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Hybrid identities: Māori Italians challenging racism and the Māori/Pākehā binary*

Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture

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ABSTRACT

New Zealand's indigenous Māori were colonized by the British (now referred to as Pākehā). Scant systematic investigation addresses bicultural/biracial identity for Māori who identify with ethnic groups other than Pākehā. Taking a narrative approach and applying thematic analysis, this paper explores interviews with forty-four Māori Italians, conducted in New Zealand in 2013. We show how Māori Italians negotiate the challenge of constructing positive ethnic identities in a milieu where ethnic hybridity has been defined primarily in relation to the Māori-Pākehā colonial encounter. Focusing on racism and stigma, we demonstrate that Māori Italians run a gauntlet of identity challenges shaped by socio-political contexts. Conversely, Māori Italians draw boundaries between themselves and the dominant Pākehā culture and draw from both Māori and Italian identities to buffer discrimination from Māori, Pākehā, and Italians. Our analysis reveals a multiplicity of interpretations of Māori-Italian identity not yet articulated in social psychology or New Zealand literature.

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Introduction: the Māori/Pākehā binary and ethnic hybridity

In social psychology, how identity interacts with ethnicity has been a major research focus since the 1960s (Santos & Umaña-Taylor, 2015). In much scholarly writing identity refers to

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Adalgisa Giorgio was born and raised near Naples in Southern Italy, where she graduated in Western European Languages and Cultures. She obtained her PhD from the University of Reading, England. She then taught at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and later settled in the UK, where she is Associate Professor of Italian Studies at the University of Bath. She has dual Italian and British citizenship, and feels a strong connection with New Zealand. Carla Houkamau is of Ngāti Porou Kahungunu/Ngati Kere and Ngāti Porou/Te Whānau o Tuwhakairiora descent. She is Māori, Irish, and Italian. Carla is a descendant of Nicola Sciascia and Riria McGregor, connected by descent to some of the participants in this study and is empathetic to their experiences. Carla is an Associate Professor at the University of Auckland, specializing in intergroup relations. The two authors contributed equally to this article. Adalgisa completed all data collection in 2013. She later approached Carla for her work on Māori identity. The ensuing discussions led to their collaboration. Carla led the theoretical conceptualization and structuring of the article, writing the sections on identity theory, Māori/New Zealand history, and Māori identity. Adalgisa provided and analysed the data, identified themes with Carla's support and expertise in qualitative data analysis methods, and selected the interview excerpts. Adalgisa also wrote the sections on the Māori Italians and the research methodology. The remaining sections were written together.

those aspects of self-experience which pertain to the class, type, or group to which an individual belongs (Harré, 1998). Erikson (1968) suggested that identity concerns how one is situated relative to others and comprises self-labels and group memberships. In both views, identity may be best considered as denoting the aspects of the self-concept linked to 'who' a person is and how they 'fit in' with others in the social world. Erikson (1968) proposed individual identity as a person's answer to the questions 'Who am I?' and 'What does it mean to be "me" as a member of society?'. Thus, identity was both unique and subjective and under continual revision as individuals learn more about 'who they are' through life experiences and changing relationships. In keeping with these theories, we conceptualize ethnic identity as part of one's overarching identity, bearing specifically on the individual's identification with a particular ethnic group(s) and what that identification means to them. Importantly, in keeping also with New Zealand official measures, ethnicity, understood as pertaining to 'cultural affiliation' rather than 'race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship', is self-perceived and self-defined and people can belong to more than one ethnic group (Stats NZ, 2018).

Māori are the indigenous people (*tangata whenua*/people of the land) and the largest ethnic minority in New Zealand (Stats NZ, 2014). The latest data available from the 2013 census reveal the complexity of Māori ethnic affiliations. Of 668,724 people claiming Māori descent, only 598,605 marked their ethnicity as 'Māori'; that is 70,119 decided not to identify ethnically as Māori. Less than half (278,196 or 46.5%) of the Māori ethnic group identified Māori as their only ethnicity, versus 52.8% in 2006. Another 273,192 (45.6%) identified Māori and one other ethnicity, while 38,079 (6.4%) identified Māori and two other ethnicities (Stats NZ, 2013, December 3).

Understanding Māori identity is therefore a complex endeavour, with many layers of intra-group diversity to consider. Each *iwi* (tribe) and *hapū* (kinship entities) have their own distinctive history. On the individual level, cultural knowledge – such as the ability to speak *te reo Māori*/the Māori language and understand *tikanga Māori*/Māori values/practices – is unevenly shared. As Durie (1998, p. 215) observes, 'Māori live in diverse cultural worlds. There is no one reality nor is there any longer a single definition which will encompass the range of Māori lifestyles'. Reflecting New Zealand's history of colonization and discrimination experienced by Māori, the personal act of claiming a Māori identity can be, in the words of Māori musician and political activist Moana Maniapoto, a 'political statement' carrying 'responsibilities and expectations from the Māori and Pākehā worlds' (cited in Husband, 2016).

The majority European ethnic group, commonly referred to as 'Pākehā' and 'New Zealand European', comprised around 74% of the New Zealand population in 2013. The term Pākehā was created by Māori to refer to non-Māori, or most typically to New Zealanders of European descent (see Sibley et al., 2011). The specific origins of the term are not completely clear. However, common consensus among academics and historians is that it derives from the words *pākehakeha*, *patupaiarehe*, and *pakepakehā*, all of which are Māori language terms for mythical or imaginary human-like beings with fair skin (see Baker, 1945; Biggs, 1988; Goldsmith, 2005; Williams, 1992). Although some have suggested Pākehā can be extended to all non-Māori of European descent (see Ranford, 2015), this application represents a departure from the historical roots of the term, which has its origins in colonization. From early days of inter-group contact, settlers, mainly of British descent, were referred to, by Māori, as Pākehā (Ausubel, 1960; Baker, 1945).

The history of Pākehā engagement with Māori has been fraught with tension and conflict and a history of racism, as well as with intimacy and collaboration (King, 2003). Here we emphasize that the colonization of New Zealand had dire consequences for Māori (Reid et al., 2017) and included open warfare between Māori and British troops (Belich, 2013). Māori lost the vast majority of their lands (*whenua*) and political control to Pākehā by the close of the nineteenth century (New Zealand Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2014). For generations, Māori have resisted cultural assimilation and sought reparation for the historical injustices wrought by colonization. Central to reparation is honouring of the *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*/Treaty of Waitangi. Signed in 1840 by most Māori Chiefs and the British Crown (Orange, 2013), the Treaty founded New Zealand as a British Colony. The Māori-language version, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, signed by most chiefs refers specifically to British subjects as Pākehā (New Zealand Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2014). Today the Treaty of Waitangi plays an influential role in New Zealand politics and society (Orange, 2015), being an ongoing source of debate in relation to New Zealand's past as well as future (Thomas & Nikora, 1992).

Pākehā historian Michael King (1985, 1999) describes Pākehā as white New Zealanders whose ancestors have lived in New Zealand for multiple generations and who therefore 'belong' to New Zealand, as they have no other country they can call home (King, 1999). Within this socio-historical context, identifying as Pākehā involves a recognition of New Zealand's colonial history and the implications of colonization for Māori (see Gray et al., 2013 for a discussion). Although in New Zealand common vernacular and historical and statistical records are replete with references to Pākehā, it is certainly not a universally accepted ethnic label (Bedggood, 1997; Cormack & Robson, 2010; Liu et al., 1999; Pearson & Sissons, 1997; Ranford, 2015). Many may prefer 'New Zealand European' or even 'New Zealander' (Cormack & Robson, 2010). The adoption of the term Pākehā by some, and its rejection by others, underlines the complex inter-group processes that shape personal and collective identities (see Kukutai & Didham, 2012). This is particularly relevant today in a nation where ethnic diversity has been increasing steadily, with the 2013 census showing that 'New Zealand has more ethnicities than the world has countries' (Stats NZ, 2013, December 10).

Since the 1980s the nineteenth-century term 'hybridity' has increasingly returned to describe racial mixture and two or more cultural influences on identity (Hutnyk, 2005; Verkuyten, 2018). 'Hybrid ethnic identities', emerging from combining different races or cultures, enrich human complexity and offer new and unique ways of approaching difference in diverse societies (Wang & Collins, 2016). The complexities of intermarriages and mixed Māori-Pākehā identities have been addressed by several researchers (Meredith, 1999; Moeke-Maxwell, 2003; Rocha & Webber, 2017; Wanhalla, 2008, 2013; Webber, 2008). Other ethnic hybridity has gained less attention, except for such notable examples as Māori Dalmatians (Božić-Vrbanić, 2005, 2006), Māori Chinese (Ip, 2013), Māori Indians (Aikman-Dodd, 2013; Pio, 2009), and Māori Jews (Ore, 2018). Since the claiming of a multi-ethnic identity is an important and growing phenomenon in New Zealand (Kukutai, 2003, 2004), it is timely to examine other hybridities, focusing on how they may challenge and be affected by the prevailing Māori/Pākehā cultural binary, thus expanding our understanding of Māori diversity.

In this article, we examine the rarer Māori-Italian ethnic hybridity, which is only now starting to attract the attention of researchers (see Giorgio & Houkamau, 2019). Our participants' self-identifying as Māori Italians and rejecting affiliating as Pākehā further

breaks the simple binary. A major aspect of this is that Italians were not part of the colonizing power and are instead seen as an allied and somewhat exotic minority. Italians are also recognized for their own culture, which is considered very different to British culture, and this persists in the identity of their New Zealand descendants (see De Marco, 2016; Elenio, 2012; Hill, 2011, pp. 135–136). We explore how Māori Italians construct identities in a socio-cultural milieu dominated on the one hand by the ethnic Pākehā majority and on the other by essentialist notions of Māori identity. We therefore assess the way in which Māori Italians navigate between and negotiate these two fronts. We first trace the position of Māori post-colonization, noting that a Māori ‘renaissance’, as strengthened by recent revival of the Treaty, has fostered an essentialized Māori identity. We next introduce the Māori-Italian hybrid and outline our aims with reference to other Māori hybrid identities. We then describe our methodology and theoretical approach and present our data under three themes related to racism and stigma. We close with a discussion of our findings.

Māori identity politics and Māori hybridity

A significant body of literature has described the negative psychological impact of colonization on the colonized around the world. In Hook’s summative elucidation, ‘colonized subjects’ are in a situation of being constantly reminded of their inferiority through the imposition of the hostile cultural values of the colonizers, following the eradication of their own cultural resources. The ensuing ‘continual dissonance between ego and culture, self and society’ leads the ‘colonized subject’ to experience him/herself as a ‘phobic object’, causing a sense of inferiority, a conflicting identity, and a lack of agency (Hook, 2005, pp. 481–482). This is the key theoretical argument that specifies the psychological disadvantage of membership in a socially disparaged group: group members are threatened by negative evaluations held about their category because they internalize those ideas ‘into’ their own self-concept. This idea has been espoused frequently by Māori who have criticized negative stereotypes of Māori depicted in the mainstream New Zealand media (Diamond, 2018; Walker, 2002). Notably, Māori remain heavily over-represented in most negative social statistics. As a physically distinct minority, Māori are subject to negative stereotypes and this fuels racism, deepening socio-economic disadvantage (Houkamau et al., 2017). The impact of socially-assigned ethnicity, that is to say the perception of one’s ethnicity by others, also merits mention in the context of this study because it highlights genuine implications of physical appearance for Māori of mixed ethnicity. Data suggest that Māori who are socially assigned (perceived) as New Zealand/European may experience advantages in several contexts, including health (Harris et al., 2013) and when applying for a mortgage (Houkamau & Sibley, 2015). Research also indicates an association between socially-assigned ethnicity as Māori and exposure to racism (Harris et al., 2013; Muriwai et al., 2018).

Māori have consistently fought against racism and inequality, and they have become increasingly politically mobilized since the 1960s. Spurred by a burgeoning international interest in human rights, Māori leaders drove a Māori political and cultural renaissance (Walker, 1990). A key ideological tenet of the renaissance, namely, positive cultural difference between Māori and Pākehā, essentialized Māori culture and identity, by emphasizing that Māori are uniquely different from Pākehā. Some argue that this view has fostered a

bipolar identity politics in New Zealand restricted to colonizer/colonized (Collins, 2001; Meredith, 1999).

Against this background, celebrating intra-Māori ethnic diversity has, at times, incurred suspicion from some Māori (Bell, 2004; Paterson, 2010). Diversity has sometimes led to claimed dilution, discrediting people of mixed Māori-Pākehā descent with fair skin as not 'real Māori' (Collins, 2001). In an attempt to counter essentialist notions of Māori culture, several researchers have acknowledged, explored, and quantified cultural, political, and social differences within the Māori population (Greaves et al., 2015; Webber, 2008), a turn that has also perhaps encouraged the qualitative studies of Māori hybrid identities mentioned above.

Notwithstanding the different histories of Māori Dalmatians, Māori Chinese, Māori Indians, and Māori Jews, and their different self-perceptions as hybrid subjects, these studies indicate that these hybrid minorities experienced and may still experience racial tensions. Whether culturally or socially, the degree and modality of exclusion and discrimination are a function of the position the various ethnicities occupy at a given time (the position may change over time) on the scale of the white/black-superior/inferior polarities. This is an essentialist discursive framework that translates itself into, and justifies, social and cultural hierarchies, placing the British at the top and other ethnicities on different rungs below (Božić-Vrbančić, 2006). Božić-Vrbančić (2005, 2006) shows the impact dynamic on Māori-Dalmatian women that grew up during the period of assimilationist politics. Ip (2013) reports that, despite positive early Māori-Chinese relations, today Māori-Chinese families experience tension and anxiety, due to the anti-Asian backlash by Māori who see the recognition and support of other minorities (multiculturalism) as a threat to the privileged status that official biculturalism grants Māori. Similarly, most of Ore's (2018) Māori-Jew participants experienced intergenerational racism within their kin networks, when their Jewish grandparents rejected their Māori parents: they overrode racist attitudes and behaviour by affirming the value of being Māori and expressing pride in having mixed heritages. Pio's study of Māori Indians identified a progression from Māori, Indian, and Chinese being treated 'equally badly' by Pākehā in earlier times to the current acknowledgment of mixed heritages by families and schools and the perception that mixed identities are a 'definite advantage' (2009, pp. 14–15). These findings provide useful touchstones for the analysis of Māori-Italian hybridity.

Māori Italians: a harmonious connection

Italians have been migrating to New Zealand since the early years of colonization (Elenio, 2012; Hill, 2011). Historical accounts of Italian migration to New Zealand and reconstructions of Italian family histories in New Zealand often report episodes of solidarity, collaborations, and sharing of knowledge between Māori and Italians (Copland, 2015; Hindmarsh, 2004; Riseborough, 1986; Vaggioli, 2000). Furthermore, stories of friendships, loyalty, and generosity between Italian families and soldiers of the 28th Battalion, the 'Māori Battalion', during World War II have fed a narrative of special Māori-Italian connections which is still endorsed today (see Dugo, 2014). Both Māori and Italians claim that there are special affinities between the two ethnicities rooted in physical similarities and cultural commonalities (see Dugo, 2014; Iti, 2013; Raihania, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Two particular groups have contributed to the consolidation of good Māori-Italian relations. The first is the very large line of descendants of Nicola Sciascia (1840–1898), who is thought to have arrived in New Zealand in the early 1870s and who married a Māori woman in 1882. In 2013, when the data on which this study is based were collected, the Sciascia *whānau* (family) counted over 6000 descendants spread across the country. This family's recuperation of their lost Māori heritage went hand in hand with a high-profile search for their Italian *whakapapa* (genealogy). Some of its members hold public roles associated with Māori development. The second group descends from the 350 skilled engineers, tunnellers, and miners brought to New Zealand from Italy's northeast between 1967 and 1984 to work on the Tongariro Hydroelectric Scheme in the central North Island. Some of them married local Māori women and stayed in New Zealand, forming a small Māori-Italian community in the Turangi-Taihape-Taupo area which enjoys a certain visibility locally and nationally, both within and outside the Italian community, and projects an image of successful Māori-Italian intermarriage. Their regular celebrations in honour of Santa Barbara (patron saint of tunnellers and miners), on occasion attended by New Zealand authorities such as the Prime Minister in 1979, and the pioneering Italian restaurants that they established at the end of the project, both in the area and further afield, have been instrumental in keeping the memory of this community alive and making known its contribution to New Zealand life and culture (Simcock, 2020). The community's 50th anniversary reunion (Codelfa-Cogefar, 2017) led to a tall statue representing a tunneller being erected in Turangi town centre in June 2019 (The Tunneller, 2019). A more diversified assortment of Māori Italians is to be found in cities around the country, a result of the phenomenon of Māori urbanization, which historically meant more contact and more intermarriages between Māori and Pākehā and Māori and other ethnic groups. Some intermarriages also occurred between Italian women and soldiers of the Māori Battalion who fought in Italy during World War II.

Data from the 1996 census, the first that allowed people to identify with more than one ethnic group, showed that a higher proportion of Italians than of any other ethnic group identified their second ethnicity as Māori (Thomson, 1999, p. 91). In the 2013 census, 3798 New Zealand usual residents claimed Italian ethnicity. Of these, 1528 claimed solely Italian ethnicity, with the remaining 2270 claiming a combined ethnicity with Italian and 1077 claiming Māori descent (McGuigan, 2017). The project from which this study derives was inspired by the 1996 statistic and entirely coincidentally it was conducted at the same time as the 2013 census. The research design and sample selection was guided by the following factors: the accepted narrative of Māori-Italian affinities and good Māori-Italian relations; the prestige Italy and things Italian have enjoyed in New Zealand in recent times after suffering prejudice, ostracism, and racism in the early years of migration and during and after World War II (De Marco, 2016; Elenio, 2012; Hill, 2011; Giorgio, 2015; Giorgio & Houkamau, 2019); finally, the fact that in the literature on other Māori hybrid identities the Italians were not mentioned among the ethnic minorities that suffered from the same discrimination as the Māori. All this suggested the possibility that Māori-Italian hybridity enjoyed, subjectively, a higher status than other mixed ethnicities and that, consequently, a study of Māori Italians might yield different results *vis-à-vis* intergenerational tensions and social discrimination. Giorgio and Houkamau (2019) have examined the patterns by which Māori Italians assert positive mixed-ethnic identities that allow them to align with desirable notions of what it means to be Italian and Māori and to differentiate themselves from the less positive

aspects of being Māori. This article focuses on the use Māori Italians make of their dual heritage to challenge the Māori/Pākehā binary and buffer stigma and discrimination.

Theoretical orientation: three approaches to identity

In our examination of Māori-Italian identity, we combine three theoretical approaches to identity: Social Identity Theory; McAdams' narrative view of identity; and Goffman's view of identity as social performance, or 'dramaturgy'.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) predicates that groups in society, for instance social classes, genders, and ethnic groups, are situated within a social hierarchy – higher or lower than other groups depending upon relative power. Tajfel and Turner (1986) argued that individuals strive for favourable evaluations of their own group. This drive intensifies for members of marginalized minorities, who need a positive social identity to mitigate the stigma and discrimination from wider society. In SIT, identity is not unitary: people partake of multiple social identities which change and shift contingent upon individuals' situations, roles, and relationships.

To reconcile how people can have both stable and situational identities, McAdams (1994) cast identity as a personal life story consisting of an accumulation of the person's own understandings of who they are and what that means as a member of society. The expressions of identity which people make publicly are selective presentations of their own story, tailored to the moment and the social situation. McAdams' view of identity as both situational and transitional is consistent with a wide range of theoretical treatments which focus on how individuals emphasize certain aspects of their identities over others to achieve social acceptance and resist negative stereotypes. Goffman (1959) observed that people varied their expressed identities to manage social stigma by manipulating how others perceive them through linguistic strategies (Ferguson et al., 2017). Many studies have demonstrated that, when discussing the groups to which they belong, individuals acknowledge stereotypes held about their social category, yet present alternative interpretations of group membership. Instead of essentialist beliefs, these studies emphasize the socially constructed and changeable nature of identities (Verkuyten, 2018).

Combining these three approaches and treating identity as socially constructed through conversation and performance permit us to use narrative data to explore how our participants explain, justify, construct, and reconstruct identity drawing from both Māori and Italian cultural connections and resources.

Research methodology

Research design

The article relies on forty-four semi-structured interviews with Māori Italians which were conducted by the first author as part of a study of identity construction among Italians in New Zealand, focusing on their self-perceptions as Italians, Māori, New Zealanders, and Europeans. The questionnaire was designed to elicit Erikson's (1966) three elements that conceptualize identity: self-definitional (I am Italian/Māori...), self-descriptive (Being Italian/Māori means...), and evaluative (I feel proud of being Italian/Māori...).

Participants had to name three things they associated with Italy, what it meant for them to be Italian and what Italian values they thought they embodied. The same questions were then asked for Māori, New Zealand, and European identities. This strategy enabled probing into their identity stories and communication patterns as Māori Italians. Experiences of prejudice and stigma emerged spontaneously from their narratives, often in the context of being asked whether they self-identified as Pākehā on account of their Italian and, when applicable, British heritages.

Sample and data collection

Preliminary research on the Italian presence in New Zealand and the long-standing Italian-Māori connection directed the first author to select the two ‘historical’ and well-known groups of Māori Italians — the Sciascia *whānau* and the Italian tunnellers’ offspring — as two ‘most-similar’ case studies (see Gerring, 2008, pp. 17–19) for the investigation of self-identifications of Māori Italians. The same factors guided her to formulate the following working hypotheses. It was expected that, despite their different migration histories, both groups would display pride in their Italian heritage and attach great importance to it. As already mentioned, the Sciascia family had obtained great visibility in the media, thanks to their public search for their lost Italian family and for holding public roles. It was therefore hypothesized that members of this *whānau* would consider their Italian heritage to be on a par with their Māori heritage and to provide a case of positive perception and utilization of hybridity as a tool to counter cultural loss suffered as Māori. The hypothesis at the basis of the selection of the second group, the children of Māori mothers and the Italian tunnellers who worked on the Tongariro Hydroelectric Scheme, was that, despite the variables of a different generation and modality of migration, they might present a strong sense of Italianness, thanks to their close contact with their Italian fathers as well as with family in Italy, paralleling the Sciascias’ discovery of, and renewed ‘ideal’ relationship with, their Italian family. It was also anticipated that this second group might utilize the expected strong self-identification as Italians to buffer negative associations with Māori. A third group was selected as a control group: the recruitment criterion was that this group presented neither of the histories and heritages presented by the first two case studies. Ascertaining whether the processes hypothesized for the first two groups would also be observed with the third group would tell us whether they were processes specific to the first two groups or to Māori Italians in general. Wellington and the Kapiti Coast, an agricultural district north of the capital and popular place of residence for commuters, were predicted and selected as suitable locations, on account of the fact that Wellington is home to an Italian community going back four or more generations and intermarriages could be expected. The second group presents the distinctive feature, compared to the third group, of the consistent combination of a Māori mother and a first-generation Italian father. This interesting feature was noted at the time of the sample selection, but a hypothesis on its significance and possible impact on the results did not readily emerge. It was, therefore, left as a factor to be monitored during the course of the interviews and later analysis.

Names of key individuals in each group were provided by academic colleagues, members of Wellington’s Club Garibaldi and *Circolo Italiano* (Italian circle), and the curators of the exhibition *Qui tutto bene. The Italians in New Zealand* (Te Papa Tongarewa Museum,

Wellington, 2004–2007). The snowball method was then utilized to recruit further participants. Recruitment was monitored for age and gender balance when it transpired that older individuals and women were coming forward more readily, with some mothers being reluctant to put their children in touch with the researcher, declaredly because, being employed, they were busy. Forty-four individuals were interviewed, thirty women and fourteen men, aged between eighteen and eighty-three. There were nineteen interviewees in Group 1 (Sciascia family), of whom fifteen were women and four men. Twelve were interviewed in Porangahau, the *whānau*'s hometown in southern Hawke's Bay, with the remaining seven being interviewed in their homes or workplace in Wellington, Levin, and Hastings. Group 2 comprised thirteen individuals (eight females and five males) who were interviewed in their homes in Turangi and surrounds. The control group, Group 3, consisted of twelve interviewees, seven females and five males, most of whom were interviewed in their home or place of work in Wellington or the Kapiti coast.

The total number of forty-four participants was determined by saturation, a term coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to refer to the phenomenon by which over a number of interviews each new case confirms what has already been found. Once the interviewer observed that each additional participant was reinforcing what others had already reported, she concluded that sufficient data had been gathered to address the research questions and to distinguish the conceptual categories required.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in English by the Italian author during March and April 2013. They were recorded digitally with the interviewees' written and verbal consent. With only three exceptions, they lasted approximately one hour in a single session. The interviewer familiarized herself with Māori cultural protocols for interpersonal engagement and consulted Māori advisors on how best to conduct the interviews. She also followed 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; be generous, share, and host people (Smith, 1999, p. 120). As most interviews took place in the participants' homes or at a relative's home, the interviewer was the recipient of their hospitality and generosity (see Giorgio & Houkama, 2019, pp. 30–31, for additional discussion). On the basis of the perceived cultural commonalities between Māori and Italians *vis-à-vis* the importance placed on family, food sharing, and hospitality, the interviewer deemed these guidelines to be appropriate for an Italian to interview Māori Italians. Additionally, in line with principles widely recognized by European researchers, which go beyond the ethical responsibilities set by the European Union (European Commission, 2018), she was particularly attentive to the diverse experiences of the interviewees as Italians. This was done in consideration of the cultural heterogeneity of the Italian nation due to a rich regional diversity – as well as to Italy's transnational history, its contemporary postcolonial condition, and the recent phenomenon of immigration (Cento Bull, 2016) – and mindful of their own position as transnational subjects.

The interviewer conducted the interviews in the awareness of her own positionality as a Southern Italian person with a double experience of migration. Her Italian background may have led some interviewees to accentuate the importance they attributed to their Italian heritage and to emphasize positive associations with Italianness. However, the fact that she was from Southern Italy, as did Nicola Sciascia and the ancestors of most participants from the third group, had lived in New Zealand for three years and no longer lived in Italy (this did not appear to dilute her Italianness in the eyes of the participants),

offered points of identification and established trust and a constructive space for exchange (at least in her perception). Finally, the interviewer offered interviewees the possibility of retracting their statements before publication, when the selected extracts dealt with sensitive and distressing events or could lead to identification.

Data analysis

The interviews were transcribed by a research assistant and checked and analysed by the first author (and interviewer). The latter followed a process of thematic analysis, as ‘a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set’ (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). Following Braun and Clarke’s method, she generated initial codes for each group by identifying and labelling features of the data potentially relevant to the research questions. She next discerned salient categories and instances that represented such categories, attempting also to preserve uniqueness through recognizing the multiple realities of individual interviewees, as both Māori and Italians, within the three groups. She then isolated themes and shared them with the second author, who read the transcripts. The two authors discussed the themes and revisited the coded data multiple times, finally selecting exclusion and racism as the two macro themes which interrogate and illuminate Māori identity, Māori identity politics, hybridity, cultural expropriation and loss.

Key themes

Although recognized by all participants, the Māori and Italian components were not equally important in their self-definitions and self-evaluations. Their experiences of Māori and Italian identities differed depending upon education, upbringing, employment, relationship status, and connection to Italian culture (see Giorgio & Houkamau, 2019). Nevertheless, most of our participants rejected identifying as Pākehā. The analysis of their narratives shows that all of them had faced considerable challenges dealing with racism and stigma, either directly or through their parents or grandparents. The participants encountered and expressed three forms of racism and exclusion. The first was (Pākehā) institutionalized racism, or structural racism. The policies and practices of the mainstream school system, seen as giving pre-eminence to Pākehā values and beliefs, were singled out for denying Māori access to power (compare Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994). The second form of racism was from other Māori for not being Māori enough, reflecting an essentialized notion of Māori identity and a lack of legitimization of cultural hybridity. The third form was internalized racism by some Māori Italians towards non-Italian Māori, expressing negative views on some aspects of Māori culture. On the flipside of the same prejudice, the Italian heritage helps participants to overcome the negative external views held towards Māori and their own negative self-perceptions for being of mixed Māori descent. In the next section we explore these three forms of racism in separate subsections. They are preceded by a subsection on the participants’ perception of the Māori/Pākehā binary which underpins their narratives of racism. These themes and subthemes were found consistently among the three groups, with the exception of internalized racism that, as we shall see, seemed to concern primarily Group 2, the tunnellers’ offspring.

There were, however, differences in individual data, due to participants' diverse ages, occupations, genders, personal, and family circumstances, in addition to period of arrival of their Italian ancestors and their relationship and contact with, and knowledge of, Italian family and Italy. These differences make the collected data valuable, because they complicate the known patterns of racism and stigma towards Māori. The interview excerpts have been arranged by group and a selection of excerpts from each group has been provided for each theme, to make visible both the constant presence of the key themes among the three groups and the individual nuances.

Data presentation: the challenges of constructing hybrid identities

Defying the Māori/Pākehā binary

Thirty-three out of our forty-four participants rejected affiliating or identifying as Pākehā and preferred to be identified as Māori Italian, stating categorically that Italians do not qualify as Pākehā. Twenty-nine of these went on to explain with varying degrees of detail and clarity that Pākehā refers to people of English (or, in a couple of cases, British) descent to the exclusion of Scots, Welsh, and Irish, with only a small minority associating the term with white New Zealanders or Europeans from the UK or Great Britain that included Scots and Welsh, and occasionally Irish, people. Of the remaining eleven, four were not asked the question as the conversation took a different direction, one said that Pākehā meant simply non-Māori yet she excluded herself firmly from the label, three believed that being Italian made them at least partly Pākehā, and three stated that they did not use the word.

New Zealand's colonial past and the link between the term Pākehā and the British colonizers were mentioned directly by two respondents, both professionally very involved with Māori matters:

There are lots of reasons why we should be mindful here of what Europe is and who Europe is. [...] our colonial history was established at the time England was an Empire. [...] They didn't come here as Europeans, they came here as Englishmen, with the Scots and Irish and Welsh. That's what we call Pākehā. That's the majority, it is that majority that we belong to too. (Male, 56–70 age range, Group 1)

My grandfather could speak English because he had some Irish, some Pākehā. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 2)

I'd say I am Māori Italian Scottish Irish and very quietly English. I am proud of Scottish and Irish, for some reason the English doesn't do much for me because of colonization. I feel a stronger connection to Scottish and Irish probably because they were colonized and oppressed. [...] I am definitely Māori before I'm Kiwi. [...] I don't feel Pākehā at all. (Male, 40 years old, Group 3)

Many interviewees demonstrated that they subliminally associated the term with colonialism, when they excluded from it other ethnicities as well as recently arrived British people:

No, Italians are not Pākehā. Greeks are not Pākehā. Pākehā are only white New Zealanders. Myself I think of a Pākehā as a white person. I don't consider you [Italian interviewer] white. There are lots of Māori [who are white]. I don't know if it even stems from the actual colour of your skin, maybe it's beliefs [...] maybe the way you were brought up. (Female, 31 years old, Group 1)

Some man came along on behalf of a teenage queen on the other side of the world, stuck his flag in the ground and said I claim this land [...] You can't stick a flag in the ground and say you own us. [...] And I think this is what is different between Italy and New Zealand. [...] I don't [consider myself Pākehā for having an Italian ancestor]. Funny that, isn't it? I don't consider you [the Italian interviewer] a Pākehā. [...] No, the word Pākehā doesn't fit me, doesn't fit you. I don't know who it fits. Pākehā, for me they are English based. I wouldn't call [a newly-arrived English acquaintance] Pākehā either, because he spoke with a strong British accent, he is fresh off the boat, that one. [...] I usually refer [Pākehā] to really pale skinned people usually of British descent. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 1)

Pākehā means non-Māori. And I am Māori Italian. [...] I am half and half, so I don't consider myself Pākehā. [...] I would consider you Pākehā, because you are non-Māori. [Interviewer: And so, your dad is Pākehā?] Well. Yea [...] sort of... but it is interesting you say that because when I think of Pākehā I think of English, I don't think Italian, I don't think German. I don't think New Zealand. Because when I think, yea that's how I see it. [...] when I think Pākehā I think of the English [...] That's weird, eh? When I think Pākehā I think of the English settlers, not the Italians, not the Chinese. (Female, 18–35 age range, Group 2)

My father was the oldest, he was sent away for a good education, and I think when he came home with a wife who was not Māori, who was very fair skinned, I think that she was accepted more because she was Italian. [...] I think two things came into play, one was that she was Catholic and [the other] not seen to be Pākehā [...]. She was generally accepted more as a wife for him [...] because she wasn't Pākehā. [...] The meaning of the word Pākehā for me would be white, as in [...] anybody who does not have the same sort of culture as us [...] as me because I am Māori Italian as well [...] No [I don't consider you Pākehā] because you are Italian, and because I know you are Italian, if we were sitting here and you'd say to me you were Greek you would still not be a Pākehā [...] I think whether you're Greek or Italian or whatever, you have a culture that is other [...] from England. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 3)

Six respondents were adamant that the Italian interviewer was not Pākehā, despite her looks and her acquired British citizenship (however, this conviction and the idea that a newly-arrived white British person is not Pākehā raise issues of responsibility of contemporary generations for the colonial past of their country of origin or naturalization):

No, [I don't consider myself or you Pākehā], you're Italian, aren't you? [...] You probably would be a [Pākehā]. I thought you were a bit Māori [...] You would be [...] a Pākehā [from your looks], but if I knew you're Italian, you wouldn't be. [...] [What matters is] a bit of both [blood and place]. How you grow up determines what you do and things. (Male, 36–55 age range, Group 1)

The latter excerpt alludes to ethnic identity as a historical formation linked to a specific people, place, and culture, with a telling contradictory reference to physical appearance (the interviewer is said to look both Pākehā and Māori), a category that evidently cannot be relied upon for self-definition. The next two participants articulate more clearly that Pākehā blood does not make a Māori automatically Pākehā but that one must 'become' Pākehā. However, becoming Pākehā for a Māori is a complex enterprise, involving historical consciousness, ideology, and choice:

Because I have English and Māori blood in me, my philosophy is we have got to learn to live as one people, and we know, I know, that you will never make a Māori into a Pākehā or you can never make a Pākehā into a Māori, but we've got to learn to live with one another because that's where our future is. (Male, 83 years old, Group 1)

I have Pākehā blood, but I choose to be Māori. [...] The Italian is not Pākehā. Italian is Italian. [...] The Pākehā in me is the English, just English. (Female, 56–70 age range, Group 1)

While participants of all three groups were strong in their rejection of the Pākehā label, the first group engaged with the notion more eloquently, and this explains why seven out of eleven interview excerpts selected for this theme are from this group. These excerpts perhaps indicate a stronger resistance to colonial values and Pākehā domination and a more conscious commitment to Māori identities (the data also show this group's strong commitment to their Italian heritage).

The following extract links mixed ethnicity with racial divides and tensions within family and society:

[I am not Pākehā], not at all. We weren't even considered Pākehā by our father or our white grandparents. [...] I think it was difficult growing up, because we were the white kids when we went to the park with our Māori whānau and we were the black kids when we went to our grandparents' place for Christmas. So we were defined by our colour, which I don't believe we have a difference of colour. But we were defined negatively by both sides of the family, white being a negative connotation for Māori side, and black for vice versa. (Female, 56 years old, Group 1)

This final extract usefully takes us into the next three sets of extracts on the three types of racisms identified earlier and the different ways our respondents experienced, reacted to, and negotiated exclusion and racism.

Institutional racism

As noted earlier, Māori were historically, and remain, subject to racism and, as expected, it was respondents from Groups 1 and 3 that were more sensitive to this aspect, holding personal and inherited family memories of assimilation and repression from both sides of the family. The school system forbade the expression of Māori culture and language (Walker, 2016). Memories of being punished and verbally and emotionally abused for speaking Māori at school are not uncommon among older Māori schooled before the cultural renaissance of the late 1960s (Selby, 1999). These memories have often been passed on to their offspring:

Unfortunately [my grand]parents had lost the language [...] There was the belief that Māori had to learn English to get ahead. (Female, 18–35 age range, Group 1)

Mum [of Italian descent] encouraged us to learn about our Māori culture because our father was what we call a plastic Māori, someone who is Māori by blood but doesn't engage in culture or tradition [...] My papa would get strapped at school for speaking Māori. (Female, 18–35 age range, Group 3)

Going back in the history of this country, [my father's] father and my father would be beaten in school if they spoke Māori. [...] There was a shame of being Māori. (Male, 36–55 age range, Group 3)

The next extract is by the oldest participant in Group 2, a woman, atypically for this group, in her early fifties, whose father had arrived in New Zealand earlier than the other tunnellers:

My grandmother was full-blood Māori. She couldn't speak English. [...] My grandfather [...] had some Irish and Pākehā and could speak English and Māori. Mum was brought up in

the days when they were not allowed to speak Māori in school. [In my times Māori] was taught in school but I took French. [...] My youngest daughter] is learning Māori. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 2)

One participant from Group 1 articulated a highly politicized stance on the role of the school system in suppressing Māori interests. Her comments indicate an elevated level of political conscientization and education, which has been evident among Māori over the last thirty years, together with the legacy of the Treaty's restoration process which has elevated Māori rights and political awareness:

Whether I want to put that in an English box or not, education is important it doesn't matter who you are. [...] We Māori are locked in a place where we don't have the same value for education as we should have. That's why we have the lowest statistics in everything [...] If the colonizers weren't here we would have our own education processes [...] Education today is of lesser value to Māori than it is to the whites because [...] families, family relationships, [...] is more valued than by the whites and that puts things out of balance [...] that's why our children often can't cope in Western schools. The curriculum, the methods of teaching [...] doesn't gel with our Māori mind. That's why our Māori primary schools, our Māori high schools and now colleges and universities [...] have risen, because the western way of teaching didn't work for our people. [...] Māori don't value education as much as we should. [...] They don't know that education will get you ahead, makes you prosperous. (Female, 56–70 age range, Group 1)

Even though racist laws have been revoked, racial discrimination and latent racism by Pākehā towards Māori, including Māori Italians, still occurs at both interpersonal and institutional levels, perhaps originating in an ignorance of Māori people and culture and in a lack of awareness that some subtle daily personal behaviours might be construed as racist (Pack et al., 2016). The next excerpt shows racism permeating social and economic life beyond school:

I got fired from my job because I was Māori. And it was a huge shock for me [...] I couldn't believe, I didn't realize racism still happened in New Zealand. [...] They were trying to say they weren't racist. And [I said] the comments you made aren't racist and then you fire me because I said I didn't like them. They still just didn't want to admit they were racist [...] I still don't know whether they didn't want to admit it or whether they don't know they are [...] I took them to mediation [...] It was a blessing in disguise because I don't want to work for people like that. (Female, 18–35 age range, Group 3)

'Not Māori enough'

Falling into the cracks between two worlds and not being completely accepted anywhere is another common theme. Our participants reported negative attitudes from both Pākehā and Māori, with some in Group 2 experiencing racism also by Italians, including family, in Italy. Not fitting into the ethnic box and blurring the lines left some participants feeling isolated and inferior. All the participants experienced, in varying degrees, a sense of delegitimization by other Māori for not being 'real Māori'. In some cases, it did not appear to matter whether they were of Italian or Pākehā descent: they were simply barred for any visible feature that would be construed as ethnic 'impurity', such as fairer skin and hair. For some this was a double rejection causing confusion, conflicting feelings, and hurt:

For some, not all, we as a family have been treated differently [...] because we had other bloodlines. [...] We weren't always looked upon as Māori because people knew we were

Italian. [...] and we were fair, we weren't dark like Māori. People looked at us and knew we were something else as well. (Female, 56–70 age range, Group 1)

Our mother was fair and looked like a Pākehā. I was fair, one of the fair ones in the family. I have been called a Pākehā, a maggot, and all those things [by other kids]. When they used to call me those names, it really hurt my soul, it hurt so deep because I just didn't want to be a Pākehā. I'm not a Pākehā, I'm a Māori. (Female, 56–70 age range, Group 1)

Some [Māori] people love to take a dig at me and say: 'You're not Māori', 'You've got fair skin', 'You've got more Italian blood'. I have heard that quite often. I don't really care. I used to. It used to really affect me when I was young, but now [...] I don't need somebody to tell me what I am and what I'm not. [...] I know what I am. [...] It doesn't affect me any more. (Female, 18–35 age range, Group 2)

Everybody in my family is darker skinned than me. I grew up kind of white sheep in the Māori family, so when I was quite young I did feel a little bit left out, not frowned upon but not inside the family [...] kind of outside the family, because I was white [...] as I got older [now] I don't really care what people think. I love my culture. I'm proud of my Māori culture [...] People who do not know me, who are on the outside looking in, do see me different, even Māori people just because as much as Māori people like to say that Pākehā are racist to us, so are we to them. Māori people are racist too to those who are more fair skinned than them, even though we share the same blood. It is something that I disapprove [...] for me it's not the colour of your skin, it's the colour of the blood within. [...] and to be honest, it's mostly Māori people [...] who look down upon me [...] but most people don't say it to my face. (Male, 18–35 age range, Group 3)

Many from Group 1 reported being called with epithets directed at Italians, reflecting the racialized discourses common in the past. Whether intended to be disparaging or teasing or as terms of endearment, these appellations singled them out as different:

They regarded me as the Italian, they would call me spaghetti, everybody was called spaghetti in those days. It was [...] facetious. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 1)

I always saw that we were different. [The Māori] called [my uncles] macaronis so the Māori knew they were different. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 1)

While several interviewees from Groups 2 and 3 experienced moderate levels of trauma and disadvantage for not being 'Māori enough', one from Group 1 reported having been subjected to exclusion and abuse by the other Māori-Italian children in the family for being adopted and seemingly having no Italian blood (which in fact she had):

I went through quite a lot of bullying in my childhood [...] around 'blood is thicker than water'. You are not really [one of us], children would say. Mum's brother [...] explained to me very early on where I fitted into things and what my bloodline was, how I related to everybody. [One particular Christmas ...] we had an argument [...] and I got punched in the face by one of my cousins for not being [...] as she thought] part of the family. [...] Not only had they punched me in the face [...], they had also thrown stones at me, wrecked my bike, they had pushed me away from all the family things they were doing, they had alienated me pretty much because I wasn't their blood and they had made that quite clear. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 1)

In the next two excerpts, the tunnellers' children relate their experience of being ostracized or frowned upon in Italy in the late 1970s and early 1980s:

For me [Italy] was [racist]. Because my brother was white and I was brown, I was always treated differently. I was always called a negro. I couldn't understand why people would go to the beach to try and be my colour. When I was going to school and we travelled on the bus [...] I had to sit by myself. [...] Not everyone was like that. [...] I remember walking down the street with my mother [...] the old ladies would close the shutters on the windows until we walked past. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 2)

When I went to Italy, [...] my aunt frowned upon me], because I had a Māori husband and they expected me to marry an Italian. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 2)

Internalized racism by Māori Italians towards Māori

This subtheme concerns primarily the offspring of the Italian tunnellers, the Māori Italians with a stronger connection to Italy. Their statements may indicate that, while they strongly appreciate their Māori heritage, they consider themselves different from, if not superior to, other Māori owing to their being Italian. They did not suggest blood *per se* made them different, even when they mentioned 'bloodlines' or ethnicity. Rather they emphasized their Italian upbringing by their first-generation Italian fathers (or grandfathers in two cases), who they believed had instilled in them typically Italian principles that helped develop good qualities which in turn shielded them from negative Māori behaviour and habits. In the next excerpts, there is regular use of 'they' versus 'we', 'Māori' versus 'Italian', where the Italian heritage often overshadows and occasionally even eclipses the Māori one:

We have different values to the full Māori families. My [Italian] grandfather has taught us different [...] Māori families do not have so many goals, my grandfather taught us to work hard. [...] Māori families do work hard but ... [...] we have always had the shop, I have always been able to work here. But then from working here a lot, that has made it easier for me in Wellington, because of the work ethic. (Female, 18–35 age range, Group 2)

[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. [...] He also said to stick to it, you can't just change your mind later, you need to be committed, solid. (Female, 18–35 age range, Group 2)

[Māori ...] don't stress, they don't have big goals and ambitions, I am not saying Māori in general because there are some good ones, but a lot of them, they just don't care, they don't have any pressure [...] They do not have good work ethics [...] they do not encourage their [...] kids to further their education. [...] They live each day as it comes, they don't have any goals. [...] My father has always pushed me to be a good worker. [...] My brother and sister [by his Māori mother and her Māori partner], complete opposite [...] They live in a house falling down with rubbish everywhere. No stress, no work, they live on benefits, they don't care. (Male, 36–55 age range, Group 2)

The next quote is by a thirty-one-year-old female from Group 3 who presents a background and upbringing similar to Group 2, having a first-generation Italian father and having spent long periods in Italy in her formative years:

I have morals and standards [...] a lot of it has to do with being Italian. [...] In New Zealand] not everyone is passionate. (Female, 18–35 age range, Group 3)

While these negative views of non-Italian Māori are expressed almost exclusively by the second group, identifying as Italian was seen consistently across the three groups as a

way of elevating oneself and countering the current negative representations of Māori, also pointing at a change in external perceptions of Italians, who were no longer the target of negative stereotyping:

People have always tried to guess what it is I have other than Māori. [...] No-one ever guessed Italian. [It means] having something different, a different connection other than just being Māori. You may have noticed 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 [...]. For me it was always quite special to have something else. Yes, I always identified as having it even if I didn't really understand what that meant until a short time ago. (Female, 36–55 age range, Group 1)

Indeed, identifying as Italian was the most positive option for those who had more than two non-Māori identities (for instance, Scottish, German, and Pākehā). Italian identity was a choice some preferred to emphasize or that they emphasized differently at different times, in different circumstances, and with different people: with Pākehā, to place themselves on a par with them, and with Māori, to elevate themselves above them. The next excerpt is an apt example of Goffman's strategy of performing roles and deploying language to manage social stigma:

[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. [...] like you are wearing three different hats. [...] A lot of my friends are Māori, probably most of them. [...] If I'm going to have a drink and meet somebody, 'So what's your name?', I say [my Italian name]. 'Oh, you are Italian.' I am recognized immediately as Italian. (Male, 36–55 age range, Group 2)

The three hats refer to his Italian, Māori, and Māori-Italian identities, the latter being the hybrid one that connects the former two. The same participant also reported the usefulness of having some Māori blood as a shield against the racism of Māori towards Pākehā and other ethnic groups:

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)

While this participant leverages the positive association with Italianness, in others the choice of emphasizing the Italian heritage is driven by a strong desire to dis-identify with Pākehā. One fifth-generation participant (male, 36–55 age range, Group 1) was unique in our sample in displaying, almost ostentatiously, indifference and even contempt for his Italian ancestry, placing it last in the line of self-identifications after Māori, New Zealand, and Australian. He indirectly questioned the legitimacy of identifying as Italian when he mentioned family members with a strong investment in their Italian heritage which he may have considered disproportionate seen that they had more British ancestry than Italian. However, this was a solitary voice among a chorus of participants who saw themselves as embodying a naturally harmonious Māori-Italian identity and adroitly deployed to their advantage the resulting highly versatile set of possibilities for self-identifications.

Discussion and conclusion

The data we have presented do not reveal significant differences among the three case studies comprised in our sample, in keeping with the initial expectations that had directed the purposeful selection of the first two groups and against the expectation that the third, control group might show a different outcome. Our findings indicate that our sample of Māori Italians overwhelmingly construct hybrid identities that help them overcome the negative external views of Māori and their own negative self-perceptions. Thus, racialized mixed identities turn into empowering hybridity.

Hybridity provides psychological, social, and practical skills and tools to resist stigma in a culture which is still controlled by a Pākehā majority. The data also offer evidence that Māori Italians of recent generations faced and still face challenges in both New Zealand and Italy, related to interpersonal (though with some school-based institutional) racism ensuing precisely from their hybrid identities, namely racism directed at being Māori in Italy and at being Italian in New Zealand. Within New Zealand, hybridity has engendered, and subjected them to, other forms of racism from their own Māori communities and even their families, who may consider them as ‘not Māori enough’. This illuminates how individuals are ethnically marginalized and how they construct and describe their own ethnic identity faced with such tensions and dilemmas.

Another – and possibly novel – aspect emerging from our data is the bias against Māori implicit in the positive associations with Italianness expressed by many respondents. While most participants felt different from non-Italian Māori owing to such associations, a number considered themselves indirectly (or implicitly) superior to non-Italian Māori. They perform a delicate balancing act, evincing deep loyalty to their Māori heritage while simultaneously presenting themselves as embodying Italian values that distance them from a Māori way of life they consider less than positive. This may be a consequence of not only having internalized negative media views and stereotypes of Māori (on the latter, see Kupu Taea, [n.d.](#)) but also of recognizing certain social advantages deriving from living and professing the Italian principles and values they emphasize. Our participants’ comments on Māori people’s lack of commitment to education, which they considered crucial for Māori advancement, were accompanied by criticism of the Pākehā educational system for not reflecting or respecting the Māori mind and cultural practices. On the contrary, the respondents who avowed different attitudes to money and work from ‘full Māori’ did not reflect on the causes and origins of the different practices of non-Italian Māori and seemed unaware of the negative assumptions about Māori abilities, aspirations, and intentions embedded in their statements. This implicit bias of Māori Italians towards Māori may suggest not only that Māori with hybrid identities feel resistance towards essentialist notions of being ‘real Māori’, but also that they may be complicit in external racist perceptions of Māori culture and people. Whether Group 2 displays this bias more consistently than Groups 1 and 3 on account of the specific gendered composition of Italian father-Māori mother has not emerged from the data in a clear way. We could hypothesize that the presence of fathers who arrived in New Zealand at the same time as a compact group – similar age, from the same Italian region, employed by the same company in the same project and occupation, and thus with a strong sense of community as Italians which they were able to retain over the years – had created, in most cases, stable family environments centred around a paternal figure of breadwinner that guaranteed the

prosperity and well-being of his family and acted as a positive model of Italian values for his offspring, both male and female. It is perhaps in this contingent rather than essentialist manner, as far as gender is concerned, that Italian fathers may have instilled economic and social aspirations in their children which set them apart from their Māori contemporaries. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that the sense of being different felt by Group 2 is not underpinned by essentialism.

The argument that race and ethnicity are historically constructed social formations is critically examined by Guglielmo and Salerno (2003) in relation to Italians. They note that while Italians have endured historically racial discrimination and prejudice in America, this was mitigated by concerted efforts on their part to position themselves as white. At present, there is no research in New Zealand which examines the extent to which Italians may self-define as Pākehā or European, however, we see this as a fertile field for future research.

The data show how essentialism may inform even discourses of 'difference', with adverse consequences. Essentialist Māori non-acceptance of Māori of mixed descent promotes confinement and disempowerment for those who experience it. Similarly, the differences in life practices emphasized by many participants, pitting Māori Italians against non-Italian Māori, could be construed as essentialist, despite their focus on upbringing rather than blood. In this case, essentialism grows from ignoring other influences on the Māori way of life, such as low socioeconomic status and low levels of education which lock Māori into vicious circles and impede their access to employment and power. Our data alert us to both the dangers of essentializing Māori people, forcing them into an idea of 'race' as a biological given rather than a social construct, and the positive impact of mixed ethnicities.

Our subjects saw Māori Italian as a much more appealing option than a purely Māori identity or, because of perceived physical and cultural similarities between Māori and Italians, mixed Māori with one or more other, non-Italian identities such as Māori Pākehā. Problems of racism are underpinned by essentialism (Verkuyten, 2018). Previous research exposes a persistent belief that there are fundamental and inherent cultural differences between Māori and non-Māori which justify excluding and abnormalizing individuals. Our data show that exclusion and abnormalization are addressed to, and affect, not only those Māori Italians who do not comply with expected Italian values but also those who are seen as not 'pure' Māori. This essentialist view of Māori people and culture assumes that to represent Māori culture contrary to this stereotype is inauthentic. We argue that such beliefs need to be examined if we are to avoid alienating those with mixed heritage and obscuring their experiences and their contributions to contemporary Māori identity, especially when there is no such ethnicity as a 'pure' Māori.

As with any qualitative study, the present study did not aim at being representative. Nonetheless, our findings offer a detailed understanding of the complexities of non-Pākehā hybrid identities. The Māori-Italian 'case' may be a useful touchstone for future studies, to compensate for the paucity of research in Māori hybridity in a country which is increasingly being defined as 'superdiverse', in contrast to its official biculturalism. We note interesting convergences and divergences between our findings and those of existing studies on other hybrid Māori identities. Like the Māori Jews (Ore, 2018) and younger generations of Māori Indians (Pio, 2009, p. 22), our respondents affirmed the value of both their Māori and non-Māori heritages. As Ore noted for Māori Jews, Māori Italians have

resisted and challenged racist attitudes and behaviours within and outside their *whānau*. There are notable differences, instead, with the Māori Dalmatians and Māori Chinese, in the negative external and internal(ized) perceptions of their non-Māori heritage, which is in stark contrast with the consistently positive view of Italianness expressed by Māori Italians. We outlined the factors to which these positive views can be ascribed in our introductory sections. Here we underline that other factors, for example economic and political, should not be discounted. The Chinese community, for example, is subject to ethnic power relations (Ip, 2013, p. 3) in ways that the Italian community is not. The changes in trade relations between New Zealand and Europe after Brexit may well change the perceptions of European communities in New Zealand. A better understanding of the mechanisms by which people valorize and devalue ethnic identities afforded by studies such as the present are of the utmost importance in a globalized world which is becoming more and more intolerant of otherness.

In conclusion, questions of hybridity and multiple identities are under-studied in New Zealand. In this article, we show how Māori Italians construct hybrid identities as they navigate their different cultural spheres. However, we also highlight the fact that, because of social and political processes, they face significant identity tensions. Our results further our understanding of Māori diversity and open the way to future investigation.

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Data availability

The data were collected prior to implementation of relevant policies requiring publication of research data. As such, informed consent obtained from participants does not allow for data to be made available to other researchers.

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