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Social identity responses to colonization

The process of colonization in settler colonies gives rise to a range of complex social identity issues as the settler and indigenous cultures clash, come together, and merge. This paper explores this phenomenon among self-identifying tribal members of Ngāi Tahu – a tribe of Māori indigenous to Te Waipounamu (the South Island of New Zealand). In particular it traces the impacts of colonization on social identity across generations, demonstrating that in response to the political, economic, and social policies of the settler state a range of social identities have emerged among Ngā

social identity form an in-group, while all others are the out-group. The markers of in-group status – which can range from language to looks, ancestry to beliefs – and the dynamics between and in- and out-groups are critical in the formation of social groups. In his seminal work on social identity theory (SIT), Tajfel (1981) outlines some key aspects of social identity: individuals strive for a positive social identity; positive social identities are largely determined by in-group/out-group dynamics; and, if their identity is perceived negatively members will either try to leave or make it more positive.

Rather than a single ‘social identity’ everyone has a dynamic set of social identities, including nationality, ethnicity, culture, religion, class, gender etc. (Tajfel, 1981). These are not equally important or even always all salient, as social identity is not a static, singular, or simple concept but rather is dynamic. For example, while there is a ‘Māori’ identity, many Māori also have a tribal identity – though these are not necessarily distinct and different. Furthermore, Māori may identify with national, regional, religious, and gender identities, amongst many others. Also, contemporary Māori ‘social identity’ can be considered as both an ‘ethnic identity’ and a ‘cultural identity’. The umbrella term ‘social identity’ (sometimes shortened to ‘identity’) will be used to refer to the Māori/tribal ethno-cultural identity, with the acknowledgement that this is an imprecise descriptor and that even the divide between Māori/tribal identity is complex. Also, where relevant ‘culture’ will be used instead of ‘identity’, referring to the cultural knowledge/markers necessary to associate with an identity.

Social identity responses to colonization

The first key concept needed to understand the social identity responses of indigenous people to colonization is the colonial narrative. The colonial narrative encompasses the discursive constructs used by colonizers to justify colonization. Indigenous people may internalize these

constructs, which changes the way they view their social identity (Bhabha, 1983; Fanon, 1967; Hogan, 2000; Meredith, 1998). The colonial narrative establishes a hierarchy, portraying western society as culturally superior – creating simple categories to differentiate societies according to their stage of evolution, from ‘primitive’ through to ‘modern’ (Bhabha, 1983; Bhabha, 1994). The colonial narrative obscures similarities between people from different cultures and turns nuanced, complex, variegated, and dynamic social identities into simplistic, fixed, contrasting caricatures (Hogan, 2000).

In the early stages of European colonization the colonial narrative cast indigenous people as primitive, communal, mystical, and irrational, which inferred they were unable to govern themselves or utilize their land, justifying invasion and colonial settlement (Bhabha 1994; Hogan 2000). The narrative further encouraged ‘civilizing missions’, enacted through state policies, which sought to assimilate indigenous people through the eradication of language and tradition, replacing the pre-contact indigenous identity with a pseudo-settler identity (Hill 2004). Such civilizing missions were dovetailed with policies designed to divorce indigenous people from their resources, undermining economic autonomy and demanding assimilation out of economic and political necessity. In the later stages of colonization, and to the present day, the colonial narrative has shifted to portray indigenous people as developing, with the underlying implication of being less developed than the settler society.

Although the colonial narrative has evolved, its underlying effect is to create a negative association with the indigenous social identity and, in turn, instill a sense of shame for being indigenous. This shame is further fueled by the economic and social problems found among indigenous communities in settler states. The colonial narrative associates these problems as an inherent quality of being indigenous (i.e. under-developed), rather than as being an

inevitable outcome of colonization undermining a culture's political, economic, and social institutions (Smith, 1999). According to Tajfel (1981) an individual faced with the dilemma of possessing a shame-inducing social identity will be to dissociate with their in-group and identify with a new in-group. Alternatively, they will seek to create a positive social identity for their in-group. Either way, they have a fundamental need to belong to a positive social identity.

Within the field of postcolonial studies and psychology such responses to shame-inducing social identities have been identified among indigenous and marginalized people (Bhabha, 1994; Hogan, 2000; Berry, 1997). Generally speaking, these responses may be summarized

being the product of cross-cultural upbringings associated with intermarriage and of daily life navigating through two cultural worlds.

Although these four provide an analytical frame for describing and thinking about identity responses to colonization there is another layer of complexity that has been identified, both in postcolonial studies by Hogan (2000) and indigenous studies by Greaves et al. (2015). This entails the level of reflexivity with which an individual, or group, associates with the indigenous and/or settler social identities. That is, the extent to which the social identity associations are rigid and closed, or open and flexible. As outlined, the colonial narrative rigidly differentiates between the indigenous and settler social identities, due to its Manichean representations that obscure similarities and posit the cultures as opposites. Consequently, the internalization of the colonial narrative, will result in individuals, or groups, establishing a rigid polarity between indigenous and settler social identities. In terms of an acculturation response this polarity, as its most extreme, will result in the settler culture becoming

by Fanon (1967), and built upon by both Bhabha (1994) and Nandy (1998), amongst others. Good et al. (2008, p. 12), referencing Nandy, explain that colonization often results in ‘a split self in which one element is repressed or denied’ through ‘the internalisation of colonial disregard for local cultures and values’, which can cause ‘self-hatred’. In addition, Hogan (2000) has identified how this split self can result in individuals and groups cycling through different social identity responses. For example, the assimilation response suppresses the indigenous identity, which may cause an individual or groups to move to a protection response to release this identity.

It needs to be noted that the theoretical constructs outlined, encapsulated by SIRC and the supporting notions of reflexivity and split self, are not prescriptive concepts but illustrative. They are intended to assist with understanding how indigenous individuals, families, and communities, based upon situation, historical context, and life pathways may respond to colonization. In this paper these concepts are contextualized within the narratives of Ngāi Tahu whānau (families and networks of families) describing the impacts of colonization on their identity. These narratives demonstrate that the SIRC employed shift generationally based upon changes in New Zealand government policy and wider society and growing Maori political assertiveness. Furthermore, the SIRC shift developmentally over an individual’s lifespan, based upon the manner in which they were raised, and how the colonial environment shifts throughout their life. There is also a third component, the interactional, where one’s social identity response is shaped by another individual’s identity response, which shows how in-group/out-group dynamics play a crucial role in shaping responses.

Method

The data used came from the Ngāi Tahu Research Centre Whenua Project, which has been designed to explore the impacts of colonization on Ngāi Tahu whānau to find culturally

useful as it helped participants discuss the trauma of colonization (Lee, 2005). It is also part of a common cultural practice of Ako within Māori culture, in which storytelling is used to support learning processes (Lee, 2005).

Results

These results are presented using a historical framework, which provides a means understand the emergence of SIRC within context contexts. This framework breaks the colonial history of Ngāi Tahu and Māori into four divisions, which provide a degree of clarity and comprehension in regards to understanding identity responses at different points in history. There are four particular periods that can be identified: inundation (1840-1890); isolation (1890-1940); integration (1940-1980); and invigoration (1980-present). We will examine these final three for the various identity responses, with the first simply providing context, because our participant's recollections only span these three periods. With regard to this, often the recollections span several generations so the

to being outnumbered ten to one by the settlers (Pool & Kukutai, 2011). The settler state also grew in power, coming to dominate Māori life. Ngāi Tahu experienced dramatic change in this period, and intermarriage with settlers was a common way of coping with this change. This meant that while some Ngāi Tahu remained wholly ethnically and culturally Māori, there was early ethnic and cultural hybridity occurring as well (Wanhalla, 2004).

Isolation – 1890-1940

The period of 1890-1940 is classified as isolation largely because while the political and economic amalgamation of the inundation period continued there was a physical segregation between Pākehā (European New Zealanders) and Ngāi Tahu, who were mostly living either on the eighteen reserves or in one of the many mainly Māori settlements. Some Ngāi Tahu lived more closely enmeshed with settler society but these are considered the exception rather than the rule. Most of our narratives begin near the end of the isolation period, when the forces on Māori to join the settler economy were growing and the period of isolation was coming to an end. Many participants emphasized how these forces and the influence of the colonial narrative provoked the acculturation response, which, as will be demonstrated, has a strong developmental component. The crucial vector of acculturation pressure during the isolation period was government-run schooling, where te reo (Maori language) was banned, Māori culture denigrated, and Pākehā culture was celebrated. Being exposed to the colonial narrative at school had an obvious impact:

‘But [grandmother] used to tell us that they weren’t allowed to speak Māori at school and they weren’t allowed to do this and they were taught that the Pākehā way was better...

So she embedded that I think in her kids...’ [Female, 57]

However, while school was an important in the acculturation response, often serving as a reinforcer, across the narratives we found that it was often a conscious choice by parents that

was the leading acculturation force. This is apparent in the following statement, by a participant who grew up in a largely Māori settlement near the end of the isolation period:

‘[When we were born dad] said to Mum, “What do you want your kids brought up, how do you want your kids brought up? Do you want them brought up as Māoris or Pākehās?” And he said, “Before you say anything there’s nothing for them as Māoris,” he said, “There never will be.” We were brought up as Europeans... I never ever wanted anything else... And yes I don’t know where the hell we would have got to if it had been Māoris. We weren’t allowed to talk Māori at school; you got hit over the bloody fingers with the cane. And they never taught Māori at home, only if they didn’t want us to know anything.’ [Female, 85]

Similarly, another participant explained:

‘... mum... said that pop and nana have been told that there was no future for Māori so they must bring their children up as European because that was the way of the future so they did... Mum did say that nana and pop both spoke Māori, they were both fluent, but only spoke it when they didn’t want the kids to know something... It would seem that our parents’ generation were the first link if you like to Western, everything in a Western way if you know what I mean. They were told and brought up as European.’ [Female, 56]

There was an enormous pressure for children to be brought up ‘as Europeans’ at the end of

elements of indigenous identity are passed on despite attempts to acculturate. Consequently, rather than being brought up as 'Pākehā', many in this generation had a mixture of two conflicting identities instilled, with the Māori identity deemed inferior and the Pākehā identity superior. Thus, while children in pre-contact Māori society were absorbing a *single holistic identity*

facility with Pākehā culture. This hybrid identity was also apparent in the following participant's statement:

'Dad came off as an ignorant Māori but I think underneath it all he had a lot more. He was real staunch Māori values and things but I think he had things happen in his life time growing up that he didn't want to be associated with being Māori...he told me that he got caned at school for speaking Māori.' [Female, 52]

In addition, this quote illustrates the shame that was associated with the Māori identity, and in turn the silencing of that identity in response. While the issues caused by this hybrid identity emerged in this period we found they were more common in the integration period as individuals were forced into a situation that exacerbated the contradictions.

Integration – 1940-1980

From the 1940s, there was a significant demographic shift in the Ngāi Tahu populace, specifically many moved to Pākehā cities, towns, and settlements for work (Hill, 2004). Not only did this make the material inequalities more obvious but it also meant that many whānau became immersed in a racist environment, becoming a poor minority living in the settler-dominated institutions whose sudden proximity hardened settler's racist beliefs. This often reinforced the acculturation response. This participant, who grew up in a largely Pākehā town, explains:

'... the neighbors walked past our place saying, "That poor [woman] and that older girl living with all those Māoris." Not all the neighbors of course. But that's the social environment that we were in and mum and dad knew we were and they believed they were protecting us by making us less different by allowing us to integrate; and in fact not integrate, to assimilate into Pākehā society which we did largely.' [Female, 61]

But while integration often helped reinforce the acculturation response, the exposure to the racist environment and the paradox of not being able to completely disassociate from an ethnically-based identity, particularly for those who 'looked Māori', also meant that the integration period saw the contradictions inherent in the acculturated response manifest in a

more extreme way. This participant, who moved from a largely Pākehā settlement during this period, reveals how these contradictions impacted identity:

‘We struck all kinds of interesting stuff, boy. They crossed the road when they saw us coming. They called us strange names, half caste and quarter caste... And the thing is my Māori family were all shot down. They’d shut off. It was too hard to try and navigate that stuff. It was shut down Jack. They had shut down...I felt I’d lived in a straightjacket; that something that was in me couldn’t exist too much. Something that made up a good part of my life couldn’t exist too much... By the time I’m 14, I’m screwed up and mixed up. I’ve had enough of school. I love the nuns at the first bit. Second bit I’m starting to get pretty titchy and I can see that Māori, there’s something I want there and they ain’t giving me. There’s something I gotta have there. I’m hungry for this stuff and I’m searching the newspapers for names of Māori. I search everything for Māori, where are we?... I left home first 14; I’m gone. I gotta sort something for myself thanks. I’d die of boredom here because nobody’s saying anything. We’re just keeping the show together. There’s something in me that... the search engine’s running. Google ain’t nothing on this thing when it’s living inside you. I gotta find what the hell is going on because I don’t lik

Invigoration – 1980-Present Day

The final period, from 1980 to present day, is classified as one of invigoration as it is marked by the Māori political, economic, and cultural renaissance (Belich, 2001). During this period full immersion and bilingual schools, as well as a Māori television station, saw te reo become increasingly common. Also in this period Ngāi Tahu successfully applied to the Waitangi Tribunal for compensation for Treaty breaches. Thus, while Ngāi Tahu remain overrepresented in negative statistics and institutional and personal racism remain, there is also a renewed pride in the Ngāi Tahu identity.

The issues of acculturation and disaffection were still present in this period. In a revealing quote that shows the generational, developmental, and interactional aspects of SIRC, one participant, in her middle age, outlined the impacts of acculturation on three generations:

‘I think that’s because tāua [grandmother] was kind of she had to become Pākehā to survive. She had to fit into the Pākehā world to survive so her roots were kind of left behind... I feel very actually quite disjointed from where I come from... I feel disconnected in terms of when I got to whānau hui [gatherings] out there I know I belong there but I don’t feel I belong there. Like all the ones that were kind of raised around that area they all know each other and there’s more of a connection and I feel like I’m sort of more of an intruder and a bit of an outsider... My father was completely alienated from all things Māori to the point where I wasn’t even allowed to speak to Māori people; to a point where he was almost racist really... One day, when my daughter was doing kapahaka [Māori performing art]... we went out and I took my dad out to watch, and all the people out there greeted him like someone back from the dead. All the whanau came up to him and made a huge fuss over him and hongied [touched noses and forehead] him... I watched my father and I knew he was feeling it... Then after, he started to try and get [my daughter] to sing Māori songs to him and speak Māori to him. I knew that something had awoken inside of him. [Female, 53]

The rigid associations with social identity and the way the negative consequences ricochet both generationally and developmentally are clear in the above. Across the generations we

see the grandparent having to acculturate into the Pakeha world to survive, then her son rigidly rejecting the Māori identity during the integration period and encouraging his daughter to do so also. This, in turn, led to his daughter losing her sense of identity, and becoming disaffected, but ensuring that her own daughter connected back with

is associated with certain markers, when a participant was asked if someone they had talked about was Māori :

‘No. Well he is actually Ngā

adaptable associations with both the Māori identity and the Pākehā identity. This fits with Tajfel's (1981, p. 256) understanding that an "individual will tend to remain a member of a group and seek membership of new groups if these groups have some contribution to make to the positive aspects of the individual's social identity" and that individuals will reinterpret social identities to make them positive. However, the hybridity of this response, where the two identities may be fused, reveals a specifically postcolonial slant, one most famously outlined by Bhabha (1994). The next participant demonstrates a very flexible and positive association with different postcolonial identities, even creating a fused social identity signifier: 'New Zealand Māori'. She is describing her experiences of living in a Pākehā dominated region, then moving to a Māori dominated region, and how she could move between social identities based on where she was located.

'I'd have to say I am New Zealand Māori...I have a Pākehā side to me that comes from the region [Christchurch]...That whole Māori environment [in Gisborne]... everyone was Māori... I started...thinking, 'I'm not like [them]. I'm different!' And so that's why I sort of owned my Pākehā side because everyone down in the South Island and Christchurch was Pākehā and that was the norm for me. So there was my New Zealand Māori side, there was my Christian side...and then my cultural side... [Female, 36]

This next quote also provides an interesting symbolic example of fusion. Here the participant

but that's sort of what everyone's got now. So we want to come up with something that we can pass around to the whole whānau so we can see and be like, "Yeah; well, that's us." [Male, 26]

This response demonstrates a positive association with both identities. However, it should be noted, that these examples of fusion do not necessary involve an even fusion of both. Many participants demonstrated a primary facility and affinity with their indigenous social identity, but one that transcends the damage inflicted upon it by colonization. For example, when asked about whether she used 'traditional Māori practices' when muttonbirding this participant told us:

'That's the thing. It's 'cause we do it. That's what makes it Māori...' [Female, 40]

Her understanding of what constitutes 'Māori' is not limited by the 'backwards' traditionalistic delineations ascribed by the colonial narrative that have often meant any progress is equated with (e) 4 (nha) 9.(a) 4 (t)u4-2 () - (e) 4 (d nha) 9.(ol) -2 (e) 4 (s)9 (s) 9 () -10 (M) 9] TJ /

In the meantime, I'm working for [a Māori radio station] learning how to produce. Working with every Māori there is around in the hub of Māoridom there; what a gift. I was so frightened to even go and visit the studio one day when somebody had... I thought there are real Māori in there... So she's calling and saying, "You better come

and it is what can cause the response ‘cascade’ that we saw across the narratives. This amalgam identity is the converse of the fusion identity, it is a hybrid form which sets an individual up for potential identity crisis because of its unequal and inexact instillation. Certainly a number of participants who grew up acculturated did not experience an identity crisis and there are many ways the issues can be ameliorated. Still, this is an unstable identity for many as it is inherently antagonistic. To have Māori parents attempt to their raise children as Pakeha despite not having a strong affinity with the culture as they see no future for being Māori because the Pakeha culture has denigrated Māori culture all whilst exhibiting Māori behaviors which they will not discuss is, to put it simply, a toxic situation.

It is not surprising that the responses cascade, which is the second issue we want to discuss. Throughout the analysis the connections indicated between the acculturation, disaffection, protection, and fusion responses were portrayed as often following one another and it needs to be stated that there is no linear or consistent trajectory. While some people remain acculturated throughout their lives, with what seems like little issue, others may never move beyond disaffection; likewise, while some may go from the acculturated response to protection others will move through from disaffection to fusion. There are, it seems, no hard and fast rules, though there were some broad if largely circumstantial trends that were apparent in the narratives. For example, while it seemed possible for individuals to move from an acculturated response to a protective one with minimal disaffection, virtually all the individuals who had developed a fused identity had been disaffected at some point. It is this very disaffection, and the identity reflection and negotiation that it can generate, which seems essential to developing an adaptable and flexible response to the identity issues caused by colonization. The fusion response is, we believe, the most desirable for indigenous peoples living in settler states as it not only enables individuals to confidently ‘walk in two worlds’ it

also ensures that the indigenous in-group is more flexible and inclusive, helping to heal the wounds of colonization.

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