How is the ethnic identity of female Māori and Pacific artists constructed?

A study of life stories using vertical layers of discourse.

Tui Matelau
How is the ethnic identity of female Māori and Pacific artists constructed?

• Participants: 6 female artists of Māori and/or Pacific descent
• Video ethnography: Audio-visual technology used to record participants engaging in their creative practice
• Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis (MIA): Transcription and analysis of video data.
• Interviews: semi structured life story interview
New Zealand context

• Ethnic make up of New Zealand (2013 Census)
  • European 74%, Māori 14.9%, Asian 11.8 %, Pacific people 7.4%, Middle Eastern/ Latin American 1.2%.
  • Māori and Pacific population is young, growing significantly and has a high proportion of people that identify with both Māori and Pacific ethnic connections.
  • Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand.

Historical, social and cultural factors have shaped Māori and Pacific Identity.
Studying Māori identity
Research into Māori identity

• Enculturated/Traditional Māori identity
• Bicultural Māori identity
• Marginalised/Negative Māori identity
• Fluid Māori identity
Research into Māori identity

• Enculturated/Traditional Māori identity
  o Defined as having knowledge of “whakapapa (genealogy), matauranga Māori (Māori knowledge), proficiency in te reo (Māori language) and tikanga (cultural protocols)” (McIntosh, 2005, p. 43).
  • This identity has been significant in challenging the negative stereotypes of Māori.
  • Two sub groups- traditional essentialists and traditional inclusives.

• Bicultural Māori identity
• Marginalised/Negative Māori identity
• Fluid Māori identity
Research into Māori identity

- Traditional Māori identity
- Bicultural Māori identity
  - Feel positively toward their Māori identity but are also confident to engage with Pakeha/European practices (Durie, 1994).
- Marginalised/Negative Māori identity
- Fluid Māori identity
Research into Māori identity

- Traditional Māori identity
- Bicultural Māori identity
- Marginalised/Negative Māori identity
  - For this group their Māori identity is influenced “...by a second-rate status in New Zealand society: poor education records, high unemployment, low incomes, alcohol and drug abuse, shocking crime statistics, excessive rates of teenage pregnancy...” (Meijl, 2006, p. 919).
  - Both excluded from the mainstream and from Māori who identify with the traditional Māori identity.
  - An assimilated identity and/or a colonized identity (Moeke-Maxwell, 2005).
- Fluid Māori identity
Research into Māori identity

- Traditional Māori identity
- Bicultural Māori identity
- Marginalised/Negative Māori identity
- Fluid Māori identity

It is a positive Māori identity and is more inclusive as it combines different ideas about culture, language, tradition and the present social environment.

“Indigenous cultural identity then, is not a static creation locked in a frozen embrace with the past, rather it can be seen as an agentic articulation of selfhood that aids Māori young people in their navigation of an uncertain future,” (Kidman, 2012, p.198).
Research into Pacific Identity

• In New Zealand Pacific culture is made up of “at least 13 distinct languages and cultural groups, migrants as well as New Zealand-born, and speakers of Pasifika languages and, increasingly, those who can speak only English” (Ross, 2014, p.1315).

• Traditional Pacific Identity
  • Christianity- “Church has been proposed as a setting where individuals can negotiate their identity and resolve conflict between New Zealand influences and traditional Pacific ways of life” (Mauela & Sibley, 2013, p. 85).
  • Male and female gender roles and norms.
  • Acceptance by community and importance of family.
  • Proficiency in home language and knowledge of cultural practices.

Fluid Pacific Identity
Research into Pacific Identity

• In New Zealand Pacific culture is made up of “at least 13 distinct languages and cultural groups, migrants as well as New Zealand-born, and speakers of Pasifika languages and, increasingly, those who can speak only English” (Ross, 2014, p.1315).

• Traditional Pacific Identity

• Fluid Pacific Identity
  • Ross (2014) explains that this second Pacific identity construction also incorporates elements of Māori identity due to interracial marriage and community interaction.
  • The possible loss of language and traditional cultural knowledge which is included in this more fluid identity has been highlighted as a risk factor (Fairburn-Dunlop, 2010).
Creativity, life stories and ethnic identity
Studying creativity
Studying creativity

Creativity is multidimensional. 
It is made up of environmental, behavioural and cognitive aspects (da Costa, Paez, Sanchez, Garbeaigordobil, & Gondim, 2015).

Environmental- psychological safety and psychological freedom (Fearon, Copeland Saxon, 2013).
Studying identity
Vertical layers of discourse

The outer layers of discourse contribute to the general identity element of a social actor. The rules and laws, institutions and media that exist in society develop a social actor’s general identity.

(Norris, 2011).
Outer layers- General ethnic identity

The identities mentioned at the beginning of the presentation are present in the outer layers of discourse through communication channels such as the media and people in their extended communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Māori identities</th>
<th>Pacific identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicultural</td>
<td>Fluid/emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalised</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fluid/emerging</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Psychological safety was denied due to conditions being placed on their worth within their ethnic community.
(749) where do I belong
(750) you know
(751) which side do I fall on
(752) and I’ve had
(753) a couple of
(754) um
(755) because I’m so fair
(756) people don’t look at me
(757) and think
(758) oh she’s part Māori
because it
it hurts for me
and um yeah
just
being looked at as a
palagi
which means a non-Samoan
or European
um
and it just makes me think why
why
why am I a palagi
to them
like
there’s this poem that
like where I had this experience of being
constantly told that I wasn’t
like a real Tongan
and so I wrote this poem called
six poems on not being called a real Tongan and they’re actual
instances
what am I
who am I
this is
like I
I would look around
and I just
could not
see what I was like
mirrored back in any fully formed way
(2314) I was too brown to hang out
(2315) with the white people
(2316) too white to hang out
(2317) with the brown people
(2318) so I never really had that
(2319) sense of
(2320) where did I fit
and I saw so much
violence
to be honest
violence and disrespect
and horrible behaviour
and I thought
wow
is that what it means to be Maori
I did have a moment where I went
I don’t know
if I want to be Māori
because
man these buggers
aren’t the way I behave
I don’t relate to how they behave
Outer layers- General ethnic identity

The identities mentioned at the beginning of the presentation are present in the outer layers of discourse through communication channels such as the media and people in their extended communities.

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<td>Marginalised/colonised</td>
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Psychological freedom was enhanced due to conditions being placed on their worth within their ethnic community.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>576</td>
<td>I was always the observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>577</td>
<td>always not quite fully in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>578</td>
<td>which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>579</td>
<td>created this bit of distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>580</td>
<td>so that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>581</td>
<td>which was always like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>582</td>
<td>stimulating creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vertical layers of discourse

The intermediary layers of discourse produce the continuous identity element of a social actor. These include people from the varying networks that the social actor belongs to.
Intermediary layers- Continuous ethnic identity

Family and friends are key networks that have contributed to their continuous ethnic identities.

Through the actions of family members in previous generations, psychological safety was denied. Transmission of cultural knowledge was denied, undervalued or put off until later, reinforcing some participants’ positions as outsiders.
I didn’t actually have links down south and I still don’t I’m still trying to forge the living relationships because there was see two generations where there was no relationship at all almost three generations if you include Queenie my great grandmother because she cut all ties so suddenly she just disappeared to whanau
and my nan
it was just like
the fear was in her
from a very young age
and she was
passing it down to us
yeah and another time I came home
and I was doing kapa
just kapa haka
when I was at primary school
and mum was like
oh what are you doing that for
and you don’t need to and
(2533) growing up
(2534) in a home
(2535) where I didn’t get
(2536) immersed in the culture
(2537) here was things
(2538) I was expected to know
(2539) and
(2540) things I was taught
(2541) and things that I
(2542) just didn’t understand
I wanted to learn more about my family and my cultural identity because I don’t know how to speak Samoan fluently and I just felt this big missing piece in my life.
Intermediary layers- Continuous ethnic identity

Family and friends are key networks that have contributed to their continuous ethnic identities.

Through the actions of some family members and friends, psychological safety was denied due to conditions being placed on their worth within their ethnic community.
(345) I went to Tonga
(346) in fourth form and lived there for six months
(347) in a real attempt to try and understand
(348) who I was
(349) and I thought
(350) oh I’d be going home
(351) and I would um
(352) finally know who I was
(353) and then I got over there and they were like
(354) oh you
(355) you’re a palagi like you’re
(356) you know you’re a white person
(357) you not
(358) definitely not one of us
some of my friends might say something slightly racist and I would say hey you know don’t say that you know like um I’m Māori and it’s not nice to hear you you know talk that way oh you’re not really Māori though so I had that when I was at high school
Intermediary layers- Continuous ethnic identity

Family and friends are a key network that has contributed to their continuous ethnic identities.

Through the actions of some family members and mentors, psychological freedom was enhanced.
so
and then the next
most pivotal time
was
um
when I met my
Kaiako
and coming into my
tohungatanga
yeah
and that’s been
where
the it’s all shifted
and I’m like
oh yeah
can’t actually run away
from this whakapapa
I mean there are so many mentors at university and I was also doing my PhD at the same time as some amazing scholars and academics like and and poets and writers so um Selena Tusitala Marsh was doing her PhD same time as me
| (1197) | his work would be exhibited |
| (1198) | in that gallery |
| (1199) | didn’t have an idea |
| (1200) | but saw this |
| (1201) | saw this Polynesian man and went |
| (1202) | ohhhh |
| (1203) | cause he was painting motifs |
| (1204) | motifs |
I think that’s why I’m so passionate because she was passionate in everything she did. She started off dancing and so I think that’s why I feel like I’ve taken the torch from her to carry on.
I hear through different family members that my grandmother made tapa and I often feel like that that’s my way of trying to connect with someone I didn’t know.
Vertical layers of discourse

The central layers of discourse produce a social actor’s immediate identity element. The immediate identity element is constructed through the mediated actions and the practices that the social actor performs and participates in.
Central layers- Immediate ethnic identity

The mediated actions/creative practice performed by each participant reveals their immediate ethnic identity.

Through their actions they address an imaginary audience, contributing to the layers of discourse of an imagined social actor.
(2523) it was my way of saying
(2524) I am Samoan
(2525) I claim this motif as mine
(2526) I know it belongs to a culture
(2527) but I
(2528) it was my way of saying
(2529) this is
(2530) this is part of who I am
how I’ve reclaimed it in different ways in later years especially through my Māoritanga it has really strengthened me to reclaim it out of a western um professional context
and I did have ideas
of
doing a series of paintings
sort of based on that Raupati report
because it’s a story that
many um
people in my position
who are Maori and European both
many of us
have that same story
a very similar story
and then as a creative artist
I wanted to create pieces
that are more fulfilling
to me
and stuff
that can relate to others
and so that’s why
I’ve been creating pieces
around being a New Zealand Samoan
because I know
a lot of people
um
in my generation
can relate
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1223)</td>
<td>so I feel like I have an important job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1224)</td>
<td>as an artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1225)</td>
<td>it’s like it’s not just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1226)</td>
<td>for me anymore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1227)</td>
<td>it’s for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1228)</td>
<td>pacific islanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1229)</td>
<td>and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1230)</td>
<td>anyone that can relate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1231)</td>
<td>to what I have been through</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
what am I then
if I'm not like real enough for you
and that happened a lot
and so
I wrote about that
you know and
um
quite a bit
and it was quite
you know
like it was cathartic
and it was a little bit like
screw you
like I saw you
you did this to me
and I'm gonna write about it
because I know you do it to other people
so I wanted to tell that story and share it and I knew that there were lots of other Maori Chinese who had similar stories and probably felt the same way about their family
Eating Dark Chocolate With

I am sucking on a sante bar / sneaking
in a cigarette gold wrapper / I remember when you bought
them in dairies / they were stripped and served undressed
edges worn from the friction / getting down with the
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