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“I don’t think I would have made it through that first year without the Tuākana programme”

A Technical Report for the Faculty of Arts, Equity Office

by

David Tokiharu Mayeda, Hilary Dansey Dutton, 'Ilaisa-Futa-Helu 'Ofamo'oni, & Moeata Keil

February 2014

WHY WE CONDUCTED THIS STUDY AND WROTE THIS REPORT

We hear it enough in our courses. We see it enough in the mainstream media. “Māori are X% of this.” “Pacific peoples tend to lack that.” We notice the dearth of Māori and Pacific cultural and political perspectives incorporated into the university’s coursework. Building off of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Konai Helu Thaman writes that what’s presented over and over is the deficit model, where “indigenous peoples’ perspectives have been silenced, misrepresented, ridiculed, and even condemned in the academic as well as popular discourses” (p. 10).

And it is not just that Māori and Pacific people are portrayed across Aotearoa New Zealand in ways that are particularly harmful. Additionally, the deficit model perpetuates an unhealthy legacy of colonialism, whereby indigenous peoples are characterized as dependent, deviant, irresponsible, or problematic in some other way, and are therefore in need of the colonial administration’s ongoing guidance (Loto et al., 2006). Enough already!

While disparities exist that should not be ignored, there needs to be a more balanced approach in our lecture theatres and classrooms that accounts for (A) the colonial forces that lead to racialised disparities, (B) the existing successes in spite of colonial history, and (C) a culturally-embedded, indigenous sovereignty over the curricula. It is with this spirit that we conducted this study and authored this report for the Faculty of Arts Tuākana programme.

Yes, Māori and Pacific students are under-represented in tertiary studies, but heaps of Māori and Pacific students are making it to university, graduating, earning advanced degrees, contributing positively to society, and doing so without shedding their cultural values. This report is about privileging Māori and Pacific students’ voices here at The University of Auckland who are achieving high marks and serving as positive role models. As you will see, Māori and Pacific student voices structure much of this report.

Taking a broader indigenous perspective, we firmly believe that scholarship on education in a colonial setting must be conducted in ways that “seek the student voices and respect Aboriginal oral tradition as a valid way of knowledge” (Oloo, 2007, p. 98), knowing that within an academic setting research is not done simply for the sake of knowledge production. Rather, research with indigenous peoples is connected to social justice and tangible change (Smith, 2013). In short, this report is also about learning from Māori and Pacific student voices in hopes of extending a positive trend that sees increased educational excellence.
What we mean by indigenous

Māori are the tangata whenua of Aotearoa. However, in some ways the Māori identity is a postcolonial construct. Kukutai (2004) reminds us that Māori are a highly heterogeneous population, but “for reasons of history and contemporary politics, public policy tends to treat them as homogenous” (p. 87). Furthermore, prior to European contact, a homogenous Māori category was essentially non-existent, and even today, Māori frequently identify strongly with their respective iwi. Hence, it is important to remember the extensive diversity that exists within “the” Māori grouping, both historically and in present time.

Thinking more abstractly, indigeneity also reflects a political consciousness of colonial resistance. Coombes (2013) writes that “Indigenous peoples are not a natural category but rather a political category; thus, Indigenous identities are social constructs that emerge from interactions with colonizing others…. Indigenous identities form in opposition to colonial norms of citizenship” (p. 74). This is a sensibility indigenous people have worldwide. With reference to Canada, St. Denis (2007) adds that “Aboriginal people are no longer – as if they ever were – a homogenous Aboriginal people, but what does tie us together is a common experience with colonization and racialization” (p. 1087).

To this end, the nation-state of New Zealand and its political relationships with certain Pacific nations must also be considered. The Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau all have legal ties to New Zealand; Samoa is a former New Zealand colony (Coxon & Mara, 2000). And like Māori in Aotearoa, diverse Pacific peoples (from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, and Vanuatu) have had to cope with European imposition, whether that be via traditional colonialism, neo-colonialism, or in most cases, both.

Hence, one identity that brings Māori and Pacific students together as indigenous under the Tuākana programme is shared experiences with colonialism and racialisation. In addition, Māori and Pacific communities tend to share broad cultural norms that value community, collectivity and quality relationships (Ka‘ili, 2005; Vaioleti, 2006). It is with these inclusive principals in mind that we embrace a kind of pan-ethnic Māori and Pacific identity under the Tuākana whānau.

What study are we talking about?

Between January and April 2013 we conducted 17 focus group interviews that included 90 Māori and Pacific students attending The University of Auckland. Participants had earned a B- or higher grade point average in semester 2, 2012; most had GPAs much higher than that. Our study’s main objective was to identify the factors that contributed to these participants’ academic success, though participants took the discussions in an array of different directions. Without any provoking by the research team, Tuākana’s importance was highlighted time and again by participants as a key factor in their educational success, as were related programmes such as the Māori and Pacific Admission Scheme (MAPAS) in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences.

Study participants included a mix of Māori and Pacific students across all University of Auckland faculties, though a majority were Māori, female, undergraduates, and Arts students. A breakdown of all 90 participants can be seen in Table 1, following page:

“It was kind of hard for me just because, my family aren’t here with me… and so I was just here by myself and I thought I would just, I honestly thought I would just crash and not do well at all in the first semester, but I just kept myself really busy and I had a lot of support from things like SPIES for engineering and the Tuākana group at commerce.”

- Cook Island undergraduate female, Engineering
Focus group discussions lasted approximately 60 minutes, were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed by the research team. A more detailed description of the research methods can be seen in this report’s Appendix.

Our research team is comprised of four people. David Mayeda is a Sociology lecturer of Japanese and European ancestry, who conducted research with Hawaiian and Samoan communities before moving to Auckland in 2011; though not indigenous, the Japanese side of his family has lived in Hawai‘i for five generations. Hilary Dansey Dutton is a MA student in Education of Māori and Pākehā descent. 'Ilaisa-Futa-Helu 'Ofamo'oni (Futa) is a sociocultural Anthropology graduate of Tongan and New Zealand Pākehā heritage, pursuing his MSW (Social Work), and Moeata Keil is Samoan student, pursuing her MA degree in Sociology, born and raised in Samoa, though she has resided in Auckland the past ten years. Hilary and Futa are both from Auckland; Moeata and Futa have both worked as Tuākana mentors. We describe our research team only to note our social proximity to study participants, which we feel greatly enhanced the study’s validity and richness.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

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YOUR POTENTIAL AS A TuĀKANA: WHAT WE’RE UP AGAINST AND HOW YOU CAN RESPOND

Before delving into some of the study’s broader thematic results, it is important to emphasize how much participants valued the TuāKana programme as it related to their educational accomplishments. Again, these viewpoints were provided without prompting from the research team. In fact, because the research team consisted of two people who had a history with TuāKana, we made a deliberate decision not to ask about TuāKana at all, and only discussed the programme if participants raised it as a topic of discussion independently, making participants’ statements all the more impressive in demonstrating TuāKana’s effectiveness.

Recall that Māori and Pacific students tend to face an array of challenges, many of which are not immediately visible, especially once in a university setting. Māori and Pacific students more often attend lower decile primary and secondary schools, which technically may be better resourced than high decile schools, but ultimately face greater deprivation (Dale, 2000). And because learning is cumulative, learning in a deprived environment can have long-term consequences that accumulate. Other challenges Māori and Pacific students face within a western Education system:

♦ Māori and Pacific students may also need to balance university studies with heavy family responsibilities, religious commitments and/or work obligations.

“...that was a huge struggle for me. If I had to stay a little bit late [at uni], it was like, ‘Yeah you can stay but make sure you come home and you do all the housework before you get to sleep at 1:00am.’ Then [I had to] get up at 6:00am to come to uni. So that for me, it was hard and I think for me, specifically Pasifika young women who are my age, that’s common. That is so common.”
- Tongan undergraduate female, Arts

♦ They are more likely to be first generation university students, meaning parents and families may not be familiar with students’ workload.

“How long a degree takes, how many papers you have to do, what grades mean, how long assignments take, just pretty much the work content...’cause a lot of parents think that you have class at this time so you should be finished then and come straight home. They don’t really know the extra work.”
- Cook Island postgraduate male, Arts

♦ Sometimes computer access is complicated when a household has numerous family members.

“My family’s friend, we always go home late, and number one question they always ask us, ‘Why you home late?’ They don’t understand us having to need to be down there, and the computers at home, one computer cannot satisfy six different users.”
- Tongan undergraduate male, Arts

These are challenges you’ve probably heard before and should keep in mind as possible concerns when working with your teina.

And then there are things happening here at the university that we need to consider as well. We hear incessantly that Māori and Pacific students feel isolated, lonely, disconnected from the university. It is rare that Māori and Pacific students see their cultures represented in the curricula, especially in positive ways. And there are subtle, almost invisible forms of racism that occur, something we’ve called “everyday colonialism,” that have significant impacts on Māori and Pacific students. As a study participant said, “Especially for first years (students), first time here they feel lost. It’s a big place, a culture clash, all these factors just coming up at them at once” (Cook Island postgraduate male, Arts). As a TuāKana, you can help your teina work through these challenges.
Study participants expressed three broad themes that supported their educational success:

1. Role modelling and support through family and university staff
2. Teaching and learning practices that reflect Māori and Pacific cultural norms
3. An ability to cope with “everyday colonialism”

From these three larger thematic sets, we will draw out a number of sub-themes and provide tangible teaching tips for you to consider in your lesson planning. And remember, you have the opportunity to combat some of the unfortunate trends we see here across the university:

**Student 1:** “Did you guys see a big drop off from first year to second year?” (Māori undergraduate male, Education).

**Student 2:** “Oh bro, horrendous drop off, aye” (Māori undergraduate male, Education).

**Student 3:** “Yeah” (Tongan undergraduate male, Business).

**Student 2:** “And it was like, the Māori’s and the Islanders [group agreement] and it was males, especially in teaching, males drop out.”

**Student 4:** “Same in Nursing” (Māori undergraduate female, Medical & Health Sciences).

### ROLE MODELLING AND SUPPORT THROUGH FAMILY AND UNIVERSITY STAFF

Māori and Pacific staff are under-represented on campus. Māori represent 11.1% of the Auckland area (Auckland Council, 2011), but only 7.0% of all University of Auckland undergraduate students, 4.8% of all postgraduate students at the Masters level or below, 4.5% of all PhD level students, and 5.7% of all academic staff. Pacific peoples represent 14.4% of Auckland (Auckland Council, 2011), but only 8.9% of all undergraduate students, 4.9% of all postgraduate students Masters level or below, 2.7% of all PhD level students, and 2.4% of all academic staff (Mayeda, Keil, & Mills, 2012; University of Auckland, 2012). With respect to role modelling, it is particularly important to focus on academic and professional staff. The Māori and Pacific teaching and professional staff who are on campus were said by participants to be vital role models. However, their lack of numbers was an expressed concern. Fortunately, this concern was offset to some degree by role models from the Tuākana programme.

**“Being Islander, you naturally will go and invest in somebody else, or Māori as well. You never want it to just stop with you.”**

- Tongan undergraduate female, Arts

As a Tuākana you have the opportunity to support and inspire your teina; this is also your kuleana (responsibility). Victoria University of Wellington runs a similar programme to Tuākana for Māori and Pacific students. Like you, their mentors “are expected to be positive role models at all times, support one another, and provide leadership” (Wilson et al., 2011, p. 706).

**“One thing I was going to say...is about role models. It’s about having people in the years ahead of you. Seeing them I felt, that’s really helpful for me [other participants agree]. Seeing other people, being mentored by them...there’s other MAPAS students in years ahead and they try to get us to mix together throughout the MAPAS programme and I found that quite helpful, to be able to just talk to them and see how they’ve managed to get where they are.”**

- Cook Island undergraduate male, Medical & Health Sciences
Researcher: Any role models at the university?

Student 1: “Yeah the Tuākana mentors.... ‘Cause they’ve already succeeded and now they are helping us and they give you something to look up to, how they’ve achieved their degrees. It’s easier to follow in their footsteps” (Māori undergraduate male, Arts).

Student 2: “I just think because they’re not what you think of as a university tutor. They’re not like nerdy or anything; they are well rounded [group laughter]. They’re accomplished, but they also have real lives and are well rounded people, so you have to admire that” (Māori undergraduate female, Arts).

Student 3: “Yeah like [Tuākana’s name], she’s been through times that could’ve ended her studies but she’s back and she got her BA and now honours. Yeah and to see somebody that’s gone through such times to succeed just makes me specifically want to go even more” (Tongan undergraduate male, Arts).

Student 2: “They’re always so positive, and you know that they have things in their lives but they never let that interfere with what they’re doing to help students.”

“The Tuākana programme my first year. There were role models there that were Masters students that were helping out first year students, and that was really well done. They showed how to study, what to say, what not to study, things to focus on, things not to worry about, don’t stress out too much, how to break things down bit by bit.... That was pretty helpful, saved a lot of time.”
- Māori undergraduate male, Business

“...when we see other Pacific Islanders doing it, we tend to follow the same pathway... Seeing somebody else who has done it, that’s a pretty big thing. It’s helped, coming into uni, first year, seeing other Tongans who have succeeded in the same field. It’s just given you that extra push, to work that little bit harder. It’s sort of like them as a role model, and you’re the young guy coming through and trying to make it in the same sort of field. Yeah, it’s pretty good.”
- Tongan undergraduate male, Business

“My MAPAS tutor was actually Pākehā and she was the best one I’ve ever had...and so that’s what made me...she was awesome.”
- Māori undergraduate female, Medical & Health Sciences

Numerous study participants also stated that certain family members were instrumental in supporting their educational success, sometimes offering tangible forms of assistance (e.g., driving them to and from school, providing financial support), other times serving as positive role models. You cannot be expected to alter students’ family dynamics. But during times when students may feel discouraged and frustrated, encourage your teina to reflect upon those family members who have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice so that they can earn a tertiary degree.

Teaching Tip: Find a balance. Don’t add to family pressure your teina may already feel, but see if you can motivate them by asking if they have family members who are inspirational figures.

“For me it has to be my Dad. He’s got that typical island story of coming from the islands with $5.00 in his pocket and making a lot of himself. He’s had the same job for about 30 years now. Yeah he’s just that typical factory worker, rising up the ranks and stuff.... So I guess coming here I always just wanted to do the best that I can, make him proud.”
- Cook Island postgraduate male, Arts
Student 1: “My mum is also one of those people who has always fought, she never wants to be discriminated so she always fights harder.... She came to New Zealand when she was 22. She came here on a scholarship to do nursing. She didn’t even have money to buy her sandals. I’m a second generation of that.... Just knowing that I’ve never had to fight for those things, like my parents gave it to me. I didn’t have to fight to go to a good school because my parents already fought that fight.... If my mum can do her masters, I can do my masters” (Tongan undergraduate female, Science).

Student 2: “Yeah, I think it’s the same for every Pacific Island [student], their parents are sort of like role models. For me, that is absolutely true...knowing that struggle that they went through, there’s the sacrifice as well” (Samoan undergraduate male, Science).

“I’m the fruits of their labour from the ‘50s and ‘60s. Her parents coming from Samoa and Niue and going through all this racial segregation...you realise that there’s a history behind you being at university...you want to do your family proud in knowing that history or in knowing the problems that your mother put up with to ensure that you got to experience or even sit here today.”

- Samoan undergraduate female, Arts

In an interesting twist on role modelling, a number of study participants discussed being a role model within their families and broader communities.

Teaching Tip:
Encourage your teina to think about how they can become role models and take up a social responsibility.

“...to have my children look at me as a positive role model for them first, and then go into the school and have those children look at me as a role model again, then that’s where I can believe I can make the change for them. Yeah, so being Māori’s definitely the essence of what drives me.”

- Māori undergraduate male, Education

“You’ve gotta set a precedent, aye. Like my son’s 19 and then my baby’s 12, and you’ve gotta set that precedent. Okay, I started in ’99; I didn’t finish. I didn’t want my kids to go, ‘Well mum started and never finished,’ you know. It went back to your comment about role models. I want them to look at me as a role model and go, ‘Yay mum finished, I’m gonna do exactly the same.’”

- Māori undergraduate female, Law

Student 1: “…what sets them apart from the rest is the desire to do something good with what you have.... Pacific Islanders, the islander families, they lack financial literacy skills, so something I’ve been thinking about, it’s that desire to do something, solve that problem” (Tongan undergraduate male, Business).

Student 2: “That’s it bro, I’m the same. I’m doing part of that in my studies” (Māori undergraduate male, Education).

Student 3: “That’s like me as well, with diabetes” (Māori undergraduate female, Medical & Health Sciences).

“...to have my children look at me as a positive role model for them first, and then go into the school and have those children look at me as a role model again, then that’s where I can believe I can make the change for them. Yeah, so being Māori’s definitely the essence of what drives me.”

- Māori undergraduate male, Education

“I’m the oldest recognised, so to an extent I have to represent my whānau. [My koro] was always like, ‘If you’re not gonna do it for yourself then do it for your cousins.’”

- Māori undergraduate female, Arts

Student 1: “…it’s the desire to do something good, and to utilize whatever you have, whatever talent you have for a good purpose.”
Historically, higher education in New Zealand developed with heavy ties to Britain in order to fulfil colonial needs that did not coincide with Māori value systems (Kidman, 1999). Today, a significant number of instructors at The University of Auckland work to counter this historical trend, as does the university through larger systemic efforts, such as via the Tuākana programme. These important efforts notwithstanding, the university at its core, is still a place of individualised, competitive learning, which too often adds to Māori and Pacific students’ feelings of discomfort and isolation.

While this was not said to be a concern for all study participants, a significant number stated that they or their peers felt lonely and uncomfortable in lectures and mainstream tutorials, that they were initially intimidated in massive, anonymous lecture theatres. This was particularly true for students in their first year of university studies. The Tuākana programme, through its attempts to create a learning environment that is inclusive and collaborative, was seen as a safer place of learning that incorporated Māori and Pacific cultural values.

Perhaps more importantly, study participants stated that what made Tuākana so helpful was the ways that Tuākana built personalized connections with and between Māori and Pacific students. Thus, the Tuākana programme’s success rests upon your ability to serve as a role model who cares, and your ability to foster an interdependent, inclusive learning community that maintains Māori and Pacific values and makes students feel connected to the university.

**Student 1:** “I introduced myself to my lecturer like three or four times and then the fourth time I go talk to him, he was just like, ‘Sorry who are you again?’ And I was just like, ‘This is awkward’” (Māori undergraduate female, Arts).

**Student 2:** “Yeah Tuākana definitely...Everyone just felt comfortable amongst each other. Sometimes in mainstream tutorials, it’s awkward silence [group agreement]...but Tuākana everyone’s encouraging to others’ ideas, they’re not afraid to ask questions. The dynamics are quite different. Food makes everyone feel comfortable...” (Māori undergraduate male, Arts).

**Student 1:** “When you’re going to a Tuākana workshop, when you walk into the room it’s like you have that instant feeling of belonging...coming to the Tuākana workshop, it’s like I actually belong here, I do have a purpose here, I can achieve what I want to achieve. It’s the ice-breakers. It’s the fact that everyone knows your name.”

**Student 2:** “It’s the humour as well.”

**Student 1:** “It’s kinda cool when they mock the tutors and lecturers [group laughter].”

**Student 3:** Once I became a Tuākana and realised how there’s a different sort of approach. We are a little more personal. We try [to] actually know our students’ names, and when we see them around campus it’s just saying ‘hi’, not being on a separate level to the students” (Māori postgraduate male, Law).

“I don’t think I ever felt isolated because I always knew I had the Tuākana to go talk to new people and meet new people.”

- Māori undergraduate female, Business

“Yeah, I know, it can be quite isolating, isn’t it? ... you come to university and you’re one brown-skinned [person] in ten or fifteen. I found a lot of this in the tutorial groups and lectures. We could go through a whole semester and I could point out all the brown-skinned students that never said one word.”

- Fijian undergraduate female, Arts
“...my school was like 600 people when I left, and I knew like every person at my school. It was just that sort of family spirit within my school, so when I left I expected that sort of spirit here. Walked into my law lecture, it was just horrible. And then once I met my Tuākana for my subjects like, I think the best thing was getting an email that had my name in it. Like, ‘Hey [student’s name], come along and have lunch. We’d love to meet you.’ And meeting other people, it just made it so much better, especially the Law School has its own Māori stream and Pacific Island stream so by the end of Semester One, the first row under the library was just us, Māori and Pacific students. We all knew each other and it was using those programmes that really helped me personally.”

- Māori undergraduate female, Arts

“The Accounting Tuākana, I think he’s doing his Masters, he keeps you going, like the tutors, they actually put their heart into their work... I know they get paid and stuff, but still, they do extra hours. Around exam time they have heaps of office hours and stuff. They don’t get paid for the [extra] stuff that they do. Because they actually put their heart into the work, the Tuākana tutors at the Business School, they’re good role models.”

- Tongan undergraduate male, Business

“...in my first year Tuākana formed the basis of really helping me ‘cause it introduced me to some of my close friends now that I never met before. And then even though there weren’t any Tuākana in year two or three for me, it was still referring to that base root of you can always come to our meetings...it was really good to be able to be welcomed back.”

- Cook Island undergraduate female, Arts

“...all my friends are Tuākana people.... I wouldn’t talk to my lecturer because I was too intimidated, but I could talk to my Commercial Law Tuākana tutor and I found having mentors in Tuākana really useful... It’s just having that community there.”

- Tongan undergraduate female, Science

Teaching Tip:
To build community, create a learning environment that is inclusive, team-oriented, where you and your teina support each other. Let everyone know it’s okay to ask questions, make mistakes, and learn collectively.

“I think the university should push for that kind of collective learning, rather than the individual learning [group agreement], because I think that’s how we flourish, and I think that’s how our ancestors have worked [group agreement] and the way our culture is structured, that collectivist kind of thing.”

- Samoan undergraduate male, Law

“With the Tuākana thing, that’s amazing...we seem to learn better in groups, as opposed to the Euro system we [have] in place.”

- Samoan undergraduate male, Business

“...It’s not just the education part that they care about. They actually give a crap about what’s going on at home. They give a crap about your family.... They accept that part of you.”

- Tongan undergraduate female, Arts

Remember that sometimes it’s vital to provide extra empathy.
Study participants generally said that they appreciated Tuākana and mainstream tutors who were well organised, and had structured lesson plans prepared in advance. Most participants appreciated it when Tuākana were able to adapt course content and assessments to Māori and Pacific cultural contexts, and do so through personalised examples that demonstrated how students could follow suit within their own cultural frameworks. Finally, it was a concern that university instructors were too often stuck in a deficit-model style of teaching where Māori and Pacific examples were framed as social problems. Hence, it was appreciated when Tuākana illustrated how Māori and Pacific students could see themselves in the curricula in less inflammatory ways.

“...for MAPAS we talk about health and everything, you know health impacts. You can bring in church or the fact that we’re very family-oriented, things that we can relate to would make it more understandable.”

- Tongan undergraduate female, Medical & Heath Sciences

“...And that’s what they label Māori and Pacific Islanders...we get that in the first year too, ‘Māori’s take up 50% of the population in jails.’”

- Māori undergraduate female, Law

Student 1: “I like it when they tell us about themselves first” (Tongan undergraduate female, Arts).

Student 2: “Yeah like [names Tuākana], she’d always related a concept to Samoa or family life, or her own experience. Then other tutorials, they just give you a topic and then they talk about it” (Samoan postgraduate male, Business).

Researcher: Why is it important they talk about themselves?

Student 3: “I think it’s that Pacific people are very relational. We want to relate to people. We’re very personal, so if they stand up and say what their name is, what their background is, kind of give their own experience and how it relates to what we’re studying, it kind of lets us know that, that’s how it applies to us, so that’s why I should learn it” (Tongan undergraduate female, Medical & Health Sciences).

AN ABILITY TO COPE WITH “EVERYDAY COLONIALISM”

In 1991, Philomena Essed coined the term “everyday racism,” defined as “practices that infiltrate everyday life and become part of what is seen as ‘normal’ by the dominant group” (p. 288). More specifically, everyday racism occurs when members of the dominant group behave in ways that rely on racialised stereotypes that are so normalised they become almost automatic, and therefore are frequently done unintentionally, unconsciously. Common examples of everyday racism may include when majority group members who work in a store pay extra attention to an ethnic minority, assuming he or she may steal something, or assuming an ethnic minority cannot afford to live in a particular apartment complex. A few studies on everyday racism have been conducted with indigenous peoples in Canada (Leah, 1995) and Australia (Mellor, 2003), but most studies on everyday racism (also called “micro-aggressions”) have been conducted with African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans in the United States.

Participants in our study expressed having to cope with everyday racism on campus, but given the neo-colonial context in which we all work, we have termed these experiences “everyday colonialism.” This is not to trivialise the seriousness of colonialism from decades past, but rather to highlight that vestiges of colonialism continue to function in contemporary society on a systemic basis that are typically not visible to majority group members. As Essed argued, part of what makes everyday racism so influential is that majority group members feel racism is no longer a significant factor in society, or is only enacted by extremist fringe groups. Likewise, in a neo-colonial context like Aotearoa New Zealand, we argue that most majority group members feel society has reached a point of social equity and in turn are unable to see how colonialism continues to operate, subtly, yet very powerfully under their perceptual radar.
Everyday colonialism that happens across New Zealand universities includes the disproportionately small numbers of Māori and Pacific professionals on campus, the heavy prevalence of a Eurocentric curricula, a lack of Māori and Pacific culture in the curricula, and the tokenistic inclusion of Māori and Pacific issues only when discussing social problems; we have termed these forms of everyday colonialism, macroexclusions.

Participants in our study also stated that everyday colonialism occurs through interpersonal interactions with others, namely other students. The university was not said to be saturated with peers who acted in discriminatory ways. In fact most non-Māori and non-Pacific students were said to be supportive of or neutral on issues tied to indigeneity. Still, troublesome interactions happened frequently enough that they were not considered unusual.

It is also important to note that our research team initially planned not to ask participants about discrimination in order to keep conversations focused on positive factors. However, research participants continued to raise the topic autonomously. Thus, it was not until the 10th focus group that we began probing participants on this issue, which exemplifies everyday colonialism’s seriousness.

Everyday colonialism was said to emanate in the following forms:

- **Macroexclusions**: systemic exclusions from curricula, too few Māori and Pacific role models (see above).
- **Microassaults**: actions resembling “old-fashioned” racism that more clearly communicate discriminatory intent (e.g., racial epithets), frequently directed towards The Treaty of Waitangi, or Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- **Microinsults**: actions that “convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a persons’ racial heritage or identity” (Sue et al., 2007a, p. 274).

Again, there is extensive diversity among Māori and Pacific students, not only by way of the many ethnic cultures within the Pacific “umbrella,” but also by way of socio-economic status, nationality, sexuality, gender, and as a result of intermarriage, there is a growing number of Māori and Pacific students who straddle multiple ethnic backgrounds (see Table 1). As such, the visual cues people use to interpret racial constructs are increasingly ambiguous. Participants who were seen by others as more discernibly Māori or Pacific – because for instance, they had darker skin complexion, dressed in a particular type of attire, and/or spoke a certain way – frequently had to endure other students’ surprise when they learned of the Māori and Pacific students’ high academic standing.

“*When you meet people for the first time, even students around uni and they’re like, ‘Oh what are you studying?’ And then you’re like, ‘Yeah, doing law and stuff.’ And then they immediately (say), ‘Oh first year? Are you still trying to get in?’ … It just sucks cause no matter where you go, I guess it’s kind of empowering because you just wanna break the stereotype… It’s another good thing, you get this opportunity to break it and just be like, ‘Nah bro stop thinking like that.’ But the majority of the time it just sucks.”*

- Tongan undergraduate female, Arts

In other cases, majority group students’ demeanor changed once they found out participants were Māori or Pacific, but then as the following participant states, she may get labelled as an acceptable, or as she states, “properly” Māori student because of her speech patterns and other forms of behaviour. These varying reactions from some majority group students remind us how everyday colonialism impacts Māori and Pacific students, irrespective of their diversity.

“*…people, like mainstream students, will sort of be really nice to me and then they’ll all of a sudden kind of just click and be like, ‘Wait no, she’s quite properly Māori,’ and then they immediately sort of step back and stuff and (say), ‘Oh, I didn’t realize you were so cultural’ … I just laugh at it. It’s just kind of, just sad really [another participant agrees]. That sort of thing is so pervasive and stuff.”*

- Māori undergraduate female, Law
Study participants across a range of disciplinary majors expressed strikingly similar experiences, having to deal with the repeated expectation that their ethnicity was incompatible with scholarly success. In many cases, study participants’ academic success was attributed to assistance via preferential treatment from lecturers, as some majority group students thereby invalidated Māori and Pacific students’ capabilities.

Microassaults were not said to be as common. On rare occasion they happened through interpersonal interactions. However, it was more common for microassaults to occur in response to instructors who discussed The Treaty of Waitangi (or in rare cases Te Tiriti o Waitangi).

“[Other students will say], ‘Oh you’ll be alright, you’re Māori.’ And I said, ‘But I still have to moot; I still have to stand up. I get judged by somebody just like you do on the day, on what I say. I can’t just, you know, pull it out of nowhere… I still have to have done all the work. I still get my essays marked and moderated by the same lecturers.’ But I’ve just given up, it’s just like, ‘Oh, I can’t even be bothered with you ignorant people.'”

- Māori undergraduate female, Law

Programmes for Māori and Pacific students (Tuākana, MAPAS) could be the target of condemnation from some majority group students. Yet the most common microinsults that student participants experienced revolved around some majority group students’ assumption that Māori and Pacific students were unqualified and only granted admission to the university through affirmative action schemes or via supposed widely available ethnic-specific scholarships, as seen in the following contributions from participants, from different focus groups:

“European people are like, ‘Well, why is it just you guys? Why isn’t it us? Why can’t we go? … Oh you guys are going to your Māori thing’, you know.”

- Māori undergraduate female, Education

“I got told the only reason I got a job was because I was Māori, which is not true at all. Like, that’s what everyone was saying, ‘Oh [she] only got the job ‘cause she’s Māori.’ I worked my arse off to get that job. It kinda sucks ‘cause you put so much effort in… If I was a bad nurse they wouldn’t hire me, even if I was full Māori.”

- Māori undergraduate female, Medical & Health Sciences

“People constantly talk about, ‘You’re Māori, you get free uni or if you’re not getting free uni, you get into uni easier.’ I’ve figured that’s just the way it is with everything that’s going on. That’s a big thing, I hate it, but I just have to deal with it.”

- Māori undergraduate male, Arts

“…before people have met me, they look at me and assume that if I’m at uni, they assume that I got in through a scheme. I’m not smart enough to hold my own sort of thing, until they actually get to know me and the way I work.”

- Samoan undergraduate female, Creative Arts & Industries
"I think the real root of Māori and Pacific struggle is just the stereotype itself. There are all these extra programs that we have...and you can see that it helps a lot of students. But also...you heard people say Māori get free university. That's not good, that's obviously what the media has represented it as, and that's become a new stereotype for Māori, that Māori need this free stuff and that they are inferior by nature. People may not outright say that Māori are inferior by nature because that's just blatantly racist, but they are going to think it.”

-Māori undergraduate male, Arts

These are the types of everyday colonialism that Tuākana and related programmes are constantly battling. They are still an unfortunate reality of life in 21st century Aotearoa New Zealand. Working within your own comfort zone, remind your teina that on occasion they may encounter these types of microinsults, or even body language from majority group students that communicates patronizing thoughts, such as eye rolling. As much as possible, suggest that teina try to cope with these insults in healthy ways.

Student 1: “It’s like that internalised racism that I was talking about... All the negative things about ourselves, we start to believe it after a while, to the point where it just becomes normal to think that way about yourself” (Māori undergraduate female, Arts).

Student 2: “They don’t talk about the positive statistics...” (Māori undergraduate female, Science).

Student 1: “When you get told enough times that you’re not good enough because you’re Māori or Pacific Island, you start to believe it. If everyone around you feels the same way, then you know, it kind of grows, the belief grows.”

Student 3: “There’s also a sort of soft racism that you get. Hard racism being like, ‘You’re Māori,’ some slander, but soft racism as in, ‘Oh you did really well, for a Māori’” (Māori postgraduate male, Engineering).

“I think the real root of Māori and Pacific struggle is just the stereotype itself. There are all these extra programs that we have...and you can see that it helps a lot of students. But also...you heard people say Māori get free university. That’s not good, that’s obviously what the media has represented it as, and that’s become a new stereotype for Māori, that Māori need this free stuff and that they are inferior by nature. People may not outright say that Māori are inferior by nature because that’s just blatantly racist, but they are going to think it.”

-Māori undergraduate male, Arts

Researcher: “So how have you guys overcome some of these issues? You know, the racism, the cultural barriers?”

Student: “It makes you work harder.... You just wanna prove them wrong. ‘Cause a lot of my class didn’t know I was Māori, and when they found out I was part of MAPAS, I think they were kind of [thinking] as if I wasn’t as deserving of my place. And so I wanted to work harder to prove them all wrong, just like, ‘I can do it,’ you know. That’s what I found anyway, ‘cause it kind of fuels the fire.”

-Māori undergraduate female, Medical & Health Sciences

“Stuff like that just pisses you off, especially with people in authority, they run around with all these stereotypes – Pacific Islanders shouldn’t be in school, Māori’s shouldn’t be getting an education.... Yeah it’s just stuff like that, it motivates me, motivates you to do better.”

-Niuean undergraduate male, Education

“Teaching Tip:
As many study participants did, take everyday colonialism and use it as motivation to succeed.

"It was teachers telling me I couldn’t [make it], which made me just push harder to try and prove them wrong and stuff...they didn’t have very high expectations for me, but proving them wrong would just feel so good. Being at uni and when I finish my degree, I’m gonna go back.”

-Māori undergraduate male, Arts

“Stuff like that just pisses you off, especially with people in authority, they run around with all these stereotypes – Pacific Islanders shouldn’t be in school, Māori’s shouldn’t be getting an education.... Yeah it’s just stuff like that, it motivates me, motivates you to do better.”

-Niuean undergraduate male, Education
And finally, remind your teina that their ethnic background(s) should never be divorced from academic success. Having a strong, proud ethnic identity is completely compatible with high academic achievement.

“...there’s nothing wrong with being a Māori, and there’s also nothing wrong with being academic and achieving. It’s always been teachers and my family who always believed that I’d achieve.”

- Māori undergraduate female, Education

In addition to the challenges many Māori and Pacific students face before coming to university, the university itself presents challenges that lead to adverse outcomes. Figure 1, below, presents everyday colonialism in the form of macroexclusions, microinsults, and microassaults coming from the top. These lead to harmful outcomes seen at the bottom of Figure 1 (feelings of isolation, lower pass rates, etc.). The *intervening protective factors* that safeguard Māori and Pacific students from these harmful outcomes are areas you can build in your Tuākana tutorials.

![Figure 1: Everyday Colonialism with Māori and Pacific Students](image)

**Intervening Protective Factors for Māori and Pacific Educational Success:**

- Teaching and Learning Practices
  - Integrating Māori and Pacific Cultures
- Māori and Pacific Students' Abilities to Cope with Racism
- Support from university and family role models

**Māori and Pacific Student Concerns:**

- Feelings of isolation
- Poor class engagement
- Poor class attendance
- Lower pass rates
- Early dropout
Before closing out, we would like to provide a few additional suggestions for your lesson planning, provided by this study’s participants.

**Sometimes as a Tuākana, you have to give that extra effort.**

“We had one Indian guy who does the Economics [Tuākana], he still like puts his heart into it. And yeah, that’s something that you can really feed off [from] the Tuākana tutors.”

- Tongan undergraduate male, Business

“Yeah MAPAS definitely, tells you everything constantly that they have to offer. So it’s never a question of not knowing that there’s support there.”

- Māori undergraduate female, Medical & Health Sciences

**Express high expectations for your teina.**

“It’s about putting those ideas in their head that, ‘Yes, you can succeed at university,’ and ‘yes, you can be a lawyer or you can be a physician.’”

- Samoan postgraduate male, Business

 “[The] Tuākana, she was pretty awesome because she never limited us. She always got us to aim for A’s and stuff like that.”

- Tongan undergraduate female, Arts

**Be passionate and positive.**

“I think passion, when you can just feel that they’re in love with the subject [group agreement] because it makes me want to learn more…”

- Samoan undergraduate male, Science

“The passionate lecturers are awesome.”

- Māori undergraduate male, Business

“One of the people, I suppose she’s a role model, is one of the lecturers. Just seeing the passion when she taught us, you know it was inspiring... I thought geeze, I wanna teach like that. I wanna be just as excited as she is with her pedagogy. She really inspired me after all these years she still had that passion.”

- Māori undergraduate male, Education
Presenting the Tuākana programme in courses can be tricky. Try and get active, positive support from lecturers in advance when informing classes about the programme.

“I know that [Tuākana ] present themselves in the lecture theatres and say, ‘I’m the Tuākana for all the Māori and Pacific students.’ Personally I don’t like that, ‘cause it actually makes us feel smaller. And I think that’s something that they really need to look at... Somebody waltzes up and says, ‘Oh I’m here for the Māori and Pacific people if you need help’... It reinforces literally what we’re saying, that we’re disadvantaged. To me it’s not a thing to help disadvantaged people. It’s helping our people to succeed to the maximum that they can.”

- Samoan postgraduate male, Business

Student 1: “Yeah ‘cause that’s the same thing with Tuākana, when Tuākana mentors come in to introduce themselves...you always have that underecurrent, a massive sigh goes out in the lecture theatre [group agreement]...The reality is we come from unequal educational backgrounds and these systemic biases are so embedded into our education system that we now think they’re normal and for those who need to be given extra help, is just trying to equal that unequal playing field” (Samoan undergraduate female, Arts).

Student 2: “A practical way to deal with that is rather than Tuākana introduce themselves...let the actual lecturers give a little blurb like that, and then introduce the Tuākana so that the Tuākana then explain the hours...” (Fijian undergraduate female, Arts).

Student 3: “In the second semester we changed it and the lecturer that we had was a lot more supportive.... It sort of legitimised the programme because the lecturer had done that speech” (Māori undergraduate female, Arts).

Encourage your teina to talk 1-on-1 with their lecturers and tutors.

“That’s another important aspect I feel for our students, is just knowing that they can go to that lecturer and not be afraid.”

- Samoan postgraduate male, Business

Remind your teina that they play an important role in Auckland’s and Aotearoa New Zealand’s development.

“...it’s just acknowledging the fact that Auckland is the biggest Pacific Island, Māori setting really, and the fact that we’re not gonna go away, and that we’re only going to grow in number. I think they need to acknowledge that.”

- Tongan undergraduate male, Business

Be prepared before your lessons. Students will be able to tell if you come to class un– or underprepared.

“I know a good tutor would have a plan, how he or she is going to make a point.”

- Samoan postgraduate male, Arts
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: NURTURE A POSITIVE ETHNIC IDENTITY

More than anything else, support your teina to have a positive Māori, Pacific, and/or indigenous ethnic identity, and furthermore that this identity should be connected to their academic success. Our study revealed the three broad themes outlined previously as instrumental in participants’ academic success: support and role modelling from family and academic staff; teaching and learning practices that valued indigenous cultures, and an ability to cope with everyday colonialism. However, what tied these three themes together was students’ commitments to their respective cultural groups. In some cases, this came in the form of wanting to give back to their ethnic community(ies) and having a strong sense of their culture. In other cases, this was shown through a political resistance to colonisation and racialisation. For some students, ethnic identity was strengthened through an appreciation of their family’s sacrifices and on-campus role models. But again, the running theme that these high-achieving Māori and Pacific students demonstrated was a positive ethnic identity and sense of cultural commitment. This particular sense of self as it related to broader indigenous issues appears to provide Māori and Pacific students with that extra motivation to work through the multiple challenges they may face during their university studies. Nurture this in your teina.

“...’cause where I’m from, like it’s only Māori people really, they don’t get anywhere. I was an exception. I’m an exception at home, so it was really nice to be surrounded by other Māori and Pacific people who are doing well, and who can see the future. I think if anything, that’s the thing that I like the most about the MAPAS groups.”

...  
“I have a big one, he’s kind of my hero... I want to be like him when I graduate. He’s a Māori [medical] doctor... He treated a patient who was so poor...even though she couldn’t pay him. He got fired for it, but to do that and to risk losing his job, and to lose his job is the most amazing thing to me... What he did it’s definitely made an impact, and it’s definitely made people think about how we’re treating people and what we’re doing and what we’re doing wrong.”

- Māori undergraduate female, Medical & Health Sciences

REFERENCES


APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

This study’s primary objective was to identify the key factors that contribute to Māori and Pacific students’ educational success at the university level. Exploring this research question was highly strategic, countering the deficit model that characterizes so much research on indigenous peoples by western scholars and ultimately refines highly deleterious racial stereotypes. However, as discussed previously, a significant number of participants initiated discussions on coping with racism, thereby serving as a major focus of this report.

Between January and April 2013, the research team conducted 17 focus group interviews with 90 high-achieving Māori and Pacific students at the University of Auckland. Research participants were selected through a purposive sampling procedure (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996) based on the following two criteria: participants (A) were identified through university records as ethically Māori or Pacific (Cook Island Maori, Fijian, Fiji-Indian, Niuean, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan, or Other Pacific Islander); and (B) earned a B- or higher grade point average in second semester of the 2012 academic year. Although high-achievement in tertiary educational settings can be defined in multiple ways, the research team operationalized scholarly success through the B- average in students’ most recent semester for convenience purposes.

Based on these criteria, 986 students across the entire university were randomly selected and sent an invitation via email to participate in a 1-time focus group by a third party administrator within the University of Auckland, Department of Sociology. The research team also worked with equity offices across the University of Auckland to recruit a small number of participants. As potential participants responded to the invitation, focus groups were scheduled and conducted. Among the 90 student participants in the study, a majority were majoring in Faculty of Arts subjects, female, and undergraduate students; participants prioritized their ethnic identity through ongoing communication with the research team (e.g., if a participant was multi-ethnic but identified with only one ethnic group, that participant’s ethnicity is represented only through the column labeled “Ethnicity A” in Table 1; if a participant was multi-ethnic and identified more strongly with a particular ethnicity, the participant’s self-identified most significant ethnicity is represented in the “Ethnicity A” column, the second most significant ethnicity under “Ethnicity B” and so forth; See Table 1, page 3).
Focus group facilitation and analyses blended Kaupapa Māori (Smith, 2012), Pacific (Ka‘ili, 2005; Vaioleti, 2006) and western research methodologies. To begin with, the second, third, and fourth authors identify as Māori and Pākehā, Tongan and New Zealand Pākehā, and Samoan respectively, and have strong familiarity with the Auckland region. The lead author is half Japanese, half Caucasian from the United States, but spent 15 years conducting research with Hawaiian and Samoan communities in Hawai‘i. Focus groups also followed procedures that minimized power inequalities between researchers and participants (e.g., encouraging participants to ask researchers questions, engaging in humour, inviting participants to analyze and disseminate research findings). With participant permission, all focus groups were audio-recorded. Research procedures were approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee.

Audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim, predominantly by the second and fourth authors. The third author then cleaned a majority of the focus groups by listening to each audio-recording and reading the corresponding transcription while making corrections. The first author also contributed moderately to focus group transcribing and cleaning. The entire team contributed to an extensive content analysis, engaging in deep discussion and debate to identify the three most salient themes emergent from participants’ voices on their educational success (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Berg, 1998).

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<tr>
<td>Tokelauan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers exceed the total number of participants because in this table each ethnic group includes participants who identified with only one ethnic group, as well as those who identified with one or more ethnic groups. Thus, some participants are counted twice across ethnic groups.

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