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**Back to School - First Year University Experiences of Mature Māori Women**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an exploration of the first year experiences of five Māori women who attended a tertiary institution in Aotearoa as mature students. Situated in the context of higher education and student life, their first year experiences includes challenges related to childhood school experiences, language and culture clashes. The importance of collectivist Māori values as a form of Māori identification supports them through their academic journeys. Interviews with five mature Māori women revealed the conflict and cultural dissonance between western University values and Māori cultural values that impacted on their first years of study. It was also clear that Māori values such as whānau and whanaungatanga were critical to providing cultural support for these women. Findings also show that for these Māori women the practice of Māori values contributes to their identity as Māori women and also to the wellbeing of their whānau, hapū and iwi. These stories explore how the mature Māori women in this study, overcame the very powerful influence of negative experience as children within the state education systems, to begin tertiary study later in life.



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# CHAPTER ONE

## Mature Māori Women in Tertiary Education

### Introduction

More Māori women are participating in tertiary education at bachelor level and hold a bachelor's degree or higher, than Māori men in Aotearoa (Ministry of Education, 2014; Statistics New Zealand, 2013). In 2014, more Māori women over the age of 25 participated in degree level studies than non-Māori women over the age of 25 (Ministry of Education, 2013b; Ministry of Education, 2015). From 2012-2013, Māori women aged 25-39 years attending tertiary education increased 1.9% and Māori women aged 40 years and over increased 1.0%. In 2006, 20.1% of Māori studying full-time or part-time overall compared to 19.6% studying in 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Though the number of Māori students participating in university has decreased overall, mature Māori women participation numbers continue to increase. Mature Māori women are the largest group of Māori students participating in the universities of Aotearoa (Ministry of Education, 2015). Given the governments' priority to increase Māori participation in higher learning for younger Māori, it is an interesting phenomenon that deserves exploration since greater understanding of individual context and diversity within Māori university student experience could encourage more Māori to pursue higher education, and inform the provision of effective supports for these students. This study specifically explores the first year university experiences of mature Māori women.

This study is informed by my recent experience as a mature Māori university student. My claim to 'being Māori' comes through whakapapa and lived Māori values important to me. I do not consider myself proficient in te reo Māori. I have only recently connected with my marae and ancestral lands and I have had no consistent connection to regular participation in cultural and marae based practices within my own hapū and iwi. Most tangihanga and hui -a-Māori I have attended have been for those not from my whānau, hapū or Iwi, but in the essence of my understanding of whanaungatanga they have been a part of my whānau whether by whakapapa (connected through shared kinship) or kaupapa (connected through shared purpose) (Durie, 2003; Pihama & Penehira, 2005).

All of the five study participants identify as Māori; some like me were raised as 'urban Māori', others raised rurally or close to ancestral lands. Collectively, all women were denied access to Māori language and some to other aspects of their culture also. For them, assumptions made regarding their Māori authenticity are often based on the way they were raised, skin colour, physical appearance, names they carry or the ability to kōrero Māori.

Justifying the claim to being Māori on grounds other than ancestry is further complicated when new environments challenge the values upon which Māori identity is based. For women in this study, the lived values of manaakitanga, whānau and whanaungatanga were institutionally and academically challenged when entering tertiary study. These and other challenges were often present when two worlds culturally laden with their own set of beliefs, ideologies, social norms and practices clashed.

In order to fully appreciate and understand the experiences captured in this study it is important to understand the historical setting and consequences of social factors such as politics, education and religion in Aotearoa (Moeke-Pickering, 2010). This chapter will set the context with an overview of the early history of Aotearoa in relation to colonisation, education, te reo Māori and mature Māori women. This will define current knowledge on this topic and highlight the gaps in research that have led to this study.

## **Colonialism and Māori Women**

Colonialism, according to Linda Smith (1999), is an expression of imperialist ideologies based on economic expansion, cultural domination and knowledge control. Colonial activity increases the ability for domination and power by one group as it oppresses and marginalises others (Gemmell, 2013). In Aotearoa, colonial rule began the binary positioning of Māori as oppressed and 'othered' in their own land (Gemmell, 2013; L. T. Smith, 1999). However, Māori did access and utilise the new knowledge and technology introduced by early settlers to ensure whānau, hapū and iwi wellbeing (Hawaikirangi-Pere, 2013).

Colonisation was not an isolated event that occurred when early European settlers with all their cultural trappings arrived in Aotearoa. Instead, it is perpetuated today as Māori continue to suffer at the hands of laws and policies enforced by government, ministries and state run or funded institutions (Moeke-Pickering, 1996, 2010).

The disruption to a sense of 'belonging' for Māori caused by colonisation has meant many Māori feel dissociated with both Māori and Pākehā worlds; not fully, or comfortably belonging to either as they increasingly become urban Māori who do things in the traditional Māori way (Gemmell, 2013; Reeves, 1979). Māori women are even more likely to feel the colonial impact of race amongst their own gender, and the impact of western gender roles within Māori. Māori women hold places of prominence and importance in Te Ao Māori and in cultural contexts such as the marae, colonial patriarchy is challenged. Colonisation has marginalised Māori women in other contexts of western society by ignoring the cultural values and worldviews of Māori women (August, 2005; Gemmell, 2013).

Colonial legislation marginalised many Māori women by ignoring traditional practices of marriage where Māori women of tribal status would marry to establish or secure powerful relationships with other iwi. Land ownership by Māori women legitimised by the tikanga of birth right and identity challenged male patriarchy and was disregarded by colonial law. The negotiation or trading of land and business with the Crown belonged historically within the domain of men (Gemmell, 2013). The assimilation policies of colonial education systems also denied Māori language, culture and worldview. All things Māori became inferior to the western philosophies, policies and religions of colonial Aotearoa. Māori society valued the collective roles, responsibilities and contributions of both genders equally. The generally gender-neutral Māori language reflects the position pre-colonial Māori once held regarding gender roles. Roles aligned to tikanga Māori and were 'tapu' based, not gender based (Mikaere, 1994). Balanced and complementary, the relationship between the roles Māori men and women can be seen in action in all aspects of marae protocol, dependent on the kawa of each iwi, enhancing and protecting the mana of Māori women (Gemmell, 2013; Mikaere, 1994). Colonisation however, brought socially constructed roles of gender subservience and inferiority from Victorian patriarchal values that were imposed on Māori women (August, 2005; Gemmell, 2013). Excluding gender from the legislative language in colonial law gave primacy to male Māori and reinforced the invisibility of Māori women by homogenizing them within the Māori collective. Endeavouring to unite a nation through one law, colonial rule created a mono-cultural society that discriminated against race, gender and culture. Colonisation sought to suppress Māori tikanga and in doing so sought to suppress mana wāhine and impede Māori women's political participation (Mikaere, 1994; L. T. Smith, 1999). Māori women in traditional times played significant roles in tribal leadership, accounts of the presence and importance found in numerous whakataukī, haka, carvings, marae and cosmologies (Tomlins-Jahnke, 1996). Māori women continue to hold leadership roles which effect change for Māori wellbeing throughout society (Mikaere, 1994; Tomlins-Jahnke, 1997). The enforcement of the 1907 Tohunga Suppression Act and the introduction of Western birthing methods and locations made traditional Māori birthing practices and rituals illegal and socially unacceptable. Cultural practices surrounding childbirth that provide connection to whenua, whānau and Māori identity were disrupted when Western practices disposed of the afterbirth without consent or consultation impacting directly on the mana of Māori women (Gemmell, 2013). With the loss of Māori traditional practices, the loss of Māori knowledge pertaining to Māori identity as women is also diminished (August, 2005). Citizenship, under Article III of The Treaty of Waitangi proposed Māori be extended the same rights, privileges and protection as British subjects by the Crown. This has not protected Māori women's rights

to be Māori, it has meant they will be treated equally under a colonial law just as their female settler counterparts (Barrett & Connolly-Stone, 1998). When laws are made that disadvantage Māori or suppress their culture, it is difficult to see equality of rights or protection in practice.

Decolonization occurs as awareness of colonial ideologies, policies and practices are identified, challenged and ultimately dismantled. Graham Smith's (2003) work in Kaupapa Māori reframes the de-colonizing conversation that historically ascribed positions of power to the colonizer and re-centered Māori through the transformative action of a 'conscientization' agenda. As externalizing conversations of dominant discourse occur, space is provided for a different understanding to return power to the individual and not the discourse. In doing so, the meaning, or ability to make sense of the colonizing experience is understood for Māori from a Māori worldview which challenges previously held views and informs change and promotes Māori wellbeing and autonomy.

## **Education and Māori Women**

The replication and assimilation of European customs, language and values was hastened by the education of Māori, asserting dominance and governance while ignoring obligations to protect Māori and their culture (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011). Early missionary schools were established and education reflected European culture and Christianity (Pere, 1982). Many Māori actively sought the missionary mentored education desiring to be included in the education movement and gifting land to the Church for schools to be established (Moeke-Pickering, 2010). Simon (1998) argues that Māori requests for the establishments of Native Schools in their tribal rohe reflected the interest of Māori communities to access the English language and increase 'life-chances' (p. 66). The 1847 Education Ordinance and 1867 Native Schools Act made missionary schools subject to government control in order to secure much needed funding. To access funding, the education of Māori children had to be conducted in the English language with continued religious instruction (Gemmell, 2013). So began the formal education and legal assimilation of Māori children.

Education is socially constructed and is not value free and so the policies and curriculum in education that supported assimilation also initiated the creation of two classes of Māori, the 'civilised' Māori, and the Māori 'yet to be civilised' a process which further 'othered' Māori (Awanui, 2013). Under the 1867 Native Schools Act education continued to civilise Māori by removing cultural access and cultural identity and replacing it with an identity constructed by European knowledge and culture. The 'Christianising and civilising' of Māori played an important part in the establishment of Pākehā as dominant through language, religion and culture, entrenching colonising policies into the infant nations laws (Matthews &

Jenkins, 1999, p. 340). Social, political and cultural processes constructed and reflected the dominant culture through curriculum and systems that were reproduced, maintained and controlled by the values and norms of those in power and control. The Education Act 1877 provided free yet compulsory education that maintained Eurocentric ideology. The focus on English literacy was underpinned by curriculum aimed at the assimilation of Māori to western culture and as future citizens of a working class labour force as their contribution to society rather than the provision of an academic curriculum aimed at intellectual. With that, curriculum topics taught to Māori reflected the area of society that Pākehā determined for Māori (Moeke-Pickering, 2010). The teaching of selective Western history in schools is an example of the continual reinforcement of colonial views (Lee & Lee, 2007). Increasing practical curriculum also regulated the potential competition with Pākehā for more intellectual or white collar employment (Moeke-Pickering, 2010). Eurocentric education had devastating effects on and for Māori, including “assimilation, cultural invasion, cultural subordination, language domination, hegemony, the curriculum, class structures, racism, meritocracy, intelligence testing, and negative teacher expectations” (Ka'ai-Mahuta, 2011, p. 196). The difference between cultures became the difference within social structures and status.

Gender-differentiated education and curriculum taught the reflected social views on gender roles that academically marginalised women. Māori girls were trained in domesticity and how to become a ‘good wife’ which promoted patriarchal world views of western nuclear families. Boarding schools were better equipped to enforce assimilation due to geographical isolation from whānau communities (Gemmell, 2013; Pihama, 2001). Continual priority of Eurocentric values persisted when schools shifted from religious based schools towards public secular schools. Educational outcomes were based on capitalist values of increased workforce and competition which contradicted Māori values (Roberts, 1998).

Deconstruction of the colonising effects of education begins with returning to the original site of struggle and understanding its impact across time, place and culture. When colonisation is deconstructed the act of liberation begins and pathways the re-positioning of becoming an agent of change, to act and not be acted upon. In the history of Aotearoa, education is one of the largest sites of struggle for Māori and for nearly 200 years has continued to be so (Pihama, 2001, 2012; G. H. Smith, 2003).

## **Te Reo Māori and Māori Women**

One of the major casualties of the assimilating policies in education was the loss of language. Te reo Māori is traditionally considered by many to be central to the survival of Māori culture and identity (Benton, 2015; Waitangi Tribunal, 1986). In many whakataukīte

reo Māori is imperative to the survival of the Māori culture and its people. *“Ka ngaro te reo, ka ngaro taua, pera i te ngaro o te Moa.* If the language be lost, man will be lost, as dead as the moa” (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986). Efforts in the last 30 years to revitalise the Māori language include Māori initiatives such as Te Kohanga Reo and Māori-medium education at all levels; Kura Kaupapa Māori, Whare Kura and Wānanga. These initiatives and institutions have been crucial in de-escalating the threat to the Māori language in Aotearoa as the number of fluent Māori speakers continues to decrease in proportion to the increasing Māori population (Benton, 2015).

The New Zealand 2013 census reported on Māori well-being and included the level of te reo usage and ability in Aotearoa. According to the report 55% of Māori over the age of 15 have some ability to kōrero Māori with only 11% being able to speak Māori with a higher level of fluency. More Māori women than Māori men indicated having an overall ability to speak some te reo, however, women over 44 years of age do not speak te reo as proficiently as men (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).

The Māori Language (Te Reo Māori) Bill 2014, provides proactive strategies for government to fulfil their obligation to protect and enhance the Māori language (Te Puni Kokiri, 2014). However, if the environment is not supportive or devalues Māori culture or language it will not thrive (Awanui, 2013).

## **Tertiary Education and Māori Women**

Early childhood, primary and secondary education has generally been accessible for most Māori. Māori participation and achievement in Aotearoa tertiary education has increased steadily over the past decade. The percentage of Māori students participating at bachelor degree level or higher increased by 7% from 2007 to 2012 up to 21,900. Priority Three of Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014) focuses on increasing academic participation, completion and achievement of Māori in higher level tertiary education in conjunction with Ka Hikitia Accelerating Success 2013-2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013a) which also seeks to improve academic outcomes for Māori. However, the focus of Government funding specifically targets Māori students under the age of 25 to enter, participate and complete tertiary education (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014). Even though the number of Māori female students aged 25 years and older has continued to decline over recent years, Māori women aged 40 years and older who study at a bachelor’s degree level has still continued to increase. Mature Māori women are the largest group of Māori university students in Aotearoa universities (Ministry of Education, 2015). For Māori women

this could be attributed to a return to education after raising a family is less problematic at that age and that Māori women are also living longer (Scott, 2006).

In 2014, Government policy reduced government funded student allowance for people over 40 years of age to receive only 120 weeks (equivalent of three academic years of study). Changes to the student allowance eligibility restricts the ability of students to complete a four year undergraduate degree or begin a Master's degree with financial assistance. This has further disadvantaged mature Māori women who are more likely to begin university study after raising children. The student allowance restrictions for mature students operationalises the Tertiary Education Strategy to focus on Māori under 40 years (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014). Financial challenges are the largest contributor to the decrease in Māori retention statistics in tertiary education across all age groups. Therefore, without the much needed government financial support during tertiary study, Māori women who choose to study later in life are further financially disadvantaged (Jefferies, 1997).

## **Mature Māori Women as Tertiary Students**

Western parameters for defining mature students are used in Māori and non-Māori studies. Nikora, Levy, Henry, and Whangapirita (2002) begin with the same age demarcation used by the Ministry of Education of 25 years of age and then discuss mature Māori women as 30-39 years and 40 years of age and over. Barratt (2001) also refers to mature students as those over 25 years of age while in Bennett's (2001) study, 73% of Māori undergraduate students were women over the age of 30.

All eight westernised universities located in Aotearoa have a 'special admission' criteria of 20 years of age or older. Mature students are more likely to be 'special admission students' according to Williams (2010). Gemmell (2013) refers to mature Māori women students as 'second-chance learners'. Few studies use measures other than age to categorise or identify mature students (Clark, 2014). In Aotearoa, age demarcation of mature students differ yet still tend to be older than international studies.

In this study a subjective criteria used to define mature student was determined by the participating women. This included; 'later in life', 'have had' or 'are raising a family', with more emphasis on 'life experience' than age. This ensured those participating had the power to determine and advocate for themselves as to how they viewed themselves and their experience.

As a demographic population, more and more mature women across ethnicities and nationalities, are entering higher level tertiary education. In Europe and Australia there are more mature women enrolled in higher education than men (O'Shea & Stone, 2011).



Research indicates the same pattern for mature indigenous women of Australia (Tones, Fraser, Elder, & White, 2009). International studies in westernised countries show many older women return to study after beginning a family to improve their economic position (O'Shea, 2014). National and international studies identified common areas that challenge non-Māori mature female students and suggest it is age rather than gender that impacts on adjustment to the new environment. For example, the feeling of isolation is attributed to campus culture targeting the younger, traditional student making it harder for the older student to integrate fully into university student life (Clark, 2014; O'Boyle, 2014). Positively geared, age provides coping strategies for mature students that their younger counterparts do not yet possess. Stevenson and Clegg (2013) found that the prior knowledge and experience that mature students take with them to higher education builds a stronger resilience to the challenges they face. This could be attributed to a deeper, more effective learning strategy and a more positive attitude towards university (Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007).

While enrolment numbers of mature Māori women tertiary students are decreasing in general, the numbers enrolling in and successfully completing tertiary education continues to be high and is the largest group of Māori students (Nikora et al., 2002). Mature Māori women, in comparison to their non-Māori female peers and mature male Māori, are more likely to embark on tertiary education later in life often while raising a whānau. Mature Māori women are also more likely to study to benefit their whānau, hapū and iwi (Jefferies, 1997).

Historically and politically, little has been done to specifically address the educational needs of mature Māori women students. Exploring experiences in tertiary education through the voice of mature Māori women acknowledges, legitimises and validates the presence of this increasingly successful and large Māori student population. The importance of capturing Māori student voice enables meaning and understanding of tertiary experience from a Māori worldview to be explored (Bennett, 2001; Williams, 2010) and better understood. New research in the field of Māori student experiences will increase awareness and add to existing knowledge that will better inform practices, support and change required in order to further academic success for Māori women.

## **Previous Studies**

There is an increasing volume of international literature exploring mature non-Māori female student experience at university or tertiary education. Findings from these studies emphasise the stress factors of financial struggle, balancing of study, work and family responsibilities for mature women students (Fulmer & Jenkins, 1992; O'Shea, 2014; Ramsay et al., 2007; Stone & O'Shea, 2013). In Aotearoa, existing literature focuses primarily on the

challenges, barriers and achievements at the higher level of tertiary education experienced by all Māori students. Historically, non-Māori research often highlighted the deficit-theorizing and the educational under-achievement of Māori (G. H. Smith, 2012; Tassell, Flett, & Gavala, 2010; Tomlins-Jahnke, 1997; Williams, 2010). Numerous Māori studies discuss the barriers, challenges and retention issues around Māori student university experience and highlight the role of Māori identity during student life (Bennett, 2001; Coombes, 2006; Hawaikirangi-Pere, 2013). Literature on tertiary experiences for both male and female Māori students have also identified struggles to balance family responsibilities with study and work and financial stress that can impede upon the continuation of study (Bennett, 2001; Coombes, 2006; Cram & Brunton, 2014; Jefferies, 1997). Māori research is increasingly orientated towards the academic success and achievement of Māori at tertiary and degree level (Kaumoana, 2013; Mayeda, Keil, Dutton, & Ofamo'oni, 2014; Millward, Stephenson, Rio, & Anderson, 2011; Selby, 1996; Williams, 2010). The amount of literature on experiences of Māori women in various fields such as nursing, accounting, education, the environment and cultural contexts is also growing (August, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2003, 2010; McNicholas, Humphries, & Gallhofer, 2004; Simmonds, 2011; Tomlins-Jahnke, 2002). Less attention has been given to studies that specifically explore the diversity within Māori of first year tertiary experiences of mature Māori women in Aotearoa as far as the author is aware.

Charmaine Hawaikirangi-Pere (2013) explores the experiences of Māori women studying at tertiary level who do not korero Māori and identify as Māori using alternative indicators of cultural identification. Carla Houkamau (2010) discusses the validation and the increasing variety of subjective interpretation of cultural or Māori identity that must be acknowledged. Comparing gender by race, Bennett (2001) observes that the challenges faced by non-Māori women may be similar to those faced by Māori women however this fails to view the experience and challenges from a Māori woman's perspective. Māori and non-Māori women enter tertiary study later in life after having raised a family. For non-Māori it is usually to increase their financial situation, for Māori it is to contribute to the wellbeing of others (Jefferies, 1997; O'Shea & Stone, 2011). Barratt (2001) found that most mature students experienced frustration and tension between the theories they were learning and the realities of their practical life experiences. More commonly shared challenges included the roles of student and parent which competed for priority and added to the challenge. The academic barrier of writing academically, learning academic language and balancing the demands of work, study and family also challenge all Māori (Bennett, 2001; Jefferies, 1997). However studies that focused on the challenges and barriers to all Māori or all women students, do not

explore the variety of ways these challenges are experienced from a mature Māori woman's worldview.

Contributing factors to achieving academic success found in multiple studies of general Māori student population include whānau and whanaungatanga (Bennett, 2001; Houkamau, 2011; Jefferies, 1997; Kaumoana, 2013; Selby, 1996; Williams, 2010). Selby (1996) found that Māori women acknowledge the influence of whānau in their success and the support of their tīpuna and knowledge of whakapapa gave them. Mayeda et al. (2014) identified similar factors for Māori and Pasifika students which included; family, role modelling and support from within the university, indigenous teaching and learning practices that made students feel 'comfortable'. The high numbers of Māori women in part-time study is due to the requirement to balance more aspects of daily life such as family and work responsibilities (Selby, 1996). Jefferies (1997) identified Māori women as having responsibilities and roles within hapū and iwi that can be very demanding of their time and resources which therefore places more pressure on their ability to balance their time effectively.

O'Shea and Stone (2011) found the challenges experienced by mature European women entering university included the balancing of family responsibilities with studies and the transformative effects education had on the women and their families. Family relationships were often strained and many marriage or partner relationships dissolved the longer the women studied. Many women begin tertiary education later in life due to raising a family or financial independence or financial security providing an improved financial outcome (Stone & O'Shea, 2013). For many mature Māori women the demands and challenges of family, work and study are further compounded by cultural responsibilities to whānau, hapū and iwi (Jefferies, 1997).

Navigating an academic environment with a greater 'traditional' or young student body that is viewed as the norm, is often difficult for mature students (Clark, 2014). O'Shea (2014) observes that not fitting in or feeling authentic for non-Māori women is often linked to their age and to the fear of the lack of 'knowledge capital' they perceive is needed upon entry. This is then challenged with the suggestions that older women should be better positioned to adjust to change and 'uncertainty' due to their ability to be flexible in the uncertainties that women experience in motherhood and family life (West (2005) as cited by O'Shea, 2014). The sparse information that relates to the first year tertiary experience of mature Māori women highlights the need for exploration in this area as growing research relating to non-Māori mature women ignores the role cultural identity plays in their student experiences.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the topic of this thesis and has provided historic and contextual foundation for the research aim, which is to explore the first year tertiary education experiences of mature Māori women.

Chapter two outlines the research approach and methodology that is most appropriate for this study. Chapter three explores the experiences of the women in this study from their Māori women's worldviews. Chapters four and five highlight the journeys of education throughout the participants' lives and the sites of struggle and sources of strength along the way. Chapter six discusses the findings and conclusions of the study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Research Approach and Processes

Chapter two sets out the aim, approach and research processes used in this study. Ethical requirements and considerations are also included and my position as researcher/participant is acknowledged. Exploration and analysis through a Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine approach helps provide context as to why and how the research was carried out, acknowledging the fact that a Māori worldview was central to the research. A kaupapa Māori approach, research that is centred in a Māori worldview, provides empowerment for those in this study both individually and collectively and also contributes to Māori research that enhances Māori self-determination. The concept of a Mana wāhine approach specifically provides a Māori woman's worldview of the experience.

#### Aims of the Research

This research seeks to explore the first year university experiences of mature Māori women. The study aims to highlight the perspectives, experiences and aspirations of mature Māori women who seek higher learning later in life, namely;

- a) What the first-year university experience is like for a mature wāhine Māori
- b) What challenges the new environment presents to mature wāhine Māori and
- c) What the role of being a mature Māori woman plays in first-year university experience

In exploring the lived realities and experiences of first year study in a western tertiary education setting in Aotearoa, greater understanding can be gained into how mature Māori women experience a return to education many years after their schooling and education.

The benefits of this study are twofold. For the participants of the study it is an opportunity to share their experiences and voice, offering insight into their lived realities of what it means to be a mature Māori woman studying in a western tertiary environment. Also, greater understanding of the first year experiences of mature Māori women will offer insights into how to better support other mature Māori women at beginning tertiary study.

#### Positionality

No research is value-free. Subjectivity is an inevitable and desired outcome of Kaupapa Māori and as the researcher I am obligated to acknowledge my position and subjectivity as researcher-participant. Declaring my position is an effort to acknowledge and

address the extent of researcher bias that comes with qualitative research (Diefenbach, 2009). The subjective connection between researcher and participant positions the researcher as a participant allowing both researcher and participant to analyse their own experiences, making sense of them through the experiences of the participant (Mataira, 2003). As a former student and also in a role as Māori student support at a mainstream university I have both lived experiences as a student and observed other Māori students in the first year experiences of university study. My observation of the need for cultural translators or guides to support Māori students during their first year contributed to my motivation to carry out this research.

## **Research Approach**

The theoretical foundation of Kaupapa Māori approaches to research and a mana wāhine perspective, determined that a qualitative approach would be most culturally appropriate for this study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used in order for mature Māori women's voices to be heard and to contribute to Māori women's knowledge by exploring experiences that make sense of the lived realities of Māori women, as told by Māori women.

## **Kaupapa Māori**

Kaupapa Māori theory is becoming more and more established and recognised as a legitimate way to theorise the everyday Māori experience. Kaupapa Māori theory validates Māori as a people legitimising te reo Māori me ona tikanga and challenges hegemonic systems and ideologies that have confined and defined Māori throughout society.

Kaupapa Māori theory provides a framework that is fluid and responsive across time, place and culture. Conscientization, resistance and transformative action are all elements of Kaupapa Māori theory which motivate change and action (G. H. Smith, 1997). Sometimes viewed as anti-colonial and reactive, Kaupapa Māori theory decolonises, reclaims and renames Māori space and experiences in a critically reflective way that is proactive and pro-Māori (Pihama, 2001).

Kaupapa Māori has become normalised as a theorizing tool and as a research method by many Māori scholars including; Graham Smith (1997), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1992, 1999), Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1991), Huia Tomlins-Jahnke (1997), Leonie Pihama (2001), Russell Bishop (1998), Jessica Hutchings (2002) and Te Ahukaramu Royal (2012). Kaupapa Māori is a legitimate and valid approach to Māori research using a Māori centred worldview to explore the lived realities and experiences of Māori (Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002; G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith, 1999). The epistemology of Kaupapa Māori demonstrates the authenticity of this

approach due to its inclusion of ancient observances and practices of te reo me ona tikanga as a means and advancement of self-determination. It is intended that te reo Māori be used in Kaupapa Māori research however, the decreasing number of fluent Māori speakers of te reo means this may be the exception and not the rule. Walker, Gibbs, and Eketone (2006) state that even though English may be used in Kaupapa Māori research, the responsibility to encourage and empower the revitalisation of te reo should be present. Core principles provide a culturally specific framework in order to protect the rigor of Kaupapa Māori research. These principles are based on cultural aspirations for autonomy and well-being for Māori culture and society (G. H. Smith, 1997). Tikanga Māori is also used within this framework as an ethical guide to ensure cultural validity and integrity by guiding, not dictating, the process of how and why research conducted with Māori should occur. These include Māori values relating to autonomy, mana, whānau and manaakitanga (Mataira, 2003; L. T. Smith, 1999). In essence, if the principles of Kaupapa Māori are absent, the power and empowerment of Māori to challenge deficit theorizing, effect social change and maintain the survival of Te reo Māori me ona tikanga is jeopardised. The practice of these elements in Kaupapa Māori research and its purpose to empower Māori can be applied across any setting or discipline reflecting the overall relevance, significance and portable nature of Kaupapa Māori as a methodology (Pihama, Smith, Taki, & Lee, 2004)

Kaupapa Māori denies the continuation of western research methods and practices that have traditionally been used to exploit, misinterpret and misrepresent Māori. Kaupapa Māori methodology validates and supports the appropriate way to gather, analyse, interpret and theorize the experiences of Māori and thereby provides protection of Māori knowledge and understanding (Pihama et al., 2002). Kaupapa Māori explains why I am conducting the research the way I am by making explicit the implicit practice of tikanga Māori and privileging the experience, voice and worldview of Māori. In this way Kaupapa Māori privileges all Māori as insiders of the research.

### **Mana wāhine**

Kaupapa Māori privileges the worldview of all Māori. Mana wāhine privileges the worldview of Māori women. Independent of western ideologies of feminism, wāhine Māori as its own theory privileges Māori women and their fight against their oppressors. Western feminism would have Māori women unite to fight a western battle against western patriarchal ideologies of gender. However, western feminism denies the role that race plays in feminist discourse thereby continuing the oppression of Māori women (Hutchings, 2002; Pihama, 2001). Therefore, mana wāhine refutes the homogenizing effects of western feminism theory



and challenges the homogeneity of Kaupapa Māori theory which does not specifically acknowledge the diversity of Māori women within Māoridom (Hutchings, 2002). Mana wāhine reclaims the knowledge that Māori women are connected to Deity (August, 2005; Pihama, 2001).

From a mana wāhine perspective the researchers are Māori women, the participants are Māori women and the framework provides the emancipation of Māori women. In order for Māori women to create theoretical space, Māori women's knowledge and understanding must be 'defined, developed and controlled' in a theoretical way as determined by Māori women. This in turn offers the women the ability to experience a different way of thinking that is unique to Māori women including what has shaped their thinking and the way they live their lives as Māori women (Jenkins & Pihama, 2001). A mana wāhine perspective provides an analysis tool of colonisation by viewing and voicing the experiences and impacts of colonisation from a Māori woman's perspective and challenging the patriarchal practices and colonial impacts within Māori society (Pihama, 2001; Simmonds, 2011). Mana wāhine acknowledges the diversity of experiences Māori women have and the meanings and learnings from a viewpoint that it is specifically for Māori women, by Māori women, about being Māori women.

## **Research Process**

### **Selection of participants**

The topic of this study determined the selection criteria which required mature Māori women who had completed their first year at a western tertiary institution in Aotearoa. Using a purposive sampling selection method, women I knew that met the selection criteria were personally approached to determine if they would be interested and available to participate in the study. Purposive sampling supports participant selection based on potential data contribution towards a specific topic or phenomena experienced by participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Follow-up communication to organise a time and place convenient to the participants was made in person, by telephone, email, texting and even Facebook.

The participant ages at the commencement of their studies ranged from 37 years to 48 years of age however all were over the age of 45 at the time of the interviews. Three of the five participants have studied in Aotearoa at the same university campus as full or part-time students within the past two years. The two remaining participants also studied in Aotearoa, one at a University, the other at Teachers Training College (now a qualification acquired at universities and for the purposes of this study will be included in the term 'university') some 30 years ago in their late 30's and 40's. They are also mothers of two women who also began

university at a similar age and are also grandmothers. The younger generation of participants are also mothers, one of whom is awaiting her first mokopuna. These participants represent their own unique experiences as university students in their later years as Māori women. I am a daughter of one of the participants who also studied for the first time, while raising a family and who pioneered tertiary study for women in our whānau. The connection and engagement between researcher and participants in this study varied from direct kinship, to commonality of purpose and experience. Both connections illustrate the concept of whanaungatanga that supports the interview process with a shared understanding that includes the researcher as part of the research (Bishop, 1998).

### **Participant consent**

The women in the participant whānau gave their written consent prior to the interviews taking place to; participate in the research, have audio recordings of their interviews made and transcribed for use within the context of the study. All participants understood that they were under no obligation to participate and they were free to withdraw at any time for any reason. All the women were given the option to remain anonymous, use pseudonyms or their first given names. All the women gave their permission for their first names be used.

### **Equipment and preparation**

Digital audio recordings of each interview were made. Checks were made before each recording to make sure the device was working. Spare new batteries for the recording device were taken in case they were needed. Digital recording was felt to be most appropriate as it was physically less obtrusive and quickly forgotten as conversations began.

A koha of kai was taken to each interview, which contributed to the relationship of whanaungatanga. A personal koha of a kete made from where I come from up North was given to each of the women with a copy of the thesis as a way to replicate the support and challenge to fill their kete of knowledge.

### **Interview preparation**

A list of open-ended interview questions relating to the aims of the study were used to stimulate their memories and experiences of their first year and to guide the conversation. Questions were aimed at uncovering any expectations the women had prior to them entering university and, what the reality of their experiences actually entailed. This included, the challenges of a new environment and what role, if any, being a mature Māori woman played.

Once the women had read their transcripts, follow-up interviews were held in order to form shared understandings of their previous korero. Each individual semi-structured interview was conducted *kanohi ki te kanohi* which is culturally appropriate and an important way of establishing a foundation of trust upon which to progress (Smith (1999), as cited by Mataira, 2003). One on one interviews allows space for both the relationship and conversation to grow and develop in a reciprocal, authentic way that privileges the perspectives and experiences of each of the participants. Each interview went as long as was needed, guided by the natural process of untimed conversation which would acknowledge their individual mana (Mataira, 2003).

### **Ethical considerations and observations**

Approval for this study was given by Massey University Human Ethics Committee. Using a Kaupapa Māori research approach meant cultural ethical consideration and methods were guided by tikanga Māori and kawa. Adhering to tikanga Māori principles is essential for the rigour and validity of Kaupapa Māori research. Whanaungatanga and rangatiratanga principles of tikanga Māori guided the interview process. Each interview was held and conducted differently as felt or deemed appropriate by the participant (Mataira, 2003).

A Kaupapa Māori approach positions the whole experience from a Māori worldview which meant normal protocols of whanaungatanga were genuinely engaged as part of tikanga Māori. Traditional greetings and re-establishing identity and familial connections through whakapapa prepared a comfortable and safe space for the interviews to take place (Bishop, 1998). Guided by the Kaupapa Māori principle of *Kia tūpato*, that is, valuing the experiences and mana of the Māori women participating, meant that prior ethics indication of time allotted for interviews was not followed. This could be viewed as breach of ethics from a western worldview of conventional protocol, however ensuring the interests of the participant are paramount is ethically and culturally acceptable.

### **Process of analysis**

Each of the interviews was transcribed verbatim and entered into NVivo for qualitative thematic analysis. NVivo is a software programme used to organise qualitative data collected from transcribed interviews. Using word frequency, interview excerpts were coded into emerging themes across the five participant interviews. Each transcribed interview was read looking for sentences or longer vignettes that mentioned words, events, experiences, thoughts or feelings that appeared regularly. The frequency and context with which aspects of these

narratives were used assisted in identifying emerging themes which became the focus of the study.

## **Limitation**

A key limitation of this study is the low number of participants. Five women is too small a number to generalise any findings as representative of all mature Māori women.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter described the research aim, process, methodology and positionality of the researcher. The theoretical epistemology of Kaupapa Māori as a research approach and mana wāhine as a tool of analysis from a Māori worldview determined how the research was conducted. The process for selection of participants and interviewing was also outlined.

Chapter three examines the diversity of upbringing and the effects of colonisation, urbanisation and the loss of te reo Māori on the cultural identity of the women in this study.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Being Māori

This chapter explores the diverse experiences recounted by mature Māori women raised in Aotearoa as children of Māori decent. The use of the term Māori to identify a group of people that share Māori ancestry often fails to acknowledge the diversity within Māori. The colonising effects of urbanisation has also contributed to the diversity within Māori society who that live in the town and cities. Where and how Māori are raised as children contributes to individual and collective cultural identity as Māori (Moeke-Pickering, 1996; O'Carroll, 2013). All women in this study have dual ancestry to a Māori and Pākehā heritage and identify themselves a Māori women.

#### Being 'Raised Pākehā'

Growing up Māori in Aotearoa was experienced by the women in many different ways. They were socialised within whānau that informed both their individual and collective cultural identity. The shift away from traditional whānau communities of extended whānau, often located near tribal marae, isolated many Māori from whānau, hapū and whenua that supported and maintained the language and collectivist culture. Urbanisation aided absorption into western culture which gave primacy to individual istic ideologies and meant collectivist practices were often abandoned in order to fit in (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). Urban Māori replicated the western ways of living they were exposed to. Socially and culturally constructed ideas of how Māori were raised in Aotearoa challenged the way in which Māori were often viewed by themselves and others. Being raised 'Pākehā' or 'Māori' referred largely to the extent of assimilation and replication of either culture. Many Māori did not want their children to suffer the negative outcomes they had incurred as Māori children and believed they should raise their children immersed in the way and language of the Pākehā (O'Carroll, 2013).

The women in this study were born and raised over the past seventy years. All had childhood experiences that illustrate the differing consequences of the same assimilation policies, such as education policies, that they were subject to. Kay reflected on her 'Pākehā' upbringing in a European farming community where she describes herself as part of the only Māori family in the community.

*I didn't even know I was Māori, you know... until I said to mum I went to school and there's a Māori family moving in and she said 'well what do you think you are' sort of thing. I don't know. I'm me - Kay*

*I was brought up white because mum thought that was the right thing to do - Adele*

Being brought up 'white' or 'Pākehā' was often reflected in the way the home and children were presented replicating western values that were associated with order, tidiness, civility, wealth and material possessions. This informed the way some have experienced being 'othered' by Māori whānau for being raised Pākehā.

*We were fussed as little kids by our Māori uncles, cause they thought we were really flash I think because we were raised Pākehā and they'd say 'oh you're the Pākehā's, but that didn't mean anything to me – Kay*

Being 'flash' or raised 'Pākehā' included replications of western fashion, social trends and norms (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). Being a good mother and providing the best opportunities for their tamariki was founded on the western norms of being a good wife and homemaker. Great effort to conform or perform to Western social expectations meant consequences of these choices were felt by the whānau as a whole.

*My mother worked so hard because she was Māori we just naturally had to be perfect for her in her eyes, because she was living in this Pākehā world I guess. To a degree I think there was a certain amount of racism too for me growing up, I'm not quite sure if that's the right way of saying it but, because mum felt it, she always made sure we were dressed right and fed right and all those sorts of things – Kay*

The ability to 'be Māori' was often made harder because of geographical distance and financial constraints that limited physical connections to extended family and tribal marae being maintained, thereby further isolating Māori whānau from each other. Visits to whānau 'back home' were rare and there were limited opportunities for the next generations to access te reo Māori, cultural knowledge and practices. This did not completely exclude exposure to the cultural values of being Māori however. Kay attributed the 'warmth' her mother showed in caring for others to her 'being' Māori.

Being raised 'Pākehā' increased the risk of denied access to te reo Māori. The majority of Māori homes in Aotearoa during the 1960's did not raise families in their native tongue as a result of being punished for speaking te reo Māori at school or in choosing to not speak it because English was seen as the best solution for the future (Reedy, 2000). Denial of access to te reo Māori in the home also meant the denial of choice to access Māori language.

*It's not that I didn't want to learn Māori, it's just we didn't have it there – Adele*

Many Māori women today who were raised rurally and/or in urban settings, experienced childhoods where te reo Māori may have been heard, but was not taught or encouraged (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2002). Whaea Em remembers as a child seeing and hearing her father whaikorero on the marae and being fascinated hearing him korero Māori.

*They never taught us Māori, because he [father] said it would not help us get employment - Whaea Em*

Through assimilating policies the loss of language in the home affected generations of Māori whānau.

## **Being 'Raised Māori'**

Some Māori children grew up in what is often referred to as 'traditional whānau' or Māori ways of being raised. This may have included whāngai relationships, being raised by other family members such as grandparents, or being brought up on tribal lands or in close proximity to whānau marae. Being 'raised Māori' around whānau, hapū and whenua provided socialisation of Māori ways by increased access or regular involvement in cultural practices, ceremonies and community (Benton, 2015; Moeke-Pickering, 2010; Paul, 2014; Williams, 2011). However, the effects of colonisation and urbanisation on te reo Māori meant those 'raised Māori' were still not guaranteed they would grow up hearing or speaking te reo Māori (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2002). The transmission of Māori knowledge and culture was often done without te reo and deeper meanings may have been lost. However, the values associated with these practices are also taonga that are important connections to culture, whānau, whenua and identity. The practice of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga are an expression of being Māori and recognises the role of Māori women as nurturers and transmitters of Māori knowledge and values (Gemmell, 2013).



*I used to remember Nanny.... 'no don't put that down there because it affects the earth this way and because the fish and the things would eat that', so I remembered those sorts of things, and know that we don't put that there, and women in the gardens, and women in the sea, you know at that time of the month, and all those, and I haven't had to think about those in a long long time... And its funny, I don't go into the garden at that time of the month, I just don't. Even my daughter goes, 'oh mum no... not that time of the month...' but I'd forgotten why and I remember we used to talk about it, but I couldn't articulate why you just don't. And she's curious as to why you don't and I go, 'cause you just don't' - Raiha*

## **The Loss of Te Reo Māori**

The combination of mixed marriages and assimilating educational policies had multi-generational impacts in the lived reality of many Māori (Selby, 1999). Regardless of where or how Māori were raised, the majority were direct recipients of policies that stripped their language from the classroom and alienated it from their homes. Assimilation ensured the English language dominated teaching and engagement in the classroom. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century schools in Aotearoa prohibited the use of te reo Māori and Māori children experienced physical and punitive punishment for speaking te reo Māori in the classroom (Simon, 1998; Waitangi Tribunal, 1986). By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the English language had raised its second generation of monolingual English speaking Māori. Between 1913-1975 the numbers of Māori children fluent in te reo dropped from 90% to 5% (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986). The growing Māori population in Aotearoa will increase faster than the rate of Māori able to speak Māori fluently (Benton, 2015). The loss of te reo Māori due to colonisation, also meant the loss of traditional ways of socialisation as Māori. A mono-cultural way of living as Māori provided protection of Māori norms, culture and language until assimilating policies such as those found in education, and urbanisation, disrupted and dispersed the functionality of Māori life (Royal, 2012). For the women in this study the English language influenced many aspects of day to day life.

*Even my name, I was given a Pākehā name because my father told me a Māori name would not get me a job - Whaea Em*

Mono-lingual teaching in mono-cultural settings within state education supported comparative and deficit theorizing of Māori which divided Māori and Pākehā, teaching Māori children that at school their language, culture and identity were not valued. Disregard within Western education, teaching and curriculum for the Māori language endangered identity and

connections to whenua and whānau. Māori name mispronunciation was a common occurrence by the dominant culture which disregarded and de-valued the Māori language (Bishop & Glynn (1999) as cited in Moeke-Pickering, 2010). Raiha shared the experience of being sent home from school to get ‘an English name’ from her whānau because her teacher was tired of Raiha correcting her when she did not pronounce the name Raiha correctly. When Raiha’s nanny became aware of an English name Raiha had taken on she stated “*now no-one knows your name*” then proceeded to tell Raiha that her “*name came from generations and it’s lived through generations from the area and everything.*” Unbeknown to Raiha at the time her name connected her to a tīpuna and a particular whenua that has since explained a very special connection that is a source of strength and renewal for her.

Hegemony, or in-direct rule by the dominant culture, and the subsequent prejudice experienced in the classroom meant Māori children struggled with language and also the clash of cultures, values and learning styles (Bishop, 1998; Simon, 1998; Tomlins-Jahnke, 2002). In the classroom Māori children experienced discrimination, physical punishment and psychological wounding which affected their self-esteem and self-worth.

*I don’t know if you had the long wooden rulers in your day? I used to get that slammed on my hands at intermediate, the Māori and pacific islanders, we had a teacher in Form 2 and she used to keep us all at the back and the Pākehā’s in the front. And she literally did tell us we were sort of the dummies and all that sort of stuff – Raiha*

The inability of many Māori to korero Māori alienated some of them from whānau, aspects of cultural knowledge requiring knowledge of te reo Māori, access to te reo speaking events and engagement in customs. Being unable to communicate with older generations in te reo was often frustrating for both young and old or avoided altogether (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2002). The geographical distance from whānau and hapū, meant building relationships through verbal communication was often minimal. Kay shared accounts of being with her maternal grandmother, and the awkwardness of not being able to communicate with her because Kay did not know how to speak Māori and her grandmother did not speak English. When asked how they communicated, Kay said:

*Mum would yell out and tell us what she wanted. We just smiled. We just smiled. She would’ve been frustrated, but we didn’t know that then, because she had no English - Kay*

Visiting whānau who could only speak Māori was different than being raised by whānau who were having to learn English. Exposure to te reo did not guarantee the ability to korero te reo. Raiha did not learn te reo Māori while she was growing up, however she was raised by her Nanny whose first language was Māori,

*They said it in Māorish English because they weren't that proficient at English, so it sort of went back and forth between, and Nan would say it in Māori first and I'd be going 'like this?' and she'd go, 'no good for the earth'. And cause their first language was Māori, they would say that first and then when we'd go 'huh?', they'd go 'oh....' and they'd try and put it into English for you. So that's what I mean dispersed in between – Raiha*

Though the inability to korero Māori may have caused frustrations and possibly limited relationships for some of the women, the absence of the language was not viewed as essential in order to identify as Māori. None of the participants considered themselves proficient in te reo, yet all agreed the practice of cultural values was a valid and key indicator of Māori authenticity.

*I think that all goes back to that same age of not being allowed to at school and being stopped. So you can be part of it, but not the language, you've got to speak English and that's it - Kay*

For these women, a Māori identity was established and reinforced by the way you lived and the way you cared for others. The absence of te reo in the lives of the women was compensated by their ability to be fluent in other aspects of Māori culture in order to maintain their identity (Awanui, 2013; Tomlins-Jahnke, 2002). Many Māori women today may not speak te reo Māori, but they demonstrate that they still know who they are as Māori;

*See I thought I was Māori. I thought I was Māori Māori... even without the reo. See even without the reo I thought you can't tell me I'm not Māori just because I don't know reo - Raiha*

Whaea Em was also raised in a generation where Māori was not taught in the home or school;

*I'm not fluent Te Reo, but I know what my heart is and my whāngai mum tells me that's all that's important - Whaea Em*

## Being Māori

Being “Māori ... is as much psychological as biological. A Māori is one who has Māori ancestry and who feels himself to be Māori (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. 14).

A secure Māori or cultural identity comes through accessibility to Te Ao Māori and consists of language, values, knowledge, arts and customs as cultural resources (Durie, 2006). The Waitangi Tribunal language claim for te reo Māori focused on the centrality of Māori language to cultural survival. However, Leonie Pihama (2001) warns against denying Māori identity based on levels of fluency as tikanga can still be practiced and support cultural survival without reo proficiency. Not all Māoridom share this view and see the ability to korero Māori as the main indicator of Māori identity and authenticity (O'Carroll, 2013). For some women, cultural authenticity was also measured by levels of participation or access cultural activities, rituals and practices that normalised being Māori.

*I think the kids that had the opportunity to go and be on the marae, were comfortable with it, those who had a feeling for it to me, would've been more Māori. See I didn't even think I looked Māori. I was just me... What I love is seeing others use bits of reo here and there and they aren't Māori, but that doesn't make them a Māori. Even those who might be able to talk the language. But can you do the language? Do you live it? Do you understand it? Is it part of you? Is there a connection? – Kay*

Homogeneity of Māori is further compounded when assumptions are based on skin colour or physical appearance. The assumption then becomes the qualifying criteria or expectation to validate the claim to being Māori. Physical markers may suggest ethnic identity but they do not guarantee te reo proficiency (Awanui, 2013; O'Carroll, 2013). Indeed, women in this study, fall within a contemporary approach to Māori categorisation which is more fluid and acknowledges the duality of both Māori and Pākehā ancestry (Awanui, 2013).

With the revitalisation of te reo, Māori initiatives such as Te Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori and Wānanga emerged as did the expectation that it would mean significant increase in Māori speakers. (Pihama, 2001). Te reo as an essential criteria of Māori identification fails to acknowledge the growing number of Māori who identify as Māori yet still do not korero Māori. Raiha shared an experience where the danger of assumptions based on appearance can highlight expectations and assumptions within Māori society:

*I didn't know Māori and this lady, when I went around serving, spoke to me in Māori and I said 'I'm sorry I don't know Māori' and she went off her rocker at me 'what kind of Māori*

*are you etc.” And then that was me – straight on, ‘I may not know Māori, but I know the right ways, I know the ways of the kitchen...’. You know you have these people who are fluent and they come walking in, ‘can you make me a coffee...?’ Make your own coffee.... Where do you think you come from? They think they’re at this level. Not all of them are like that, different strokes, different people. Or people will go, and we haven’t even feed the people, and so me people will be putting plates away for their husbands or something when they finish work.... What the... what kind of protocol is that. You can’t throw that at me, you may speak Māori, but your actions don’t say Māori. I said, ‘you don’t get to say I’m not Māori because I don’t know the reo...’ But for me it makes my standing stronger for me now – Raiha*

The inability to speak te reo Māori did not completely alienate the Māori women in this study from their heritage and the values that legitimize their cultural identity. Huia Tomlins-Jahnke (2002) found similar views expressed by Māori women in her study who were also raised without te reo Māori who relied on the Māori values of whenua and whakapapa to maintain their cultural identity as Māori women.

## **Role of Māori Women**

Understanding the importance of working in marae kitchens can only be fully understood from a Māori worldview. Fulfilling the responsibility of working in the marae kitchen illustrated the value of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga through action and practice for Māori women of this study. Collaborative work at the marae allowed the application of embedded Māori values such as manaakitanga and upheld tikanga in everyday life (Pere, 1982).

*You don’t know me. You know, you can identify what race I am, or what culture I am, but you don’t know me. Yeah. I know who I am... Yeah. And for me that’s really important. Like I don’t korero Māori or anything like that, but I know who I am because of the colour of my skin and I can do everything at the marae. I’m just not the front person. We’ve always been the back people. You know... we feed the people because all Māori’s like food. You know, and you have to make visitors feel welcome. That’s been our teaching. Is to look after the people – Kahuirangi*

The role of Māori women in the kitchen are complimentary to those people who sit on the paepae. Access to participation in more formal or ‘out front’ rituals and practices may have been inhibited and even prevented due to the inability to korero Māori (Tomlins-Jahnke,

2002). However, te reo Māori does not prevent Māori women from participating in other aspects of Māori culture and protocols that are vital to upholding culture, tikanga and mana. Without the support and abilities of those preparing food to feed the manuhiri, the reputation and mana of the marae is in jeopardy regardless of what may have been accomplished on the paepae (Gemmell, 2013). Everyone remembers the hospitality of the marae by what and how well they were fed. However, the work in the kitchen is not limited alone to the process of feeding those people who come to the marae. The work in the marae kitchen is an important part of observing and practicing tikanga which culminates in releasing people from a position of tapu that may place cultural restrictions on them throughout ritual events such as tangihanga (Dickson, 2011).

Underpinning cultural values such as manaakitanga that were important to Māori identity and tikanga in the past are just as valued and practiced by Māori women today.

*To me success is being able to treat people with respect and kindness, and identify people deeper than skin. To be honest, you know, all the old school ideologies, the Māori things that we are taught when we are brought up – Kahuirangi*

Connections to the marae provides a place of security and acknowledges the various roles and responsibilities of Māori women. The marae kitchen is a space that empowered some of the women in this study, acknowledging their contributions as Māori women to whānau, hapū and iwi, without the ability to korero Māori.

*But a marae is such a safe place, and to me a marae is a place that makes me feel like I am clever or that I am somebody, whereas you come into here, you're the little tadpole and there are all the sharks kinda thing. Whereas at the marae, you're the shark, normal – Raiha*

## **Conclusion**

Chapter three explored the diversity of childhood experiences and upbringing lived by the women in this study. This also included discussing the effects of colonisation on access to cultural events, practices and settings. Exploring the loss of language in the lives of these women identified the importance of cultural values as a means of maintaining connections to Māori culture and identifying as Māori women.

Chapter four explores the contributing factors that have influenced the decision, expectations and realities of tertiary study for the women in this study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Lifelong Learning

This chapter explores different aspects of the women's lifelong learning and the influence of those contributing factors, both negative and positive, they have faced in the pursuit of formal educational as mature Māori women. Consistent with other mature Māori student studies, the primary reasons these women began studying was their desire to provide a positive role model for whānau and other Māori, fulfil a desire to learn and develop personally while contributing to Māori wellbeing within and outside of their whānau, hapū, iwi (Jefferies, 1997).

#### Reliving the Past

Secondary schooling ended prematurely for a few of the women in this study due to the immediate economic needs of whānau wellbeing. For some of the women individual and collective responsibility to provide for whānau often prevented their individual aspirations of pursuing tertiary education when they were younger (Jefferies, 1997; Mayeda et al., 2014; Tassell, 2004; Williams, 2010). For generations of Māori, western education did not support or provide their children with success or achievement as suggested by Kahuirangi

*Education has always been big in my family, but nobody's ever made it because we've never had the money to support ourselves. Our parents couldn't afford it. We always finished school earlier because we were told we were dumb. Because we've always thought, you know, 'humble Māori's, just be grateful you've got a job, you've got a roof over your head, you've got kai on your table and clothes on your back – kei te pai'. But now, at my age..... I think if my dad knew that he could change things, he would've come to university. But we were too dumb, we were told you know, no you go to work – Kahuirangi*

Reliving feelings accumulated by negative schooling experiences that included instances of stereotyping, deficit-theorising, discrimination and punitive punishment played heavily upon most women in this study before and during their first year in tertiary education.

*Fear. Absolute fear. Fear. Fear. All the things that happened to you in your last... you know... the dumb. The dumb... the dumb thing. I remember even at primary and intermediate, all the dumb kids, the dumb Māori's. The dumb Māori's they called us. You know, just that*



*'dumb' coming back in full throttle. And that just hangs around, it just hangs around in the air above you. And so, the first year was more about a struggle of feeling that I actually belong here. It wasn't so much about learning about the stuff that was important. You still felt like, even at your age, you know, I reverted back to what I was like at college. I didn't want to be seen as dumb. You know, I didn't want to be seen as dumb at my age versus the young kids. I didn't want to be seen dumb as a Māori, versus the Pākehā. So, you carry actually all of that with you in the first year and even part of it's still with me in the second year – Raiha*

For Raiha, feelings of not being able to cope and a perception that she lacked the ability to learn were based on her previous experiences during her childhood education. Her hesitation towards study also came from the possibility that life pre-study may have provided a sense of confidence, belonging and success that the new tertiary environment would not. Choosing to leave the comfort and security of successful employment and achievement, demonstrated Raiha's personal level of commitment and courage to step into the unknown.

*You know, and it's like, in a lot of ways it just shows you what you're not. It just shows you what you're not. The struggle is, for me the struggle is myself most of the time. And also because, I was fantastic in my other role and I was somebody. And it's not a nice feeling to be rubbish in this role you know - Raiha*

## **Expectation versus Reality**

Many mature women have expectations that tertiary institutions are fixed and perceive this as a challenge to their existing identities that have been well established by age and life experience (O'Shea, 2014). Past experiences influenced initial expectations of education as an adult. Raiha's experience illustrates this:

*With the expectation of failing very quickly. And that's because my last, my last involvement with education was, where I left it, which was over 30 years ago, which wasn't good. Primary lost me, intermediate buried me and college was just about hitting 15, playing sports, mates and getting out of there. And so you leave your education or what you think you know about education back where you last sort of dealt with it – Raiha*

So deep were the effects of discrimination for being Māori at school, that the expectation of failure in education as an adult was inevitable. Raiha continues;

*I fully expected to fail. I fully expected to not pass. I fully expected to not get anywhere. I fully expected someone to tap on my shoulder and go 'you don't belong here'. I was waiting for all of that. And it was ridiculous because at the end of the year, and I passed. I had to sit there and really think about the next year, because I hadn't planned on next year. For me, it was I was going to be noble and well, at least I gave it a go – Raiha*

A tertiary education was sometimes portrayed as unattainable for Māori because of previous academic failures in the compulsory sector of education systems.

*My expectation was only brainy people came to university because through college we were always told you have to make it to 6<sup>th</sup> form, and then you have to get university entrance if you want to go university. Well, we gave up in the 4<sup>th</sup> form you know, 15 finish school cause we're never going to get there so don't even try wasting mum and dads money and we can help put kai on the table if we get a job. So, my expectation of university have never changed – Kahuirangi*

However, the reality of the student life as adults in tertiary education challenged many aspects of the negative experiences they were anticipating.

*My expectation of university was predominantly Pākehā all over the place. Predominantly very rigid. Probably thinking of my maths teachers in primary school. Not going to make it. Very difficult. Cold. Unfeeling. What's a Māori doing here? My reality of it is, wow, Māori's everywhere. Māori's in positions. Support, Māori support – Raiha*

Adele also found the university experience was more positive than she had initially anticipated. Even with fears of the past, the support fellow students can give raises confidence and builds social capital within the context of student life.

*Expectations exceeded first of all, the help or encouragement that I got. Didn't expect to develop friendships, but also the fact that other students wanting to help you. That was weird, cause in school, you don't do that. If you don't know it, you're stupid. Well, that's how it came across when you grow up as a young kid. The study at university has blown my mind. It is much more social. There is more help. I mean admittedly you've got to ask for it and want it, but definitely more help – Adele*

Like Adele, Raiha found her experience at university challenged her expectations and preconceived ideas also, and was surprised by the reality of her university experience albeit the strength of her fears remained nonetheless extremely powerful.

*It's about fighting your own ghosts if you have any. You know, your own doubts and everything like this. Because to me my first year wasn't so much about the work, although it was, I can look in hindsight and say it was, but I remember sweating. I remember thinking I'm going to be the oldest because I didn't realise Uni had old... I thought they were all young. Because Uni was a young game in my day, it was all youngsters, and then thinking I'm going to be the oldest one there. I'm going to be the oldest there. And then I saw an older woman. And then I saw another older woman, and then another older woman and I was like yeah, yeah, yeah. And then I was like, I'm going to be the only Māori there. And then I saw another Māori, and another Māori, Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you have all these ideas in your head, all these things you know to be concrete, and then oh no that's not concrete, oh no that one's gotta go. Oh no, that one's... hang on, hang on, is anything of my idea of university, does it even exist? Then that sort of all goes by the way side. But what I learnt about first year is how easily you revert to your feeling of yourself and education. How easily, no matter how old you are, no matter how learned you are in another field, you revert to that. Nothing about me is confident about this - Raiha*

## **Something Old, Something New**

A major challenge to learning for the women in this study was the value of knowledge and whose knowledge seemed to be more valued. Varying degrees of tension existed for women in their first year as they negotiated how their experiential life learning fitted into their new learning environment. For a few of the women returning to study, tertiary education reignited the clash of hegemonic ideologies of individualism and competition with cultural values of collectivism expressed in Māori knowledge, experience, language and culture. The clash of prior knowledge, experience and preferred values were confronted and challenged their independent voice and being experts in their own right.

*You know everything. You've lived it and now you're having someone tell you how you lived it, how you coped, how you got through it. But somehow it didn't fit. And I think the other thing is the books, the theory, theory of it and learning too many things all at once. And yet we do it in life, we don't just learn one thing, we learn multitudes of things all at once. But*

*here at university it just seems, at times, too much, too hard, lonely. Yeah, but being conformed by books, by your tutors, by your lecturers, by thoughts – Kahuirangi*

The speed and volume of new knowledge content delivered did not necessarily allow enough time for all the women to fully reflect on what they were experiencing. Part of the first year experience for many of them was spent trying to piece what they already knew with what they had to learn as quickly as possible.

*You've got everything going on so quickly, you're drowning in books, in work, in assignments, in wrapping your head around concepts that you've come into, that everything else just becomes too overwhelming. And then you're trying to identify yourself amongst all those pages of paper and books and you just don't have time too – Kahuirangi*

*I think after being there for a little while, I started to marry the two. The practical that I knew and the academic that I was learning. I came to be able to piece the two together, and that's, the two and two make four thing having had the experience. But other times I had to think, well, what's this got to do with anything. Because it was not something that I had to learn, or used in my children's lives – Kay*

Bringing the two worlds together took time for some of the participant whānau as the new language used to transfer knowledge challenged existing ways of articulating and communicating thoughts or knowledge to others.

*It's like putting me into a size 16. Yes its do able, but boy it doesn't look good and it's damn uncomfortable. And it's the way I feel about the words we use here. I don't feel comfortable with them. And I think that's a lot of my struggle too is, is when I have to write a essay these words don't feel right to me and I can't. It's hard to read something that you do n't like but you have to put it there so your lecturer likes it. That's what it's like for me now, is on a paragraph, because it just seems so ugly. Ugly in my eyes. Because that's not how I talk, but I have to talk that way for lecturer so they can say 'you understand the content' and when I'd really just love to talk, korero about it, rather than put it on words. So yeah, I struggle with that a lot. It just, it feels wrong. It almost feels like I am being fraudulent in that sense – Raiha*

Academic jargon bombards most students who begin their tertiary studies and is seen as one of the larger challenges for Māori students and mature Māori students in

particular (Bennett, 2001). In this study, understanding the jargon and language used was also a concern. As the use of the new academic language became familiar to the women their concerns were raised as to how the new language would affect their relationships with members of their whānau and with those they would work with in the future.

*But for me if I'm talking about not fitting right, it's the language you have to learn, that language and that thinking, and is it possible to learn that thinking you know? But then I sort of think, do I want to talk like that? Cause you have to talk like that in this environment. Those are the words they want to see and that's what's made me look at, after the first reading and the second reading, 'if I'm struggling a lot with that and it seems to pop up its head, am I in the right environment?' With the academic I'm scared it's going to change me. I don't want to be talking that language and make any of my whānau or anyone feel like they're less than and that stuff and I don't want to change me, I like talking to the cuzzie like 'hey cuz' and all that sort of thing and I find that that language has been creeping in and I also find, and I have to be quite mindful and careful that I'm going 'yeah but if you look at the...' and it makes them automatically withdraw and so I don't want to change those relationships, I want to still have fun and everything like that – Raiha*

The feelings expressed by Raiha demonstrates the beginnings of conscious awakening that occurs for many Māori as they make sense of the impacts of colonisation in their own lives. With conscious awareness the women were better positioned to theorize and respond to their lived realities (Pihama, 2001; G. H. Smith, 1997). Cultural dissonance, a dis-harmony or conflict felt from the clash of Māori and Pākehā cultures, was stronger for some due to the impact of colonisation on their cultural socialisation as a child growing up, the level of stability in their cultural identity and their experiences throughout life. Understanding the cultural dissonance they were experiencing because of the different cultural environment they were in, provided enlightenment that empowered the women to make conscious and informed choices about their situation and learning.

*At my age, I don't want to change. I don't want to speak how they speak. I want to be a social worker on the ground with the people, for the people. I don't need big words to speak to my people, or people in need, people that are vulnerable. So therefore, it doesn't in my head, it doesn't match up. I need to know legislation, yes I know. I need to understand the acts, yes I know that. But, because I speak basic English, does that make my knowledge any*

*different? No it doesn't. Not to me. Not to the people I'm going to help, or the whānau's or the kids. The language that I speak is not going to make it any better for them – Kahuirangi*

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the influence that previous educational experiences have had on the expectations of beginning tertiary study for these women. Their own life experience, prior knowledge and cultural values were challenged by the new western environment that had its own set of norms, values and language, causing them to experience cultural dissonance, yet did not halt their education.

Chapter five examines the education of the women in this study, from childhood through to their tertiary education as mature students and the importance of cultural identity and cultural values in their day to day lives.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Back to School

Chapter five explores different interactions the Māori women in this study have had in their formal state education from childhood through to adulthood. Their lived realities during their childhood have contributed to the way in which their expectations of tertiary education, experience and outcomes eventuated.

#### A Site of Struggle and Strength

Tertiary study presented challenges for the women that facilitated an awareness and resistance to the colonial impacts on their identity as Māori women. Exposure to new knowledge and language with words like 'hegemony', 'dominant culture', 'colonisation', 'deficit theorizing', 'white privilege' and other sociological terms provided western terms to articulate their experience of the concepts from their worldview. Understanding academic language and the knowledge gained through this level of 'enlightenment' raised a conscious awareness among the women to both personal and societal injustices and its implications for Māori generally and Māori women in particular.

*I never really knew the intricate cycles of how we have been manipulated as Māori. How we live up to western ideology that if we become them, we're gonna be just as good as them. There's nothing wrong with us. We're not broken, we live in a broken society –  
Kahuirangi*

Juggling an overload of new knowledge, experience and demands from a foreign environment meant many of the women did not have time to fully understand the cultural dissonance they were experiencing. In the first year of university, the western cultural expectations of student life did not fit with their own worldview.

*It's like you're a wild animal now and it's like they're trying to put you in a cage, or one size fits all. It doesn't fit me and that was the hardest thing for me. In the fighting, the resisting, that was even harder. And sad. That's really sad. That's where the loneliness too comes. In the, I have to do it again, I can't be myself, I don't wanna. I want to be me. I can't change the words because I don't want to change me. I want to be me.... Why can't this fit around me. And I think I still challenge that now, because I won't use their language in my*



*writing. So, I'll push myself, but I don't want to change. I want to be me. The same person that relates to people, that, you know I want to be the howl bag, I want to be the soft Māori that I am and yet can drive. I have drive and I want to maintain my dignity, my values, my beliefs - Kahuirangi*

The inner conflict caused by cultural dissonance was not perceived however as a personal identity crisis by the women. Rather the conflict was about how as Māori women they could fit into an institution that was founded and focused on maintaining western-based cultural values. For Kahuirangi for example, the feeling of not fitting in triggered conscious awakening, critiquing and theorizing about what she was experiencing.

*I think if you can get through that first year and you can see how much it's empowered you, how much it's stirred you up inside, to start thinking about who you are. What you can do. How you can make a better change for your whānau. Things like that...I think about what an impact western ideology has on our people. You know, globalisation and consumerism, how we've, we buy into it because we don't know any better and that's where I share my university experience with my whānau. So that they will think outside that square that we've all been brought up in. Because if it's not me that's gonna save part of my whānau or some people or make a change, it's going to be a whole lot of us. Because to me, Māori scholars are coming. In force. We are. We're gonna be bigger, better, brighter, yeah! There's going to be a better future for our kids – Kahuirangi*

Much of the personal confrontation came from entering an institution of learning and having the value of your knowledge and life learning challenged or dismissed. Dismissal of prior knowledge and experience can become a barrier to the learning process as resistance builds. As Māori women studying later in life, the challenge to prior experience and knowledge had to be negotiated head on in order to avoid being left behind academically. Though prior knowledge and experience may have been challenged, it also provided a strength to endure and resist.

## **Individualism**

According to Tassell (2004), individualism and collectivism are constructs that describe cultural characteristics and patterns reflecting the internal “shared beliefs, values, norms and interactions” of a group or people (p. 3). The term ‘Pākehā’ is often used to identify or distinguish non-Māori persons, culture and a way of thinking, doing and being. The ‘Pākehā

way' describes among others, the individualistic values generally associated with western values.

*Cause I love being Māori. I love who I am. It's just that individuality that I cannot wrap my head around. I think it's because of the way we've been brought up as Māori. For me personally, it's a Māori thing because we're not a selfish people. We've never thought about ourselves. We think about everybody. We'll take everybody you know. We're not used to the individuality. We do things whānau based, hapū based, iwi based. And I kept trying to tell myself that. That I'm doing this for the people that have paved the way so I can be here. To everybody that's gonna come after me so that I can pave the path for them. But the one thing that was missing was the people that are here now. My brothers and sisters and my children. My children were there, but not my brothers and sisters. And for me to actually do it without them, I did feel like it wasn't normal. It's not normal for me to do something for myself. Individuality is a Pākehā thing. It's not a Māori thing, not for me – Kahuirangi*

The concept of individualism in both theory and practice produced challenges for the women in this study that required them to make sense of what it means to maintain an individualistic sensibility. Grounded in collective roles as Māori women within whānau, hapū and iwi for example, the challenge of individualism the women encountered in their experiences of tertiary education reinforced the importance of their own collective cultural values anchoring their identity as Māori women in a Pākehā environment. University environments that did not provide access to collective values and practices contributed to cultural dissonance. Aspects of whānau support were divorced from the students as monocultural protocols dictated and controlled the value norms of campus life and student learning. Isolation from collective values and experiences can create an environment that becomes very stressful and limiting for Māori.

Not having a central place for Māori students to gather prevented them from connecting with each other on their terms in culturally preferred ways. The provision of specific space in the university to support whanaungatanga of Māori students on campus is essential to transitioning into an environment which is not conducive or inviting to Māori collectivist values (Masters, Levy, Thompson, Donnelly, & Rawiri, 2004). For some of the women in this study, much of the first year at university was spent exploring connections and establishing relationships amongst other Māori students in order to utilise their 'Māoridom'. The same shared value and understanding of whanaungatanga that underpins the practice of working in the marae kitchen, facilitated a sense of belonging for the women which provided

them a safe and yet portable 'space' on campus from which to orientate. Creating a collectivist environment in an individualist setting became a way for the women to survive and support each other.

Understanding that the confrontation they experienced was in fact a conflict of values as opposed to a crisis of identity helped the mature women in this study make sense of their experience. Finding out how to navigate the individualistic environment and culture for some of the women became a bigger challenge than the actual work load of tertiary study.

*That identity thing, you know there was that battle with the fitting in to mainstream and that. But I think the biggest battle was not the 'who am I' but, 'is it alright if I do this'. How do you tell another mature Māori student, male or female, 'it's alright to be, to do this....' [When it goes against everything] that I've been taught. That I've been brought up to be... to understand. 'You are not the most important person in our iwi, or in our hapū, we all do this together'. Yeah. And just the togetherness. The Whānau. Whakawhanaungatanga – Kahuirangi*

For all the women in this study, whānau continued to play a pivotal role in the ability to make sense of what was occurring and the motivation to continue their university education.

## **Whakapapa Whānau**

Whānau is the central unit of Māori society bound by collective and reciprocal obligations and responsibilities (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). Whakapapa whānau is the kinship connection between members achieved through a common ancestor (Pihama & Penehira, 2005). A kaupapa whānau is the connection made between its members by a common goal or purpose (Durie, 2003; Pihama & Penehira, 2005). As a cultural institution and in the context of whānau and whanaungatanga, the fundamental purpose and principle of whānau is manaakitanga and the ability to contribute individually to the care and overall wellbeing of its member (L. T. Smith, 2005; Durie, 2006). The extent or ability to express manaakitanga reflected the status a whānau has in traditional and contemporary times. These values have been passed on through generations and the practice of these values ensure whānau connections and maintains the integrity and reproduction of Māori culture (Pihama & Penehira, 2005). For the women in this study, not being able to give primacy to these values contributed to their feeling of cultural dissonance in the first year.

*Because if you were brought up like that continuously.... I watched my Nan do it. I watched my mum and dad do it. I've watched my brothers and sisters do it. I've done it. It's been a legacy that's ongoing and will continue. And I think because we don't want to lose that Whakawhanaungatanga within Māoridom, we don't teach our kids to be individual. It's ok to like they can go off and buy a house, and have a family and stuff like that. But they're never disconnected. And I think that's what I felt. I felt a disconnection. Am I disconnecting myself from being Māori? That's wrong! Am I disconnecting from being Māori. Cause this is like. Real like ... like tapu to do something like this. Because our people don't do it - Kahuirangi*

As a result of trying to balance their studies with their whānau and work responsibilities, mature Māori women may perceive a greater sense of obligation and duty to their whānau than required (Jefferies, 1997; Williams, 2010). The tension between fulfilling roles, expectations and responsibilities as mothers and also as students became an emotional battle for the women in this study.

*So when that opportunity came [to study], I liked the idea, but I wasn't that sure about leaving my family, that's really how it was for me - Kay*

*And to actually say no. 'No, no, I'm not going out tonight, I'm not going out with you and the kids to the park, cause that will just give me an hour.' Oh.... It's that catch 22 - Adele*

*I've watched other mature Māori students do it. And they find it really hard. 'Oh, I've got to go home early today cause my mokopuna's are coming because my girls sick or she starts work at three, so I've gotta try fit my.... You know'. Still sacrificing.... To maintain that role of nurture... - Kahuirangi*

To ensure study time was an important function in their lives some of the women adjusted their home life by sharing the responsibilities of the home amongst the family, which became beneficial to whānau members as well as supportive of those studying. By sharing the load and knowing their children were taken care of helped relieve concerns for the studying mothers.

*Because I still had that sort of, 'how are my kids doing' and you know, forget that I needed to go and do this for me and learn. It was nice that we, dad and I, were able to go to work together and have that time and then he'd go to work, I'd go study and after my classes,*

*studying till it was time to pick him up, come home. You kids had accepted the responsibilities that you were given and so that made it a lot easier for me you know. You knew that you had to do certain things before we got home. You learnt to tell the time very quickly and very well, which if I hadn't have moved out, I'd still be doing all those things for you and not teaching you kids how to be independent – Kay*

As adult students, some of the women in this study were responsible for the financial support of their families while they studied and often found themselves with a heavier load of juggling work, study and whānau responsibilities. The Government policy changes to student allowances based on age will compound the financial pressure some of the women already experience. For some of the women in this study, being the first in the family to study at university meant they often felt isolated and alone due to not being able to share the academic workload, expectation or knowledge with whānau.

*If you come from a whānau where nobody has studied, as an adult you don't have... They can't support you, they feel like they can't support you because; 'we don't know what you're talking about' you know? And then you feel, for me and again as a mature Māori student, being whakamā, being ashamed, being embarrassed - Kahuirangi*

### **Kaupapa Whānau (Uni Whānau)**

The whānau unit is a model that maintains Māori identity through providing a sense of belonging and safe space to be Māori (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). The shared cultural capital of Māori students at university created a kaupapa whānau that crossed academic disciplines, gender, age, and hapū and iwi boundaries. Traditional structures and frameworks of support found within whānau and in the process of whanaungatanga established and maintained the contemporary Māori 'Uni whānau' (Durie, 2006; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Pihama & Penehira, 2005). The absence of whakapapa whānau on campus meant some women in this study turned to a kaupapa whānau to assist in the transition and socialisation process of student life.

*I think I do that every day. I think with my culture, my values and my beliefs, as a Māori, is the whanaungatanga. And now that I'm not so whakamā, oh probably the end of the first semester that was me, I was out, loud and proud that I'm struggling and I need help. So it was kind of that networking like how you do in a kitchen at a marae. You know you can go anywhere in New Zealand and as long as you know how to wash dishes, or peel spuds, or*

*something like that, you can walk into a kitchen and say 'kia ora whānau, is there anything I can help you with?' and they'll say 'no, it's alright' or 'do you want to peel the spuds', 'yeah'. And immediately that network has started, and more people will come into the network. That's exactly how our Uni whānau works. So I think that my culture for that has been the same. Utilising that whanaungatanga, whakawhanaungatanga. Definitely. – Kahuirangi*

The confrontation of competition and individualistic values experienced at university caused initial withdrawal and loneliness for some of the women as they tried to understand the tension they felt. The emphasis on the individual in western culture at university challenged some of the women as they began to question their initial intentions to study raised by the conflict they were feeling. The kaupapa whānau helped women make sense of their experience and desires to attend tertiary education by viewing university through a Māori collective worldview.

*I think first semester is totally lonely, I think it's like being on an island by yourself, in a dingy with all the sharks circling you. That's what it's like. I think in the first semester, it was really hard to utilise your Māoridom. "Why can't it be just like a marae and go into the kitchen and 'hey...'. Because it's not like that. We're not all the same here. And we're only in very small numbers but together we're strong because it feels like you're a whānau. Yeah. Maybe we're all a little bit like that, because in there we say how we identify and how Māori's are drawn to Māori's. Maybe we're looking for that 'it's alright', because we'll all stick together and be our own hapū and that gives us that permission, that we'll just do it all together. We're not individuals – Kahuirangi*

In the UK, mature female students avoided the role of parenting or leadership in study groups as was often socially expected by their younger peers (O'Boyle, 2014). In complete contrast, the women in this study often initiated nurturing roles amongst their Uni whānau and wider student peers. Being a 'uni mum' included a search for younger Māori students who appeared lost. Kahuirangi recalls gathering younger Māori students in to the Uni whānau;

*'You look how standoffish they are, they do it as a collective, just them together And I've been down and said to them, "come up by us if you's need any help, and stuff like that you's are feeling a bit whakamā or a bit lonely, come up and join our table. We don't judge, we're just whānau. We're not related, but you know how it is". That's what I said. "Don't sit down here and struggle by yourself cause it will get really lonely, and when you're lonely you*

*start feeling dumb, incomplete, you can't do it. You start doubting yourself. Come upstairs to us - Kahuirangi*

These women were also called upon to share their life experience and knowledge with younger students.

*They'd come to me saying, 'just need a little advice here cause you know', and it wasn't that I knew everything, it was just simply that I'd had the experience and they wanted to know what it meant for me. And so, well you just be a friend. You just help who you can along the way don't you - Kay*

*I think the greatest part I did play was I was able to share experiences that none of them have had. So, classic example was a case study where, they felt that they didn't have all the information to make the decision they needed to make, and I went on about my experiences 'some cases you will not, but you will still need to make a decision and you have to just go with the best of your knowledge, the skills at hand, whatever other knowledge, and seek, and you still have to make a decision'. So I think I was able in the classes to articulate my own life experiences and say 'that happens in real life people – Raiha*

Each woman in this study had a different experience of whanaungatanga during their studies. Whaea Em studied and lived with a group of other mature Māori women comprised of whakapapa and kaupapa whānau from the same iwi which provided vital off-campus whanaungatanga for the women. Whaea Em's unique experience highlights the bonds of whānau that for Māori transcend western ideologies of family and genealogy that provided her with a sense of belonging and support.

*If I didn't have the whānau, the Māori women I was with, I don't think I could've lasted and I believe some of the others felt the same, because we all knew what whānau was about, but other people didn't know. Other people would go, 'she can't be your relation, like, she lives in Gisborne, you live in Wairoa'. 'Yeah?' They don't understand that we link because we're Rongowhakaata. And I honestly don't know that I would've managed otherwise - Whaea Em*

Both the whakapapa and the kaupapa whānau provided an environment that meant academic discussion of their daily learning from a Māori worldview was safe and supported. Whaea Em's experience is indicative of the support that Māori women can give each other

based on the shared experiences they have as students.

*Often you would put the question on the table and someone else would say, 'yeah that's what I was thinking you know...' and you'd think 'oh, I'm not so dumb after all'. It was amazing, and I think that's what led me on, being in that group. I think that if more Māori women had a similar experience of being together in a group that you were familiar with and studying the same things and you can get on.... You know I think that's what got me through. It's really scary going to the varsity on the first day, but it was really good because at least I had a few mates - Whaea Em*

### **Strength from Within Whānau and Within Self**

Cram and Kennedy (2010) highlight the concept of 'au' in 'whānau' and provide insight as to where Māori women source their strength. The interdependence and reciprocal relationships within whānau suggests the wellbeing and stability of the collective identity is founded on the wellbeing and stability of the identity as individuals (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). Strong individual identity as Māori women enabled the women in this study to give strength and receive strength from within multiple forms of whānau who supported their first year experiences. These women drew on life experience and whānau relationships, as strategies to overcome first year challenges. In this way their strength came through by challenging potential negative experiences and by using the successes they had experienced in the past.

*I wasn't afraid of change. I was afraid of embarrassing myself when I got there, it was more that and made to feel belittled. And whether that's subconscious of schools sitting there, actually I think, now you're making me think about it, I think that's what it is. I think, sometimes you have to repeat an experience to change the experience to help to deal with it, to make it better. So I suppose, it's a perfect example of, I can still hear the teacher putting me down. But now with study all I hear is, if I'm saying 'I'm really struggling, I don't know if I can do this... you know what, let's take a step back and let's see where, where you started to not know what's going on Adele'...'really?'...'yeah, its ok....', 'oh'. It's changing that process. That I'm ok – Adele*

Their combined life experienced had helped the women draw on their previous experiences of challenge and adversity in order to reinforce their knowledge, abilities and their drive to achieve.



*But it is that, you're trying so hard and you're so determined to do it that. You just keep pushing yourself. Because you're older, because you've had more life experience you just keep... I can do this, I can do this, I can do this. Life's not going to break me – Kahuirangi*

Drawing on their whānau histories of female ancestors as role models also provided some of the women the strength to approach the new challenges they faced.

*I don't know if being a Māori, with the cultural background if we go back, has given me the strength. I like to think it has. I get very proud knowing that we were the fighters in our tribe and the women didn't sit down. She got involved with the war as well. Even though I hate war. It's just that whole 'yeah'. That strength. So if that's all part of the genealogy pool. I'm going to take that and use that – Adele*

The visibility of other mature Māori women on campus who were also studying or tutoring, supporting and lecturing challenged previous perceptions held by the participants in this study and instead provided them with positive role models as a source of collective strength. As Smith contends, Māori women as educators are role models for Māori women as students (L. T. Smith, 2005).

*I've learnt that not every Māori woman comes from my background, in which all the Māori women I've worked with do come from my background, and none of them are academic. And yet I've come into university and I've met so many academic Māori women. You know, so it's like I've seen another side of Māori women - Raiha*

Finding strength from their whānau also helped the women in this study understand the conflict they experienced in their first year. Returning to the key principles of whānau and whanaungatanga became a source of strength that supported and motivated them to carry on secure in the identity as Māori women.

*But now... in saying that. I'm not here as an individual because doing the reflection with my brother and sisters and just being at the whare and seeing my tupuna and going to the urupā. I thought about um, what my dad, and my grandparents and stuff like that. And looking even beyond them and what they've done so that my grandmother, so that we could, so that our kids can. You know I feel all of them with me. My brothers and sisters, my kids, all my nieces, my whole whānau with me now. Not as a weight, but as a support unit. That, I'm*

*not just doing this for me. Yeah. That's I've identified who I am. That I know who I am. Without being an individual and without feeling guilty for coming to university. Actually I come to represent us, altogether, not as an individual. I'm coming to represent for my people. For my whānau for my people. You know for us as Māori. Like I've given myself permission to do it. Or I've got their permission to do it. But I had to do it all, like I had to go to the marae... I had to go to the urupā. I had to talk to my brothers and sisters, just to kind and get my footing.... And understand it – Kahuirangi*

## **Conclusion**

Chapter five looked at the formal education experienced by the women throughout their lives as students. Cultural dissonance was a major contributor to the conflict or tension that was experienced by the women as mature students. Collective cultural values of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga that were taught in childhood were used to support the women through the cultural and personal challenges they faced. The concept of whānau became a framework that anchored the women throughout the first year at university.

In chapter six, the thesis aims are reviewed and the key findings of the first year university experiences of the women in this study are discussed. Recommendations and areas for future research are also offered.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter six begins by revisiting the aims of this thesis, the major themes that emerged to highlight the key findings of the first year university experiences of the women in this study. Discussion on the key findings and contributions this thesis can make to existing literature will follow. Recommendations from findings will also be addressed.

#### Thesis Aims

The aim of this thesis was to explore the experiences of five mature Māori women in their first year of study at a university in Aotearoa. Based on a series of interviews, the purpose of this study was to determine what challenges were presented to them in a new learning environment and what the first year university experiences as students were like from a mature Māori woman's perspective.

#### Key Findings

Emerging themes from this study provided key findings regarding first year university experiences of mature Māori women. Māori values and practices of manaakitanga, whānau and whanaungatanga played important roles in their identity as Māori identity, as well as in the pursuit, motivation and support of their tertiary studies. There was a strong desire by the women to contribute to and promote the wellbeing of whānau, hapū, and iwi by learning new knowledge that empowered them to continue their studies despite the challenges they faced. As mature students, the first year entailed transitioning from strong positions the women held based on life experience and prior knowledge to an educational environment where they knew very little about the new knowledge and environment. Initially, negative childhood experiences of education and schooling influenced the women's expectations of university life. However, the reality of their experiences at university challenged their expectations. Maturity and life experience became tools that enabled the women to make sense of their new student life, being better able to identify, resist and transform the challenges they faced. The varying degrees of cultural dissonance they experienced at university, in part as a result of the effects of colonisation on their upbringing, was moderated by the Māori values, practices and interactions of manaakitanga, whānau and whanaungatanga that they replicated on campus. These practices resulted in the establishment of whānau support groups which anchored their cultural identity amid an environment that did not value Māori culture, language or worldview.

For these women, the ability to practice Māori values was an important way to maintain cultural connections through manaakitanga and whanaungatanga without being fluent speakers of te reo Māori.

Educational policies in Aotearoa have had multi-generational effects on the educational experiences, expectations and aspirations of Māori. These mature Māori women live within the generations of Māori who have had relatively negative experiences within compulsory education systems.

## **Discussion**

### **First year experience**

During their first year of university, all the women experienced a degree of cultural dissonance, a feeling of conflict between their Māori cultural values and that of the university's culture which unsettled their efforts to adjust to the new educational environment. They had negative experiences of childhood education and schooling that underpinned most of the expectations of university prior to entering their studies. However, this study found that the reality of their first year experiences contradicted the women's initial expectations of university and weakened some of the barriers to their academic learning and success. Confronted by new western academic knowledge, theories, methods, ideologies and jargon the women talked about beginning a journey of self-discovery, of solidifying their prior knowledge about themselves and the role their culture plays in their identity as Māori women. Graham Smith (2003) articulates the type of journey which women in this study experienced as "a confrontation with the colonizer and a confrontation with ourselves" (p.3). The degree of confrontation they experienced reflects the differing degree of impact colonisation played in the lives of the women beginning with the way in which they were raised as children. However, their journey of confrontation was not necessarily an experience filled with regret or anger. Those who were 'raised Pākehā' did not feel as much dissonance or confrontation within the university setting because the environment was 'more familiar' to their upbringing. While the women who were 'raised Māori' however, experienced more confrontation with the tertiary environment as the cultural dissonance was greater. Cultural dissonance at university was experienced differently by each of the women and subsequently affected the time it took each of them to orientate themselves within their learning environment.

### **Challenges of a new environment**

The ability of the women to cope and complete their first year at university was challenged by the fears and anxieties associated with childhood education and schooling which

caused elements of self-doubt. Overwhelmed sometimes by new knowledge, theory and ideologies, their confrontation with academic jargon, language and knowledge challenged prior and well established ways of life and knowledge with which these women entered their studies. Their struggles to have their cultural values and prior knowledge recognized within the institution had the potential to inhibit their learning, and caused some of the women to experience isolation and loneliness. Balancing their study workload with existing responsibilities of work and whānau required constant negotiation and re-evaluating.

### **Being a mature Māori woman**

Much like their tīpuna of the past, the mature Māori women in this study also pursued western education to contribute to the overall survival and wellbeing of their whānau, hapū and iwi. Likewise, this meant learning the new language, knowledge, tools and technology they were exposed to, that also needed to be acquired. The women still take their role in contributing to the wellbeing of their whānau very seriously and will put aside personal fears, anxieties and challenges to promote the collective wellbeing of whānau by individually re-positioning themselves in order to do so. On this collectivist premise, mature Māori women are entering tertiary education to fulfil their whānau obligations and responsibilities. Their motivation to help empower and better the lives of whānau, hapū and iwi became part of a 'treading water' strategy in the first year experience of these women. Gradually becoming more familiar with their learning environment, the women were eventually able to engage more with their learning. In becoming more aware of what they did not previously know, their desire for learning and gaining more knowledge increased as their study progressed. Though confrontation with cultural values were always present, navigation of their university experience included seeking academic and cultural support from whakapapa and kaupapa whānau to 'translate' and make sense of the student experience from a Māori worldview. Due to their nurturing roles as Māori women, contributions to whakapapa and kaupapa whānau provided a cultural anchor to their established identity as Māori women. Defaulting to the cultural position of whānau and whanaungatanga provided the women with a sense of stability and familiarity that offered them the strength to move forward. The women were able to draw on previous life experiences and, contribute to the collective knowledge in whānau maintaining tikanga practices of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. The women were also able to assist with the socialisation of other Māori students within the kaupapa whānau at university by sharing their life experiences to support academic navigation from a Māori worldview. Such contributions to a university based kaupapa whānau as well as whakapapa whānau reinforced the idea that Māori values can be replicated successfully even without

many of the women being fluent in te reo Māori. Fluency in te reo does not mean a lack of authenticity as Māori. In fact these women were able to feel validated as Māori through their ability to practice tikanga Māori in their everyday life including at university.

Māori identity is more than Māori ancestry or the ability to korero Māori fluently. Their established identity as Māori women supported their ability to be confident as Māori independent of their ability to speak te reo Māori. According to the women, proficiency in te reo Māori was not viewed as an imperative criteria to define an authentic identity as Māori. The women maintained that traditional roles and values that were practiced and lived, validated their authenticity. The stability of an established identity over years of life experience supported the women's navigation of unfamiliar territory in tertiary education. Huia Tomlins-Jahnke (2002) suggests identity security provides confidence for Māori women to act in their wider communities. This would explain the women's attitude to press forward with their studies even though they were challenged by past fears, anxieties and new cultural values and environment. According to Bennett (2001) stability has been correlated to academic success at university and is often determined during the course of academic study. However, in this study, an identity as a mature Māori woman, in all its diversity, appears established by this stage in life. Furthermore, the impact of identity on academic success, at least for these women in this study, is more about the tension between the value bases of identity and the institution as opposed to establishing who they are. Women who were or have been denied access to te reo have simply embraced other aspects of their culture that demonstrate their authenticity. Māori language is a unique marker of Māori identity and Māori culture, but it is not the only marker of a Māori identity.

Drawing on their prior experiences of life strengthened the women's confidence in their ability to face and overcome the challenges of university life. Life lessons and maturity that underpinned the women's support strategies enabled them to utilise their experiential knowledge to solve problems and eventually to resist succumbing to fears of self-doubt. Repositioning themselves through understanding the cause and negative impact of their childhood educational experiences empowered the women to challenge their expectations and assumptions of their university experience. Understanding their personal confrontation with colonisation, repositioned and empowered the women of this study to continue their studies in order to benefit their whānau and others as they initially intended.

## **Conclusion**

Assumptions cannot be made that all Māori are the same or that all Māori speak te reo Māori. Unlike Māori scholars of the past, many contemporary mature Māori women are less

likely to be fluent speakers of te reo Māori. The absence of te reo does not lessen the value of their cultural contribution to the wellbeing of whānau and maintenance of Māori values and tikanga Māori. This study highlights the invaluable contribution mature Māori women make with their cultural capital and the important role they play in western tertiary education systems and institutions that stand as role models for other Māori students and their wellbeing. The significance in the growing literature that supports the validity of subjective markers of Māori identity means this study contributes to a broader conceptual understanding of Te Ao Māori and Māori identity for those who do not speak Māori.

The first year university experiences of the mature Māori women in this study, though filled with much anxiety and past fears, provided self-discovery that awakened their political consciousness and the yearning for more knowledge as a means to contribute to the future wellbeing of whānau, hapū, iwi and others within society. Upbringing is one factor that influences the subjective interpretation of Māori identity (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). The diversity in upbringing and socialisation within whānau experienced by Māori today, explains in part the fluidity within Māori identity formation. Cultural values such as whānau, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga play important roles for Māori at university both on and off campus. This includes access to cultural support and practices for Māori students which contribute to greater participation and academic achievement at university. This is especially significant given that education is still a continuing site of struggle for Māori, because of the monocultural practices that alienate and homogenise Māori.

The lived reality of the women in this study of their first year at university and their ability to be able to make sense of their experience, repositioned them as Māori women actively engaged in transformative action that served to liberate them, their whānau, hapū and iwi.

## **Recommendations**

Given the increasing numbers of mature Māori women entering tertiary education at bachelor degree level, more cultural support needs to be put in place to minimise the negative effects of cultural dissonance that many will experience. Provision on university campus for cultural space, support and practice that reinforces a Māori worldview is important for mature Māori women who as a majority group, may identify as Māori fluent in Māori values and not necessarily fluent in te reo Māori. This is not the first study to identify this need within western tertiary institutions (Bennett, 2001; Coombes, 2006; Earle, 2007; Masters et al., 2004; Nikora et al., 2002; Selby, 1996; Williams, 2010). The effects of not adhering to the growing number of similar recommendations will see the continued decline in Māori participation, Māori student retention and academic achievement of Māori in western institutions of higher



learning in Aotearoa. Mature Māori women also need Māori student whānau, as taking on the role of nurturer in a kaupapa whānau allows the continuation of relational benefits of reciprocity in the absence of their whakapapa whānau. While not a target cohort, support to mature Māori women to meet the challenges they face, will indirectly support the success of governmental policies and strategies aimed at decreasing the attrition rate and increasing the participation and retention of the younger Māori student cohort the Government is currently targeting.

Recent government changes to financial assistance for all mature students creates financial insecurity that limits or disadvantages tertiary education participation for mature Māori women based on age. For mature Māori women, policy changes must be made to secure future access to tertiary education that ensures their ability to contribute to the retention of future Māori students during their own studies, and the wellbeing of their whānau, hapū and iwi once their studies have been completed.

## Glossary

Māori to English word translations have been made in relation to their usage in this thesis. I acknowledge that there is often more than one translation or meaning associated with te reo Māori. These translations were sourced through Te Aka online Māori dictionary (Moorfield, 2015).

<b>Ako</b>	To learn or to teach
<b>Aotearoa</b>	Commonly used as Māori word for New Zealand
<b>Au</b>	Self, I or me
<b>Hui</b>	To meet, gather, or a gathering
<b>Hapū</b>	Tribal relations or grouping of whānau connected by kinship to a common ancestor
<b>Iwi</b>	Extension of existing whānau groupings of hapū within a geographical area
<b>Kai</b>	Food or sustenance
<b>Kanohi ki te kanohi</b>	Face to Face, an expression used to describe contact or communication in person
<b>Karakia</b>	Incantation, chant or prayer
<b>Kaupapa Māori</b>	An approach, topic, practice, agenda, ideology or institution that upholds Māori worldview
<b>Kete</b>	A basket or kit
<b>Koha</b>	A gift or offering used to maintain or recognise relationships
<b>Kōrero</b>	To speak, explain or address. An account, discussion or information
<b>Kura Kaupapa</b>	Māori medium primary school
<b>Māori</b>	Indigenous person/people of Aotearoa
<b>Mana</b>	Prestige, authority, power or influence of an individual, group, place or object
<b>Manaakitanga</b>	Generosity, support, hospitality and care of or for others
<b>Pākehā</b>	New Zealander of European descent
<b>Rangatiratanga</b>	Chiefly right to exercise authority and sovereignty. Autonomy and self-determination
<b>Rohe</b>	Region, area or district with set boundaries
<b>Taonga tuku iho</b>	A treasure or heirloom handed down from one generation to another

<b>Tapu</b>	Sacred, forbidden, set apart
<b>Tīpuna</b>	Ancestor, grandparents
<b>Tika</b>	Correct, upright or true
<b>Tikanga</b>	Procedure, process, way, custom, practice
<b>Te reo Māori</b>	The Māori language
<b>Te Kōhanga Reo</b>	Māori medium pre-school
<b>Tohunga</b>	A specifically chosen person, expert in a certain field who Mediates between atua and the tribe often using karakia and Ritual based practices
<b>Urupā</b>	Burial ground, cemetery
<b>Wāhine</b>	Female, women
<b>Wānanga</b>	Learning – of traditional cultural customs and knowledge
<b>Whaikorero</b>	A formal speech, oratory given in cultural contexts
<b>Whakapapa</b>	Lineage or ancestry
<b>Whānau</b>	To be born. Grouping of people by kinships or purpose
<b>Whanaungatanga</b>	The relationship, sense of connection or belonging resulting from responsibilities towards, and support of each other
<b>Whakawhanaungatanga</b>	The process of establishing and maintaining relationships
<b>Whāngai</b>	Raised by others within whānau/hapū ties
<b>Whare</b>	House or residence
<b>Whare Kura</b>	Māori medium school
<b>Whenua</b>	Land

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# Appendices

## ***Appendix 1: Information Sheet for Participants***



Massey University  
Private Bag 102-904  
North Shore Mail Centre  
Auckland,  
New Zealand

## ***First-year University experiences of mature wāhine Māori students***

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Ko Tamatea te maunga  
Ko Hokianga te moana  
Ko Ngātokimatawhaorua te waka  
Ko Tamatea te whare tupuna  
Ko Te Rarawa te iwi  
Ko Ngāi Tamatea te hapū  
Ko Waimate Anaru te tangata  
Ko Megan Fitzpatrick ahau

Tēnā koe, I am doing my Masters thesis in Educational Psychology at Massey University under the supervision of Professor Huia Tomlins-Jahnke (Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Kahungunu) and Dr Jeanette Berman. If you have any questions you can contact me directly 027 2989633 or if you would like to speak with either Huia or Jeanette, they can be contacted through Massey University on 0800 MASSEY (0800 627739).

### WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research aims to explore the first-year university experiences of mature wāhine Māori students. This study will investigate why you chose to study now and how your first year at university went; what challenges the new environment presented to you as a mature wāhine Māori, and what role being a mature wāhine Māori plays in first-year experiences.

### HOW AM I DOING THE STUDY AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR YOU?

This study uses semi-structured in-depth interviews which allows you to share your experiences guided by questions that may invite memories or experiences that you may not have thought about for a while. The case study interviews will be in two phases. The first interview is to ask you about your first-year experiences at a university student as a mature wāhine Māori. An initial interview will take up to an hour at a place that you feel comfortable in and if you agree, will be electronically recorded and later transcribed. The second interview is a follow-up interview where I ask you to review the written transcripts of your first interview and invite you to extend upon or add further information. The second interview will be conducted within 4 months of your first interview. We will meet again to make sure the shared meaning and understanding I have gleaned from your interview is accurate and you are

happy with what was recorded. Participant identity will be kept confidential unless you choose to be identified. At no time should you feel obligated for any reason to participate in this research and can freely withdraw at any time should you decide to participate.

#### WHY AM I DOING THE RESEARCH?

It is hoped this study will give voice to the many courageous mature Māori women who enter university for the first time later in life bringing with them a wealth of prior knowledge and life experience. This information can be used to better assist Universities and teaching staff in meeting the specific needs of mature wāhine Māori that will better support their journey to academic success. It is hoped that the outcome of the research will indicate to the government policy makers that mature wāhine Māori should be included in policies that promote higher education in Aotearoa. This study will support the growing number of studies that validate the unique voice and narratives of wāhine Māori with integrity and mana in response to traditional western discourses which suppress.

#### HOW WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM MY STUDY?

This is an opportunity to take part in research that will benefit future wāhine Māori tertiary students, especially those who return to study later in life. Your involvement will give voice to the high numbers of mature wāhine Māori students who will have to study with no government financial assistance because of their age. You will also help universities and academic staff by sharing your experiences and demonstrating how such experiences differ from other student cohorts; what you offer by way of life experience that can benefit and enrich you, your peers and your lecturers' learning and teaching.

#### WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM ME – THE RESEARCHER

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form agreeing to participate. You are under no obligation to participate, participation is strictly voluntary. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time if you so wish. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to and can ask me any questions at any time. Your experiences will be held in confidence to be viewed only by myself and my supervisors. A typed copy of the summary of the research findings will be provided to you at the conclusion of the project.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given a typed copy of the summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

So, if you are a mature female student (aged 30 years or older) at a New Zealand university, who identifies as Māori and have completed your first year of academic study and are interested in taking part or have any questions, please contact me. Thank you for your participation.

***This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 15/12. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Prof Julie Boddy, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 86055, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)***

Megan Fitzpatrick

School of Educational Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North

Phone: 027 2989633

Email: [f.m.fitz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:f.m.fitz@xtra.co.nz)

## ***Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form***



Massey University  
Private Bag 102-904  
North Shore Mail Centre  
Auckland,  
New Zealand

### ***First-year University experiences of mature wāhine Māori***

#### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....

**Appendix 3: Authority for Release of Transcript**



Massey University  
Private Bag 102-904  
North Shore Mail Centre  
Auckland,  
New Zealand

***First-year University experiences of mature  
wāhine Māori***

**AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS**

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from the interview may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Full Name - printed** .....

## **Appendix 4: Interview Schedule**



Massey University  
Private Bag 102-904  
North Shore Mail Centre  
Auckland,  
New Zealand

### ***First-year University experiences of mature wāhine Māori***

#### **Interview Schedule**

*Researcher: Megan Fitzpatrick, Masters Candidate, Educational Psychology  
Massey University, New Zealand*

As the researcher, I would value knowing your first-year experiences as a mature wāhine Māori student at University. For the purposes of this research, this case study is being undertaken to explore *a) What the first-year university experience is like for a mature wāhine Māori; b) What challenges the new environment presents to mature wāhine Māori and; c) What the role of being mature wāhine Māori plays in first-year university experience.*

The case study interviews will be in two phases. The first interview is to ask you about your first-year experiences at a university student as a mature wāhine Māori. The second interview is a follow-up interview where I ask you to review the written transcripts of your first interview and invite you to extend upon or add further information. The second interview will be conducted within 4 months of your first interview. If you have any queries, please feel free to contact me at email: [f.m.fitz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:f.m.fitz@xtra.co.nz).



## ***Appendix 5: Interview Questions***

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What were you doing before you began your university study?

Why did you choose to study last year?

Did the reality of student/university life match your expectation?

What challenges did your new environment present to you?

What was the hardest thing for you to adapt to?

In what ways did your prior knowledge assist your transition into the new environment of tertiary education?

Tell me about the role your life experience has played in your study and learning

In what way did being a mature student impact your study and university experience?

How was being a mature wāhine Māori possibly different to your peers?

What if any role did you feel you played in your student community?

Is there anything else you would like to share?