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

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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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“Make sure they get a good education, so they can be in the best place to do the most good to help others”.

I hope all you kids are listening to Papa. I am.

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