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## Indigenous Urban School Leadership: A Critical Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis of Educational Leaders in New Zealand and the United States

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# Indigenous Urban School Leadership: A Critical Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis of Educational Leaders in New Zealand and the United States

## **Cover Page Footnote**

The authors would like to acknowledge and thank the Indigenous educational leaders and of leaders of colour in NZ and the US who generously share their knowledge, skills, and dispositions with us in a collaborative effort to better address the needs of underserved learners.

**Indigenous Urban School Leadership (IUSL):  
A Critical Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis of  
Educational Leaders in New Zealand and the United States  
Leadership Autochtone, Urbain et Scolaire (LAUS):  
Une analyse critique, cross-culturelle et comparative des leaders éducatifs en  
Nouvelle Zélande et aux États-Unis**

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**Abstract**

This qualitative inquiry compares the practice of one Māori primary school leader of urban education for Indigenous multicultural multilingual learners in New Zealand (NZ), to research on the practices of nine educational leaders of colour in the United States (US). This study identifies and compares leadership practices for leaders who work toward positively impacting learner outcomes in similar settings (e.g., UK, Canada). From a critical comparative perspective, this Māori school principal shares her leadership practice and lessons learned to inform leadership practice in similarly multifaceted urban settings. This research is undertaken by a collaborative cross-cultural team of educational leaders and scholars from the US and NZ, from the local university and urban primary school. The research team comprises multiple perspectives, the basis for global comparative discourse on school leadership. This contribution offers a cross-cultural model, framework, and way of doing educational research to increase understanding of leadership in different societies.

**Résumé**

Cette enquête qualitative compare les pratiques d'un leader Māori d'une école primaire pour une éducation urbaine pour apprenants autochtones, multiculturels et multilingues en Nouvelle Zélande (NZ), aux recherches sur les pratiques de neuf leaders éducatifs de couleurs aux États-Unis (É-U). Cette étude identifie et compare, dans des contextes similaires (par exemple, Royaume-Uni, Canada), les pratiques en leadership de leaders se débattant pour trouver des moyens pour avoir un impact positif sur les résultats des élèves. D'un point de vue critique et comparatif, cette directrice d'école partage ses pratiques en leadership et les leçons apprises afin d'informer les pratiques en leadership dans d'autres contextes urbains similaires, à multiples facettes. Cette recherche est menée par une équipe cross-culturelle et collaborative composée de leaders éducatifs et de chercheurs provenant des É-U et de la NZ, faisant partie de l'université locale et de l'école primaire urbaine. L'équipe de recherche comprend de multiples perspectives, la base d'un discours global comparatif sur le leadership scolaire. Cette contribution offre un modèle cross-culturel, un cadre, et une manière d'entreprendre des recherches éducatives afin d'augmenter la compréhension du leadership dans des sociétés différentes.

**Keywords:** Indigenous leadership; applied critical leadership; urban school leadership

**Mots-clés:** Leadership Autochtone; leadership critique appliqué; leadership scolaire urbain

## **Wanted: Innovations in Educational Leadership**

Academic achievement gaps are the contemporary schooling educational pandemic of this age. These gaps form deep chasms separating children from impoverished backgrounds, who may also be students of colour<sup>1</sup>, from their mainstream and traditionally higher socioeconomic peers in Canada (CAN), the United States (US), New Zealand (NZ), Australia (AUS), and the United Kingdom (UK). Educational leadership has been identified in related literature as fitting to address and alleviate these gaps, after classroom-based educational reform such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in the US and pedagogical approaches like culturally responsive pedagogy have been met with limited success. Education finds itself now in a stark era of accountability, high stakes assessment, league tables, and like reform measures. The system has identified the most able educational leaders as those who are able to sustain high levels of academic student achievement in schools representative of significant student subgroups at the lower ends of the achievement gap. Addressing academic disparities have proven to be daunting for educational leaders serving students and communities with high levels of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity. Schools where diversity is most prevalent are likely to be urban in nature or schools where students who have been historically disenfranchised and traditionally marginalized by systems of inequality based primarily on race, ethnicity, culture, gender, social class, language, and/ or disability are taught.

“Closing the educational achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners is a shared and urgent policy priority” (Cottrell, 2010, p. 223). Māori, the people Indigenous to Aotearoa<sup>2</sup>-NZ, comprise 15% of the population (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Similar to other Indigenous groups and people of colour in the US and CAN, following industrialisation an unprecedented number of Māori families moved to thriving cities in NZ and all over the world (e.g., Māori settlement in the UK) for work and a better life. Today as a result, as in comparable international urban centres, there are growing numbers of Māori in urban schools in NZ. This growing cultural and linguistic diversity, offering innovative opportunities that are simultaneously perceived as challenges to the mainstream, necessitates innovative leadership practices to meet the unique needs of Indigenous, multicultural, multilingual, and bicultural students and communities. In the US there are similarly complex demographic opportunities rich with multiple levels of cultural and linguistic diversity. Where increased diversity is challenging for most school site leaders, some research findings indicate leaders of colour find leading for diversity an opportunity to serve their communities with empathy, understanding, and expertise (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009; Jean-Marie, 2008). Other researchers warn that there may be consequences if educators continue to disregard culture as related to the practice of educational leadership (Walker & Dimmock, 1999). Historically underserved students and their families look to educational leaders to change status quo educational practices and usher in educational systems where more learners can enjoy academic achievement than has been the norm.

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<sup>1</sup> People of colour is a term – used primarily in the United States – to describe any person who is not White (e.g., African-American, Latino/a, American Indian/Indigenous). The term is meant to be inclusive among non-White groups, emphasizing common experiences of racism.

<sup>2</sup> Aotearoa is commonly given as the Māori name for New Zealand. Literally, ao = cloud, tea = white, pale, roa = long. This could be translated as (the) long white cloud.

Research findings suggest when leaders of colour with critical<sup>3</sup> dispositions or those who otherwise *choose* to lead with a critical disposition are recruited, adequately prepared, and their practice is sustained, students and communities that have had limited academic success are more appropriately served (Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012).

Building on previous studies, this strengths-based qualitative inquiry aims to explore the leadership practices of Kerehi (pseudonym), a Māori primary school principal, juxtaposed with the shared leadership practices of nine educational leaders of colour in the US, to make a case for a cross-cultural model toward international urban school leadership. Multicultural multilingual Indigenous educational leaders and scholars from the US and NZ have come together pooling our collective cultural capitol for this study to compare the practices of Kerehi with those of US leaders. As researchers of colour who consciously challenge ourselves, locating our own individual and collective histories, critically and reflectively, as well as associated power relations, we aim to contribute to the dialogue on comparative studies and international educational leadership from a critical theory perspective (May & Sleeter, 2010). To this end, caution is taken in this study to avoid “superficial comparisons between practices adopted in different countries” and “misleading [conclusions] without thorough understanding of the contexts, histories and cultures” from which the leadership practices are drawn (Dimmock & Walker, 2000, p. 144). Rather, a modified comparative case study is employed, informed by previous research on leaders of colour by researchers of colour in comparable contexts. Moreover, literature on Indigenous educational leadership in NZ and applied critical leadership (ACL) in the US is reviewed to further substantiate this contribution.

The research question guiding the study was: What are the common leadership practices undertaken by an Indigenous educational leader in NZ and leaders of colour in the US who lead multicultural, multilingual, and bicultural learners in urban schools? Following the literature review, case-study qualitative research methods were used to collect data to adequately address the research question (Yin, 1994). Data considered included natural observations, formal interviews, supporting documents, and academic narratives written by Kerehi. Other data included findings from previous research on ACL (Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Data were analysed using the constant comparative method, which contributed to the case study presented (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Yin, 1994). Preliminary findings were further analysed against prominent literature frames, which informed the discussion. Results, limitations, implications, and a conclusion are presented.

## **Literature Framing the Study**

### ***Critical Theory***

Critical Theory (CT) (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Young & Young, 1989) provides the perspective and theoretical underpinnings for this article. A critical theory perspective is taken for this study for several reasons. First, prominent and progressive educational leadership scholars in NZ (Bishop, 2003; Pihama, 1993; Smith, 1997) and the US (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Jean-Marie & Normore, 2008) employ critical theory

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<sup>3</sup> Self-reflective knowledge with understanding and analysis to challenge entrapment in systems of domination or dependence (e.g., colonialism, traditional schooling), signaled by active work toward emancipation and the expansion of autonomy, thereby reducing the scope of domination.

frameworks in their research. Second, critical theory is centred on notions of critique and change versus understanding or explaining social phenomena (Horkeimer, 1972), as is this inquiry. Third, critical theory functions optimally when it is explanatory, practical, and normative (Calhoun, 1995), as are the aspirations of this research. In an effort to make CT clear and accessible, Wink (2004) explains critical educators must name an issue or challenge, reflect on and explain what is wrong with the status quo or norms regarding the issue, identify the people needed to address and change the reality associated with the challenge, provide norms for criticism of the issue, and finally initiate or pursue achievable practical goals for change or transformation. In Aotearoa-NZ, decolonising methodologies such as Kaupapa Māori<sup>4</sup> research have been described as local approaches to critical theory (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

In NZ and in the US critical theory is a means to analyse power structures and inequalities present in societies. In this article, we join critical theorists in both countries who “expose underlying assumptions that serve to conceal power relations that exist within society” and ways dominant groups construct “common sense” facts, and the norm which has resulted in negative long-term educational impact on Māori and other culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students and their families, manifested as academic achievement gaps (Pihama, 1993, p. 57).

CT research importantly recognises White privilege and social advantages, benefits, and courtesies afforded to members of the dominant culture in every society. These attributes may contribute to colour-blindness wherein educational leaders of European descent consciously or unconsciously fail to recognise difference in Māori, Pasifika<sup>5</sup>, or CLD learners in schools. This and similar dispositions may include the enactment of micro-aggression, discrimination, and prejudice both conscious and unconscious based on assumptions about difference, germane to NZ and US society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). As Indigenous scholars of difference, we employ a CT perspective throughout the course of this study, even as research in comparative studies and international educational leadership, Indigenous educational leadership, and applied critical leadership are considered.

### ***Comparative Studies and International Educational Leadership***

A critical theoretical perspective is rarely taken in traditional comparative international educational studies, even though many are centred on cultural and linguistic similarities and differences (Cheng, 1995). Additionally, there are few studies in the comparative international educational studies genre that feature educational leadership (Duke, 1996; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996). This dearth in the literature is what prompted Dimmock and Walker (2000) to put forward their seminal contribution, which provides part of the rationale and working model on which the present study builds. In their contribution suggesting the need for more comparative studies on international educational leadership, Dimmock & Walker (2000) propose a conceptual framework based on a comparative cross-cultural approach focused on the school level as the baseline unit for analysis and

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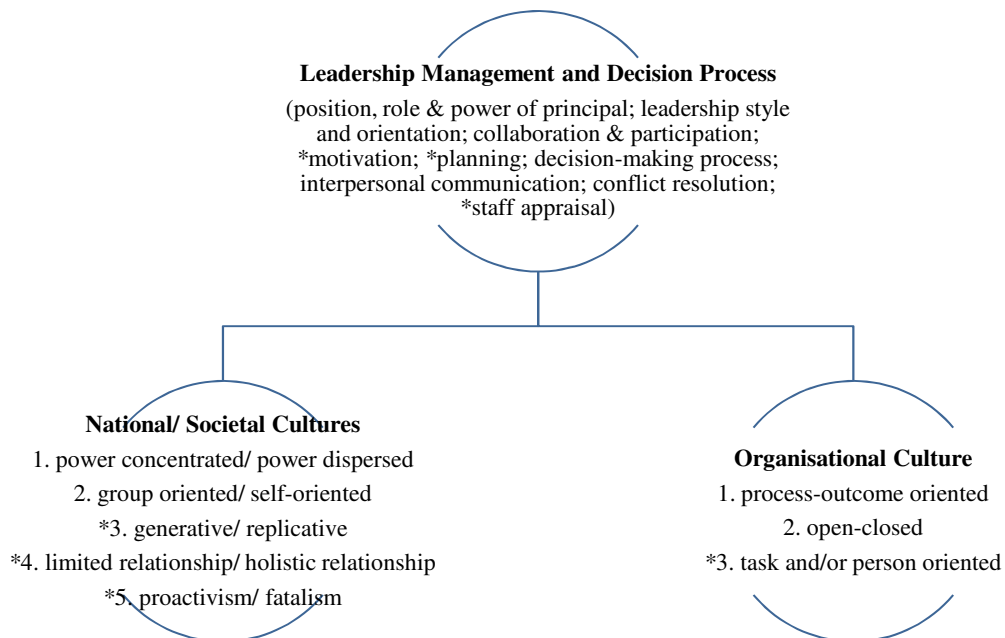
<sup>4</sup> Kaupapa Māori is literally “a Māori way” described as: related to “being Māori,” connected to Māori philosophy and principles, taking for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori, taking for granted the importance of Māori language and culture, and concerned with the “struggle for autonomy over Māori cultural well-being” (Smith, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> This term does not refer to a single ethnicity, nationality, gender or culture and is a term of convenience used to encompass a diverse range of peoples from the South Pacific region now living in New Zealand who have strong family and cultural connections to their South Pacific countries of origin (NZ Ministry of Education, 2010).

the interrelationship between six dimensions of culture at societal and organizational levels and four elements of schooling and school-based management.

With regard to culture: values, beliefs, and practices are considered with the goal of being able to describe, measure, or compare leadership practice along lines of society and organization. Here, the assumption is that societal culture is national in nature and therefore more values-based, whereas organisational culture is more superficial with less emphasis on values. This may suggest societal culture is more related to notions of leadership, and organisational culture is more closely aligned with management. Although Hofstede (1991) discusses organisational culture in companies in an either-or binary manner, Dimmock and Walker's (2000) model suggests a multi-dimensional understanding and application of variations of organisational cultural practices. This consideration may prove more clear, explanatory, practical, and normative, hinting at some alignment with the goals of critical theory (e.g., Calhoun, 1995). Further, with regard to schools as the unit of analysis, we suggest these consist of organisational structure (e.g., resource allocation), curriculum (e.g., subject matter), teaching and learning (e.g., pedagogy), leadership management, and decision processes (e.g., school site leader roles). For the purposes of this study, we consider leadership management and decision process by way of national/societal cultures (power concentrated/power dispersed and group oriented/self-oriented) and organisational culture (process-outcome, open-closed, and formal-informal) as indicated in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Study Scope (Dimmock & Walker, 2000, p. 151, 154)**



The original figure reflected elements of leader management and cultures researchers predicted would be present in this case study of Indigenous urban school leadership. Elements asterisked were added to the figure post-analysis, which included consideration

of the characteristics associated with ACL. This model will frame Kerehi's case study and findings from ACL research in the Discussion section. We next consider Indigenous educational leadership in New Zealand to further set the stage for this work.

### ***Indigenous Educational Leadership***

In Aotearoa-NZ 70% of secondary students experience academic success compared to international peers, however 30% of the students, largely Māori, do not fare as well (Timperley & Parr, 2009). In response, ministry-backed initiatives (e.g., He Kāmano<sup>6</sup>, The Starpath Project) engage efforts to improve the achievement of Māori learners (McKinley et al., 2009). Scholars of educational leadership in NZ understand the need for the development of strong Māori leadership yet remain pragmatic in addressing challenges around diversity in schooling, instead focusing more on colour-blind educational outcomes (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Durie (2006) argues that Māori educational leaders need to acquire specific skills to work across multifaceted communities and agencies, contributing to an educational system that can transform the lives of Māori individuals contributing to the realisation of Māori aspirations. His approach echoes tenets of critical theory in that it moves beyond critique and actively interrupts ways dominant groups create and dictate normative educational “ways of being” to the detriment of Indigenous learners and other historically underserved groups (Pihama, 1993). Beyond this deliberate critical positioning, Durie (2006) clearly suggests strong leadership management and decision processes along the lines of national/societal culture as suggested by Dimmock and Walker (2000), with a predictable emphasis on Māori leadership to benefit Māori society. For example, in his address to the Post Primary Teachers' Association Conference at Massey University, the scholar says promoting Māori success as Māori will “demand a more active approach to leadership building so that there is a succession of leaders who are well trained to manage and lead the next phase of Māori educational reform” (Durie, 2006).

Any attempt at educational reform and change with respect to Māori needs to align with the deeply held cultural aspirations of Māori people before they can be successful (Smith, 1991). Pathways, school cultures, and educational practices that are embedded in Kaupapa Māori practices or Māori “ways of knowing” that incorporate Māori world views, values and knowledge and place an emphasis on whanaungatanga<sup>7</sup>, culture, identity and an ethos of care reveal success (Bishop, Berryman, Powell & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2004; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Bishop, O'Sullivan & Berryman, 2007; Macfarlane, 1997; 2004; Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh & Bateman, 2007).

Previous research findings indicate that a combination of effective, open, and responsive school leadership, alongside well designed and planned whānau<sup>8</sup> engagement, with a focus on students, has the potential to change educational outcomes for Māori in mainstream (Education Review Office, 2008a; 2010; Epstein, 2001; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This study aims to inform what we know already in terms of school cultures and

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<sup>6</sup> Translated means, what works for Māori works for everyone. It is also the name of a strategic school-based professional development programme with an explicit focus on improving culturally responsive leadership and teacher practices to ensure Māori learners enjoy educational success as Māori (NZ Ministry of Education, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Relationships and connections including “the value placed upon family processes which are based on kinship obligations” (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993, p. 85).

<sup>8</sup> Family.



serves to contribute to lifting Māori, Indigenous, and CLD student achievement. Responsibly, purposely, and critically comparing the practice of Māori and non-Indigenous principals in NZ and the US informed by a cross-cultural analysis could contribute to local and global gains. A closer look at leadership from the perspective of critical leaders of colour further backs this premise.

### ***Applied Critical Leadership***

Complementing the core principles underlying Māori and Indigenous educational leadership, ACL is the emancipatory practice of choosing to address educational issues and challenges using a critical race perspective to enact context-specific change in response to power, domination, access, and achievement imbalances, resulting in improved academic achievement for learners at every academic level of institutional schooling in the US (Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012).

Although critical leaders often represent or identify with members of historically underrepresented groups in the US, a critical theory lens, we assert, is present in other marginalized leaders, like Kerehi, the Māori principal serving the urban school featured in this study, and fully accessible by all leaders regardless of identity. ACL, which is a hybridized approach building on transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory, may be the kind of qualitatively different leadership needed in order for leaders in urban school settings to reverse learning trends and outcomes for a wide range of diverse students who struggle with academic success. ACL research findings are based on case studies of nine culturally, racially, linguistically, and gender diverse kindergarten through to higher education educational leaders who were found to practice leadership promoting social justice and educational equity in schools and universities serving CLD learners. These educational leaders were similar to Kerehi in that they were leaders – some Indigenous – of colour leading schools or educational environments with high levels of diversity and educational inequity. Findings from this research revealed characteristics or qualities shared by applied critical leaders over the course of one year (Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). These characteristics, with the founding theories, are included in Table 1.

Similar to Kaupapa Māori research methods and Indigenous heuristic action research (Kahakalau, 2004; Moustakas, 1990; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), ACL has an Indigenous/ people-of-colour orientation inherent to our author identities. As such, this contribution builds on the work of Diamond (2003), Durie (2005), Pihama and Gardiner (2005), Walker (2006), Hohepa and Robinson (2008), and the synthesized Tū Rangatira Ministry of Education NZ (2010) report by promoting the notion of “leadership for the people by the people.” Providing findings from the ACL research as shared characteristics of applied critical leaders provides a research-based sample with which to compare Kerehi’s Indigenous urban school leadership practice.

**Table 1: Characteristics of Applied Critical Leadership (ACL)**

<i>Applied Critical Leadership characteristics present with frequency in data (e.g., interviews, observations, written communication) drawn from case studies</i>	<i>Transforma-tional Leadership</i>	<i>Critical Pedagogy</i>	<i>Critical Race Theory</i>
Willingness to initiate and engage in critical conversations--often regarding race, language, culture, difference, access, and/or educational equity	X	X	X
Ability to choose or the assumption of a CRT lens for decision making		X	X
Use consensus as the preferred strategy for decision-making	X	X	
Particularly conscious of “stereotype threat” or fulfilment of negative stereotypes associated with historically marginalized individuals in the U.S.		X	X
Make empirical or research-based contributions to educational contexts, adding authentic research based information to academic discourse regarding educational equity issues		X	
Feel the need to honour all members of their constituencies	X	X	
Lead by example to meet unresolved educational needs or challenges	X	X	
Feel the need to build trust when working with mainstream constituents or partners or others who do not share an affinity toward issues related to educational equity		X	X
Describe themselves as transformative, servant leaders who work ultimately to serve the greater good	X	X	

### **Inquiry Methodology**

Case study research was chosen for the inquiry design as it builds on previous leadership studies that attempt to understand leadership in CLD contexts (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Hohepa & Robinson, 2008; Jean-Marie & Normore, 2008). As such this inquiry serves to emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events, conditions, and relationships (Yin, 1994). Further, case study was chosen in order to provide an in-depth profile for the participant, multifaceted enough to create a narrative counter-story of her leadership practice and experience to “counter deficit storytelling,” while addressing the research question posed (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 23).

Counter-stories in research from a critical theory perspective serve to expose, analyse, and challenge mainstream majority stories steeped in privilege in order to “challenge the dominant discourse” on difference (p. 32). The selected method and design provided a comparison of findings to the literature framing the inquiry. The range of data collected ensured appropriate data triangulation for the purposes of theory corroboration, adding depth, texture, and multiple insights as a result of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

### **Participant**

Kerehi, is a Māori practicing primary urban school principal who adamantly races herself outside of Whiteness by identifying with people of colour as a result of her Indigenous

orientation and multicultural experiences as a child growing up in Aotearoa-NZ (Haney Lopez, 1998). Kerehi's leadership practice inspired us to consider taking a scholarly look at leadership practice in NZ resulting in increased academic achievement and well-being of Māori, Pasifika, and other students of colour at the school. Kerehi was ultimately selected to participate because of her self-proclaimed practices and our own informal observations as parents of children attending the school of her leadership practice promoting social justice and educational equity. Kerehi's participation represented a purposeful convenience sample of an individual working as a primary urban school principal. Because our children attend the urban elementary school where Kerehi is principal, there were natural access opportunities and authentic rapport between researchers and participant, which may serve as perceived inquiry limitations.

### ***Setting***

Wānanga Whānau<sup>9</sup> primary school is a small inner-city primary school. The school roll is currently at 304. At present there are 16 nationalities in the school, although Pākehā/European descent (33%), Māori (47%), and Pacific Island students (7%) make 87% of the total. The community is diverse not only by ethnicity, but in the range of socioeconomic groups and family structures as well.

Currently, Wānanga Whānau has 19 Ministry of Education funded teaching positions. This is inclusive of Kerehi (Principal), Special Needs Coordinator, Reading Recovery, Māori Literacy Intervention, Sports Coordination and classroom release time for beginning teachers and fulltime classroom teachers. The Board of Trustees through Māori Medium funding employs a Director of Māori Medium Education responsible for the management and development of all Māori Medium Education. The Board also funds a role of Student Advocate to ensure that students' well-being, both physical and emotional, is given high priority.

Wānanga Whānau offers a safe, nurturing, and stimulating learning environment for children. The school provides education that reflects a deep commitment to biculturalism and the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi<sup>10</sup>. The school offers three learning pathways: English medium, Māori medium, bilingual English/te reo Māori<sup>11</sup>. The school is creative and visionary, celebrating the diversity of its urban community. Here, social background and culture are not obstacles to learning, but the school capitalises on the diversity of its learners, taking learning to the learner in ways that allow students to engage in ways that are most conducive to their progress. The school values diversity and welcomes children, parents, and caregivers from every background. The rich character of this urban school proudly reflects the multicultural nature of its surrounding city.

### ***Data collection***

Two informal, hour long interviews took place at the school, followed by three natural observations of Kerehi at two-hour long school board meetings over the course of six

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<sup>9</sup> Name of the school. Translates to Family Meeting Place.

<sup>10</sup> New Zealand's founding document. It takes its name from the place in the Bay of Islands where it was first signed, on 6 February 1840. The Treaty is an agreement, in Māori and English, that was made between the British Crown and about 540 Māori Rangatira (chiefs).

<sup>11</sup> The Māori language.

months and a review of supporting documents available in the public domain (e.g., Educational Review Office reports, school Charter, Mission Statement). Two academic narratives written by Kerehi reflecting her educational leadership journey as an Indigenous primary urban school principal were also considered. Most of the data collection took place on-site at Wānanga Whānau. Regular informal visits to the school and email communications allowed Kerehi to elaborate on her leadership practice over time and at her convenience. During the course of the inquiry and with Kerehi's ongoing permission during follow-up contacts, member checking, and other planned and unplanned meetings over the course of the year, formal and informal observations were made of Kerehi at the school or at school or community gatherings.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data was analysed using a modified constant comparative method in two phases (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The first relied on the theoretical propositions for the study based on the core literature reviewed (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). This included elements of the proposed cross-cultural model and applied critical leadership (ACL). Evidence for elements of ACL were sought as well as subsequent alignment with elements of Dimmock and Walker's (2000) model. These included the above in combinations of more than one participant instance or utterance, which signalled ways in which Kerehi practiced ACL. Following this initial frequency analysis, a detailed case study write-up was developed for Kerehi in the form of a counter-story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Interview answers were then organized as related to the research question. Kerehi member-checked the original case study. Follow-up contacts were made when needed for clarity.

Data presented in the Findings section is organized by ways in which common characteristics across ACL intersect with Kerehi's Indigenous urban leadership practice. Findings are presented as a counter-story case featuring a blend of a personal story in Kerehi's voice based on data gathered that recounted her more racialised or classed experiences as relevant to this study (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). These findings are then presented in a discussion against the theoretical model presented by Dimmock and Walker (2000). The research question frames the discussion and is further addressed in the conclusion.

### **Findings**

Observational data revealed that Kerehi is a dedicated and committed urban school principal. She defines the world through relationships; for her there is no bridge too far, no stakeholder too distant, nor any dispute that cannot be resolved through consultation, dialogue, and collaboration. She welcomes all with a warm hug and a genuine smile. On any given day, Kerehi proudly escorts visitors throughout the school grounds where vegetable and flower gardens in raised beds are sprinkled throughout. She is most proud of the forest of native trees planted behind the school separating classrooms from sounds of the adjacent main highway below. Walking from one lavishly decorated classroom to the next, Whaea (Auntie) Kerehi, as the children call her, greets each student by name. She picks up pieces of trash to maintain the meticulous order of the premises on her walk. All this is built on the kind of instructional and distributed leadership that Kerehi nurtures and supports, with a focus on reinforcing, evaluating and developing teacher quality. At

the school, teachers collaborate to design, lead, and manage innovative learning environments. Kerehi works collaboratively alongside individual teachers to become aware of any weaknesses in their practices. This on-going professional development means not merely creating awareness of what teachers do but shifting their underlying attitudes and dispositions. Kerehi scaffolds her teachers, assisting them in grasping deep understanding of specific best practices (e.g., culturally responsive pedagogy) through experiencing such practices in the authentic setting of other classrooms. Kerehi motivates teachers at Wānanga Whānau to make the necessary changes through high expectations, a shared sense of purpose, and a collective belief in their common ability to make a difference for every child.

Further data analysis indicated close alignment between Kerehi’s leadership practices and those shared by leaders of colour in the US featured in ACL research. Table 2 illustrates the many ways that data analysed revealed Kerehi’s practices as resonating with and exemplifying ACL in her context.

**Table 2. Examples of Kerehi’s Applied Critical Leadership**

<i>Applied Critical Leadership</i>	<i>Kerehi’s Indigenous Urban Leadership Practice</i>
Willingness to initiate and engage in critical conversations-- often regarding race, language, culture, difference, access, and/or educational equity	“I am part of a wider struggle towards decolonisation, which includes challenging Pākehā hegemony and reclaiming Māori realities, which is crucial to facilitating positive Māori development” (interview).
Ability to choose or the assumption of a CT lens for decision making	“Kaupapa Māori is about seeing the world through a Māori lens, and is based on Māori world views; understanding this is critical if school leaders are to effectively engage with whānau” (interview).
Use consensus as the preferred strategy for decision-making	“In a school context and in engagement with whānau, the establishment of a kaupapa whānau is critical as is the need for respect of Kaupapa Māori. Harnessing the collective influence of whānau and bringing that to the task of improving educational outcomes for Māori is a powerful vision; however, there is a need to explore what engagement with whānau means” (interview).
Particularly conscious of “stereotype threat” or fulfillment of negative stereotypes associated with historically marginalized individuals in the US and world	“Schools’ lack of knowledge of, and connection to, Māori people and their realities gives rise to naive expectations about a culturally-intact and organised Māori community available for formal consultation in line with national requirements” (academic narrative).

Make empirical or research-based contributions to educational contexts, adding authentic research based information to academic discourse regarding educational equity issues	<p>“I am a proponent of Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis as key in changing outcomes for Māori students in some mainstream schools. As a result we are beginning to see improved achievement, attendance, and retention of students alongside high levels of engagement of whānau” (Bishop &amp; Glynn, 1999; Bishop, Berryman, Powell &amp; Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, &amp; Richardson, 2004; Bishop, O’Sullivan &amp; Berryman, 2007; Macfarlane, 1997, 2004; Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh &amp; Bateman, 2007; Milne, 2009)” (academic narrative).</p> <p>“I am also a proponent of Te Kotahitanga<sup>12</sup> (Bishop et al., 2004; Bishop et al., 2007), which seeks to address [academic achievement for Māori students] by developing learning-teaching relationships that recognise and affirm Māori student identities. Connectedness is fundamental to the success of Te Kotahitanga and requires teachers who are committed to and inextricably connected to their students and the community. It also requires a complementary connection between school and home aspirations. The Te Kotahitanga project is grounded in Māori beliefs, values, culture and a culturally responsive pedagogy (Milne, 2009)” (interview and academic narrative).</p>
<b><i>Applied Critical Leadership</i></b>	<b><i>Kerehi’s Indigenous Urban Leadership Practice</i></b>
Feel the need to honour all members of their constituencies	“The Treaty of Waitangi provides a rationale for building a school culture that acknowledges Kaupapa Māori, and promotes te reo Māori and tikanga Māori” (interview).
Lead by example to meet unresolved educational needs or challenges	“The practice of educational leadership by Māori in mainstream schools has the potential to inform all school principals (Hoskins, 2010)” (academic narrative).
Feel the need to build trust when working with mainstream constituents or partners or others who do not share an affinity toward issues related to educational equity	“Barriers and risks to engagement are identified from both Māori and non-Māori perspectives followed by a discussion of the critical role of the principal in establishing relationships and trust” (interview).
Describe themselves as transformative, servant leaders who work ultimately to serve the greater good	“Investigating the practice of Māori and non-Māori principals in mainstream schools and facilitating a relationship between these two groups could contribute to gains in this area (serving the greater good). Through collaboration, principal and whānau relationships and engagement could be improved, contributing to Māori student achievement” (academic narrative and interview).

Regarding Kerehi’s interview and academic narrative data, we are able to glean an understanding of the ways in which her practice and reflections further corroborate evidence of her practice of ACL. These particular data additionally serve to exemplify the literature and critical theory research base in which ACL is rooted (Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012).

Along these lines, in an interview Kerehi shares that, with regard to initiating and engaging in critical conversations often regarding race, language, culture, difference, access, and/or educational equity (Singleton & Linton, 2006), her peers are often quiet:

I frequently attend meetings and gatherings of principals in the Metro region as well as national conferences and workshops. On these occasions, the issue of Māori achievement often engenders a defensive reaction from some of those present. I have experienced this on many occasions and yet have never heard a conversation that involves the question: What are we going to do about improving educational outcomes for Māori?

<sup>12</sup> Meaning unity, is a research and professional development programme for teachers of students in years 9 and 10. It is part of the Ministry of Education’s Te Tere Auraki professional development strategy to improve teaching practice and the engagement and achievement of Māori learners in English-medium settings (Bishop et al, 2004; Bishop et al., 2007).

In terms of her ability to choose or the assumption of a CT lens for decision making she adds:

Schooling will not become more equitable until paradigm shifts happen in the way we think about Māori, engage with Māori and how we define achievement. I agree with Smith (2009) in that placing Indigenous language, knowledge, and culture at the centre of Indigenous educational leadership is important so that emotional and moral energy related to identity may be harnessed to enhance learning more generally.

Observational data of Kerehi in board meetings and during professional development with staff also indicate that, like applied critical leaders in the US, Kerehi prefers to use consensus in her day-to-day leadership tasks (Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Reflecting on consensus she stated, “Today the concept of whānau has evolved to include people who come together under a common purpose or effort.” Along these lines, she also shared, “Leadership that is committed to relationships and to collaboration with whānau in the development, design, and implementation of strategies to improve outcomes for students is critical” (Hoskins, 2010; Pearson, 2007).

With regard to being conscious of “stereotype threat” or fulfillment of negative stereotypes associated with historically marginalized individuals in the US and around the world (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002), in an interview Kerehi reported, “Māori will continue to feature disproportionately in indicators of poor outcomes, and will be considered a wasted resource for New Zealand.” But Kerehi does not buy in to stereotype threat in her leadership practice. To counter its ill affects she works hard to make empirical or research-based contributions to educational contexts by contributing authentic research-based information to academic discourse regarding educational equity issues. She does this in her own pursuit of advanced academic degrees and uses “approaches and models which are grounded in Kaupapa Māori and are a strong call in the literature and practice of Māori,” as indicated in a sample of her academic writing.

As do applied critical leaders in the US, Kerehi reported feeling the need to honour all members of her constituency. This is evidenced by her belief that “Leadership needs to effect change in their school’s collective cultures in order to partner more effectively with the cultures of whānau and communities” (Robinson et al., 2009). Similarly, observational data from school meetings indicate that she led by example to meet unresolved educational needs or challenges, for example by “understanding the most vibrant platform for Māori educational reform may not lie with the state, but with Māori, working towards the fulfilment of a range of objectives while committed to collective goals and the harnessing of collective energies” (Durie, 2001b).

Trust played an important role in Kerehi’s urban educational leadership practice. On building trust with mainstream stakeholders she reflects in her own writing,

Integrity, identified by Bryk and Schneider (2002) as a determinant of relational trust, is important to Māori. For Māori, integrity is about values and authenticity. It means walking the talk and doing what you say you are going to be “he tangata kī tahi<sup>13</sup>” (as is cited in Robinson et al., 2009 p.185).

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<sup>13</sup> A “person of a single word” or a person who keeps their word.

Finally, applied critical leaders have a leadership for the greater good “calling” on their practice. Kerehi expresses some elements of this as well as she supports and pushes all of the learners in her school Māori, Pasifika, Pākehā<sup>14</sup> and international toward fulfilment, academic achievement, and a sense of value in their learning community as was substantiated in researcher observation by all researchers on the team. The realisation of social justice and educational equity rings as true for the students at Wānanga Whānau in Aotearoa-NZ as it did in the schools and universities in the original ACL research studies that took place with leaders of colour in the US. If findings are further corroborated by the cross-cultural analysis proposed by Dimmock and Walker (2000), they may suggest an emergent model for Indigenous Urban School Leadership or International Indigenous Urban School Leadership. This possibility follows here.

## **Discussion**

Comparing Kerehi’s leadership practice in Aotearoa-NZ to applied critical leaders in the US revealed common or shared characteristics across the board. A further analysis of the ways in which these characteristics align with a cross-cultural analysis filter (Dimmock & Walker, 2000) provides further information in relation to this study. Having established that ACL characteristics are present in Kerehi’s leadership practice, we now compare ACL to cross-cultural analysis indicators.

With regard to leadership, management, and decision process (e.g., position, role and power of principal; leadership style and orientation; collaboration and participation; motivation; planning; decision-making process; interpersonal communication; conflict resolution; staff appraisal), collaboration can be considered a form of consensus-building as evidenced in ACL and practiced by Kerehi in this study. As well, the decision-making process can be linked to consensus as a way to approach problems coupled with applied critical leaders choosing to practice using a critical theory lens. Collaboration and participation relate to honouring all members of a leaders’ constituency and was a major characteristic of Kerehi’s leadership practices in an urban primary school setting. Conflict resolution can be tied to ACL’s willingness to initiate and engage critical conversations. Further, position role and the power of the principal are related to the ACL characteristics “leading by example” and “leadership for the greater good.” These points and salient features were also present in the literature reviewed on Indigenous educational leadership (Durie, 2006). As in the literature, Kerehi’s Indigenous urban school leadership practice is more heavily weighted in the national/societal cultures aspect.

To further illustrate ways in which ACL and Kerehi’s leadership practice complement and relate to the cross-cultural analysis provided in the literature, elements of national/societal cultures and organizational culture are juxtaposed with characteristics of ACL in Table 3 (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012).

As in Kerehi’s leadership, management, and decision processes, ACL characteristics align with elements of culture identified by Dimmock and Walker, with stronger emphasis on national/societal cultures wherein power is distributed, the collective is more highly regarded than the individual, knowledge is generated,

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<sup>14</sup> This term has Māori origins and is used in Aotearoa-NZ to denote a person or people not of Māori descent, particularly a White person or people of European descent.



relationships are reciprocal, and a spirit of pro-activism prevails. Kerehi and the individuals who participated in ACL research are formal leaders in the sense that they are working as employees of educational organisations; they each reflect elements of organisational culture. Of interest are the elements found in the data. Applied critical leaders and Kerehi are (1) open as opposed to closed in their decision-making dispositions; (2) process oriented versus outcomes oriented with regard to their expectations of students and learning community; and (3) task and/or person oriented where person oriented prevails in that applied critical leaders and Kerehi “value, promote, and show consideration for the welfare of [their] teachers” (Dimmock & Walker, 2000, p. 157). In our original use of the cross-cultural analysis suggested, rather than apply the cultural dimensions to elements of schooling and school-based management, we selected relevant elements and dimensions and aligned them to leadership practices of Indigenous urban leadership in NZ and leadership practices of leaders of colour in the US. This operationalisation of the model builds upon and expands Dimmock and Walker’s (2000) original intent and reiterates their suggestion that “elements and dimensions selected will depend on the research question and purpose” (p. 159).

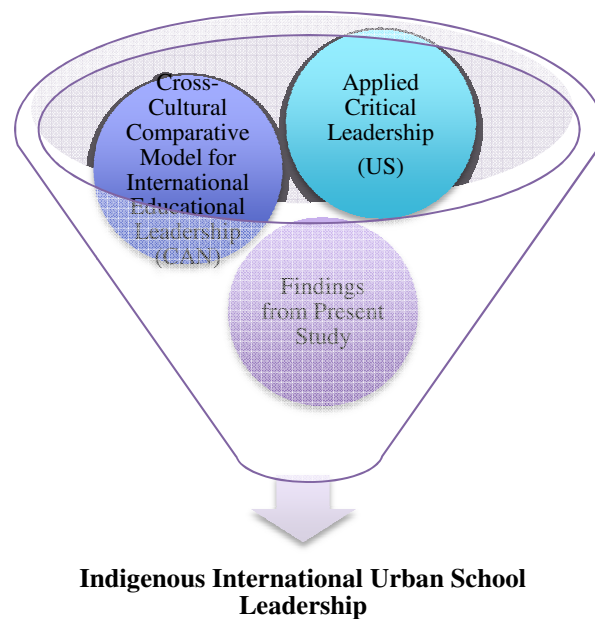
**Table 3. National/societal Cultures, Organizational Culture and Applied Critical Leadership Alignment**

<b>Applied Critical Leadership characteristics present in Kerehi’s Case Study</b>	<b>National/ societal cultures</b>	<b>Organisational culture</b>
Willingness to initiate and engage in critical conversations--often regarding race, language, culture, difference, access, and/or educational equity	power distribution/ power concentrated	
Describe themselves as transformative, servant leaders who work ultimately to serve the greater good		
Ability to choose or the assumption of a CT lens for decision making		open vs. closed
Use consensus as the preferred strategy for decision-making	group oriented/ self oriented	
Particularly conscious of “stereotype threat” or fulfillment of negative stereotypes associated with historically marginalized individuals in the US and world		process oriented vs. outcomes oriented
Make empirical or research-based contributions to educational contexts, adding authentic research based information to academic discourse regarding educational equity issues	generative /replicative	
Feel the need to honour all members of their constituencies	limited relationship /holistic relationship	
Feel the need to build trust when working with mainstream constituents or partners or others who do not share an affinity toward issues related to educational equity		task and/or person oriented
Lead by example to meet unresolved educational needs or challenges	pro-activism/ fatalism	

Study limitations in work of this nature cannot be avoided, as education is fraught with complexity and variation. That stated, study limitations range from the reality that “culture” as a concept is ambiguous, as are terms like Indigenous, and urban education. We worked to avoid essentialising individuals in this study by using case study research to yield thick rich descriptions resulting in Kerehi being presented as an individual Indigenous educational leader versus “the” essential or quintessential Indigenous educational leader. This same care was taken in the original ACL research studies for individual leaders of colour in the US. Still, though we employed a known NZ case, to known multiple US cases, compared findings of one to the findings of an unrelated sample in another country, and then further compared the findings to a cross-cultural model developed in Canada, we found value and tremendous learning in our work which at the day’s end addresses the limited perspectives on comparative cross-cultural educational leadership in existence. Despite the limitations above, and lack of ability to generalise notwithstanding, this contribution begs for further study in more international contexts with additional educational leaders both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and hints at a new way of thinking about Indigenous and international educational leadership. Figure 2 illustrates the possibilities around some of these findings.

We assert that the use of critical theory to frame this study proved appropriate as the work served to challenge or counter popular thinking about educational leadership in the face of global diversity without mainstream notions of elite internationalism. In this study we instead named and critiqued the issue as educational inequity evidenced by local, national, and global achievement gaps (Horkeimer, 1972). By featuring some of Kerehi’s explicit leadership practices, the inquiry also made her way of leading achievable for others in similar settings with practical goals for change or transformation.

**Figure 2. ACL, Cross-Cultural Comparative Model, and Indigenous Urban School Leadership**



## Conclusions

Comparative international studies on educational leadership practices that are conducted from an informed culturally responsive and critical perspective have much to offer traditional worldviews on education for diverse local and global populations. This study reiterates this reality in multiple ways.

The issue we named was educational inequality and the unknown benefits of leadership practice of diverse educational leaders to benefit Māori, Pasifika, CLD, and other underserved learners in NZ and the US. The question we aimed to answer was: What are the common leadership practices undertaken by an Indigenous educational leader in NZ and leaders of colour in the US who lead multicultural, multilingual, and bicultural learners in urban schools?

We found that Kerehi and leaders of colour in the US engaged in very similar leadership practices to address the multiple layers of cultural and linguistic diversity. Findings indicated alignment with findings from similar studies and an Indigenous international applied critical leader, showing promise that ACL research may also be applicable in Indigenous and international educational contexts (Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). This study also supports the use of Dimmock and Walker's (2000) cross-cultural model for comparing international educational leadership and management. Despite the limitations discussed, the global implications for this work and future research along these lines are promising.

Moreover, this contribution serves as an active reflection and scholarly discourse on diversity in schools, which we perceive to be a challenge as well as an opportunity. We also maintain and argue that educational inequality is unacceptable at every level in every country in the world. The status quo we collectively challenged in this case are academic achievement gaps separating underserved students and students of unearned privilege, requiring critical disruption. In this work, we identified other scholars, and educational leaders, including ourselves as individuals able to address and change the reality associated with the issue at hand. Through this inquiry, we aimed to provide norms for criticism of the issue using comparative study and scholarly engagement. Finally, we pursued achievable practical goals for change and transformation by providing guidelines and an emergent model for other aspiring and practicing leaders and scholars in NZ, the US, and like countries to apply in their own diverse, complex, and urban and Indigenous settings.

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