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Negotiating multiplicity: Macro, meso and micro influences on the ethnic identifications of New Zealand secondary school students

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

In New Zealand, the number of people who identify with more than one ethnic group is increasing. This is particularly true for adolescents and for those whose identifications include Māori or Pacific Islands ethnic groups. However, there is little understanding of what identifying with multiple ethnicities means for individuals. This research examined the multiple ethnic identities of senior secondary school students (aged between 16 and 18 years), by focusing on how they identified themselves, what decisions formed the bases of their identifications, and what influenced their identifications at three interconnecting levels: the macro (state) level, the meso (institutional) level, and the micro (family and individual) level.

A mixed methods research approach was employed, including a nation-wide survey and fieldwork in one South Auckland secondary school. The fieldwork methods were participant-observation, interviews with students who identified with more than one ethnic group, and a photo elicitation exercise. Through these methods, data were collected that gave a broad understanding of multiple ethnic identifications for New Zealand adolescents, and a deep and multifaceted explanation for one group of participants.

This research explored the ways that the participants negotiated their multiple ethnic group identifications, despite macro, meso and micro pressures towards singularity. It examined macro-level influences on ethnic group data collection and the ways that ethnic group identifications are shaped and constrained by data categorisation protocols. It looked at the meso-level influences of the research school on students' ethnic identities. The school focused on cultural identity and provided opportunities for students to participate in cultural activities and speak their languages. It examined the micro level influences of family and individual decision-making around identities, and the way that the participants maintained multiple ethnic group identifications, despite family experiences that might encourage them to focus more strongly on a single identity. This research explored the complex and nuanced ways that ethnic identifications are constructed at each of the three levels, for adolescents who identify with multiple ethnic groups.

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Glossary

’Afakasi	‘Half-caste’, person with heritage from multiple ethnic groups
Ako	Teaching and learning, reciprocal learning
Aroha	Love, compassion
Fanau	Family
Fonuamalu	“A safe shelter”, the Tongan bilingual unit at Kia Aroha College
Haka	Dance, performance, war dance
Hapū	Sub-tribe, kinship group
Hui	Meeting, gathering
Iwi	Tribe, nation
Kaea	Leader of a haka
Kafa	Tongan belt or tie
Kai	Food
Kapa haka	Māori performance group
Karakia	Prayer
Karanga	Ceremonial call of welcome
Kaumātua	Elder, person of status
Kaupapa	Philosophy, collective vision
Kia Aroha	Through love
Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kāinga	Mediation of socio-economic and home difficulties
Kimiora	“Seeking life or well-being”, the Cook Islands Maori and general unit at Kia Aroha College
Kīngitanga	The Māori King movement

Koha	Gift, contribution, reciprocity for being involved in research
Kōhanga reo	Māori-language early childhood centre
Kōrero	Speech, conversation
Koro	Grandfather
Kura	School
Kura kaupapa Māori	School based on Māori ideology, customs and philosophy, and using te reo Māori as the medium of instruction
Lumana'i	"Future", the Samoan bilingual unit at Kia Aroha College
Ma'ulu'ulu	Tongan sitting dance
Māori	Indigenous person of New Zealand
Marae	Meeting place or courtyard, also often used to refer to the complex of buildings around a marae; home of a particular hapū or iwi
Mātauranga	Knowledge
Mau rākau	Māori martial arts
Mihi	To greet, acknowledge, thank; speech of greeting
Minus	Cook Islands potato salad
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
Palagi	"White" person
Pānui	Notices, announcement
Pōwhiri, pōhiri	Welcoming ceremony
Rangatiratanga	Chieftainship, autonomy, authority, leadership, self-determination
Reo	Language, Māori language
Ta'ovala, kiekie	Traditional Tongan skirt
Tangata whenua	People of the land, indigenous people
Tangi	Mourn, funeral (shortened form of tangihanga)
Taonga	Treasures
Taonga tuku iho	Cultural aspirations, heritage
Tau faka-Niua	Tongan sailors' dance

Te reo	The language, Māori language
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Whānau o Tupuranga	"Future generations", the Māori whānau unit at Kia Aroha College
Teina	Younger sibling or cousin of the same gender
Tikanga	Values, beliefs, practices, protocols
Tuakana	Older sibling or cousin of the same gender
Tuakana-teina	Being a role model, helping peers and younger students, taking on leadership roles
Tupuranga	Growth
Tūrangawaewae	Iwi territory or homeland, place where a person has the right to stand
Wānanga	Meeting, discussion, conference; related to learning and the passing on of knowledge
Whakairo	Carving
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakataukī	Proverb, saying, motto
Whānau	Family, extended family
Whanaungatanga	Relationship, sense of family connection
Whare	House, building
Wharekai	Dining hall, part of a marae complex
Wharekura	Māori immersion secondary school
Wharenui	Meeting house, part of a marae complex