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The diverse stories of Māori political agency: a Q method study

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ABSTRACT

While there is much research and writing on Māori self-determination, little of it focuses on how Māori individuals and organisations conceive the necessary antecedent to self-determination; Māori political agency. To remedy this research gap, we explored the political aspirations of Māori individuals with a research method built to study such subjective topics: Q method. Combining Q method with some practical innovations from Kaupapa Māori Research method, we developed a unique way of researching the stories our participants tell themselves about politics. Our results suggest some Māori individuals do think of politics as a collective endeavour as the self-determination literature suggests, but just as often Māori collective forums and other non-Māori political institutions are seen as barriers to Māori individual and collective political agency and thus to Māori self-determination. We also found that Māori view the political autonomy and participation necessary for self-determination as possible in numerous diverse spaces, suggesting the focus on low voter turnout amongst Māori in the literature is missing the point: the stories told by this research suggest Māori individuals perceive their political agency to be hindered, not by majoritarian politics of non-Māori, but by Māori and non-Māori elites.

KEYWORDS

Māori politics; tino rangatiratanga; indigenous politics; indigenous self-determination; political agency

Introduction

Colonisation, by definition, is an attack on the self-rule of those colonised. It takes away the self-determination, the political agency, of indigenous peoples as they become subject to governance by the colonisers. Māori have endured that process since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. The New Zealand settler governments used legislation, war and the confiscation of the fisheries, lands and forest to deliberately undermine the ability of Māori individuals, hapū, whānau and other organisations to be part of political decision-making in their land (Sinclair and Dalziel 2000; Walker 2004). This history has influenced negatively the political attitudes of many Māori individuals today, and their ideas about how to exercise agency in the political realm. Yet, indigenous political organisations such as iwi, hapū and other Māori groupings have not only

survived colonisation but have emerged into the new millennium having fought for and gained extensive political and economic power – witness the statutory governance partnership between Ngai Tahu and the Crown in rebuilding the earthquake-shattered Christchurch. Māori political agency, at least in its outward appearance, seems to be rebuilding. We take the view that the creation and operation of such self-determination depends, as all self-defining behaviour does, on a sense of selfhood or individual agency. This type of agency, or the ‘the affirmation of an individual’s subjective existence through concrete action in the world’, has two parts. First ‘a subjectivity or selfhood aspect’ and second, an aspect relating to efficacy or impact on the world’ (Krause 2016, 309).

The impact of Māori individuals and organisations on New Zealand politics (their concrete political actions as individuals and organisations) has been studied and described extensively (for instance, Bargh 2013; Bargh 2016; Hill 2010; Humpage 2017). On the other hand, the subjective views of Māori individuals about their political agency have mostly been a matter of conjecture by scholars and Māori political leaders about what Māori ‘ought’ to want for their politics, given Māori tikanga, culture, history and ethnicity (Durie 1998; Ann Roche, Haar, and Brougham 2017; Smith 1999). This normative literature on political agency suggests that Māori take tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) or mana motuhake (political autonomy) to mean the right for Māori to decide how they want to be governed, including having the ability to make decisions about their futures. In this research, we sought to find an empirical basis for those normative presumptions: we sought to understand political views of Māori as ‘shaped by the desires, beliefs, habits, and personal histories that establish the character of or make an individual who they are’ (Krause 2016, 301). Using Q method, a research process created explicitly to study such subjectivity (Brown 1980; Stephenson 1953), we sought the stories that exist in common language amongst Māori about politics. In political science idiom, we sought to understand the beliefs of Māori participants about their external and internal efficacy (Bandura 1997).

The research found that, in line with much of the literature on indigenous and Māori politics, Māori individuals’ political selfhood is narrated by a desire to be involved in the political realm if they choose, and though such activity, to exercise greater control over decisions that affect their futures. That is, all wish to be self-determining, and some desire to express that by participating in collective Māori political activity. Yet, participants held a wide range of other views, often opposed to collective action, concerning how individual and organisational political agency is best realised. Our analysis of the data produced four diverse factors, or stories, that show that the various languages used by Māori about politics have markedly different beliefs about which collective decision-making forums best serve their political purposes, which goals should be pursued, and the political importance or significance of Māori as an identity. For instance, a group of – mostly younger – Māori no longer feel their identity as Māori is threatened by politics; and therefore, their stories of political agency narrate diverse strategies and bountiful options. The stories of the older generation have narratives about entering politics to protect Māori identity, as represented in works such as *Māori sovereignty* (Awatere Huata 1984). While such a conclusion may not be obviously radical, the idea of diversity in the political aims of Māori unsettles the contemporary literature on Māori politics that derives Māori political intentions, and tino rangatiratanga from assumptions about

Māori culture, history or ethnicity (Durie 1998; Walker 1990) such that the central fault line of Māori political identity is the conflict with non-Māori. This article provides empirical evidence for the revision of this current scholarly paradigm in indigenous studies we first suggested when we drew attention to the absence of aboriginal voices in the political theory of indigenous and Māori self-determination (MacDonald 2016).

Māori political desires are diverse. There are multiple and conflicting accounts of who Māori think best represent them, what organisations Māori individuals think are best suited to represent them and what they think such representation should achieve. Our findings should not be read as a rejection of normative ideas of *tino rangatiratanga* as a right collectively held by Māori. Nor should our findings be read as a rejection of the possibility that there are views arising in Te Ao Māori about politics that are qualitatively different from those held by non-indigenous peoples in New Zealand. Rather, we are arguing that such traditional or cultural views are but one set of ideas amongst the several stories that Māori in our study tell themselves about how best Māori might achieve collective rights of self-determination and which organisations and individuals might best fight for, achieve and then support a collective right of self-determination. This should be no surprise to anyone working within Te Ao Māori; a conversation with a number of *kuia* or *kaumatua* will deliver a range of responses about *tino rangatiratanga* and *mana motuhake* and its meaning to those individuals. Our point is that such diversity disrupts the presentation of 'Māori' as an explanatory frame in the analytical vocabulary of political science for political action by Māori (MacDonald 2016).

We first locate the Māori political agency in the scholarship particularly focusing on ideas of Māori and indigenous self-determination. Then, we introduce the Q methodological process which we used in this research. This method has been used a little in political science (Carlin 2017; Davis 1997; Dryzek and Berejikian 1993; Dryzek 1994; Dryzek and Braithwaite 2000) but much less to study indigeneity (Hunter 2013), and, so, we give a brief description of its practice, interwoven with additional tools we borrowed from the innovations of Kaupapa Māori Research (KMR). Following that, we describe the data collection and the extraction of the results from the PQ software, a specialist software used for doing the Factor analysis unique to Q method. We go on to describe the stories that can be deduced from Factors produced in the analysis, and in the review of our results by the participants. Finally, we make some comments about the lessons to be taken from these stories of Māori political agency for scholarship and government policy.

The scholarly literature on Māori political agency reveals a diverse set of ideas that authors have typically subsumed under the label of indigenous self-determination. Historically, for many Māori scholars, the phrase – whose etymology arises from the Māori translation of the Bible and the Treaty of Waitangi – has come to be 'te tino rangatiratanga' (Love and Tiller 2014). In her seminal argument for 'Māori sovereignty' in 1984, Awatere defined *tino rangatiratanga* as 'Māori ability to determine our own destiny and to do so from the basis of our lands and fisheries' (Awatere Huata 1984). Ranganui Walker called self-determination a 'dynamic', and it seemed to him a rubric that it encapsulated any Māori political or social self-organisation, particularly when that organisation sought to take power from the colonial authorities to Māori (Walker 1984). This anti-colonial impulse in Māori discussions of self-determination was also present in other indigenous discourses, prompting Murphy, to suggest that 'self-determination is

usually understood as a means of gaining distance or protection from rather than inclusion in state institutions [such as representative institutions]'. Yet, Murphy argues the recent literature offers a respite from this binary of either indigenous self-determination or the state, noting that,

...indigenous representation in shared-rule institutions such as national legislatures need not be seen as a means of short-circuiting indigenous self-determination; instead, this form of political voice can be viewed as part of a broader strategy for advancing indigenous self-determination by targeting a variety of parallel and complementary access points to political power. (Murphy 2008, 186)

The success of Māori in a variety of political claims across a variety of institutions has made it difficult to frame Māori self-determination in opposition to the New Zealand government (O'Sullivan 2017). More often today's scholars of Māori empowerment, such as Macfarlane and Macfarlane (2014), have moved to a more encompassing and plural idea of self-determination. Macfarlane starts with the Māori idea of 'te tino rangatiratanga' (authority over one's own things) and in doing so introduces a wider scope for the idea of self-determination that encompasses not just states but tribes, and peoples and other political groupings. This view of indigenous self-determination certainly better reflects existing contemporary practice around the world, where indigenous and inter-indigenous governance is deeply embedded in the state through a variety of indigenous institutions (Kingsbury and Gover 2005; O'Sullivan 2017). Key to the deep penetration of indigenous institutions in New Zealand governance is the rising economic and political power of various Māori organisations such as iwi, so it would be remiss not to note iwi conceptions of self-determination or rangatiratanga. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, the corporate body of Ngai Tahu, identifies rangatiratanga as leadership with personal integrity and ethical decision-making. Finally, Durie, the leading Māori academic of self-determination of the early twenty-first century, defines tino rangatiratanga as a set of capabilities (Sen 1979) at which Māori aim, such as

the advancement of Māori people as Māori and the protection of the environment for future generations. Economic self-sufficiency, social equity, cultural affirmation, and political power stand alongside a firm Māori identity strengthened by access to whānau, hapū and iwi and confirmation that future generations of Māori will be able to enjoy their lands and forests, rivers and lakes, harbours and the sea and air. (Durie 1998, 239)

Though varied, these interpretations of Māori political self-determination or tino rangatiratanga point to an underlying discourse of autonomy, control, leadership and a focus on the future; One participant in similar research project underway now suggested all these terms are best summed up as a desire for mana motuhake. All the scholars of Māori tino rangatiratanga, while admitting variance in definition, agree that the central idea of tino rangatiratanga is the desire of, and the claim right by, Māori to decide how they want to be governed and to participate in political processes to have greater control over the decisions that affect their lives and futures (Bargh 2010; Maaka and Fleras 2005; O'Sullivan 2017). In sum, the literature suggests Māori want political agency, where agency is the ability to act and make politics. Such a definition makes self-reflection and goal setting (internal efficacy) important, but gives few clues about how Māori speak about politics themselves when thinking about these topics, and deciding to act.

While it might seem obvious that autonomy and self-determination are what a colonised people would want – to escape the settler yoke – few scholars have tested their suppositions with empirical qualitative work that asks Māori participants about their subjective beliefs about politics. There is some work examining the reasons for low Māori voting turnout (Tipene and Poa 2006). This work was conducted using the typical political science measure of political agency: efficacy. Since the 1950s, efficacy measures have been used to examine an individual's belief in their abilities to participate in the political realm (internal efficacy), and their belief in the likelihood of their desires being acted upon (external efficacy). Efficacy research tends to focus on the correlation between low levels of efficacy generally and level levels of participation, usually using voting as a proxy for participation (Balch 1974; Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954; Craig and Maggiotto 1982; Niemi, Craig, and Mattei 1991). The Electoral Commission's research found that Māori external efficacy is low and this is a reason Māori participation in national elections is low. Certainly, Māori voting turnout remains proportionally low, and our research did find amongst the stories some evidence of low efficacy. However, our study used a method which allowed us to take a broader snapshot of the subjective views of Māori agency, and this enables us to tell a more nuanced set of stories about the relationship between Māori political agency and political participation. Indeed, we question the simple logic of colonisation equals low efficacy equals low participation. The stories we found suggest otherwise; a set of stories exist in which the political agency of Māori is thriving, diverse and adventurous. Such stories better explain the ability of Māori organisations and individuals to come from the edges of society in 1900, to be, via a variety of political institutions (iwi, hapū, Māori urban authorities, a political party) a dominant force in New Zealand politics in the twenty-first century. This article provides a glimpse into the diverse ideas of politics and political agency that drove Māori political institutions and actors to re-claim spaces in the governance of New Zealand.

Methodology

Though Q method has been around for over 70 years, it still may be relatively to unknown readers of this article, particularly since its use within indigenous studies is extremely rare. Therefore, a small introduction to the principles and theory of method is provided here. For a more extensive discussion of the practical steps of the method see Supplementary Appendix 1. Q method is a mixed qualitative–quantitative method that provides a foundation for the systematic study of subjectivity, i.e. peoples' viewpoints, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and opinions, from their point of view (Brown 1980; Brown 1993; Brown 1996; Van Exel and Graaf 2005). Stephenson, the creator of Q method, defined subjectivity as the communication of viewpoints (the views of a person); rather than its more popular definition as a consciousness or a metaphysical phenomenon (Stephenson 1953).

Subjectivity, in the lexicon of Q methodology, means nothing more than a person's communication of his or her point of view. As such, subjectivity is anchored in self-reference, and is, the person's 'internal' frame of reference... 'It seems to me ...' or 'In my opinion ...' In speaking thus, an individual is saying something meaningful about personal experience,

and what Q methodology provides is a systematic means to examine and reach understandings about such experience. (McKeown and Thomas 1988, 12).

In a Q method study, participants are presented with some statements about some topic (here; views on indigenous political agency) called the Q set (Supplementary Appendix 2). Those statements represent the various ways in which people talk about the topic to be studied (Watts and Stenner 2012, 34). Each participant is then asked to rank-order these statements according to their point of view using a quasi-normal distribution across a range of responses to the statements such as; disagree most, -5, to agree most, 5. An individual sort of the cards is known as a Q sort. Participants are interviewed through the process to gain some insight into their thoughts about the decisions they make while sorting the Q set into a Q sort.

Usually, around 20–40 Q sorts are gathered, then Factor analysed in one of the software tools built for this task. The Factor analysis explores the various ways in which the participants' Q sorts correspond. In Q analysis, it is the similarity between participants' groupings of the statements (e.g. five participants who all had statements 29–33 in the +3 range), rather than the correlations between rankings of each statement that indicates similar viewpoints. Q method produces a range of viewpoints, not a range of people's responses (Risdon et al. 2003). In simple terms, the method produces a small number of Q sorts, each of which is statistically significant, and thus a representation of an important viewpoint of the participants understanding of the subject under investigation. Since viewpoints rather than a particular set of variables are the object of analysis (unlike R-studies), 'Q does not need large numbers of subjects ..., for it can reveal a characteristic independently of the distribution of that characteristic relative to other characteristics' (Smith 2001). We follow Dryzek and Braithwaite (1994, 2000) in thinking of think of Q methodological research as a method to help how scholars accurately gauge the descriptions of political phenomena by the eponymous 'woman or man in the street'. In a world in which mass behaviour is becoming increasingly volatile and more unpredictable, ensuring we understand how people describe and narrate their political opinions seems particularly pressing.

Apart from Q-methodologies apparent suitability for studying subjectivity, there were several other reasons it appealed. First, the software provides an anonymised data set of around 20 pages which can be provided to other researchers for verification of the conclusions (see Supplementary Appendix 3). Second, the statements used in the research can be drawn from the language used by the participants to describe the subject in which the researcher is interested. Third, the results can be shown to and reviewed by the participants at the end of the study, allowing the researcher to have confidence that the views he or she finds express the possible range of participant's ideas, in the participants own words.

We found that the Q methodological approach shares many similarities with the approach recommended by practitioners of KMR. Both methods focussed on ensuring respect for the subjectivity of the participants throughout the process; from the agenda-setting of the research, through to the presentation of its results. KMR methodology has a wide-ranging whakapapa, but broadly it rests on the following ideas: to embrace and recognise of traditional Māori beliefs and ethics (Henry and Pene 2001); to reassert indigenous voices and bring them to the centre; to research for and with Māori, not

about Māori; to acknowledge the fluidity of Māori society and the changing dynamics of Māori culture; to emphasise a set of research practices to reflect these underlying philosophical beliefs and finally to empower Māori and Māori communities through research (Berryman, SooHoo, and Nevin 2013, 8–11). For the seminal author of KMR, Linda Smith, these principles suggest that research with Māori should be based on respect, so the Māori participants should guide the research question and design, be conducted a face-to-face setting ('kanohi ki te kanohi'), follow a look-listen-speak format, involve working with groups and not involve the researcher flaunting his or her knowledge (Smith 1999). In our research design, we ensured the Q set statements were generated by the participants natural language (Chilisa 2011, 212.) by holding hui for focus groups, ensuring Q-sort interviews were held in Māori settings such as the Māori student services where and the Māori department at the University, with the participants in charge of the Tikanga, and providing for the Q-sort interviews to be kanohi ki te kanohi. See Supplementary Appendix 1 for a detailed guide to the practical steps of our method and Supplementary Appendix 2 for the statements in the Q set.

Once the Q sorts by individual participants had been completed, the data (the Q sort) for each were entered in the PQ software. A seven-Factor extraction was performed on the Q-sort data. The software used centroid Factor analysis to reduce the data and identify sizeable portions of shared meaning, revealing Four significant Factors or shared viewpoints.

The Four Factors that we found through our analysis of the data each contained Two or more significant Q-sort loadings and 16 of the 19 Q sorts loaded significantly on One of the Four Factors. An initial review of the Factor arrays revealed that the Factors were distinct enough from each other to produce meaningful analysis. Table 1 summarises the Factor-defining Q -sorts for each Factor and their statistical variance. A last note, Q method, like KRM, allows for results to be returned to the participants, and so via hui, we engaged in a review and revision of the stories that emerged from the Factor analysis (presented below) until they made 'sense' to initial focus group participants.

Interpretation and analysis of the results

The results of the q method analysis, the Factor arrays, are essentially dummy sorts that each particularly significant viewpoint. A 1.00 loading against a Factor would indicate it was a perfect representation of the participants in that Factor. Typically, however, each Factor array is an approximation of the group of viewpoints that sit within the range of that Factor. Once the Factor rotations are completed to the satisfaction of the researcher, the software generates 20 pages of data about the Factors. Those 20 pages of data were first analysed using the 'crib sheet' method suggested by Watts and Stenner (2012). The crib sheet approach involves looking at the highest and lowest ranking statements for each Factor along with the statements that ranked significantly higher or lower than in other Factor arrays, as well as identifying any other significant statements, or unusual rankings of statements in the context of the wider Factor array. Starting with the crib sheets, we moved to explore each Factor's q sort and used the demographic data and the interview notes to produce an understanding of the perspective of each Factor about Māori political agency. Each of the Four Factor arrays we distilled are a unique individual view of Māori political agency, so, below, we introduce

them as though they were Four different individuals speaking in the first person. Unfortunately, space means the viewpoints presented below are a fraction of the information provided by each Factor. We strongly encourage readers to read the full descriptions in Supplementary Appendix 4 to both honour the voices and stories of participants and to fully appreciate the enormous vitality and diversity of Māori political subjectivity.

Factor one: a culturally sound and politically individualistic agent

Iwi and hapū do not represent my, or my whānau's, political interests (18: -4). This does not matter since I can represent myself and do not need traditional or family structures to help (6: -1). There are opportunities to participate in politics (5: -2) on many levels, from voting in elections, right down to getting involved at the local level (4: +1) (34: +2) (20: +4) (19: +3). I participate because I think I ought to and because it is important to my sense of self to have political views and act on them (26: +4). The reader should note that the stories are the shared imaginations of the participants about the possibilities of politics. Thus, even the individualist position of Factor One is a product of social interaction, and a property of the collective voice of some Māori, rather than the individualism of, say, Hobbes' Leviathan. We make this point to ensure that Factor One and Two are not read as 'more Western' and Factors Three and Four more 'Māori'. Instead the Factors are stories that are likely to weave in and out of the imaginations of the participants, and to a greater or lesser extent (depending on the untested representativeness of our research), for many other Māori individuals.

Factor two: excluded, but willing to be an agent, if given a chance

You need to participate in politics to have any effect (23: +1), but doing so can be hard. You seem to need certain attributes to be active in politics (7: +3), and these attributes seem to come with both age and experience (35: +2). I find it hard to participate at a local level (4: -2; 24: -1) or to get involved in tribal forums (9: +2). I do not feel that as a tribal member I get a voice and make a difference in this forum (14: -3). It also feels like the current leaders in certain forums, such as iwi politics, constrain the voice of others (10: +4), and it is not always easy for women to have a say in traditional forums, although in other forums they do okay (8: 0). For me voting in elections is the most important form of political participation (34: +3) because it is the only real way I can get to contribute at a national level. That said, I do not necessarily think that I can affect what the government does (21: 0), and individually it does not feel like I can make a difference (13: -2).

Factor three: political agency via te ao māori

We all should be involved in decision-making, but that is best One through collective representation, so my interests are best represented by my community or iwi or hapū (18: +3), and those organisations do have some degree of political influence (17: -1). Being involved in political activity makes me identify more with my community (30: +3). Within these forums, I guess I have a voice if I want to speak, but I am not sure how

much difference that makes (14: 0). I do not have a good understanding of the important political issues facing New Zealand (22: -2), but that does not matter since as an individual I cannot make a difference (13: -2), or have any effect on what the government does (23: -3).

Factor four: working together for my whānau, hapū and iwi

Community, family, iwi and hapū are important political actors for me (18:+3). I have a pretty good understanding of the political issues facing New Zealand (22: +4), and I think that being involved in political processes is important, though I do not think that voting in elections is an important form of political participation (34: -4). My voice gets heard on the marae, but I am not sure that it is easy to influence what is going on in the political realm. This is why collective action is essential – it much more influential. There are also times when the people in power should involve the people and community more, especially when it comes to important issues (31: -4).

Discussion

On the basis of Factors Three and Four, the research does allow us to conclude there is empirical evidence in the stories of Māori participants in favour of collective political agency by Māori, for Māori. The stories from Factors Three and Four understand that Māori institutions (such as iwi, hapū or Māori urban authorities) empower some Māori individuals to act in politics. The story evoked by Factor Three noted the difficulties of working as an individual separate from traditional structures such as iwi and hapū, and the positive impact of those institutions on politics. Factor Four told a story about individuals finding improved political agency through community involvement.

All the Factors held that Māori could have agency in politics, but there were diverse views across the Factors about how that political agency is best achieved. For example, Factor One emphasised the importance of voting in general elections as an individual, while Factor Four indicated a preference for collective forms of political action and saw voting as a less critical expression of agency. Factor Three emphasised participating in traditional community/iwi forums as more important when compared to the other Factor viewpoints and suggested a sense of duty or obligation to their community drives their political participation. In contrast, Factor One was not sure that iwi necessarily represented the interests of its members, so it was up to individuals to make a difference politically. Furthermore the story of Factor One was that a person could identify and be culturally secure as Māori, yet feel excluded from traditional iwi forums. In turn, that feeling of exclusion generated a desire to belong in the wider democratic system (in stark contrast to Factor Four, which identified strongly as Māori but wanted only to participate in Māori political forums). In addition, compared to the other viewpoints Factor Four expressed a different understanding of what constitutes political action, identifying political activities as more entwined and connected with everyday life, rather than primarily forms of institutional action such as voting.

A positive finding was that all the viewpoints told of a deep desire to be involved in political processes. This finding more than any other suggests a deep commitment to the agency necessary for self-determination, but with a twist; Māori are not only

committed to self-determination but within that self-determination, they tell diverse stories about their agency and their particular choices.

Conclusion

The research indicates that the institutions of both representative democracy and Māori governance in New Zealand are seen as too exclusive in the stories that the Māori participants told themselves about politics. All four stories emphasised that those institutions should be opened up since important political decisions should be considered by all those entitled to do so, not just an elite (whether Māori or non-Māori). These findings confirm the common point of agreement in the self-determination literature: that Māori want *mana motuhake*; the ability and autonomy to make decisions about their futures and have more control over decisions that affect them. At the same time, the stories indicate there are very broad and deep disagreements about how best to struggle for *mana motuhake*. Complicating the picture further are narratives of exclusion from, and repression by, both non-Māori political institutions, and, more interestingly, the Māori institutions that are assumed to help Māori find political agency, such as *iwi*, *hapū* and *whānau* and urban Māori authorities. These narratives of exclusion were primarily from younger participants. For instance, Factors Two and Three evoked stories that Māori individuals found it difficult to get involved politically since the networks necessary to be being involved (e.g. on the *marae*, within *iwi*) are often intimidating or exclusionary. Factor Two participants expressed the view that there are often strong existing networks, especially in local or traditional political arenas, where they feel that current leaders tend to constrain the voice of others. Participants also saw pan-tribal forums as difficult to participate in, due to the tendency of leaders, experts and *kaumatua* to dominate discussions.

The research raises questions as to whether traditional structures like *iwi* and *hapū* often represent the participants they purport to speak for (Factors One and Two). For scholars, such a finding is a timely reminder that cultural institutions are as likely to impact negatively as positively (Houkamau and Sibley 2011). Given that it is the younger participants who had these narratives of exclusion the stories we wonder: does this exclusion from power reflect an exclusion by older generations as with the elite politics of many societies? Or does the exclusion serve the Māori institutions' interest in some other way? For instance, do the older generation ensure that the next generation serves an apprenticeship in local cultural practice before they are allowed access to the traditional institutions of Māori politics?

This research also found that policy-makers and politicians would be well to ask for further research into the well-funded efforts to lift Māori political involvement in traditional political institutions (Māori Party 2017). The attempts by the Electoral Commission and others to lift the rate of Māori voting are no doubt important normatively – it is important that government institutions seek to increase voter turnout to assist with the legitimacy of the government and to bring a sense of inclusion to marginalised citizens. This study very tentatively suggests, however, that stories about voting are not necessarily correlated with individual Māori political agency. All the factors we found in our analysis highlighted the importance of voting, independent of whether or not the participants thought of themselves as effective political agents or that voting was an

effective use of their political agency. That is to say, the concentration on ethnic explanations of low voter turnout amongst Māori voters may be yet another pathologising of Māori (Bishop 2005). Our finding here gives a measure of qualitative research support to work by UMR insight (2006, 6) and Te Hoe Nuku Roa Group (Fitzgerald, Stevenson, and Tapiata 2007) on behalf of the New Zealand Electoral Commission which found that demographic, not cultural factors, indicated interest in voting amongst Māori. Whether or not further research will find a correlation between Māori turnout and efficacy, our analysis suggests there is a more urgent matter to deal with for Māori and non-Māori political authorities than national voting turnout. The stories collected by our research tell not of a lack of political interest in voting (both as individuals and collectives), but a much broader story told by Māori of a feeling exclusion from all the places in which political decision-making occurs in New Zealand, whether Māori or non-Māori. Our Q method study opens the possibility that for Māori exclusion from settler politics (Walker 1984), is not, or at least is no longer, the principal frame relevant for Māori narratives about politics, even if it remains an essential chapter. Instead, the grand narrative is exclusion of Māori from politics by elites, whether those elites are Māori or non-Māori.

We hope this research provides more evidence that naming something Māori explains little about the intentions or the behaviours of that individual or organisation. The stories of how individual Māori conceive of their politics are too diverse to be subsumed under a single ethnic frame. It is true that we have found some support for separate ways of thinking about politics that may be different from non-Māori, but this finding should not be used to buttress essentialist arguments for a 'Māori' way of understanding politics. The stories circulating within the Māori population about their political agency range from a complete belief in personal agency, to needing collectives to make change, from believing all political institutions are set against both Māori individuals and Māori organisations, to a belief that Māori individuals or organisations have great power. Though that, in the abstract, is obvious – any set of peoples will show such diversity – for too long the scholarly analysis of Māori has been an attempt to group individual and organisational political aspirations with a racial or cultural signifier (MacDonald 2016). Hopefully, this research puts that essentialist ethnic or cultural story to rest and demonstrates that scholars, journalists and political leaders should be open about the profound cleavages in the stories that Māori individuals and organisations tell themselves and others before purporting to speak to 'Māori issues' in politics.

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