Chapter 4
A Kaupapa Māori Facebook Group for Māori and Indigenous Doctoral Scholars: Maryann Lee in Conversation With Dr. Mera Lee-Penehira, Dr. Hinekura Smith, and Dr. Jennifer Martin

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the use of Facebook to support Māori and Indigenous doctoral scholars who are enrolled in the MAI ki Tāmaki Makaurau doctoral programme in Auckland, New Zealand. The programme is part of a National Māori and Indigenous (MAI) Network aimed to increase doctoral participation and completion rates of Māori scholars. Drawing on three Kaupapa Māori principles introduced in chapter three: tino rangatiratanga (self-determination principle), taonga tuku iho (cultural aspirations principle), whānau (extended family structure principle), the author explores some of the key considerations in creating a Kaupapa Māori digital learning space with the use of social media. Through conversations with three Māori academics who administer the MAI ki Tāmaki Facebook group, this chapter captures their unique perspectives and provide rich insights into the ways in which the Facebook group can provide a strong network of support for Māori and Indigenous scholars.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the MAI ki Tāmaki Makaurau doctoral programme was led by Dr Jenny Lee-Morgan and Dr Mera Lee-Penehira at Te Puna Wānanga, School of Māori and Indigenous Education, the University of Auckland. The programme is part of a National Māori and Indigenous (MAI) Network, supported by Ngā Pae o te Maramatanga (Māori Centre of Research Excellence) primarily made up of Māori and Indigenous doctoral students and emerging academics enrolled in tertiary organisations throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand. Established in 2002, the Network aims to increase doctoral participation and completion rates of Māori scholars (Te Kupenga o MAI, n.d.). The MAI ki Tāmaki Makaurau doctoral programme was innovative in its approach, bringing Māori and Indigenous academics together through a range of cultural, social and academic events.

Alongside the MAI ki Tāmaki Makaurau programme a MAI ki Tāmaki Facebook Group was created to provide additional support and guidance for Māori scholars between events. Over the last six years the Facebook group’s membership has steadily increased, with a total of 85 members in 2018. It has also extended its membership to include postgraduate Māori and Indigenous students, as well as senior Māori and Indigenous academics. The inclusion of Masters and Honors students is an important part of the recruitment or encouragement pathway into doctoral study, supporting a tuakana-teina approach (older and younger sibling relationship). Additionally, inviting senior academics to the Facebook group enables students to interact with a greater pool of Māori and Indigenous academic knowledge. The Facebook members are diverse in their research disciplines and research experiences, with a much higher ratio of Māori women (90%) to Māori men (10%).

This research examines how the MAI ki Tāmaki Facebook Group reflects a Kaupapa Māori online learning space to support Māori scholars on their doctoral journey. Through gaining perspectives from three senior Māori academics who administer the site - Dr Mera Lee-Penehira, Dr Jen Martin and Dr Hinekura Smith - this research seeks to identify key Kaupapa Māori elements that underpin the Facebook group, and highlight ways in which members engage with each other as Māori Indigenous academics.

This chapter is designed to be read in conjunction with chapter three, which provides a context for the use of social media for Indigenous communities in general. Chapter three highlights how Māori and Indigenous groups are
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