

# The effects of home-school dissonance for Māori and European New Zealand adolescents



## RESEARCH

‘The Effects of Home–School Dissonance on Individual and School Outcomes for Māori and European New Zealand Adolescents’

by Professor Paul Jose, Dr. Arama Rata and Alex Richards (2017).

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## Background

Researchers and practitioners have long been concerned by the poor academic performance of minority children in mainstream schools. An explanation for this might be the incongruity between the values and processes in the students’ homes and schools (home-school dissonance).

Previous research suggests that the extent to which the home and school life are in conflict can have a negative impact on academic performance, classroom behaviour and personal outcomes such as anger, self-esteem and hope for the future.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, undertook a study examining the levels of home-school dissonance, family and school connectedness and a number of personal outcomes in Māori and European New Zealand adolescents aged 11 to 16 over three years.

## Main research findings

In all times of measurement higher levels of home-school dissonance were associated with lower levels of family connectedness and school connectedness. The Māori youth reported a greater mismatch between the culture of their home and the culture of the classroom than their European New Zealand classmates.

A high level in home-school dissonance in the first year predicted for the following years:

- increased levels of lack of autonomy, rumination, avoidance, and negative affect,
- decreased levels of aspirations, positive relations with teachers, self reported quality of schoolwork and confidence.

European New Zealanders showed a greater decrease in the positive outcome variables when scoring high on home-school dissonance, than their Māori counterparts.

## Relevance of findings to New Zealand

The study highlights the disadvantage that Māori youth may experience trying to navigate two contexts that are based on different values, which may be due, at least in part, to the Eurocentrism of New Zealand’s mainstream education system. Increasing the cultural congruence of the education setting with students’ homes would be likely to improve education and mental health outcomes, as well as increase students’ connectedness with both their school and their families.

The findings support the pedagogical approach taken within the kaupapa Māori education movement, which includes establishing an equal power relationship between the school and students’ families, who are jointly responsible for the education of the students. They also deliver support for the Te Kotahitanga program, encouraging teachers to acknowledge and respect students’ cultural heritage and realities.

While Māori students experience more home-school dissonance than their European New Zealand counterparts, the link between home-school dissonance and poor outcomes was stronger in the European New Zealand youth. Possible explanations are that Māori youth may be more adept at transitioning between culturally incongruent spaces and may engage with other cultural institutions that are congruent with their home lives, apart from school.