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## **Flexible identities: Narratives of Māori Italians in New Zealand**

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Ethnicity is a key variable in social science research and is often assumed to be a stable construct. Yet, for more and more individuals in New Zealand's diversified society, ethnicity is flexible and individuals may choose to change and adapt their ethnic identities contingent on social contexts. Using material from narrative interviews with 44 Māori Italians conducted in New Zealand in 2013, this paper explores the relevance of the social identity theoretical approach for understanding the construction of mixed ethnic identities. Employing an interactionist conceptualisation of identity expression, our findings disclose four thematic patterns by which participants assert positive mixed ethnic identities that allow them to align with desirable notions of what it means to be Māori, Italian, and Māori Italian and to differentiate themselves from what they perceive as the less positive aspects of the dominant New Zealand culture.

**Keywords:** Māori Identity, Māori-Italian Identity, Hybridity, Social Identity Theory, Interactionism.

### **Introduction**

#### ***Māori, Italians, and Māori Italians in Aotearoa***

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the term 'ethnicity' is defined as 'a measure of cultural affiliation', rather than 'a measure of race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship'; furthermore, ethnicity is self-perceived and people can choose to belong to more than one ethnic group (Stats NZ, 2018). The indigenous people of Aotearoa, Māori, more than any other ethnicity, are likely to identify with more than one ethnic group (Stats NZ, 2014a). The number of Māori acknowledging multiple ethnic affiliations has been growing each year, with younger Māori (aged 18 to 25) most likely to identify with two or more ethnicities. In the 2013 Census, the most recent for which statistics are available, over half of Māori (53.5% or 320,406 people) identified with two or more ethnic groups. The most common second ethnicity for Māori is European/Pākehā; however, reflecting changing national demographics and mixed ethnic unions resulting from steady increases in Pasifika, Asian, and new-immigrant shares of the population, each year more Māori are identifying with other groups (Stats NZ, 2014b). Compared to Māori, the New Zealand Italian population is very small. Notably, though, in the 1996 Census proportionately more Italians than any other group identified their second ethnicity as Māori (Thomson, 1999, p. 91). In the 2013 Census only 3798 people usually resident in New Zealand claimed Italian ethnicity and 28% of them (1077 people) also identified as Māori (McGuigan, 2016).

British colonisation of New Zealand has had a profound intergenerational impact on Māori (see Reid, Rout, Tau, & Smith, 2017 for a discussion) and the history of Māori engagement with Pākehā has been fraught with conflict as well as intimacy. Māori-Pākehā unions have been commonplace in New Zealand for generations (King, 1988, 1999).

Māori-Pākehā hybridity has been studied relatively extensively, thus theorising ethnicity mainly in relation to Māori and Pākehā (Meredith, 1999; Rocha & Webber,

2017). Multi-ethnic groups and indigenous populations, on the other hand, remain relatively understudied. Recent qualitative studies of Māori Dalmatians (Božić-Vrbančić, 2005), Māori Indians (Pio, 2009), Māori Chinese (Ip, 2013), and Māori Jews (Ore, 2018) show that these immigrant minorities share with the indigenous Māori a past of employment in certain occupations (for example, gum digging in the case of Dalmatians) as well as of discrimination. While this facilitated interethnic exchanges, support, and marriages, it also gave rise to racial tensions and divided self-identities both within families and ethnic communities (on both sides) and in relation to the wider, external Pākehā community. However, notwithstanding the recent anti-Asian backlash affecting the Māori Chinese (Ip, 2013), there appears to be a tendency among the younger generations to value both heritages equally (see Pio 2009, pp. 14-15; Ore, 2018), possibly as a consequence of the shift from assimilationist politics to official biculturalism and unofficial multiculturalism, with each identity spurring the valorisation of the other.

It is noteworthy that none of these studies lists the Italians among the immigrant minorities with a similar history of discrimination and repression to that of the ethnic group under examination or the Māori. This suggests that the Italians may occupy a different and atypical position in relation to the indigenous Māori, other immigrant minorities, and even perhaps the Pākehā. And yet, like the Māori and other minorities, the Italians have been subject to discrimination, racism, prejudice, and stereotyping (Copland, 2005a, 2005b; De Marco, 2016; Elenio, 2012; Hill, 2011). The following outline of the Italian presence in New Zealand affords some insights into possible reasons for this omission.

Early assisted immigration from Italy was fraught with difficulties. During the 1870s, Italian migrants were wrongly deployed in projects for which they were not suited, notably the failed Jackson Bay settlement, which led to their being accused of misrepresenting their skills,

laziness, and sabotage, and to their being declared ‘undesirable immigrants’ (Ballara, 1975; Boncompagni, 1996; Hill, 2011, pp. 128-129; Laracy & Laracy, 1973). Nevertheless, they continued to migrate to New Zealand and established themselves as miners, fishermen, market gardeners, terrazzo workers, and in a variety of trades. Elenio (2012, p. 59) starts his account of the negative consequences of Fascism and World War II for Italians in New Zealand with the declaration that ‘Italians in New Zealand had been well treated’, to emphasise the contrast with the dark period of exclusion and racism that he is about to recount. With the war, 38 Italian men, some of whom were naturalized New Zealanders or were born in New Zealand, were interned as ‘enemy aliens’ for as long as four years, while others were forced to leave their jobs and sell their businesses (Hill, 2011, pp. 131-132; Elenio, 2012, pp. 59-71). It took some time for Italians to rebuild their reputation and overcome the humiliation of these experiences. Referring to the prejudice and intolerance he encountered in the 1950s, Italian immigrant writer Renato Amato ‘was seldom allowed to forget his nationality for a day’ (Shadbolt, 1967, p. 13). Hill (2011, pp. 131-135) reports that New Zealanders’ prejudice towards the Italians, alongside widespread ‘misperceptions of Italy as a backward, underdeveloped country’, possibly a consequence of accounts of Italy’s devastation and poverty by returning soldiers, continued well beyond the war and into the 1970s, when a change in perceptions started to be observed.

A markedly positive attitude was experienced first-hand by the Italian author of this article when she arrived in Aotearoa on a temporary lecturing contract in 1987, with both Pākehā and Māori people showing a keen interest in Italy and things Italian. We posit three concomitant factors for this shift: technological advancements in transport and communications had made Europe much more accessible to the New Zealand middle classes interested in Italian art, design, music, fashion, food, as well as landscape; following modernisation and prosperity in the wake of the 1960s economic boom, in 1987 Italy was ranked the 5th richest nation in the world after the USA, Japan, Germany, and France; the profile of the Italian immigrant was changing, with entrepreneurs, businessmen, and professionals arriving in New Zealand in search of alternative lifestyles replacing the economic, poverty-driven immigrants of the past (this profile has changed again in the new millennium, with highly qualified or highly skilled individuals being driven to migrate by economic instability in Italy and Europe). Giorgio’s (2015) qualitative study reported positive self-perceptions among the Italians of Island Bay, Wellington, as an immigrant community that had made an important contribution to the host country. Giorgio and Houkamau (submitted) also report positive external perceptions of Italians and self-perceptions among Māori Italians, who claim a strong affinity between the two ethnicities on account of physical similarities, cultural commonalities, and long-standing good relations.

Hill (2011, p. 135) points at a ‘very interesting and largely un-investigated connection between Māori and Italians’. Early missionaries’ accounts of British oppression of Māori, newspaper articles, anecdotes, semi-fictional reconstructions of the lives of early Italian

migrants, stories and memories of the soldiers of the 28th Māori Battalion who fought in Italy during World War II (on the colonisers’ side against Italy), all attest to empathy, collaborations, respect, kindness, solidarity, and friendships between Māori and Italians (Dugo, 2014; Hindmarsh, 2004; Mokoraka & Rotondo, 2007; Raihania, n.d-a, n.d-b; Riseborough, 1986; Vaggioli, 2000). This gave rise to a significant narrative of a special bond between Māori and Italians which is still in wide circulation today among both peoples.

Italian-Kiwi actor Paolo Rotondo, who is married to a Māori Pākehā and has co-authored a play, *Strange resting places* (2007), on the encounter between an Italian soldier and a Māori one in Italy during World War II, expresses this connection thus: ‘For both peoples the cult of the individual doesn’t exist – life is about whānau, the importance of sharing food, song, intergenerational living, spirituality, tūrangawaewae or, in Italian, *di dove sei*. [...] Through Italian eyes I connect to the passion and emotional aspects of Māori culture and I deeply relate to the pride, care for ritual and living with history’ (cited in Warnock, 2018). A Māori TV channel documentary entitled *Why be Māori when you can pass for an Italian?* (Iti, 2013) testifies to a similar perception among Māori. This semi-serious programme was not about Māori-Italian affinities (as the Italian author of this article was expecting and hoping), but about the implications of mixed identities for Māori. The references to Italians stop after the title and the opening frames of Māori actor Toi Iti getting out of bed, wearing a jacket, looking at himself in the mirror with great self-satisfaction, and saying: ‘This jacket makes me look very Italian, like an Italian detective. I could very well be taken for an Italian. Why bother to be Māori?’. This opening ploy can only be effective (to attract audience?) because it gestures to the narrative that has just been outlined and that is expected to be recognised by all Māori: the Māori-Italian connection and the prestige Māori, if not all New Zealanders, attach to Italian culture, including the myth of Italian beauty and elegance.

While early good Māori-Italian relations in Aotearoa could be a consequence of both ethnic groups occupying a position of subalternity *vis-à-vis* the British colonisers, it is this claim to a deep connection between Italians and Māori rooted in similarities in a range of aspects from physical features to occupations, language, and musical abilities, to a social structure based on the family, that places the Italians closer to Māori than any other subaltern immigrant minority. This subtext may affect Māori Italians’ identitarian self-perceptions in a very specific way. A study of the limited but not insignificant Māori-Italian lineage might give us new insights into the ways in which ethnic identity is experienced and expressed by Māori (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012; Wang & Collins, 2016). In particular, we ask whether the Italian heritage, in providing a positively-connoted identification, equips our respondents with psychological and social tools that help them to validate aspects of being Māori and especially negative stereotypes that are associated with being Māori, ultimately helping them to handle challenges to identity construction and to achieve increased life satisfaction.

In what follows, we first give an account of Italian migration to New Zealand and the perception of Italians

in this country. We then outline our theoretical approach to identity, a combination of Social Identity Theory, interactionism, and life stories which evidences the psychological complexities of mixed ethnic identities. Next we describe our sample and methodology. Then, using excerpts from interviews, we demonstrate how respondents talk about their identities and how Māori Italians articulate attitudes towards themselves, other groups, and the Pākehā majority, by means of four key strategies. The concluding discussion attempts to evaluate whether Māori Italians pose an alternative mixed ethnic group to other Māori, Pākehā and non-Pākehā, mixed ethnicities.

### **Theoretical foundations**

#### ***Identity and social identity***

Within the social sciences, identity may be defined as a person's answer to the questions 'Who am I?' (self-definitions) and 'What does it mean to be "me" as a member of society?' (self-descriptions and evaluations) (Erikson, 1968). Because various strands of theory and research in psychology suggest people hold quite resilient self-views (Markus & Sentis, 1982; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Swann, 1983) and report similar traits on different occasions when asked 'what they are like' as a person (Rosenberg, 1981), identity is sometimes referred to as if it were relatively stable. Consequently, some theorists treat it as an internal frame of reference guiding the individual's social behaviour towards the world outside (Banaji & Prentice, 1994). Yet identity may also be seen as an ever-changing aspect of self. At its core is social comparison. Because social situations, affiliations, and contexts change routinely, identity is not something stable but changeable, depending on setting and social context and intergroup dynamics (Josselson, 1996).

The multidimensional, context-dependent nature of identity is explained by Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory (SIT), which delineates two aspects: personal identity is the sum of the individual's unique identity characteristics (including personal beliefs about the self, skills, and abilities); social identity is the self-concept an individual derives from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002) and comprises self-definitions, self-evaluations, and self-meanings associated with group affiliation. The social identity paradigm emphasises that identity is multidimensional, with many different social identities, including nationality, ethnicity, gender, family, social class, occupation, and sexuality varying in salience and expression, depending on environmental demands upon the individual. The assumption that people have both personal and social identities, and that there are multiple social identities, carries important consequences for understanding how identity is experienced and expressed contingent on social context. First, because part of the individual's self-esteem derives from their group/s, they are driven to elevate their social group/s, including the ethnic groups they affiliate with, over others. Intergroup contexts can therefore prompt intergroup comparisons and within-group solidarity and highlight group boundaries. Secondly, social context triggers individuals to think, feel, and act on the basis of their social identities: they behave in ways normative to their social group, particularly if group affiliation is central to their self-

definition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this way, SIT accounts for various social phenomena such as in-group favouritism (why people show preference and have affinity for their own in-group) (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2002), and out-group derogation (discrimination against out-groups) (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002).

#### ***Ethnic identity and multiple ethnic identification***

Ethnicity is an aspect of identity and refers to the significance and meaning individuals attach to belonging in their ethnic group (Phinney, 1993), including a sense of belonging connected by heritage, culture, shared language, and values (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Ethnic identity has long been recognised in psychological research as a critical determinant of minority individuals' attitudes about themselves, others in their ethnic group, and the ethnic majority (Lusk, Taylor, Nanney, & Austin, 2010; Thomas & Wagner, 2013; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). Given that ethnic minorities often face marginalisation, identity theory regarding ethnic minorities has generally assumed identity salience and 'problematisation' (Erikson, 1966; Pettigrew, 1964). Way, Hernández, Rogers, & Hughes (2013), for example, find ethnic and racial identity development is influenced largely by contextual stressors like negative societal stereotypes and discrimination (see also Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker & Quinn, 1998; Cross, 1971, 1978, 1991). Discrimination and ethnic minority status may 'push' ethnicity to the fore for minorities as a particularly salient social identity and therefore a key aspect of 'who they are' (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996).

Complicating ethnic identity for mixed ethnic individuals are their possible different approaches to identity development and the resultant identification with one, both, or neither of their ethnic heritages (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). The relationship between psychological and social outcomes and ethnic and racial identity has primarily been examined exclusively among mono-ethnic minority groups; however, the research on mixed-ethnic individuals shows that, generally, individuals who have internalised a strong, secure, and positive identification with the ethnicity central to their identity also report higher self-esteem (Robinson, 2000). Moreover, they are more likely to reject the conception that biology predicts one's abilities and to see race and ethnicity as socially constructed, which may buffer them from the detriments of prejudice (Gaither, 2015; Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007). From the SIT perspective a key motivator to identify with social groups is to enhance self-esteem. Ethnic hybridity may therefore be a coping mechanism for the negative effects of discrimination and prejudice if individuals strongly align and identify with positive aspects of their ethnic group identity which enhance their self-esteem (Settles & Buchanan, 2014). Despite this possible psychological benefit to those with mixed ethnic affiliations, Gaither (2015) showed they may experience the added stress of an 'identity crisis', especially if they feel 'torn' between parents or ethnicities. However, raising individuals with dual ethnicities to identify with both parents and to understand their complex heritage can enhance their psychological and social adjustment (Binning, Unzueta, Huo, & Molina, 2009). Thus, while membership of

multiple marginalised groups can place individuals at risk for negative experiences and well-being (Settles & Buchanan, 2014), it can serve as a positive psychological resource by providing individuals with multiple sources of potentially positive self-definition and meaning.

### **SIT, interactionism, and life stories**

To reconcile how people can have identities which are multidimensional and trans-situational yet situationally expressed, McAdams (1994, 2001) has proposed personal identity as an internalised life story comprising the person's accumulated understandings of who they are and what that means in society (see also Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). McAdams (1994) suggested the life-story approach is also consistent with situation-specific views of identity because people's public expressions of identity arguably represent a selection of aspects of their story, tailored for the time and audience.

Erving Goffman's early work adds another theoretical base for understanding identity expression. He took an interactionist perspective, asserting that meaning is produced through the interactions of individuals. Goffman (1959, 1963) observed that people varied their expressed identities to manage social stigma by manipulating how others perceive them through linguistic strategies and presenting selected aspects of their identities. His interactionist views have provided the rationale for many studies demonstrating that individuals, when talking about the groups they belong to, acknowledge stereotypes about their social category, yet present alternative interpretations of group membership to negate unwanted feedback (Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker & Quinn, 1998; Verkuyten, 1997). Data also suggests that those with mixed ethnic affiliations can freely and easily switch between or identify with their multiple identities (see Gaither, Sommers, & Ambady, 2013) to manage the impression they make. For example, Houkamau (2006) found that Māori women with mixed affiliations selectively expressed aspects of their Māori or Pākehā identities in various social situations to fit in and achieve acceptance.

Our study applies these three theoretical lenses, namely Social Identity Theory, interactionism, and the notion that identity is expressed in the form of a personal life story (narrative), to our interpretation of Māori-Italian identities. The value of combining them is that by treating identity as socially constructed through conversation we can harness narrative data to explore how identity is articulated drawing from both Māori and Italian ethnic affiliations and cultural knowledge. Taking the approach to identity offered by Erikson (1968), and treating Māori-Italian identity as a person's answer to the questions 'Who am I?' and 'What does it mean to be "me" as Māori or as Māori Italian?', our narrative interviews explored how Māori Italians express their own ethnic identities in relation to themselves, others in their ethnic group, and those from the Pākehā ethnic majority. Our analysis particularly concerns intergroup dynamics, how in-group and out-group differentiation and alignment are achieved, and the impacts of racism on participants' identities. It was a fortunate coincidence that the interviews were conducted shortly after the Census of 5 March 2013, an event that had triggered reflection on ethnicity in some of them and on which the interviewer was able to draw.

## **METHODS**

### **Sample**

This study is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with 44 Māori Italians. The interviews were conducted by the Italian author of the article in 2013 in three main locations in New Zealand: Wellington, Porangahau in southern Hawke's Bay, and Turangi. Initial discussion with academic colleagues, the curators of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and members of Wellington's Italian community led to key interviewees. More participants were found by snowballing. They were interviewed in their place of residence, mostly at home. Three main groups emerged.

The first group of 19 interviewees (15 women and four men) were descendants of Nicola Sciascia, an Italian man who reached New Zealand around 1873-1874 and in 1882 married a Māori woman, Riria McGregor, the descendant of a Scottish settler (Campbell, 2004; 'Jock McGregor', 2018) and a local Māori (Fulci, Ingravalle, & La Notte, 2007, p. 3; 'Nicola Sciascia and Riria McGregor', n.d.). Most respondents lived in Porangahau. The others who were interviewed in Wellington, Levin, and Hastings retained a strong connection with the family and the Marae in Porangahau. The Sciascia whānau have a level of public visibility, owing to some of their members occupying Māori-related public roles as well as for their research into their Scottish ancestry (Campbell, 2004) and their 50-year long search for their Italian whānau which attracted media attention in Italy and New Zealand (see Copland, 2005c; Fulci, Ingravalle, & La Notte, 2007; 'Flanders to Rome', 2008). The second group of 13 participants comprised 11 children and two grandchildren (eight females and five males) of Māori women and male tunnellers, mostly from the Veneto region in Northern Italy brought out to work on the Tongariro Hydroelectric Scheme (1967-1984), and now living in Turangi and surrounds. This group, most of whose first-generation fathers are still alive, maintained close ties with Italy and the Italian family, having spent long periods there, travelling there regularly, and having siblings currently living there. They also enjoy visibility in Turangi, and within the national Italian community, as attested by a tall statue of a tunneller erected in Turangi town centre in June 2019, following the 50-year anniversary celebrations in 2017 (see Codelfa-Cogefar, 2017), as a tribute to all those who worked on the scheme ('The Tunneller', 2019). The first and second group were featured in the exhibition 'Qui tutto bene. The Italians in New Zealand' (Te Papa Tongarewa National Museum, Wellington, 2004-2007), which emphasised the artistic and social links between Italians and Māori. The two groups have contributed to the consolidation of the idea of good Māori-Italian relations. The third group included 12 individuals, seven females and five males living in Wellington and on the Kapiti Coast, nine of whom descended from Italians from the Sorrento coast or the Isle of Stromboli in Southern Italy. Among these, only one had a first-generation Italian father.

The complete sample comprises 30 women and 14 men, aged 18 to 84 when interviewed. 19 fell in the 18 to 35 years age band, 17 were aged 36 to 55; six were aged 56 to 70, and two were aged 70 plus (some volunteered their exact age). Three had left high school without

completing it, 14 had secondary education, and 26 had tertiary or university education (one had a doctorate). Participants had worked or were working in various occupations: five were labourers; six were self-employed and ran their own business; 25 were employed in diverse businesses, professions, education, and public services (two in this group were also studying); four looked after the family; three were retired; and one (18 year old) was unemployed.

In presenting our data, we endeavour to make visible differences and trends in self-perceptions across the three groups. To this end, we have designated them as Groups 1, 2, and 3 and we will indicate the group in brackets, together with gender and age of the participants, after each interview excerpts.

### **Research design and procedure**

Data was collected by face-to-face semi-structured interviews, recorded with the interviewees' written and verbal consent. All interviews were conducted in English, in one session lasting approximately one hour, except three with prominent members of the Sciascia family which were markedly longer and which twice spanned two sessions. The interviews formed part of a project on identity construction and multiple identifications among Italians in New Zealand. The project aimed to investigate perceptions of Italy and its culture and people among the Italian and Italian-Māori communities. Interviewees were asked to name three things they associated with Italy, what it meant for them to be Italian and what Italian values they thought they embodied or subscribed to. The same questions were then repeated for Māori to find out about their Māori identities and what being Māori Italian meant to them personally. Participants were interviewed alone, with five exceptions when family members attended but did not speak. In the very first interview, which was less structured and served to refine the questionnaire, a father and son contributed to the discussion. The interviewees could speak freely, with more questions being asked in response. Clarifications were given if requested. Unanswered questions were reformulated. However, interviewees were never forced to answer. The interviewer also took written notes. Once all data was collected, interview transcripts were produced by a research assistant in the United Kingdom and reviewed by the interviewer.

As a non-Māori researcher, the interviewer was conscious of the need to respect interviewees' cultural sensitivities. She attempted, whenever possible, to follow Māori cultural protocol using Smith's (1999) ethical research guidelines for Māori researchers: respect for people; the importance of meeting face to face; look, listen ... speak; be cautious; do not trample the mana of the people; do not flaunt your knowledge (Smith, 1999, p. 120). Being only a visitor to New Zealand, she was not in a position to comply with Smith's last principle: be generous, share, and host people. She was instead the recipient of her interviewees' generosity and hospitality. Her own Italian origins and experiences of migration were shared to reveal some of her own personal background. All this, including the perceived affinity between Italian and Māori cultures, helped her establish trust and gain better insight into her interviewees' stories. Some

relationships continued after the interviews by email and Facebook.

### **Data analysis**

Thematic analysis was conducted on the explicit content of the data. In line with SIT and interactionist analysis, both researchers were interested in how identifying as Māori, identifying as Italian, and identifying as Māori Italian provide a strong source of identification which can be emphasised or de-emphasised to promote a favourable notion of self and identity (Blumer, 1969). Thus, we have examined whether and how our respondents express views of being Māori, Italian, and both Māori and Italian (and switch between these social identities) to assert the value of their groups within a dominant Pākehā culture.

To identify these elements, we followed the five stages outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). The first stage involved intimate familiarisation with the data through multiple readings of transcripts. Next, the transcripts were roughly coded. This process required identifying the aspects of the data most relevant to the research questions. In the first round of coding, as we were primarily concerned with how respondents in the study constructed positive identities and what resources they drew from (in both Māori and Italian cultures), the interviewer explored all the ways that they referred to being Māori and being Italian. Since identity was conceptualised as comprising definitional, descriptive, and evaluative elements, these elements served as a starting point. The data was examined to identify all the descriptions, evaluations, meanings, and associated behaviours the participants recounted that they 'had' or 'did' because they were both Māori and Italian. After this preliminary analysis, a second stage concentrated on clarifying core themes. Once chosen, these were compared with the results of the first round of coding to ensure they truly represented the key elements and recurring concepts. Excerpts were selected to demonstrate how respondents' identities reflected their experience as Māori and as Italian and how these in turn reflected their social relationships and contexts.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS**

Consistent with our stated theoretical lenses, data analysis disclosed four strategies employed by our respondents: Māori identity salience; A seamless marriage between Māori and Italian cultures and identities; Contextual flexibility: Why be Māori when you can be Italian?; Distinct and better: In-group favouritism and distinction. For each strategy, we will point out and comment on differences and similarities between groups.

### **Māori identity salience**

In line with the Social Identity Theory research outlined above, our results revealed that ethnic identity for all recipients was complex and flexible. On the one hand respondents spoke of strongly valuing their Māori identities, yet on the other proudly identified as Māori *and* Italian. With rare exceptions, respondents identified primarily as Māori. This may reflect New Zealand's socio-political climate and Māori's status as the indigenous people and the largest ethnic minority of Aotearoa. Moreover, Māori have historically been

discriminated against and continue to experience discrimination in New Zealand (for a recent review, see Houkamau, Stronge, & Sibley, 2017). The fact that discrimination and ethnic minority status may 'push' ethnicity to the fore for minorities (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996) may render being Māori a particularly salient identity. Likewise, in the 2013 Census, a large proportion of those of mixed Māori and Pākehā descent chose their primary ethnic group as Māori (Stats NZ, 2014a). Most of our respondents also made clear that biological aspects of ethnicity were not a crucial factor in how they self-define, and Māori identity was at times a conscious choice driven by cultural values and context:

*We are Pākehā as well because my mother is Pākehā, you know, European. [...] Her grandfather came from England and he was a Stirling who came out on a whaling ship and married a Māori woman. On my mother's side there is European and Māori, so we are a bit of a mixture. [...] But we have chosen to be Māori because it is who we are, how we've grown up. We have grown up in both worlds but I choose to be Māori. We don't all as Sciascia choose to be Māori. (Female, 55-70 age range, Group 1)*

*[I am not Pākehā] because I am a Māori [... Having Italian or Scottish blood does not make you Pākehā] because we grew up as Māori. Our lifestyle, our cultural behaviour, if you like, is Māori. Even though we have characteristics of Pākehā, we've European eyes, like I said, we are very English in the way we speak, in our way of life, we have lived our lives as Māori. (Female, 70 plus age range, Group 1)*

*It means everything to me to say I am a Māori, everything, because that honours all my ancestors. It is who I am and to acknowledge that is honouring them. That's honouring myself. It gives you a place to stand, you know, your ownership and your responsibility and obligation. If you were to say 'I am a Māori', then that comes with obligations and responsibilities that I am aware of, whereas a lot of Māori aren't. I do my best to fulfil those things. (Female, 55-70 age range, Group 1)*

*The most dominant [identity] is Māori, because it is the culture in which I live. [...] Yes, because I am exposed to it a lot more, especially at my workplace. The underlying values are the same for Italian and Māori. (Female, up to 35 age range, Group 2)*

*Probably Māori would come first because I live in New Zealand [...], then Italian. [...]. New Zealand [identity] is not really there. Sometimes I consider Māori and New Zealand the same. (Female, up to 35 age range, Group 2)*

*[I am] Māori and Italian, but Māori probably is [more dominant] because that's how I have been brought up. My uncles and aunties and cousins are Māori, I was brought up that way. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

*For being Māori there is a sense of belonging to this land. [...] I'm] Māori [first], Italian [second], New Zealander [last]. They are at the same time, I'd say they are what makes me, so they are all there together.*

*[...] only because probably I am here I focus more on the Māori [than Italian]. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 3)*

*Thankfully for me, I feel comfortable being Māori because I have the language and I know how the culture works. So I feel comfortable in that culture and I feel proud of that culture especially when I perform, when I use my music. And because I am brown, I think that means a lot to me. [...] I have a white brother and I don't think he has the same connection with that culture or feels as comfortable or confident, so I feel I look like a Māori and I speak like a Māori, so I feel more comfortable in that culture. [...] I just feel strong in that culture that has supported me through life. I have been employed through my culture most of my life. [My strongest identity is] definitely Māori. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 3)*

The view of ethnicity as choice was more prominent among the members of Group 1, the Sciascia whānau, perhaps as a consequence of the positive way in which Māori identity and culture have been experienced by them. As noted earlier, this attitude aligns with the predictions of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) which underlines the tendency of groups to elevate ethnic groups they affiliate with over others (thus showing in-group favouritism), particularly if group affiliation is central to their self-definition.

Group 3, consisting primarily of third- and fourth-generation Italian individuals, recounted memories of their Māori and Italian parents' loss of heritage, and revealed an awareness of the shift from assimilation to, and repression by, the dominant Pākehā culture to biculturalism and increased tolerance of Māori and other ethnicities, from which they had benefitted. Group 2, on the other hand, displayed much more nuanced self-identifications, with some switching between the two heritages *vis-à-vis* their importance during the course of the interview. Nevertheless, they appeared secure in both their identities. Even the few who declared their stronger affiliation to their Italian heritage, which was often confined to specific areas, they expressed their total commitment to their Māori heritage. With the exception of two participants, who demonstrated confusion about their self-identifications as both Italian and Māori, Group 2 expressed a secure sense of self as both, perhaps as a consequence of their younger ages, of the fact that they, as well as their Māori mothers, had been brought up in more protected rural communities, and that their Italian fathers had come to Turangi with good work contracts and under the protection of an Italian company. The next three strategies provide a more detailed and refined understanding of the participants' views of their Māori-Italian hybridity and the value they attribute to each heritage.

### **A seamless marriage between Māori and Italian cultures and identities**

Although generally claiming Māori as their foremost ethnicity, respondents of all ages, both males and females, spoke of an easy and uncomplicated blending of the two ethnic groups and cultures. With the exception of the same two atypical participants from Group 2 mentioned above

who reported some conflict, no sense of being torn between ethnicities was reported. Respondents, by and large, claimed that the affinity between the two cultures, whether real or perceived, made it easy and ‘seamless’ to align the two. Many referred to cultural and physical similarities between Māori and Italians. These perceived similarities allowed respondents to identify with both ‘sides’ of their identities and embrace how their dual (or multiple) heritage can enhance their lives and identities:

*I think the fact that they [Italian and Māori heritages] are so much alike, we were immediately at home [in Italy]. [...] I was home. (Male, 83 years old, Group 1)*

*Some parts of our culture [Italian and Māori] are pretty near the same. It’s how we present ourselves, it’s how we eat [...]. We are gatherers of food, we build things to make it easy for us, like we make nets for fishermen. We are gardeners, we are builders, those things. [The professions are close] in both cultures. (Male, 55-70 age range, Group 1)*

*We had an experience many years ago [...]. We walked into a restaurant in Turangi [...] and the people were looking at us. [...] They [a Māori-Italian family of miners] said: ‘You look like us’. And I said: ‘We were just saying the same thing’. (Male, 55-70 age range, Group 1)*

*No, [my Italian and Māori selves are] never at odds. I’d say they complement each other. [...] Italians have a similar family thing that Māori have [...] that’s a connection. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 1)*

*We are the same in the way, to me ... family, food, and entertainment [...]. Maybe different types of food, but [food is important for both peoples]. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 1)*

*It’s hard to know whether [some of my values] were always there or there was an Italian influence, [or they were] Māori, because they are very similar. Probably the big one’s about family and connection, and meeting and occasions when we meet as a family, celebrations, food, and song quite often, you know, speaking and the arguments with the family, [something that] is quite a robust, lively thing. (Female, up to 35 age range, Group 1)*

*I don’t notice [differences]. To me it’s the same. [...] Both cultures in my eyes are similar. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

*[Italian and Māori] are very similar cultures really. I mean, Māori love food, Italians love food, Italians love family, Māori love family. They love gatherings. Very, very similar. That’s probably why they get on very well, and the language, the vowels even, is so similar. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

*Although there are some protocols, procedures that are different, the important things of both cultures are so similar. [...] I couldn’t be me without being one or the other. [My Māori and Italian selves] work rather harmoniously together. [...] I think it is evident from my family [that there are affinities]. (Female, 30 years old, Group 2)*

*I believe that Italian values are similar if not the same as Māori. [...] both my parents, one is Italian and one is Māori, were Catholic, were brought up in the Catholic faith and [...] the values are very much family oriented. I cannot distinguish between the two cultures at all. [...] My perception of what it is to be Italian and my knowledge of what it is to be Māori are pretty much the same. [...] I don’t think I could separate them. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 3)*

*From all I can say, from what I know, I think Māori Italians have so many similarities in the way that we are raised and values, that I think that they go well together. [...] my grandfather being in the Māori battalion, when he went to Italy he found the same things, you know. He felt good in Italy. He loved Italy. And I suppose, yes, having a Māori father and an Italian mother, we were learning the same things. Respect your elders. Family is important, religion is important, all of those things, land is important, where you’re from, having a connection to..., blood is important. There’s all the same messages, the Māori message, the Italian message, they’re the same. (Female, up to 35 age range, Group 3)*

*The main thing [...] that I say is similar between Italian and Māori is the food, they are very big on food and looking after people. That way it is very similar. [...] Caring and very welcoming, they look after you in the same sort of way. (Female, up to 35 age range, Group 3)*

*Famiglia, we call it whānau here, is [where the two cultures are] very similar. (Male, up to 35 age range, Group 3)*

The overwhelming uniformity in these responses can be attributed to a variety of reasons. Most participants demonstrated to have been exposed to the narrative of good Māori-Italian relations and/or the socio-cultural affinity between the two cultures. Older member of Group 1 had memories of relatives who had fought in the war and of the post-war period which they had passed on to younger members of the whānau. Furthermore, interviewees from Group 3, who lived in Wellington or nearby, were aware of, or participated in, Italian community events in the capital. Notably, a reunion of Stromboli families attended by 450 people, held in the Parliament Buildings in 2000, which led to an exhibition and a book (Page, 2000) and was followed by other books about Stromboli families (see Hindmarsh, 2004; Moleta, 2012), appeared to have triggered the participants’ interest in their Italian genealogy, also making them amenable to being interviewed for this study.

### **Contextual flexibility: Why be Māori when you can be Italian?**

Like previous findings that many individuals with mixed ethnic affiliations switch freely and easily between ethnic identities contingent on social situational demands, respondents reported emphasising their Italian or Māori heritage depending on such demands. This strategy presents more variety for the three groups, due to the variety of life situations and circumstances and to the subjective way individuals interpret and react to contexts.

The comments below are testimony to Goffman's (1959, 1963) interactionist understandings of identity expression which underline the tendency for individuals to publicly 'perform' selected identities to project a desirable image within the course of social interactions. Among Group 2, who felt stronger in their sense of Italianness owing to the still strong presence of their Italian fathers, the switching is performed consciously and playfully to obtain a certain effect:

*[When I meet Māori people] I start talking like them. [... I use] different body language movements. [...] My wife thinks it's funny. She sees me changing my attitude if I have to when I meet different people. [...] It's] like you are wearing three different hats. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

*Italian and Māori are the same. [Whispering to the interviewer] I feel more Italian. Maybe because dad is still here. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

The last interviewee's need to hide, by whispering, that she feels more Italian reveals that she is aware of the importance of feeling Māori and living as one. Living in New Zealand, often close to their Māori families, respondents were immersed in a Māori cultural and social milieu. As such, some reported that this reality pushed their Italian side into the background, as not always relevant to their daily life. As expected, this perception and attitude was more prevalent among Groups 1 and 3, whose Italian ancestry went back various generations:

*Māori [is the stronger identity] because it's where I live. [...] Māori is the culture that I live in. I guess we do a lot of European things. This is European, the way we live here, you know. I like them all really. I like to mix them all up actually. I probably do more things Māori because more things Māori are happening around me, do you know what I mean? And my family are doing more things Māori, so it's more about that [...] I mean if [...] there was a whole lot of Italians doing Italian things, I'd be getting involved, you know, but it's just what's available. It's like most people here are shearers and fisherman [...] because of where we live, but that doesn't mean that they can't be judges or whatever. You just learn to fit in within your environment. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 1)*

*I normally answer [I am] Māori. because I think here in New Zealand if you start throwing things out like 'Oh, I am Italian', 'I am fourth-generation New Zealand Italian', they look weirdly at you. [If I were in Italy,] yes [I would emphasize the Italian connection...]. As much as I would like to have more of a connection with Italy, I feel like ... sometimes, I don't know, I think I have such a strong Māori background I just identify with what I've just [said]. But I would really like to learn more about my Italian culture. (Female, 31 years old, Group 1)*

*I was brought up very much more Māori, and that was all from mum [of Italian descent]. She was doing the kapahaka and all those things and made us go to Māori boarding school. [...] she identified and loved very much [Māori culture]. [...] Dad] gave us the Māori blood but she demanded culture. [...] The biggest thing [about the boarding school] was it was*

*the one time in my life where I was not a minority. Everybody there was Māori. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 3)*

Entirely coincidentally, in 2013 the second author featured in the aforementioned television documentary *Why be Māori when you can pass for an Italian?*. In the programme Toi Iti travelled New Zealand and the Gold Coast of Australia talking to Māori, including scholars, about why those of mixed ethnicity would identify as Māori if they could be perceived as belonging to another ethnic group (Iti, 2013). Aligned with Goffman's idea that individuals manage social stigma by presenting selected aspects of their identities, this documentary highlighted the flexibility of ethnicity for those who affiliate with more than one ethnicity and the fluid way ethnicity is perceived and engaged with by Māori with multiple ethnic affiliations, particularly to distance themselves from unwanted negative perceptions of either identity groups.

This same pattern was evident among our respondents, who were acutely aware of discriminating and negative stereotyping about Māori in New Zealand and many of whom had observed acts of stigmatisation of other Māori people. While many appeared highly resilient and happily asserted a positive view of their Māori culture, the ability to identify as Italian, for many respondents, somewhat shielded against what they perceived as the negative stigma ascribed to Māori ethnicity. This is evinced in these statements:

*Māori don't really get good press in this country at the best of times. Any story about Māori people is blown up on the news and yet any other ethnicities can do that and it's back-page news kind of thing. For me it was always quite special to have something else. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 1)*

*[Being Māori] means family, it means loyalty, it means knowing where we come from, pride, sometimes shame [... due to] some behavioural manners of some Māori people, that I feel quite disappointed in, because they are Māori. I guess when one Māori lets you down, you feel they are letting everyone down, all of us down. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 1)*

*I think I am proud of my connection. I think as a young man I thought it was cool to be Italian, it was a bit exotic. I think if I look at Europe or other parts of the world, I think of so many positive things about Italy. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 3)*

In keeping with his strategy of freely switching between identities (as seen earlier), one participant from Group 2 expressed the unusual perspective that his Māori blood conveniently shielded him from Māori racism towards non-Māori people:

*In this country there is a lot of racism, especially with the Māori. To have some Māori inside you makes things a lot easier. [...] With Māori blood] I've got all bases covered. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

As noted above, a key motivator for individuals to identify with social groups is to enhance self-esteem. Given those with dual or multiple ethnic identities have two or more groups to identify with, and the choice to do so flexibly, those who can identify with two groups or



more would naturally draw on those identities strategically. Although most participants spoke of being Māori as most salient to their identities, several emphasised that being part-Italian was special. Some participants said so explicitly, explaining that having two identities, two sources of belonging, and being able to walk in 'two worlds' was a source of personal strength and self-worth:

*I'm very satisfied with what I am and who I am and I feel so much more fulfilled now that I have been able to put my arms around [my Italian family]. (Male, 83 years old, Group 1)*

*You have the genealogy and the blood connection there [Italy]. But obviously I don't speak the language. I don't live there. [...] I don't know if I feel less [Italian] but obviously I am in terms of not speaking the language and living there. [The connection] gives me a sense of cultural security, [...] a place of standing, like the foundation of belonging [...]. What [the Italian side]'s given me is, I feel I am able to straddle both worlds [...] I'm as confident here in the CBD or going to the Opera and ordering a latte. And I am familiar and fine doing that as well as being on the Marae and performing the karanga, welcoming people. Italy [represents] the international side. (Female, up to 35 age range, Group 1)*

*Living in New Zealand, being an Italian, you are nearly singled out, you are a special person. A lot of New Zealanders have respect for Italians. You feel different, you feel special, you're not just a normal New Zealander. [...] My name, everybody who comes through the door who I haven't met before: [Italian name], you must be Italian, oh... wow'. They just start talking: 'I've been to Italy, I love [Italy]'. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

While almost all respondents believed the two cultures share a number of values and customs such as the worth of family, respect for the elders, and living off the land/nature, they also consistently expressed a belief in the fine attributes of Italian culture. With that foundation, some participants ascribed certain positive features of their lives and character, skills, and abilities to their Italian heritage. This emerges in the positive descriptions of Italian identity and the association of Italian identity with high culture, art, fashion, and beauty:

*[My grandmother] always did things like embroidery [...] and we all do, all the family does [embroidery is not a Māori thing]. [Mum] learned from grandmother and all of us. [...] I think it is in the blood, it's like my Māori side. [...] It's a pride thing, it's blood. (Female, 55-70 age range, Group 1)*

*I am proud to be Italian. I love the Italians, Italians are beautiful. Yes, [being Italian] is exotic. Hey, everybody thinks: Oh...wow! (Female, 55-70 age range, Group 1)*

*[Italians are] adventurous people, very prosperous [...] think of the great mechanical side to Italy, its production side, and where it leads in the world, film stars, music, I think a lot about Michelangelo, because of art, arts, the structures, buildings. [...] Just being*

*part of the world's existence really, I always have to say I am Māori because I was born, that's the culture I came ... and lived and been in and my Italian side too ... just knowing that ... Italy proved to be part of this world. [It made] a huge contribution to this world. A huge empire, the Roman Empire. All of those things, and thinking that I have a blood strain in me that belongs to that... (Male, 55-70 age range, Group 1)*

*In Māori society women are considered lesser than males. We are not even allowed to speak in the Marae. Males are totally dominant, the female element is about support and subserviency. And I believe that the Italian side of me is about superiority, it's about knowledge, history, and strength. And when I disagree with my husband he often says to me: 'That's the Italian coming out in you'. Because I can swap my cultural subservience role in Māori to my Italian role, because I believe the Italian women have a sense of assertiveness that their culture and history has allowed them to gain, so I revert to Italian ancestry because I feel privileged that I can. (Female, 56 years old, Group 1)*

*For me what I see is like how we talk, talking over each other, and everybody has got an opinion, to me that's an Italian trait. Because you know like on my Māori side [...] they're very quiet. And on the Sciascia side they are always loud and talking, and they are leaders. I see them as leaders. And they think outside the square, made things happen in the community. [...] when we got to Italy and I saw [...] our people like people with power because they were always people that organised, people that made things happen [...] and they were judges, lawyers etc.. Ah ah... that's why [we] are like the way [we] are. I always saw that we were different, when my uncles [were] called [...] macaronis, so the Māori knew they were different. They had a different way of doing things. We say we are Māori because that's where we live. You relate to this place we live in. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 1)*

*[Italians are] steadfast. I think of [...] their work ethic, their finances, they are pretty structured, they are very good at saving money, and self-insuring. [Dad told us] you need to work. If you want something, you need to do this. [...] stick to it, you can't just change your mind later, you need to be committed, solid. (Female, 18-35 age range, Group 2)*

*I identify with beauty as well [...] beautiful blue sea, the buildings and even the people. [...] Dad had very strong morals and beliefs and loyalty, and sense of self and sense of family, food, wine, expensive tastes. I am prone to something a little bit different. I usually don't like things that are run of the mill, because everyone could have them. [I like] something that stands out and usually costs more. (Female, up to 35 age range, Group 3)*

*I have morals and standards [...] A lot of it has to do with being Italian. (Female, 31 years old, Group 3)*

Generally Italian culture was seen as not competing with Māori culture, but adding to and enhancing Māori

heritage and identity. The following excerpts go further, asserting that being Italian (as another or second ethnicity) can help Māori to reconnect with their Māori heritage and rebuild their Māori identity:

*In my acknowledging of my Italianness [...] when I'm out teaching [...], I always acknowledge that I am Italian, half Italian, that my greatgreatgrandfather came from Italy [...] to help people who have any problems perhaps relating to being Māori, or whatever, just to understand that [...] if you know your genealogy, then all of that is part of what makes you. (Female, 55-70 age range, Group 1)*

*My mother has taught us that everything is about family. And everything you do is for your family. [...] It could be [a Māori thing]. I think it is both [Māori and Italian]. [But] I think ... especially getting to know Māori friends, that [our family] is quite different. I think [...] some people might think I go overboard and everything is for your family. [...] I don't know if it's because times are changing. I just see the difference. (Female, up to 35 age range, Group 1)*

This latter excerpt hints at the possibility that family values are becoming diluted among Māori. The interviewee continues by reporting that Pākehā relatives do not have the same commitment to family as her own Māori family. This perhaps indicates that she sees Pākehā-Māori unions as responsible for this loss and a threat to Māori values and way of life, whereas she considers Italian-Māori hybridity as an antidote to such a threat. Although this comment is clearly an individual perspective, recent quantitative data do indeed indicate that, although Māori tend to be described as relationally orientated and collectivist, such attitudes and values are not held ubiquitously among Māori (see Houkamau & Sibley, 2019). We shall see in the next section that our respondents erect clear boundaries between themselves, as Māori and Italian, and Pākehā.

### **Distinct and better: in-group favouritism and distinction**

SIT emphasises that because individuals want to develop and maintain social identities they will be strongly motivated to define group boundaries clearly to set themselves apart. This tendency was evident among our participants. In some cases, Māori Italians claimed their identities gave them more social value and meaning compared to Pākehā New Zealanders, who were seen as having 'no culture'. This was then contrasted with what they perceived to be a richer, distinctive Māori-Italian cultural mix:

*I don't think I think of Italian as being Pākehā. I am more inclined to think [Pākehā] is a European. Pākehā, English. I think Pākehā as being the 'other' race of New Zealand. [...] Pākehā are the other race that lives in our country. Italians are Italian. [...] For me Italians are colourful [...] Yes, I think that's the right word [ethnic], rather than Pākehā. (Female, 70 plus age range, Group 1)*

*I connect to Italian more so than to English, because Sciascia was our surname. I guess if our surname was*

*Smith, I might feel different, I don't know. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 1)*

*The Italians who came here struggled with the Europeans, you know, because we all have our own culture. The Europeans, [that is to say] the English, had no culture, whereas the Māori and the Italians had a culture. Dad's gang in the tunnels was made up mostly of Māori people [...] The English were stiff. They didn't know how to gel at work. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

*I class Pākehā as white people from New Zealand. Pākehā actually means stranger [...] Pākehā don't really know where they come from. That's the beauty about being Italian or Māori, you know where you come from. (Female, 36-55 age range; Group 2)*

*I have never considered myself a Pākehā. I never thought [an Italian to be a Pākehā]. In my eyes Pākehā is a white person born in New Zealand. For me Italians are European. A Pākehā to me is like my stepfather [...] he is a Pākehā. He's got no culture. He was born in New Zealand. I don't know where his ancestors came from. (Female, 36-55 age range, Group 2)*

*I'd say I am Māori Italian Scottish Irish and very quietly I'd say English. I am proud of Scottish and Irish, for some reason the English doesn't really do much for me. Sometimes I don't even want to put it there for some reason, because of colonisation and things like that. I feel a stronger connection to Scottish and Irish probably because they were colonised and oppressed. [...] I am definitely Māori before I'm Kiwi. [...] There is a lot of things that I don't really relate to, like I think a lot of New Zealand families isolated and they don't support their neighbours, they don't really have connections to their culture. There is a lot of kiwi stuff that I just think is watered down British stuff. (Male, 36-55 age range, Group 3)*

As noted, SIT provides clues as to why these respondents referred to Pākehā as being without culture: it may be seen as a way of differentiating their own identities in a positive way, as opposed to an actual social reality (see King, 1988, 1999 for a discussion of Pākehā culture in New Zealand).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In New Zealand, Māori are the most likely to identify with more than one ethnic group and the numbers who do so have been growing each year. This reflects New Zealand's demographic transformation, which impacts on the construct of ethnicity. We confirm previous findings that Māori select aspects of their different ethnic identities and express them in various personal and social situations to meet social goals (Houkamau, 2006). This in turn confirms the implications of SIT for ethnic minorities, namely that the task of assuming a positive sense of identity that drives all individuals is more complex for these groups due to discrimination from the dominant group, but also because multiple identities provide tools to overcome the external negative categorisations (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010, 2014a, 2014b). Our data demonstrate that knowledge of their Italian heritage and alignment with the positive associations with Italy and

Italian high culture provided our respondents with a sense of pride and personal self-worth that added very positively on their sense of self as Māori. This inspired some to learn more about their Italian ancestors and culture, expressing the intention to travel to Italy, study Italian, and join in more local Italian events.

Some respondents emphasised that their Italian heritage afforded intellectual abilities and practical skills that enhanced what they had learnt from the Māori heritage or compensated for Māori lack of interest in those areas. Having goals and pursuing them with passion, aspiring to a good job and to a nice and clean house, and generally building a future for oneself were seen as ideals originating in the Italian heritage, which indirectly projected a view of the Māori lifestyle as inadequate and inferior. Many of them appealed to the Italian historical, artistic, cultural, and technological patrimony to elevate themselves, one even reproducing the colonialist discourse of categorisation of indigenous cultures as 'primitive'. This shows how internal and external definitions are mutually implicated. In Jenkins' words (1994, p. 217), 'the very act of defying categorization, of striving for autonomy of self-identification, is, of course, an effect of being categorized in the first place. The rejected external definition is internalized, but paradoxically, as the focus of denial'. The association of Māori with the availability of Italian elements worked overall to enhance personal and social prestige and to resist definitions imposed by Pākehā colonialists, emphasising agency and encouraging many participants to take ownership of their lives. A second ethnicity reduces constraints and opens up the range of ideas by which Māori individuals can conceive of themselves and resist social stigma (Davis, 1975). While we cannot state that it has been their Italian heritage that has encouraged the pursuit of a good education, many respondents were clear that it had inspired a strong work ethic and thinking 'outside the box'. Certainly, all respondents, except one 18 year old, were employed and were in good occupations.

The respondents' ability to describe their identities positively, to counter stereotypes and stigma or to overcome discrimination, including within-group gender inequalities, was partly contingent on their relationships with others in their family and social networks. Thus, those with more positive role models were better placed to assert positive views of their own identities. These role models were more clearly and vocally identified with living first-generation Italian parents or with grandparents whom the respondents knew or had known personally. Yet the importance and value of even distant Italian ancestors were felt just as strongly by many, with their ancestors' legacy being recognised in their lives today, even when this legacy was felt as an Italian national one rather than personal or familial.

Respondents also spoke of being distinctive, as Italians or Māori Italians, and felt positive about that distinctiveness. The belief in a strong affinity and harmony between the two cultures and the prestige Italy and things Italian currently enjoy in New Zealand do indeed distinguish the Māori Italians from other mixed

Māori groups. Joint Italian ethnicity elevates the Māori both in their self-definition and in the external definition by the dominant group. The findings of studies on other mixed ethnicities suggest that while tension from the Māori whānau ensued from essentialist notions of what it means to be Māori, tension from the non-Māori family depended on the social value the non-Māori ethnic group attributed to itself, which may in turn be a consequence of the esteem in which it was held within the social and cultural hierarchy and within the colonialist/racial Pākehā discourse. The Māori Jews, for example, suffered exclusion from the Jewish family who considered themselves superior to Māori, though a change is reported in relation to today (Ore, 2018). By contrast, Ip (2013) reports how, despite very good early relations between Māori and Chinese communities, today Māori-Chinese relationships are sources of tension within families and Māori-Chinese individuals experience anxiety due to the current anti-Asian backlash by Māori. Ip quotes a Māori-Chinese young woman saying that she felt 'like one side of me [was] attacking the other' (Ip, 2013, p. 4), a tension which contrasts starkly with the overwhelming harmony between Māori and Italian selves our interviewees reported. An important difference is very clear to see, namely that the Māori-Chinese community is subject to ethnic power relations in New Zealand today (Ip, 2013: 3) in ways that the Māori-Italian community is not. It seems that Italian ethnicity is held in high consideration among the Māori, who distinguish it from other minority immigrant communities. Māori Italians use their Italian ethnic affiliation to elevate themselves without at the same time aligning with the colonisers: not having been part of the colonising power, Italians are not currently seen as a negative reference group in relation to either Pākehā or other 'undesirable' minorities.

It is important to note the limitations of this study. The identities expressed by participants may have been influenced by the interviewer being Italian and not, say, Māori or Pākehā. This may have shaped the identities expressed, particularly the very positive presentation of their Italian identities and heritage. These stories and experiences are only glimpses into the participants' lives. In addition, small sample size limits generalisability beyond this Māori-Italian population. However, the data give a unique insight into how very socially contingent and constructed expressions of identity can be. Indeed, respondents spoke of flexible identities which allowed them to experience multiple selves in different contexts.

To conclude, our findings show that pejorative external categorisations of Māori and consequent negative self-definitions combine with positive external and internal categorisations of Italians to shape the ideas and ideals of the Māori Italians who participated in this study. While Māori was seen as the primary identity, Italian identity was a highly valued second heritage. The two cultures and heritages enhanced one another to equip individuals with psychological, social, and practical skills that enabled them to transcend Māori's disadvantaged position in New Zealand and, paradoxically, assert themselves as Māori.

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