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Reflective Essay
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Last summer, I went to New Zealand for a two-week program to study Maori faith, culture, and education. At that time, I had been a high school teacher at an inner-city, under-resourced high school, and I was slowly becoming disillusioned with the deep inequalities that I saw in the educational system. The trip left a profound impact on me as I saw how Maori beliefs and values can be applied to education to affirm and empower a community. When I came back, I decided to write my paper on Maori pedagogical practices with an understanding of how Maori culture and beliefs help to inform these practices.

The strategy that I developed for finding and using relevant information was to gather as many varied sources as possible, including primary and secondary sources, encyclopedias, historical documents, government reports, and qualitative studies. This was important because my topic by nature intersected at education, history, sociology, and psychology. Furthermore, topics in education cannot be understood in silo but rather has to be examined from various lenses. I wanted to include primary and secondary sources so that I can take into account other people's opinions and analyses but also wanted to understand the sentiments around education for Maori in the earlier stages of development through original writings. In selecting sources, I ensured that authors came from a variety of backgrounds. While some authors were *Pakeha* (New Zealand people of European descent), others were Maori. The perspectives and voices of the Maori people were equally as important as researchers from the academic community.

The primary resource that I used was the Hannon Library's online database. Initially, I went to every individual database to search for sources. However, with the help of a LMU

librarian, I located OneSearch. From there, I received results from every journal with just one search. I also used the bibliographies of these journals to link me to other sources. Additionally, I used the citation tool to help me with creating APA citations. During the process, I discovered that the keywords typed into OneSearch is of essential importance. For example, “Maori education” returned different results from “Maori pedagogy”, Therefore, I spent time searching with synonymous keywords, such as using “indigenous in New Zealand” vs. “Maori”, “curriculum” vs. “instruction”, and “impact” vs. “effect”. I also had to be careful about the keywords I chose, as words have different connotations and are specific to certain fields. For example, “pedagogy” returned completely different results from “schooling” or “education”. Furthermore, I came across articles with relevant titles and abstracts, but I was not able to access them. I filled out the article request forms on LMU LLIad to request them.

I used several criteria to ensure that my sources were credible. For one, in evaluating contemporary Maori pedagogy, I eliminated sources that were outdated (published before the 1990’s). Secondly, I took into consideration the author’s background and personal biases. For example, an author from the outside community described Maori education as “emotional” and defined success in Maori education when students were “cooperative”. In evaluating the effects of Maori education, I was careful how authors defined success. In Western models of education, success may be defined in measurable data, such as improvement in test scores. However, the Maori definition of success includes the qualitative, such as relationships with others and connection to the physical and spiritual world.

One obstacle that I encountered during the process was finding sources written by Maori, as the majority of academic journals came from elitist institutions, and historical documents were largely written by the colonizers. However, I located Maori perspectives and voices through

sources that incorporated direct narratives and interviews from Maori, as well as chapters within a book that were written by Maori. Lastly, I had to be aware of my personal biases and limitations as I was evaluating the sources. For one, there is a “lost at translation” issue, as I do not speak Maori. As a student and teacher from Western institutions, I found myself asking questions that were inherently biased. For example, I found myself evaluating the effectiveness of Maori schools by attempting to find measurable data, such as test scores. However, I had to realize that success is defined differently for the Maori community. While the characteristics defined by Maori are not always measurable, they are equally as, if not more, important.

Overall, writing this paper taught me the importance of gathering information from a variety of sources. It also taught me how to track down primary sources as well as journal articles that were not accessible available through LMU.