ORANGA TAMARIKI
Ministry for Children

EVIDENCE CENTRE
TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA
New Zealand Government

Clothing and wellbeing of children and young people

Evidence Brief

ALLEN+CLARKE

Acknowledgements

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre works to build the evidence base that helps us better understand wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children, young people and their whānau.

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Published: March 2021

ISBN: 978-0-9951443-8-5

Citation guidance:

This report can be referenced as Allen + Clarke (2020). *Clothing and wellbeing of children and young people: Evidence brief*. Wellington, New Zealand: Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this evidence brief is to provide an up-to-date summary of literature on the link between clothing and the wellbeing of tamariki (children) and rangatahi (young people). Oranga Tamariki provides a Clothing Allowance to caregivers receiving the Foster Care Allowance (FCA), Orphan's Benefit (OB) and Unsupported Child's Benefit (UCB). An evaluation of the Clothing Allowance is underway, and this evidence brief supports this work through informing understanding of the impacts of clothing on tamariki and rangatahi lives.

A search for peer-reviewed literature was conducted using a range of academic databases. There was limited research available that specifically focused on clothing and wellbeing of children and young people in New Zealand and other relevant jurisdictions including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, the literature selection parameters were expanded to include literature from Europe, the United States of America, and South Africa.

In total, 55 sources were included in this evidence brief. This included a mix of academic literature, grey literature, and contextual literature from targeted searches for information.

The operating model for Oranga Tamariki is to ensure all tamariki can have their wellbeing realised and be nurtured in families. Oranga Tamariki's definition of wellbeing (Oranga Tamariki, 2019b) is underpinned by the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (Child Wellbeing & Poverty Reduction Group, 2019) and includes the domains of safety, security, wellness, development and connection. This brief on clothing and wellbeing is structured according to each of these five domains. An additional section on strategies to provide clothing and shoes to children in New Zealand is also included.

Safety

Safety for tamariki and rangatahi is about being and feeling safe and being free from harm.

Across several literature sources children and young people reported bullying and teasing due to lacking or not being able to afford appropriate or the 'right' clothing, and not being able to fit in. Individual studies pointed to findings that dressing in a certain way could help male youths avoid discrimination and criminalisation.

Security

Security for children is about having access to appropriate financial and social resources.

Access to clothing and other material needs is dependent on income. Child poverty research tends to explore clothing as one of many material needs required by children and young people to thrive, so clothing is often not explored on its own as an indicator of living in poverty, low-income situations or financial insecurity. Themes that were common across the literature included that government policies (e.g.,

penalties for beneficiaries) and lack of government regulation (e.g., housing and necessary household expenses) exacerbates stressful circumstances for low-income families. This, in turn, impacts on parents' and caregivers' ability to invest in children and young people's material needs, such as clothing.

Some of the literature discussed the importance of measuring indicators of living standards and material deprivation, which include indicators specifically in relation to clothing (e.g., owns a warm coat, owns a pair of shoes) alongside income, in order to provide better policy responses to families struggling to provide for children's needs. Other research highlighted the importance of specific clothing metrics related to the experiences of children within households, as existing measures may not adequately capture the subjective and relative experiences of deprivation.

Children and young people are aware of their circumstances. Clothing is a visible aspect of poverty, and lack of appropriate clothing leads to children and young people feeling ashamed about their appearance and family or household situations. Evidence suggested that perceptions of some middle-income children of children in poverty were negative, and these perceptions were often centred on clothing and appearance.

Assistance from governments was also discussed in the literature, in relation to (specific and non-specific) measures taken to ensure that children and young people have access to clothing. State assistance can affect wellbeing of children and young people through the provision of benefits to purchase goods and services, such as clothing. However, assistance may not be enough to ensure that all families are able to provide material resources that they ought to for children and young people. There is evidence that individuals and households use strategies to help to mitigate material hardship in relation to clothing, including going without clothing to pay for food, or prioritising children's clothing purchases over adults.

Wellness

Wellness for tamariki and rangatahi is about being physically, emotionally and psychologically healthy, and being free from trauma. Clothing plays an important role in the health of tamariki by protecting them from being vulnerable to illness, and ensuring that they have a sense of worth and value through the clothes they wear.

Clothing is one of several material needs that are important for physical health. Appropriate clothing and shoes keep the body's temperature regulated and warm in winter, and feet protected from the elements. These help to prevent injuries, and common colds or 'flu that can impact on children and young people's participation in their daily lives.

Children and young people's need for replacement items as their bodies grow and change can put pressure on households that are financially constrained. Furthermore, several studies found that provision of clothing, uniforms and equipment presented a barrier to participation in sport and physical activities due to costs.

Children and young people's emotional wellbeing is influenced by clothing. Studies that explored preferences of clothing for children and young people (9- to 12-year olds) highlight that clothing plays an important role in self-expression and the construction of identity through style and colour. However, it can be difficult to find affordable clothing that is stylish, age appropriate, or fits their bodies.

Development

Development is about giving tamariki and rangatahi the opportunity to grow and develop with support to have aspirations, and enabling them to achieve and lead successful lives.

Uniforms for school are important because they carry symbolic and social value. Financial barriers exist for some children and young people in obtaining uniforms. Uniforms that were incomplete, needing to be replaced or incorrect impacted on experiences in education. Uniforms are beneficial for inclusion at school, but present social barriers when children and young people lack access to them. Children and young people in care move between schools more frequently than other children, and may therefore not always have the correct uniform.

Furthermore, the literature on clothing related to education highlighted that student appearance, including what they wore, tidiness and grooming, influenced how teachers perceived and treated students. For example, teachers' negative perception of student appearance was associated with poorer academic achievement. Other literature noted that teachers may be unfairly disciplining students due to their uniforms being incomplete (when uniform items such as blazers were unaffordable to parents).

Connection

Connection for tamariki and rangatahi is about relationships with others that brings a sense of belonging and being a valuable part of something bigger than themselves. It is also about helping tamariki and rangatahi to understand who they are, where they belong, and know about their culture in a positive way.

Household members have influence over children and young people's clothing purchases and choices. Parents 'hold the purse' so to speak, so children and young people negotiate with their parents about clothing purchases. Evidence shows that children and young people in foster group home arrangements make choices about what to wear based on different social factors. Ideologies related to sustainability and the environment can also impact on clothing purchasing decisions in middle-class families.

Children and young people are influenced by implicit 'rules' around consumption and wearing the 'right' clothes. Evidence shows that peer pressure is a factor around wearing branded clothing and one study found that wearing the 'right' clothes could be more important than 'doing the right thing' to gain or maintain social acceptance amongst their peers. Clothing can also be an indicator of social status; if you are rich and have 'cool' clothes you are popular; if you are poor and have cheap clothes you

are not. Findings from individual studies included: children and young people can have positive, negative and changing attitudes towards branded clothing, and these attitudes are mediated by relationships with families, peers and teachers; children from families who have immigrated to western countries may feel socially excluded if their clothing is different to that of other children; and that social practice theories[1] offer a way of understanding how children and young people talk about branded clothing and social hierarchies.

Clothing is also important for social inclusion, and financial barriers mean that low-income children and young people are more likely to feel socially excluded. Individual studies found that: low-income young people place higher social value on expensive or branded clothing than high-income teenagers; adolescents from low-income households are socially rejected to a greater extent than adolescents from higher income households; and that 'facework' (e.g., saving face) was employed by economically deprived young people to manage social relationships through construction of narratives around ability to obtain desired clothes and shame avoidance.

Sources from New Zealand highlighted that clothing is one of a number of factors that positively impact on children and young people's participation in activities such as kapa haka. Providing clothing and outfits for kapa haka also has an additional benefit of supporting Māori economic development through the growth of Maori-owned businesses that create items such as kākahu, korowai and piupiu.

Initiatives to provide clothing to children in New Zealand

KidsCan, a charitable trust set up in 2006 and based in New Zealand, provides programmes to ensure that children in low-decile schools have access to material resources including food, clothing and hygiene products. KidsCan currently runs two clothing-related programmes: Raincoats for Kids and Shoes for Kids. These programmes have both been evaluated, and findings show that the programmes have broadly been positive and are appreciated in the communities they support. There is anecdotal evidence of improvement in educational and health outcomes, however, more robust data needs to be collected and analysed to confirm this.

Conclusions

The overarching theme of the evidence sourced for this brief is that clothing is substantially important to children and young people's physical, social, and emotional wellbeing, but access to clothing, and therefore wellbeing, is dependent on financial resources. Lack of access to clothing means children and young people in impoverished or low-income households face barriers to participation in important

[1] Grounded in the thinking of sociologists such as Bourdieu (1977, 1990) and Giddens (1984, 1991), social practice theories are defined as a set of cultural and philosophical accounts that focus on the conditions surrounding the practical carrying out of social life. The notion of social practices being organised or ordered is important, including, for example, understandings of what to say and do, explicit rules and principles, and beliefs, purposes, emotions and moods (Nairn & Spotswood, 2015).

aspects of their lives, and puts them at risk of social exclusion, teasing and bullying within social, educational, and extracurricular spheres. Barriers to accessing clothing therefore need to be addressed.

Introduction

In July 2018 Oranga Tamariki introduced a Clothing Allowance as part of its support for caregivers receiving the Orphan's Benefit (OB) and Unsupported Child's Benefit (UCB). Tamariki and rangatahi who are in a care placement outside of Oranga Tamariki that is intended to be ongoing, became entitled to a four-weekly Clothing Allowance, which covers a reasonable range of appropriate clothing, a travel bag, shoes and replacement of school uniform items (Oranga Tamariki, 2019a).

Oranga Tamariki pays for school uniforms when tamariki and rangatahi in the custody of the Chief Executive are starting at school and require a uniform, or when there is a need for a uniform change within a school, e.g., between junior and senior school. Meanwhile, tamariki and rangatahi financially supported through the OB or UCB have access to a School and Year Start-up Payment, which is paid at the beginning of the year as a once-a-year payment for uniforms and school-related costs. This requires caregivers to apply for the payment each year, around mid-January to the end of February. Any replacement uniform items needed outside of this period are expected to come from the Clothing Allowance (Oranga Tamariki, 2019a). Similarly, uniform payments may not be provided to foster caregivers beyond the first uniform or where there is a major change to a uniform, and the standard Clothing Allowance is expected to cover any other uniform requirements for tamariki.

Oranga Tamariki is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Clothing Allowance and is interested in further understanding the connection between clothing and the wellbeing of children and young people. This evidence brief explores the relationship between clothing and wellbeing domains as specified in Oranga Tamariki's conceptual model (safety, security, wellness/health, development and connection). Within this model, clothing as a barrier to children's cultural and educational participation, and clothing as an aspect of poverty is explored.

This evidence brief supports ongoing work for Oranga Tamariki's Clothing Allowance Evaluation and informs understanding of the expected impact of introducing the Clothing Allowance for children unable to live with their natural, step- or adopted parents and in care with kin and non-kin caregivers. It also contributes to the evidence base for the Review of Financial Assistance for Caregivers.

Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodology for this evidence brief. Key research areas highlight the focus of this document, and the following paragraphs describe the literature search approach including for grey literature, the approach to selection of literature for inclusion, any limitations of the approach, and gaps in the literature.

Focus of the evidence brief

The evidence brief considers what national and international research and evidence tells us, for children and young people, about the following focus areas:

- the relationship between clothing and wellbeing
- the link between adequate and appropriate clothing and wellbeing domains supported by Oranga Tamariki
- the relationship between clothing and participation in cultural and sporting activities
- the relationship between clothing and education participation, and
- inadequate or inappropriate clothing as an attribute of poverty.

While children and young people in care are of particular interest to this evidence brief, the review of literature was not restricted to this group.

Literature search

The following databases were searched between 9 and 23 March 2020:

- Cochrane Library
- CINAHL
- ProQuest
- PsycINFO
- PubMed
- ScienceDirect
- Scopus, and
- Web of Science.

To conduct the search, we used combinations of key terms. All search terms used in the scan are provided in Table 1. Searches were conducted using all possible combinations from each of the four columns, where relevant.

Table 1: Search terms

Search term 1	Search term 2	Search term 3	Search term 4
child*	cloth*	wellbeing/ wellness/ health	state care
young people	Dress	safety/ security/ stability	foster
youth	uniform	accept*/ belong*/ inclu*/ connect*	custod* or noncustodial/ noncustody
teen*	gear/ apparel	develop*/ child develop*	out-of-home
peer	Attire	education/ school	away from home
tamariki/ rangatahi/ mokopuna	Wear	physical activity/ sport/ activity	child protect*
		cultur*	child welfare
		poverty/ deprivation/ hardship	clothing allowance/ grant
			access
			second hand/ used/ worn
			adequate/ inadequate
			appropriate/ inappropriate
			experience
			Maori
			indigenous
			Pasifika
			New Zealand

A total of 2921 sources were returned from the database searches. Duplicates were removed and titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance. A total of 25 full-text articles were initially obtained for potential inclusion.

Grey literature

Due to the lack of academic literature available in the New Zealand context, grey literature was also included in this evidence brief. Oranga Tamariki provided documents relevant to the New Zealand context to *Allen + Clarke*, and additional

searches for documents were carried out on New Zealand government websites, Australia, UK and the Republic of Ireland government websites, and websites of different organisations with an interest in clothing for children, including Child Poverty Action Group and KidsCan.

A total of 12 grey literature sources were obtained for potential inclusion.

Selection and review of returned material

The list of 37 full-text articles and documents recommended for inclusion were provided to Oranga Tamariki for their review and input. In the final selection of literature, priority was given to:

- sources of information produced by recognised and reputable organisations
- relevance to primary research areas
- relevance to Māori i.e., Indigenous populations
- English language publications
- more recent literature i.e., 2011 onwards
- material that exhibits methodological rigour (e.g., systematic reviews, meta-analyses, representative samples)
- literature likely to be applicable in the New Zealand context.

A major challenge of the literature selection was the small amount of literature specifically available on clothing within jurisdictions of primary interest to Oranga Tamariki – that is, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and Republic of Ireland. We therefore extended the scope to include literature from the United States of America (USA), Europe and South Africa, which explored similar themes.

Full text articles and documents were also assessed to identify any further key references from their bibliographies. The scope of this evidence brief was also reviewed to identify gaps, and additional targeted searches for grey literature and contextual literature were undertaken. This identified a further 18 sources for inclusion.

A total of 55 sources are included in this evidence brief.

Limitations and gaps

When considering the information provided in this evidence brief, it is important to note that a systematic review of the literature was not conducted. Although the literature search was relatively detailed and extensive, it is likely that some research or reports that address the key research areas were not identified, and are therefore not included in this report. Furthermore, we did not attempt to formally assess the quality of each study or report that was included. As a result, this brief includes information from reviews that lacked some important components, such as clear eligibility criteria, search strategies, study selection processes, and assessment of methodology and bias in individual studies. We have also included information sourced from individual studies, which may be more subject to bias than synthesised

research. While we have attempted to address these limitations by clearly indicating the source of information presented in this evidence brief, it is important that the information from non-systematic reviews or individual studies is interpreted with caution.

There was a lack of literature available specifically related to clothing and children and young people's wellbeing who are in care (or not), in New Zealand. Clothing is mostly conceptualised in the literature as being part of a child or young person's material needs, and this is often in the context of poverty or low-income life experiences. More specifically, the relationship between clothing and cultural participation for children and young people in New Zealand and internationally was not often discussed. Little relevant literature was sourced that specifically related to Māori populations and no literature was found that specifically related to Pasifika populations., We undertook targeted searches of specific New Zealand-based websites such as Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Child Poverty Action Group, and KidsCan in order to gather information that related more closely to the New Zealand context.

There is limited literature available on the meaning of clothing for children and young people in care, particularly in relation to self-expression, selection, and influences on consumption. Other limitations include clothing preferences and meaning for children and young people who are of Asian, Middle-Eastern, Latin American or African ethnicities, former refugees, who have disabilities and chronic health conditions, and who identify as queer or gender diverse.

Further, robust evaluation of interventions providing clothing and shoes to children in New Zealand is required to assess their effectiveness.

A final limitation of this evidence brief is that much of the peer-reviewed academic literature included has been sourced from outside of New Zealand – primarily from the UK, Scandinavia, Australia, and the USA. Although some themes explored in the literature from these jurisdictions are interesting to note and may have relevance, caution is needed when generalising these findings to the unique cultural and environmental context of New Zealand.

Findings from the literature

Clothing is a human right and is a visible indicator of material wellbeing. Article 27 of the United Nation Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that a child has the right to "a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development" (Harju & Thorød, 2011; Shamrova & Lampe, 2020; United Nations, 1990). Recent research carried out by Oranga Tamariki has highlighted the importance of providing for the material needs (including clothing) of children in care (Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People Team, 2019).

Oranga Tamariki developed a Child and Youth Wellbeing construct using quantitative methods that sits across five domains: safety, security, wellness, development and connection. This evidence brief on clothing and wellbeing is structured according to each domain in relation to tamariki and rangatahi.

- **Safety** is about tamariki and rangatahi being and feeling safe from harm. This section explores the ways in which clothing brings a sense of safety or not and protects tamariki from harmful treatment by others, which primarily related to bullying and teasing at school, discrimination, and being visibly different.
- **Security** is about tamariki and rangatahi having access to the financial and social resources. In this section, access to clothing is covered as an aspect of poverty – specifically in relation to material deprivation and lack of household income.
- **Wellness** is about tamariki and rangatahi being physically, emotionally, and psychologically healthy and being free from trauma. In this section, clothing as an indicator of health will be covered as it plays an important role in protecting from illness, identity development and establishing a sense of worth and value, and enabling self-expression.
- **Development** is about equipping tamariki and rangatahi with the skills and abilities they need to live independent and successful lives while being able to achieve their aspirations. This section covers the clothing experiences of tamariki and rangatahi in the educational setting, particularly school uniforms.
- **Connection** is about tamariki and rangatahi relationships with others near and far that brings a sense of belonging and being a valuable part of something bigger than themselves. It is also about them understanding who they are, where they belong, and their connection to culture. This section covers clothing in relation to family, whānau and social connection.

This evidence brief also outlines the KidsCan programmes in New Zealand which provide clothing (raincoats, shoes and socks) to children in low decile schools, and discusses evidence of their effectiveness.

The following sections provide detail of available evidence about the relationship between clothing and wellbeing for children and young people in care (or not in care), in New Zealand and internationally.

1. SAFETY

Oranga Tamariki's conceptual wellbeing construct includes safety which is defined as both being and feeling safe from harm. Less literature was sourced on clothing and wellbeing in relation to aspects of safety than the other four domains of wellbeing (security, wellness, development and connection). A few sources discussed branded clothing and social inclusion (discussed later in section 5.2) in relation to bullying and teasing, and two other studies discussed physical visibility, and discrimination, as aspects of safety in relation to clothing.

1.1. Children and young people reported bullying and teasing due to lacking appropriate clothing

A number of articles sourced for this evidence brief, particularly related to social relationships, social inclusion, branded clothing, and experiences at school, reported bullying or teasing linked to clothing.

An Australian study reported that for young people, not having the right clothes was significantly associated with indicators of poor school engagement, including bullying. About 11% of study participants reported that they had experienced bullying because they did not have the right clothes (Redmond & Skattebol, 2019).

A UK study by the Children's Commission on Poverty showed that bullying was one of the impacts on children in families who struggled with school costs. This was experienced by 28% of children from households who were financially 'not well off at all'. Of children 'not well off at all':

- 10% said they were bullied because they could not afford appropriate clothing
- 7% said they were bullied because they could not afford sports kit
- 6% said they were bullied because they could not afford accessories (Holloway, Mahony, Royston, & Mueller, 2014).

There was limited evidence available that specifically linked clothing with bullying. Having the right trainers (shoes) was seen as a protective factor against bullying in one study, noted in a literature review on child poverty (Ridge, 2011). A qualitative study within a multicultural village school in Norway reported the following anecdote:

> *We know many children are bullied because of clothes, and that is rather sad (Rysst, 2013, p. 22)*

A Swedish-based quantitative study found that bullying and peer rejection was associated with not having the economic resources to participate in activities with peers (Hjalmarsson, 2018). This study examined associations between economic

resources and adverse peer relations of adolescents, using measures of peer rejection and bullying victimisation. The study population was a nationally representative sample (n=4725, 51% female) of Swedish eighth grade students (approximately 14 years old) (Hjalmarsson, 2018).

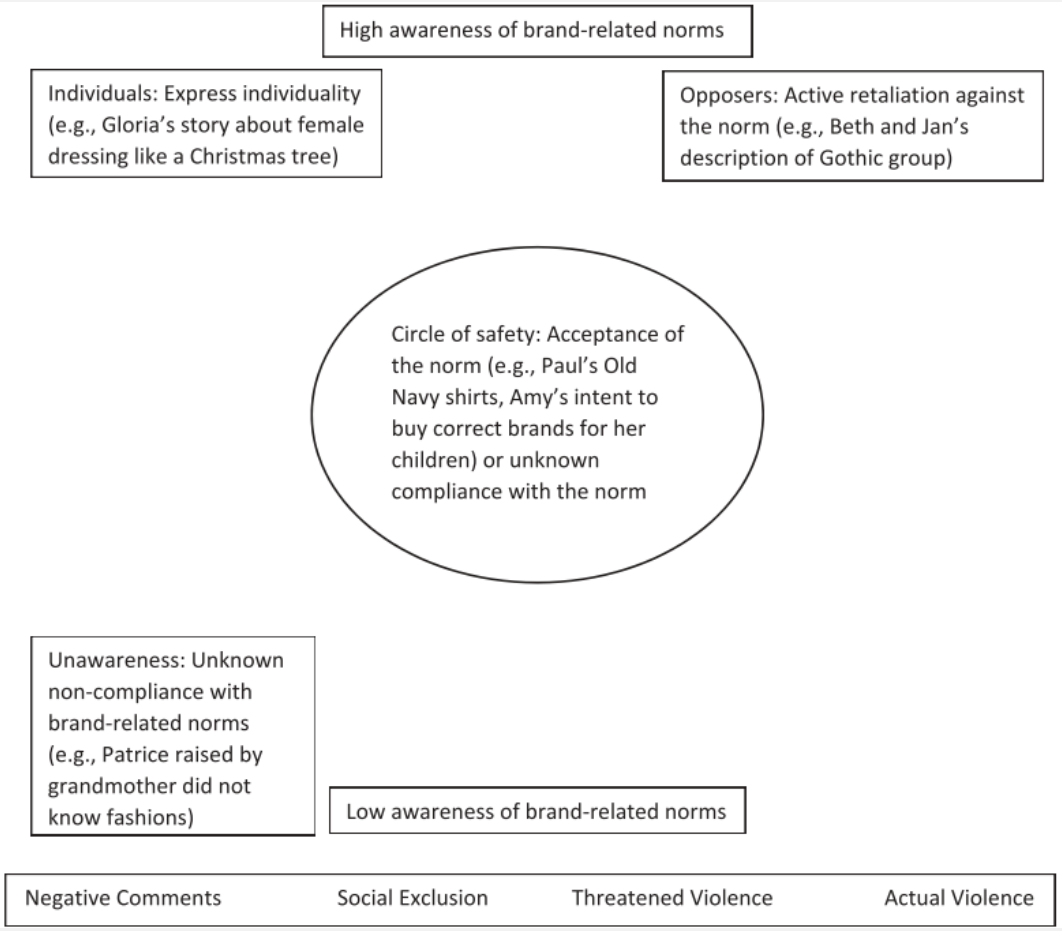
Peer rejection was reported by school class peers and describes a peer group's attitude towards a member (how much peers want to interact or avoid and individual). Nearly 87% reported rejecting peers. **Bullying victimisation** was measured through self-reports and about 9% reported being victimised by bullying. The data showed that adolescents from households in the lowest income group were rejected by school class peers to a greater extent than more advantaged students. However, there was not an association between household income and bullying victimisation (Hjalmarsson, 2018).

Only one study directly researched bullying in relation to clothing, specifically, brand-related bullying in a USA classroom setting among children and teenagers aged from 11 to 18. This was a retrospective study, where 18-20 year old college students (n=41) were asked about their reflections on experiences at school (Williams & Littlefield, 2018).

The study found that clothing brands are used to reinforce existing social hierarchical order, and that students bully others who do not wear what is seen as the more popular or desired brands. Therefore those wearing these brands are perceived as having higher status. What is interesting to note is that children and young people are aware of brand-related cultural norms, and possible repercussions if they are non-compliant, which usually meant being ignored and socially excluded or bullied further.

The researchers found that compliance and non-compliance with brand-related norms sat on a continuum where 'individuals' or 'opposers' had high-awareness of brand norms, and those who were unaware of brand norms were non-compliant simply because they were oblivious. Individuals within the 'circle of safety', that is, acceptance and conformity with brand norms, could blend in and avoid any negative attention or bullying (Williams & Littlefield, 2018). See figure below.

Figure 1. The circle of safety (Williams & Littlefield 2018)



Williams and Littlefield (2018) note that there is a risk for brands when popular brands are seen to be the source of bullying. This echoes the analysis of Nairn & Spotswood (2015), who argue that brands should not advertise their products in a way that assumes children and young people who wear branded clothing have higher social status than those who wear cheaper clothes.

1.2. Dressing a certain way could help Mexican-American males avoid discrimination

A qualitative USA study found that avoiding specific clothing was a way in which male youths could avoid discrimination. The study explored Mexican-American adolescent experiences of criminalisation and discrimination, and the responses of parents and young people through a sample (n=40) of Mexican descent parents (n=20) and young people aged 11-15 years old (n=20), who participated in separate youth and parent focus groups (Romero, Gonzalez, & Smith, 2015).

Parents tried to prevent the criminalisation of young males by talking to them about their clothing choices. Parents spoke specifically about gendered concerns with

Latino male adolescents; in particular, they discussed negative stereotypes that might mean young men are criminalised based on their appearance:

> *Some mothers spoke about discussing clothing choices with their sons to try to minimize assumptions of being part of a gang or drawing unwanted negative attention in stores or school (Romero et al., 2015, p. 1540).*

1.3. Physical visibility could mean that young people are safer

Research with tweens in foster care homes around understanding their needs, and meanings associated with their personal possessions (discussed in more detail in section 3.2), noted that being able to be seen was important for physical safety. Light coloured clothing can protect people when it is dark and one eight-year-old noted that she had seen a movie that showed her that:

> *…it is better to wear light colors [sic] every day because if you get in front of a car, and you see that bright color [sic] and it hits your eyes then they can see you and you won't get hurt. They won't run over you…if you are wearing something dark and then they will probably think that you are not there. We have dark all around us, because it is good to wear light colors [sic] so we won't blend in and camouflage inside other things (Chang et al., 2018, p. 50).*

2. SECURITY

Clothing is a part of child poverty. Much of the literature sourced and reviewed for this evidence brief centred on poverty and lack of financial resources. Experiencing poverty and/or being from a low-income family has a profound effect on wellbeing and participation in society. The lack of (or inadequate) clothing as well as other material resources are consistent themes in the literature (e.g. Child Poverty Action Group, 2011; Gibson et al., 2017a).

US-based research shows that poverty and low income are causally related to worse child development and wellbeing outcomes (Chaudry & Wimer, 2016). Ways in which poverty affects outcomes include material hardship or an inability to meet basic needs (such as provision of clothing) (Chaudry & Wimer, 2016).

This section explores how the provision of clothing and other material needs is dependent on income; how material deprivation and living standards are important indicators of childhood poverty; that children's experiences of poverty are linked to clothing; government initiatives to ensure greater access to material resources; and a number of clothing-related strategies that children, young people and adults carry out to mitigate child poverty.

2.1. Provision of clothing and other material needs is dependent on income

Clothing and shoes are examples of basic material needs for children. Parental income is essential to meet these needs, which are required for children to grow, learn and to live in dignity (Duncanson, Richardson, Oben, Wicken, & Adams, 2019).

A New Zealand report completed by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki entitled *What makes a good life?* reports the views on the wellbeing of children and young people living in care. One of the key findings was that children and young people in care **want to have the basics.** They do not want to have to worry about being able to pay for the things that they need to survive, such as clothing, and this included being able to participate in sports and activities. Children and young people in care also spoke about financial barriers to accessing the basics, and noted that school uniforms can be expensive (Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki, 2019b).

The *What makes a good life?* research included an online survey of children and young people in non-whānau care arrangements (7-19 years of age, n=79). The survey found that 74% said that their caregivers have enough money to pay for basics like food and clothes (Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki, 2019b). This was compared with data from another report from the same study on children and young people not in care (n=5353), where 89% had enough money to pay for basics (Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki, 2019a).

A study exploring the wellbeing of young Australians (the Australian Child Wellbeing Project) asked survey participants (n=5440), from school years four, six and eight, to rank key domains for 'the good life' in order of importance. These domains were previously identified through in-depth discussions via interviews and focus groups with young people (n=97). The domains were ranked as follows: (1) family (2) health (3) friends (4) school (5) community, and (6) money. Clothing fitted into the 'money' domain, with over three-quarters of all participants reporting that they were not deprived materially, which included having adequate clothing (Redmond et al., 2016).

Government policies and lack of government regulation exacerbate stressful circumstances for low-income families in New Zealand

Child Poverty Action Group's 2011 report *Left further behind: how policies fail the poorest children in New Zealand* highlights a number of policy issues that can compound poverty and lead to children's basic needs not being met: Examples are Child Support policy and provisions which do not take into account the increasing costs of meeting children's needs as they age – including replacing clothing as children grow; and the universal application of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in

New Zealand compared to some jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom[2], where clothing for children is exempt (Child Poverty Action Group, 2011).

Income impacts on parental investment in children's material needs

A systematic review of 34 studies (including randomised control trials, natural experiments, and studies that used econometric techniques on longitudinal data) including Canada, Mexico, Norway, the USA and the UK investigated the causal effect that money has on children's outcomes. Related to expenditure on clothing:

- One 2006 UK study found significant increases in relative spending on children's clothing and footwear, toys, books, fruit and vegetables (and reduced spending on alcohol and tobacco) as incomes rose for low-income families with children (Cooper & Stewart, 2013).
- Conversely, a 2007 USA study did not find significant increases in spending on children's items where families received increased welfare payments. Instead, there was greater spending on work-related clothing and transport, however this may be because benefit recipients in the USA are required to work (Cooper & Stewart, 2013).
- Another interesting finding from a 1997 UK study was that a policy change to Family Allowances in the late 1970s (that redistributed resources from husbands to wives) was followed by increased spending on children and women's clothes. The policy change also meant a name change to the Child Benefit – and the authors suggest that the labelling of benefits could impact on how they are spent (Cooper & Stewart, 2013).

Higher levels of caregiver stress are related to low income

A recent survey was carried out using telephone interviews with caregivers receiving the OB (n=125) and UCB (n=1,175) – both of which include the Clothing Allowance (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2019). The survey results found that while the majority of caregivers find the role and their experiences personally rewarding (85% of OB and 86% of UCB caregivers), 63% (of both OB and UCB caregivers) also found the experience stressful. Regression analyses were undertaken to understand the drivers of stress for caregivers. Higher levels of OB caregiver stress were mostly related to lower income, which was attributed to not being able to provide necessities for children such as clothing. However, analyses of the predictor variables determined that there are other factors not measured in the survey that also cause caregiver stress. Income also plays a strong role in UCB caregivers' ability to cope financially, with 61% of carers receiving the UCB reporting that they used 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' of their own money to supplement what they receive from the Ministry of Social Development to cover costs of raising the child (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2019).

[2] Value-added tax (VAT) in the United Kingdom is zero-rated up to and including size 14 children's clothes (GOV.UK, n.d.).

2.2. Material deprivation and living standards are important indicators of childhood poverty, alongside income

A New Zealand literature review carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group and New Zealand Psychological Society investigated the relationship between poverty experienced in childhood and its impact on mental health of children and young people (and later in adulthood) (Gibson et al., 2017). The authors discussed a definition of children living in poverty in New Zealand outlined by an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Solutions to Child Poverty, established in 2012 by the Children's Commissioner:

> *…those who experience deprivation of material resources and income that are required for them to develop and thrive (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, 2012a, b, c, 2013, in Gibson et al., 2017a, p. 5)*

The Solutions to Child Poverty EAG described child poverty as involving a higher chance of insufficient nutritious food, going to school hungry, wearing worn out shoes or going barefoot, having inadequate clothing, living in cold, damp houses, and sleeping in shared beds. Approximately 14% (155,000) of New Zealand children experience material hardship (living in households that go without seven or more things they need) (Gibson et al., 2017). Living standards of Māori and Pasifika families with dependent children are lower than those of other New Zealanders (Child Poverty Action Group, 2011).

Figures from the Poverty and Social Exclusion UK 2012 Living Standards survey – using childhood deprivation indicators – found that:

- 1% of children lacked a warm winter coat
- 4% of children lacked new properly fitting shoes
- 4% of children lacked some new and not second-hand clothes
- 5% of children lacked at least four pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms (Mack, 2016).

A recent paper on child wellbeing using international data moved away from using income-based measures of poverty and has employed a material deprivation approach. The International Survey of Child Wellbeing included 12-year-olds from 12 countries: Norway, Germany, England, Spain, Malta, Estonia, Romania, Algeria, Israel, Turkey, Ethiopia, and South Africa (n=13,628) and used a Material Resource Index (MRI)[3] to assess whether children and their family had possessions, including:

- clothes in good condition to go to school in
- access to the Internet
- mobile phone
- your own room
- access to a computer at home
- books to read for fun

[3] The MRI has been used in a number of studies to explore patterns of material deprivation, and has been adapted to country contexts. For the International Survey of Child Wellbeing, the MRI was utilised in universal form with items un-adjusted for each country (Shamrova & Lampe, 2020).

- a family car for transportation
- your own 'stuff' to listen to music.

The vast majority of children (97%) had good clothes to wear to school. Only 42% of the children had all eight items from the MRI (Shamrova & Lampe, 2020).

The differences in using a material deprivation approach to poverty rather than an income-based approach is that material deprivation measures focus on the tangible outcomes of having sufficient income, such as access to certain goods and services, rather than solely focusing on a certain level of income (Shamrova & Lampe, 2020). Furthermore, earlier work in Ireland, for example, discussed the importance of having a child poverty measure as well as a household poverty measure. This is because household poverty measures rely on indicators that are mostly relevant to the lives of adults, and data is usually provided by one adult household member. There is an argument that this approach does not truly capture poverty and deprivation as subjectively experienced by children (Kerrins, Greene, & Murphy, 2011).

The findings from Shamrova and Lampe's (2020) study supports UNICEF recommendations that social policies and programmes aimed at addressing child poverty should focus on both income and material deprivation, by designing interventions that provide goods and services in addition to financial support (Shamrova & Lampe, 2020).

In the Australian Child Wellbeing Project, clothing and food were also used as deprivation measures, as severe material deprivation impacts on young people's development and educational opportunities.

> *…deprivation in the space of food and clothing is particularly concentrated among young people in marginalised groups, for example, young people with disability, young carers and Indigenous young people (Redmond et al., 2016, p. xviii)*

Deprivation associated with clothing was rarely an isolated matter; young people were also materially deprived in other ways. Material needs such as clothing are intrinsically important to wellbeing (Redmond et al., 2016).

2.3. Lack of appropriate clothing as a symptom of poverty leads to children feeling ashamed

A non-systematic UK review of literature on children's experiences of poverty highlighted that poverty is an all-encompassing situational experience for children:

> *…poverty penetrates deep into the heart of childhood, permeating every facet of children's lives from economic and material disadvantage, through the structuring and limiting of social relationships and social participation to the most personal often hidden aspects of disadvantage associated with shame, sadness and the fear of social difference and marginalisation (Ridge, 2011, p. 73).*

From the literature sourced for this brief, four sources specifically researched children's views on poverty across different socio-economic groups. Clothing is often mentioned, usually as a visible indicator of poverty:

The young people we talked with appeared to know well, and feel, the associations between visible poverty and shame. They wanted decent clothes so that they did not feel ashamed (Redmond et al., 2016, p. 255).

Clothing was described as part of essential items that children in poverty lacked

New Zealand-based qualitative research explored children and young people's experiences and perceptions of poverty. Children and teenagers aged 12-17 (n=56), young people aged 18-24 (n=32) and adults aged 25+ (n=8) participated. Data from focus groups, and content such as written descriptions of poverty, photographic images and interpretations, artwork, poems, and autobiographical accounts were analysed. Themes that emerged included a lack of essentials, as well as lack of money, health, housing, social exclusion, school, work and the impact on children, child abuse, neglect and violence, gangs, mental and emotional wellbeing, addictions, physical environments and future prospects – and were discussed in the context of other literature (Egan-Bitran, 2010).

Clothing was discussed in the context of 'lack of essentials', and it was evident that lacking clothing was common among those experiencing poverty. The importance of clothing for warmth (and health), and for appropriate resources to obtain clothing, was emphasised:

> *Cold – got hardly no clothes, looking for some. Wonder if there's any money in here [clothing bin]. No money, no clothes! Desperate. Anonymous, Paeroa (Egan-Bitran, 2010, p. 11).*

Egan-Bitran (2010) highlighted that visible signs of poverty, such as lack of adequate and suitable clothing and shoes, can cause children to be fearful of social isolation/exclusion and stigma, unable to take part in sporting, cultural and school activities, and subject to teasing and bullying. Not having the 'right' clothing was less about having expensive labels or branded clothes[4] and more about:

- not having enough clothing
- lacking warm clothing
- lacking school uniforms and sports uniforms
- not having the correct uniform
- clothing being in poor condition (Egan-Bitran, 2010).

Research has reported that children engage in poverty concealment behaviour using clothing (Ollson, 2007, in Kerrins et al., 2011). A number of Scandinavian studies also explored poverty from children's viewpoints. Harju and Thorød's (2011) article discussed findings from two studies (carried out in Norway and Sweden) that focused on the importance of food, housing, and clothing for an adequate standard of living and the need for children's voices to be heard on these matters. All

[4] This was a theme identified in Egan-Bitran's (2010) literature review for this research.

participants were children or parents from low-income families (Norway) or were recipients of government subsidies and described as living in financial hardship for many years (Sweden).

The studies found that for children in poverty, worrying about clothing among other necessities was part of everyday life. Children in these studies also discussed the impact of poverty and lack of appropriate clothing on their development (see section 2.1), sense of identity (see section 3.2), social lives (see section 5), and education (see section 4) (Harju & Thorød, 2011), which are discussed further in this evidence brief as noted.

Perceptions of middle-income children regarding children in poverty were negative

A qualitative study, using semi-structured interviews, was conducted in Finland on children's perceptions of poverty. The children in this study (n=30) were 10-15 years of age and represented a "middle affluence" socio-economic group according to the Family Affluence Scale. No children who were from low income families participated.

Children in this study considered that children in poverty did not lack essential basic needs, rather, that they had cheaper, older or second-hand versions of basic needs (Hakovirta & Kallio, 2016).

The children in this study described poor children negatively. Some comments were based on clothing and appearance, which suggested that poor children were stigmatised and socially excluded from activities:

> *Well, some of them have kind of like holes in their clothes… their hair's kind of dirty and what not*
>
> *You look kind of, like, miserable*
>
> *You can tell from the clothes, if you're wearing smelly socks and t-shirts that are 2 years old (Hakovirta & Kallio, 2016, p. 325-326).*

Poor children were described by middle-class children in Finland as timid, quiet and withdrawn, or lazy and antisocial and as lacking the money/resources to do extracurricular hobbies or socialise outside of their homes. Wealthier children, on the other hand, tended to be described more positively, as more social, and as having the resources to participate in different hobbies outside of school (Hakovirta & Kallio, 2016).

2.4. Government assistance, and individual and social strategies are utilised to help people to obtain clothing

This section discusses the use of government assistance to help people in low-income or impoverished situations. While the findings are not always specific to clothing, they offer an indication of the ways in which governments do or do not meet the costs of raising children and young people. These costs include purchasing clothing and shoes as well as other material needs. Different clothing-related

strategies individuals (including dependent children) and communities use to mitigate material hardship are also detailed.

Government assistance can affect wellbeing of children through the provision of benefits to purchase goods and services, such as clothing

Oranga Tamariki has a Clothing Allowance available to caregivers receiving the FCA, OB and UCB. A recent survey of OB and UCB caregivers views (discussed in section 2.1) found that just under half (46%) of caregivers receiving OB and just over half (54%) of caregivers receiving the UCB were aware of the Clothing Allowance (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2019). However, results from cognitive interviews suggest that the Clothing Allowance is not set aside to be used specifically to purchase clothing for nominated[5] children, nor is clothing usually specifically budgeted for (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2019).

Caregivers receiving the OB were divided over whether the OB is enough to pay for the costs of caring for the nominated child, with 43% saying it was enough and 53% saying it was not enough. Similarly, 50% of caregivers receiving the UCB said that does not cover the costs of caring for the child. However, this rose to 60% for those with a household income of $30,000 and below (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2019).

A review of the UK social security system investigated how it met the costs of a child in a low-income household. This was carried out through using a mixture of the best elements of a 'deductive variant' calculation, where the total cost of a childless family budget is deducted from that of a family with children; and an 'itemised variant' method, where child costs were derived from what parents ought to spend on their children, instead of what they do, or think they need to spend. Focus groups discussed the meaning of clothing and how it contributed to household expenditure:

> *Clothing items for children covered 'all seasons', school, leisure, play and smart clothes (Oldfield & Bradshaw, 2011, p. 135).*

They noted that clothing costs (discounting age difference) were similar for each child in the household. However, the passing on of clothing to a sibling to save costs was not seen as a means of reducing expenditure because it was over and above basic needs, even if this helped to cushion expenditure. For an example of how clothing costs can increase with the age of children, the table below shows the cost of children's clothing by age in the UK– these costs did not differ based on the number of children in a household (Oldfield & Bradshaw, 2011).

[5] Where a caregiver received the OB or UCB for more than one child, the 'nominated child' was selected for the caregiver to complete the interview about. This child was selected if they had the nearest birthday to the interview date.

Table 2. Cost of clothing for a child by age (2010), £ per week

Toddler (age 1 year)	Preschool (age 3 years)	Primary school (age 8 years)	Secondary school (age 14 years)
£5.40	£7.06	£6.78	£14.19

UK Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits contribute a large proportion of the costs of raising a child, including clothing. For infants under age one, they make up more than 100% of the overall cost. However, employment benefits do not cover all the costs of a child, which means children in workless households are living below the level prescribed by the minimum income standard (MIS), or their costs are being supplemented by the adult scales of the parents benefit (Oldfield & Bradshaw, 2011).

A Canadian study investigated changes in child benefits over time and across Canadian Provinces to see their effect on outcomes, including mental and physical health and other measures of deprivation. Data (from 1995 to 2005) was sourced from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth, focussed on children and young people aged 0-21 years old (n=108,000+ observations). Parent-reported health, wellbeing and developmental information on the child and family was recorded, as well as parental labour market participation and income information. The results showed that child benefit programmes in Canada had significant positive effects on child and maternal mental health and wellbeing, as well as some measures of child physical health. There was also evidence of direct effects of child benefits on test scores (Milligan & Stabile, 2011).

> *On the one hand, families may simply use the income to purchase more goods and services, including those goods that are valuable in maintaining basic child welfare and also for enhanced child development (food, clothing, books, etc). Income transfers may have indirect effects such as reducing stress and improving household relations, increasing the chance and opportunities for employment, and others. These indirect channels, while not goods and services purchased with the extra income, may benefit family members, including children, and therefore improve their ability to function, learn and improve themselves (Milligan & Stabile, 2011, p. 175-176).*

Individuals and communities use a number of strategies to help to mitigate material hardship in relation to clothing

Research on the impacts of poverty has found that children try to help mitigate material hardship for their families, and these included strategies related to clothing.

Australian and Scandinavian literature highlighted that children and young people's strategies for coping with poverty included using their own money to pay for clothing to help ease economic pressure on their parents (Harju & Thorød, 2011; Ridge, 2011) and help to provide basic clothes for their siblings (Harju & Thorød, 2011). Children moderated or supressed their needs and contained their expectations by reducing demand for things like clothing, and concealed this from their parents (Ridge, 2011). Young people also borrowed money to pay for things that they

needed, wore hand-me-downs from siblings, purchased discounted clothing, and bought from second-hand stores or opportunity shops (Redmond et al., 2016). German-based research found that parents of low-income households also used these types of strategies to clothe their children (i.e. obtaining clothes second-hand, seeking out special offers, or purchasing counterfeit brand clothes) (Andresen & Meiland, 2019).

US-based research on strategies low-income families employ to mitigate the consequences of poverty identified clothing as one of five domains of material hardship. This research suggested that each domain of material hardship is unique, and that specific mitigation strategies are required for each domain. Qualitative data was collected from women living in three highly disadvantaged neighbourhoods (n=38), with most completing four annual interviews from 1997–2001 (Heflin, London, & Scott, 2011). Overall mitigation strategies included:

- social programme participation
- reliance on personal networks of family and friends
- individual strategies e.g., making repairs to clothes, purchasing from second-hand stores (Heflin et al., 2011)

Clothing was identified as a type of hardship that mothers were more likely to mitigate through families and friends (for example, grandparents buying children's clothing or friends offering hand-me-downs), as well as through churches and other charitable organisations. State assistance in the form of vouchers or grants were available for purchasing clothing, however the research found that mothers were less likely to use these measures because they were not easily accessible. Those who received such assistance were considered 'lucky'. However, it was noted by a participant that they were not able to use clothing vouchers for themselves, even when they could not afford clothing for work, because they were told this was not allowed. Participants also avoided purchases for themselves and their partners in order to ensure their children had clothing (Heflin et al., 2011).

One participant who struggled to meet expenses for bills and medication described trading food stamps for clothing with a relative and receiving food parcels from their church. This way she was able to meet both clothing and food needs of her family. Other strategies included waiting for tax refunds, saving money, and bouncing cheques to provide clothing for their children (Heflin et al., 2011).

A South African study explored the experiences of caregivers receiving the Child Support Grant (CSG) (n=15), mostly young black African single mothers, regarding alleviation of child poverty. Results were analysed in relation to child-focused multi-dimensional model themes, where provision of clothing was a sub-theme of material deprivation (Vaaltein & Schiller, 2017). Participants met the clothing needs of their children in a number of ways, which were influenced by the low value of the CSG:

- working family members assisted them to buy clothing
- using lay-bys
- clothes received as gifts from others

- buying last season's winter clothes in summer to take advantage of sales (Vaaltein & Schiller, 2017).

3. WELLNESS

As discussed in the previous section, literature on poverty highlights the lack of material resources, such as clothing, available to children. However, there is little research specifically about how a lack of clothing, or inappropriate clothing, contributes to physical, mental, and emotional health outcomes for children and young people.

Allen + Clarke has assumed that because clothing is classed as a human right (United Nations, 1990), its specific functions in relation to health and wellbeing are not explored in-depth in recent literature obtained for this evidence brief. However, it is important to note that clothing is important for regulation of body temperature, a type of homeostasis (stable physiological environment), as extreme temperatures can cause illness and death. Furthermore, social norms generally require people to be clothed a certain way, and laws in New Zealand (for example) prohibit indecent exposure.

Given that the literature does not always highlight lack of clothing as a specific issue, instead framing material deprivation as the issue, it has not been possible to draw exact conclusions about the impact of a lack of and/or inappropriate clothing on physical and mental health outcomes. As a lack of and/or inappropriate clothing is part of material deprivation, and that is part of poverty, it is assumed that clothing is part of the "equation", or one of many circumstances in people's lives, when poverty is discussed as impacting health outcomes.

The following sections discuss findings in the literature that related to clothing and mental and physical health. This includes how clothing can be a barrier to participation in sport and physical activity and how clothing is important for emotional wellbeing, including how it can be an expression of individuality.

3.1. Clothing is one of several material needs that are important for mental and physical health

While it is challenging to unpack the impact of the different facets of poverty, such as lack of clothing, on health, it is clear from the literature that poverty/material deprivation contributes considerably to poor health outcomes for children (Child Poverty Action Group, 2011; Egan-Bitran, 2010; Gibson et al., 2017; Redmond et al., 2016).

> *Poverty is one of the leading factors contributing to illness, disease, disability and deaths in New Zealand children. For children, poverty means lacking the material resources to stay well (Child Poverty Action Group, 2011, p. 126).*

The Child Poverty Action Group and New Zealand Psychological Society's literature review observed a relationship between experiencing poverty in childhood and an increased risk of mental health problems later in life. This increased risk is

exacerbated through factors associated with childhood poverty, such as poor nutrition, inadequate housing, and living in poor neighbourhoods. The evidence suggests that addressing severe and persistent poverty, particularly during the early years, is most beneficial to lowering the incidence of poor mental health later in life. Interventions to address poverty and the effects of poverty on children are also likely to prevent poverty cycles and prevent poor mental health (Gibson et al., 2017).

In New Zealand-based research on children's experiences of poverty, clothing was identified as a physical need. Participants talked about lack of warm clothing, how cold they were because they did not have appropriate clothing, and how they would get sick easily (Egan-Bitran, 2010). KidsCan's Raincoats for Kids initiative was developed when consultation with lower decile schools revealed that many children did not have suitable wet weather gear or shoes, and at times either did not attend school on days when it rained, or arrived at school with wet clothes which increased the risk of catching a cold or getting the 'flu (which led to absenteeism) (KidsCan, 2007). In a similar vein, qualitative research completed in Germany with parents and children aged 6-13 years emphasised that a lack of sufficient (i.e., warm) winter clothing was a characterisation of poverty (Andresen & Meiland, 2019).

Clothing is important for children and adolescents' physical development

As humans grow and physically mature, clothing sizes and needs change. Some of the literature that focused on child poverty pointed out that financial situations impact on the ability of children to have clothes and shoes replaced when they are either worn out or too small, due to children growing (Harju & Thorød, 2011).

One USA study discussed the transition from childhood to adolescence (i.e. for tweens), noting how puberty changes bodies, individual's relationships with their bodies, and their relationships with clothing. This research on apparel needs and preferences of tween girls and their mothers characterised subgroups based on age and size of female tween consumers, and included mothers in order to understand how mother/daughter relationships affect the tweens' relationships with apparel. The sample included 41 girls and 39 mothers. It was theorised that, given that puberty is a time of change for tweens, there could be different subgroups of tweens with different relationships to clothing and apparel (Brock, Ulrich, & Connell, 2010).

When discussing clothing and apparel **needs**, tweens discussed modesty the most:

- They said that clothing needed to be **age-appropriate**, not too grown up, and conforming to school dress codes. Appropriateness of clothing for church and other occasions was also discussed.
- **Clothing fit** was also important to tween girls. All subgroups expressed difficulty finding clothes that fit them, as the market did not offer their sizing.
- **Price and agreement with mother** on clothing choices was also discussed, and sometimes related. Younger average-sized and older plus-sized girls mentioned this the most, for example:

  "Well, I always like to wear my pants like low down on my hips, like hip huggers and my mom doesn't really like that [because] sometimes I have really short shirts and sometimes you can see like some of my stomach, and

she doesn't like that, so ... well, I don't really care what my clothes look like, but my mom does." (Brock et al., 2010, p. 103).

- **Sizing** was discussed as an issue, particularly with jeans. Plus-sized girls also discussed the need for better styles for larger sizes. Younger average-sized girls talked about the need for consistent sizing (brand to brand) and adjustable size features (for example, jeans with different leg lengths, not one length only) on clothes.
- Younger average-sized girls talked about the need for **more clothes for sports activities** (Brock et al., 2010).

A UK study explored social dynamics around clothing and food provision for children, particularly in relation to sustainability and 'green' ideology, and the influence of children in decision making regarding that ideology (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016). The researchers sought participation from highly educated working mothers with young children (n=28), who were identified in the literature as more likely to engage with sustainability and ecological issues. There was a recognition that, due to children's needs and their physical growth over time, continuous replacement (and therefore consumption) of clothing was required even though parents recognised that some areas of consumption contributed to planned obsolescence, for example, sport uniforms changing style every season even if they were not worn out (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016).

Financial barriers, including provision of clothing, affects children's participation in sport, recreation and play

Some studies explored the relationship between families who are low-income or experiencing material hardship, and participation in physical activity and sport. A number of studies identified financial barriers to participation in sport, including the need to purchase appropriate sports uniforms or clothing and equipment (Best, Ball, Zarnowiecki, Stanley, & Dollman, 2017; Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011; Reece et al., 2020; Somerset & Hoare, 2018).

Two qualitative studies conducted in Germany (n=18 children age 6-11 years) (n=13 parents) explored children's experiences of material hardship related to clothing, food, housing and relationships. These studies found that not having weatherproof shoes greatly constrains elementary school children's "radius of activity and scope for play" (Andresen & Meiland, 2019).

An initiative in five Australian states from 2011 to 2015 provided 'sports vouchers' (median value = $150 AUD) as a means to address cost barriers to participation in sport. Subsequently, a study was carried out analysing AusPlay data to examine children's participation in sport (n=7976 children from 2015-2017) and an estimate of the annual expenditure on children's sport, which included costs covered by sports vouchers. The researchers assessed the financial support achieved through sport vouchers across different states and territories, as a means of overcoming financial barriers and increasing children's participation in organised sport (Reece et al., 2020). Patterns of expenditure in sport were recorded by gender, age and socio-economic status. In relation to gender, female participation cost $103 AUD more

than male participation. Median expenditure also increased with age, that is $397 AUD per annum for 0-4 year olds, and $479 per annum for 9-11 year olds. Median annual expenditure for one child sport participant was $447 AUD. The researchers also found social-economic status was associated with participation in sport and that the most disadvantaged communities spent less than half the amount of the least disadvantaged communities, a difference of $311 AUD per participant. Sport vouchers contributed to 60% of total expenditure on children's sport in the most disadvantaged populations (Reece et al., 2020).

A Canadian study explored the benefits and challenges associated with sport participation by children and parents from low-income families. The researchers also explored parent's perceptions of challenges associated with providing sporting opportunities for their children. Thirty-five individual interviews were carried out with parents and children from 17 families. Parents noted that "cost creep" was associated with children improving in their sport, but available subsidies did not increase in tandem (Holt et al., 2011).

An Australian cross-sectional study of physical activity levels among children and young people aged 9-13 years (n=1204 who completed a physical activity questionnaire) and their parents (n=410) aimed to understand consistent predictors of physical activity. Appropriate clothing was highlighted as a factor consistently associated with physical activity variables for both boys and girls. The authors suggest that this could reflect the role that parents have in meeting the costs of participation. Clothing could be interpreted as an outcome rather than something that determines physical activity as, for example, children are provided with appropriate clothing for participation in sport (Best et al., 2017).

Parents can also function as 'gatekeepers' to physical activity in a number of ways that align with self-determination theory including material support (e.g., providing clothing and equipment) as well as encouragement/praise (emotional/motivational support) and role modelling behaviours (observational support) (Best et al., 2017).

A Swedish nationally representative study on associations between economic resources and peer relations of adolescents found that students unable to participate in activities with peers for economic reasons experienced more rejection from their peers and were at higher risk of bullying victimisation (Hjalmarsson, 2018).

3.2. Clothing is important for children and young people's emotional wellbeing

Clothes and shoes have important practical and "symbolic and socially integrating value" in terms of identity construction (Harju & Thorød, 2011, p. 289). Having good clothes positively affected teenagers' confidence, and a lack of good clothes reduces self-esteem (Isaksen & Roper, 2012).

Clothing as a socially integrating tool is discussed further later in this evidence brief in a section on connection (section 5), which focusses on themes that are indicators of individual emotional wellbeing, including preferences of clothing and self-expression for tweens.

Clothing plays an important role in individual self-expression

Clothing, including colour and style, as a form of self-expression for teenagers was a theme that came through in a number of sources (Chang et al., 2018; Isaksen & Roper, 2012).

Research carried out with tweens living in foster group homes in Southwest USA discussed themes that related to clothing and identity construction. This qualitative study conducted with female (n=13) and male (n=5) tweens (age 8-12) in foster care sought to understand clothing selection motivation, as well as the meaning of possessions and how this is related to their life experiences in foster care group homes (Chang et al., 2018).

The research found that foster tweens have limited options for clothing selection. They tended to have only donated clothing or clothing purchased by foster care parents for them (Chang et al., 2018). Other themes that emerged from the focus groups related to individual identity e.g., independence, self-expression, and ownership, discussed below.

Regarding **independence**, this related to whether or not tweens get to decide what they wear on their own. They liked having this level of independence and some tweens saw choosing their own outfit as a freedom or honour. Sometimes tweens were 'helped' by guardians or foster parents or were made to wear certain outfits on special occasions. One tween stated that if someone picks out their clothes for them they are being treated like a 'baby' (Chang et al., 2018).

Regarding **self-expression**, tweens' clothing choices were made based on colour, style, design, wanting to stand out, and show personality:

> *"The reason I wear bright and light clothes is because I am awesome." (9-year-old female) and "…I like a lot of things, and that is why I like a lot of colours" (11-year-old female) (Chang et al., 2018, p. 50).*

Decisions were also made to wear certain colours and accessorise outfits based on whether tweens were going somewhere special (i.e. environment).

The theme of **ownership** relates to how tweens think/feel about things that 'are mine' or their own. Having possessions (including clothing) was seen as important for most, but not all the tweens felt that possessions were very important (Chang et al., 2018).

Chang et al. (2018) suggested that due to the importance of clothing for positive self-expression, particularly in terms of fashionable clothing that fits well and looks good, foster caregivers should be encouraged consider this when regarding self-esteem of young people. Foster caregivers have an important role to play around enhancing developmental capacity for independence and identity construction through allowing children and young people responsibility for their own clothing choices.

It can be difficult to find clothing that 'fits' with tween girls' apparel preferences

Results from Brock et al.'s (2010) study discussed earlier (section 3.1), that segmented tween girls on age and body size regarding apparel needs and

preferences, also showed that preferences related to themes around personal appearance and identity. A major finding was that tween girls in all age and size groups were not able to find clothing that was stylish, age appropriate, or fit their bodies. These tween girls also told the researchers what they wanted from clothing (Brock et al., 2010):

- **Clothing fit** was discussed the most, as an expression of desired fit, e.g. how they wanted clothes to hang on their bodies, how long or short sleeves or pant legs should be, where they wanted waistbands to sit (older and average-sized girls discussed mostly).
- **Store and brand preferences** was also an important theme. Younger girls talked about where they like to shop, and older and plus-sized girls talked more about brands.
- **Style, comfort, and colour preferences** were also discussed though to a lesser extent than the above. Style was discussed more by older girls, and colour more by younger girls. Comfort was discussed by all.
- **Clothing quality** and **labelled sizes** was also discussed across all subgroups (but was not clearly distinctive of any) (Brock et al., 2010).

4. DEVELOPMENT

This section discusses the function of clothing in settings where children and young people's capability is developed – mostly within educational settings such as schools. Much of the literature included in this evidence brief sampled groups of children and young people through schools. Many of these studies include findings related to social interactions and connections within school and this is most notably discussed in the next section on stability and social connection (section 5 and the earlier section on safety (section 1)).

Research shows that being in poverty or from a low-income household (with clothing as an indicator), as for other dimensions of wellbeing, is a significant factor that can influence educational outcomes. The following sections detail how poverty, specifically in relation to clothing and uniforms, impacts on children's education; the strengths and challenges associated with uniforms; and the impact that teachers and school staff can have on children's education, based on their attitudes and behaviours in relation to children's appearance at school.

4.1. Financial barriers to obtaining clothing and uniforms impact on education experiences for children and young people

Costs associated with school do not only include uniforms, they also include school trips (which may be contingent on having appropriate uniform or attire), books, stationery and other costs (Naven, Egan, Sosu, & Spencer, 2019). The majority of children in the studies reviewed by Ridge (2011) revealed that poverty was severely impacting on their schooling, and had a cumulative or compounding effect. A lack of resources/money meant that children were not able to obtain items needed for school, including appropriate school uniforms.

Naven et al.'s (2019) UK study examined the influence of policies and practices on the ability of children from low-income families to participate fully in the school day. Students from six schools participated in 71 focus groups and were engaged with the aid of a vignette of a fictional character from a low-income household who was about to start at their school. The vignette was used to offer a safe degree of personal distance, which encouraged pupils to explore potentially sensitive topics on aspects that could impact on school life throughout a given day (Naven et al., 2019).

A range of factors were found to negatively affect children's experiences at school. These included clothing costs, stigma and enforcement of school dress code. School uniform and accessories, particularly shoes, bags, and jackets, emerged as significant costs for low-income families (Naven et al., 2019).

More recent studies highlight that lack of appropriate clothing is associated with reduced levels of engagement at school in Australia (Redmond & Skattebol, 2019; Redmond et al., 2016). Research on young people's (n=193) experiences and perspectives when they do not have the right clothes for social participation found that it was significantly associated with several indicators associated with poor school engagement including:

- low school satisfaction (about 9%)
- low level of teacher support (about 11%)
- average or below-average assessment of school performance (about 10%) (Redmond & Skattebol, 2019)

Young people also highlighted that the stress of not having the right clothes affected their feelings about school. For example, not being able to adequately dry clothes led to feelings of anxiety, or having the wrong clothes could lead to being ostracised, teased or bullied (Redmond et al., 2016). Anxious feelings about school were also an issue for some young people in relation to clothing and socio-economic status. Evidence suggests that children or adolescents may drop out of school because they do not have the ability to buy new clothes. In a Scandinavian study one 17-year-old girl said that she dropped out due to anxiety and lacked the ability to concentrate. She linked her anxiety to her financial situation (Harju & Thorød, 2011).

4.2. Uniforms are beneficial for inclusion at school, but present social barriers when children and young people lack access to them

Much of the literature that discussed clothing in relation to education was focused on the challenges of school uniforms. Uniforms were seen as a strength and important so that children could feel the same as others, but financial barriers still exist so some children and young people may not have the same uniform as their peers. The following subsections discuss studies that highlight the unique experiences that children in care have in education settings, the important symbolic and social value of school uniforms, and even though New Zealand and the UK have 'free' education systems, uniforms still cost (too much) money, so families need to come up with strategies to mitigate these costs.

Children and young people in care have unique educational experiences around schooling – and uniforms are an important part of this

A recent Oranga Tamariki report on the voices of children in care and key adults in their lives (e.g., caregivers, social workers) (n=23 interviews) on their educational experiences reported that some children in care experience stigma and bullying. The practice of social workers coming to schools could contribute to stigma, however, some participants said that the fact that children in care were entitled to resources that support their education could help protect them from being stigmatised. An example offered was the importance of providing children with uniforms and other equipment, so that they are not seen as different to the other children (Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People Team, 2019).

It was important for children to have material needs met as soon as they start school, which included having the correct uniform. Furthermore, children in care often experience multiple changes in schools, impacting on their educational outcomes and social lives. If children needed to change schools, provision of uniforms were part of important preparation to start a new school – which helped reduced the impact of this change (Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People Team, 2019).

Uniforms have important symbolic and social value at school

Results from a UK study (discussed above, section 4.1) reported that pupils of all ages described school uniforms and accessories of having symbolic importance as the main indicator of family income at school. Most schools allow students to buy generic clothing items in the school colours from supermarkets and low-cost stores, but differences in brands are noticed, even at primary school level, and children recognise the distinction between low cost and expensive clothing and accessories, which can result in stigmatisation:

> *"There's a set uniform, but you can still tell like who's richer and poorer by like the jackets, the shoes, the bags" (Naven et al., 2019, p. 319).*

Primary school children thought that it would be embarrassing if others could only afford low-cost school clothing, or had to wear older clothing, and would fear being bullied. Some spoke of the difficulties involved in not being able to afford uniform items:

> *"It's really hard for my mum and she only had enough money to pay for one of my brothers' jackets so I had to stick with the one I had last year."*
>
> *"See, if you've got one pair of trousers and one shirt, what are you meant to wear if it's in the washing?" (Naven et al., 2019, p. 319).*

Cost is a barrier to provision of school uniforms, even in countries that have free education

A New Zealand study looked at the impact of cost on children's participation in school and related activities. This was an individual study that analysed survey data collected from parents (n=212). The study highlights that even though New

Zealand's education system is officially free, schools can legally require families to meet the costs of uniforms. Average yearly costs of uniforms in New Zealand reported by parents were as follows:

- $85 for decile[6] 1–5 primary schools
- $211 for decile 1–5 secondary schools
- $115 for decile 6 – 8 primary/intermediate schools[7]
- $324 for decile 6 – 8 secondary schools
- $87 for decile 9–10 primary/intermediate schools[8]
- $408 for decile 9–10 secondary schools (Gasson, Pratt, Smith, & Calder, 2017).

In estimating uniform-related payments, parents indicated whether they had included second-hand items or noted no cost for items handed down. Some costs that could be legally required were not always experienced as an obligation, such as sports uniforms (Gasson et al., 2017).

Uniform costs increased for families with multiple children, and uniforms were often handed down through these families. Some parents suggested that if basic public education in New Zealand was to be free, then activities and equipment necessary, such as uniforms, for their children to receive their education should also be free (Gasson et al., 2017). This was echoed in a report on the impact of poverty (including inappropriate clothing) on school life in the UK, even though the UK is purported to have free education:

> *…what children wear at school, what they eat, whether they can join in with friends, even which classes they choose to attend, are all affected by their ability to afford the costs of school (Holloway et al., 2014).*

The inquiry by the Children's Commission on Poverty drew from 13 parliamentary hearings, submissions analyses, 35 interviews (with children or other parents), and a survey of 2000 households in the UK. Seventy percent of parents surveyed said that they struggled with the cost of school. This rose to 95% of parents of families that were 'not well off at all'. 63% of children from families who were 'not well off at all' suffered from embarrassment because they could not afford school costs (Holloway et al., 2014).

With regards to clothing, nearly half (46%) of all parents surveyed said that they had cut back on clothing to afford the cost of school for their children. 81% of families who were 'not well off at all' had cut back on clothing. In relation to school uniform policies, despite government guidance that value for money should be a key priority, many schools require parents to buy expensive items of clothing, embroidered with

[6] Lower decile schools are in more socio-economically deprived communities in New Zealand.

[7] Although payments related to intermediate school uniforms were included with primary schools, their uniform-related payments were more in line with secondary schools – this was $287 for decile 6–8 intermediate schools

[8] As above, but $350 for decile 9–10 intermediate schools

names and logos, and to purchase uniforms from specific suppliers (Holloway et al., 2014).

Further, of children who were 'not well off at all' who said they were embarrassed because they could not afford different school costs:

- 23% said this was because they could not afford appropriate clothing
- 19% said this was because they could not afford sports kit
- 19% said this was because they could not afford accessories (Holloway et al., 2014).

This UK-based research showed that there can be enormous variation in uniform cost, ranging from £34 for a complete uniform that could be purchased from a supermarket, to state-funded secondary schools that have uniforms costing more than £500. On average, parents surveyed spent £108 on school clothing for primary school children and £126 on school clothing for secondary school students. This excluded sports kit, and separate summer and winter uniforms also added to costs (Holloway et al., 2014).

Different strategies could mitigate the cost of uniforms, and education systems should play a role

The notion that wearing a uniform means that children living in poverty stand out less from their peers is seen as a positive. However, the costs of certain items can mean that children in poverty stand out more. Skirts, for example, were not as affordable as trousers, so girls from low-income families stood out for wearing trousers when the rest of their female peers wore skirts. Other examples of children and young people not fitting in even when they wore uniforms included children not wearing school blazers in winter and having second-hand items, worn-out or repaired uniforms:

> *'…a lot of people think that poverty stops in school because everyone's wearing the same thing. Which is the worst thing I've heard…' Young person (Holloway et al., 2014, p. 29).*

> *'School uniform is a constant source of anxiety. I am not ashamed of being poor but I always want my children to look as well cared-for as others. I go without so my children can always have what is needed.' Parent (Holloway et al., 2014, p. 23).*

In New Zealand, where children had multiple siblings, uniforms were often handed down through families. Some solutions were available for parents of children at church-run state integrated schools where parishes provided financial support for items such as uniforms, or when schools offered payment plans for school expenses or laybys for uniforms (Gasson et al., 2017).

In the UK, some parents had taken out loans or borrowed on credit cards to pay for school uniforms. One loan that was available to parents included the 'crisis loan'. This loan was provided interest-free from the government which parents could use to

help with uniform costs. 22% of families who were 'not well off at all' had received assistance to purchase a school uniform (Holloway et al., 2014).

The Children's Commission on Poverty recommended that schools choose simple uniforms available with sew-on logos to make them more affordable (Holloway et al., 2014).

4.3. Clothing and appearance influence how teachers perceive and treat students

Teachers were an important part of studies that explored themes relating to clothing and children's wellbeing. Some studies included teachers as participants, and other studies reported attitudes and behaviours of teachers from the perspectives of other participants (e.g., parents and children). A study from France, discussed later (section 5.2), talked about the importance of teachers as part of a group of social actors in children's lives that have a mediating influence on children's attitudes toward branded clothing in relation to social participation (Rodhain & Aurier, 2016). The following sub-sections discuss studies that found that student appearance is associated with positive perceptions from teachers and achievement academically, and that teachers may be unfairly disciplining students because of their appearance and dress.

Student appearance is associated with positive perceptions among teachers, and academic achievement

A Canadian study explored the relationship between student appearance and academic achievement and engagement. This was an individual population-based study using survey data collected from children (n=1,311), parents and teachers in the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development. Examination of fourth-grade teacher ratings of student physical appearance (e.g., appropriateness of clothing) found that children described by teachers more negatively regarding their appearance had worse academic adjustment (Fitzpatrick, Côté-Lussier, & Blair, 2016).

While the study could not ascertain causal relationships between the variables assessed, analyses controlled for variables such as concurrent parental socioeconomic status, e.g., parental education, income, and occupational prestige, to capture variance associated with material disadvantage. Parenting and family variables likely to capture risk for parental neglect, which may also contribute to student appearance and academic adjustment, were also controlled for (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016).

It was suggested that children who were dishevelled, poorly groomed, or not appropriately physically prepared for school may be aware of their appearance relative to other students, experience rejection from their classmates, and emotional distress, interfering with their ability to learn in the classroom (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016).

On a related note regarding student appearance, a Norwegian study that included a network analysis of students in a multi-ethnic school, discussed later (section 5.2), found that some items of clothing were "cool" and associated with popularity, whereas traditional items of clothing worn by children in migrant families (e.g., hijab over traditional dress) were not (Rysst, 2013).

Teachers may be unfairly disciplining students without correct uniform

Evidence suggests that disciplinary measures were taken (inconsistently in some schools) where students did not have correct uniform or did not meet a teacher's standard of appearance, which could lead to conflict with schools (Ridge, 2011). Fitzpatrick et al. (2016) suggested that teachers may be more likely to discipline students who appear "less competent". In a New Zealand study, harassment in relation to school uniforms was reported more by parents with children at higher-decile schools than lower-decile schools :

> *Compulsory blazer in school uniform… this year at a cost of $210. Students taken out of class, humiliated by constant questioning, when are you going to get your blazer sorted. Phone calls home to parent. Bullying…! (decile 9 secondary) (Gasson et al., 2017).*

In a UK study, there were variations in reports of enforcement of school dress codes. For example, some teachers were seen to be unhappy about transgressions but were somewhat flexible, while others operated strict enforcement with disciplinary measures. Pupils highlighted the tendency for some teachers to openly discuss children's clothing, in corridors, and to challenge them on uniform in front of their peers, causing embarrassment and frustration:

> *"I think that should be private, especially if it's an issue to do with money" (Naven et al., 2019, p. 319).*

In primary schools, children reported losing class points and subsequent rewards. In secondary schools, pupils described receiving punishment exercises, demerits, detentions, and being sent home for not wearing the correct uniform:

> *"Some people get paid monthly and they cannot even get new shoes until next month, but teachers expect it the next day and give you detention until you get black shoes" (Naven et al., 2019, p. 319).*

Some pupils said that less severe punishments were given for behaviour that affects learning, such as disrupting classes or not doing homework, than for breaching school dress codes (Naven et al., 2019).

5. CONNECTION

There is a significant body of literature that discusses how clothing can act as a mediator or stabiliser of social and familial connection, and to a lesser extent, cultural identity. While there is little literature from New Zealand, research on children's wellbeing in Australia highlights how many children feel as though they fit in with their peers based on clothing.

In the Australian Child Wellbeing Study, almost 7% of students in years four and six (n=1,455) said that they did not have (and wanted) the right kind of clothes to fit in with their peers. For year 8 students (n=3,164), nearly 6% shared this sentiment (Redmond et al., 2016). Meanwhile, almost 10% of young people in "disadvantaged" groups (n=1,394), which includes those who had a disability, were young carers or young Indigenous people, did not have (and wanted) the right kind of clothes to fit in with other people their age, compared to almost 5% of other young people (Redmond et al., 2016).

5.1. Household members influence decisions made about clothing purchases and choices

Several studies have noted the mediating impact of different household members in children and young people's lives (e.g., parents, siblings, housemates) on purchasing clothing and choosing what to wear (Andresen & Meiland, 2019; Best et al., 2017; Brock et al., 2010; Chang et al., 2018; Ritch & Brownlie, 2016).

For example, in an earlier section (section 3.1) it was discussed that financial barriers impacted on children's participation in sport, and oftentimes those financial barriers related to appropriate clothing, footwear, uniforms or other equipment needed to participate. Parents in a sense act as gatekeepers to their children's participation, particularly if they have the economic resources to support it (Best et al., 2017).

Tweens in foster care group homes chose clothing to wear based on social factors

Chang et al.'s (2018) research with tweens, discussed earlier (section 3.2), noted that social acceptance, family connection, and respect were themes that emerged about clothing selection motivation and how this relates to their lives in foster care group homes.

Social acceptance, that is, tweens recognising themselves compared to others, acceptance in groups, "proper" appearance and self-consciousness of appearance that may follow societal norms, choosing an outfit because friends liked it or because they care about other people's opinions, wanting to impress people at school.

Family connection was about seeing clothing or jewellery as special because they are items from "home", which had additional sentimental value when in foster care. Examples included a pair of boots that a girl in foster care had wanted that her mum gave up for her, and other items of clothing that parents purchased for them. These items also made them feel special because they are different to what others have (Chang et al., 2018).

Respect was related to whether or not tweens took care of their clothes or possessions. Tweens who said they took care of clothing did so because it has meaning, and they want it to last. One person said they did not take good care of their clothes because they could always get more. Having respect for other people's clothes/possessions in the context of the group foster home was also discussed. For

example, people taking/borrowing others' clothes and not returning them was a sign of disrespect (Chang et al., 2018).

The authors of this study suggested that examining the education of foster care parents or guardians and tweens regarding ownership of property and respect in a foster care group home might help tweens feel more independent and claim ownership of their possessions (Chang et al., 2018).

Environmental ideology in families can impact on clothing consumption decisions

A UK study mentioned earlier (section 3.1) explored social dynamics around clothing and food provision for children in relation to sustainability and 'green' ideology, and the influence of children in decision making regarding provision (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016). Regarding consumption of clothing, the researchers were interested in engaging with parents on their views around inexpensive clothing as a result of:

- exploitative practice of both the environment and workers
- chemical applications in the clothing which can be absorbed by the skin and cause illness
- encouragement of increased consumption of inferior quality clothing more likely to end up in landfills (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016).

Analysis showed that there were practices and tensions around satisfying children's clothing needs and wants within the context of family provision, and there was an interplay of sustainability relating to concerned parenting and construction of family identity. Participants were less concerned about sustainability of clothing than food, due to assumptions of higher prices and lack of availability of sustainably-produced clothes in locations where they tended to shop i.e. in main shopping centres/on the "high street" (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016).

Parents were also aware that children's socialisation encouraged increased consumption to maintain popular trends particularly in relation to fashion and clothing. There were tensions between satisfying children's wants, even though the goods requested were seen as unnecessary by parents' due to their beliefs and values. Sometimes parents' values (i.e. less consumption) conflicted with broader social norms or behaviour of their children's friends' parents (for example, going on shopping trips as a social activity was not something one parent would normally do). Managing children's desires and expectations therefore required balance (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016).

Parents also described not wanting to make their children feel different from their peers because of their own lifestyle choices and behaviours. This was illustrated with a participant's son's football club, which provided a new uniform annually. The participant did not want to purchase it as she considered it unnecessary as her son had not grown. However, she felt socially pressured to buy the uniform as her son felt alienated and wanted the new uniform in order to fit in with the other children. It was difficult for her to convey (and her son to understand) the environmental consequences of production as his personal experience was about feeling different to the other children (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016).

> *[We did not want our] children [to] feel that they are different, even if you wholeheartedly believe that your values are what count. I have seen children of parents who are [ethical hardliners] and their children can just be a bit weird and socially outcast. So, I think we have had to temper ourselves. That's one of the differences with having children, you have to live in the world that they share (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016, p. 1113).*

This illustrates a contrast of parental values with children and young people's needs to feel socially included, and parents needing to make decisions that balanced their values and children's social wellbeing, that is, needs and desires to fit in with their peers.

5.2. Consumption attitudes and behaviours toward clothing brands are influenced by social factors

A number of articles sourced discussed branding of clothes and its importance to children and young people's identity and self-expression (discussed above, section 3.2). In addition, wearing branded clothing is important for many children and young people to feel socially included.

One UK study investigated the perception of consumption and how it affects the social lives of adolescents. Over 100 15-16 year olds took part in focus groups. The research primarily focused on clothing and fashion brands and how these possessions affect identity formation, self-esteem, and the differences between social classes. The researchers found that there are "rules" of consumption, and that these are detailed in terms of what is "right" and acceptable. If one is able to, and can afford to, follow the rules, it may provide security, peace of mind, friendships and social acceptance (Isaksen & Roper, 2012). This finding is echoed in other studies, which also refer to social rules around consumption and wearing clothing brands, and norms around the right and wrong ways to dress (Harju & Thorød, 2011; Nairn & Spotswood, 2015; Redmond & Skattebol, 2019; Rysst, 2013)

Peer pressure (direct or indirect) was also something that impacted on children and young people's attitudes towards wearing brands (Nairn & Spotswood, 2015; Rodhain & Aurier, 2016; Rysst, 2013). Findings from one study highlighted that fashionable clothes and brands are seen as more important than personality and personal preference, and there are also signs that wearing the correct clothing can be considered more important than one's own behaviour (Isaksen & Roper, 2012). The researchers also referred to the commodification of self-esteem. Where self-esteem is commodified for young people, it is seen as necessary to own branded clothing or other items in order to feel good about oneself (Isaksen & Roper, 2012). Similarly, other studies discussed the function of branded or designer clothes as commodification of childhood (Ridge, 2011; Ritch & Brownlie, 2016; Rysst, 2013).

Clothing is seen as an indicator of social class and status (Andresen & Meiland, 2019; Isaksen & Roper, 2012). Being socially popular, cool, or at the top of the social hierarchy was associated with designer branding (Nairn & Spotswood, 2015; Rodhain & Aurier, 2016; Rysst, 2013; Williams & Littlefield, 2018). Furthermore,

individuals made associations of “popular” with being rich or wealthy, and “lower stage” in the social hierarchy with being poor (Nairn & Spotswood, 2015).

While children and young people may want to wear branded or expensive clothing, this does not always happen. This is because clothing consumption choices of children and young people are often constrained by decision-making and/or financial situation of their parents. Research has found that children and young people negotiate with their parents about needing to have the right clothes (Andresen & Meiland, 2019; Rodhain & Aurier, 2016; Rysst, 2013) or sports uniforms/equipment (Best et al., 2017; Ritch & Brownlie, 2016) to fit in and participate. Strategies included appealing to their parent’s ideologies to convince them to purchase brands or expensive designer clothing. There were anecdotes of children using sustainability values to influence their parent’s shopping where they knew parents were more interested or likely to purchase sustainable goods:

> *…her older children used Fairtrade [labels] or organic to position higher-priced consumption requests positively, including designer fashion labels, to appeal to her social values (Ritch & Brownlie, 2016, p. 1112).*

Children have positive, negative and changing attitudes towards branded clothing, which are mediated by relationships with families, peers and teachers

A French study explored the child-brand relationship dynamic concerning branded clothing, and how this can be mediated by relationships children develop with their families, peers, and teachers. Six classes in French primary schools were observed for six months. Among the 112 children observed, aged 10-11 years, 24 of them were interviewed twice individually, and another 24 participated in focus groups (Rodhain & Aurier, 2016).

The researchers identified typologies of child-brand relationship dynamics, using the following two criteria:

- the child’s attitude toward the brand relationship (favourable and unfavourable)
- the consistency of attitudes in his/her socialisation spheres (peers, parents and teacher) relative to this relationship (Rodhain & Aurier, 2016).

The four typologies of child-brand relationships identified were:

1. **Chosen relationship** (desired child-brand relationship), i.e. the child is from a financially well-off family, chooses to wear brands and this is supported either directly or indirectly by their peers, parents and teachers, and the child feels no external pressure to conform or otherwise.
2. **Dream-like/imposed non-relationship** (desired child-brand relationship), i.e. the child does not pay attention to consumption issues/peer pressure, parents strongly disagree with consumerism, but suffers from rejection from peers down the track and becomes socially isolated, still refuses to wear brands but subconsciously may want to (example of a child dreaming of wearing adidas like one of their peers).
3. **Assumed non-relationship** (non-desired child-brand relationship), i.e. child from a low income family/community, does not have any desire to wear

brands and they are not a topic of discussion at home as the cheapest options are a priority. Other students may tease but this may not affect the child:

She lacks so many things (she reveals, for example, that she did not receive any present for Christmas) that wearing brands is the least of her concerns (Rodhain & Aurier, 2016, p. 91).

4. **Imposed relationship** (non-desired child-brand relationship), i.e. a child and their peers may not have a desire to wear brands and may reject them, however over time peer pressure leads children to conform, and be rewarded socially but, they may still not want to wear branded clothing or shoes:

   According to his mother, he was disappointed by the purchase having learnt in a class debate organized by his teacher that Nike shoes are manufactured by children (Rodhain & Aurier, 2016, p. 91).

Trajectories between child-brand relationship typologies were observed over time, more frequently from (3) "assumed non-relationship" to (2) "imposed non-relationship" or (4) "imposed relationship". This happened when, among a group of children who did not wear branded clothes or shoes, one child changed their mind, no longer resisting the pressure from other children (Rodhain & Aurier, 2016), suggesting that peer pressure can change children's attitudes to clothing brands.

The strongest child-brand relationships appear when the child feels free from outside pressure and when peers, parents and the teacher create a "virtuous circle" for brands, or do not contradict the child's desires for brands (Rodhain & Aurier, 2016).

Attitudes or behaviours – changing or non-changing – of people in children's lives (peers, parents, teachers, siblings) can affect children's relationships (or non-relationships) with brands. Where the opinions of parents, peers and the teacher differ on brands, as well as with the child's own desires, this reduces the child's self-esteem (Rodhain & Aurier, 2016).

Children from families who have immigrated to western countries may feel socially excluded if their clothing is different to that of other children

A study looking at social networks of children and understanding their influences was carried out in a suburb of Oslo, Norway. The researcher was allowed access to a village school in a multi-ethnic suburb. The school had 460 students from forms 5 to 10[9] with between 15 and 18 nationalities, with ethnic Norwegian being among the minority groups. The researcher spent time in classes and conducted conversational interviews with the students. A network analysis was undertaken of the data collected, and findings related to the function of clothing as well as other material items and activities (Rysst, 2013).

Children that were observed to be the most popular wore "cool enough" clothes. This was observed for both boys and girls, but clothes appear to be more important to the

[9] The age of these students was not clear in the study – but it was assumed to be six to ten-year-olds.

girls' economy of dignity. While cool clothes did not have to be expensive brands, expensive brands of clothing did trigger admiration (Rysst, 2013).

The popular girls who were friends wore the same clothing styles (tight jeans, long sweaters and sweaters with hoods) and had similar hairstyles (shoulder length or longer). This style to 'aspire to' was copied by other girls and conceptualised as a bridge for social inclusion and for participation and feelings of belonging.

> *Correct clothes and hair styles thus have social importance as bridges in relationships, while wrong clothes and hairstyles work as fences (Rysst, 2013, p. 22).*

"Wrong" clothes that worked as fences to social inclusion were traditional dress and hijab (headscarf) worn by children from "foreign" countries who had immigrated to Norway. However, hijabs could be worn with "cool" clothes (i.e. jeans and sweaters) and not be seen as a fence (Rysst, 2013). The researcher suggested that migrant families may experience social inclusion or exclusion related to consumption of material goods for the first time when they immigrate to a western country (Rysst, 2013).

Social practice theories offer a way of understanding how children and young people talk about branded clothing and social hierarchy

A UK study was carried out on children and young people's views on the effects of branded clothes and other popular consumer items using a Social Practice Theory lens. Interviews and focus groups were carried out with 8-13 year olds (n=58) across the UK. The researchers found that branded clothes combine with the socially sanctioned objective of achieving, and maintaining a place in the peer hierarchy (Nairn & Spotswood, 2015).

> *Wearing "casual" or "normal clothes" is required to be seen as "normal", whereas to be popular demands "dressing up". Beyond this, "normal clothes" serve to lubricate peer-to-peer relationships, whereas "dressing up" means social elevation and aloofness. (p. 1471)*

Nairn & Spotswood (2015) identified three skills which children inherently learn: social consumption recognition, social consumption performance, and social consumption communication. There is an unconscious layer of knowledge as children do not necessarily talk about these skills or even intentionally set out to use them, but these skills were clearly noticed through the research.

- **social consumption recognition** is recognition of the ways in which clothing functions to determine if someone is popular or not. For example, a 'popular' child or teenager would wear designer branded clothing
- **social consumption performance,** where a person performs or wears their social position in public. For example, showing up to a sports event at a muddy field wearing impractical designer clothing, or wearing the 'right' clothes on a non-uniform day at school
- **social consumption communication,** where a person manages the way they speak, as there are unwritten 'rules' for talking about consumption of

> clothing and other goods. For example, downplaying material resources or wealth so as not to appear spoilt and be received negatively socially (Nairn & Spotswood, 2015).

This research suggests that the consumption of clothes and other material goods determines social hierarchy to an extent, and the researchers point out that article 18 of the International Chamber of Commerce Code on Advertising and Marketing Communication Practice, that forms the basis for global advertising, states:

> *Marketing communications should not suggest that possession or use of the promoted product will give a child or young person physical, psychological or social advantages over other children or young people or that not possessing the product will have the opposite effect (International Chamber of Commerce, 2014, p. 10, cited in Nairn & Spotswood, 2015)*

The authors suggest that stronger guidelines around advertising content need to be created, and that strategies to mitigate the effects of advertising on increasing consumption needed to be different to initiatives that focus solely on cognitive capacity. “Protecting” children from advertising, or educating them about advertising is one part of the picture of consumption in the lives of children – as this research has shown that the skills above are relatively unconscious (Nairn & Spotswood, 2015).

5.3. Clothing is one of several factors that positively impact on children and young people’s participation in cultural activities

There is a lack of literature that explores the direct influence and impact of clothing on cultural participation for children and young people, however, some themes can be drawn from the limited literature available on the role clothing plays (amongst many other factors).

The Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit (AERU) at Lincoln University published a research report on culture, wellbeing and the Living Standards Framework, which discusses material artefacts that become part of a community’s cultural heritage. Korowai and other taonga are noted as examples of tangible culture or cultural capital (Dalziel, Saunders, & Savage, 2019).

New Zealand’s Ministry for Culture and Heritage published a scoping report on the research needs and options for better understanding the contribution that kapa haka makes to wellbeing and Aotearoa New Zealand society.

> *Kapa haka is more than just performance. It is a unique part of our identity as New Zealanders and helps facilitate meaningful connections with other cultures… [there is a] very strong belief that kapa haka contributes to social cohesion, positive health and educational outcomes and economic vitality (Pihama, Tipene, & Skipper, 2014, p. 2).*

One of the significant aspects of kapa haka is its cultural value to revitalisation and retention of reo and tikanga. This was discussed specifically in relation to children

who grow up with kapa haka. Kapa haka was seen as a strengths-based environment for rangatahi, as it keeps them engaged in positive, rather than risky activities, and that participation in culture and performance lifted them. A participant stated that once the kapa haka clothes were taken off they were brought back down to earth (Pihama et al., 2014).

Related to clothing, costume and adornment, was discussion in the report on economic benefits for Māori-owned small businesses that have emerged in response to demand from the industry around kapa haka, including creating kākahu, piupiu, korowai and poi for performances, and using graphic design and screen printers for fabrics:

> *…there's a whole economy around dressing your peeps before you get them on stage* (Pihama et al., 2014, p. 56).

People also expressed concerns about the financial barriers of participating in kapa haka, noting uniforms as an expense, as some schools do not have funding to do kapa haka.

> *…you've got to really fork out from your own pocket (Pihama et al., 2014, p. 27).*

The silent economy of kapa haka was also discussed. Kapa haka teams come to perform at Matatini, and they all have matching T-shirts and uniforms, but it is not clear where the money for those items comes from. However, it was also noted that kapa haka communities are resourceful and adept at fundraising (Pihama et al., 2014).

An Extraordinary Care Fund is available to help with the costs of children who show promise in a particular area such as kapa haka, however, the application process was seen as challenging and was not always approved. 80% of caregivers receiving the OB and the UCB were aware of the Extraordinary Care Fund, however only 26% (OB) and 27% (UCB) caregivers had applied for one. 46% (OB) and 61% (UCB) of caregivers said that it took 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' of effort to apply for the grant (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2019).

5.4. The need for clothing presents financial barriers to social inclusion

Studies have shown that social exclusion can be influenced by a lack of the 'right' clothing. A quote from a teenager highlights the angst of this kind of social exclusion:

> *Some girls at school talk bad about me. They say I'm weird, you know, using weird clothes, so they don't like me. … I really want new clothes. Because in the morning I can never find anything to wear. One thing is ugly, one is childish and the other has a hole. I feel very outside at school, so if I had the same clothes as the others, maybe they would include me in their group? Norwegian girl, 11 (Harju & Thorød, 2011, p. 289).*

As discussed above, clothing is important for children and young people to feel socially included. For lower-income children and young people, and those in poverty, there are significant financial barriers to feeling like they 'fit in' to society. The shame young people experience associated with lacking the right clothes to fit in can lead to social self-exclusion (Redmond & Skattebol, 2019; Redmond et al., 2016).

Ridge's (2011) literature review highlights that lack of access to appropriate clothing, as an indicator of the material effects of poverty, is underpinned by inadequacy of income, as well as:

> *a lack of key material and symbolic markers of social inclusion in childhood such as branded goods and trainers (Ridge, 2011, p. 75).*

Inability to keep up with their peers in terms of their purchases of material goods such as clothing and shoes (trainers) was compounded by not being able to replace items that were lost, stolen or broken (Ridge, 2011).

Other research with children and their experiences of poverty, and middle-class children on their views and assumptions of children in poverty supports this (see section 2.3). Children or young people in poverty are often easy to identify by middle-class children, and were seen as not being able to fit in socially. Specific to clothing, these children believed that the clothing of poorer children was acquired in second-hand and department stores, whereas wealthy children bought clothes in boutiques and were able to buy designer clothes:

> *…poor children are considered different. The poor cannot meet the fashion norm of the world of children and adolescents, nor the minimum requirements of consumer electronics… it is clothing and mobile phones that most reveal the difference between the rich and the poor (Hakovirta & Kallio, 2016, p. 325).*

Parents reportedly go without in order to buy branded clothing for their children, because they want them to feel included. This was especially the case for older children. Sometimes parents discuss the consequences of purchasing something expensive for them with their children, , e.g. their sibling missing out on something, so that they understand why they cannot buy them everything they want (Isaksen & Roper, 2012; Rysst, 2013).

Social relationships are impacted by lack of economic resources experienced by low-income families. Ridge's review of literature noted the "commodification of childhood", and how this means participation in accepted social activities becomes increasingly difficult due to costs such as entry fees, uniforms, or equipment (Ridge, 2011).

Low-income teenagers place higher social value on expensive or branded clothing than high-income teenagers

Isaksen & Roper's (2012) study, discussed earlier (section 5.2), observed striking differences between high- and low-income adolescents' consumption behaviour. Findings suggested that teenagers from low-income households place greater importance on "status" symbols, such as expensive brands, than high-income

adolescents. Among low-income adolescents, self-esteem was especially focused on possessions in that they showed more aversion to low-cost brands and the social consequences of consuming low-cost brands were more negative, than among teenagers who were from high-income families. Further, adolescents who have less money typically:

- have lower levels of self-esteem
- have higher levels of materialism
- are more susceptible to consumption influence, and therefore
- are more reliant on possessing expensive, branded clothing as a means of disguising their poverty and building and maintaining self-worth.

The researchers stated that this was problematic, and not a sustainable way of gaining or retaining self-worth (Isaksen & Roper, 2012).

Facework was used by economically deprived young people to manage social relationships through construction of narratives

Facework is social impression management that necessitates "the presentation of an honourable self in order to gather dignity in public" (Pugh, 2009). It is reportedly a term borrowed by Goffman (1959/1992, in Rysst, 2013) who used it to explain apologies and other efforts people used to cover up social/interactional mistakes (Redmond & Skattebol, 2019; Redmond et al., 2016; Rysst, 2013).

Australian research (Redmond & Skattebol, 2019; Redmond et al., 2016) highlighted that social strategies were employed by young people to deal with issues associated with lacking the right clothing, and deprivation in general. Redmond and colleagues discussed that while some young people adopted shame avoidance strategies, others engaged in facework or narrative construction. This is where materially disadvantaged young people attempt to position themselves to avoid stigma and shame in their interactions with peers or others, such as the researchers:

> *It seemed… Linox (a 17 year old boy), whose shoes and clothes were very worn, was engaging in facework when he claimed his parents could get him anything he needed, while in another context stating he had trouble getting money for bus fares (Redmond et al., 2016, p. 266).*

Similarly, participants in Redmond et al.'s (2016) study constructed narratives that downplayed their individual experiences of material deprivation but highlighted the needs of people in similar situations. For example, 'other families in poverty need assistance from the government to have their needs met, but my family doesn't' (Redmond et al., 2016).

Facework was also discussed regarding how young people expressed themselves in relation to the clothing they possessed. One affluent young woman who was wearing a one-piece suit (a popular fashion item at the time of the research) was observed to be boasting about having seven of these suits, which was said to illustrate facework in that they were trying to be socially included (Rysst, 2013).

6. INITIATIVES TO ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

This section highlights the work of KidsCan Charitable Trust, set up in 2005. KidsCan runs programmes providing food, raincoats, shoes, socks, and basic hygiene items to children in 742 low decile schools and 25 early childhood education centres (KidsCan, 2019).

In 2018, KidsCan distributed 47,605 warm jackets and 28,271 new pairs of shoes to children in New Zealand (KidsCan, 2019). Between 2005 and 2017, KidsCan distributed over 298,000 raincoats, over 142,000 shoes, and over 284,000 socks to over 168,000 children who had access to their programmes (KidsCan, 2018). They have also distributed other clothing items to children in schools including beanies, sunhats, and thermal underwear (KidsCan, 2012).

Massey University researchers conducted studies to evaluate the charity's raincoats and shoes and socks provision programmes in 2007 and 2010, and their findings that relate to providing clothing for children are discussed below.

6.1. Raincoats for Kids

KidsCan developed the 'Raincoats for Kids' initiative alongside other initiatives, when their consultation with low-decile schools revealed that many children:

- did not have suitable wet weather gear and shoes to wear to and from school,
- often arrived wet to school (heightening risk of catching colds or 'flu, increasing absenteeism), or
- did not attend school on days when it rained, as children did not own raincoats, and parents could not afford to buy children raincoats: raincoats were seen as additional to necessities (KidsCan, 2007).

KidsCan partnered with adidas and other sponsors to produce a black raincoat. adidas designed and made the jackets, and their trademarks appear on the front and back. KidsCan also secured endorsement from the New Zealand Rugby Union, so a silver fern is also on the front, and inside the coat was a tag with an inspirational message from KidsCan patrons and previous All Blacks (KidsCan, 2007). In recent years KidsCan has partnered with the New Zealand Warriors to produce the rain jackets, so they now feature the Warriors logo (KidsCan, 2018, 2019).

KidsCan's 'Raincoats for Kids' was evaluated in 2006 (KidsCan, 2007) and again in 2010 (Bern & Murphy, 2010). Nine schools participated in the 2006 evaluation, and a range of methods and data sources were used, including quantitative data (e.g., school rolls – demographics, school performance; data on distribution of raincoats from KidsCan), qualitative data via interviews and focus groups with teachers, a questionnaire and interviews with parents, and classroom-based case studies with children using stories, artwork and discussions (KidsCan, 2007). It was unclear what data was used, nor how many people participated in the 2010 evaluation.

The evaluations of Raincoats for Kids were generally positive

In terms of physical wellbeing, children were more likely to take a raincoat to school and wear a raincoat on a wet day and parents felt better about their child going to school on a rainy day (Bern & Murphy, 2010; KidsCan, 2007). Participants found the raincoats to be good quality: well thought out, practical, and to keep the kids dry (Bern & Murphy, 2010; KidsCan, 2007). The quality aspect indicated respect toward the children and their families, because it showed that the children were valued through the gift of a quality raincoat (KidsCan, 2007).

Teachers reported a positive impact on school identity and the raincoats were treated like a uniform, and the children looked smart (KidsCan, 2007).

Regarding mental and emotional wellbeing, the children were delighted to receive the raincoats, and appreciative of the gift. They took great care of their raincoats, and had improved self-esteem and pride because they had a raincoat (Bern & Murphy, 2010; KidsCan, 2007). The raincoats were attractive and 'cool', the logos and branding gained the most positive comments. The symbols for adidas and the All Blacks had high importance for the children, teachers and parents (Bern & Murphy, 2010; KidsCan, 2007). The raincoats were also seen as a fashion statement, rather than protective wear for some (KidsCan, 2007).

The raincoats also reduced social differences by making the children all look the same, and there was no social stigma associated with receiving the raincoats (Bern & Murphy, 2010).

Many parents appreciated the help, which was seen as financial as they were unable to afford raincoats. One teacher estimated that 30-40% of students did not have a raincoat prior to receiving one from KidsCan (Bern & Murphy, 2010). Some children wore the raincoats all the time:

> *…amongst the more socially and economically deprived… the raincoats were of particularly high personal value and significance (KidsCan, 2007, p. 8).*
>
> *They were also seen as providing cover for poverty: "Some children just don't take them off – due to the fact that underneath they haven't got on what they're supposed to - it's worn out or perished or filthy. (So) children felt very good about having one – that made a difference." (KidsCan, 2007 p. 9)*

There was anecdotal evidence of improvement in educational outcomes such as learning, participation, behaviour, performance, and attendance

The evaluations were not able to determine whether absenteeism rates had improved because of the raincoats, but there were anecdotes from teachers about improved attendance from individual students and sibling groups (Bern & Murphy, 2010; KidsCan, 2007). Rain was less of an excuse for children not to come to school, however, chronic absenteeism was still seen as an issue for some children. Some parents said that their child's behaviour or attitude had improved as a result of having the raincoat (Bern & Murphy, 2010; KidsCan, 2007). In the 2010 evaluation, all participants considered that having a raincoat contributed to school performance,

along with other KidsCan programmes that provided food and shoes, for example (Bern & Murphy, 2010).

Improvements to Raincoats for Kids were identified

There were some issues with distribution of the raincoats – some schools gave all their students raincoats, others did not, and schools tended to use a range of distribution criteria. Some children accepted this, others were upset (particularly younger ones) that they did not get one, some had a $10 bond that was paid when the raincoat was received, and the raincoat was expected to be returned once the child left school or moved schools. Views differed among participants as to the appropriateness and privilege of giving all, or some of the children at one school raincoats (KidsCan, 2007). The 2010 evaluation reported that most schools provided all students with raincoats (Bern & Murphy, 2010). The evaluations also reported on a number of other process matters in relation to logistics and provision of information to parents about the raincoats.

Annual reports in later years highlight that KidsCan has committed to making improvements to the raincoats as seen in feedback from the evaluations, including adding fleece lining (KidsCan, 2013) to make the raincoats warmer, and changing the zips to be full length (KidsCan, 2018).

6.2. Shoes for Kids

KidsCan also ran a 'Shoes for Kids' initiative. The document discussing this initiative provided little information on what the initiative entailed and who it was provided for, however, the key points were:

- Some families could not afford shoes
- KidsCan provided shoes to kids in schools with the aim of reducing foot injury and improving health
- There was a choice between black school shoes and sneakers
- It was important that children's shoes were the correct size and width, as incorrect sizing can lead to poor development of the feet or deformities in adulthood
- Children were identified to be fitted for and receive KidsCan shoes when teachers or principals noticed they did not have appropriate footwear i.e. the wrong size or in poor condition, or no footwear (KidsCan, 2010).

Evaluation of Shoes for Kids generally found the programme to be positive for children

'Shoes for Kids' was evaluated in 2010. It was not clear specifically what methods were used to evaluate, but the findings document pointed to focus groups with children, a survey of parents, and comments from representatives of schools including teachers and principals. Key findings were positive, in terms of quality and newness of the shoes, and being able to order the most appropriate shoes for the children at school i.e. to best fit with the school uniform or children's clothing (sneakers or black shoes) (KidsCan, 2010).

Children took care of their shoes and used them frequently, and they experienced improved self-esteem and pride, particularly because shoes were new. Shoes were worn “fairly regularly”, however where shoes were not worn by the children, they were often considered a family resource to be shared and this emphasised the need to provide shoes for all students in one family, which some schools tried to do where possible (KidsCan, 2010).

Stigma associated with receiving the KidsCan shoes was not a major issue for the schools that participated in this study. Some schools were discreet and avoided drawing attention to children receiving the shoes, where others discussed them openly to make them desirable to children. In fact, a number of children wanted to receive a pair of shoes when they had missed out (KidsCan, 2010).

There was anecdotal evidence of improvement in educational outcomes such as learning, participation, behaviour, performance, and attendance

With regards to improvement of educational outcomes for children, such as learning, participation, behaviour, school performance and attendance:

> *Some participants speculated that the shoes may contribute in a holistic sense – indirectly through other school initiatives to improve school performance, such as behaviour management or the children being more active (KidsCan, 2010, p. 2)*

School staff, parents, and children reported anecdotes that children had improved ability to participate in physical activities and sport including outside of school. No improvements to foot health or reduction in foot injury or infection were noted, but literature was noted that supports the notion that shoes protect feet and prevent injury (KidsCan, 2010).

Improvements to Shoes for Kids were identified

Feedback from participants said that the shoes could have been provided earlier in the year so children’s feet could be kept warm and dry (KidsCan, 2010) presumably during cooler and wetter months of autumn and winter. It is not clear whether shoes are now provided earlier in the year, but KidsCan has worked to ensure that shoes have improved in quality and durability (KidsCan, 2018).

Conclusions

Clothing is a human right. It is important for physical and mental wellness; it helps with identity construction; it helps children and young people feel connected to their peers; and it can help them feel safe. For clothing to have these benefits it must be appropriate for its circumstances, fit well to the body and to societal norms, and ideally be of a style and/or brand that is respected. However, much of the literature highlights that children and young people from insecure, impoverished, or low-income households do not have the opportunity to experience these benefits. Their experience is not only due to inappropriate clothing or lack of clothing, but a wider experience of material deprivation including lack of food and healthy housing, and a household that does not have sufficient income to meet basic needs.

Much of the recent literature that relates to clothing and wellbeing of children and young people, particularly from New Zealand, Australia and the UK is framed around child poverty and being from a low-income household. Clothing is seen as one of a variety of types of material deprivation, such as lacking food, transport, access to a phone or the internet, so the impact of clothing on children and young people's lives is not often explored on its own.

The major overarching theme of the evidence sourced for this brief is that clothing is substantially important to children and young people's physical, social, and emotional wellbeing, but access to clothing is dependent on financial resources. Therefore, children and young people in impoverished or low-income households face barriers to participation in many aspects of their lives. They feel ashamed that they do not have appropriate clothes, and may try to use clothes to conceal their poverty or use narratives to downplay their experience. Financial barriers mean that parents cannot afford to buy:

- appropriate warm or waterproof clothing to prevent children's health issues
- shoes to protect children's feet
- new, complete school uniforms so that children can better participate and engage with education
- sport uniforms, footwear and equipment so that children can participate in sports and other extracurricular activities
- clothes that that are the right size, style and fit so that children can express themselves in the way they want to, fit in with their friends and participate socially
- replacement clothing items and shoes when children and young people grow out of them, and
- 'good' clothes so that children can participate in important occasions with families and friends like birthdays, weddings, funerals or church.

All of these examples touch on literature that was explored in relation to Oranga Tamariki's conceptual wellbeing domains of security, wellness, stability, and development. There was less information on the impact of financial resources on the ability to participate in cultural activities, but it is assumed that participation would also be impacted if parents cannot afford to provide clothing and footwear for sport participation and other extracurricular activities, for example.

Branded clothing was also an important theme in terms of highlighting perceived social hierarchies, i.e., rich = socially popular and poor = socially excluded. While some research supported this dichotomy, there was evidence that children and young people's relationships with clothing brands are more complex, and influenced by their own ideas, culture, and important people in their lives, including parents, teachers, siblings, friends and school peers.

Regarding the conceptual wellbeing domain of safety, what is clear is that a lack of appropriate clothing due to financial barriers puts children at risk of social exclusion, teasing and bullying within social, educational, and extracurricular spheres. It is also concerning that children and young people may experience discrimination or social exclusion for their clothing choices, particularly if they are immigrants from non-western countries.

With this in mind, it is positive that charities like KidsCan exist so that necessary clothing such as raincoats, socks and shoes and other material needs such as food and sanitary items can be provided to children and young people in impoverished and low-income situations. However, these initiatives need robust, up-to-date evaluation and preferably collection and analysis of quantitative data on wellbeing and educational achievement for the students and schools they support, in comparison to schools that do not receive this support, to get a clearer picture of their effectiveness.

Several sources underlined the importance of gathering robust data on poverty and deprivation, especially children's poverty in particular, to understand the level of need and to ensure that children and young people have access to material resources that they are lacking, including clothing. Government interventions such as child benefits or child tax credits can help parents to better make ends meet and provide the material resources that their children need.

There is a lack of specific research on the meanings and importance of clothing for children and young people. While international literature – including from the USA and Europe – offers insights, this information is missing in the New Zealand context, particularly for whānau Māori and Pacific peoples. Primary research is required to better understand the needs of these and other groups, and to ensure appropriate interventions are developed to ensure their clothing needs are met.

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