al., 2016). Drawing on KMT, this study represents an important shift towards the decolonisation of what we consider legitimate knowledge. Traditional research methodologies often prioritise neutrality and strict structures, historically marginalising those who do not fit the WEIRD demographic (Henrich, 2020; Henrich et al., 2010). It also provides a political and transformational framework that challenges the imperialism of Western research and legitimises Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview) research approach, promoting cultural integrity and self-determination in research involving Māori communities (Bishop, 2011; Smith, 2012; Walker et al., 2006).

As a HK Chinese immigrant and a tauiwi (foreigner) researcher living in Aotearoa NZ who is engaged to a Māori, drawing on a Kaupapa Māori approach honours my commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and contextual enactment of relational ethics. For example, applying the principle of tino rangatiratanga reflects my commitment to recognising and upholding Māori self-determination within the research process, particularly when engaging with Māori participants. A relationally ethical approach ensures that GC can be investigated in-depth by listening to participants' diverse worldviews in a way that is mutually respectful, reciprocal, and ethically grounded. To

do so in a culturally responsive way in Aotearoa, my engagements with participants were informed by key Māori values and principles developed by Māori scholars (Smith, 2012). These principles will be outlined in detail later in the discussion about the research design.

In summary, adopting a relationally ethical, Kaupapa Māori-informed approach enables authenticity and intentionality in the research process, fostering mutually respectful and trusting relationships between researcher and participants. This relational grounding shifts the research dynamic away from treating participants as 'test subjects' who can be controlled, towards a more human-centric construction of knowledge. In doing so, participants are supported to exercise autonomy over their narratives, enabling more genuine and meaningful insights.

Narrative Storytelling

Narrative storytelling provides a framework for understanding how individuals construct meaning through storytelling (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012). Recognising that personal experiences are not just records of past events but also a dynamic and interpretive process that reveals different aspects of individuals (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012). Within narrative approaches, storytelling offers insight into the individual's inner world, revealing not only what has been experienced but how those experiences are understood and interpreted (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012). This further highlights the role of narrative as a co-constructed process, where meaning emerges through interaction between the researcher and participant. Schiff (2012) conceptualised this process as "making present", suggesting that narratives are actively constructed in the moment of telling, shaped by context, audience, and relational dynamics. As such, storytelling is not viewed as a fixed recounting of past experiences, but also a dynamic internal process where individuals re-interpret their experiences over and across time. This is particularly relevant to the study of GC development because it allows room to explore how individuals re-construct and re-interpret their understanding through lived experience over time.

Narrative storytelling complements relational ethics and the Kaupapa Māori-informed approach underpinning this study. Narrative approaches recognise that

meaning is constructed through relationships and meaningful dialogue (Rappaport, 2000; Schiff, 2012). This aligns with the emphasis of relational ethics on mutuality, responsiveness, and co-construction of knowledge. Moreover, the exchange of personal stories as relationship-building reflects Kaupapa Māori values that prioritise authentic, reciprocal engagement (Bishop, 1999; Cram et al, 2018; Mark & Lyons, 2010).

Summary of the Integrated Conceptual Framework(s)

Together, these frameworks offer a carefully layered and meaningful approach to understanding GC. Relational ethics emphasises interconnectedness and mutual responsibility and ethical responsiveness in human relationships. KMT underpins a culturally responsive engagement throughout the research process, anchored in relational accountability through whanaungatanga (building relationships and connections) and manākitanga (see discussion about enacting Kaupapa Māori principles in next section). And finally, narrative storytelling offers an authentic way to understand how individuals construct and share meanings of GC through the way they present their stories (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012). In particular, a narrative approach aligns with relational ethics as it recognises that stories are co-constructed and shaped through interaction and social relationships (Hodgetts et al., 2022; Hopner & Liu, 2021; Rappaport, 2000). Woven together, this combination of approaches supports a relationally grounded methodology in which storytelling is conducted with care, reciprocity, and attention to the relational and experiential processes of GC.

Research Design

This study has taken a qualitative approach to explore how lived experiences contribute to GC development, allowing an in-depth understanding of the participants' narratives, their meaning-making processes and unique interpretations in relation to GC (Chao et al, 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). GC is an ongoing and dynamic process grounded in relational and experiential learning (Choi et al, 2025; Fraser, 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016), hence a qualitative approach is necessary to capture the richness of participants' stories and experiences. Within the qualitative approach, the study uses a case-based narrative inquiry as its research design (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012) to examine individual experiences of GC development and how participants make

meanings from their experiences and re-interpret them over time (Hodgetts et al, 2022; Liu et al, 2023).

Case-based Narrative Inquiry

Case-based inquiry was chosen as the research design because it enables an in-depth exploration of complex real-world social phenomena across diverse contexts (Amaral, 2022; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). Rather than seeking broad generalisable findings, case-based research acknowledges the complexity of human experience and the valuable insights that individuals can have (Thomas, 2010). The case-based approach focuses on understanding lived experiences as they are shaped by individuals' social, cultural, and relational contexts (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012; Thomas, 2010). This approach is particularly relevant to this study because GC is understood to be developed through diverse lived experiences, relationships, and cultural contexts (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Therefore, each participant's lived experiences need to be understood as a distinct case to provide an in-depth understanding of how these experiences uniquely informed and shaped their GC development.

As mentioned, Narrative storytelling offers a glimpse of the participants' inner worlds, by allowing them not only to tell the stories how they want but also by the way they present and interpret their experiences (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012). Alongside this narrative approach, a case study design allows space for in-depth and contextualised exploration of each participants' narrative and emphasises the uniqueness of each case (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012; Thomas, 2010). This combination allows a richer and more personalised exploration of individuals' GC development, as interpreted and made sense of through participants' narratives of their lived experiences.

In summary, a case-based narrative inquiry (grounded in relational ethics and informed by Kaupapa Māori principles) is used within my research to critically explore the contextual and relational nature of each participant's lived experiences. Kaupapa Māori principles guide the ethical and culturally responsive engagements with participants in this study (Hodgetts et al, 2022). This methodology also reflects an acknowledgement of lived experience as a source of wisdom (mātua ā-wheako; Māori

Health Action Plan, 2025), which fits within the wider relational and experiential framework that grounds this study.

Kaupapa Māori Approach Principles

In this section, I present the KMR principles which informed my ethical and culturally responsive engagements with participants. KMR principles provide a human-centric manner of engagement (Martin et al., 2024; Ministry of Health, 2020; Smith, 2012) which support and uphold, Tino rangatiratanga, ensure whanaungatanga, manākitanga and Ako Māori (Reciprocity of teaching and learning) are prioritised and maintained throughout (Cram et al., 2018; Walker et al., 2006; Smith, 2017).

The key principles I draw from are: Tino rangatiratanga, which translates to self-determination and sovereignty for tāngata whenua (people of the land) to have meaningful control over their lives and wellbeing (Smith, 2012; Cram et al, 2018). Whanaungatanga, which means establishing genuine relationships through ongoing engagements that create spaces where knowledge can be collaboratively constructed and interpreted (Smith, 2011; Walker et al., 2006). Manaaki ki te tangata means sharing, hosting and cultivating spaces for reciprocation, ensuring people are looked after, and their needs are met (Cram et al, 2018; Walker et al, 2006). Ako Māori refers to reciprocal sharing with intention, as Ako means to both learn and to teach, validating everyone's ability to share and learn from each other (Cram et al, 2018; Smith, 2012). Aroha ki te tangata, which means respect for the people, giving autonomy for them to define their own spaces and meet on their own terms (Cram et al, 2018; Smith, 2017). Finally, kanohi ki te kanohi means meeting people face-to-face, and ensuring authentic engagements (Cram et al, 2018; Walker et al, 2006).

The implementation of these principles in research prioritises relational learning, reciprocity, and ongoing engagements that cultivate space for knowledge to be collaboratively co-constructed and interpreted (Bishop, 2011; Mahuika, 2008; Smith, 2011; Walker et al, 2006). Together, these practices demonstrate how Kaupapa Māori principles were intentionally enacted within my engagement with participants to ensure that this study was culturally grounded and responsive within the context of Aotearoa.

Positionality

As a 1.5-generation HK Chinese with experience of working internationally as a community worker in the mental health, social services, and lived experience sector, I have noticed the lack of existing literature on lived experience and its impact on individuals' learning and development of GC. This inspired my methodological decision to implement Kaupapa Māori principles and relational ethics to understand GC through lived experiences. Rather than treating participants as subjects to test hypotheses, these approaches recognise that the genuine bonds between researcher and participants influence how stories are shared and presented (Hodgetts et al, 2022; Hopner & Liu, 2021). As these approaches are grounded in the understanding that knowledge is a two-way exchange, they also acknowledge how my background and worldviews inform my approach to this research, such as how I engage with my participants and interpret the results (Bishop, 1999; Gaber, 2017).

As this study is guided by KMR, it is fundamental to acknowledge my positioning as a tauiwi researcher being informed by this approach. While KMR is designed to be used by and for people with Māori ancestry, the participation of non-Māori scholars is encouraged, with the condition that it is guided by Māori scholars (Pūtaiora Writing Group, 2010; Smith, 2012). Therefore, to ensure the cultural integrity of this study, it is under the supervision of Dr Ahnya Martin, a lecturer in Bi-Cultural Psychology and Kaupapa Māori researcher. As a tangata Tiriti (person of Te Tiriti), I recognise my responsibilities to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi by engaging in a culturally responsive manner and challenging the notion of researcher neutrality often embedded within traditional Western approaches to psychology.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the current research was obtained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee [MUHEC] and deemed as low risk, ensuring that the study met the required standards for research involving human participants. Ethical considerations were guided by the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (MUHEC, 2017). All documents related to this research were stored on a password-protected drive, and access to these files was restricted to the researcher and two supervisors to ensure confidentiality. In one case,

photographs were used to capture the physical material participant used as a visual aid to support their storytelling.

Method

This section details the steps that were taken for participant recruitment, engagement with participants through the interview process, followed by the transcription procedure.

Participants

The study aimed to interview three working adults with lived experiences navigating diverse environments and/or settings, including but not limited to biracial individuals, 1.5 or 2nd-generation immigrants or individuals who have lived in different countries for more than a year. Individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds who are working or have worked in diverse environments (e.g. gender, disability, ethnicity) were preferred.

Participants were to have a degree of insight or reflection on their cultural positionality and interconnectedness. As noted, the study is informed by a Kaupapa Māori approach to conceptualise and study GC through an Asian/Tauiwi researcher's lens, so it was important to ensure at least two participants were of Asian descent or Māori descent.

Recruitment

Recruitment occurred through a general call for interest via email within existing networks, in accordance with ethical guidelines, by maintaining two degrees of separation. The email included an overview of the present study, criteria for participants and an information sheet (see Appendix A) outlining the purpose of the study, their rights, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Interested parties would then be introduced via email. Three participants were then recruited to participate in the research. The first participant outlined in the case studies is Toni, a queer Cook Islands Māori who works within the diversity, equity, and inclusion sector. The second participant is Amy, who is a 1.5-generation HK-Chinese New Zealander working in creative capability and workforce development. And finally, Miguel is a second-

generation Brazilian American working as a content creator who advocates for men's wellbeing.

A 20-minute online meet-and-greet was held with all three participants. This served as a time and space for the researcher to engage in a process of whanaungatanga (Cram et al, 2018; Walker et al, 2006) and further explain the research and define global consciousness. Participants were then given time to ask questions and raise concerns. I then explained the criteria of the interview location, which had to be significant to them and asked to have a backup plan in case the first location was outdoors. In providing the opportunity for participants to choose their own location that was significant to them, reflects the concept of Te Taiao, which recognises the interconnected relationship between humans and the environment (Mane, 2009; Mark & Lyons, 2010). Following this, we scheduled a date for the in-person interview and exchanged phone numbers for easier communication. Following the online meeting, a consent form was sent to participants (see Appendix B). Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview, and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. Once the location was confirmed by participants, a reminder was sent via email and text message a week before the in-person interview.

This initial online meeting provided a space for potential participants to ask questions and address any concerns they might have. It also freed up time for the 60-minute in-person interview to focus on the research questions and participants' stories. The online meet-and-greet also allowed for me to learn more about the participants as people and to prepare tailored questions. This is an essential process where the participant and researcher can build a trusting and respectful relationship through whanaungatanga (Bishop, 1999; Walker et al, 2006). In allowing participants the autonomy to pick the place in which the research is conducted, I am actively enacting aroha ki te tangata (Martin et al., 2024), rather than the researcher choosing a place that may feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar for participants. This opportunity was given to them to show how people connect with their environment and what that choice tells us about them. Face-to-face interviews were preferred over Zoom not only for the location but also drawing on the notion of Kanohi ki te Kanohi, a face to be seen and heard,

which further supports whanaungatanga, manākitanga and provides a space for in-depth rich stories to be shared (Cram et al, 2018; Smith, 2015).

Koha And Kai

Consistent with a KMR approach it was important that I offer and share kai (food) (Martin et al., 2024; Smith, 2012) alongside providing a koha (gift) to show manaki ki te tangata, and enact aroha ki te tangata, thanking my participants for their time and sharing of their whakaaro (thoughts/opinion). At the end of the online meeting, I asked participants for any food allergies or preferences for snacks, to plan what kai I could bring to share for the interview. Prior to each interview, I purchased kai and took it to the interview. By providing and sharing kai, opportunities for connection and reciprocity were cultivated, creating a natural and supportive environment for kōrero (conversation). A koha of a $50 supermarket voucher was given to each participant at the end of the interview (Martin et al, 2024; Smith, 2012).

Engaging With My Participants

As mentioned earlier, relationships with participants were first established through an initial online meet-and-greet, followed by in-person interviews. This process helped build trust and familiarity, enabling participants to feel more comfortable sharing their lived experiences.

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method as they allow the space and flexibility for participants to tell their stories conversationally (Cram et al, 2018; Walker et al, 2006). Through the semi-structured interviews, participants and I engaged in reciprocal kōrero, where knowledge was co-constructed through shared stories, experiences, and reflections, enacting ako Māori. This allowed for the flexibility of what participants wanted to provide while still letting me guide the conversation to centre around GC. Ensuring the study remained participant-led and provided space for more in-depth discussions and a safer space to share personal stories. Tino rangatiratanga was acknowledged in my interactions with Toni, who identified as a Cook Islands Māori, recognising the importance of Māori self-determination within the research process (Mahuika, 2008; Smith, 2012; Smith, 2015).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted kanohi ki te kanohi at a location chosen by the participant. Each interview began with a warm greeting, a verbal check-in and a hug to show aroha (love and compassion) and manaakitanga. Participants would then show me the location they had chosen and provide a brief explanation of why they have chosen this specific location. Before the interview officially began, I presented the kai and koha and a verbal review of the consent form to ensure participants understood all the terms before signing. The interview format aligns with the relationally ethical and Kaupapa Māori informed approach, where meaningful and reciprocal engagement is prioritised (Hodgetts et al., 2022; Smith, 2012).

The participants were first asked to introduce themselves and describe their cultural backgrounds and upbringing. Sharing of cultural backgrounds and upbringing further supports the process of whanaungatanga. A list of prompt questions was prepared by the researcher to guide the interview (see Appendix C), guided by narrative inquiry (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012) and manākitanga. It was important to allow the participants to lead the conversations and have the space to tell their stories the way they wanted. Follow-up questions were asked sometimes in response to participants' stories and experiences relating to their worldview, values, reflections, reasons for the chosen location and its significance and lastly their understanding of GC.

Collecting Participants Narratives

Given the importance of the interview location, kanohi ki te kanohi interviews allowed for further understanding of participants' non-verbal cues, such as body language, pauses, and facial expressions. These are all important for building a contextual and relational understanding of their stories (Murray, 2015; Schiff, 2012). Each interview was recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim by me and sent back to participants for feedback and review. This allowed participants to clarify their stories and expand their responses if they wanted to. By providing the participants with the opportunity to choose their interview location, own pseudonym, and review their transcripts. These practices recognised participants as active contributors to the research process and supported their autonomy, ownership, and control over how their stories were represented, showing the principle of aroha ki te tangata. This process ensured the accuracy and authenticity of their narratives.

Following each interview, I recorded a post interview reflection immediately to capture initial interpretations, observations, and responses to the kōrero. These reflections were recorded in written notes or video recordings. This process supported reflexivity and provided additional contextual insights into the co-creation process of knowledge, strengthening the richness of the data.

Cultural Reflexivity

To ensure cultural accountability, I engaged in ongoing reflexive practice through regular supervision and revisions. This reflexivity was essential to maintain alignment with Kaupapa Māori values and uphold ethical commitments to both participants and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In addition to formal ethical procedures, cultural safety was an important consideration for this research, particularly when working with participants whose voices are often underrepresented within Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) research contexts (Henrich et al., 2010).

Case-Based Narrative Analysis

The narratives from this qualitative case-based research were analysed and documented using case-based narrative analysis and creative response. The analysis involved individual case studies to examine how each participant's narratives reflected their experiential development of GC. These cases were treated as standalone cases, with some cross-case comparison to identify similarities and differences across narratives (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012).

The analysis began with holistic engagement with each transcript and audio recording, involving repeated readings and listening to become familiar with participants' narratives. This included paying attention to how participant delivered their story, such as their tone and word choice. My post-interview reflections were also reviewed and rewritten into an overall reflection after each transcript. This process helped me to relive the interview and thus deepened my understanding of the participants and also reflect on the assumptions and biases I might have brought to the kōrero. Each narrative was then story-mapped by identifying key relationships and events, turning points and meaningful quotes (Amaral, 2022; Thomas, 2010; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012. These story maps were used to construct an individual narrative case for

each participant, preserving the contextual richness and uniqueness of their lived experiences and GC development. The narratives were structured through key events and experiences, mapped chronologically, and finally, presented in relation to participants' whakapapa, beliefs, experiences, cultures, worldviews and particular moments when GC was mentioned and reflected upon. Within this narrative analysis, key moments relevant to GC development were identified, interpreted, and organised according to the three components conceptualised by Liu and MacDonald (2016): awareness of interconnectedness, moral interdependence, and reflexive enactment. A case-based presentation enabled each participant's story to be understood as a distinct case in their own right, before similarities and differences were considered across cases.

This culturally grounded process allowed for a deeper understanding of how GC is developed over time through contextual embeddedness and subjective interpretation of lived experience (Chao et al, 2025; Liu et al, 2023). This holistic approach provided insight into not only how participants experienced their lives but also how these were interpreted according to their underlying identities and worldviews (Choi et al, 2025; Fraser et al, 2025; Hodgetts et al, 2022). Following this, each transcript and recording was revisited to get a final sense of the narratives and write a general summary for each case study. This was followed by a cross-case comparison to identify commonalities and differences among the three cases.

Creative Interpretation

In addition to the case-based narrative analysis, a creative interpretive response was produced for each participant as part of the interpretation process. Three creative responses were created following the narrative analysis of each case study. Following repeated holistic engagement with the interview materials and writing the participant's case, I created visual artworks as a way of engaging with participants' narratives in an innovative and meaningful way. These creative responses were the result of my ongoing reflections and interpretations of the participants' narratives and my interactions with them. The creative process enabled me to engage with participants' GC development on a multidimensional level that interconnected with my own reflections, identity, and meaning-making processes (Mace & Ward, 2002). This aligns with the relational and

experiential epistemology of this study, which recognises knowledge as dynamic, contextual, and shaped through experience and relationships (Levine & Levine, 2011). The use of creative interpretive practice also complements narrative storytelling by enabling a more holistic interpretation of participants lived experiences, including dimensions that may be difficult to fully capture verbally. The creative responses added depth to the interpretation process by providing a non-traditional way to understand participants' experiences and meaning-making processes (Sternberg, 2003). This aligns with the recognition that the cultivation of GC extends beyond verbal or intellectual domains, with creativity offering another pathway for understanding the meaning-making that underlies GC in individuals (Fraser, 2025). Together, the creative interpretation complemented the case-based narrative inquiry by providing a holistic means for incorporating and weaving both participants' and the researchers' interpretations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological approach adopted in this study to explore how lived experiences contribute to GC development for individuals. Grounded in a relational and experiential epistemology, as well as a pluralist understanding of reality, the research drew on relational ethics, informed by Kaupapa Māori principles, and used a narrative storytelling approach to provide a culturally responsive framework for understanding participants' experiences. A qualitative case-based narrative inquiry was used to examine the unique contexts, meanings, and experiences that shaped each participant's GC development. Through relationally informed engagement, narrative interviews, case-based analysis, and creative analytic responses, participants' stories were analysed in ways that centred their voices, lived experiences, and interpretations. Together, this methodological approach supports a holistic and contextual understanding of GC development. The following chapters present the three participant cases, beginning with Toni.

Chapter 4: Toni

This chapter introduces the first of three case studies, focusing on Toni and their journey towards GC development. To begin, I introduce Toni's cultural background, whakapapa and who they are now, which is important in setting the scene for the remainder of the chapter. Next, I discuss the chosen interview location, Toni's own home and why they have chosen their whare (house) to tell their story. Following this, I explore the key moments and experiences that have informed Toni's identity, values and how they came to appreciate their Māori heritage, which motivates and inspires their everyday life. Toni's narrative is presented in chronological order, beginning with childhood experiences that shaped their initial worldview and beliefs, turning points where Toni learned to embrace their diverse identity, and finally the present day, reflecting how Toni's experiences have influenced the way they live their life today. I then analyse Toni's narrative through a GC lens, reflecting on how Toni's lived experiences have helped them understand themselves in relation to the global context, and how they make sense of these experiences. These analyses are presented in three parts: awareness of interconnectedness, moral interdependence, and the enactment of GC. Analysing Toni's interpretations and meaning-making process is essential for understanding the contextual factors that contribute to our GC development, showing the importance of social relationships and lived experiences in understanding GC. Finally, I conclude the chapter with my own reflections on Toni's story and a creative response as a part of the interpretive and analysis process.

Introducing Toni

Toni (they/them) is a queer individual with a pluralistic identity of New Zealand and Cook Island Māori heritage who grew up in Hamilton, Aotearoa NZ. Toni now resides in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), the capital of Aotearoa NZ, working as a public servant in the government sector. Toni's parents are both Māori, while their father whakapapa to Aotearoa NZ, their mother whakapapa to the Cook Islands. This means that they were from different iwi, so have different histories, practices and even dialects. Due to colonialism, Māori were homogenised as one people 'Māori' (Martin, 2024; Metge, 1964; Mutu, 2018) it is important to distinguish this here, as Toni and their father both whakapapa to Ngāti Mahuta (a hapū in the North Island of Aotearoa NZ). Toni grew

up there on their ancestral land in the Waikato. On their mother's side, they also whakapapa to Cook Islands and Tahitian ancestry. Toni's maternal grandfather originated from the north of the Cook Islands, associated with Aotearoa NZ and spoke a language called Saku, otherwise known as Māngarongaro or the Penrhyn Language (Dictionary of Cook Islands Languages, 2026). Toni's maternal grandmother was from a very small island with a population of 50 people, and they spoke English and Cook Island Māori. Even though Toni's grandparents from both sides spoke multiple languages, Toni only grew up learning some basic Te Reo Māori. Toni explained that this was a deliberate choice by their grandparents not to pass down their native languages. They prioritised English in the household so their mokopuna [grandchild] could have a "better chance in the Pākehā world". This is a common sentiment associated with the State policy of assimilation, in which Te Reo Māori was suppressed (Groot et al., 2017; Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011).

As a child, Toni described themselves as an extroverted, confident and outspoken kid who had "subscribed to the Pākehā idea of individual success", so doing well academically and "getting ahead" was important for them. "I was very much lacking the kind of collective narrative that was set by our people [Māori & Cook Island Māori]," they reflected. Toni's reflections on identity and thus enactment of colonial Pākehā ideals illustrate the assimilation of individual academic success, over and above the collective and relational values of the wider whānau, as seen within Te Ao Māori (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Liu & Xie, 2023; Love, 2008; Rua et al., 2017; Sibley et al., 2011). As a "visibly brown" person growing up in Hamilton, in a predominantly white neighbourhood, Toni hadn't always enjoyed being different. "I remember being a kid, being almost ashamed to be Māori," Toni said regretfully. They recalled being labelled as "plastic" or "Oreo" by their Māori peers and being told that they were nothing like them, even though they looked like them. Toni felt this caused identity confusion within their young self, particularly regarding their ethnic background. This had pushed them away from participating in any cultural activities since primary school, such as Kapa Haka (traditional Māori performing art), and instead focused on studying mathematics and getting good grades. It was not until their late teens that they started to learn to embrace their Māori heritage.

By the end of high school, Toni was surrounded by friends who had seen where they came from [culturally] and who they became, who still stayed and welcomed them with open arms, and they felt “a switch flipped”. They started opening themselves up to be involved in Māori cultural activities, and due to their respectable reputation at school, they were quickly put into leadership positions involving cultural performing arts, which inspired them to become curious about the stories of their people and where they came from. The more they learned about their history, the prouder they grew to have grown up on their ancestral land in Waikato. Toni had also visited the Cook Islands but was unable to visit their maternal grandparents' hometowns as their islands were too inaccessible. Toni now works in a management position in the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) sector within the public services. Their mahi mainly focuses on shaping systems and ensuring equity and inclusiveness in the workplace. They described their workplace as a representation of wider society, and their job as being about fostering an environment where employees can "feel like they belong”. Reflecting on their journey and where they are today, Toni concluded that they had never imagined growing up to one day be in a position where they could honour their identity, lived experience and background in the mahi that they do.

Toni’s Choice of Interview Location: ‘My Home’

Guided by Kaupapa Māori methodology and thus considering the importance of Te Taiao (relationship with environment), the interconnections between people and the environment, this study invited participants to choose the interview location they felt was meaningful and most comfortable for them. Toni’s interview took place at their residence, a lovely two-story townhouse near the city centre. Toni had chosen their home as the interview location, because it is their own place, which they own. Toni explained that they grew up poor and always had to share spaces and bedrooms, and they never thought they could ever own a place of their own. They described themselves as a natural entertainer who had dreamed of having a space where they could host and entertain their loved ones. The current residence represents a step nearer to their fantasy of one day having a big house on a hill, where they could stand at the head of a long table with all their loved ones seated and raise a full glass of champagne and say, ‘Enjoy the meal.’

Toni's dream of having a house big enough to host their loved ones speaks to Toni's cultural values, which have changed and developed over time (see next section). The value of connections and providing a sense of belonging and joy is consistent with the Māori concept of manākitanga in which hospitality, kindness and respect for others are enacted (Pūtaiora Writing Group, 2010; Walker et al., 2006). Their fantasy was more than about having a big house, in a Western sense of individual achievement, but about hosting their loved ones and providing for them. Whether it be through providing kai (food), entertainment or a shared space to come together. This is particularly interesting as it shows how much Toni has changed over the years. Young Toni was described as a subscriber to Western ideals of individual success measured by money and status, who lacked a collective or communal outlook (Henrich, 2020; Oyserman et al., 2002). Young Toni perhaps would have wanted a big house on the hill for the status or just for the sake of owning a house in a material sense. For young Toni, it was about getting ahead, proving oneself and staying away from the stereotypes society might have put on them. But now, the *why* for Toni has changed and their driving factors now look different than they used to. It is not just about owning a house but about providing a welcoming space for their community embedded in cultural values of manākitanga.

Lived Experience and Lessons Learned

In this section, I will present Toni's narrative in chronological order: early experiences, turning point and who they are now. I begin with Toni's grandparents' understanding of the world and how their decisions based on fear and survival, embedded in colonialism, have had an intergenerational effect on Toni's experience of the world. I will then dive deeper into Toni's identity journey and the key moments that changed what they value towards a more intentional and relational perspective. Toni's lived experiences demonstrate how social relationships influence the way we see and interact with the world. Moreover, these lessons taught Toni a different way of being other than assimilation, which is an essential part of Toni's GC development.

Early Experience and Navigating Identity

From a very young age, Toni was taught to fit into the "white world" by their whānau. This concept began with Toni's grandparents on both sides, who started assimilating their native languages in the household in favour of English. Toni reiterates

that it was their grandfather's deliberate decision. As a result, Toni's mother does not speak any languages other than English. While Toni's father could speak Te Reo Māori, he also did not make an effort to teach his children the language, other than saying a few words here and there. Hence, English became the dominant language, and Toni's grandparents' decision became an intergenerational norm. Toni wished they had the chance to learn more about their Cook Island Māori heritage, and that they could speak the different languages spoken by their grandparents:

> My grandparents probably have like 3 or 4 languages between them that they could have taught their children that they chose not to. That is a deliberate decision. Again, what we're talking about before, around fitting into a white world [Pākehā], and so my mother spent her whole life growing up, sounding just like me [English]. On the one hand, I'm grateful for [it], because it afforded me a lot of opportunities in the white [Pākehā] world, because I can speak like them. But I do feel like, a sort of regret, not really sure what for. Because at the end of the day, it's not my fault that I don't know, that I wasn't raised in those languages. Everything that I have now, I have.

Toni recognises the advantages and privileges afforded by speaking English fluently in a colonised society but expressed regrets that their grandparents' languages could not be passed down. Toni understands that their decision stemmed from a survival instinct rooted in hardships stemming from discrimination and structural violence against Māori (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Martin, 2024; Mutu, 2018; Rua et al., 2017; Sibley et al., 2011; Spoonley, 2015). Toni empathised with their grandparents who would have felt very unsafe being Māori in a Western-dominated society, and they believed assimilating aspects of their Māori identity would provide safety and better opportunities for their mokopuna. This became an internalised belief that was reinforced throughout Toni's upbringing, an intergenerational trauma being passed down, which was sadly not an uncommon occurrence in many Māori households at the time (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Rua et al., 2017; Sibley et al., 2011; Spoonley, 2015).

Without knowing a lot about the differences between Aotearoa NZ and Cook Island Māori, I asked if Toni's parents struggled navigating each other's cultures during Toni's upbringing. They explained that although there are differences, their parents' struggles came from navigating the Pākehā world rather than each other's. Toni recalled growing up in poverty and struggling alongside their whānau in navigating between Māori and Pākehā worlds:

> I think they [Toni's parents] both equally struggled from different perspectives to navigate my upbringing in the Pākehā world. My parents are both Māori, but from different places, you know, they're both descended from people who has the right to call themselves Māori, but different languages, different cultural practices and norms, and that sort of thing over thousands of years of difference. So yeah, so I think in a lot of ways, they were quite similar. The aspect that they ultimately both, you know, our people are related, but I think their challenge was not necessarily like navigating the differences with each other, but together against Te Ao Pākehā in a Pākehā world.

Within this quote, we see lived experiences which confirmed to Toni what their grandparents had taught them: being Māori is a disadvantage. To this, I curiously asked Toni what it was like to grow up Māori and queer, which are both commonly marginalised groups (Cole, 2009; McAreavey, 2017; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Safa et al., 2021). To which Toni responded that, personally, they never felt any tension within themselves to have to identify as anything, but they believed that, as a child, no one really questioned their identity because they did well at school:

> I didn't necessarily feel like I was trying to move as far away from being a boy as possible. I didn't feel that I did that consciously. But I think it was definitely more of an issue for me, when I was a kid. I felt as far as gender identity and my sexual orientation, I don't think I ever really [come] out, like in myself, that there wasn't any

> tension or anything. I consider it a privilege that growing up I was able to just be myself, I think, part of the reason why is because, from a young age, I was an overachiever and quite successful, getting good grades and stuff so nobody questioned me [about my gender] because I did well.

As the education system in Aotearoa NZ is grounded in traditional Western individualistic values, such as individual achievements in standardised testing (Love, 2008; Mahuika, 2008; Sibley et al., 2011), this may have encouraged Toni to adapt to such Pākehā standards. To young Toni, conforming to the Western ideal seemed like a safer way to be in the world. Toni had used the phrase "overachiever" to describe themselves and also admitted that they "subscribed to the Pākehā ideal of success from an early age". Measuring themselves against these ideals seemed to motivate them to work and study hard in school, while this also afforded them the social safety of not having their identities questioned, criticised, or noticed too much by their peers.

Moving through the world according to Pākehā ideals of success appears to have protected them from experiencing social and internal tensions in these early years, which they themselves described in the quote above as "a privilege". While Toni was able to fit in with Pākehā norms socially, doing well at school also granted Toni the autonomy to be themselves freely in the home setting because it would appear to the family that they had no reason to worry about Toni. Although Toni seemingly fit into the Pākehā society through the way they behaved and navigated the world, they were still aware of the fact that they did not visually present as Pākehā: "Even though I can't hide it. Yeah, even though it's highly visible, you know, there's no way I was getting away with being white." This dynamic also informed how Toni was perceived by their Māori peers:

> So, growing up that way, you know, not being able to hide what I look like. Then the people who look like me would often remark that I was nothing like them [Māori], even though I looked like them, right? They called me plastic, you know; they call me an Oreo [a biscuit which is chocolate on the outside and cream on the inside].

In this quote, Toni expresses the conflict that came from visibly appearing Māori but not "acting" Māori, which led to being rejected by Māori peers. Toni remembered feeling ashamed and unwanted as a Māori kid who wished to fit in with their peers and community. By sitting in the intersection between Māori and Pākeha worlds, they were always 'too' different. In response, they distanced themselves even further from their Māori identity by doing things that are not considered "Māori-like" in common stereotypes (Love, 2008; Rua et al., 2017; Sibley et al., 2011). Such as excelling at maths, obeying the rules at school and not participating in cultural activities like Kapa Haka. This impacted the way in which Toni moved through the world as Māori growing up, in wanting to further reduce their association with 'being' Māori and not openly participating in Māori cultural events:

> It's just became a cycle where... because I felt, "oh, I'm not going to participate in anything cultural or wear it on my sleeve, because, you know, it's just not right or like, it's kind of useless to me. I remember, growing up when I was in primary school, um, not participating in Kapa Haka, because um, yeah, it looked, you know, it was that coupled with my own people looking at me, like I didn't belong to them. You know, kind of pushed me further away from it.

Feeling rejected by their Māori peers had further deepened Toni's struggles with their identity and sense of belonging. These early experiences shaped Toni's worldviews and their understanding of how the world views them. Toni learned to be "less Māori" as a way of life and identified as an in-betweener who did not fit in either cultural world.

Turning Point: (Re)Claiming of Cultural Identity Through Manākitanga

Things changed for Toni during their senior years in high school, when they found acceptance and trust through peers and mentors who welcomed Toni as they were. Growing up, Toni had always lived under the pressure of choosing between "being Māori" and fitting into the "white world", whether it was at home or at school. Toni was constantly living between the tension of being praised for meeting societal standards like getting good grades and being mocked and feeling rejected for not "acting like a

Māori". So, when Toni was welcomed by their peers as they were, they felt seen. I asked if Toni could remember what their peers did that made them feel this way, to which Toni responded:

> I think it's not about, it's not necessarily anything that they have done because I can't really remember it, but I think it is the way they made me feel. Whatever environment that they created, they made sure that I felt seen for who I am and who I was, how I came to be, what I grew up with. So the lack of understanding of my cultural background, history that sort of thing. They saw that and still decided that I was welcome there, you know, amongst them. And I think that was definitely a turning point for me.

For the very first time, Toni did not have to perform to be validated, they did not have to choose sides, and they could just be who they were. As quoted above, Toni described this experience as their turning point, which represents the beginning of a transformative journey that would shape who Toni is today. Toni continues to explain the impact their peers had on them:

> We had this cultural, this annual cultural festival, performance festival, and so we would make connections, and the schools, and sort of competing in this competition. And they have a number of stages for each of the groups of presenters. Again, I'm not quite sure how but I then became the leader for the Cook Islands stage. But everyone trusted me, and it just felt, I felt like, even though, not that I didn't know, but not enough or have enough with me, because everyone else trusted that I could so then you know, what's the issue here? It's me.

Compared to Toni's early experience of being mocked and shamed for not being "Māori enough", they were instead welcomed with aroha and manākitanga. While Toni was still questioning themselves and worrying that they did not know enough, others entrusted

Toni with the responsibility of leading in cultural settings. This completely changed how Toni had experienced the world and sparked curiosity for Toni to learn more about their cultures and heritage, marking a significant shift in negotiating and connecting with their cultural identity. Toni learned that they did not have to be enough to be welcomed by peers, and that it is okay to still be learning while leading others. Toni's peers gave them the confidence to be themselves and the opportunities to give back and make an impact for others in turn:

> I then felt, very quickly, then, sort of became like a personal mission to learn more about myself and my people, and my identities, that sort of thing. So, over the last 8-9 years, since I left high school, I've invested a lot of time and energy into learning about my peoples and their histories, their practices, their languages, and that sort of thing, and probably not even for me, to be quite honest, but more for the preservation for the next generations.

The relationships Toni made in high school taught them that living with different cultures did not always have to be a struggle, enabling Toni to reclaim their Māori identity on their own terms. Going beyond being driven by survival instincts that are rooted in intergenerational trauma, Toni learned to be inspired as Māori, and to inspire others in their own journeys with identity and belonging. Toni's aspirations to preserve and pass down cultures is evidence that Toni was moving away from the individualistic ideal of success toward a more collective motivation for supporting people's cultural well-being and resilience. This marked the beginning of Toni's own journey towards decolonisation. As Toni described, this experience was a turning point that shaped the foundation of how Toni understands diversity, belonging and the world today.

Career Choices and Becoming Comfortable with Who They Are

The manākitanga Toni experienced in high school completely changed how they value themselves and success, becoming more community-driven in their motivations. They were inspired to create a welcoming environment for others, as their high school friends did for them. After high school, Toni chose hospitality and tourism for their

tertiary education. At the same time, Toni was also volunteering full-time for a civic education and activism organisation. They were helping young people understand the political system, like what their votes mean, and how to engage in civic life. This volunteering work allowed Toni to develop valuable skills that led to their current career in the diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) sector. Toni explained that their role was about designing youth programmes and delivering them, and from there, they started building their career in community governance:

> My career throughout, in that organisation, my kind of pathway. As I said, I'm kind of learning design and facilitation, while I was there, over the 3 years, like I got so much experience - Event Management, Communications and Marketing, People Leadership. I also got my kind of step in the diversity, equity and inclusion there. Like I am designing affirmative action programs like scholarship programs and thinking about, with the initiatives that the organisation was delivering, are they equitable? So, it was my kind of first taste of DEI. Then I got a job at the HR [Human Resources] centre as an educator, and at the same time, I started building up a community governance career as well.

Since then, Toni has been actively involved in the youth community as an educator and advisor. They were on multiple community boards and were working independently with two local councils on designing youth engagement models and helping them reach out to young people across the country. Eventually, Toni got their first official DEI position in the public service sector, and they have been in the DEI sector ever since. These career choices are reflections of Toni's personal development, the impact of their early experience, and how being accepted by peers paved the way for Toni to build a career based on creating a welcoming, inclusive and equitable space that could educate others to better themselves, not for their own individual advancements but for the betterment of the community. Reflecting on these career choices and where they have led, Toni is grateful that they have allowed them to step into a political role and create social justice from within the 'system':

> My work is all about shaping systems, that are equitable, that are inclusive, fostering inclusion and cohesion, and just, mainly diversity. In my case, the system is the department I work for, so shaping a workplace that represents the makeup of society, there are policies and processes, you know, equitable. All our stuff looks at accessing, has equal access opportunities and um, you know, we make them feel like they belong to, you know, that when they work, as a worker, they feel that they belong. Just that when they are at work, there's a place for them. So that's what my work is all about. I never, ever imagined at any point growing up that I would be in a position where I could kind of honour my lived experience and backgrounds into the work that I do. So, it's become my personal mission to do as much. You know, within my power to, you know, learn as much as I can, pursue as much as I can, not for myself necessarily but for the next generations.

This was the second time Toni mentioned that doing what they do is a personal mission for the next generations, which perfectly sums up Toni's developmental journey. As a young child, Toni was taught to assimilate their Māori identity to survive in the "white world", but then Toni was shown a different way of being, through genuine relationships and community-oriented responsibilities. These experiences informed how Toni understands difference, identity, and belonging, shaping the values and relational ways of being that later became central to Toni's GC development.

Toni's narrative illustrates a journey from early experiences of cultural disconnection, identity uncertainty, and pressure to assimilate, towards a stronger sense of belonging, cultural pride, and commitment to collective wellbeing. Through experiences of acceptance, trust, and meaningful relationships, Toni came to re-evaluate inherited assumptions about success, identity, and community, developing a more relational and community-oriented worldview. The following section further unpacks the underlying elements of GC within Toni's journey of decolonisation and (re)connection with their cultural identity.

Toni's Experience in Relation to Global Consciousness

This section illustrates how Toni's global consciousness has developed through their lived experiences and is enacted in their everyday life. Toni's experience shows GC as a dynamic process that requires not only awareness but the active willingness to make changes (Chao et al, 2025). Through Toni's approach to their work, we can observe real-life examples of how GC manifests in our everyday life and actions, and how it continues to guide us in this interconnected world.

Awareness Of Interconnectedness: Toni's Journey Towards Decolonisation

Toni's early value system was shaped by intergenerational traumas and the impact of colonisation, rather than conscious personal choices. One main component of GC is the awareness of the historical impact and structural inequality in the name of globalisation (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Although awareness on its own is not an indication of GC, it is an essential step towards becoming globally conscious. Upon recognising and reflecting on the impacts of colonisation on their own whānau, Toni followed through with changes and reassessments of their personal value system. The fact that Toni is now working within the system and calls themselves a public servant in the DEI sector shows that Toni not only *understands* the ongoing damage and impacts of colonisation on themselves and society, they have decided to actively seek opportunities to *do* something about it, not for the benefit of oneself but for the betterment of others within these structural conditions.

Toni's reflections demonstrate an understanding of how colonisation has shaped their upbringing and how they have understood themselves in the world. Toni now understands their early experiences of subscribing to Western ideals were not accidental, but a deliberate survival strategy shaped by their grandparents' experiences and normalised by society. That belief continued to be practised by their parents, and as a child, Toni had accepted that as the status quo. Rather than experiencing colonial influences as a form of oppression, Toni describes how these influences became embedded within everyday family practices, aspirations, and understandings of success. The deliberate decision by previous generations encouraged the adaptation of the Pākehā world, reflecting survival strategies developed in response to historical marginalisation (Love, 2008; Mutu, 2018; Paradies, 2016). As these practices were

passed through generations, they became normalised within Toni's upbringing and informed how they understood identity, belonging, and achievement (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011; Mutu, 2018; Paradies, 2016).

However, Toni's simple acceptance from their peers was enough to empower them to make formative realisations and learn from them. Toni realised how adopting these individualistic, neoliberal values as a means of survival and assimilation had blocked the opportunity for them to foster an authentic relationship to their culture and identity in their early life. In this way, understanding the impact of colonisation was an important step towards Toni's GC development. Toni had to unlearn and let go of the performance of Western-assimilated identity that had protected them, critically reflecting on their own value system and transforming their awareness into actions. A part of this unlearning process is to challenge inherited value systems (Mahuika, 2008; Smith, 2012; Smith, 2017). For example, values of what is considered success, and the prioritising of oneself over others and future generations. In early years, Toni was normatively taught that money is the measure of success, and being independent was prioritised over interdependence:

> But then you wonder, like, where did that come from? You know, like whose value systems is that actually speaking to, if you look back far enough, you realise that it's actually not from our own [Māori] people, it's not our own people, saying that money is, you know.

As shown in Toni's reflection, they show an awareness of how colonisation has manifested in their personal life and across multiple levels of relationality, ranging from family and wider community. From becoming aware of the cultural damage of colonisation, coloniality, and neoliberalism, Toni now realised that they have the autonomy to actively unlearn and reshape these beliefs. Reshaping involved moving towards a different way of being that is more relational and collectively orientated, by prioritising the greater good for the community through deliberate actions, over individual success. Decolonisation is an important part of Toni's GC development, where everyday decisions became guided by collective care and intergenerational

responsibility (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Smith, 2012; Smith, 2017). Rather than simply acknowledging these values, for Toni, it is about the continuous effort to take responsive actions for the greater good. This relates to GC as it requires an expansion of one's value system to be orientated to the world beyond oneself (Liu and MacDonald, 2016).

This is apparent when Toni talked about their dream of having a big house. Their motivation changed from material wealth and independence to being more about providing and creating space for others. This reflects the personal growth that Toni had developed, from their younger self as "doing whatever to get ahead" to asking the question, "what can I do in my power to make it better for others?" Rather than being driven by survival strategies, which Toni had been conditioned to adopt, these aspirations highlight a shift to relational values (Hopner & Liu, 2021; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Smith; Rua et al., 2017). This transition marked that Toni had gone beyond superficial awareness to the path of developing genuine ethical engagements in line with GC.

Toni's journey shows that recognising colonisation was their first step in moving towards GC development. Their subsequent experiences and reflections indicate more than surface-level awareness. Rather, their GC reflects a deeper understanding of how everyday actions impact on our society, not only on a personal level, but on a global level, in interconnected ways (Liu & MacDonald, 2016). With this gained awareness and the contextual understanding of colonisation, GC also requires one to have the willingness to do something about it. Toni's multilayered awareness of historical context activated an ethical re-evaluation of their values and worldview. In other words, gaining awareness of *why* things are the way they are contextualised Toni's understanding of how these 'bigger' social, historical, political conditions had shaped them as a person in the world. It allowed Toni to step out and challenge those previously internalised norms by decolonising their beliefs and moving their priorities from the 'self' to 'people', which included themself in relation. Overall, this journey demonstrates a shift from survival-based individualism toward a more *consciously* relational and collective value system. This psychological shift creates the ethical conditions for GC to emerge (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). For Toni, decolonisation is the underlying principle

that informs and contextualises their GC, and a conscious decision that is being made every day.

Moral Interdependence: Experiencing Diversity and Interconnectedness

> "Navigating multiple worlds, I think, is how I would describe my cultural background"

Having grown up learning the differences between Aotearoa NZ and Cook Island Māori, as well as navigating the Pākehā world, Toni explained their view on diversity as something they always experienced growing up. It was not just a concept, but something embedded in their upbringing and everyday life. They never experienced life without experiencing diversity. Toni described their upbringing through navigating differences:

> Because of my upbringing, I've just always understood differences and diversity. I think from the outset growing up, knowing that my parents, though their people [Māori/Cook Island] are very similar and have a shared history, but are very, very different and distinct ... From a very, very young age, I understood that even within my own family, if there were differences, there's a whole world out there with all [the] differences, and so I've never, ever, I don't think I've ever lived life without a lens of diversity.

From a young age, Toni understood that diversity was not restricted to geographic locations or ethnicity. For example, their whakapapa to both the Cook Islands and Māori whilst navigating a Pākehā social context. Even at home, Toni experienced a pluralist sense of self through the diversity they were exposed to in languages and place-based relationships. This already oriented them to be aware of how many layers of differences can be out there in the world. As discussed throughout Toni's reflections earlier in life, they constantly navigated internal conflicts rather than fully embracing any one or combination of those identities that they had a connection to. While differences were implicitly understood and embodied early in life, such as being Māori within the home,

there was a dominant colonial way of being ‘Pākehā’. This reinforced the pressure to conform to the normative group, and Toni was consistently having to choose between being Māori and Pākehā in a binary way, rather than embracing differences and intersectionality (Cole, 2009; Rua et al., 2017). This is why the turning point of being accepted and trusted by their peers, as outlined earlier, was a moment of disruption and a catalyst to explicitly *accepting* their own differences. The unconditional acceptance by Toni’s peers made Toni feel seen and allowed to be just as they are.

For the first time, Toni was allowed to exist just as they are, queer, neurodivergent and Cook Island Māori, without having to perform or adjust to gain validation from peers. Rather than having to choose to live in one world or another, Toni’s peers showed Toni how to embrace the complexity of their identity and opened them up to the resilience of the multiplicity of differences (Cole, 2009; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Toni learned to be comfortable being in between worlds and embodying their overlapping and intersecting multiple identities. Toni, as someone who carried many marginalised identities, believed the space their peers created helped them develop the ability to consider different perspectives moving through life:

> I'm quite comfortable kind of sitting at the intersection between all genders, kind of thing. The same goes for my sexuality as well. I’ve also been diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder, so OCD, I am neurodiverse as well. Lots of different identities … I do feel that's just simply another dimension that's added to the lens that I now have, moving through life … just considering alternative perspectives.

This afforded Toni the resilience to continuously learn and grow, being curious and open to what diversity can bring into spaces. It also brought a new understanding of what *belonging* meant for creating these opportunities for open reflection and growth, and as such, how social connections are crucial in building a culturally safe space.

Since Toni had built their sense of belonging around the people who made them feel like they were “among them”, Toni had developed a deeper understanding of how spaces affect people. For example, physical spaces that foster acceptance,

development and curiosity, which provide the psychological safety for people with multiple identities (Cole, 2009; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). This inspired Toni to reciprocate and create inclusive and safe spaces for others as well. This aligns with the cultural notion of manākitanga (Hopner & Liu, 2021; Pūtaiora Writing Group, 2010), which we have seen enacted in Toni's household during their upbringing. While manākitanga was implicit within their home environment, Toni's peers provided the safe space for Toni to visibly engage as Māori outside of the home rather than having to assimilate to Pākehā ideals. This bridging experience allowed Toni to embrace and be Māori proudly. In addition to that, Toni's childhood of feeling rejected and 'not enough' allowed Toni to empathise with those who are excluded or marginalised by mainstream society. This informed Toni to see how impactful one's actions could be on others (Chao et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). More specifically, Toni could recognise the interconnectedness between people's actions (for example, between the actions of Toni's Māori peers, which motivated them to take their *own* action). In this case, these interconnected actions led to Toni actively creating spaces for different identities to both exist and flourish. With this awareness of interconnectedness, Toni developed a sense of ethical responsibility to ensure others could experience the safety, and acceptance Toni had experienced themself. Toni's ability to turn awareness into moral principles that guide their future actions is another core foundation of GC (Liu & Macdonald, 2016).

Enacting GC in Everyday Actions and Choices

Following the awareness of interconnectedness, Toni was inspired to learn more about their own heritage and what it truly means to create safe and inclusive spaces in the community. Toni believes that their journey of reclaiming their heritage would enhance their ability to connect with others and further develop their diverse perspective-taking skills. This is crucial for creating a culturally safe and responsive environment. Toni explained that being inclusive does not mean a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, and being safe means we must consider who the safe space is for and respond to the needs of that certain group:

> Considerate of different needs. What is the need of this person or this community, and how do we set up the system, that means, that they have what they need, and sometimes, what they need is to talk to other people that are like them and exclude people that aren't like them. Making spaces that are safe, like a safe space for women, is okay to exclude men, like a safe space for queer people, is okay to exclude people who aren't queer. Like, I think everyone can't belong everywhere. I think there still needs to be a distinction.

As demonstrated, Toni showed a deep understanding that belonging is relational, that people are what build the spaces, and that their actions affect each other, which is why boundaries of difference are important. Unlike cosmopolitanism (Brock, 2013; Liu & Xie, 2023; Pogge, 1992), which believes that everyone belongs everywhere, Toni's belief aligns with the Confucian form of the Golden Rule, the understanding that respecting diversity sometimes means exclusion and maintaining (while respecting) differences, such as separating conflicting groups (Liu & Macdonald, 2016). This reflects how Toni's awareness of interconnectedness guides their moral interdependence, one of GC's three main components (Liu & Macdonald, 2016). From being aware of differences to learning to embrace diversity, Toni grew a sense of responsibility to look after those whose spaces Toni is creating. This nuanced view of inclusiveness motivates Toni to intentionally create spaces that support others' wellbeing. Toni applies this view to their everyday life and in their DEI work, reflecting a form of leadership that is grounded in care and a sense of responsibility for wider society:

> That's my job at the end of the day. My job is to make sure that everyone has everything they need to grow, feel like they belong. Even if it means that, either they decide that they feel that they don't belong to us, or they grow so much that they outgrow us and they move on, like I feel that I've done a good job. And so, I lived my life as much as possible, to make that the case, that other people have everything that they need to succeed in life, the way that they want to.

Toni is leading with their heart, with compassion and respect, demonstrating 'human-heartedness' and benevolent leadership, both of which are shown to be traits of people with high GC (Choi et al, 2025; Liu et al, 2023; Liu & Macdonald, 2016). Toni is inspired to lead by placing the people and their wellbeing at the centre of their attention and found success through empowering others. Reflecting on their career choices, from volunteering to teaching youth about their civil rights to working with local councils and now as a public servant working in the DEI sector, Toni's lived experience informed the way they choose to exist in the world. Toni's sense of social responsibility guided them to their current career path, as Toni concluded, "*I just never thought that my work, would be, would ever end up being so intimately tied to my identity*."

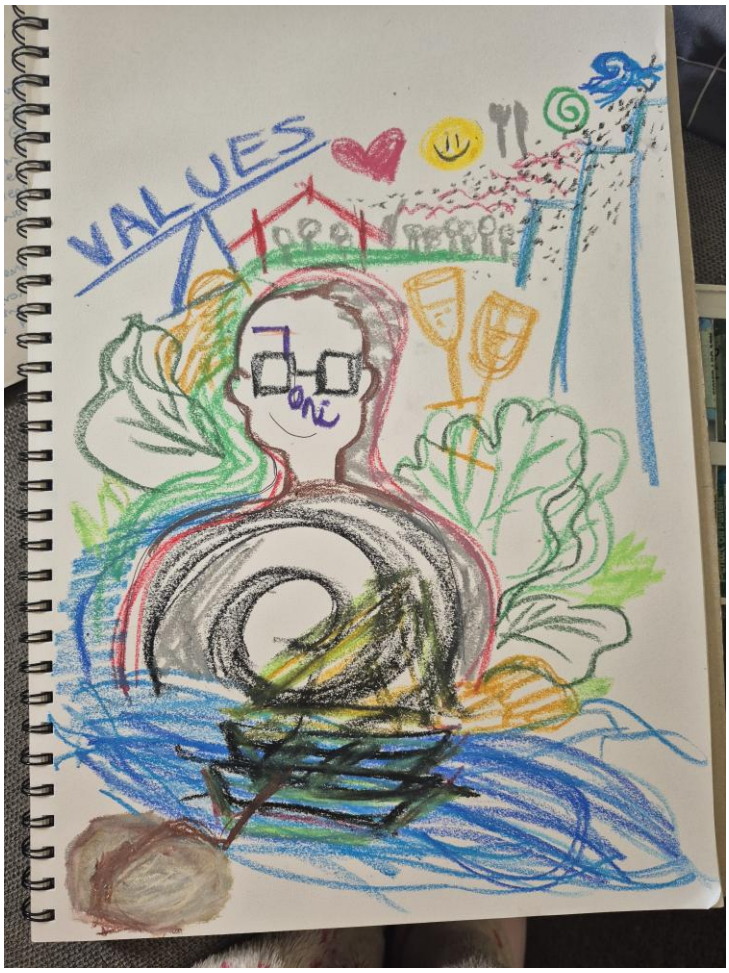
My Reflections and Learnings from Toni's Experience

As a person of colour who has also struggled with a sense of belonging and identity, I understand the fight to overcome our own internalised bias and to reclaim and learn to appreciate our own heritage. Through our identity struggles, we learn the importance of knowing who we are and where we come from, that everyone deserves the opportunity to connect with their whakapapa. Toni's experience demonstrates that being born within a diverse environment does not automatically grant someone GC. This reminds us that the development of GC is not a linear process, it requires a continuous effort to keep learning and doing. Toni wishes to continue educating themselves for the next generation, and to change the systemic racism from within is a great example of that.

Throughout the interview, I was mindful of my positionality as a HK Chinese immigrant with limited knowledge of Cook Island Māori and approached the kōrero with care and mindfulness. Toni was incredibly open and generous in sharing their experiences, and they showed compassion for my learning journey in both New Zealand Māori and Cook Island Māori knowledge. Our interaction reminded me of the concept of Ako, a reciprocal relationship in learning, where both teacher and learner bring knowledge and grow together. On top of this, Toni effortlessly demonstrated manākitanga by asking their sister to invite me into their house before Toni's arrival, simply because they were worried about my comfort. This experience was deeply affirming.

Figure 3

The Creative Analysis of Toni's Case (own work)



Note. *An oil pastel drawing portraying Toni's GC development*

As a part of my analysis, a creative response to Toni's GC development was produced, see Figure 3. Oil pastel was used to reflect Toni's friendliness, as oil pastel is a beginner-friendly medium, which also allows a more visually inviting aesthetic, reflecting how welcoming Toni made me feel. This drawing shows many aspects of Toni, such as how Toni sees themselves, their values and their way of life. For example, the word 'value' on the scale represents how Toni reflects on whose value system we are agreeing to; the waka Hourua (double canoe) in the ocean, the rock by the shore as an anchor, the koru as Toni's centre, as well as the colours, are all representations of who Toni is and aspires to be. All the different plants around them are a symbol of growth, which is important in GC development, as shown through Toni's lived stories.

Toni today has long moved away from the survival-based motivations, instead living with a more intentional way of engaging with the world, being able to see differences as an advantage and a privilege rather than something to be ashamed of. Toni believes that we can live in a diverse and interconnected world where we can assist each other to success:

> I think if we consider global consciousness, in its simplest form - it's just simply about knowing that there's a world out there and then responding to it and like being attentive to it. Realising that it has an impact on you and you have an impact on it. And adjust based on that and making sure that everyone has the right to belong and we all have, we should all have the same access to opportunities to success.

Toni's word beautifully captured the idea of GC. From the young Toni who once saw being successful as "doing whatever to get ahead" to now being a collective-driven leader who wants to make an impact through inclusive care and connection, that is still respectful of unique and contextual differences, and actively claiming the agency to make systematic changes, shows their enactment of GC.

Chapter 5: Amy

This chapter introduces the second of three case studies, focusing on Amy and her spiritual journey that helped her GC development. Like Toni's case, I begin by introducing Amy, her cultural background, upbringing and who she is now. Then, I discuss the significance of Amy's interview location and its connection to her identities, worldviews and development of GC. Following this, I explore the key catalyst events and experiences that contributed to deep shifts in Amy's perspectives and how she then chose to carry herself around the world. Amy's narrative is presented in chronological order through three broad phases similar to Toni's: her formative years moving from one place to another, key moments when she learned about her cultural position in the world, and her spiritual awakening that led to her current career path. I then analyse Amy's lived experiences and narratives in relation to GC, again focusing on awareness of interconnectedness, moral interdependence influenced by Amy's religion, and how she enacts her values in everyday life. Lastly, the chapter concludes with my own reflections and a corresponding creative response on Amy's journey of GC development.

Introducing Amy

Amy is a HK Chinese New Zealander who was originally born in Guangzhou (GZ), China and moved to HK as a child. She then eventually emigrated to Aotearoa NZ at age 12. Amy considers herself a 1.5-generation immigrant [born outside of the host country who migrated as a child] (Benesch, 2008) and a big part of her identity is grounded in Buddhism. Amy enjoys travelling and has lived in different countries. She can speak multiple languages, including English, Cantonese, Japanese, Spanish and more. Amy now lives in Wellington, Aotearoa NZ, and works as a general manager at a consultancy that works with different organisations to help grow their capability. As the only child, Amy describes being 'a little princess' by her parents and grandparents. At the time, Amy's father was working in HK while the rest of the family stayed in GZ. Amy's mother worked as a pharmacist while her grandparents stayed home as the main caretakers. Because of that, Amy and her grandmother were very close. At age 6, Amy and her mother reunited with her father in HK. Meanwhile, her grandparents migrated to Aotearoa NZ to be with her aunt's family in Dunedin. When Amy was 12, her parents

sent her to Dunedin to further her education. This was common during the years leading up to the handover of HK to China in 1997, when an increasing number of HK people were moving overseas or sending their children away due to political fear, uncertainty about their futures and economic considerations (Lam, 1990; Wong, 1992; Chan & To, 2025).

With the support of friends and family, it did not take Amy long to adapt and flourish in her new environment. By her senior years, Amy was excelling at school and received a scholarship to join an exchange programme in Japan for a year, which began her life of international travel. Since then, Amy has taken every opportunity to travel. While she was completing her bachelor's degree, she was in Poland for a semester as an exchange student and travelled to many European countries before coming back to complete her master's degree in political studies. After graduation, Amy took a position at a government department and continued to work there for the next eight years until she felt burned out. At this point, she decided to take a year off for a working holiday in South America. During this time, she had a spiritual awakening that led her back to Buddhism, an ancient religion that originated in Asia and was practised by Amy's mother during her upbringing. She experienced moments of what she called "synchronicity", where meaningful opportunities in her life just seemed to line up. This helped to consolidate Amy's faith and trust that she would be looked after by the universe. Amy called this one of her pivotal moments in life, as she found herself more mentally healthy and learned a lot about herself and what gave her meaning in life. Today, Amy has found purpose in her job that upskills employees and is thriving in a career that aligns with her values. She hopes to own a holistic wellbeing retreat centre one day, where people can experience the kind of peacefulness she feels with her religion.

Amy's Choice of Interview Location: SGI Centre

The interview took place at an Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist centre, located in the inner city of Wellington, New Zealand. SGI is an international Buddhist association that promotes peace through individual transformation and contribution to society. It follows the teachings of Nichiren, a Japanese Buddhist monk in the 13th century. SGI is a branch of Buddhism that focuses on cultivating a mutually respected

space that will nurture the limitless value and potential of every individual (Kawada, 2009). The SGI centre is not a typical temple but a quiet and calm community space with modern architecture. The centre has multiple rooms for gathering, chanting and other related activities, an art gallery and a communal kitchen where Amy and I had our interview. Unlike traditional temple settings, the centre does not have any Buddhist statues, as explained by Amy that "SGI believes that Buddhahood is inherited in all of us, it's not about worshipping a deity, but it's about living out our best version in our day-to-day lives".

Amy has chosen the SGI centre as the interview location because Buddhism is an important part of her identity and worldview. Amy described SGI as a form of Buddhism that is accessible and grounded in everyday interactions and "moment-to-moment decisions", reflecting her values of individual growth, human connections and the belief that we all have the potential to achieve enlightenment, which begins on an individual level. This is a central idea that she would repeatedly emphasise throughout her storytelling. The SGI centre reflects an important aspect of Amy, who she is and how she understands the world around her. For Amy, the centre is an external representation of her inner space, where she feels most at peace. It is also where she goes when she feels down and needs guidance. By choosing this location, Amy introduced me to her religion, which I am not familiar with, on a deeper level by using the place to take me through her journey and her religious practice.

Lived Experience and Lessons Learned

This section explores the intricate details of Amy's key moments in life and the lessons she describes learning along the way. It is presented chronologically in three parts: to begin, I will discuss the formative years where Amy moved from GZ to HK, then to Aotearoa NZ by the age of 12, how these moves informed her early identity and affected her sense of belonging. This is followed by Amy's turning point, where Amy started to form an identity of her own and became reflexively aware of her positioning in the world through international travels. Then, I will unpack another key moment of Amy's life, her spiritual awakening in South America, which led to her aspirations and motivations behind her current job in the present day.

Amy's Formative Years: Moving from GZ to HK to Aotearoa NZ

"I would say in terms of thinking about my identity, I identified myself as a HK person in here", Amy said as she put her hand on her chest. Before Amy moved to HK from GZ, she was mainly looked after by her grandmother and was very loved and spoiled by everyone around her:

> I am the only child of the family, so I had my grandparents, we had a domestic helper as well. So, you know, I was kind of a little princess in the house. My grandma used to spoon-feed me until I was 6, so I was close to her.

When Amy moved to HK with her mother, her grandparents migrated to Dunedin, Aotearoa NZ, where Amy's aunt and cousins were. I asked Amy about this relocation experience and what it was like for her as a 6-year-old girl. She responded:

> In HK, my life was quite different, you know, cause from living in quite a big house in GZ to a tiny apartment with my parents. I remember going to primary school in HK. There was, you probably know, but there was a sense of discrimination against people from mainland China in HK, so you know my mother tongue is Cantonese, so people generally wouldn't know that I am from mainland China, that wasn't a fact that I would publicise, so even as a child, I was conscious that I was, would be viewed differently if you know where my origin, know that's where I came from.

Unexpectedly for Amy, she experienced discrimination from people who look similar and speak the same language as her, who she thought would be her own people. Amy became conscious of her identity and had to navigate the political differences between HK and mainland China before she could understand politics (Costantini, 2019; Tam, 2024; Wong, 1992). This was a confusing and harsh reality for a young girl to have experienced. Amy described this experience with a heaviness in her voice. When she looked at me and said, "You probably know", I nodded as I sympathised with her. The British occupation of HK since the 1840s dramatically changed the way HK people view

their identity, becoming increasing Westernised and rejecting the ideology of the People's Republic of China (Costantini, 2019; Tam, 2024). This phenomenon intensified when HK was due to be returned to the Chinese government in 1997, around the time Amy moved to HK (Chan & To, 2025; Costantini, 2019; Tam, 2024).

Because I am also from HK, Amy did not have to explain the social and political tensions between mainland China and HK (Chan & To, 2025; Costantini, 2019; Tam, 2024; Wong, 1992). We had a mutual understanding of what she was referring to, as she described the discrimination she felt as a child. Amy clarified that she did not experience discriminatory behaviours personally, but through her mother's experience:

> My mum particularly had a difficult time proving herself at her age. You know, joining the workforce in HK. She used to be a pharmacist, then having to train herself to work in office environments in HK. Yeah, so she had to face quite a bit of discrimination.

This experience made Amy feel conscious about herself and feel the need to hide her GZ identity. This is somewhat similar to Toni's experience of feeling ashamed of their origin as an Indigenous Cook Island Māori, a learned response to social and societal pressures. Unlike Toni, Amy was able to hide undetected because she was not visibly marked as 'different'. For a little girl who had just been separated from her grandmother, her main caretaker, with the promise to be "reunited as a nuclear family" in HK, it was impossible for her to consciously understand the social complexity of the discrimination she experienced.

At age 12, Amy moved to Aotearoa NZ by herself, reunited with her grandmother and moved in with her aunt, uncle and three cousins. Amy was treated as a part of the family but still felt like an outsider. This mirrored her early experience in HK, where she did not feel like she belonged, even among the people she considered her own. Amy explained there was a certain perception of HK people that her extended family carried:

> Another big kind of pivotal point in my childhood [moving to Aotearoa NZ]. I suppose, I mean, there was obviously tensions and conflicts within my auntie's house, with the cousins, you know, you don't feel like you really belong. [There were] no major

> dramas. Well, I think my auntie was worried I might be a bad influence for her kids, you know, coming from HK, because the perception was kids here [Aotearoa NZ] are very 好純 [pure/naïve]. So, they thought that I would 帶壞佢地 [have a bad influence on them]. Cause they [the cousins] were in a sheltered system, whereas in HK, it is more complex.

Although Amy was reunited with her grandmother, home life was not the same. Once again, Amy felt disconnected from her own people, her own biological family. This mirrored Amy's early experience of discrimination by HK people. Through this, Amy learned that people's perception of others can be based on biases that are influenced by many factors, such as social hierarchies and political opinions. As a preteen, she already started to understand that 'differences' between people are subjectively perceived, that this is merely a socially constructed concept based on others' opinions. This unique personal experience of difference and subtle othering from a young age prepared Amy to be open and curious about other cultures.

Turning Point: Forming Her Identity and Learning About Diversity

When Amy first started intermediate school in Aotearoa NZ, she had trouble understanding everyone and everything, but luckily, she was approached by a classmate who also spoke Cantonese:

> I was really lucky that I had a friend from intermediate, who was a NZ-born Chinese girl, so she just befriended me, like she came up to me and asked "Hey, do you speak Cantonese?" Then she just started like, became my personal interpreter. She was a godsend in a way. So that made my first year of schooling at intermediate a lot easier. I made friends with other classmates, and everyone, like at the time, I didn't feel there was discrimination. Everyone was very welcoming.

Being welcomed by not only someone who looked like her but also other peers who were visibly different from her was a key moment for Amy, who had previously felt

unwelcome by her own people. This experience taught her that a sense of belonging is not necessarily tied to blood relation or location, but through the people around her and how they treated her. Amy's experience allowed her to form a sense of safety with others and the confidence to navigate diverse environments as an "outsider".

By high school, Amy was fluent in English and excelling at school. At 16, she received a scholarship to be an exchange student in Japan for a year, which Amy described as "one of the best years" of her life:

> So that's another [pivotal point], one of the best years of my life because I really came out of my shell. Being an exchange student from NZ, as a foreigner - so there was another girl who was also from our school, we became kind of like the school celebrities. We go to school and everyone would say hi to us … stuff like that, moved me out of my comfort zone, in a good way. I felt like I had the opportunity to reinvent myself, because I guess, in NZ, back in my high school in Dunedin, I was more reserved … But I felt that being in Japan gave me the permission to, because no one knew me, so then I reinvented myself with a new identity. I really, really loved it, like I grew my confidence and made some lifelong friendships with my host family as well. Especially, like that, that kind of got me interested in, the topic of global citizenship, that there are, we just have a lot more in common than we have differences.

Being in a new country and once again being greeted with curiosity and compassion by other peers gave Amy the confidence to form and express a new identity of her own. This experience not only solidified her trust in people but also sparked her interest in "people-to-people connections". It also allowed Amy to realise that, on an individual level, as humans, we have more similarities than differences, unlike what we were often made to believe.

Amy's host family in Japan, particularly the grandfather, was the biggest influence behind her passion for global citizenship. His survival stories as a Japanese soldier stranded in China after World War II really gave Amy a new perspective on life:

> I was inspired by my experience during the exchange in Japan, because the family I was with, the host family, the granddad, was actually a soldier in WW2, he was a pilot, stationed in China. He told me the story of how, after Japan lost the war, he was stranded in China for three years and he couldn't open his mouth, he didn't talk to anyone for three years. If people knew that he was Japanese, he would be killed … and then I just thought that was quite meaningful. Despite these animosities between us at a country-to-country level, at a person-to-person level, like we are able to kind of repair. Now that, like for example the views of Chinese people, are influenced by the way that I interacted with them first-hand rather than just the narrative of them on a country level.

Listening to her host grandfather's experiences shed light on the aftermath of country-to-country violence. It widened Amy's perspectives on how international conflicts translate into discrimination on a people-to-people level. Through her relationship with her host family, Amy began to understand the importance of listening and mutual understanding in resolving conflicts, causing Amy to wonder whether we could start challenging societal differences through individuals' interactions, just like how her relationships with her host family in Japan changed the way they might have perceived Chinese people.

Amy became increasingly comfortable navigating foreign countries and grabbed every opportunity she could to travel outside of Aotearoa NZ. She carried the belief that people are generally kind and continued to explore new parts of the world on her own. Before Amy graduated with her bachelor's degree in political science, she went on another exchange programme in Poland for one semester, where she was introduced to

different European cultures through meeting other exchange students and travelling around the region:

> Poland is interesting, because it's got a lot of history of being invaded by its neighbours, so there is a heaviness, like their national identity is really strong … What being a Polish person is, what Polish identity is. So, you will see lots of Polish flags everywhere, and so they are very patriotic. At the time when I was there, I was the only Asian person everywhere … It's alright, I guess I am quite comfortable, like I'm used to being like an outsider. And I feel really safe in the world. Just from my experience, like I believe that human nature is essentially good.

In Poland, Amy observed a strong sense of national identity among its people, rooted in collective trauma from a history of repeated invasions (Ochman, 2013). As a rare East Asian person in this environment, Amy became aware of her cultural position and that she was no longer only representing HK Chinese-New Zealanders but East Asians in general. Through her journeys, Amy had learned that how she carries and presents herself around the world makes a difference to how others perceive a bigger population and community, and that she was not just representing herself as an individual.

Coming from GZ and HK, with their own political complexities, to Aotearoa NZ, another British colony, then to Japan and listening to her host grandfather's story (where she heard an unexpected narrative from the 'invader') and to visiting Europe, a continent with its own history of invasions. Amy's journeys had shown her the different narratives of international conflicts and how political power impacts people from both conflicting sides. Despite these country-to-country conflicts, Amy met people from all walks of life who displayed kindness, curiosity and openness. These experiences and learnings shaped her firm belief that compassion and communication are key to human connections, and that we could all make a meaningful impact by connecting with different people, even with the smallest interactions.

Redefining Her Identity Through Spiritual Awakening

After her exchange programme in Poland, Amy completed her bachelor's degree and went on to pursue her master's degree in political science. With her impressive experience, Amy began her steady career in the public sector soon after graduation. However, she began to feel burned out after eight years in the position. Amy then decided to prioritise her wellbeing and took a year off without pay to work in South America, where she could be surrounded by nature and be more physically active. For Amy, that was a big step as she had built her identity around her professional career. Believing that she would be able to come back to the job after her unpaid leave, it came as a devastating surprise when Amy found out she had lost her job during her trip:

> It came as a blow, because I have worked for that organisation for eight years. I was very much, my identity was wrapped around that, you know. I had a strong sense of belonging to the organisation, but while I was away, the organisation restructured. I felt quite devastated.

Much like Toni, Amy had based most of her self-esteem on neoliberal ideals for success, through performance and high achievements, validating herself through societal standards, so it was understandable that Amy felt devastated. Nevertheless, Amy did not regret her decision even though she lost her job. She explained that her journey to South America had taught her so many valuable life lessons, including what she knew and valued about herself:

> It was liberating because I realised that you actually don't need to work a full-time job to have a fulfilled and meaningful life. The people I met, on the journey, the lifestyle, you know, being able to work more with my body rather than just sitting in front of the computer. I had a really good health reset, just a lot fitter, healthier, slept better, and just by being out in nature more and using more of my body. It changed me in a way to know that I can do this, I don't need a lot of material stuff to live a fulfilled, happy

> life … It was a really empowering experience to know there is more than one way of life, like you don't have to work full-time, you can experience life differently.

This experience showed Amy that she did not need much in relation to material wealth and career success to be happy and to feel fulfilled, an important realisation that helped her process the loss of her job and her view of herself. Her newfound wisdom that there is more than one way to live her life, outside of neoliberal ideals, was particularly empowering for Amy because she realised her worth did not have to be based on high achievements or a steady, high-paying job.

Moreover, this experience also helped Amy to reconnect with her faith from her upbringing and reignited her path to Buddhism. Amy called this her spiritual awakening and believed that her religion granted her calmness and hope, leading her to a path she felt confident and safe moving forward. Amy remembered when she found out she had lost her job; she returned to her religion for the first time since travelling and practised a personal chant to help process her feelings:

> I remember, because my practice kind of left while I was travelling, like I didn't have a stable place and always on the go. But I chanted about this personal chant for a while, and just after I finished chanting, I got a message from her (the person who offered her the new job) … So the timing couldn't have worked better. Another synchronistic thing happened, I bumped into an old colleague … and there is another position opening, and she really encouraged me to apply. And even coached me for the interview, and I got the job, so these are examples that, two jobs just kind of came to me, with my chanting practice being in sync with the universe, like it opens opportunities for them to come to me.

Reflecting on these occurrences, Amy believed that things happen for a reason and that she was looked after by the universe. Amy did not regret her decision to prioritise her wellbeing over her career and gained the courage to look after herself better. This

journey allowed Amy to experience a different way of living that felt truer to herself. Most importantly, she learned that her identity and worthiness did not depend on her achievements.

As a non-religious person, I was very curious about Amy's spiritual journey, so I asked her to tell me more about how she decided on her religion and why Buddhism. Amy said that she had not always been a Buddhist. In fact, she once considered herself an agnostic, someone who believes but also questions the existence of God or a higher power. Even though her mother was Buddhist, and Amy was somewhat familiar with the religion, she had always kept an open mind until her mid-20s. Amy was reintroduced to it by her flatmates through different practices, such as mantra chanting, yoga and meditation. Slowly, Amy became more sensitised and started feeling differently:

> It kind of started seriously, like in Synchronicity, like I started feeling vibrations energy going … I remember by the end of this three-day [workshop], I just picked up a fruit, a mandarin or an orange, and felt the vibrations of that fruit, and it was different from the vibrations, say like the apple. So, like that kind of really opened up my eyes to this, there's more to the world than what we can see and touch, and I was not prepared when I was introduced to this practice … I could feel the energy and the vibration. I feel things shifting when I chant, for example, I would feel a certain sensation that I would have tears and stuff flowing, not like tired or feeling sad, like I feel things are getting moved through, in an energetic vibrational level.

Through her spiritual discovery journey, Amy experienced a transcendental understanding of the world beyond physical senses. Through her religion, she felt connected to something bigger than herself, allowing her to fully experience the teaching of "individual transformation" and what it means to "contribute to society". This motivated Amy to not only think about bettering herself but also to inspire others to do so as well. Amy, as an adult, had consciously chosen Buddhism as her religion because it gave her a sense of global responsibility that she could do more with her life.

This links back to the reasons why the jobs that came after Amy's chant in South America were greatly significant to Amy. She explained that those jobs gave her the opportunities to help upskill others and allowed her to realise her passion for facilitation. These jobs ultimately led to her current job as a GM in a consultancy that helps grow employees' capabilities through supportive facilitation and communication, allowing Amy to embody her belief in "helping others reach their potential" every day. Reflecting on this, Amy felt that was the path she did not know she was meant to be on, and this was what she meant by being looked after by the universe. In the next chapter, I will further unpack how Amy's embodiment of her religion, in her work and way of life, aligns and relates with the components of GC.

Amy's Experiences in Relation to Global Consciousness

This section examines Amy's lived experience and how her way of life translates to GC. It is presented in three parts, corresponding to the three components of GC: awareness of interconnectedness, moral interdependence, and the enactment of this awareness. Much like Toni's case, the first part describes how Amy became aware of interconnectedness through living within diversity and their journey of identity negotiation. The second part shows the role and centrality of Amy's relationship to her religion, in her GC development. Finally, the last part demonstrates how Amy synthesises and translates her experiential learnings and religious values into beliefs and everyday actions. With a similar beginning to Toni but completely different lived experiences, Amy's development in GC demonstrates how her lived experience and religion helped her to self-actualise and continues to guide her to live with intention.

Awareness Of Interconnectedness, Differences and Diversity

Amy's development of GC began similarly to Toni's early experience of living within diversity and feeling unwelcome by their own people. Both their lived experience forced them to become aware of differences and their cultural position in the world. For Toni, it was the struggle of being between Māori and Pakeha culture, whilst for Amy, it was her early exposure to second-hand discrimination from members of her own ethnic group, driven by political complications. Since there were no visible differences between HK and mainland Chinese people, Amy had to navigate subtle cues that drive people apart. This is different from Toni's experience of discrimination as an Indigenous

person. Furthermore, Amy's repeated "outsider" position in HK was reinforced by her extended family, directly affecting the way Amy understood belonging and diversity, informing her understanding of racial hierarchy. As explained in Toni's case, being aware of differences and understanding the historical influence of colonisation on a global scale was an essential part of becoming globally conscious (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). While young Amy at the time might not have understood exactly why HK people discriminated against mainland Chinese people, she described having an implicit understanding that differences are socially constructed, therefore can be invisible and shaped by social biases. This showed that Amy, even at an early age, had developed a reflexive view of diversity, which is a crucial step towards her growing GC (Chao et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & Macdonald, 2016).

Secondly, Toni and Amy shared a similar key moment where both were welcomed by their school peers, which helped them grow a sense of belonging in an environment they initially did not feel they belonged. This unconditional acceptance by their peers was the first time they were shown a different way of treating diversity. This experience showed them the impact of social interactions, which then developed into an intentional compassion for others and openness to differences, another essential component of GC that emphasises human-heartedness and cultural openness (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Liu et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2025). For Amy in particular, she had learned to approach differences critically and learn to challenge bias, rather than taking social biases and perceptions for granted. This is part of why Amy wanted to travel and explore around the world, so that she could learn from different people through first-hand interactions. For instance, the way Amy chose to experience and interpret her trip to Japan reflected her growing GC. It was impressive for a 16-year-old with her newfound identity to want to spend time with an elderly person, whom she built a relationship with and who felt safe enough to open up about his traumatic veteran experience with her, his Chinese host granddaughter. Not only did Amy show her openness to different perspectives and cultural intelligence through her interactions with her host grandfather, but the way she reflected afterwards showed her growing concern for not just her own ethnic community, but all humanity globally:

> Yeah, so that's what I came to realise that these categories were invented to define 'the other'. Same with nationality … It wasn't really a thing, you know, now we just draw a border in order to define us versus them. It also matches my current personal belief, is that this whole concept of race and ethnicity is made-up … People judge you on your racial makeup or appearance alone, but actually, people can be from all different parts of the world. Hence, the topic of people-to-people interactions, like how those micro-actions influence things on a macro-level.

Evident within this quote, which reflects on Amy's teenage years, she had already been making conscious decisions to connect, hold space for others, show empathy, and learn from different people. Her awareness of the socially constructed nature of nationality aligns with GC's emphasis on critical cultural awareness and being globally oriented (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023). Relatedly, Amy's trip to Japan informed her perspective on global international relations and politics. This made her recognise the interconnectedness between humans and their potential to connect and understand each other despite social and international conflicts, while at the same time recognising that those conflicts influence everyone's lived experience and perspectives. This is what inspired her to pursue political science for her tertiary education, which further enriched her development of critical awareness.

Amy's continuous international travel allowed her to experience and learn from more diverse perspectives, expanding her knowledge of interconnectedness and understanding of how individual actions can shape public opinion and global harmony (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & Macdonald, 2016). Amy believed that through multicultural engagements, even small interactions would have a ripple effect in the ways we engage with diversity and differences (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & Macdonald, 2016). Young Amy's experience of rejection in HK and by her extended family helped her understand how discrimination is driven by social misconceptions and assumptions, while her travel allowed her to actively and consciously recognise these politicised social narratives that divide us.

Amy's international travels had allowed her to explore much more than just geographical and cultural differences but also gave her the opportunity to connect and learn about diverse perspectives of people from all around the world. Through her journeys and effort to listen to different perspectives, she experienced a deep sense of connection that she would later understand as 'interconnectedness' (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). This led to Amy's awareness of her own cultural and social position and what she represents when she travels around the world and interacts with people. This manifested into a sense of ethical responsibility, representing another important dimension of Amy's GC development (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Chao et al., 2025).

Just like Toni, Amy's understanding of the world was heavily influenced by her social relationships and the way she was treated by others. Both came to learn to question social opinions through reflections and ethical reasoning, rather than just accepting what they saw and were told. While Toni's GC development was motivated by social responsibilities of leadership, Amy's path was completely different. Her GC development was heavily influenced by what she learned on her international travels and her religion. In the next section, I will further explore how Amy's understanding of diversity and the world contributed to her decision to pursue Buddhism as her religion.

How Amy's Spiritual Awakening Informed Her Moral Responsibility

Amy processed her lived experiences by interpreting and understanding that interpersonal relationships have an impact on collective wellbeing. This reflects a growing experiential awareness of interconnectedness. Indeed, Amy showed a deep appreciation for communication and an earnest desire to learn and understand others' perspectives, which built the foundation of her growing GC (Chen et al., 2023; Fuller, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). In addition to this, her religious beliefs enabled her to further conceptualise her experience into explicit principles that inform her way of life (Chiu et al., 2004; Liu, 2011; Zhang et al., 2021), allowing her to shift from an implicit awareness of interconnectedness to a coherent and actionable system of moral responsibility (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016):

> Buddhist philosophy has a big, like a lot of the philosophies make sense to me about, like cause-and-effect, we are all interconnected, you know. Despite you know you might be just here, as an ordinary person, even ordinary people can do extraordinary things to influence the course of history. We believe that Buddhahood is inherited in all of us, … It's about living out our best version in our day-to-day lives, and hence we have this concept of *kosenrufu*, which, it means world peace through individual happiness, so highlights that global consciousness, the interconnectedness of all things.

As shown, Amy's religious belief system centres around the concept of collective wellbeing through individuals' development, conceptualising ideas like cause-and-effect to emphasise the interconnection between our actions and influences on each other (Chen et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2025; Fuller, 2023; Liu, 2011). When she talked about "Buddhahood being inherent in all of us," she did not mean that everyone must be Buddhist, but simply that every individual has the potential to be better.

It is worth noting that when Amy decided to practice Buddhism, she was an adult making a deliberate, informed decision. This is a conscious step in her identity development. Even though Amy was exposed to many different religions throughout her life, she had been critical and intentional in how she engaged, just as she approaches differences and diversity with curiosity and patience. Amy found the sutra, the teaching of Buddha, spoke to her experiences and helped her become more self-reflective:

> We emphasise the concept of self-responsibility … So, we always look back at ourselves, "okay, what am I doing, how am I influencing, how am I responsible in contributing to this situation, cause everything is our creation, so sometimes it is not necessarily the action, but the energy, the thought, the belief, also manifest into the external environment. If I am walking around in the stage of fear, I know I will attract

> fear. Whereas I know that I am safe, I am comfortable in my own skin, and it doesn't matter where I go, I feel protected.

This quote illustrates Amy's reflexivity, how she showed concerns for others while reflecting on how she could contribute to the world beyond a physical sense. This reveals a key part of her GC development, demonstrating a crucial moment where her awareness became actionable responsibility (Chao et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2023; Li & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). The emphasis on self-responsibility reflects her moral understanding of interconnectedness, where individuals take accountability by recognising that the way they conduct themselves in the world shapes collective outcomes and the wider social environment (Choi et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Amy's values centre around collective wellbeing through individuals' improvements, aligning with GC's dual emphasis on individual agency and contributions to public good (Chen et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023).

Beyond a relational understanding of interconnectedness, GC also recognises the importance of individual influence on broader social and external environments, such as how we contribute to physical spaces and show concern for the planet (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Choi et al., 2025). This aligns with Amy's perspective on how our energy, beliefs and values manifest into the external world beyond the physical senses. In other words, she believes in the interconnections between our inner and outer worlds:

> In our practice, we talk about your environment, much like your global consciousness idea, your environment is a reflection of your inner world, so if things are sh*t in the outside world, chances are there are things you need to work through … If you look around the world now, all things that (are) happening, the war, all these conflicts, are a result of, the root cause is the illusion and dilution of separation, because we don't see that we are actually one, part of the same ecosystem here, part of everywhere else.

Amy extended her understanding of interconnectedness beyond interpersonal relationships to connecting one's internal states to their effect on the external environment. As she explained earlier, your energy or belief will show up in your external environment, whether through attraction or manifestation. The way I have interpreted this as a non-religious person without fully understanding the concept of "energy attraction", I related this to times when I am feeling stressed or overwhelmed, which affects my ability to perform, even as simple as keeping the house or my desk clean. On top of that, it would affect the people around me and so forth. In the above quote, Amy referred to the current wars and conflicts happening around the world as an example of how that is shaped by people's fears and disconnection from each other. Amy's ability to relate her understandings to global issues aligns with GC's emphasis on moral interdependence, where one relates themselves ethically to others and beyond, resulting in a sense of moral commitment (Chen et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

This sense of moral responsibility has been demonstrated throughout Amy's narrative. Her lived experiences and religion informed her nuanced perspective and way of life, providing a practical framework that enabled her to externalise her spiritual beliefs into everyday actions, her mahi and aspirations. She showed an in-depth understanding of the interconnections between all people and their environments:

> So yeah, I think global consciousness influences how we are interconnected, how the micro-actions cause macro-outcomes. That concept of cause-and-effect, butterfly effect, you know. It will all add up. When everyone is happy, everyone is feeling connected, and sufficient, then we believe that there won't be war cause what we see in the outside world is a reflection of our inner world.

Amy's spiritual journey helped her make sense of her experiences and the world around her, allowing her to develop a spiritual understanding of individual purpose, beyond physical senses. Most of all, her spirituality has deepened her GC development by positioning moral responsibility and self-improvement as interconnected foundations of her value system (Chao et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Amy's

spiritual journey guided her to live holistically, allowing her to see the interconnection between her own well-being and the well-being of others and the world. Her religion became a moral guideline that helped her to find fulfilment and meaning in her life through actions and choices (Chiu et al., 2004; Liu, 2011; Zhang et al., 2023).

Enacting Religious Values into Everyday Life

In the context of GC, the interconnectedness between our internal states and the external environment informs how we interact with one another, how we present ourselves, and how we care for our surroundings (Chao et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). This is a recurring concept that Amy kept circling back to throughout our conversation, a core belief that guided how she experiences the world. In this section, I will unpack how Amy intentionally embodies and enacts her GC through her religion in her mahi, everyday engagements and aspirations.

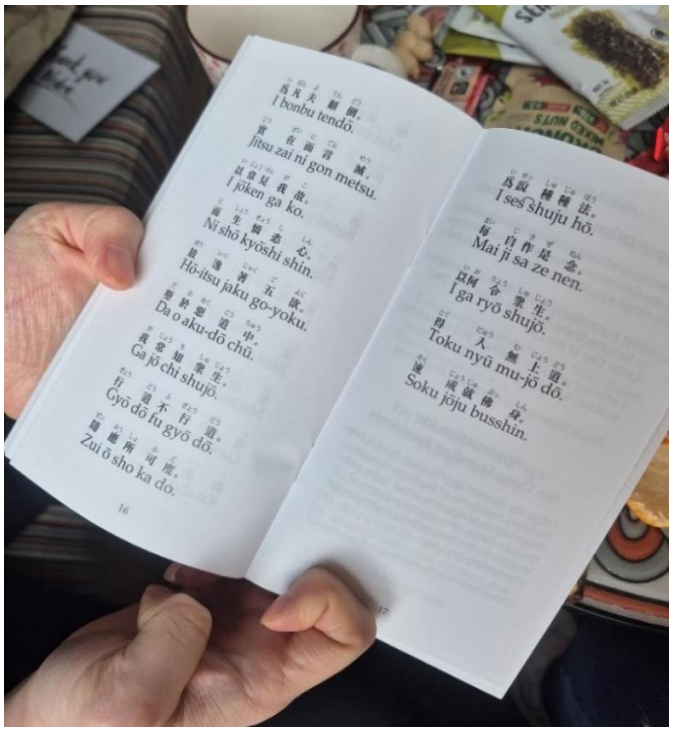
Given that Amy's mahi involves creative problem-solving and enhancing employees' capabilities through team-building workshops, training, and employee programmes, she would often have to facilitate. She enjoyed it the most out of her other duties because it is about bringing people's perspectives together:

> I realised that actually the work that I enjoyed the most is facilitation. Just bringing people together and solving problems together. And I believe that every person has a specific piece of puzzle, and, you know, unless we can get like the wisdom, or puzzle from everyone, then you can see this bigger picture. We talk about how this is actually the most important thing, if you want to help someone or guide someone, you start with understanding. What are their circumstances? To see the world from their perspectives. That's what I do, as a facilitator, is to bridge the different worldviews, to bridge the understanding because everyone experiences the same reality differently, and they are all equally valid, so how do we bring them together to form the full picture?

Stemming from her awareness of interconnectedness, Amy shows a deep appreciation for different perspectives and believes in the power of communication. Her interpretation of her mahi reflects a relational, human-centred approach that focuses on fostering spaces that facilitate knowledge co-creation. Amy integrated her earlier belief that everyone has the potential to influence collective outcomes into her mahi, facilitating spaces for others to grow and contribute to their organisation. This reflects an important development in Amy's GC, where she continues to enact and embody her understanding of interconnectedness and moral responsibility by dedicating her professional life to elevating others (Chao et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

Figure 4

Photo of Amy Showing a Phrase from the Book of Sutras (own photo)



Note. Amy explained her facilitation and communication style in Cantonese and English by quoting the passage.

Amy's lived experience had taught her to be culturally responsive and approach differences with openness, while her religion helped her find structure to embody her beliefs. Her valuing of communication and co-creation of knowledge was demonstrated

through the very way she communicated with me throughout the interview. This became particularly apparent when she directly showed me a specific passage in the sutra and translated it for me herself, reflecting her earnest communication style, see Figure 4. Using the passage from the sutra, Amy explained how she integrates these philosophies into her mahi in a way that I could understand. At first, she read it in Chinese, knowing that I could follow the characters.

"每自作是念, 以何令眾生, 得入無上道, 速成就佛身. 隨應所可度, 為說種種法."

But then she realised I could not understand the actual meaning of the passage as it was written in an ancient poetic form. Noticing that, she immediately translated it for me and further explained it in both Cantonese and English. I was immediately intrigued as she told a story about the person who wrote the passage and followed with this explanation:

> At the time was a storyteller, a master communicator, he would adjust the message based on the different audience. His intention is 我點樣可以解釋依樣野比眾生聽 所以能夠令到眾生得到無上道 盡快成就佛身 [how can I explain this to everybody so that everybody can get to Buddhahood as quickly as they possible can] so I feel like that kind of essence of communication skills, it's about what way can you communicate to deliver a message in a way that is based on people's level of understanding.

This is another example of how Amy meets me at my level and uses different techniques and languages to get her message across to her audience, requiring her to actively understand diverse perspectives and be flexible and empathetic in the way she communicates. Her GC is clearly demonstrated through her adaptive communication, relational understanding of individuals as a whole and her intentional effort for ethical engagement (Chao et al., 2025; Liu, 2011). This is a specific example that speaks to the broader enactment of Amy's GC in her work and everyday life. It is representative of her

deep, reflexive understanding of her own positionality and how ethical contributions are shaped by *both* individuals' needs and aspirations for collective growth (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023).

We can further relate Amy's embodiment and enactment of GC to her dream of having a holistic wellbeing retreat centre one day. It is a representation of *kosenrufu*, the concept she mentioned earlier, which means world peace through individual happiness. This also reflects one of Amy's core driving intentions to create environments that foster collective wellbeing. Similar to the reasons why she chose the SGI centre as the interview location, aligning with her idea of internal and external space, it is a space that reflects growth and interconnectedness. Like Toni, Amy's desire to provide a comfortable and supportive space for others to grow and connect is an extension of her GC enactment. Slightly different to Toni, whose dream was motivated mostly by fostering social connections through shared space, Amy's dream is motivated by diverse collaboration and self-improvement, contributing to global wellbeing.

Throughout Amy's journey, she has gone from understanding interconnectedness to actively integrating her belief in her everyday life and aspirations, such as how she communicates and how she applies her religious beliefs in her work. Her experience demonstrates how multidimensional GC development is and how our lived experiences shape the way we understand the world and the people around us. The way Amy had chosen to approach the world with openness and intention is a clear display of GC (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Liu et al., 2023; Chao et al., 2025). At a young age, Amy was already behaving in a globally conscious way by engaging in critical thinking and understanding concepts like racial hierarchy. Amy's religion then provided her with a moral blueprint to follow and behave ethically (Chiu et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2021). Amy's journey illustrated how the three core components of GC, awareness of interconnectedness, moral commitment and enactment, are often interwoven together and show up at different stages of our lives (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023).

My Reflections on Amy's Experience

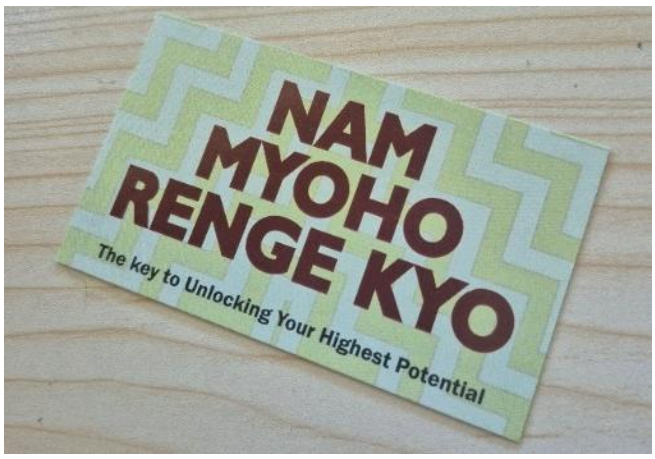
Coming from a similar upbringing as Amy, I am aware of how my positionality shapes the way I interpret Amy's narrative. Amy and I both shared similarities in our

lived experience - we were both from HK, primarily cared for by our grandmothers in our formative years, and migrated to Aotearoa NZ at the same age. I could also relate to her on the aspect of how our international travels influenced the way we understand the world and helped us develop an openness to diversity and awareness of interconnectedness. These commonalities allowed me to relate to Amy on many occasions. Especially when we switched between languages as we communicated, we were bonding in a unique way. While I could not fully understand Amy's spiritual experience, I found her commitment to her Buddhism inspiring. Through her storytelling and embodiment of her religious belief, she introduced me to a whole new worldview without imposing her beliefs onto me.

With the understanding that I struggled to grasp the concept of "energy" and "'vibrations", Amy invited me into one of the chanting rooms and gave me a card with the phrase, "Nam Myoho Renge Kyo", see Figure 5. She then rung the metal singing bowl at the altar and invited me to join her chant if I wanted to. As I listened to the echoes of the metal bowl, feeling the powerful vibrations lingering in the air, I quietly joined in. I was surprised by Amy's voice, strong and unwavering, vastly different from her speaking voice, which was soft and quiet. Through her powerful chanting, I could understand how her faith has contributed to her personal and GC development. It was a profound experience, one that reminded me how important religions can be for people with faith.

Figure 5

Photo of the Card with the Mantra "Nam Myoho Renge Kyo" (own photo)

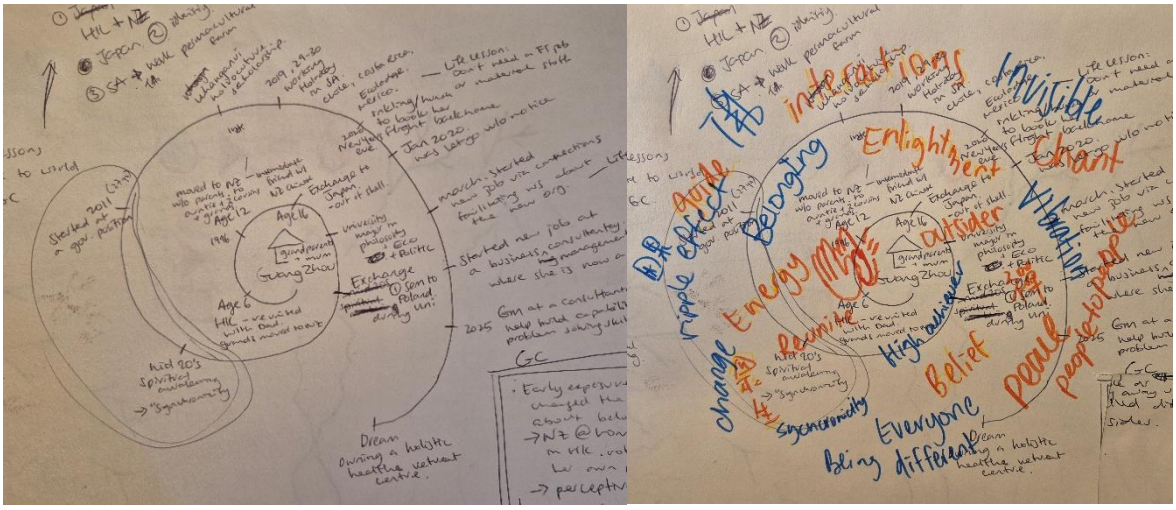


Note. Amy gifted me a card with a common chant used in the Buddhist practice, which has multilayered meanings that represent the oneness of life and the interconnectedness of all beings and the environment (Kawada, 2009). A representation of Amy's overall belief.

As part of my analysis process, I engaged in a creative response to make sense of Amy's lived experience. This allowed me to visualise and interpret key themes in her story. Since her narrative was not in chronological order, I started with creating a timeline of Amy's life and story-mapping, then I used markers to write all the key words of her story from memory, see Figure 6. The use of markers represents Amy's attitude toward her worldview, certain and clear, while the two contrasting colours, blue and orange, represent her ability to navigate wide range of perspectives. After that I cut out the spiral and added more key words on the other side of the spiral, focusing on grounding words from her narrative, hence the green coloured marker. From the spiral-shaped timeline, I developed a 3-dimensional artwork that can be displayed both upwards and downwards, see Figure 7. When it spins, both sides of Amy's key words are visible, these elements represent the multidirectional and evolving nature of Amy's thinking.

Figure 6

Photos of the Creative Analysis Process (own work)



Note. (Left) Timeline of Amy's life. (Right) Word association on Amy's timeline.

Figure 7

The Creative Analysis of Amy's Case (own work)



Note. A 3-dimensional artwork of a cut-out spiral that works in both directions (left and top right), *grounding words written on the other side (bottom right).* A representation of Amy's GC development.

Amy's case highlights how GC development is not linear or one-directional, but a continuous growing process that requires humans to connect and engage with each other and the world. The spiral artwork illustrates Amy's GC development as a dynamic and ongoing project that can be interchanged across time and space, showing how we continue to reflect, reinterpret, and keep learning from our past experiences as a globally conscious individual.

Chapter 6: Miguel

This chapter introduces the final of three case studies, focusing on Miguel, a Brazilian American male who married a New Zealander and has lived in Aotearoa NZ for only two years. As the new arrival, Miguel's position offers a fresh point of view on Aotearoa NZ and insights into how GC develop as an adult through interracial relationships and encounters with new social environments. I begin by providing a brief introduction of Miguel, his cultural background, formative years, and current life circumstances. Then, I discuss the significance of his chosen interview location, Wellington Airport, and its connections to his identity, sense of belonging and worldview. Following this, the key moments and turning points of Miguel's life are explored to understand how these experiences shaped Miguel's personal growth, including his bicultural upbringing, leadership and work experiences. These experiences are presented chronologically in three phases: his formative years navigating Brazilian and American cultures, key experiences that fostered personal responsibility and self-reflection, and his present-day life as a content creator, living between the United States of America (US) and Aotearoa NZ, and balancing his career with being a present husband. I then analyse Miguel's lived experiences in relation to GC, focusing on awareness of interconnectedness, the development of moral interdependence, and how he enacts these understandings in his everyday life. At last, I conclude the chapter with my reflections on Miguel's story and a creative response that represents our shared dialogues and his journey of GC development.

Introducing Miguel

Miguel is a first-generation Brazilian American, originally from a small town close to San Francisco in Northern California. He grew up bilingual, speaking Portuguese and English in a Brazilian household. He described his upbringing as a "classic first-generation immigrant story, where parents and the kids are all learning a new culture at the same time." His parents moved to the US in their 20s, speaking minimal English. Miguel said his parents pursued the "American dream", which worked out for them, and he was grateful for that. Miguel seemed to have a typical childhood and did not mention any discrimination from others growing up. This might be partly due to Miguel being a very loud and social child who performed quite well in his extracurricular activities and

interests, such as playing the piano and participating in sports like taekwondo and soccer. Miguel felt that his parents were always open and supportive of him trying new things, which helped him build his confidence and willingness to approach differences. Being a child of immigrants, he said, being hard-working was modelled throughout his life. Therefore, his core values are working hard and trying again after failing. Miguel would later enrol in university, in a different state away from his family. This was a significant moment in his life, as he got to "start fresh and know nobody". Being away from home for the first time, Miguel was more excited than nervous. During his time at university, Miguel became the president of his fraternity, which motivated him to reflect and be a better role model. This leadership position made Miguel feel responsible for others and realise the impact he could make, marking his GC development (Chao et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2023).

After graduating from university, Miguel continued to work hard and tried every type of job he could get. He worked across 25 different jobs, from cleaning, serving food, working in a call centre, and being a salesman. For Miguel, trying everything was a way for him to learn about himself. Eventually, he got a weekend job at a television (TV) station where he was hired as a replay operator whose job it was to watch the national football games and manually select clips for replays or highlights. Miguel described this as his dream job at the time, as he had always wanted to be a presenter or broadcaster on sports channels. This kick-started Miguel's career in the entertainment industry. He then went on and worked with a few different major national TV channels and even went to Russia for the FIFA World Cup in 2018. Miguel described a pivotal moment of his career when he got a 6-month temporary contract at [an online streaming platform], which at the time was an emerging industry. Knowing that this position was temporary, Miguel became extra hard-working, tried to learn everything from every department, and purposely outperformed to show how valuable he could be. It paid off when Miguel completed a project and unintentionally solved a cross-department problem, which resulted in him getting a full-time job as a solution engineer. Between 2020 and 2024, Miguel started making content online and gained millions of followers, which ultimately gave him the financial stability to quit his full-time job at [the online streaming platform] and become a self-employed content creator. Around the same time, he met his wife, a

Serbian New Zealander who was travelling around the US. Miguel became smitten while talking about his wife, describing their relationship as a romantic movie where they fell in love at first sight, and the rest was history. Despite being a long-distance relationship, they got married in 2022, and Miguel has lived in Aotearoa NZ with his wife ever since. As of now, Miguel is still a content creator and the spokesperson for [an online platform that promotes male fertility health], which he sometimes travels back to the States for.

Miguel's Choice of Interview Location: The Airport

The interview took place at Wellington International Airport, located in the south-east suburb of Wellington city centre. While it is an international airport, it is a small airport that only has one major runway with flights going as far as Australia. Small but not lacking, the airport always has different art exhibits or displays that make the Wellington airport more artistic and a bit more 'Wellingtonian'. As we met there in the late afternoon, it was very busy. Miguel arrived with his luggage and a big smile, carrying a sense of ease that most travellers do not. He had just checked in for his flight back to the state. We found a table for the interview, and I thanked Miguel for participating in the current research and fitting me into his tight schedule. He thanked me for meeting him all the way here, as he was going to choose the airport as his location regardless. Miguel explained:

> I am always stressed out because I am travelling, and then I get here [the airport] and I'm like "I enjoy this!". Because usually something cool is gonna happen, like I'm gonna see my family … I'm gonna work, and I'm gonna feel like myself when I'm back in America. So, this is like a portal … This is only possible for me to be with her [his wife] because of this [the airport]. And this is where my parents arrived. I was there to see them, and grandma, my cousins, all here for the wedding.

For Miguel, airports in general represent new adventures and opportunities, as he explained. The Wellington Airport is particularly significant for Miguel because this is a place that represents love, where he used to travel back and forth between the U.S. and Aotearoa NZ to see his wife before they got married. This is also where he greeted his

family and friends when they came over for his wedding, many of whom were on their first visit to Aotearoa NZ. This place reminds Miguel of the love he felt when everyone came and celebrated him with his wife. In his words, the airport is a place that makes what he does possible. Now that he has made Wellington his home, he has become extremely familiar with this airport due to his frequent travel. As he concluded, "This is my boat, vessel, that connects my whānau there and my whānau here".

Lived Experience and Lessons Learned

This section unpacks Miguel's key moments throughout his life and what he learned from his experiences. Similarly to Toni and Amy, Miguel's lived experiences and lessons learned are presented in chronological order. This begins with a discussion of Miguel's formative years before he moved to a different state for university. Next, I discuss two of Miguel's turning points: his university years, where he learned about social responsibility through leadership and his early adult life, where his values of working hard and trying after failing helped advance his career. Lastly, I will explore Miguel's current lifestyle and aspirations, and how his marriage and living in Aotearoa helped him see the world differently.

Formative Years: Differences Without Exclusion and Discrimination

Miguel presents as a confident young man in his early 30s, well-travelled and loves trying new things. Miguel gives credit to his parents as he realised mid-conversation that they had always been encouraging and open to him trying different things:

> I just basically said yes to everything, my whole life. Part of that, I never wanted to miss out, but maybe because my parents would be like, always saying yes to me, so I got used to saying yes, maybe, that's the first time I thought of that.

Throughout our conversation, Miguel would often reflect on his life experiences and make connections to the person he is now. When I asked about his upbringing, he did not mention experiencing discrimination as Toni and Amy had, but he knew that he and

his family were different from other 'typical' American families. For example, he noticed that his friends would find his family 'loud' and act differently from their own families:

> As a kid growing up, I was the loudest kind in my class. I was just a weird, different kid … But yeah, like when my friends would come over to my house, and how my parents are and how my family are, which is way different, regardless of language or appearance, me, seem like crazy people. So that's the part where I was like, among my friends, like in my class, Brazilian. Because when my family would get together, like parents at the soccer game or whatever, my parents were LOUD.

While Miguel did not experience any negative treatment from his peers, he had observed cultural differences across his environment, especially between his home life and school life (Choi et al., 2025; Gaber, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2013). Miguel described how different his family would be compared to his peers' families. He used the word "crazy", which I assumed he meant being more expressive and louder than others. As a first-generation Brazilian American, he was experiencing two cultures emerging, where his parents were still actively participating in Brazilian cultures, such as speaking Portuguese at home, cooking Brazilian meals, and visiting families back in Brazil. By normalising exposure to Brazilian cultures within the home, Miguel grew up feeling connected to his heritage and perceiving "different" as a natural phenomenon. Miguel grew up celebrating his heritage, which made him feel proud of where he is from and become more curious and accepting of differences (Berry, 1997; Del Toro et al., 2024; McAreavey, 2017; Safa et al., 2021). More importantly, the lack of discrimination Miguel experienced in his early life and his generally positive social interactions allowed him to keep an open mind about diversity and different cultures (Del Toro et al., 2024; Fuller, 2023; Fraser, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2013). Miguel's bicultural background and upbringing planted the seed for his GC development (Berry, 1997; Choi et al., 2025; Fraser, 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2013).

As Miguel mentioned, they would make regular visits to Brazil throughout his childhood for summer holidays and would spend two to three months there at a time.

Miguel enjoyed being in Brazil and observing the contrasting family dynamics and lifestyle. He felt that Brazil felt "freer" and more community-oriented, where family extends to aunts and uncles, cousins and neighbours:

> The different feelings of family. I only had my parents and my brother (in the States), but in Brazil, the whole family, all these cousins, you know, like three couples, each have three kids, like 12 cousins. Like what a different experience. Like more family-oriented, casualness, like people just walking barefoot, walking down the street to go to the store. Like Americans are very like get in the car, go to Costco, do your weekly shop. In Brazil, they are more like why get in the car when I can just go down the street, knock on this guy's door [for food/ingredients] … It's free flow, like FREE! Actually, ironically, the word "free", right? But like, it felt more free, and the US is more like, it felt more industrial.

Miguel's exposure to the different lifestyles through diverse cultural and community dynamics had further shaped the way he understands diversity and people around the world: how others live, their values and how they interact with each other (Chao et al., 2025; Del Toro et al., 2024; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). This allowed him to compare cultural differences through everyday life, something as simple as being able to borrow household items from neighbours seemed out of the world for Miguel. This contrast of lifestyle and community values enabled Miguel to understand the concepts of individualism and collectivism through real-life interactions at a young age (Chao et al., 2025; Fuller, 2023; Heine, 2010; Oyserman et al., 2002).

While Miguel enjoyed navigating the differences between the two worlds, he did notice how his American upbringing differentiated him from his Brazilian-born and raised cousins and other local people. In Brazil, he was always a visitor, even though it was where his parents were from, he would always be identified as American, whereas in America, he was always too Brazilian:

> Like going back to Brazil … my cousins get out of school at noon, and they are like 'you guys just spend the whole day at school and doing homework? That's so crazy' … I have never lived there [Brazil]. So, I feel like an outsider there. Over there, I am American. In America, I am Brazilian. Because in America, I am even a lot for an American because I am Brazilian. Like this guy is over the top, so animated and touchy.

Other than lifestyle, the most noticeable aspect for Miguel was how he interacts with other people. In Brazil, he might be seen as too hard-working or hurried. While in America, he was also seen as too Brazilian for being too expressive or passionate. Miguel expressed feeling like an "outsider" and not quite belonging to either America or Brazil. This is similar to Amy and Toni, both of whom also used the word "outsider" to convey the idea of not fitting in. This "outsider" experience further contributed to Miguel's growing awareness of diversity and compassion for people different from him.

Miguel's parents appeared to be able to blend both cultures seamlessly and modelled a positive attitude towards diversity for Miguel. This is when he chuckled and air-quoted "American dream" as he explained his parents' attitudes towards differences:

> They climbed the corporate ladder and ended up doing well. The 'American dream' actually worked out for them. Because we are living 'the dream' now, we were used to comparing, like I am used to being in a car when I was a kid, and my parents would be like criticising Americans, and then at the same time they would also be criticising Brazilians, and then they would see other minorities, and they would become racist. They are criticising everybody, just like everybody is wrong. It didn't occur to me for a while that they just don't like anybody. They just like to complain, I think. So, I was used to comparing in that way. Maybe it was unhealthy, the language we were using.

> But yeah, like differences, like different groups, like which friend is rich, or poor, or this friend is not rich like us.

Acknowledging the unhealthy and competitive nature of his parents' behaviours, Miguel was experiencing contradictory attitudes from his parents regarding their views on identity and social status. While their discriminatory opinions were not specific to any ethnicity, there were class-based biases rooted in experiences and certain mindsets, like achieving the "American dream", which usually indicate financial stability and freedom (Kehl, 2023; Samuel, 2012). The concept of the "American dream" emphasises individualism, social hierarchy, and material success, which has been criticised for being overly concerned with class and wealth (Kehl, 2023; Oyserman et al., 2002; Samuel, 2012). This could explain his parents' prejudiced behaviours, which resulted in Miguel's chase for material and financial success. Miguel called it "his capitalism ideal", a recurring theme throughout Miguel's narrative. It is interesting to point out that, through it all, Miguel has grown to recognise their behaviour as "unhealthy" and "racist". Through Miguel's formative years navigating two worlds, witnessing and becoming aware of differences, became the norm for how he approaches diversity and understands social identity (Del Toro et al. ,2024; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Safa et al., 2021).

Turning Point: Becoming An Independent Young Adult

In this section, I will explore two key turning points in Miguel's life that have significantly shaped his personal development. The first occurred during his senior year in university when Miguel became president of his fraternity. This experience helped him develop a sense of social responsibility, expanding his perspective beyond individual gain. This also prompted Miguel to participate in self-reflection and desire to improve himself. The second turning point is one where his values of hard work and never giving up were rewarded and overall advanced his career. Miguel's work experience had helped him better understand himself, what he wants to do and why.

When Miguel moved to a different state for university, he was hopeful and excited about his future. As he said earlier in this chapter, he was always comfortable with new

things because his parents were supportive and encouraging, so being away from them for the first time gave him a sense of independence and freedom to explore himself. In his senior years, he was elected to become president of his fraternity, a male students' society in the university, where Miguel began to understand his impact on others and what it means to be a leader:

> When I was seen as a leader, I felt this responsibility to behave as an example: be early, go to the gym before class, eat healthy, because people are looking at me. Like this kid is 18 years old … he looks at me, so what I do is really gonna affect him. And so, I am doing the better thing. And then when I am doing this better thing, kind of for him and guess what, I am also winning and I am also getting better. Since then, I realised actually you can be leader without being all level leader, like actually HE is a leader maybe among his friends, and he doesn't realise it. When I became that role, ever since then, I see myself as a leader, not like I'm the man, I'm the best, not like in an ego way, but in a way like, hey, I have an impact!

Since Miguel has always been confident and adaptive to new environments, it had not occurred to him how much impact senior students can have on new, younger students. Miguel explained that being in a leadership position had given him a sense of social responsibility and forced him to look inward at how his actions could influence others (Chao et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; McAreavey, 2017). This inspired him to move beyond his focus on personal success to a more people-focused mindset, recognising that there was no competition when we help each other grow. This directly contradicts the competitive mindset he was raised in, contributing to his growing sense of social responsibility. Moreover, by being a role model to others, Miguel also began to recognise others' leadership potential and that anyone is capable of influencing others (Chao et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Because of this experience, Miguel became more aware of the interconnectedness between people, which inspired him to be more self-reflective and intentional in his self-improvement. Upon recognising a sense of social responsibility, Miguel

responsively made a series of behavioural adjustments with certain underlying moral and relational intentions. This responsiveness and dynamic change in his actions upon reflection show growth in the connection between his GC awareness and enactment (Chao et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023).

After graduating from university, Miguel began his working life by undertaking a range of different jobs. Miguel wanted a career that he is passionate about and aligned with his interests, such as sport, music, and entertainment. At the same time, his sense of social responsibility and understanding of interconnectedness began to grow and to shape his career aspirations (Chao et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2025; Heine, 2010). Instead of pursuing his interests blindly, Miguel began to reconsider how his interests could fit into a career that could make an impact. This led him to consider careers in the entertainment and sports broadcasting industry, where he felt he could use his voice and public status to influence a bigger audience.

Miguel described his adult life as busy and full of trials and misses. At the start, he was enthusiastic about joining society and did not mind doing low-paying jobs such as waiting tables or cleaning. Miguel believed this was part of his journey before he could pursue his desired career. Reflecting on the many different types of jobs he had done, Miguel said he hated the sales job the most, but he also learned a lot about himself, like his limits and capabilities, as well as what he did not want for his career. He said it was a very stressful job with a 10-hour workday, and a 1-hour commute each way. While he was making good money, he was exhausted and burned out the whole time. Apart from the income, the nature of the job was part of the motivation, as he was working as a healthcare recruiter and felt the job was “at least helping people”. Miguel found the job to be “very toxic and unhealthy”, but it did empower him to reconsider the value of financial gain. While it can be earned through hard work, Miguel now understands it is not worth prioritising financial gain over his wellbeing:

> And then it came to a point, only basically in my adult life, that I started saying no, I started to like not doing every single possible thing … It made me like, I mean I hated it [the sales job], and I did it, and I didn’t think about this at the time, but I realised that’s like, as hard as it’s ever gonna get. Other than physical labour, like building a roof

somewhere. Like it's never gonna get worse than that. Which was a blessing looking back.

Reflecting on this experience, Miguel now sees it as a blessing because he gained confidence in his capabilities and learned his limits. By enduring the long-hour sales job that he hated, he learned to reevaluate his value system, thus gained a sense of autonomy and empowerment, as if he was finally becoming his own person. By recognising this experience "as hard as it's ever gonna get," helped him perceive future challenges as more manageable and gave him more confidence to pursue his desired career.

Fortunately, Miguel found a weekend job at the local TV station, where he was hired as a replay operator to watch national football games and manually select clips for replays or highlights. Miguel loved this job and considered it his step into the entertainment industry. However, since it was only for the weekend, Miguel was still working the sales job during the week to support himself financially. During this time, he realised his work ethic was different from others, that he was comparatively "too hard-working":

I remember coming from scrubbing toilets at [Fast food chain], from like sales, working 12 hours a day to like this [replay operators], so when I got in, I am sitting next to people who are used to doing these jobs … And I am used to be like fighting for my life at work and hating it and just like and the only way out of hating it is to do better at it and just to work harder. So, I was outperforming everyone in my team … Like I was doing so much more work that they didn't have any more for me. And I was realising like you guys aren't hungry, or like is this what normally, is this what jobs are normally like?

Having worked in multiple industries, including physically and mentally demanding jobs, Miguel developed a different perspective on what is considered "hard" work. For

him, coming from a sales job he hated and moving into an environment where he described the job as “getting paid to watch football”, he found himself working harder than everyone else. This contrast in work ethic and environment led Miguel to initially judge his colleague to have no ambition or “not hungry”. Being raised by immigrant parents who achieved the “American Dream”, Miguel was accustomed to combating hardship with “working harder” and to “climb the corporate ladder” so he could be in the position of leadership or influence (Kehl, 2023; McAreavey, 2017; Safa et al., 2021). However, Miguel’s experience at university had taught him that everyone can be influential and a leader figure. This is when he made a big realisation and said, “Cause immigrants don’t have a choice!” While he had built resilience through his fruitful work experience, he began to more intentionally reshape his approach and mindset to work, demonstrating his growing sense of critical self-awareness and ability to self-reflect. As Miguel explained, “I just basically said yes to everything, my whole life. And then it came to a point, only basically in my adult life, that I started saying no, I started to like not doing every single possible thing”. This is a key personal development where Miguel started having boundaries and questioning his internalised biases toward his 'work ethic' and its connection to the American dream.

Nevertheless, Miguel continued to work through both his weekday and weekend jobs until eventually he got a six-month full-time contract with [an online streaming platform]. This is a key moment in Miguel’s career where he officially got into the entertainment industry, his hard-working nature was recognised and rewarded. With online streaming still being a relatively new concept at the time, Miguel felt like he had found his people, who are also “hungry”, creative and innovating:

> This is where I belong, because there [the local TV station], I was out-performing, going to my boss, asking for more work, and felt like I was annoying him. And people at [the online streaming platform] were like, ‘Yes! This guy! We love this guy!’ And everybody is like this, everybody is hungry, everybody is thinking, and if someone said they have a smarter idea, the boss will listen. Some of the workplace is like, ‘Oh, shut

> up.' Like that doesn't exist in a new industry, that's not how you innovate. We want innovation, and it was just sick I was around innovators!

In contrast to his previous job at the local TV station, Miguel finally got to work in an environment that aligned with his preferences. This gave him a sense of belonging by enabling him to contribute and be valued. For example, Miguel described his boss as open-minded and encouraging, as he would listen to his employee's opinions and ideas. Thus, Miguel seized the opportunity and continued contributing however he could, from offering ideas to picking up extra shifts and working across different departments. This allowed him to develop new skills, learn more about the industry, and build confidence in his capabilities. By becoming a skilful and cross-department trained employee, Miguel's hard work eventually paid off when they offered him a permanent contract, further advancing his career. Miguel's work ethic helped him to build resilience and find financial security. At this point, he could now start balancing his ambitions with his moral commitments, laying the foundations for his path towards becoming a self-employed educational content creator, where creativity, adaptability, social responsibility and relatability are essential to the role.

Pursuing Dream Career, Financial Stability and Moving to Aotearoa NZ

Reflecting on his time at [the online streaming platform], Miguel felt that being in an innovative environment and working alongside creative colleagues played a big part in his career evolution. This experience helped him gain confidence to express ideas and an appreciation for teamwork. He also acknowledged that it gave him the financial freedom to explore his interests, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chen et al., 2023; Gray & Tischler, 2024; O'Connor et al., 2021). This is when Miguel started posting funny videos that address gender norms, social expectations, and stereotypes across different social media platforms, using humour to bring awareness to social issues he cared about. This reflects a significant development in Miguel's personal and career growth. While his job provided him with financial stability, the pandemic created space for reflection, allowing him to explore ways to diversify what he could do to make a bigger social impact. As he gained more traction and followers, Miguel was eventually able to leave his full-time job at [the online streaming service] to pursue his career as a

content creator. This ultimately led to his current role as the spokesperson for [a male health company], promoting male fertility health through humour. Miguel felt that was a job made for him, a career that is community-driven and goal-oriented, but also everything he loved doing:

> For me, it's a full circle moment of combining sport, sort of comedy, serious presentations, like a podcast, short form content … like this is everything I wanted to do in different ways … Thing is, because there actually is a problem with male fertility right now … We also have a society narrative problem focusing on the women is the front of the infertility conversation, pregnancy complication, when more than half the time, pregnancy complications, miscarriages, stuff after birth is because of the men. We are not talking about this at all, that needs to change.

Evident throughout Miguel's narrative so far is an internalised immigrant mentality centred around hard work (McAreavey, 2017; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Safa et al., 2021). The above quote reflects his growing awareness of global issues, such as male infertility and his readiness to do his part. Miguel describing this as his "full circle moment" reflects his growing development in critical and relational thinking, particularly regarding gender inequality, the status quo, and social hierarchy. This shows his effort to shift from an individualistic mindset to a more purpose-driven and community-oriented one. Since Miguel no longer focuses solely on survival and security, he can afford to pursue a career of his dreams that aligns with his deeper interests and values. Through hard work and persistence, Miguel's journey thus far has helped him to grow and gain access in many ways, including how he can utilise his positionality to influence and educate others.

Around the same time Miguel was building his content creator career, he met his future wife, a Serbian New Zealander travelling through the US at the time, whom he has now been happily married to for almost four years. Miguel recalled that one of the things they initially bonded over was both being first-generation and children of migrants.

Miguel said that being with his wife and her family had expanded his perspectives on migrants and how the previous generations can affect and shape the way we are:

> My wife and her older sister were born in Serbia, and they left because of the circumstances of the civil war ... So we related a lot to that part where both of our families are from different places and left their country to a new country. One big difference between me and her is that my parents each made conscious decisions of wanting to come to the U.S ... Her parents felt the need to come and can't wait to go back. You know, so there is an interesting identity thing with, I mean both of our parents felt very strongly that they are where they are from but if you talk to her parents, they feel like home is like back home [Serbia], whereas my parents, like wanted to establish in the US. It was like, yeah, 'that's so weird, you are Serbian living in NZ and I am Brazilian living in America', it's the same. Because everything is the same, like everything is connected.

Miguel's relationship with his wife had further deepened the way he understands cultural identity and the intergenerational influence of migrants' experiences. While he and his wife share similar experiences of being first-generation migrants, their parents had completely different reasons for migration, which had affected the way they raised their children and their sense of belonging to the migrated country (Berry, 1997; Heine, 2010; Kehl, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2013; Safa et al., 2021). Recognising these differences, Miguel became aware of another layer of interconnectedness. He has gained a more nuanced understanding of power dynamics within migrants, particularly how privileges, autonomy, and historical contexts affect their experience and identity across generations.

Furthermore, moving to Aotearoa NZ with his wife had prompted Miguel to reflect deeply on his cultural positioning and identity. Having navigated life as a Brazilian American, Miguel did not think he would experience cultural shock in Aotearoa NZ, a Western-dominated country, as he admitted he did not know much about Aotearoa NZ

beforehand. One of the surprising things he had come to realise was his individualistic and self-focused mindset. Compared to living in busy big cities in the US, Miguel felt that Aotearoa NZ is more relaxed and community-oriented:

> My experience here was like, it's just so relaxed. It's so, like everybody so polite, there is this feeling, kind of a sense of community. I feel the most like myself in the big city, which had this individualism. But in big cities, I would say, there is a feeling of 'me me me, I have to look out for myself because no one is looking out for me.' People are not looking out for each other in a big city. You just, everyone is trying to survive basically. But that's the capitalism in me, the American in me.

In contrast to his usual environments, Miguel's life in Aotearoa NZ helped shape his growing awareness of his social identity as an American male and a child of immigrants raised in the culture of achieving the "American Dream". More importantly, it reintroduced him to something he had previously experienced in Brazil, a sense of community and trust where people looked after each other. This experience forced him to once again confront his capitalistic tendency and reevaluate his value system. Miguel continued to explain his "foreigner" experience:

> I remember when I got on the flight, Rotorua to Wellington … There are two gates, the immigration is like over there. And I was like where is the security? She was like "there's no security." Like she thought it was funny I was asking. I was like Wow this is such a different, like there is a, like not having security in the airport really stuck with me because there is such a sense of trust. That was like a cultural shock but in a good way to me. So yeah, that's the balance like, I feel much more like myself being over there [the US], over here [Aotearoa NZ] I am like, turn it down and slow down. And that's a good practice for me because I usually go too fast … like I need to slow down so New Zealand is a good way forcing me to do that.

Miguel's shock at the lack of security in the airport demonstrated a broader contrast between his life in the US and Aotearoa NZ, where airports are usually highly securitised, versus a small airport where he could board without showing his passport. This reflects a vastly different level of societal trust between the two countries and this contrast surprised Miguel. He concluded that living in Aotearoa NZ had made him slow down and reflect on his individualistic value system, allowing him to seek balance between the capitalist ideal he was raised with and a more collective-oriented approach to life.

Miguel's Experiences in Relation to Global Consciousness

This section further explores Miguel's GC journey and development. Similarly to Toni and Amy, I will follow the same format, first I begin with awareness of interconnectedness, moral interdependence and enactment. It is worth noting that Miguel is still at an early stage of GC development compared to Toni and Amy. He is still learning, reflecting and putting the pieces together. He would tell me throughout the interview that this conversation had got him thinking about many aspects of his life. This was reflected in his language, expressions, and the way he was verbalising the lessons he learned from those experiences, interpreting his story at the same time as he was telling it while interacting with me.

Awareness Of Interconnectedness: What Informed His Way of Life

Given that Miguel grew up among different ethnic groups, though never experienced social adversity, it is likely that, despite his parents' competitive nature, the adults around him had modelled positive interactions and relationships with each other, contributing to his implicit normalisation of and openness to diversity (Del Toro et al., 2024; Heine, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2013; Safa et al., 2021). Like with Toni's case, the competitive ideology passed on from Miguel's parents is likely to reflect a survivalist strategy adopted by migrants to assimilate and succeed in their host countries (Berry, 1997; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Oyserman et al., 2002). Miguel's bicultural upbringing and immigrant background during his formative years enabled him to become aware of differences (Fuller, 2023; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Safa et al., 2021). Moreover, becoming a leader in his young adult life helped him understand the impact of social relationships, while his work experience, especially at [the online

streaming platform], helped him build a sense of belonging, competence, and purpose through being a part of a team achieving something bigger than himself. These are all crucial experiences for Miguel's GC development (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023), and he was connecting all of these in real time right in front of me during the interview. When I asked how he thinks his overall experience had affected the way he understands the world, he replied:

> The first thing you had me thinking was, how do you know what's right and wrong from parents. The suburb where I grew up, that was, you have kind of a sense of community but obviously, we were already immigrants, and then where I lived, there was a lot of Latinos, Mexicans, and other minorities … Because the thing you need to realise is that we are all experiencing the same thing because it's very easy look at something over there or something here and say that's just how it is, like we are connected to them, we are just like them. So, what's happening, because how you respond or want to respond, is happening to everyone, you know. That's how my wife and I connected right, like the same way we are having this moment of like oh my god we are so similar.

Reflecting on his upbringing and his parents' influence on him, Miguel said there was some sense of community within their small neighbourhood, which allowed him to experience community connections among different ethnic groups. Miguel then realised how his inter-racial marriage had also helped him understand how the wider historical contexts had influenced their migrant experiences, their intergenerational relationships and cultural identity (Foeman & Nance, 1999; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Safa et al., 2021). As Miguel processed these experiences, he was growing increasingly aware of interconnectedness in more explicit terms:

> Like it clicked! Like things that happen, nothing by accident, now, I'm not saying things happen for a reason. I am saying how we got here is because of everything that

> happened, since we are all connected. That everything is connected. Like we are all trying to live … We all got the same anxiety, we all are dealing with the political climate of polarisation. You know, we are all dealing with the fact now, when we open our phones. We see things happening all around the world … So, GC, everything is connected. Because we are all going through the same thing, because we are on the same planet with the same technology. Different details, different stories but similar experience.

Miguel was visibly delighted at his realisation as he excitedly repeated the phrase "everything is connected", every time with more emphases. As shown, Miguel has started putting the pieces together, beginning to understand interconnectedness as a major theme in his experiences. While he might have implicitly experienced the connectedness between people growing up, in his fraternity, and at work; in the interview, he began explicitly connecting the dots as we kōrero. Miguel was not consciously aware of interconnectedness, showing that GC and awareness of interconnectedness does not necessarily develop at the same time but instead as part of a dynamic, non-linear, constantly unfolding process (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). This shows that the three components can occur at any point in life; while we might not consciously recognise these connections, they still have an impact on our GC development and enactment (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). Throughout Miguel's life, he had developed many crucial understandings that informed his GC, such as openness to diversity, awareness of historical impacts on our identity and a growing sense of social responsibility (Chao et al., 2025; Lit & MacDonald, 2016; Sibley et al., 2011). Next, I will explore how these traits contributed to his growing sense of moral interdependence.

Moral Interdependence: Everyone Has an Impact. Everyone Can Be a Leader

For Miguel, being a part of a team and becoming a leader was a key moment for his personal growth, where his experience started to shape his sense of moral interdependence and his understanding of his moral commitments to others and the

world (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). Like Toni, Miguel grew a sense of social responsibility by being put in a leadership position. It inspired him to reflect on his role among his peers and how his actions could influence those around him. Through this, Miguel began to realise that everyone has the power to influence anyone, that we all have something to teach and learn from each other, that everyone is a leader:

> Anybody on a team can be a leader … Even if they are younger, even the old guys might look at the young guys like oh is it how the young guys are doing it now … I used the word leader, but everybody impacts everybody, and so, just be a good force! When I am a good force, good things happen around me. If I carry myself a certain way, and you see that, then you are gonna behave a certain way towards me. Everyone has the ability to influence and to lead, so therefore if everybody can be a leader, and everybody is a leader, everybody is connected.

Being in a leadership position expanded Miguel's understanding of relational influence and the domino effect of his actions. As he explained, when he is being a "good force", it reinforces a culture for others to behave responsively. This made him want to "carry [himself] a certain way" and showed his desire to foster a space for collective growth. Upon Miguel's realisation that "everyone has the ability to influence and to lead," he then intentionally made changes to act in more socially responsible ways. This is a crucial transformative moment for Miguel's GC development, as he translated these experiences and understanding into moral commitment (Chao et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Miguel grew beyond surface awareness and became an active participant in ethical engagement while still developing his moral blueprint. In addition, Miguel reflected on how living in Aotearoa NZ with his wife had made him more aware of his "big city" behaviours and become more morally sensitive and considerate of other members in the community. Miguel then told me a story about their experience at a hotel apartment where everyone was slamming the door, so he was doing the same

because “no one cared, why am I gonna take extra effort”, this resulted in his wife telling him off and him in turn, reflecting on his individualistic conditioning:

> Just little things I would naturally do in a big city that my wife would sometimes point out like don’t do that, what about the next person. And I’m like wow; I am just being conditioned to look out for myself. That feeling of looking out for each other, it feels good, to be good, it feels good to leave things nicely. When everyone is doing it, it feels good to be part of this. It is like how it should be. Capitalism has made us all like, yeah.

Although Miguel argued that he has a capitalistic mindset and often falls into the individualistic ideal like “[only] look out for [himself],” it was evident within the interview that he was trying to become more community-oriented and constantly reflecting on his capitalistic “conditioning.” This shows Miguel has a deep, contextual understanding of the impact that his upbringing and identity as an American male have had on how he carried himself around the world, another important step towards his GC development. Miguel is in the early stages of understanding interconnectedness and yet to have a clear, structured set of moral principles, but the way he reflects and responsively implements his understanding into actions shows his underlying and burgeoning globally conscious orientation (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

Enactment As Part of Miguel’s Learning Process

Miguel’s enactment of his awareness is one of the strongest indications of his GC development, as he actively interprets and reflects on his experience and translates these understandings into everyday actions and moral commitments (Chao et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Being an opportunist throughout his career, Miguel has learned to find ways to implement his values and beliefs in the work he does, like how he was able to turn his interests into a successful career from his understanding that small actions can make a big impact:

> I realised that you can just do the good person stuff, and it actually does make a difference in the big city. Everyone can win. For example, if I work in a small team, so if I am nice to my teammate, and like, I keep everything nice around here, that puts me in a culture, and my team, and then the whole office. And if this whole office has this culture that can affect maybe this whole block or this neighbourhood. Little by little of course, but it makes a big difference.

The quote above reflects Miguel's broader understanding and appreciation of human connectedness and proactive measures towards ethical engagement, allowing his understanding to shape the way he interacts with others and collective space. This demonstrates behavioural evidence of his GC growth (Choi et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). For example, his earlier discussion around slamming doors and "little things" that people overlook shows his enacted understanding that if one person starts doing better and closing the doors carefully, they have the agency to influence others into doing the same. Miguel's belief that small changes could begin with individuals and have a snowball effect in the community reflects his enactment of moral obligation, a key component of GC (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

Another strong indicator of Miguels's GC is his acknowledgement of the privileges afforded by his social identity and upbringing (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). This shows Miguel is not only aware of interconnectedness on a surface level, but he is intentionally questioning and re-evaluating his understandings and allowing this to re-shape his actions, like doing the "good person stuff":

> As I am telling you this individualistic thing maybe that has to do with being a 31-year-old male in America. Hmm but coming here, seeing people care about each other and care about their surroundings. It had changed me to being a better person. You see that people in the big city are actually doing that, like picking up trash. And then you

> appreciate that. I kinda think it made me a better person, it made me realise all this for sure. People have a lot more influences than they realise.

Miguel has become very aware of his privileges and feels particularly grateful for his parents and his wife. He further points out that living in Aotearoa NZ had prompted him to care more about the environment. His critical analysis of his capitalistic conditioning, growing concern for the environment, and conscious effort to be more collective-oriented provides indication of the growing connection between his GC awareness and enactment (Chao et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2025; Leung et al., 2024; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). Throughout the interview, I was impressed at how quickly Miguel was able to externalise his learnings and relate to real-life situations:

> So, like everything just comes back to like these people [at the airport] are just like us somehow, you know. I am influencing you, somehow, you are gonna walk out of here like I had something, and you also with me. Even though I am talking the whole time, like little things that you did, and it goes to me and I carried that like, aha!

As Miguel wrapped up our interview, he acknowledged the mutual influences we had on each other, again showing his understanding of interconnectedness and ability to apply his learnings into the moment. Overall, Miguel shows all three components of GC in a more implicit phase (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). As he continues to learn, reflect, and apply his understanding into everyday actions, his GC is likely to continue flourishing in parallel with his career, relationships and environment.

My Reflections on Miguel's Experience

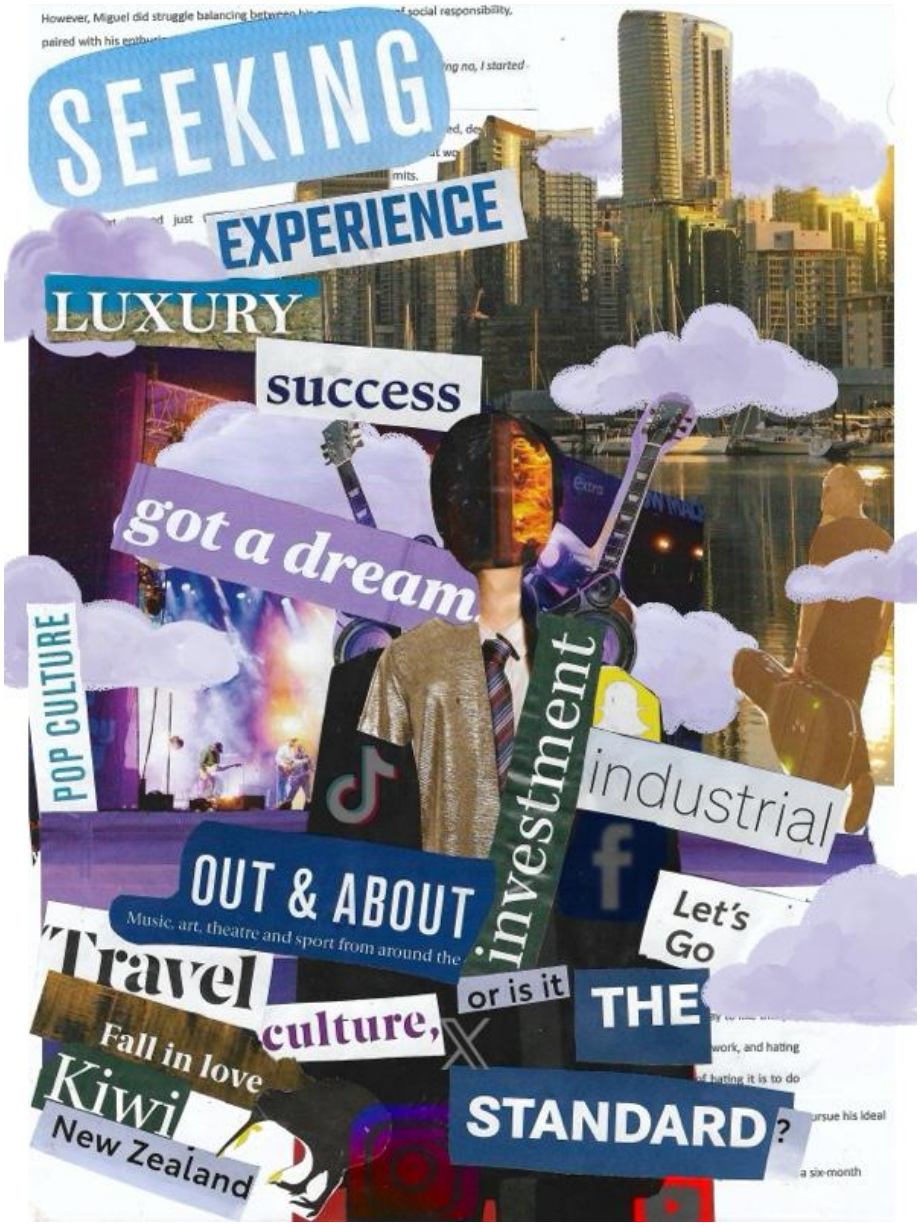
Miguel was very friendly and different from my other participants, as a lot of his reflections and meaning making happened in real time during the interview. In contrast to Toni and Amy, Miguel was processing and interpreting his lived experience alongside me, making the interview process a more active part of his GC development. This was evident in his comment about our mutual influence on each other, and that he was

learning so much about himself from this interaction. Indeed, it was very interesting for me to hear a different perspective from an American immigrant who is relatively new to Aotearoa NZ. Miguel expressed how much his wife and moving to Aotearoa NZ had changed him and made him see the world differently.

As an HK Chinese New Zealander with my own immigrant story, who has also lived in North America and spent time in cities where Miguel had lived, this allowed us to connect in a unique way that influenced the direction and depth of our co-created knowledge. I also noticed that the way I presented myself, such as proudly wearing a pounamu (Māori greenstone) and a Chinese jade and embedding words in Te Reo Māori in my speech, had influenced how Miguel interacted with me. Like how he felt comfortable sharing his view on the treatment of Indigenous people around North America or asking me about Chinese or Aotearoa NZ culture. Our shared experiences, particularly in navigating between cultures and adapting to new lives in Aotearoa NZ, cultivated a space for broader, more global discussions.

Figure 8

The Creative Response of Miguel's Case (own work)



Note. Collage art with images and texts associated with Miguel, such as his character, values, and experiences in relation to his GC development.

For the creative response, I have chosen collage as my medium to visualise Miguel's emerging GC development, where he is still 'putting the pieces together', see Figure 8. The original idea was a digital collage to reflect his innovative mindset and online presence. However, I ultimately decided to use physical materials such as magazines, as it allowed me to explore and choose images or texts intuitively. As such, each element represents a certain aspect of Miguel: tall buildings indicate his urban upbringing, the stage represents his online career and his audience, the fire in the head/face reflects his ambition and drive, while the clouds represent his many dreams

and thoughts. I also reused the drafts of this case study and incorporated them into the background to symbolise our co-construction process. Moreover, the collage is roughly divided into two sides, with the left side representing his preferences and aspirations, and the right side representing his more individualistic, “big city” mindset. Lastly, I finished the collage by digitally adding social media logos and matching clouds layered front and back to show Miguel’s active interpretation of his experiences across time. Interestingly, I found the whole creative process somewhat mirrored Miguel’s own exploration of his identity and experience, adding another meaningful layer to this analysis.

While Miguel would argue that he has a very “capitalistic mindset”, I found the way he engaged with curiosity and openness, how he interpreted and found meanings throughout our interactions, says otherwise. His emphasis on his family, social relationships, interconnectedness, and positive contribution to society demonstrates his community-oriented tendency and his growing GC (Hopner & Liu, 2021; Liu & MacDonald, 2016).

Chapter 7: Discussion

This study sought to explore how lived experiences contribute to the development of GC. Using a qualitative case-based narrative approach, I examined how three participants, Toni, Amy, and Miguel, understood and made meaning of their lived experiences that shaped their awareness of interconnectedness, sense of responsibility towards others (moral interdependence), and engagement (enactment) with the wider world. The study aimed to provide a deeper contextual understanding of GC development by examining the role of lived experience and meaning-making processes, as well as the importance of relationships and negotiation between multiple identities in GC development.

This chapter will discuss the three common themes found across the case studies. To begin, I provide a summary of each case as a reminder of its uniqueness. Then I highlight the common patterns of the cases, particularly in navigating diverse upbringings and environments, GC as a non-linear process, and the importance of being entrusted with social responsibility, which seem to help foster GC.

In Toni's case, GC development was influenced by social-relational and group dynamics, where experiences of belonging, acceptance, and cultural reconnection encouraged critical reflection surrounding colonisation, identity, and collective wellbeing. Whereas for Amy, religion was the major influence on her GC development. Her Buddhist beliefs helped her to make sense of her lived experiences and shaped the moral framework that motivated her commitment to supporting collective growth and wellbeing. While Miguel is at an earlier stage of GC development compared to Toni and Amy, his case highlighted that awareness of interconnectedness does not necessarily emerge first, but can develop through action, leadership experiences, relationships, and ongoing self-reflection.

Despite participants' different backgrounds and lived experiences, they all demonstrated an awareness of interconnectedness and concern for collective wellbeing. The findings further support the notion that GC does not develop universally (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). Instead, it emerged differently through ongoing meaning-making and reflection on lived experiences that

informed participants' identities, values, worldviews, and relationships with others. Three key themes can be identified from the narratives: navigating diverse environments and multiple identities, GC as a dynamic and non-linear meaning-making process, and the role of social responsibility and opportunities for reflection in facilitating GC development.

The Development of GC Through Encounters with Diversity, Identity Navigation and Meaning-Making

A common theme across all three cases was the experience of navigating diverse environments and multiple identities, with all participants expressing feeling like an 'outsider' and needing to navigate who they were in relation to others. For example, Toni had to negotiate identities of being (and being perceived as) Māori, Pākehā and queer; Amy learned about social identities through living and travelling across different countries; and Miguel navigated between being Brazilian and American, as well as adjusting to his interracial married life in Aotearoa NZ. Their experiences required them to develop an understanding of difference, belonging, and their positionality in relation to others (Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013; Oyserman et al., 2002). All participants had to work to integrate different aspects of their identities rather than completely assimilate one or another, demonstrating that GC emerges through learning to navigate and integrate these identities in reflexive ways over time.

While all three participants shared experiences of navigating diversity and multiple identities, the nature of these experiences differed according to their cultural and historical positioning (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). Toni's experiences as an Indigenous person were heavily shaped by colonisation and intergenerational trauma. In turn, Amy's and Miguel's experiences emerged through voluntary migration and ongoing navigation between different cultural worlds that involve mainly positive experiences of hybridity. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that individuals experience and navigate diversity differently (Berry, 1997; Del Toro et al., 2024). The present study suggests that awareness of difference is not experienced universally. Rather, individuals understand and navigate diverse social environments through their various cultural, historical, and political contexts. Despite these different pathways, all three participants shared similar reflective and meaning-

making processes on belonging, differences, and human connectedness, supporting previous literature that GC develops through social interactions, identity formation, and engagement with diverse perspectives rather than isolation (Choi et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023). This is a key contribution of the present study because it demonstrated that while GC developed through diverse pathways, similar reflective and meaning-making processes occurred across all participants. These findings highlight that GC develops not only from lived experience, but through the ways individuals reflect upon, interpret, and make meaning of those experiences over time.

GC as a Dynamic Non-Linear Process

One of the key findings of this study is that GC is shown to be a dynamic and non-linear developmental process shaped by how individuals interpret and make meaning of their lived experiences. Liu & MacDonald (2016) theorised the nature of the three components of GC: awareness of interconnectedness, moral interdependence, and enactment, as an interwoven process that emerges, overlaps, and interacts differently across individuals (as seen in Figure 1, Chapter 2). The current findings within this research illustrate how real-life conditions play out, suggesting that these components do not necessarily emerge in a linear, straightforward process. Miguel's case in particular illustrates this complexity.

Although Miguel is still in the early stages of developing a clear awareness of interconnectedness compared to Toni and Amy, he demonstrated prosocial behaviours, leadership, and a growing sense of social responsibility long before he could explicitly identify and articulate the concepts of interconnectedness. His reflections suggest that action and lived experience, along with ongoing reflectivity, could facilitate the development of awareness, rather than awareness needing to serve as a motivation for action. This finding also demonstrates how GC can be expressed behaviourally before it is consciously understood, supporting previous research that identified prosocial and globally oriented behaviours as indicators of GC development (Fuller, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). In Amy’s case, her awareness of diversity, moral commitments, and behavioural enactment were intertwined across different stages of her life, through her experiences of migration, international travel, and spiritual exploration that deepened and enriched her understanding of interconnectedness. While Toni's development was more aligned

with a linear process starting from awareness, Amy and Miguel's case illustrated that GC components emerge differently across individuals depending on experiences, identities, and contexts. Across all three cases, participants reflected upon, interpreted, and integrated their experiences into their understanding of themselves and others.

Social Responsibility and Privileges as Facilitators Of GC

Another key finding of this study was the idea that social responsibility provides a key pathway for GC to develop and be cultivated. All participants described experiences of being trusted and accepted by others before they believed in themselves. This led them to form meaningful relationships and positive social interactions that shaped their values and beliefs and motivated them to act in ways that promote collective wellbeing. These experiences reflect three of Chao et al.'s (2025) psychological dimensions of GC, mainly social-relational and group dynamics, core beliefs and values, and motivational drives (as seen in Figure 2, Chapter 2), which are particularly relevant in this study for understanding participants' internal processes and experiences that together shape their GC development. As discussed, these dimensions worked together to inform and shape participants' relationships with others, which in turn provided opportunities for positive engagements and experiences like a sense of belonging, trust, and ability to have a prosocial influence on (and in turn, be influenced by) others.

While these dimensions manifested differently for each participant, all three described experiences where they became aware of their influence on others and their responsibilities within broader social relationships. For Toni, acceptance and trust from peers encouraged cultural reconnection and a commitment to social equity. For Amy, her engagement with Buddhist beliefs and the SGI community helped translate her awareness of interconnectedness into a sense of responsibility towards others. This responsibility was further reinforced through her facilitation work, which provided opportunities to contribute to others' growth and wellbeing. Similarly, Miguel's leadership experiences in university and in a professional work setting encouraged reflection on the influence of his actions, fostering a growing sense of responsibility towards those around him. These experiences of being trusted by others seem to encourage participants to see themselves as capable of contributing to the greater good

and help them shift from individual concerns toward broader collective well-being. These findings suggest that GC development may be facilitated when individuals are given opportunities and trust to contribute to others and influence collective outcomes.

While social responsibility was shown to facilitate participants' GC development by providing opportunities to reflect on their influence and responsibilities towards others, it is important to point out that access to these opportunities was not the same across the three participants. Consistent with Choi et al. (2025), forms of privilege such as education, travel opportunities, financial stability, and access to supportive communities seemed to provide conditions that afforded participants greater opportunities for reflection, identity exploration, and engagement with diverse perspectives. Amy's international travel and ability to take time away from work allowed her to reflect and explore spiritually, while Miguel's increasing financial stability enabled him to move beyond immediate concerns of survival and afforded him time to consider broader questions regarding values, purpose, and responsibility. Nevertheless, the current study suggested that these opportunities alone do not guarantee GC development. While privileges remained an important consideration, it appears to function as a facilitator of GC, creating opportunities for further reflection and growth. However, whether these opportunities contributed to GC development depended on how participants engaged with, reflected upon, and made meaning of them within their own social relationships and cultural contexts. For example, Toni gained opportunities to translate their GC awareness into meaningful action through how they made sense of the supportive relationships and community experiences afforded to them.

Limitations and Recommendations

While this research aimed to provide valuable insights into GC, as with all research, limitations should be considered. These include the recording method, my position as a tauiwi researcher and the number of participants who participated within the research. First, the use of voice recordings may have limited the interpretation of the full extent of the participants' experience, considering that visual cues, such as facial expressions or body language, are equally important in understanding individuals' meanings (Schiff, 2012). Without visual recordings, these cues relied only on my memories, which could lead to missing out on important context because some non-

verbal cues were not remembered. Future studies could incorporate visual methods such as video recording to fully capture the experiences of both researcher and participant, the co-construction of the meaning-making process and participants' GC development.

This research also relied on a one-off interview with each participant rather than a series of interviews over time. As GC is an ongoing developmental process, multiple interviews may have provided a deeper understanding of this dynamic nature of GC development (Chao et al., 2025; Liu & MacDonald, 2016). As such, one-off interviews may not fully capture this evolving process. Follow-up or longitudinal interviews (McKibben & Breheny, 2023) would provide a valuable opportunity to examine how GC develops over time as an evolving and ongoing process.

Second, my position as a tauiwi researcher drawing on a Kaupapa Māori-approach can have both strengths and limitations. As a 1.5-generation Chinese New Zealander, I share similar experiences of navigating multiple worlds, which may have helped build rapport with participants and informed my interpretation of their narratives. At the same time, it was important to recognise how my own identity and position might influence the way participants interact with me and how they present and narrate their experiences.

Lastly, the study involved only three participants; whilst this is a small number and not generalisable to the broader population (Thomas, 2010), it is aligned with qualitative methodology where in-depth experiences are sought to further understand how individuals make meaning of lived experiences and how these contribute to GC development. However, future research involving a broader range of participants (e.g., in age, cultural backgrounds, religious affiliation) could further explore the complex contextual factors of GC development.

Implications and Future Directions

The findings of the present study contribute to the growing GC literature by providing qualitative insights into how GC develops through everyday lived experiences, reinforcing the importance of context in understanding GC development. These findings demonstrate that neither diversity nor privilege guarantees GC development. Rather, it

is shaped by how individuals interpret, reflect on and make meaning of their experiences, highlighting the value of qualitative research in capturing the complexity of GC development and providing insights into how GC develops in real-world contexts. By examining participants' narratives, this research illustrates the dynamic and non-linear nature of GC development. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how GC is experienced, enacted and translated in everyday life, across different chapters of individuals' lives. The findings also highlight the value of conducting this research in Aotearoa NZ, where bicultural foundations and increasing cultural diversity provide unique opportunities that could facilitate the growth and exploration of GC. Toni's experiences negotiating multiple identities and later working within the DEI sector demonstrate how the historical and social context of Aotearoa NZ shapes individuals' experiences and understandings of belonging, diversity, and collective wellbeing. Furthermore, Miguel's curiosity about the Indigenous history of Aotearoa NZ illustrates how newcomers may engage with and learn from the country's bicultural foundations. Together, these cases suggest that diverse cultural engagement creates unique opportunities for individuals to reflect on diversity, identity, and interconnectedness in Aotearoa NZ.

Two interesting results are worth highlighting and expanding on in future research. First, social responsibility seemed to be an important pathway to GC development, particularly when participants were entrusted, accepted, and given responsibility to contribute to others. Future research could further explore the relationship between leadership, social responsibility, and GC development. For example, longitudinal studies could explore GC among individuals who are working in leadership, mentoring, or facilitation roles, such as teachers, community leaders, and support workers, and examine whether being entrusted with social responsibility by others fosters greater awareness of interconnectedness and collective wellbeing over time. This understanding might provide more specific insights into how these individuals interpret their influence on others and the relationship between social responsibility and GC development.

Second, Amy's case highlighted the potential role of religion in fostering GC by providing moral frameworks for understanding interconnectedness, collective well-

being, and ways of being in the world. Given the limited attention paid to these factors within the current GC literature, future research may benefit from exploring how social responsibility and religious beliefs contribute to the development and enactment of GC. Overall, this study suggests that GC can be nurtured through environments that foster meaningful relationships, opportunities for contribution, engagement with diversity, and critical reflection. Therefore, creating such environments may support GC development by helping individuals recognise their influence on others and their role within an interconnected world.

Conclusion

The current study explored how lived experiences contribute to the development of GC through the narratives of Toni, Amy and Miguel. The key findings highlight the importance of understanding GC as a contextual and relational process. They demonstrated how individuals interpreted their lived experiences across different cultural, social, and historical contexts in ways that informed their critical awareness, moral positioning with others and enactment in the world.

The study identified ways in which GC develops through encounters with diversity, the negotiation of multiple identities, and the ongoing process of making meaning from lived experiences. Further, GC is a dynamic and non-linear process, with awareness, moral responsibility, and enactment emerging in different ways across time. Finally, the findings reveal how social responsibility and access to opportunities may facilitate GC development, although exposure to diversity and having privileges alone do not determine GC. It is about how individuals make use of these opportunities and how they make meaning of and continue to reflect on these experiences that enhance and cultivate their GC.

In conclusion, the present study demonstrates how GC was developed through the ways the participants interpreted, reflected upon, and engaged with their lived experiences in relation to others and the wider world. Here we see how GC is not simply about having a global understanding of the world, but an ongoing consciousness that reminds us to be considerate, accepting, and compassionate towards others as fellow human beings in this increasingly interconnected world.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

School of Psychology
Massey University
Block 7
Wallace Street
Mt Cook, Wellington 6021

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A Kaupapa Māori conceptualisation of Global Consciousness through a Creative and Asian lens

Lead Researcher: Charmaine Lam, BSc(Criminology & Psychology); PGDip(Creative Arts Therapy)

I am a Master's student in Psychology at Massey University based in the Pōneke Region, currently completing my thesis. As a woman of colour and a 1.5 generation immigrant of Hong Kong Chinese descent, I am interested in exploring how our unique experiences in an increasingly diverse world has shaped the way we interact with each other, and our awareness of the ways that our cultural differences and similarities manifest in society.

The term Global Consciousness refers to the understanding that we are all global beings and are all connected even with our differences. It also refers to the willingness to continuously reflect and act ethically upon this awareness. You are invited to participate in this research study to share how your lived experience of navigating diverse environments has shaped your own sense of Global Consciousness.

What This Study Involves

This study will involve semi-structured interviews with three individuals with diverse backgrounds, who has lived experience of navigating diverse cultural environments (e.g. biracial individuals, 1.5- or second-generation immigrants, people who have lived abroad for more than a year). If you choose to participate, you will be invited to take part in a one-on-one interview with light kai provided to share your personal insights on navigating these experiences and your reflections on how these experiences might have changed the way you think/operate in this world. The interviews will last between 40-60 minutes and will be conducted in person, at a location of your preference. To thank you for your time, a koha in the form of supermarket vouchers will be gifted to you at the end of the interview or when you choose to end the interview.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. All personal information will remain confidential and solely used for the purposes of this study and will be destroyed after. All data collected will remain

anonymized and only the research team will have access to this data. This study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

The findings of this research may provide valuable insights into the conceptualisation of Global Consciousness, the use of Kaupapa Māori and creative expressions in this field of research. This knowledge may enhance understandings that could inform the development of wellbeing focused initiatives for diverse groups of people, and the cultural competency of these initiatives.

If you wish to participate: Please sign and return the attached consent form. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Charmaine Lam, at [redacted]@massey.ac.nz.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Massey University Human Ethics by email: **humanethics@massey.ac.nz.**

Thank you in advance for considering your participation in this important research

Appendix B: Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

School of Psychology
Massey University
Block 7
Wallace Street
Mt Cook, Wellington 6021

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

A Kaupapa Māori conceptualisation of Global Consciousness through a Creative and Asian lens

Lead Researcher: Charmaine Lam, BSc(Criminology & Psychology); PGDip(Creative Arts Therapy)

The purpose of this research to explore how the experience of navigating diverse environments in community work contributes to the development of Global Consciousness. The term Global Consciousness refers to the understanding that we are all connected as global beings despite our differences and the willingness to continuously reflect and act ethically upon this awareness. As a participant in this study, you will be invited to share how your lived experiences of navigating diverse cultural environments have influenced or shaped the development of your worldviews, including Global Consciousness.

The interview will be in the form of one-on-one conversation at a location that is significant to you and your stories (e.g. by the beach, airport, a particular spot). It will last approximately 60 minutes with light kai provided. This discussion invites personal experiences and perspectives on current life or world events, self-identity, and reflections on how these experiences has contributed to your worldview and how you operate in the world. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point without any consequence. To thank you for your time, a koha in the form of supermarket vouchers will be gifted to you at the end of the interview or when you choose to end the interview.

Your identity will remain confidential and not linked to your responses at any point. While the interview will be recorded and transcribed for research purposes, your personal information will not be included in any publications. The information gathered will solely be used for research purposes to increase understandings of the conceptualisation of Global Consciousness and the use of Kaupapa Māori methodologies in the research of Global Consciousness. By participating, you will contribute valuable insights that may help inform the development of wellbeing focused initiatives for diverse groups of people, and the cultural competency of these initiatives.

In order to take part in this research, please sign the consent form below.

To take part in this research, I ask that you please sign this consent form.

- I have been informed about this research and understand my participation in it.

- I understand that my participation in the interviews will remain confidential, anonymous and no identification information will be linked to my responses.
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and I can choose to opt out at any stage of the interview process.
- I am aware that the information I provide will be used in research publication.
- I understand that I can choose not to answer specific questions.
- I understand that I can request the audio recorder to be turned off at any time during an interview and any information I have provided to that point can be withdrawn from the research.

I confirm that:

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that anonymized data will be used in published research outputs.
- I understand that information will be stored securely for the duration of this research project, and then anonymized for future reference.

I encourage you to consider your participation in this study and raise any potential concerns about the study with myself, or the supervisory team. Please get in touch with the researchers listed below if you have any further questions.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Massey University Human Ethics by email: **humanethics@massey.ac.nz.**

Charmaine Lam	**Sarah Choi, PhD**	**Ahnya Martin, PhD**
Master Student	Supervisor	Supervisor
School of Psychology, Massey University	School of Psychology, Massey University	School of Psychology, Massey University
Email: [redacted]@massey.ac.nz	Email: Y.S.Choi@massey.ac.nz	Email: A.Martin@massey.ac.nz

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Opening/ Identity:

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your whakapapa/upbringing/cultural background? The parts that feel most important to you.
2. What has your experience been like moving through or between diverse environments?
3. How have these experiences shaped the way you connect with people, or the way people connect with you?

About the location:

4. Why have you chosen this location? What memories, meanings, or feelings do you associate this place with?

Career, Purpose, Aspirations:

5. Tell me about your mahi, and what led you to this particular path?
6. What are you motivations? What keeps you going?
7. How do you feel your mahi connects with a larger story/picture? (Cultural, spiritual, global, or otherwise?

Understanding GC:

8. What does the idea of 'global consciousness' mean to you in your own words?
9. How do your lived experiences (in whatever forms) shape your understanding of that idea? Or the world in general?

On global/local issues:

10. Is there a time where you felt your experiences/cultural background influenced the way you understood or responded to global issues or events?
11. How do you think having global consciousness or seeing things from a broader perspective helps us respond to what is happening in the world today?

Closing/Questions:

12. Is there anything else we haven't talked about that feels important in understanding your view or stories or place in the world?