

**Manu is my Homegirl:
Navigating the Ethnic Identity of the Māori Adoptee**

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MIHI

Ko wai tōku maunga?

Ko wai tōku awa?

Ko wai tōku iwi?

Ko wai tōku hapū?

Ko wai ōku tīpuna?

Ko Liz tōku whaea whānau

Ko Tom rāua ko Val ōku mātua

No Kirikiroa ahau

Ko Emma West tōku ingoa

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of New Zealand infants and children was such a prevalent practice in the 1960s and 1970s that it has been described as one of New Zealand's greatest 'social experiments' (Else, 1991, p. 197). The secrecy permeating this practice meant that up until 1985, adoptees of this era were denied access to records identifying their birthparents. Amongst these adoptees were Māori children, transracially adopted by non-Māori adoptive parents.

Although currently Māori identity is seen as crucial to Māori self-determination (Durie, 1998) very little has been written about how Māori who have been raised outside of their culture identify ethnically. This qualitative research aims to contribute to such discussions.

Using a social constructivist paradigm and applying ideas from social psychology, the narratives of eight Māori adoptees born between the years 1955-1979 are analysed to determine how they interpret their social and emotional experiences and how they navigate their ethnic identity. The author's insight, as both an adoptee and a Māori person, is used to illuminate the discussion at certain points.

The analysed case studies, which have been gathered from in-depth interviews, reveal that assumptions about Māori identity strongly influence the Māori adoptees' interpretation of their experiences and this consequently affects how they commit to their Māori identity.

Embedded in the Māori adoptees' language and behaviour is evidence of ideology used to define Māori identity. The emotional ramification of being a transracial adoptee varies depending on how the adoptee chooses to interpret this ideology.

One of the conclusions reached in this study is that if Māori identity is to be used in law and politics, then static and essentialist notions of identity need to be challenged. This will require a broader perspective of identity that is more inclusive of the diverse representations within the Māori ethnic group.

“Not flesh of my flesh,
Nor bone of my bone,
But still miraculously
my own.
Never forget for a single minute:
You didn’t grow under my heart,
But in it.”

(Conkling Heyliger, 1952, April 5)

E kore au e ngaro; he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea.
I will not be lost; the seed planted in Rangiātea

(cited in Mathews, Rapatahana & Sword, 2011)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Situating this Research

The primary goal of this research is to examine the current navigation of ethnic identity from the perspective of a group of Māori who were transracially adopted as infants during the 1960s and 1970s. The term ‘Māori adoptee’ is used throughout this thesis to describe this cohort. Factors considered in this work are how the research participants ethnically self-identify, their commitment towards Māoritanga, and how their perceptions, expectations and reactions toward Māori and being Māori have been internalised and influenced by their social world.

This thesis aims to provide a space and voice to those who share the experience of ‘being Māori’ and ‘being an adoptee’ in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Chapter two considers the theoretical approaches used to assist in this analysis. The subsequent chapters are an analysis of the findings and researcher’s observations.

1.2 The New Zealand Adoption Act 1955

In 2009 only 181¹ domestic adoptions occurred in New Zealand (Permanent Bureau, 2010). This figure contrasts significantly with collated statistics from 1962 to 1977 yearbooks which indicate approximately 53,236 legal adoptions occurred or on average more than 3,327 per year². The high number of adoptions during this period can be partially credited to the social pressure placed on single unmarried women to adopt out their infants to two-parent families (New Zealand Law Commission, 1999). For example in 1973 the New Zealand Official Yearbook 1975 indicates that 83 percent of adoptees were born out of wedlock, 86 percent were aged less than a year at time of placement, and 65 percent were placed with strangers (Statistics New Zealand, n.d).

¹ This figure is for the fiscal year 1 July 2008 - 30 June 2009, sourced from *Preliminary document No 5 of April 2010 for the attention of the Special Commission of June 2010 on the practical operation of the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption*.

² See Appendix 1

During the 1960s and 1970s social workers or welfare officers were responsible for the administration of adoptions (Adoption Act 1955). Since 1962 all adoption orders have been made in the Magistrates Court (Adoption Act 1955). Prior to this date the Māori Land Court granted adoption orders between a Māori child and a prospective adoptive parent, when at least one of the parents was Māori (Griffith, K.C., 1997). Post 1962, the adoption statistics in the New Zealand Official Yearbook Collections (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.) do not distinguish between Māori and non-Māori adoptees, therefore the exact number of Māori children adopted during the 1960s and 1970s is unavailable.

The Māori customary practice of whāngai differs from legal adoption in that children are usually retained within kinship networks, the arrangement is often open, and it is used to strengthen ties between family members (Bradley, 1997; New Zealand Law Commission 1999). Whāngai has not been legally recognised since 1932, except for the purposes of succession to Māori land (Dyhrberg, 2001; New Zealand Law Commission 1999). Unlike general adoptees, whāngai children know who they are and where they belong, and openness on these identity issues is encouraged (McRae & Nikora, 2006). Whāngai is outside the scope of this thesis.

K.C. Griffith (1997) observes that the Adoption Act 1955 was based on environmental supremacy philosophy, which resulted in ‘legal fictions’, whereby adoptees were given new names, identities and a new birth certificate. Secrecy was promoted through a ‘closed adoption’ arrangement or ‘complete break theory’ whereby the adoptee’s original birth records were sealed and contact with birth parents was severed. Today the Adoption Act 1955 is still in legislation, but open adoptions are usually practised and the Adult Adoption Act of 1985 (Department of Social Welfare, 1985) also means that adult adoptees are now able to apply for their original birth certificate. Providing a veto is not placed on the identifying information, adoptees and their birth parent/s can search for each other.

One branch of criticism of the Adoption Act 1955 is that it disconnected Māori children from whānau (family), hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe), diminished their rights to resources such as Māori land entitlement and iwi scholarships, promoted secrecy and rigidity, did not consult with whānau members, and breached the Treaty of Waitangi by denying Māori full and exclusive control of their taonga (Department

of Social Welfare, 1986; Dyhrberg, 2001; New Zealand Law Commission, 1999, 2000; Pitama, 1997). Most significantly, until 1994 it was not a legal requirement to record a Māori adoptee's biological iwi, hapū or whānau heritage on their original/first birth certificate (Griffith, K.C., 1997).

Under existing adoption legislation birth fathers consent is only necessary if the father is married to the mother at the time of the child's birth or after the time of conception or is a guardian of the child (New Zealand Law Commission, 1999). In 1970 the majority (98 percent) of birth mothers were young Pākehā³ (Griffith, K.C., 1997). In cases where the Māori birth father is not named on the original birth certificate, such identifying information is still reliant on what the birth mothers can or want to share. This can have implications for Māori adoptees who seek information about their paternal Māori heritage.

1.3 Background and Justification for the Study

In an era and country where Māori identity is integral to Māori autonomy and self-determination, it is timely to add to the emerging research and debates about the formation and/or evolution of Māori identity. Currently there is a limited amount of qualitative research about the implications of the closed stranger adoption practice on the Māori adoptee's ethnic identity. This study contributes to this gap in the literature with the intention of applying theoretical perspectives to the issue and by exploring the formation of Māori ethnic identity from the perspective of this unique group, while highlighting the philosophies embedded in the closed stranger adoption practice and the ideologies defining Māori identity. The key research question asked is – how does the Māori adoptee navigate their ethnic identity?

Māori Identity

A socio-centric view of Māori identity assumes that being Māori is “inextricably linked to the relationships Māori have with others” (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010, p. 12). This identity may encompass knowledge of whakapapa (genealogy) and te reo Māori (Māori language) and tikanga Māori (Māori custom), and lived experiences with iwi, hapū or whānau. The formation of a strong Māori identity, based on whakapapa rights

³ New Zealander of European descent (Moorfield, 1995). Note there are other meanings and connotations associated with this word refer to King (1999).

and te reo and tikanga Māori knowledge has been a crucial component in New Zealand social policy, and has been central to the return of or compensation of confiscated land, the re-birth and re-commitment to Māori language revitalisation, the development of kaupapa Māori (Māori ideology) education, and the wider acceptance and respect for Māori culture. In the last thirty years, such efforts have resulted in increased self-determination, and physical, material and spiritual advances for Māori. However, such benefits have not necessarily reached the entire Māori population. Silent in the equation is the voice of the Māori adoptee.

By exploring how Māori who live outside traditional parameters determine their ethnic identity, this thesis challenges narrow and essentialist notions of Māori identity by providing an alternative yet complementary perspective. The objective, which stems from this approach is to generate consideration of the issues related to Māori adoptees, with the intention of creating a space for determination (self and collective) that is embracing of all Māori. For full Māori self-determination to occur, there needs to be a requisite understanding of how the many voices within Māoridom define the ‘self’ and view their belonging within this collective identity.

In identifying intrinsic and extrinsic influences contributing to the Māori adoptee social identity, the intention is to highlight the empowering and disempowering effects of assumptions on their constructs and schemas. This study therefore explores the assumption that some contemporary notions of Māori identity may alienate some Māori, and aims to identify examples where this may occur and pose areas for future study in relation to perspectives of identity.

This thesis draws upon current literature regarding indigenous adoption, Māori self-determination, Māori whānau and Māori identity (such as Durie, 1995, 1998, 2003; Houkamau & Sibley, 2010; Liu, McCreanor, McIntosh & Teaiwa, 2005; McRae & Nikora, 2006; Meredith, 1998; Metge, 1995; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Wall, 1997). The implications of identity politics on an individual’s ethnic identification and stereotypes of the Māori social identity will be considered for their salience amongst this cohort.

Internationally, some of these themes have already attracted the attention of researchers, particularly in relation to adult transracial adoptees or those affected by

historic and racially assimilative child placement policies and practices in other societies. For example The Indian Adoption Project (1958-1967) caused Native-American children to be removed from reservations and assimilated into mainstream society (Lee, 2003). Likewise, large numbers of Australian aboriginal and Torres Strait children were uplifted from family reservations and assimilated into white communities (The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, 1997). Various authors and organisations have discussed the effects of such practices (Attwood & Magowan, 2001; European Network for Indigenous Australian Rights, 2009; The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, 1997, National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2012). This research aims to add to such literature by providing an understanding of the New Zealand indigenous Māori adoptee situation.

1.4 Methodology

Reflecting the social and theoretical perspectives guiding this research, the methodology used is primarily qualitative in nature, with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the participants' relationships, beliefs, values, attitudes, experiences, feelings and behaviours. The theoretical approaches examine the lived experiences of the Māori adoptee, and were selected to assist in determining how Māori adoptees participate in the construction of their perceived social reality and navigate the enculturation of their ethnic identity.

About the Participants

The research participants consist of six females and two males, born between the years 1955-1974, who have lived or currently live in New Zealand's central and lower North Island and the South Island. All self-identify as Māori or part-Māori and were raised from infancy to adolescence by non-Māori adoptive parents. Two of the participants experienced foster homes during adolescence. Six from the cohort have Māori siblings who are also adopted. Four have siblings who were born to their adoptive parents.

Mark

Mark was born 1955 and adopted by an Irish Catholic father and New Zealand Pākehā mother. He strongly identifies as Māori and is a fluent te reo Māori speaker.

In his formative years he was raised in a small town in the South Island, which predominantly consisted of Pākehā families. In his early teens his family moved to the upper South Island, where the racial mix between Māori and Pākehā was more diverse. He has one Māori birth sibling who is blood-related and who was raised with him as an adoptee. He has made contact with another Māori birth sister who was not adopted out. In his young adult years he lived in cities with a greater ethnic mix. His Māori birth mother died before he could meet her and he does not know the identity of his birth father. During his teens he spent some time with a Māori foster family.

Dulcie

Dulcie was born 1964 and adopted by New Zealand Pākehā parents. She attended a primary school consisting predominantly of Pākehā children. At her high school the ethnic mix between the Māori and Pākehā students was more diverse. She has a sibling (non-blood related) who is an adoptee and non-adopted siblings. She strongly identifies as Māori and has learned the language to tertiary level. She has met, but has not sustained contact with her birth mother. She does not know the identity of her Māori birth father.

Paula

Paula was born 1970 and adopted by New Zealand Pākehā parents. In her formative and teenage years she attended schools consisting predominantly of Pākehā students. Her blood sibling was adopted with her. During her late teens she spent some time in a foster home. In her young adult life she married into a Māori family. Physical abuse during her childhood featured strongly in her narrative. She briefly met some of her birth family as a teenager. She strongly identifies as Māori and has learned te reo Māori.

Peter

Peter was born 1956 and adopted by an Irish Catholic father and New Zealand Pākehā mother. He has learned te reo Māori to a basic level. He was raised in a South Island town consisting predominantly of Pākehā and had limited exposure to Māori. In his young adult years he mixed with Māori after joining the armed services. He is fair in appearance and although he knew he was adopted he was not told that he was part-

Māori until he was a young adult. Although he has contacted his Pākehā birth mother he has not sustained contact with her and his Māori birth father's identity is unknown.

Lucy

Lucy was born 1955 and adopted with her twin sister by New Zealand Pākehā parents. She was raised in North Island city in an affluent area consisting mainly of Pākehā. In her young adult years she worked in environments where there was a greater presence of Māori. Although she knew she was adopted she was not told that she was part-Māori until she was a young adult. She has not contacted her birth parents as her Pākehā mother died and the identity of her Māori birth father is unknown, but she has had some contact with her maternal birth family. She has not learned te reo Māori.

Jackie

Jackie was born 1972 and was adopted by a British father and Pākehā mother. She has older siblings, who are not adopted. Jackie was raised in a community consisting predominantly of Pākehā. She has spent time in New Zealand and Australia. She has made contact with her Pākehā birth mother and sustained this contact, but does not know the identity of her birth father. She has not learned te reo Māori.

Nadia

Nadia was born 1970 and was adopted by New Zealand Pākehā parents. She has older siblings who are not adopted and a sister (not blood related) who is also an adoptee. During her formative years she was raised in a community where Pākehā were the minority and Māori were the majority. During her teens she attended a school where there were more Pākehā than Māori students. She has made, but not maintained contact with her Pākehā birth mother, but has not met her Māori birth father. She has done some basic te reo Māori lessons.

Charlene

Charlene was born 1974 and was adopted by British immigrant parents. Her adoptive family consists of another adopted sibling (not blood related) and older non-adopted siblings. During her formative years she was raised in a bicultural community where there was an equal mix of Māori and Pākehā. As a teenager she moved towns and attended a high school consisting predominantly of Pākehā students. She has not made contact with either birth parent.

Procedure

The main strategy of inquiry involved collating and analysing the narratives of eight adult adoptees who were Māori and legally adopted as infants by non-Māori strangers. One to two hour semi-structured face-to-face, telephone and Skype interviews were conducted between November 2010 and March 2011. Closed and probing open-ended questions were used to elicit how the participants viewed their Māori ethnicity and how they believed others perceived their situation. All information gathered in the interviews was audio-recorded and transcribed into a written format. On the one occasion where the recording device failed, notes were taken and the participant was asked to check the written transcript.

The research participants were approached through the researcher's personal network and chosen from volunteers who had responded to an advert posted on a social-media networking site. Potential participants who matched the criteria (see Appendix 2) were provided with an information sheet (see Appendix 2), potential interview questions (see Appendix 3) and a consent form (see Appendix 4). The participant and researcher then made arrangements to meet in a convenient location. Excluded from this research were birth and adoptive parents and siblings, whāngai children, extended family and adoptees born in the years prior to 1954 or after the years 1979. Current geographical issues were not considered important to the selection of the participants, as during their lifetime some of the participants had moved regions.

Participants were questioned to determine their commitment and interest in Māoritanga. A correlation of these factual responses alongside the participants' self-perceptions of their diverse experiences contributed to the broader picture of their relationship with Māori and Māoritanga. The intention of this was to inform the key question inherent in this study.

The Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted based on the theoretical perspectives inherent in this study. These themes include the influence of the Māori adoptee's social world and how the adoptees subjective interpretations direct their emotions, behaviour and social interactions.

This is a small case study and making assumptions that categorise all Māori adoptees under a homogenous group is not the intention. Consideration should also be given to researcher and participant biases and to the fact, that ultimately, the researcher decided which elements of the participants' narratives to include and exclude for analysis.

The Treaty Principles

The Treaty of Waitangi principles of 'partnership', 'participation', and 'protection' (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2001) were utilised in the design and ethical considerations of this thesis. In applying the principles of partnership and participation the intention of this study was to gather diverse views and identify possible emerging themes about how the participants perceive their Māori ethnicity and how this has influenced their current behaviours, attitudes and personal identity. Participants were given the questions (see Appendix 3) prior to the interview to give them time to reflect. However, during the interviews a degree of flexibility was allowed to provide for the natural flow of spontaneous dialogue. To implement the principle of protection the appropriate ethical procedures were followed as outlined below.

Ethical Considerations

In this research pseudonyms are used and the names of the participants' workplaces, areas of residence and known associates are not featured to ensure the identities of the participants are protected. Prior to conducting the interviews the volunteers were told that they could withdraw from the research at any stage. They were also given the name of the AUT counsellor should the research process generate any undue emotional ramifications. AUT ethical approval was sought prior to conducting any interviews.

CHAPTER 2: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores ideas and theories that relate to issues of ethnic identity, and that provide a context for analysing Māori adoptees experiences with the intention of gaining insight into how this group socially constructs their ethnic identity. The ideas and social theories in this chapter are grouped around common themes, rather than around their authors, as many of the theoretical elements draw from a larger corpus of an author's work.

A function of theory is to present a framework within which various studies of phenomena can be situated (Mutch, 2005). The phenomena explored in this research are based on the navigation of ethnic identity, specifically Māori identity, from the perspective of individuals who have been raised outside of their culture - meaning transracial adoptees. 'Navigate', in the context of this work refers to the process whereby these individuals internally interpret and understand their world due to their different external social experiences and consequently create schemas and constructs that influence their thinking, behaviour and identity.

To understand sufficiently how the participants in this study navigate their ethnic identity, there are a number of related issues that require investigation. These include exploring the different definitions of Māori identity and the shaping of the Māori adoptees social identity constructs.

Four major theoretical perspectives and their related elements are explored in this chapter for the insights they offer into aspects of the perceptions of ethnic identity held by Māori adoptees. These theories include 'social constructivism', 'symbolic interactionism', 'social identity theory' and 'psychology'. This chapter considers some of the assumptions of these theories and how their related methodological approaches might inform the intentions of this research overall.

2.1 Social Constructivism

Knowledge and Reality

Vico proposes that; human knowledge is little more than a human construct (cited in Flick, 2006). Marx comments that; "it is not the consciousness of men that determine their existence, but their social existence that determines their existence" (cited in

Stones, 1998, p. 23). Reflecting a similar view Weber, whose ideas have been credited for its influence on interpretive and organisational sociology, (McIntosh, 1997) was interested in depicting and explaining social reality (Albrow, 1990). At the turn of the twentieth century discussions about reality and knowledge intensified, and the development of constructivism as a possible theoretical approach to interpreting the role of individuals in society became a more active field of analysis among philosophers, psychologists and sociologists.

The Emergence of the Perspective and the Assumptions

In considering the assumptions underlying the social constructivist perspective, Mutch (2005) provides a succinct definition:

Reality is not fixed but constructed; knowledge and truth are created not discovered; meaning is socially, culturally and historically situated; we invent concepts, models and schemas to make sense of our experiences; we test and modify our models and schemas in the light of new experiences; and we recognize the plurality of symbolic and language systems (p. 61).

For Mutch, there are no absolutes when it comes to defining social and cultural identity. Rather, these notions are shaped by how individuals and groups perceive themselves and their position in society.

Gergen coined the term ‘social constructivism’ in the 1960s (Deventer, 2005) during a time when there was a growing interest in cognitive psychology and phenomenological sociology as approaches to examining social interaction (Ashcraft & Radvansky, 2010; Flecha, Gómez, & Puigvert, 2003). This social psychology perspective is ‘interpretive’ in nature and is imbedded in a postmodernist framework. Interpretive researchers are interested in understanding people from within by exploring how they construct and construe their social world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Constructivist thinking and the interpretive perspective are based on the premise that there is a difference between the natural and social worlds and they must be studied differently (Hart, 2004).

Social constructivism also focuses on how societal forces and social contexts impact on an individual’s life (Rohall, Milkie & Lucas, 2007). Its proponents suggest that

humans are “products of their cultural and personal histories” (Cardwell, 2000, p. 240), and therefore human actions need to be interpreted in this context.

The Acquisition of Knowledge – A Human Construct

The ontological basis of constructivism assumes that the “world as we know it as [is], literally, just that – the world as we humans know it” (Potter, 2006, p. 79) and that it consists of a range of meanings, represented in the communication of signs and symbols such as language. The constructivist epistemological viewpoint proposes that knowledge is constructed, not discovered, that it is multiple rather than singular, and is a means by which power is exercised (Potter, 2006). From an ontological constructivist perspective this research seeks an understanding of the world, as the Māori adoptee knows it. This requires examining the adoptees perception of reality from a personal and collective point of view. Epistemologically this research probes into the adoptees’ underlying identity constructs, which are informed by subjective meaning. This involves questioning where and how the Māori adoptee obtains their knowledge and the subsequent influence of that knowledge on their identity.

The Sociology of Knowledge

An issue Gergen (2001) raises in regard to social constructivism is how does one understand how external and internal reality is connected. In the 1920s, Scheler addressed this question by coining the term the ‘sociology of knowledge’, which is described as a concept “concerned with the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 16). Berger and Luckmann (1966) note that Scheler “emphasized that human knowledge is given in society as an a priori to individual experience, providing the latter with its order of meaning” (p. 20) which consequently becomes part of the individual’s ‘natural way of looking at the world’ and a society’s ‘relative-natural world-view’. This proposition suggests that the ‘ordinary man’ takes his ‘reality’ and his ‘knowledge’ for granted.

Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) seminal work on this theme *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* suggests; “reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyse the process in which this occurs” (p. 13). For researchers this means considering whatever passes for knowledge in a society, regardless of its validity. This is an important distinction for Māori children who were adopted by non-Māori parents, because it places an

emphasis on evaluating the validity of knowledge and from that, the source of that knowledge. This thesis acknowledges the diversity of the adoptees' realities and examines how Māori adoptees have processed meanings, in particular interpretations that challenge or subscribe to their natural way of looking at the world.

Social constructivism is a “body of work in which both cognitive processes and the social milieu are pivotal” (Gergen, 2001, p. 123). Cognitive thinkers Vygotsky, Bruner and Piaget advanced discussions about how humans acquire knowledge. Vygotsky focused on the individual as the agent for obtaining knowledge emphasising inner speech is based on external speech and serves as a social function (Van Der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). Bruner proposed that; “it is culture, not biology, that shapes human life and the human mind, that gives meaning to action, by situating its underlying intentional states in an interpretive system” (cited in Gergen, 2001, p. 38). Piaget suggested that intelligence was not in-born, but developed during constantly changing interactions between the child and her or his environment, defined by distinct stages of development organised and influenced by ‘schemas’ (Cardwell, 2000). Schemas are the “generic versions of experience that remain in memory” (Quinn, 2005, p. 112). Quinn (2005) adds schemas are “learned expectations about the way things usually go” (p. 112). In essence what individuals remember and recall is dependent on their cultural framework and the social context (Lawler, 2008).

In this research the Māori adoptee is asked to recall memorable experiences in order to extract schema that influence the meanings they have about their identity. Whether these schemas help or hinder their social connection with their Māori ethnic identity is analysed at relevant sections in the subsequent chapters.

The Selection and Interpretation of Facts

Social phenomenologist Schutz (cited in Flick, 2006) suggests human knowledge involves ‘constructs’ that is; “a set of abstractions, generalizations, formalizations and idealizations, specific to the relevant level of thought organization” (p. 79). Bourdieu (cited in Lawler, 2008) states constructs as ‘common understandings’ or as ‘the doxic’ or ‘unthought categories’ that are so taken-for-granted as being true that they pass as unnoticed. Schutz (cited in Deventer, 2005) argued that it is not the experience that is meaningful, but rather the meaning that arises from the reflective act of consciousness. Furthermore facts, while constructed, only become relevant through their selection

and interpretation (Flick, 2006). These various notions of self-knowledge have a direct bearing on Māori adoptees construction of self-identity.

The interplay between notions of the social and those of the individual are examined in this thesis by questioning how the Māori adoptee selects, acquires, interprets, internalises, assumes, or discards knowledge that is pertinent to their ethnic identity formation. To understand the relative-natural worldview of the Māori adoptee also requires examining how their perceptions and personal constructs have changed or remained static.

In order to probe the fluidity or stableness of personal constructs embedded within the self-identities of Māori adoptees, this research examines the correlation between the meanings constructed from past and present social interactions. The intention is to consider the value that the adoptee has placed upon particular meanings and the consequences that have resulted in the adoptee's understanding of reality.

Considering the fluidity or stableness of the Māori adoptee's constructs is also relevant when assessing wider societal changes that have occurred during their lifetime. Such changes could include, for example, the perceived Māori renaissance and the redefining of Māori and Pākehā identities. This is a highly intricate area, and many of the associated issues are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, such 'mass movements' do require and are given consideration at certain junctures.

The Role of the Actor in the Construction of Reality

A useful tool for examining constructs is the Thomas Theorem, based on William Isaac Thomas' pronouncement that "If men define situations are real, they are real in consequences" (cited in Denzin, 1992, p. 38). By identifying incidents whereby the participants believe their situation is real and therefore act accordingly, may be useful for determining the taken-for-granted perceptions that they have about their ethnic identity. To understand how such meanings are formed, and the ensuing realities constructed, it is necessary to ascertain the intentions of the actors to share their experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Flick, 2006). In this study, to gain insight into why the participants share specific experiences with the researcher, it is necessary to extract the similarities and the possible contradictions within individuals'

narratives, highlighting emotionally impactful experiences while identifying deeply embedded constructs.

As social constructivism requires an examination of an individual's social conventions, and their perception and knowledge in everyday life (Flick, 2006), it is necessary to 'explicate' or 'unfold' (Potter, 2006) the processes by which the Māori adoptee accounts for the world in which they live. Potter (2006) states explicatory research does not aim to fit phenomena into an existing theoretical framework, but focuses on the 'residue of the unexplained' or the elements of a complex situation which do not fit the facts. Described as the 'abductive logic of enquiry', this type of research looks for the anomalies, inconsistencies and incongruities in what is being examined. Potter states the method for doing this is juxtaposition.

By explicating the anomalies, inconsistencies and incongruities of the participants' personal perceptions (meanings) of certain social experiences, the aim of this research is to find the surprising differences or similarities amongst the cohort. The intention is to develop hypotheses that might provide insight into how this select group of Māori negotiate and construct their ethnic identity and socio-cultural reality.

Ideologising Influences on Human Thought

Ideologies also play a role in the construction of identity. Mannheim defines ideologies as "ideas serving as weapons for social interests" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 21). Such a concept suggests that; "no human thought [with the exception of mathematics and the natural sciences] is immune to the ideologizing influences of its social context" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 21). Through language and interactional practices, ideology consists of myths, beliefs, desires and ideas people have about the way things are and should be (Denzin, 1992). Ideology is also the "imaginary relations of individuals to the real relations in which they 'live' and which govern their existence" (Denzin, 1992, p. 26).

The significance of this understanding of ideology to the focus of this research is its role as a force, which has the potential to produce a shared perception of reality among Māori adoptees. In this study, the wider social context of Māori adoptees is investigated to explicate the collective perceptions of Māori identity depicted in day-to-day conversations, in the media, and in the adoptees' environment. Ideologising

influences inherent to New Zealand adoption laws and identity politics are also examined to determine the correlation between society's expectations pertaining to Māori identity and the Māori adoptees perception of themselves in relation to the diverse notions of Māori identity.

Summary

The essential aspects of social constructivism include the description and acquisition of knowledge and how through subjective interpretations knowledge becomes part of an individual's objective reality, which result in constructs. Whether the Māori adoptees in this research are aware or unaware of their constructs and how they have been formed is just as relevant to this study as the process by which such realities are constructed.

Social constructivism informs this research because of the premise that behind the Māori adoptees' constructed schemas are their intentions for choosing to share certain schema. One possible motivation explored at various points is that unconsciously the Māori adoptee may be conveying what they view as acceptable ideology by associating with certain identities and discarding others.

Relevant to this discussion is Wright-Mills (2000) notion of the 'sociological imagination', whereby individuals possess the ability to "grasp the history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (p. 6). The persuasiveness of the participants' sociological imagination on how they chose to ethnically identify is applicable to this research. The societal contexts considered are New Zealand's historical adoption practices and the cultural and social structuring of Māori and Pākehā identities. Understanding how such societal influences are reinforced through everyday experiences hopes to add insight into their impact on the Māori adoptees understandings of the self and their ethnic identity. For example, has the increased acceptance of Māoritanga in New Zealand society generally, due to the 'Māori renaissance' and its associated resources, contributed to a change in cultural identification, whereby adoptees perhaps recognise the value of identifying as Māori, but for various reasons may feel alienated about adopting this identity? Alternatively, has the high status given to 'being Māori' created a longing for cultural-belonging or a dilemma for the Māori adoptee who is perhaps more aware of their unique situation?

While social constructivism provides a basis for considering how knowledge and reality is constructed for groups and individuals, what it does not always extend to is an in-depth consideration of the specific social processes that contribute to the meanings that individuals and groups make of the world. Social constructivism also does not suggest that individuals may have control over their social worlds (Rohall et al., 2007). The theory therefore has its benefits as a tool for the analysis of Māori adoptees' interpretations, but also has some limitations. Therefore, it is necessary to consider another (related) body of theory – symbolic interactionism – in order to enable additional perspectives to be obtained on the issues affecting the identity choices of Māori adoptees.

2.2 Symbolic Interactionism

To understand how participants in this study construe their social world requires exploring the internalised meanings they demonstrate in dialogue and that contribute to the formation of their identity. To assist with such a process the methods and principles underlying symbolic interactionism are useful to consider. This theory proposes that through an interpretive process, meanings arise and are negotiated through social interactions among individuals, and this in turn guides behaviour (Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975).

The Basic Postulates – The Merger of the Self and the Social

Blumer coined the phrase 'symbolic interactionism' in 1938 (Flick, 2006), based on the notion that humans have a symbol-producing capacity that enables them to "produce a history, a culture and an intricate web of communication" (Plummer, 1997, p. 21). These symbols (such as language) provide meaning to objects and it is this attribution and interpretation of meanings that make us human (Cohen et al., 2007).

Blumer's key contribution to symbolic interactionism was his focus on the interactions among individuals as opposed to the role played by societal structures, suggesting that society is a reflection of shared meanings, based on peoples thoughts and feelings or 'minded activity' (Rohall et al., 2007). It is this reconstruction of subjective viewpoints that becomes the instrument for analysing social worlds (Flick, 2006). Consideration must also be given to the multiple meanings and truths that

emerge from such subjectivity and this requires inspecting the multiple worlds from which such meanings and truths arise.

Symbolic interactionists examine the empirical world and how the 'social other' impinges upon the individual (Plummer, 1997). The 'symbolic interaction' or the merger of the self and the social interaction states Blumer (cited in Denzin, 1992) is the chief means "by which human beings are able to form social or joint acts" (p. 25) and these social or joint acts constitute society.

During social interactions 'intersubjectivity' occurs, which is described as "the shared knowledge that exists between two persons regarding one another's conscious mental states... established through shared emotional experiences which are temporally constituted" (Denzin, 1992, p. 20). As meanings are interpreted, influenced and shared through social interactions and an individual's value system (Rohall et al., 2007), the meanings shift, emerge and sometimes become ambiguous (Plummer, 1997). The result is a collection of shared meanings derived from interaction and internal dialogues. This interaction order is shaped by a variety of processes, including how the individual negotiates their own self-meanings or personal identity (Denzin, 1992).

Within this setting, there can be epiphanies, which "rupture routines and lives and provoke radical redefinitions of the self" (Denzin, 1992, p. 26). Identifying such epiphanies within the research participants' narratives is achieved by considering experiences that the participants consider salient or memorable, and situations they believe demonstrate emotional disorder. So in this instance, it is not just the content of the experience but also the re-telling of the experience, which will be considered.

A symbolic interactionist's view is pragmatic focusing on everyday life and suggesting truths are produced through language (Plummer, 1997). They are preoccupied with the daily, ritual and enforced performances of stigmatized identities (race and gender) and speak to the marginalized (Denzin, 1992). In this study, an assumption explored is that the Māori adoptee is stigmatised as they do not meet the 'traditional' (sometimes expected) norms used to define Māori identity, such as whakapapa and te reo and tikanga Māori knowledge.

Interactionists are also interested in how constructs inherited from the past constrain identity, how situated versions of society are produced, and how an individual's motives can explain past behaviour and predict future behaviour (Denzin, 1992). Such a perspective is useful for considering whether the Māori adoptee perceives they feel powerless, and a silent (assimilated) victim of someone else's social construction (i.e. being a Māori adoptee), or whether they believe they are an active agent, able and empowered to shape their own constructs of identity.

Symbolic interactionists examine “the actual, lived, emotional experiences of interacting humans” (Denzin, 1992, p. 23) from the research participant's perspective of reality (Flick, 2006). In this research, the major source used to inform the discussions emerge directly from the source themselves – the Māori adoptee. How the adoptees' perceptions and emotional interpretations of their lived experience as a transracial adoptee or as a Māori person raised in a Pākehā home guides their behaviour, self-perceptions and identity performance, are some of the focal points of this thesis.

Two Schools of Thought

The Chicago school and Indiana/Iowa schools of thought inherent in symbolic interactionism differ on how best to measure and understand the self, but share the intellectual perspective that humans construct their realities through social interactions (Meltzer et al., 1975; Rohall et al., 2007). It should also be noted that within the schools themselves and within interactionism's history there are also divergent thoughts and tenures (Denzin, 1992).

The Chicago View

The Chicago interactionist tradition which began in the 1930s (Denzin, 1992), and to which Blumer, Mead and Thomas belong, emphasises the changeability of social reality and the difficulty in quantifying and predicting future behaviour (Rohall et al., 2007). This “emergent social nature of human nature and the self” (Plummer, 1997, p. 21) is the dilemma that interactionists face, which is how to merge an interpretive subjective study of human experience with an objective science of human conduct (Denzin, 1992). The best approach, states Rohall et al., (2007), is for symbolic interactionists to understand the social processes of a situation and deduce some

general rules about how a group or individuals develop perceptions about themselves and how their views are subject to change.

Assessing the pace at which participant's perceptions of the self changed is one of the dimensions explored throughout this thesis, which considers whether transformations of the individuals' personal constructs of identity are visible, desired or even possible. Attention is given to the strategies and social processes, for example significant relationships and educational choices that lead to such change.

In inspecting the inner world of an individual it is also necessary to see the self, which interacts in the symbolic interaction as a 'multilayered phenomenon' (Denzin, 1992, p. 26). These multiple layers of the self consist of the phenomenological, interactional, linguistic, material, ideological and self as desire, and are enacted in the interaction order and become part of the biography of the individual (Denzin, 1992). These views are relevant as it enables an exploration of the spontaneous and unrestrained aspect of the Māori adoptee self and the generalised version of the Māori adoptee's self as influenced by others. Such views of the self consider how the adoptee reacts and negotiates their identity depending on what they are thinking, feeling, desiring, perceiving, presenting or imagining during an interaction order.

The Iowa and Indiana View

In the late 1940s the idea of 'structural symbolic interactionism' emerged (Rohall et al., 2007). This approach suggests that social reality can be quantified and can be studied scientifically and empirically, as an individual's social reality, while fluid, once an interpretation has been made, does not change that quickly (Rohall et al., 2007). As a means of scientifically assessing this very slowly changing notion of the self, Kuhn and McPartland designed the Twenty Statement Test known as; 'Who am I?' to identify and measure self-attributes (cited in Meltzer et al., 1975). Understanding the self in this way provides another perspective to consider, when analysing how the Māori adoptee self-categorise the different elements of their ethnic identity.

Emergent Theories – Dramaturgy and the Identity Performance

Since its inception, a variety of off shoots of symbolic interactionism have emerged. Amongst them is 'dramaturgy' (Meltzer et al., 1975; Denzin, 1992). Goffman's

notion of dramaturgical sociology is that it involves “the creation, maintenance, and destruction of common understandings of reality by people working individually and collectively to present a shared and unified image of that reality” (cited in Kivisto & Pittman, 2008, p. 272). Dramaturgy is useful for examining the context of a symbolic interaction. Within this perspective is ‘Impression Management’, which refers to the way individuals present themselves to others and control their social interactions (Flecha et al., 2003). These impressions may occur (convincingly or unconvincingly) whether the individual believes them or not, and it is the discrepancy that is of interest (Meltzer et al., 1975; Lawler, 2008). Impression management is advantageous for understanding how the Māori adoptees may modify their self-impressions in their social interactions and as a result create a sense of a constantly shifting identity. This element is explored in Chapter five, which considers the performative function of identity, the adoptee’s degree of self-efficacy, and if they believe there is a discrepancy between how they think they are perceived and how they would like to be seen.

As the main motivation for this research is to determine how the Māori adoptee ethnically identifies it is useful to consider what is meant by ‘identity’. A dramaturgy perspective describes identity as something that is not innate, but a fluid construction influenced by the social world and is a result of an individual’s identity performance (Lawler, 2008). Lawler (2008) adds identities are “unstable, inessential and in need of explanation” (p. 119). Identities are also “lived out relationally and collectively and must conform to social rules” (p. 143). Lawler states that as a concept identity is difficult to define, it is multiple and paradoxical in nature and is reflected through constantly changing narratives.

In explaining Goffman’s argument about identity, Lawler (2008) makes a distinction between ‘being an identity’ (authentic) and ‘doing an identity’ (performing), with the first being an expression of who we are and the latter being a false expression. During interactions Lawler adds we rely on the self to be validated by others and if an individual appears ‘differently’ (semblance) from their being or who they really are (substance) they may be perceived as ‘inauthentic’. Goffman also describes how the self is performed in ‘back stage’ and ‘front stage’ regions and that it is not the roles or performances that mask the ‘true person’, but rather it is these that make us persons.

In the frontstage we are aware of our audience and can act accordingly, but in the backstage region (when alone) we can take off the mask (Lawler, 2008). This distinction is important for analysing whether the Māori adoptees perceive their ascribed identities mismatches their ideal identity.

In exploring the self, Goffman's view is that "the 'deep within us' can itself be seen as constituted through the performances all of us consciously or unconsciously enact every day" (Lawler, 2008, p. 121). The purpose of an interaction order then is to provide "an act of social worship and social binding, but when someone acts or performs outside the expected social norms nervousness, horror or embarrassment can occur" (p. 111). Lawler (2008) adds that "the question, then, is not 'who we are really', but how we achieve identity, under what constraints and in what contexts" (p. 104).

Summary

To understand the internal dialogue about identity embedded in the Māori adoptee's narratives requires examining the origins of their subjective interpretations. A symbolic interactionist approach provides a means to achieve this goal, by analysing the influence of the self and the social other on the Māori adoptees truths.

The impact of the social world on perception will also be applied to this research by looking at how Māori adoptees shift their identities dependent on their audience. This requires considering how the Māori adoptee projects their self-image, if this is done positively or negatively and their motivation behind their self-portrayals. In answering such questions dramaturgical sociology is useful for explaining how the Māori adoptee manages and forms their impressions as they move between environments and negotiate (or navigate) their preferred identity for their intended audience.

In this thesis, understanding the 'deep within' the Māori adoptee also requires examining the performing of identity and the social binds that occur in the interaction orders. To achieve this latter goal, it is useful to incorporate another theoretical approach: Social Identity Theory.

2.3 The Social Identity Approach

To understand human experience requires an appreciation for the different notions of the self. Mead's perspectives of the 'self' as the subject and the object (the Me and the I) and his volume *Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist* has been particularly influential to modern sociological thought (Flecha et al., 2003). Mead argues that an individual's attitudes, personal thoughts and inner experience emerge from group membership (Pampel, 2000). The implication for researchers then is to study external social behaviour in order to understand internal thoughts and attitudes (Pampel, 2000). Applying Mead's notions of the self to this study requires examining how the Māori adoptee accepts or rejects a group's opinion and how their internal assumptions affect their sense of self.

Hegel, Marx, Freud and Mead were among the first social theorists to recognise the inability of the self to exist independent of the social domain (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2003). Building on these thoughts, Tajfel devised 'Social Identity Theory' (Smith, Bond & Kagitcibasi, 2006). This theory is used to understand the relationship between individuals and their social worlds (Moloney & Walker, 2007), and reflects Stryker's notion that the level of commitment to an identity is dependent on the "strength of one's relationship to others, while in a particular role identity" (Burke & Reitzes, 1991, p. 241). Identity theory extends symbolic interactionism principles and is a useful theoretical approach for examining how the Māori adoptee's social world influences their level of commitment to their ethnicity.

The Components

The three components of social identity theory are 'categorisation', 'identification', and 'social comparison' (Cardwell, 2000). Overall, the theory proposes that individuals position themselves within an 'in-group' or an 'out-group', and through interactions a social identity emerges; this then directs their thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Moloney et al., 2007). Social identity theorists explore "how people define themselves with respect to cultural contents, relations with others, and pursuing the group's goals" (Moloney et al., 2007, p. 221).

Stets and Burke (2000) state that when an individual socially identifies or sees the self as an embodiment of the in-group, a transformation of identity or 'depersonalization' occurs, and through a self-verification process the individual conforms to the role,

norms and behaviours required of that group. To maintain a positive self-concept individuals make social comparisons with others within their group or compare their in-group with out-groups (Cardwell, 2000). Without such identification and verification the identity has no salience or effect (Stets & Burke, 2000).

While there may be multiple reasons why people identify with a social group, such as the need to feel valuable, worthy, competent, or effective; identification with a social identity also requires acceptance by that group as a member (Stets & Burke, 2000). Once acceptance occurs, in-group favouritism may be given to members.

The implications of social identity theory on this research is it is a useful method for determining how the Māori adoptee perceives they are accepted or rejected by in- and out-group members, how they verify their positioning, and how they maintain a positive self-concept in interactions.

Understanding the value placed on an experience can be explored in relation to the adoptee's self-conception. A theoretical area that can help with this goal has been devised by Gecas (cited in Rohall et al., 2007), who states that individuals are motivated by the need to maintain a sense of self and a positive image, and that this self-esteem affects everyday behaviour and future goals. Cooley's (cited in Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983) view is that our self-conceptions are reflections of how we respond and evaluate others. This 'Looking-Glass Self' means that significant others act as mirrors reflecting images of the self (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). In adoption literature (Rockel & Ryburn, 1988; Else, 1991; Verrier, 1993; Griffith, K.C., 1997) issues of self-esteem and self-conception are central to the adoptee's understanding of how they self-evaluate and perceive others' evaluations of themselves. For the Māori adoptee they must also deal emotionally and socially with the assumptions others hold about their ethnicity.

If as Reicher (cited in Moloney et al., 2007) states social categories are 'fluid', insofar as meanings and boundaries may shift, then it is necessary to analyse Māori adoptees' views to determine which social identities they consider static or in contrast malleable. A possible reason for a static social category existing is that it serves a particular purpose. For instance Alcott and Mendieta (2003) suggest that there are some modern social identities that hold great power such as race, class, nationality and sexuality.

Relevant to this thesis is the ‘high-status’ or salience given to the ‘traditional’ Māori social identity defined by whakapapa and te reo and tikanga Māori connection. Explored is the assumption that the Māori adoptee positioning, as a sub-type of the Māori social identity, challenges the expected social norms of the high-status Māori identity as they share the traits of both in-group and out-group members (Māori and Pākehā).

The Social Identities of the Māori Adoptee

As the social identity approach assumes people are motivated to achieve a positive social identity, it is worth considering the definitions of some of the social identities salient to the Māori adoptee and the complexities of terminology such as culture, ethnicity, Māori adoptee, and Māori.

Social identity theory highlights the diversity and the shifting face of ‘the social’. In the context of this research, the social is considered pivotal in the construction of identity and is a key theme in Chapter two. Applying social identity theory to this research requires examining how Māori adoptees subjectively interpret their social interactions and the different influential groups that constitute their social world. The following section situates these social categories in the context of this research and describes some of the challenges that such definitions of identity hold.

Cultural and Ethnic Identity

Before defining some of the diverse social identities of the Māori adoptee, it is worth considering what is meant by the concepts ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’. The New Zealand Ministry for Social Development currently defines culture as:

Culture refers to the customs, practices, languages, values and worldviews that define social groups such as those based on nationality, ethnicity, region or common interests. Cultural identity is important for people’s sense of self and how they relate to others. A strong cultural identity can contribute to people’s overall wellbeing (Ministry for Social Development, 2010, p. 84).

The word culture as a concept has created some debate. The *New Zealand Framework for Cultural Statistics 1995* states that there is no single concept or definition for the word culture, but adds that popular concepts of culture relate to the way in which people affirm their identity and achieve a sense of belonging through the sharing of

common objects, behaviours and knowledge (Statistics New Zealand & The Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1995). Herskovits (cited in Smith et al., 2006) defines culture as ‘man-made’, which includes physical artefacts and social systems. Rohmer (cited in Smith et al., 2006) understands culture as “a shared way in which individuals interpret what goes around them” (p. 30).

Taking into consideration these multiple definitions of culture, it might be problematic to presume that there is a shared Māori adoptee culture or a single universally agreed-on construct of New Zealand society and culture in this period. Consideration is therefore given at the appropriate junctures in this thesis to cultural boundaries, as people belong to diverse cultural groups (e.g. socio-economic, ethnic, family, employment, and other categories). How these factors align with the Māori adoptees’ diverse identities and the varied nuances of their perceptions of themselves in these multiple settings is therefore a particularly intricate issue.

A similar term to culture that needs some clarification is ‘ethnic identity’. In New Zealand the official definition and measurement of ethnicity has changed from a race-based definition and measurement to one reflecting cultural affiliation and self-identification (Statistics New Zealand, October 2009). Currently the official statistical definition of an ethnic group is based on ‘cultural affiliation’ whereby ethnic groups have some or all of the following characteristics:

...a common proper name; one or more elements of common culture, such as religion, customs or language; a unique community of interests, feelings and actions; a shared sense of common origins or ancestry; a common geographic origin (cited in Statistics New Zealand, October 2009)

Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder (2001) add that ethnic identity is distinguishable from an individual’s ‘ascribed ethnic identity’. Allan (cited in Callister, 2004) argues that ethnicity is a culturally constructed concept and that there are “various factors that influence the way in which individuals classify their ethnicity, one of which can be nationality” (p. 2). If ethnicity and culture are constructed concepts, then it is necessary to discuss some of the constructs pertinent to the Māori adoptee and how these influence their ethnic identity choices. In the interests of this thesis, the terms culture and ethnicity share overlapping traits. However, in this work,

ethnic identity will primarily be used as a measure that also encompasses cultural affiliation.

Māori Adoptee Identity

The term ‘Māori adoptee’ could be considered an abstract concept to the extent that it does not exist in the physical realm, except in the people that represent the concept. Like the words ‘Māori’ or ‘adoptee’, multiple identities (genetic, ethnic, family, gender) exist within this identity. In this thesis, this concept is used to describe those who self-identify as part-Māori, were raised from birth in a non-Māori environment within a closed-stranger adoption, and were born between the mid-1950s and late 1970s. It is important to emphasise that it is not a unified concept constructed to homogenise a certain group. Instead, consideration is given to the diverse representations that exist within this phenomenon.

One way to look at the Māori adoptee identity is to view it as a sub-type of Māori, non-Māori, adoptee, family, and whānau identity. Māori adoptees may be members of all or some of these social categories at any given time and must best learn how to navigate them. If such worlds are separated, it is assumed navigating an identity is easier as conflicting performances of identity are not required. However, when opposing social identities collide, it is assumed that challenges will arise. It is these assumptions that this research explores, especially the effect of such collisions on the Māori adoptee’s sense of self and wellbeing, and on their social identity choices.

Māori Social Identities

Belonging to a social group defined by ethnicity is a challenge for the Māori adoptee when the identity of this social group is ambiguous, emergent, and constantly shifting. This point is illustrated in McIntosh’s (2005) definitions of ‘traditional’, ‘forced’ and ‘fluid’ Māori identities. The traditional identity is fixed and relates to Māori who can identify their genealogy, and who are strongly connected to their language and culture and can act accordingly. The forced identity is one based on the perceptions of the outsider group, for example stereotypes of Māori perpetuated through mainstream media. The fluid identity explores cultural markers such as language, custom and place “reconfiguring them in a way that gives both voice and currency to a person’s social environment” (p. 46). This fluid identity challenges notions of authenticity and “lays out new forms of claim making” (p. 46). McIntosh’s view is that “to be Māori is

to be part of a collective, but heterogeneous identity, one that is enduring, but ever in a state of flux” (p. 39). Houkamau and Sibley (2010) observe that Durie and Williams also recognise Māori cultural heterogeneity. These researchers categorise Māori into three subgroups: those who are ‘encultured or traditional’ and who have whakapapa and/or te reo and tikanga Māori knowledge; those who ‘urban and bicultural’ (Māori and Pākehā); and those who are ‘unconnected or marginalised’ and are unable to relate to Māori or Pākehā. In this thesis, these notions of Māori identity are explored for their ideologising influence on the Māori adoptee’s perception of their ethnic identity.

In broader New Zealand debates about identity, Māori and Pākehā are two social identities, which historically are often contrasted, one against the other. Liu, Wilson, McClure, and Higgins (1999) add that “history can be used as a unifying device for social identity and it can be used as a divisive lever” (p. 1022). Meredith’s (1998) approach to this theme is that bi-cultural politics in New Zealand has placed Māori and Pākehā identities in ‘us’ and ‘them’ categories, and ignores the diverse realities of Māori/Pākehā relations. Such debates are pertinent to the Māori adoptee who may perceive that they straddle both Māori and Pākehā worlds. These discussions are grounded in social identity theory, whereby group members attempt to “make their in-group(s) distinctive from and, wherever possible, better than the out-group” (Brown, 2000, p. 757). For the Māori adoptee, the question explored within this study is whether they share similar traits or are attracted to Māori or Pākehā or elements of both groups. This relates to the key research question, which asks how Māori adoptees affiliate with their Māori ethnicity?

As Brown (2000) notes, members of low-status groups may exhibit several ‘identity-protecting’ responses, such as dis-identifying, redefining and reconstructing the relevant comparison dimensions or contesting the dominant group’s right to its’ superior status position. Determining how the Māori adoptee affiliates with these intergroups defined by ethnic identity, and how they exhibit identity-protecting responses is examined in this thesis.

Bearing in mind that identity is contestable, diverse, and transverses boundaries, the previously discussed notions of Māori identity may be useful for determining how Māori adoptees self-categorise themselves in relation to other Māori. For example, do

they feel validated, invalidated, threatened or encouraged when mediating their ethnic identity? The notion of fluid identity is applied in this thesis to determine where the Māori adoptee stands and to challenge the socially constructed ‘taken for granted truths’ and forced identities used to categorise Māori. Particularly relevant to this discussion are theories associated with ethnic stereotyping (Spears, Oakes, Ellemers & Haslam, 1997).

The Adoptive Family/Whānau Identity

The family – as the first social group within which a person belongs – may guide an individual’s moral and social norms of behaviour and can influence their attitudes, beliefs and perspectives of the world. Lawler (2008) states that families are an important means of transmitting material and cultural privilege and are “at the heart of understandings of identity, both through the ‘doing’ of family relationships, and through understandings of kin groups and one’s place within them” (p. 37). A way family members share commonality is through kinship ties, common ancestors or biological and genetic similarities. These inherited and genetic kinship identities are assumed to be integral to ‘who we are’ and for many people are ‘taken-for-granted givens’.

In the case of the Māori adoptee, discussions about bloodline and the social construction of fictitious (adoptive) kinship identity holds particular resonance. Māori adoptees may differ from their adoptive family in physical likeness, personality characteristics, temperament, interests and intelligence. Although some of these family traits may or may not be socially constructed, as opposed to genetically inherited, it is worth considering them.

Relevant to the discussions about family is the absence of family. As mentioned a major criticism of the closed stranger Adoption Act 1955 is that it disconnected Māori children from their whānau (Department of Social Welfare, 1986; Bradley, 1997; Else, 1997; Pitama, 1997; Griffith, K.C., 1997). For Māori, whānau connection and whakapapa knowledge is seen as integral to their physical, social and spiritual wellbeing (Department of Social Welfare, 1986). Durie (2003) adds that whakapapa connections enable the development of language skills, provides access to tribal cultural knowledge and tikanga practices and are integral to the formation of identity.

Closed adoptions promoted the view that adoptees assume the identity of their adoptive families as if ‘born to them’ (Griffith, K.C., 1997); this led to practices and policies that created adoptive families as indistinguishable from birth families. In this study the Māori adoptees’ comments are analysed to determine if their embracing of the adoptive family identity has had a bearing on their commitment to their Māori social identity. An analysis is also undertaken into the influence of reunions with birth mothers and birth whānau on the adoptee’s ethnic identity constructs. In the absence of such connections, this research considers if there is a correlation with the Māori adoptees interpretation of their Māori social identity.

Kirk (cited in Iwanek, 1997) offers particular perspectives of the issues pertaining to kinship and adoption, suggesting adoption was a ‘creative invention’ based on unproven beliefs, fears and prejudice about ex-nuptial births. Discrediting the environmental supremacy philosophies of adoption practice and legislation, Kirk found ‘denial of difference’ between an adoptee and their adoptive family creates “dysfunctional family relationships, poor communication and distancing” (Iwanek, 1997, p. 66).

A significant factor associated with the way in which family upbringing may influence identity choices is how adoptive families viewed the Māori adoptee’s ethnic identity. One of the arguments against transracial adoption is that adoptive parents may not be able to adequately cater for their adopted child’s cultural needs or prepare them against racism (Soon Huh & Reid, 2000). Furthermore, parents themselves may hold racist beliefs about their adopted child’s culture or show disinterest and as a result the transracial adoptee’s sense of ethnic identity may become confused or conflicted. Other researchers advocate that the transracial adoptive family experience does not adversely affect the adoptee (Griffith & Bergeron, 2006). In this study, the Māori adoptees are asked for their perception of their adoptive parents’ attitudes towards Māori and whether their parents encouraged them to participate in Māori cultural activities or learn te reo Māori.

Friends and Identity

The second social group studied for its influence on the Māori adoptees’ perceptions of their ethnicity is the friendship network. Erickson (cited in Santrock & Bartlett, 1986) proposes that during adolescence, significant shifts in identity formation occur,

whereby independence and autonomy from parents may be desired. In this research the influence of the Māori adoptees' adolescence friendships, significant relationships and occupational choices are of particular interest. Social identity theory is used to identify possible motivators that resulted in the Māori adoptees alliance with particular social identities, and their avoidance of others.

Summary

The importance of social identity theory in this thesis is that it opens up an avenue to explore the extent to which the Māori adoptees interviewed for this research had their identity forged by the expectations of those in their immediate circle of contacts (friends and relatives) and/or more generally by society. This, in turn, demands some consideration of the changes and evolution in New Zealand society and culture in the decades since the 1950s.

Social identity theory provides an approach to better understand how the Māori adoptees transform their identity through the process of depersonalisation and the embracing of a collective social identity. Of particular interest is; how the Māori adoptees verify their position within their social groups and how this group identification affects their personal identity and their sense of self as an embodiment of the group. This perspective can inform questions such as: what is the social interest invested in their decisions and what self-verifications does the Māori adoptee exhibit when choosing certain social identities over others?

Several key principles are drawn on to help identify possible reasons why the Māori adoptee currently chooses interactions with certain social groups and avoids others. Among those investigated are issues of loyalty, belonging and gratefulness. For example does the adoptee believe their relationship with their adoptive family matter more than their search for biological identity and therefore forsake their search for their biological identity? And, do their reflected appraisals or perceptions of how others view them affect how they think, feel and act about their Māori identity? Such hypotheses will be assessed in the context of the 'proximity principle', whereby the views of people close to you matter more than those more distantly connected (Smith et al., 2006).

Attention is given to the Māori adoptees' social relationships to their primary groups (usually their families) and secondary groups (peers). For example, has a negative interaction with a non-Māori or Māori group or individual influenced their decision to embrace or deny or participate or not participate in the non-Māori or Māori world? How does the Māori adoptee deal with racism and other peoples' assumptions about their ethnicity? What does the Māori adoptee do when confronted by conflicting social norms while moving between their social worlds? And does a negative or positive perception of a certain experience result in the embracing or dismissal of a personal construct?

To answer such questions, it is necessary to look beyond the experience and a sociological perspective, and examine more closely how positive and negative personal meanings are constructed. Elements of psychology can assist in this area.

2.4 A Psychological Perspective

In the preceding sections of this chapter, the theories explored relate primarily to the influence of the social world on the shaping of perceptions and meanings. The final theoretical perspective to be discussed takes a slightly different direction by considering the psychological element that might influence Māori adoptees understanding of the self. The reason for this diversion is to counteract some of the deficiencies foisted upon social theoretical approaches. For instance Gecas and Schwalbe (1983) state symbolic interactionists focus upon purely interpersonal social psychology neglecting "transituational characteristics of the self" (p. 78). Furthermore, interactionists potentially over emphasise the social dimensions in the formation of perceptions and meaning and diminish the role of the self as an autonomous subject. The problem with the sole focus on the social dimension, according to Gecas and Schwalbe, is that proponents of interactionism neglect the other processes inherent in self-conception formation, such as self-evaluation.

While social theory might explain some of the extrinsic motivations, an exploration of the self, through psychology, may enable insight into the intrinsic motivators that result in the constitution of Māori adoptee identity. Psychology provides an avenue to look beyond the 'Looking-Glass Self' and to explore the "efficacious actions of the autonomous individual" (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983, p. 79). This perspective may also

enable a more in-depth analysis of the impact of the subconscious and the depth of the emotional element contributing to the behaviour of the research participants by considering other factors that have contributed to Māori adoptee identity commitment. The psychological perspective features primarily in Chapter four of this thesis, which considers how emotions direct the adoptees constructs and understanding of the self.

The Primal Wound

In Chapter four (Navigating Emotion) the perception of the reunion experience is discussed to determine if there is a correlation with the level of commitment the adoptee gives to their Māori social identity. Themes relating to this are drawn from Verrier (1993), an American clinical psychologist who discusses the adoptee's sense of self in her book *The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child*. The foundation of her argument is that adoptees have a "primal, mysterious, and everlasting" connection with their biological mother. Adoption involves separation, which creates a wound within the adoptee and this results in an - 'aching sense of loss' (pp. 26-27). A consequence of this loss may be that the adoptee may develop a sense of mistrust, disconnection or feel their sense of self has been compromised. Understanding if the Māori adoptees sense of self has been affected by their separation from their birth mother, provides another perspective of the view that the whakapapa and whānau connection is integral to being Māori and that adoptive kinship identity can successfully replace birth kinship identity.

Ideal and False Selves

In considering the different identities of the self, Verrier refers to the 'ideal state of the self', which she describes as a state of feelings of "rightness, well-being and wholeness" (p. 32), whereby security and a strong sense of self-esteem can be developed. Verrier adds that a child's separation from his or her mother, as in the case of adoption, can instead result in the construction of a 'false self', which can produce defensive behaviours, such as being overly compliant or acting out to mask their mistrust or fear of abandonment. Humanistic theorist Carl Rogers (cited in Santrock, 2007) concurs with Verrier arguing that a strong discrepancy between one's actual self and one's ideal self is a sign of maladjustment. Verrier also suggests that when an adoptee's denied or repressed feelings surface, there is often a need to search for the

birth mother or a longing to find the lost self. Verrier adds that while a social persona is evident in most people, it is exaggerated in the adoptee.

Verrier's views about the effect of adoption on ego-development raises some interesting points when applied to this research, and are particularly pertinent to the discussions about identity. If, for example, the Māori adoptee continues to exaggerate their false self or yearn for their ideal self, then how is this desire demonstrated in their other identities and aspects of their self, including their ethnic identity? For example, what influence does this false and ideal self have on the Māori adoptees when socially interacting with Māori and Pākehā? This psychological view provides another perspective to the dramaturgical approach by suggesting that it is not the role of performance of an identity that may create a sense of falseness, but rather it is the disruption to ego-development during infancy that results in certain behaviours.

A related question is: Can an adoptee reclaim their ideal self or original self? For instance, if a reunion with a birth mother is possible, there is no guarantee that there will be a restoration of the ideal self as a significant step in the ego development of the child (who is now an adult) has been missed. How does an adult progress through a stage of human development that is meant for an infant? Understanding the depth of the connection between the adoptee and their birth parent/s (if one exists) is outside the scope of this thesis and difficult to define, as birth parents were not included in this research. However, these are important elements to be considered, as one aim of this research is to analyse how the Māori adoptee ethnically identifies. Through establishing how the Māori adoptee views their sense of self and the adoptive experience, may provide a wider context within which to analyse their perceptions of their ethnicity.

Measuring Identity and Psychology

Phinney and Chavira (1992) note that research on ego identity reveals a strong correlation between higher stages of ego identity and positive psychological adjustment; however research on ethnic identity and adjustment is less conclusive. This study explores whether there is a correlation between achieved ethnic identity and psychological adjustment. To achieve this goal it is first necessary to consider how best to measure an individual's perception of their ethnic identity.

Marcia (cited in Santrock & Bartlett, 1986) suggests individuals form 'identity statuses' based on their commitment to an identity. These identity statuses include 'identity diffused', which is when an identity is yet to be explored; 'identity foreclosure' requires premature identity commitment without full exploration; 'identity moratorium' is an active stage of identity exploration, that involves experiencing a crisis or vague commitment; and the final status is 'identity achievement' where a high-degree of commitment to an identity is demonstrated. Expanding on these notions Phinney's (1993) three-stage model of ethnic identity development in adolescence highlighted a series of stages involving processes. At the initial stage one (unexamined), individuals may be ambivalent, neutral or uninterested in their ethnicity. During the transitional stage two (identity search), feelings of positivity or hostility may occur as an individual's awareness of their ethnicity increases. At the final stage three (identity achievement), individuals demonstrate feelings of pride and acceptance towards their ethnicity (Phinney, 1996). To measure how diverse ethnic groups explore and commit to their ethnicity Phinney developed the multigroup ethnic identity measure (MEIM) (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

From a New Zealand perspective, useful are the notions of 'secure identity', 'positive identity', 'notional identity' and 'compromised identity' (Cunningham, Stevenson & Tassell, 2005, p. 38), which are based on combined scores that measure Māori cultural identity across a range of factors. These notions of identity were used in the longitudinal Māori household survey *Best Outcomes for Māori – Te Hoe Nuku Roa*, which was administered to determine how correlating cultural, economic and personal factors affected Māori households (Durie, Cunningham, Fitzgerald, Stevenson & Ngata, 2004). Used in this survey was Durie's (1995) *Te Hoe Nuku Roa Framework*, which consists of four interacting axes – "paihere tangata (human relationships), te ao Māori (Māori culture and identity), ngā āhuatanga noho-ā-tangata (socio-economic circumstances), ngā whakanekeneketanga (change over time)" (p. 466). Ngā waitohu (indicators) are used to describe the four axes according to: "levels of choice, access, participation, satisfaction, information and knowledge and aspirations" (p. 466). Durie states that this framework was based on assumptions that recognise Māori as a diverse group who are dynamically changing, who have multiple affiliations and ways to self-identify. These assumptions align with the argument inherent in this study that Māori are not a homogenous group. Another area of applicability is Durie's observation that

some Māori reject the notion that they are ‘less Māori’, because they do not subscribe to classical constructs (e.g. traditional cultural knowledge or iwi affiliation).

Another New Zealand identity measure providing a subjective perspective is Houkamau and Sibley’s (2010) *Multi-dimensional model of Māori identity and cultural engagement (MMM-ICE)*. MMM-ICE is an exploratory model and is inclusive of those who not only identify as Māori through ancestry, but also those who self-identify. This hierarchically organised self-report (Likert-type) instrument is designed to assess dimensions of identity and cultural engagement in Maori populations. From a psychological and epistemological perspective MMM-ICE provides a means to consider Māori who are not encultured. It incorporates in its analysis participants’ subjective feelings towards their group allegiances, socio-political consciousness, cultural efficacy, spirituality, interdependent self-concept, and their beliefs about their authenticity as a Māori person. Models such as the MMM-ICE encompass elements or areas of enquiry that are applicable to this qualitative research. This model is helpful for analysing how Māori adoptees subjectively interpret their ethnic identity and the origin of such perceptions.

The various issues and ways to measure ethnic identity that have been outlined are useful for determining how the Māori adoptees currently engages in the expectations required of their ethnic identity, and how their ethnic identity statuses during their lifetime have affected their sense of self and psychological adjustment. It should be noted however that the purpose of this research is not to design a new model for measuring Māori identity or subscribe to existing models, rather elements of the different models are used to help analyse the findings.

Psychological Wellbeing and Emotions

Understanding the sociological and psychological impact of being a transracial adoptee may provide insight into the choices these adoptees then make regarding their ethnic identity. In this research, consideration is given to how emotions contribute to the participants’ internal dialogue, their wellbeing, their sense of worth, their self-concept, and their formation of identity. These themes are a particular focus of Chapter four. Moreover, they are useful in informing one of the key hypotheses of this research: Are Māori adoptees embracing, denying or neutrally committed to their ethnic identity?

Tantam (1993) argues that thoughts are not only causes of emotion, but are reasons for it too. In the case studies consideration is given to identifying how a positive or negative emotional reaction to a certain social situation influences the adoptees reasoning and consequent actions, attitudes and behaviours toward their ethnic identity. For example, does believing one is incompetent (e.g. not knowing marae protocol) cause whakamā (shame) and avoidance of similar situations in the future? How emotions hinder or motivate action or inaction becomes particularly relevant in this context. An assumption challenged is whether the Māori adoptee believes they are emotionally affected by their adoption experience and if so (or not) does this correlate with their level of their commitment to their Māori ethnicity. Relevant to such discussions is the relationship between ‘shame’ as a psychological concept and ‘whakamā’ as a Māori concept, along with the possible reasons for such reactions.

Summary

Applying a psychological perspective to this research requires examining the Māori adoptees’ self-evaluations of their ethnic and personal identity. In this study, a correlation is explored between the birth reunion experience and ethnic identity. For example is the possible existence of a primal wound had a bearing on the self and how the adoptee ethnically identifies. A combination of ethnic identity measures and their elements are also considered to determine the participants’ Māori ethnic identity commitment and the emotional salience they give to their ethnicity.

2.5 Applying the Theory to the Case Study Themes

Social constructivism, symbolic interactionism, social identity theory, and psychology are the main theoretical perspectives informing this study. In the following chapters, these theories are used to examine the case studies and explore themes relating to the title of this research: Navigating the identity of the Māori adoptee. Navigation in this sense requires negotiating challenges and suggests a search for understanding and direction.

The intention of this thesis is to explore in depth some of the common and salient constructs that the Māori adoptees hold about their identity, which over time have lead to schemas and a perceived social reality. Drawing upon the elements inherent in social psychology, the case studies are examined for their schemas and whether they

have emerged from an individualistic or group perspective. Common schemas are identified within the participants' narratives and across the participant group. An examination of incidents or epiphanies, which indicate a change in construct or schema, will also be highlighted for their empowering effect.

In addition to understanding common beliefs the Māori adoptee holds about their ethnicity, also examined is the emotional impact of being a transracial adoptee and being a Māori person raised in a Pākehā household. To illuminate this discussion, the psychological theories used relate to how individuals perceive the self and the effects of internal dialogue on behaviour.

Another aim of this research is to unfold the social meanings existing between the research participants and the researcher. The researcher, who acts as the interpreter, also brings to the research process her own constructs and social meanings based on her own biographical history. Understanding how the “intersubjectivity of social meaning” (Kim, 2001, p. 3) or shared understandings between the researcher and participants have affected the researchers social reality or changed her previously held biases, is the focus of the final chapter. Several themes are investigated in this context.

Theme 1: Navigating the Social World (Chapter 3)

As social theory predominantly guides this research, the first theme of this thesis explores how social influences have contributed to the Māori adoptees constructs. Social identity theory and the symbolic interactionist perspective are utilised to examine how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence how the Māori adoptee perceives their Māori social identity. Reference is made to significant experiences that have contributed to the adoptees commitment to their Māori identity. These experiences include the learning of te reo and tikanga Māori and significant people who have impacted on the Māori adoptees lives.

Theme 2: Navigating Emotions (Chapter 4)

This second theme examines how individual participants internalise their schemas as truths. From a psychological perspective common constructs are examined for the emotional effect that they have had on the Māori adoptee's personal identity, their ethnic identity commitment, their behaviour and their psychological wellbeing. This

chapter also explores how the adoptees have internalised their adoptive parents' attitudes toward Māori and salient events, such as the reunion experience.

Theme 3: Navigating the Identity Performance (Chapter 5)

This third theme explores how the Māori adoptees externalise or react to their constructs and consequently perform an identity during social interactions. Social identity theory, symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy are the key theories guiding this chapter. These performances are assessed across the participant group for their commonalities and differences and whether they occur in certain circumstances or shift dependent on the interacting social group. This chapter also discusses possible reasons for such performances of identity and whether they serve a purpose or reflect assumptions and stereotypes about Māori identity. Relevant to the discussions are how some behavioural traits may reflect coping strategies.

Theme 4: Navigating the Future (Chapter 6)

In the concluding chapter the researcher summarises the findings and gives her perspective of the social identity of the Māori adoptee from her personal experience. In this research the researcher is considered an 'insider' as she shares the phenomenon of being a Māori adoptee. On the other hand, she is also an 'outsider' as she is the researcher responsible for analysing the phenomenon and making subjective observations of the group's perceptions. This chapter also highlights the researcher's biases, assumptions and insights, describes the influence of ideology and highlights the need for future research into this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3. NAVIGATING THE SOCIAL WORLD

In applying various social theory lenses, this chapter examines how the Māori adoptee interprets their social interactions and creates meaning from their experiences, which in turn inform their ethnic identity choices.

The social world of the Māori adoptee is unique; while genetically, ethnically or socially they may (or may not) self-identify as Māori, their upbringing was that of a non-Māori (Pākehā) person. Using Durie's (1995) notion of 'Paihere Tangata' (human relationships) and social identity theory as a framework, this chapter examines how the Māori adoptee perceives their group membership status and how this shapes their understanding of their Māori social identity. The goal of this chapter is to identify how they navigate conflicting expectations or social norms, required from their diverse social groups.

In this chapter significant social interactions are analysed for their influence on the Māori adoptees choice to commit to te reo Māori and tikanga Māori acquisition. As te reo and tikanga Māori are 'cultural characteristics' (Durie, 1995) considered valuable to some Māori, how the Māori adoptee perceives such knowledge as relevant (or irrelevant) to their identity and how they choose to access this knowledge is of interest.

The other area of focus identifies the socially constructed meanings the Māori adoptee interprets and conveys in their interactions, and how these contribute to their perception of the Māori identity. As schemas and constructs are formed over a lifetime, emphasis will be placed on how significant others (eg. parents and friends) and how childhood, adolescent and adult experiences, have affected how the Māori adoptee commits to their Māori ethnicity/identity.

3.1 Social Belonging and Te Reo and Tikanga Māori Acquisition

Exploring the motivations that contribute to Māori adoptee constructs and behaviours requires examining how they perceive actions and reactions of others. When the participants were growing up, access to te reo and tikanga Māori learning through Māori whānau was limited or non-existent, so knowledge had to be sought through other means, such as formal education (schools and tertiary institutions). This section

considers the influence of others (parents, teachers and school peers) on such educational choices and how past experiences of social acceptance and rejection influenced future decisions.

Seeking Acceptance

Significant experiences and validation from Māori prompted Mark to learn te reo Māori. The first memorable event occurred as an adult when he was meeting his birth relatives who were attending a rugby match. He remembers te reo Māori being spoken on the sideline and describes feeling overwhelmed, panicky and afraid that he would be perceived as an idiot as soon as he spoke. He commented, *I felt like it wouldn't seem like I belonged, cause I so wanted to belong... I think that is when I swore to myself I am going to learn the language, because I want to really understand a lot more about where we come from* (Mark, interview, February 20, 2011). Here, Mark believes acceptance from the social other (Māori and his family) requires being able to speak the language. Reflecting a socio-centric notion about Māori identity he uses the collective term 'we' when describing Māori, suggesting either his current belonging within this collective or that he is including himself and the researcher (who is also Māori) as part of this group.

Despite this epiphany, Mark's pursuit of te reo Māori learning occurred several years later when an influential Māori friend encouraged him and together they enrolled in a te reo Māori class. Unfortunately, the week of the first class the friend was murdered. Although Mark considered quitting the class, his teacher convinced him to pursue his te reo in commemoration of his friend's death. Holding fast to this advice, he continued with his lessons and with additional support from his birth sister and her husband, he now speaks te reo Māori fluently. In Mark's case, he was intrinsically motivated to learn te reo as he saw this knowledge as integral to his identity and necessary for whānau acceptance. Supporting him in his journey was the validation he received from others. A driving motivation was the need to commemorate his friend.

Since learning te reo Mark added that because he is fair in appearance, knowing te reo Māori is an equaliser as he does not have to legitimise his Māori ethnic status. Understanding te reo Māori also enables him to *be in on the joke*, whereas in the past to be accepted he would pretend that he understood what was being said. Such

comments suggest an awareness of a false self or public persona and a belief that Māori authenticity ascribed by others is based on skin colour.

Rejection

For some of the Māori adoptees/research participants, school was their first and main exposure to te reo and tikanga Māori learning. However, such experiences were not necessarily positive. Charlene describes feeling inadequate, ignored and judged by her high school te reo teacher because she was different from her Māori peers. As a result of her perceptions of her teacher she says she hated the class. Furthermore, she thought it was not her fault that her parents could not support her with the subject. In this interaction, Charlene recognised that the criteria that validated group membership was te reo learning beyond the formal school environment. She believed that her classmates were being favoured because they could bring to the Māori language class a depth of prior knowledge and competency that she did not have. While she may have been judged, her uneasiness may have been due to her own self-comparisons with her peers and her feelings of inadequacy. Furthermore without home support her sense of isolation was intensified. In this instance, Charlene appears to have processed internally that te reo incompetency is a threat to her personal identity.

Nadia shared similar experiences of social rejection. At her first school she had lead her school's kapa haka group, however at her second school, she remembers entering the kapa haka practice room for the first time and another girl saying *'What are you going to be in here for?'* Nadia reacted by walking out. She describes how she felt: *I had gone from being right up there and in it as a kid and just turned my back on it in the end, because it was so, so – it was a bit nasty* (Nadia, Interview, March 12, 2011). Nadia was angry that despite her competency the other girls cast her out because of her fair appearance. Like Mark, she recognised that skin colour validated one's Māori ethnicity. Although her peer did not explicitly say to her that she was too fair or 'Pākehā looking' to be part of the group, Nadia imagined this was the reason for the comment. Rather than risk further rejection, avoidance was necessary. Like Charlene, this example demonstrates the power of imagined judgements and the influence of other people's behaviour in the formation of socially constructed meanings.

A vivid high school experience Jackie recalls was when the Māori language teacher (who was Fijian) called her a social outcast to the 'Māori race', because she did not

select te reo as one of her subject options. Jackie describes her reaction ...*I went ballistic at her and said - at least I am Māori you dick... it's interesting now, but back then... it was pure outrage and anger... I was so annoyed and embarrassed* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). Jackie's whakamā/shame may have been because at that stage in her life she may have felt like an outcast, and the teacher was confirming this status. Jackie's strong reaction indicates that there was a discrepancy between her ascribed identity and her actual self. She was particularly angry at having her Māori status questioned by a non-Māori. As McIntosh (2005) states, "For Māori and non-Māori fluency in te reo is seen as a real marker of the 'authentic Māori'" (p. 45). Jackie's teacher reflected such a perception. For a person with a secure Māori social identity, such a comment may not have produced such feelings. This salient experience appears to have had an impact on how Jackie perceives her identity as she provided other examples that supports her belief (construct) that at times she does not fit in.

Due to the perceived judgements of others, Charlene, Nadia and Jackie believed their lack of te reo understanding, or commitment, and/or fair skin invalidated them as a Māori person. Their response was to avoid similar future situations consequently this limited their access to the associated knowledge (te reo and tikanga Māori).

However, social group acceptance was not the only reason why some of the Māori adoptees chose not to pursue te reo/tikanga Māori acquisition to a higher level at school. Nadia says that during her teens, there was not the emphasis on learning to speak Māori as there is today, and instead, her parents encouraged her to learn German. For others in this study te reo Māori was not offered as a school subject. Charlene added she felt pressured by her parents to study te reo Māori, therefore as soon as she could she dropped the subject.

Early Influences on Future Decisions

As social constructivists are interested in how primary phases of socialisation influence secondary phases of socialisation (Flecha et al., 2003), a corresponding intention of this study is to investigate how past childhood and adolescence perceptions and exposure to te reo and tikanga Māori learning experiences influenced future adult decisions to learn the language and customs.

During their teens, Paula and Dulcie learned te reo Māori. After high school, they pursued further tertiary study in te reo Māori. The common denominator influencing their decision to study the language to a higher level was an intrinsic motivation to fulfil their own sense of self and a desire to speak te reo Māori with their children. These adoptees demonstrate how they implicitly subscribe to the ideology that te reo knowledge is integral to the Māori identity. Consequently, their desire to connect with the Māori social identity motivated them to learn te reo Māori.

Negative or a lack of school experiences in learning te reo Māori or engaging with tikanga Māori did not necessarily result in a negative attitude towards te reo and tikanga Māori acquisition as adults. While Charlene and Nadia completed basic te reo Māori lessons for their work-based training, they wish they had learned te reo Māori to a higher level at school and they now value its worth. For these women there appears to be an attitudinal shift; perhaps they were never opposed to learning te reo Māori, but rather, were negative about the social environment in which it was originally learned. This indicates a sociological understanding that te reo Māori is necessary to Māori identity.

However, despite such attitudinal shifts, past constructs has had some bearing on their current perceptions. For Charlene, a construct that has remained static since adolescence is her perception that because she is brown others think she should know te reo Māori. Charlene added that if she was to learn te reo Māori she would prefer to learn it from the television rather than attend a wānanga (place of learning) class. This would enable her to learn at her own pace without the pressure of getting it right. In such a case, Charlene's negative high school experiences of learning te reo Māori appear to have impacted on her current constructs. However, in the case where as part of her work-based professional development she had to learn te reo Māori, her attitude differs. She said that as she was the only Māori in the class amongst non-Māori, she felt comfortable. She added there were no judgements, expectations or feelings of inferiority and that she had a *natural* advantage over her Pākehā colleagues. In this example it appears the fluidity in her ethnic identification is not solely based on past experiences, but also dependent on the social group with whom she is making her social comparisons and self-evaluations against.

Peter and Lucy did not have te reo Māori as a school subject option, but Peter completed basic te reo Māori lessons as an adult, while Lucy did not. Peter believes making an effort to learn te reo Māori provides him with the validation to call himself Māori; whereas Lucy is embarrassed she does not know te reo Māori. Several intrinsic barriers prevent Lucy from pursuing te reo learning. She fears being judged, rejected or perceived as an idiot, adding her twin sister was always good at languages. She comments, *A lot of the barriers are intrinsic, but they generate the perception. It is those inner demons and arguments... the worst enemy I have is myself* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). Lucy admitted experiencing anxiety around Māori who were unsupportive of her language attempts. Like Charlene, Lucy assesses herself against others abilities and expectations and compares herself to her twin by deciding language learning is not her thing. Her self-awareness that her barriers to te reo Māori learning are self-generated is also reinforced by her personal history and self-evaluations.

Influencing the Next Generation

To add further insight the participants were asked whether they wanted their children to learn te reo or engage in tikanga Māori experiences. The reason for this question was to determine if the Māori adoptees believed te reo and tikanga Māori acquisition was necessary for their children's Māori identity. The responses appear to align with how much involvement the Māori adoptees themselves have had with te reo and tikanga Māori learning and their past perceptions of this learning. Charlene favoured child choice and was ambivalent about her pre-teen children learning the language, as she would not be able to help them. When Nadia was asked if she was interested in her pre-school son knowing things Māori her reply was *yeah – I think so* (Nadia, Interview, March 12, 2011), but later added it was equally important he know his father's Dutch culture as well. In contrast Paula, Dulcie and Mark, who pursued te reo Māori learning as adults, had each put at least one of their children through Māori medium education.

As indicated there was some correlation between the adoptees adolescent perceptions of others' expectations and their future decision-making. This was not necessarily related to how much exposure or opportunities that the Māori adoptee had to learn te reo Māori in their teens, but was related to the Māori adoptee's perception of their

social identity with other Māori. While none of the participants dismissed the value of te reo acquisition and its correlation to the Māori identity, they varied in their level of commitment to learn te reo as adults. Influencing this commitment was their self-comparisons to others, formed during adolescence.

The behaviours of the adoptees in this study concur in part with Mannheim's (cited in Berger & Luckmann, 1966) belief "that a human's ideas are not immune to the ideologizing influences of its social context" (p. 21). Whether the social other in an individual's world reacts positively or negatively or in an encouraging or discouraging manner is not the only point to consider, though. As the participants demonstrated, the subsequent reactions and the internalising of interpretations (said and unsaid) are highly influential in directing future behaviours and attitudes. From a symbolic interactionist view, it is the merger of the self and the social and the Māori adoptee's interpretation of this merger that shapes future choices. Understanding where and how such interpretations emerge is important for helping people such as Māori adoptees, who at times may feel marginalised by fixed ideas about the Māori social identity.

3.2 Navigating Others Attitudes, Beliefs and Constructs

Applying a symbolic interactionist perspective requires identifying the meanings that the Māori adoptees interpret and convey during their social interactions. These meanings are shaped by the Māori adoptees' pre-conceived notions and their perceptions of others' views of Māori identity. Determining the consequence of the intersubjectivity or shared understanding that occurs between the Māori adoptee and the social other is the primary intention of this section.

Related to how meanings are constructed in an interaction is how the Māori adoptee defines themselves according to the expectations of their diverse social groups. From a social identity perspective, attention is given to the assumption that a strong social binding to a social group increases one's desire for validation (Brown, 2000). Therefore a further focus is how the Māori adoptee has interpreted the attitudes of significant others (family, friends and partners) and how this has shaped their relative worldview.

Family Constructs – To Challenge or Comply?

One criticism of transracial adoption is that adoptive parents may not be able to adequately prepare their adopted child to deal with racism or they [the adoptive parents] may themselves hold racist beliefs about their child's culture (Samuels, 2009). If, as Lawler (2008) argues families are at the "heart of understandings of identity" (p. 37), then it is important to examine how the Māori adoptee perceives their adoptive parents and siblings attitudes about Māori and how this affects their ethnic identity.

Some of the Māori adoptees internalised their adoptive parents' racial attitudes against Māori as a personal attack against themselves and their biological background. Dulcie comments, *I did my first Māori lesson and I actually got a hiding from dad. I don't know, but he had kept quiet all those years, but I think it brought out all those insecurities, because it is my birth father that is Māori... or that is the way I see it* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). Dulcie says she does not remember the exact details of the argument, except that he was hassling her about it [the Māori lesson] so she swore at him. She was 16 at the time and says it really angered him for some reason. Dulcie added that she was unsure why her parents adopted her, as her mum would put "Maris" (sic) down all the time yet they knew nothing about Māori culture.

Sibling attitudes also impacted on some of the Māori adoptees. Dulcie's recollection of an argument with her siblings is insightful. The incident suggests the formation of a construct. At the time her non-Māori siblings, while discussing a media news item, were making stereotypical and negative assumptions about Māori. She said, *ever since that day, which was about 10 years ago, or it could be a bit longer, I have sort of thought so that is what goes on in your minds* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). The fact that this incident which occurred several years ago is still vivid in her memory suggests it was and is still of significance. At that moment she recognised her views differed from her non-Māori siblings. Since this epiphany she has maintained this view of her family. This is an example of a meaningful experience that was internalised and then used to direct subsequent attitudes and behaviour. For a shift in Dulcie's attitude towards her family to occur, she may need to see evidence of a shift in her family's constructs.

For Māori adoptees, it can be challenging to demonstrate loyalty to two social groups who share different attitudes, values and perceptions about each other, but from whom one equally seeks acceptance. In Dulcie's case, she was emotionally attached to the social group being judged (Māori), but was also connected by kinship to the social group doing the judging (her Pākehā family). Her strong reaction may have highlighted her pain at having to choose between the two social groups, and perhaps her disappointment in her sibling and parents' attitudes. This also indicated that courage was required to defend the social group (who were absent in the social interaction), despite the personal risk of being cast out from the social group who were present. If the racism had been directed towards an ethnicity other than Māori, would she have reacted so emotively? Perhaps the fact that she did react indicates her bond with Māori. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, Dulcie's behaviour suggests that she views herself as the generalised other, taking on the social identity of Māori.

Some of the Māori adoptees internalised their family's attitudes. During adolescence, Lucy began challenging her family's social norms. She recalls, *I suppose I was really well colonised and institutionalised, like any young person. I think the first time that I ever really questioned and challenged authority was when I was 16 or 17 – and I progressively moved to what I call the outer edge* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). This challenging occurred in various domains such as wanting to be a lesbian, a feminist, and distinctive from her twin. At that stage of her life, she did not know she was Māori, but considered certain family members as racist and sexist. Recognising her differences, and unwilling to verify her position or expose herself to their *ridicule and judgement* she removed herself from the family. This coping strategy of avoidance is discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

Some of the Māori adoptees identified evidence of implied racism embedded in their adoptive parents' constructs. Mark thinks his mother viewed him and his adopted Māori sibling as possessions. He comments, *...it was like a self-esteem thing for her. Like look at what we are doing raising these poor Māori children and she would look at us like that - that is how it seemed to me* (Mark, Interview, February, 20, 2011). Mark added that his mother was also abusive, had substance abuse problems and held racist views. He remembers her displeasure at the untidiness of the house and her

comment – “*It's like a bloody Māori pa around here*” (Mark, Interview, February, 20, 2011). Although Mark viewed his father as somewhat liberal and fair, he saw his mother as condescending and judgemental.

A consistent construct in Paula's life is that she has always sensed that she is different from her adoptive family. Her view of her parents is similar to Mark. She comments, *With my adopted family it was that condescending, religious paternalism - you've got so much to learn properly* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). Paula, Dulcie and Mark interpreted the negative attitude their parents demonstrated toward Māori as a reflection of their own worth and identity. Mark and Paula's comments also imply that they believe their Pākehā parents possessed an oppressive and paternalistic colonial attitude, where Māori are inferior and are in need of moral, spiritual and educational guidance. This attitude is reflected in another comment, when as a teenager Paula asked a Pākehā lady if she was ashamed of being Pākehā. Paula said she got a sense that Pākehā needed to apologise and felt guilty.

At this juncture it is important not to de-value the racism and challenges that Mark and Paula faced in their upbringing. Their comments about their parents demonstrate an awareness of New Zealand's socio-cultural history and how stereotypical schemas of Pākehā and Māori identities affected their personal constructs and interactions. Their comments show in-group favouritism towards the Māori social identity by reflecting attitudes, where Pākehā are seen as distinctive and different (and less favourable) than Māori. The fact that Mark and Paula also experienced abuse from their mothers and grew up unhappy may have also made such schemas more salient and highlighted their feelings of oppression. Although Paula said her parents' attitude toward other cultures did change, this occurred after she had left home but by then it was too late; the damage had already been done.

Crossing the Divide

Another aspect investigated was how the Māori adoptee dealt with social interactions when their social worlds collided. Dulcie described the conflict she faced after realising her friends' and family's constructs differed to hers. As a teenager, she says she was embarrassed of her adoptive parents because her Māori friends' parents knew their *Māori stuff* while her parents did not. She remembers her friends surprise when they met her parents: *People would go – okay and they would be like hmm – you don't*

look alike – they are really straight looking and you’re a real – yeah (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). In this case Dulcie’s whakamā/shame, while a reaction to other people’s assumptions, may be because her parents are white and conservative. It could also be associated with having her identity questioned and her adoptee status brought to the fore. The other point to bear in mind is that teenagers, irrespective of being a transracial adoptee, are often embarrassed about their parents because they view them as different from their peer group. The social emotion of whakamā/shame is discussed more fully in the next chapter.

How the extended adoptive family reacted to the Māori adoptees’ choice of friendships was also of relevance. Dulcie describes introducing her Māori boyfriend, who had dreadlocks, to her grandmother: *...my grandmother who had dementia would refuse to talk to him. Just looked at him and would look away... she always accepted me for who I am, but she couldn’t accept these Māori looking people that I would bring around home* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). To deal with such attitudes Dulcie’s philosophy was that her family had to accept her friends and *go with the flow* otherwise she would not come home. Peter described a similar incident where his great aunt became upset, because he was dating a Māori girl. He reacted by talking abruptly to his aunt and stating that it was his problem, not hers.

In some scenarios, the Māori adoptees supported their adoptive parents during the navigation of tikanga Māori experiences. Dulcie remembers her marae-based university graduation as an awkward experience: *...dad looked terrified... and I could see him – what do we do now. You know he was looking at me like he was scared... yeah there was quite a few incidents where they felt uncomfortable* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). In such cases Dulcie realised that her parents were part of the ‘out-group’ (non-Māori) and were unfamiliar with the expected social norms required in a marae setting, so she offered her assistance. Other adoptees also discussed how people (non-Māori) assumed that they could help them navigate tikanga Māori experiences. When the adoptee could not provide the adequate knowledge they felt a sense of whakamā/shame.

3.3 Searching for a Social Identity

Outside of family, significant others can be influential in an individual's life. The findings show that the Māori adoptees sought friendships with those they admired or with whom they shared similarities such as common interests, values, physical likeness (skin-colour) and social class. The following section highlights the participants' thoughts, which reflected these observations.

Adolescence and Young Adulthood

During their formative and teenage years several of the adoptees formed friendships with other part-Māori (described by some as half-caste). Lucy attended an elite private girls' school and gravitated toward the few Māori most of whom were scholarship students. She says these students were rural, less sophisticated, less materialistic, less competitive and exhibited more manaakitanga (caring) than her Pākehā peers. She describes her holidays with her Māori friends as *magical moments*, which were different from the elitism, wealth and affluence present in other domains of her life.

An unexpected anomaly that emerged here is that despite Lucy's attraction to the Māori students at that stage of her life, she was still unaware that she was Māori. What is unclear is whether Lucy's admiration for Māori was because she sought belonging psychologically or spiritually, or because she saw them as distinctive from her Pākehā peers. Such notions are raised in her comments referring to the moment she discovered she was Māori: *When I reflect back I think it was a relief that I wasn't just a bleeding liberal Pākehā - that some of this empathy, identity, sense of belonging that I had – had felt for many years was legitimated* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). For Lucy, knowing she is Māori gives her previous connections with Māori additional meaning. It is difficult to decipher the precise reasons behind this meaning but it is similar to Charlene's feeling that te reo Māori was *natural* to her. Likewise, perhaps Lucy's comment implies that she was naturally attracted to the other Māori students because they reflected traits that she shared, despite her different background. Another possible reason why Lucy sought relationships with those outside her immediate world (in this case Māori) was an unconscious desire to distinguish herself from her identical twin sister and establish her own identity. Growing up her salient

identity issue was about being a *twinnie*. Lucy added that her twin has embraced the values of the *white affluent* and patronising world that she dislikes.

In his formative years Mark lived in a small community with few Māori. As a teen his family moved to a region where there were more Māori. His friendships with Māori were with the *naughty boys* who enjoyed skipping school, smoking cigarettes, and drinking alcohol. When Mark's family moved again, Māori were much more prominent and he developed new friendships with Māori and was exposed to their extended families. For a time he was fostered by a friend's family, which he describes as his first fulltime experience living amongst Māori. However, he added it was an urban environment where there were no cultural differences and Māori were *brown-skinned Pākehā* in his assessment.

For other Māori adoptees their perception of Māori when they were growing up was less favourable. Despite learning Māori at high school, Paula admits that she did not know what it was to be Māori. This contradictory comment illustrates her perception of Māori at that time: *The Māori I knew were pōhara or always in trouble... I was ashamed of being Māori, but attracted to it* (Paula, Interview, February 4, 2011). Paula says she was often involved in altercations with the other Māori students and saw them as bullies and poor. This shame and attraction could be related to her being at the moratorium stage of her ethnic identity formation at that time in her life. Consequently, perhaps she felt marginalised because she could not relate to Pākehā or Māori.

Paula's conflicting views of Māori is interesting, as her high school teachers recognised her musical talents and academic success and she was awarded a school prize as a successful Māori leader. Her recollection of the event provides some insight into how she perceived this honour and it also highlights a changed schema: *It was my first exposure that I was Māori and identified as a leader by Pākehā, because they wanted to acknowledge Māori. It was the days of the Māori renaissance* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). This suggests that Paula recognised that one way of being Māori was to fit the criteria of Māori as defined by her Pākehā teachers, which was at the opposite spectrum of the *pōhara Māori*. However, her other comment about being *really Māori* when she integrated with her husband's family, suggests her school experience was an ascribed Māori identity. For her, to be truly validated as

Māori, she needed more than validation from Pākehā, she also required acceptance from Māori.

During their early teens Charlene and Nadia moved from schools and communities where Māori were dominant, to schools where Māori were a minority in numbers. Both girls said that as soon as they shifted schools they noticed the distinctions made between Māori and Pākehā. Nadia described her first day at her new (second) school: *...these big girls came up to me and said – hey girl what are you – are you a Mari or a Pākehā – and I was like aye? I didn't know where to sit, because all the Māori sat at the back and the Pākehā at the front. I had never experienced that before* (Nadia, Interview, March 12, 2011). Nadia chose to sit next to another *half-caste* girl because she looked like her. This finding somewhat supports distinctiveness theory, whereby minorities in a social setting may seek out others who share similar characteristics (Mehra, Kilduff & Brass, 1998). By contrast, at Charlene's new school, which consisted predominantly of Pākehā students, she assimilated with her peers to meet their expectations. For Jackie, who also attended a high school consisting predominantly of Pākehā, she shared Charlene's approach to social interactions.

There might be several reasons why Charlene and Nadia noticed the distinctions made between their Māori and Pākehā school peers. Perhaps they had normalised the Māori identity at their first school and there was no need to distinguish between Māori and Pākehā. Maybe the age (adolescence) at which the girls shifted schools had a bearing on their observations about ethnicity. As Erikson (cited in Santrock, 2007) notes, adolescence is often a time of identity exploration. However Nadia added that as she got older, race became less of an issue because all her peers were from a small town and were of similar socio-economic status. At high school Nadia also had positive exposure to Māori role models and talked fondly of a teacher who would organise high school camps to his local marae. Perhaps it was this demonstration of tolerance toward Māori at her high school and the egalitarian socio-economic status between Māori and Pākehā that helped her normalise the relationship between Māori and Pākehā. This is maybe why she now has friends who are part-Māori and Pākehā. In contrast, Charlene had very few Māori experiences at high school and her current friends are predominantly Pākehā. Perhaps her current lack of commitment to the Māori social identity is because she did not have high school role models and friends

who were Māori. In her interview, she wondered why she found it hard to make close friends and whether it has anything to do with the types of people she is meeting who are predominantly young Pākehā mums. This comment demonstrates self-awareness and suggests she does not feel totally validated in her social network.

For Charlene and Jackie who have had fewer social interactions with Māori as adults, there are a variety of additional factors to consider. Jackie has moved back and forth between New Zealand and Australia and has lived in predominantly Pākehā communities. Charlene has also moved frequently with her young family, so establishing social networks has been challenging. Furthermore, both girls have not been in workplaces where they have met Māori people either.

3.4 In/Out Group Influences – The Young Adult Years

Early adulthood is another significant time of life when individuals navigate a multitude of identities such as being a worker, a partner or a parent. The focus of this section is on how relationships in these settings have influenced the adoptees constructs or provided access to Māori experiences. The aim of this is to explicate further the internal constructs the Māori adoptees may hold about Māori or being Māori and whether these have shifted or remained constant over time and for what reasons.

Significant Relationships, Adult Friendships and Workplace Choices

Paula's marriage to a Māori man was the beginning of her journey to discover being Māori. She comments: *Watching how his family interacted I got that sense of connectedness and extended family. Whānau is part of who they were – I loved it. I had no sense of that at all in my Pākehā family* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). She recognised her own background differed from her in-laws and remembers her father-in-law inviting her to breakfast, taking her to the beach and saying – *'there you go'*. Paula remembers laughing and thinking, *they must have laughed at this Pākehā girl* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). While Paula says there were positive experiences with her husband's family, she also uncovered sexual abuse within the family. She remembers the challenge of confronting those involved. Paula is no longer in this relationship.

Mark's former partner and mother of his children is a Pākehā woman, who is also an adoptee. After leaving school at 14, Mark began getting into trouble and started using heavy drugs. During this time he joined a motorcycle gang, which consisted mainly of Pākehā and a handful of Māori. In the gang, being Māori or Pākehā did not matter to him, as his identification was about being a biker: *...being a gang member enabled me to define and set my boundaries in who I was and what I stood for. I knew what I didn't stand for – and that was comfort for me. It was like whānau whānui – a huge extended family* (Mark, Interview, February, 20, 2011). As soon as Mark began to gain more knowledge of his Māori birth heritage, through his birth sister, he decided to leave the gang after several years of living the life. An argument with another member triggered his exit, although he admits that in hindsight he was looking for an excuse to leave the gang. Today he works in a health organisation supporting Māori and chose this career as it enables him to utilise his te reo skills. Mark's comment suggests that for him, in the absence of his Māori identity, a substitute identity was required; however, when he regained his Māori whānau identity he could then relinquish his gang identity.

Charlene and Dulcie's former husbands and father of their children are Māori, but both men had limited involvement with their iwi, hapū or marae, and the women therefore were not exposed to Māori cultural experiences through their in-laws. Charlene's current partner is Pākehā and although he socialised with Māori at school, she says he perceives Māori as quite racist. She says her partner's attitude reflects the view of many Pākehā who see Māori as racist. When asked how she viewed Māori she said a small percentage of Māori are racist and they make it sound like every Māori is racist. Charlene admits there are also some topics, such as Māori land claims that she does not discuss with her current partner as they disagree on particular issues.

Dulcie commented that sometimes she thinks Māori men perceive her as *too white* and not Māori enough because she cannot sing, play the guitar, recite a mihi or cook fried bread. Her past employment includes working for the courts and in the mental health profession. In both workplaces she noticed the Māori she saw had unresolved issues pertaining to their Māori identity and that Māori tended to gravitate towards her, because they were keen to see a *brown face*. Such an observation may suggest that for Dulcie this legitimises her to act as a negotiator between Māori and Pākehā.

Nadia's relationships have been with Pākehā men, and her husband and the father to her son is Pākehā. As well as being a teacher, Nadia's current employment has been working with urban youth (Māori and Pākehā) in an educational institution. She describes her interactions with her students as interesting, stating how some of her Māori students do not know where they are from or know their iwi or hapū. Like Dulcie and Lucy, who also worked with Māori youth, Nadia empathises with her students' situation. She also finds that Māori students often approach her, rather than the other Pākehā tutors, but she equates this to her being a straight talker from a small town as opposed to being identified as Māori.

For Lucy, who has been unable to trace her Māori heritage, she has found support as an adult through friendships with Māori. On Lucy's behalf a Māori friend approached her family marae to see if Lucy could be whāngaid. Lucy says the marae supported orphans during the period of colonisation therefore this legitimatised her membership. Lucy's resourcefulness to establish a connection with a marae demonstrates how she recognises the collective aspect of the Māori social identity. The support of those close to her made such a desire a reality.

During her working career, Lucy also made decisions to work in areas with Māori and for the last few years has specifically chosen to work in an educational institution where there is a commitment to supporting Māori. Her long-term relationships have been with Pākehā, English, a Māori/Chinese and currently a Māori.

Feeling Like a Misfit – Navigating the Space Between In/Out Groups

In cases where the Māori adoptees did receive some social acceptance from other Māori, they were often conscious of their different upbringing and they did not feel like they totally belonged. This suggests that there were other factors outside of ethnicity influential to group validation. Lucy discussed how her Māori work colleagues would invite her to parties, but would not totally get to know her. She believes that they perceived her as someone who was from a different class, educational background and socio-economic status and that they would not have a shared background. Interestingly, today, when she identifies where she is from to other Māori, she does not say she is from the wealthy suburb where she grew up as this often results in certain connotations and stereotypes. She said if she does this she can *see the shutters come down* and describes it as a *totally different cultural space*

and by virtue of that it creates a barrier (Lucy, Interview, November 23, 2010). This comment mirrors her earlier belief whereby Māori (and herself) abhor the elite and wealthy Pākehā social identity.

In addition to social influences, self-evaluations pertaining to cultural competency also had a bearing on how the Māori adoptees relate to the Māori identity. Dulcie discussed attending tangi and how her Māori friends would be comfortable touching the tūpāpaku (the deceased) and her own discomfort. She also described shelling crayfish at a marae, feeling repulsed by it and receiving comments such as, *'what kind of Mari are you?'* For Mark his first real experience of entering a marae was with his newly found birth sister. He remembers feeling overwhelmed and in *total culture shock* because at that stage he did not understand things Māori. Jackie also described her first time on a marae as a culture shock, but also an emotionally impactful experience.

Outsiders Perceptions – Social Class, Accent, Skin Colour and Validation

Dealing with the assumptions of others was another common theme. Judgements about the adoptees social class, accent, skin colour, and their adoptee status were memorable. For example, Lucy described working with Māori youth in a lower socio-economic area and how they often challenged her, because she spoke *posh*. As a consequence she slipped into their *patois* so she could fit in. Charlene and Jackie were also conscious of their annunciation, relating it to the socio-economic class of their adoptive family. For example, Charlene said people often think that there is something different about her; *...once I speak and the English I use is quite different from what their perception of Māori is* (Charlene, Interview December 6, 2010). Charlene's choice to share such a comment maybe implies that she is aware that other people (non-Māori) may hold negative stereotypes of Māori. Unwilling to be associated with such a judgement she finds delight when others discover that she is more articulate than they expect.

Physical appearance is another available sign indicating ethnic difference and commonality (Santrock, 2007). Nadia believed looking the part, that is, being brown is a common element others use to identify Māori. This has been a consistent construct since her teens. She said her fair skin meant that at times her Māori authenticity was challenged. For example she described her son's colouring as proof

of her own Māori ethnicity: *He's part-Māori obviously, because he popped out really brown, so a bit of a throw-back... that was interesting because it almost proved – something unsaid... it was like oh actually I really am [Māori] because look at him* (Nadia, Interview March 12, 2011). While Nadia said she took people at face value and did not presume their Māoriness because of their complexion, she contradicted herself in another statement whereby she viewed the *white chicks* on her tertiary course, who attempted to claim Māori scholarships, as too Pākehā in look and behaviour. She believed it unfair that their whakapapa connection was the only criteria validating their Māori authenticity. For Nadia in this case a person's whiteness was also related to how they behaved.

Charlene was also critical of judgements from Māori of her generation. Charlene's distinction between Māori of her generation and the older generation may relate to her perceived stereotypes. The deficit (forced) Māori identity fits the cohort of her generation and the traditional or respectful elder Māori fits the cohort of the older Māori generation. Due to her few adult interactions with Māori, her comments suggest she has based her interpretations of the Māori identity on what she sees in the media or hears from others (non-Māori). For example she said: *I think what's on tv now is an utter load of crock...it's that really bad racial side coming through... incredibly negative stuff* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). This leads the discussion to the next area of consideration the power of the stereotype on constructed meanings.

3.5 Interpreting the Symbolic Interaction and its Influence on Identity

Adopting the symbolic interactionist perspective, this section further analyses the effect of imagined judgements on the Māori adoptee's sense of self, their attitudes, and their Māori social identity commitment. Particular reference is given here to the influence of stereotypical views.

Stereotypes

Spears et al., (1997) observe that stereotypes serve a variety of functions. These include; organising and simplifying the social environment; representing and preserving social values; explaining large social events; justifying collective action; creating positive group distinctiveness; and establishing and maintaining an

individual's membership in a group. Another notion that Spears et al., (1997) alludes to is "belief perseverance" (p. 28) which is when individuals believe in a perception (even if fictitious) if an adequate explanation is given. An analysis was conducted into common stereotypes of Māori and Pākehā that the Māori adoptees were aware of or believed in and how this influenced their social ethnic identity and personal identity.

Paula, Charlene, Jackie and Nadia were well aware of the deficit stereotype of Māori, described as *pōhara* or *hori* or *Mari* for example. Such views reflect McIntosh's (2005) notion of the forced Māori identity. One consequence of subscribing to deficit Māori stereotypes is that when they were teenagers Jackie and Paula found it embarrassing to be Māori. Jackie added being *Mari* in the eighties did not have the same status as it does today. She comments; ... *the media never portrayed the Mari in a good way or not much - so yeah I was embarrassed* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). Jackie coped by trying to be *white* and socialising with Pākehā, although she noted that this did not really work for her and so she rebelled by getting into trouble at school. Although Jackie is now proud to be Māori, she mainly socialises with non-Māori.

In addition to recognising how assumptions about Māori personally affected them at times, the Māori adoptees also echoed some of these assumptions. Currently, Charlene's eldest children attend schools consisting predominantly of Māori. She comments; *I tell them [her children] that if there is scrapping at school to be very weary of Māori you know cause some of the kids at the – are incredibly large and they would give you a run for your money – scrapping wise* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). Charlene added that there are a lot of gang-related homes in the town where her children go to school. This comment suggests an awareness of the deficit stereotype of Māori is still present in her constructs. While Charlene said she has not had any direct experience with gang-related Māori, she is aware of this type of Māori and wants to protect her children from them. Her attitude may also reflect an attitude that she says was evident in her upbringing; as a child she says she was not allowed to visit the children of *rough* families, who she says at the time happened to be Māori.

Some of the adoptees personally experienced other people's stereotypical views of Māori. For instance, Jackie and Dulcie remember feeling judged when they were on the government's Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB). Dulcie comments, *Yeah you could tell they thought here's another Māori on the DPB – maybe that is my perception of what I thought* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). Although Dulcie acknowledges that this comment was not explicitly expressed, she perceives this judgement was made nonetheless. This perception may have been particularly meaningful to Dulcie as a result of an earlier experience in her life, where a Pākehā boss in jest had said to her that since she was now pregnant did she intend to stay home and live off the benefit. Despite the comment being made 25 years ago, she remembers the incident clearly and her anger. This example demonstrates the potency of salient experiences in the formation of static constructs.

Lucy's awareness of the deficit Māori stereotype emerged from direct experience and her observation of other Māori. As a young adult she worked as a recreation officer with disfranchised urban Māori youth, during the era of the *Māori renaissance* (1970s-1980s). She described the great pride associated with being Māori, but also the negative perceptions that categorised young urban Māori as gang members and educational failures: *I had this problem with my white upbringing and yet these kids were just as dislocated as I was from those values of being - their Māori worldview was very different* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). In this example Lucy's empathy and identification with urban Māori youth and their loss of cultural identity arose from her own perceptions of herself and her upbringing.

Lucy, who described herself as a deficit Māori, believes that before she knew she was Māori, she should have done more to stand up for Māori: *Well when you didn't know that you were Māori you were actually like those Pākehā. Now that you have got your foot in the camp you realise a lot of your practices reinforce that attitude towards Māori and of Māori you reinforced that deficit model... you know they always focussed on the negatives and I never challenged them before I knew* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). Here Lucy talks in the third person, suggesting she is making a judgement of someone else (or a judgement of herself in the past tense), yet the context she is discussing is to do with her perception of herself. This comment also demonstrates how she subscribes to the stereotypical belief that some Māori hold

about other Māori who do not subscribe to the dominant collective viewpoint. Such an idea supports the observation that in cases where desired group membership is sought, individuals subscribe to the views of the desired group (Spears et al., 1997, p. 85).

Lucy's insights indicate a heightened self-awareness and a developed "sociological imagination" (Wright-Mills, 2000). This is likely due to her tertiary education, by which she says she challenged her constructs, noticed a change in herself, and says she developed a social conscience or became *socially conscientised*. Her feelings about being a traitor are discussed further in Chapter five.

The Invisible Social Other – Media Influences

It would be presumptuous to assume that the deficit stereotypes (forced identities) of Māori emerged solely from those in the adoptees' immediate social world. The 'zeitgeist' or the cultural beliefs and practices of an era (Crossman, 2012), may have also had a bearing on the adoptees' attitudes and beliefs. Paula, Charlene, Jackie and Nadia are all of a similar age. The influence of New Zealand's mass media and its depiction of race relations that occurred during their young adult years (1980s) may have been particularly challenging to these adoptees, as not only were they in the midst of their identity formation, but there were also more distinctions made between Māori and Pākehā. As a result salient stereotypes emerged that tried to homogenise or discredit these ethnic groups. For example, Nadia remembers gang conflict as a common problem often discussed in her community when she was a teenager. Perhaps what she witnessed through the media was reinforced through her own observations, as opposed to her direct social interactions with gang members.

As a young university student, Nadia was also aware of an increase in Māori self-assertion and prominence. She was critical of the *Mana Māori* university students who made distinctions between Pākehā and Māori or the *us* and *them*. Mark's comments reflect a similar attitude. He said in the eighties that there was more talk in the workplace and in the gangs about being Māori and Pākehā: *There was no prejudice or that and then suddenly in the eighties... I guess maybe we had assimilated into the mainstream culture and then suddenly there was a defined difference that created a type of separation, not from the Māori, but the Pākehā opinion... in the smoko rooms a lot of the talk was generated by news... the talk of the*

Treaty and those sorts of things (Mark, Interview, February 20, 2011). This comment concurs with Meredith's (1998) observations pertaining to hybridity, specifically, that bi-cultural New Zealand politics has placed Māori and Pākehā into 'us' and 'them' categories.

An effect of these past perceptions on current attitudes is that Nadia, Jackie and Charlene are critical of the *stirrer type* Māori (i.e. Māori radical/activist) who they describe make Māori look bad and create dissent amongst Māori and Pākehā. Confirming this notion is Nadia's comment; *everyone should just get along* (Nadia, Interview March 12, 2011) and Charlene's criticisms of media that depict Māori protestors who she adds are *going to divide the country* (Charlene, Interview December 6 2010). Perhaps such divisions between Māori and Pākehā, creates discomfort because the adoptees feel it discredits their Pākehā identity (family upbringing), which is another element of their identity. Such dissention also challenges their sense of belonging within the Māori and Pākehā social identities.

In addition to highlighting Māori and Pākehā race relations, Lucy says the *politically salient eighties* was personally insightful: *For me it was actually absolutely a time of politicising and of political awareness... that era opened up all these question marks. I just didn't take assumptions – you know my parents told me this so, it was true* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). Such comments support Frankenberg's (1993) observations that "...political salience produces, or at least encourages the maintenance of social salience" (p. 230). However, as indicated, the social salience ascribed to the Māori identity was for some of the adoptees at times unattainable or undesirable.

3.6 Conclusions

This chapter explored the challenges and assumptions the Māori adoptees face when negotiating their ethnic identity. These observations are not necessarily unique to all Māori adoptees, as this is a small sample group. Although the Māori adoptees in this study may share common interactions, at times they differ in their interpretations of their social acts.

In this chapter, the theoretical approaches inherent in social constructivism, symbolic interactionism and social identity theory were used to provide a conceptual basis to

some of the material provided by the Māori adoptees. The fluidity of an individual's social identity was alluded to, in that Māori adoptees throughout their lifetime have had to navigate the assumed and sometimes conflicting and contradictory self-generated and ascribed expectations; in the process of this navigation, internal and external out-casting occurred.

While the adoptees value the importance of te reo Māori to the Māori identity, for some, their self-comparisons of their abilities in relation to other Māori act as a barrier for full participation in the learning of the language. Ignorance of te reo Māori was seen as particularly shameful particularly when others assumed that because they looked Māori the adoptees should know the language. For those who had learned te reo Māori through formal learning environments, this was seen as an integral element contributing to their Māori identity formation. Such perceptions subscribe to Durie's (2003) view that language skills contribute to identity formation. In the absence of a whānau connection the adoptees sought alternative sources to obtain the relevant knowledge.

What has been illustrated is that being a Māori adoptee as well as a transracial adoptee means growing up in a unique social situation, whereby the constructs assumed by others (such as family and other Māori) are challenged. Various elements constitute the Māori adoptees' sense of belonging within Māoridom. This validation included looking the part, and holding the necessary knowledge (te reo and tikanga Māori). Accent, social class, education and personal histories also had some bearing on how the adoptees related to other Māori and what assumptions they viewed as salient. Affecting their decisions to participate in certain social groups was how they internalised their own and others' perceptions of themselves and the Māori identity. These perceptions were guided by awareness that by virtue of their upbringing, they were distinctive from the 'ought self' of the Māori identity foisted upon them by others' perceptions.

Whether the loyalty to a social group is static and fixed, or fluid and changing appears to depend on a variety of factors, not just the influence of family and friends. The political salience of Māori ethnic identity and the associated assumptions, which include in-group and out-group stereotypes, appear to influence the adoptees self-perceptions, attitudes and engagement with Māori and Māori cultural practices.

While some of the adoptees only socialised with Pākehā, others gravitated towards ‘brown-skinned Pākehā’, ‘half-cast’ or ‘part-Māori’ who were also disconnected from their iwi or hapū. For those who later developed relationships with Māori who were tribally connected, it was challenging as the adoptees lacked the previously lived experiences or schemata understanding of the finer cultural nuances which was familiar to their partners. What remains unclear is whether this gravitation towards other Māori was borne from a desire to socially or physically identify, or whether it was due to an innate wairua (spirit, soul) or a natural connection. However, the theme that strongly emerged was the need for belonging and acceptance. Perhaps for the Māori adoptee, they were drawn to such relationships, because the social other were also sub-types of the Māori and Pākehā identities.

At times the adoptees were and are currently faced with making decisions between two identifiably different social groups, in an era where the distinctions between being Māori and Pākehā has become more prevalent. As a subtype of the Māori ethnic group, some of the participants may have consciously or subconsciously felt marginalised by common notions defining the Māori identity and consequently sought other identities such as being a biker or a Pākehā. Spears et al. (1997) view is that subtypes who present inconsistent information contradictory to the consistent group are seen as irrelevant to the rest of the group. The Māori adoptee as a subtype, appear to be a silent voice in Māori identity politics. As demonstrated the internalising of this perceived irrelevance, which is reinforced through others’ assumptions about the value of kinship (whakapapa) and te reo and tikanga Māori knowledge, can be emotionally challenging. The ramifications of such feelings of invalidation are discussed in greater depth in the next chapter, which explores how the adoptees reacted to the internalisation and externalisation of their ethnic identity constructs.

These findings show that in order to determine the level of commitment the Māori adoptee has for the Māori social identity requires understanding what the Māori adoptee perceives as the defining factors that demonstrate belonging to this social identity. In their lifetime, the boundaries defining the Māori social identity have shifted. New Zealand social policy has meant an increase in the use of te reo Māori and a need for whakapapa knowledge. Being Māori requires meeting such criteria. However, alongside such changes are the aggravators who dislike the divisiveness

and cultural privileges and through schemas based on stereotypes aim to homogenous and discredit. Finding a Māori social identity that sits outside these two extremes is a challenge for the Māori adoptee. The Māori adoptees in this study offer some insight into how they, as individuals, navigate this multiple and fluid identity that emerges from the interaction between the self and the social.

CHAPTER 4. NAVIGATING EMOTION

Chapter three discussed the influence of the social other on the Māori adoptee's social identity. Evidence showed that the Māori adoptee subjectively interpreted both the actions of others and societal expectations in diverse ways, and that this affected their perception of themselves and their everyday experiences. The focus of this chapter is how such perceptions have been internalised and how they have influenced their self-concept of their ethnic identity.

Understanding the emotional impact of the transracial adoptive experience is of relevance for determining what the Māori adoptee deems important in their life. For the Māori adoptee they must cope with being an adoptee and also a Māori person raised outside of the Māori culture. Parkinson (1996) views emotions as inherently social in content and are defined by broader cultural value systems. The symbolic interactionist view considers how structures, ideology and power interact to produce subjectivity, emotionality and lived experiences (Denzin, 1992). In this chapter, consideration is given to the social milieu surrounding the implementation of closed stranger adoptions in New Zealand post 1955, and in particular, the underlying ideology that created fictitious identities, which impacted upon the lived experience of being a Māori adoptee – a theme that was raised in the theory chapter of this thesis. With ideologising influences in mind, this chapter examines the participants' interpretations of the emotional impact of societal expectations on their intersecting identities (adoptee, Māori and Pākehā). Relevant to this discussion is the interpretation and selection of facts pertinent to their ethnicity that has had a bearing on the navigation of their emotions.

The first theme in this chapter relates to how the Māori adoptee self-identifies ethnically and the influence of emotional directives. Expanding on the previous chapter, the focus of the second theme is how the Māori adoptee has internalised the attitudes, expectations and behaviours of their adoptive family pertaining to their ethnic identity. The third theme is that of salient interactions and commonly felt emotions such as *whakamā*. The types of experiences scrutinised includes reconnections with biological kin, and whether there is a correlation between Māori kinship separation and emotional adjustment. As discussed in the theory chapter, for

Māori, kinship is seen as integral to healthy development in a variety of domains (Department of Social Welfare, 1986).

According to the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development (2010) cultural identity provides individuals with a sense of belonging and security and contributes to a person's wellbeing (Social Report, 2010). In this chapter, an evaluation is made of how the Māori adoptees' self-perceptions of their ethnicity have affected their self-esteem. As psychological tests were not conducted on adoptees, the level of emotional adjustment is measured by the adoptees' self-perceptions of their social interaction. Understanding the role of emotion in this study requires the consideration of influential attitudes, behaviours and interactions from both an individual and collective perspective.

4.1 Ethnicity and Identity

Discussed in this section is whether there is a correlation between strong ethnic identity commitment and emotional adjustment, or if other variables are influential. To establish how the adoptees self-identified ethnically, their comments were analysed and categorised for the degree to which they showed commitment to, and how they felt towards their Māori social and ethnic identity. Guiding this analysis were elements of Marcia's identity statuses (cited in Santrock & Bartlett, 1986), Phinney's (1992) multigroup ethnic identity measure (MEIM) and the Māori ethnic identity framework *Te Hoe Nuku Roa* (Durie et al., 1995). These identity measures were briefly mentioned in Chapter two. In this section, participants are categorised using a variety of notions in these measures under the headings achieved/secure, diffusion/foreclosure/notional and moratorium/compromised. Such measures are used as a general guide, bearing in mind that they are subjective or may require future development.

Given that affiliating with an ethnic identity can evolve and change over time (Phinney et al., 2001), consideration is given to whether there has been a progression or a shift in how the Māori adoptees have ethnically identified at different stages of their life. While all the adoptees acknowledge that they are genetically Māori or part-Māori, how the participants currently self-identify ethnically differ.

Ethnic Identity Achieved/Secure

As adults Dulcie, Mark and Paula are the participants who have engaged the most in te reo and tikanga Māori experiences and see these experiences as significant. They do not distinguish between being genetically Māori, and being ethnically Māori, nor do they call themselves part-Māori or affiliate with other ethnic groups; instead they self identify as Māori. Their responses indicate a strong ethnic pride and affinity or an achieved/secure Māori ethnic identity, and they see being Māori as part of their enduring self.

Dulcie says that she finds it interesting that from a young age (six years old) she has always identified as Māori, even though she does not know her Māori side. This contradicts theories proposed by Erikson, that ethnic identity formation occurs during adolescence (Santrock, 2007). Another observation is that it is Dulcie's adult belief that she identified as Māori as a young child, determining if her ethnicity was important to her when she was a child is difficult to verify.

Mark was the only participant in this study to date who has made and maintained contact with his biological Māori whānau and who is also fluent in te reo Māori, which might explain to some extent his strong identification with Māori. This supports the view that stronger ties to others through an identity results in a more salient identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). Mark added that prior to connecting with his Māori whānau his ethnic identity was not a salient priority in his life. However, Mark still does not know his paternal biological Māori side and like Dulcie, desires this connection.

As previously mentioned Mark, Paula and Dulcie shared the commonality of associating with significant Māori friends and their families during their young adult years. During their teens these adoptees experienced emotional challenges, which they say were related to issues of identity, although these challenges may be related to unsettling and unhappy home-based experiences. For instance, Mark and Paula both experienced foster homes. As young adults Dulcie and Mark sought counselling and Paula says she had a mental breakdown. Paula, who briefly met some of her biological whānau as a teen, says her adoptive parents sent them away as her parents believed the experience was detrimental to Paula's emotional wellbeing.

Mark, Paula and Dulcie share the view that learning te reo Māori resulted in healing. Mark comments, *with te reo Māori I felt that I was making up ground. I don't know subliminally if I was trying to reinforce who I was or what I was* (Mark, Interview, February, 20, 2011). Now that he understands te reo Māori, he says he has discovered his true identity and adds that the language still humbles him and makes him emotional. Paula's healing also began when she started learning te reo Māori and writing waiata in Māori for her church. Since being interviewed she has also re-connected with her birth siblings and hopes this will help with her healing process. The fact that these adoptees mentioned that healing was or is needed indicates that their Māori adoptee experience has been and is emotionally challenging. Their emotional reaction also supports Marcia's observation that when an individual decides to commit to an identity (identity achieved) they may experience an identity crisis (cited in Santrock & Bartlett, 1986).

Ethnic Identity Diffusion/Foreclosure/Notional

Establishing how Charlene and Nadia ethnically self-identify was a more difficult task. As discussed in the previous chapter, sometimes they perceive the Māori ethnic identity as unsatisfactory or unattainable, and/or feel that Māori reject them. While they self-identify genetically as part-Māori, they are fairly neutral toward their Māori ethnicity and social identity. Neither adoptee showed a strong desire to engage in te reo and tikanga Māori experiences as adults, unless it was required of them through their work. Their ambivalence suggests that emotionally they are at the diffusion/foreclosure stage. Their life choices, level of participation and aspirations toward engaging in Māoritanga suggest a notional identity.

In self-identifying ethnically Charlene wavers between different identities. She describes herself as; *I am just me...I am part-Māori, but I wouldn't say I identify with Māori because I don't really. I know that I am Māori, because that is what I am - my actual makeup* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). She also added she is more Pākehā because of her upbringing, but emphasises she is not British like her adoptive parents, as she has never lived in Britain. However, in a later comment she describes herself as *I am just me*, downplaying her ethnicity by preferring to identify with no ethnic group. When describing her ethnicity, Nadia says she considers herself a New Zealander these days, as opposed to a New Zealand Māori or New Zealand Pākehā: *I*

think New Zealanders are a mixture of all sorts of backgrounds these days - Scottish and British and Irish and European and none of us are true full-blooded anything (Nadia, Interview, March 12, 2011). Charlene and Nadia's comments demonstrate how the adoptees organise and prioritise their identity, with Nadia giving greater hierarchy to her nationality and Charlene preferring to show no commitment to any ethnic identity. These reactions demonstrates Brown's (2000) notion that members of low-status groups (in this study Māori adoptees) may exhibit identity-protecting responses such as disidentifying.

How Charlene and Nadia perceive ethnic identity also differs. Although Charlene feels her skin colour and genetic makeup validates acceptance within the Māori identity, she is also aware that socially at times she does not meet the required expectations. Nadia's reaction is to question the category given to the Māori identity believing it an inaccurate term that excludes other ethnic groups, which she describes by nationality. In these examples, the participants have defined their sense of Māori ethnicity in relationship to a "multilayered perspective of the self" (Denzin, 1992, p. 26), giving greater salience to the social self or physical self (i.e. blood quantum) as relevant to being accepted or genetically recognised as Māori. Such findings are surprising considering Nadia and Charlene lived in bicultural communities as children.

Both Nadia and Charlene also took umbrage at filling in forms that require ticking specific boxes such as Māori or Pākehā. Perhaps they felt this requirement highlights the inconsistencies of their situation or does not accurately reflect the broader meanings of the words Māori and/or Pākehā for them. As mentioned previously, they may also be unwilling to place Māori and Pākehā into the 'us' and 'them' categories. However, if Nadia must choose she ticks both Māori and Pākehā or if it means more money or funding for Māori, she will only tick the Māori identification box. Such examples demonstrate Allan's (2001) view that various and sometimes inconsistent factors influence individuals when they are classifying their ethnicity.

What is curious about Nadia and Charlene's perception of their ethnicity is that some of their comments appear contradictory. Embedded in their constructs are examples where they do identify as Māori. For example, Nadia believes her son's brown colouring proves her Māori authenticity, and Charlene discussed her natural (innate) *te reo* Māori advantage over her Pākehā colleagues. Despite this, when they were

asked to self-identify, Charlene and Nadia appear to avoid the Māori ethnic label. This suggests an inconsistency between their ascribed ethnic identity and their self-identification as a Māori person, and/or how they change their ethnic identity affiliation depending on the context within which it is being used.

The correlation between a strong Māori ethnic identification and positive psychological adjustment does not seem to apply in Charlene and Nadia's case. They consider themselves emotionally well adjusted with high self-esteem. They did not indicate that they suffer from any mental illnesses such as depression or feelings of low self-worth. They did not identify any major emotional problems that had occurred during their teens or early adult years and Nadia was critical of the assumption that teen adoptees were mixed up.

While other factors such as an easy-going temperament may have contributed to Charlene and Nadia's emotional stability, perhaps they appear well adjusted because they have not faced an identity crisis or they utilise emotionally focussed coping strategies to avoid uncomfortable situations. This is reflected in Charlene's comment that; *Things that are negative in my life they get wiped out. I have no recollection of them so they must get pushed into my sub-conscious* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). This admission suggests emotional challenges do occur, but in Charlene's view it is better not to give them meaning, but instead forget about them. Nadia expressed a similar attitude that it is important not to hold on to the past.

Another factor contributing to Nadia and Charlene's emotional stability could be that they do not consider their Māori ethnic identity important to their core identity; neither women discussed that their culture had been taken away from them or were bothered by this. Unlike the other Māori adoptees, they did not indicate that they were bound to their Māori ethnic identity, or that it affected their sense of self.

Ethnic Identity Moratorium/Compromised

Some of the adoptees currently appear to be at the moratorium phase of their ethnic identity formation. Lucy and Peter are the only adoptees in this study who were not told of their Māori genetics as children, learning of their ethnic background in their twenties and thirties. Lucy used to believe that she was Spanish, and Peter, who is fair in complexion, thought he was Pākehā. During their adolescence and formative years

it is possible that other identities (e.g. for Lucy being a twin) aside from their actual ethnicity were important to their core identity.

Peter and Lucy, while positive about their Māori identity recognise that there is a level of commitment and knowledge that they need before they can fully identify as Māori. Today, Peter self-identifies ethnically as Māori and Irish. He added that when he knows his whakapapa and can speak the language he will have a greater claim to identifying as Māori and having a say on *things Māori*. Lucy holds a similar view and describes herself as a *Rangatahi [young] Māori*.

Growing up although Jackie knew she was part-Māori, as a teenager she socially and ethnically self-identified as Pākehā. Her current view is that she is unsure which ethnicity to identify with. Her level of commitment to the Māori identity and culture suggest that she is at the diffusion/foreclosure stage. However, her attitudes and the internalising of her experiences suggest that she desires greater identity commitment. Jackie has lived and socialised (and still does) in a predominantly Pākehā region and has had little involvement in te reo and tikanga Māori experiences. In this study, Jackie was the adoptee who currently appears to be most emotionally affected by her perceptions of her ethnic identity. She observes that; *If you are taken out of your culture and brought up in another it is just life changing. It gives you many issues* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). Adding to her current situation, Jackie suffers from the effects of a head trauma, contributing to her current state of depression. However, she also admits she had had problems before this head injury.

As a teenager Jackie was embarrassed to be Māori and struggled with identity as an adolescent. This suggests that emotionally she was in a moratorium stage, which Phinney (1996) suggests sometimes creates within individuals, feelings of shame. Jackie's perception also supports that strand of social identity theory, which promotes the view that "negative intergroup comparisons may threaten group members' self-esteem, as a result of which they tend to identify less with their (lower status) group" (Spears et al., 1997, p. 227). Perhaps Jackie's current emotional challenges are due to her still coming to terms with how she perceives her Māori ethnicity. Although she values Māori culture and thinks it is important to her sense of self and core identity, she appears emotionally frustrated as connecting with her culture is out of her reach.

4.2 Adoptive Parents' Attitudes, Expectations and Behaviours

There is limited research that explores how family and environmental factors contribute to the shaping of ethnic identification during adolescence (Yasui, LaRue Dorham & Dishion, 2004). As parents play an important part in influencing the meanings children attach to their ethnicity (Phinney et al., 2001); this section examines the influence of adoptive families.

The following discussion examines the cultural socialisation strategies of the adoptive parents, such as whether adoptees were exposed to te reo and tikanga Māori experiences or lived in communities that provided socialisation opportunities with Māori. Cultural socialisation outcome research examines transracial adoptees ethnic experiences of their upbringing and the relationship between racial/ethnic identity and psychological adjustment (Lee, 2003). Important to such discussions is how the adoptees emotionally internalised their adoptive parents' implicit and explicit positive, negative and ambivalent attitudes about Māori. As adoptive parents were not interviewed the following observations are based on the adoptees' perceptions.

Te Reo and Tikanga Māori and the Bicultural/Mono-cultural Community

A lack of exposure to te reo and tikanga Māori experiences early in life did not necessarily dissuade some Māori adoptees from choosing later in life to ethnically identify as Māori or pursue such knowledge. For example, Mark who grew up in mono-cultural (Pākehā) community strongly identifies as Māori; whereas Nadia and Charlene who were raised in bicultural (Māori/Pākehā) communities do not strongly embrace the Māori identity. This surprising finding may be because in their pre-teens Nadia and Charlene moved to communities and schools where there was less exposure to Māori practices and people. During childhood Nadia and Charlene described their adoptee and ethnic worlds as egalitarian and *normal*, but as teenagers they noticed the distinctions between Māori and Pākehā. As teens they appeared to resolve their own ethnic identity questions by assuming a national identity or non-identity, because they felt marginalised by the social identity ascribed to Māori or because they did not see the value of distinguishing between Māori and Pākehā. This latter thought is supported by the women's view that it is important to treat everyone (Māori and Pākehā) the same. Having made the resolution not to distinguish between Māori and Pākehā, there was no more cause for concern or questioning surrounding

their own Māori ethnic identity. Perhaps for Charlene and Nadia, by 'un-normalising' what they once considered normal they were forced to reflect on the abnormality of their situation. Identifying strongly as Māori may jeopardise the other salient ethnicity – the Pākehā ethnicity that was also considered a normal part of their upbringing. Supporting this thought is that both girls preferred to use the terms *part-Māori*, suggesting that they did not want to exclude the non-Māori ethnic elements of their identity.

Jackie's perception of her adoption experience differed from Nadia and Charlene. She recalls that; *it just confirmed the abnormality of it all - it wasn't normal so I have always felt a bit angry and many issues* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). As previously discussed, Jackie believes she has missed out because she was raised outside of her Māori culture. This has had an emotional impact on her, affecting her self-concept. In contrast, perhaps Charlene and Nadia's early bicultural exposure meant that they had a more realistic perception about what it is to be Māori. This possibility is supported by Frankenberg's (1993) observations that those who yearn for belonging to a "bounded nameable culture" (p. 230) run the risk of romanticising the experience of being oppressed. Frankenberg adds that as a result they may ignore what it means to be part of the group that is dominant and normative. The bounded nameable ethnic group Jackie desired connection with is Māori and the dominant and normative group is Pākehā.

Parents Attitudes – Colour-blindness

While environmental supremacy philosophy ignores the differences between adoptive parents and adoptees, the "acknowledgement-of-difference" (Kirk, cited in Brodzinsky, 1993, p. 158) style of communication allows adoptive families to recognise that their adopted child is biologically different. Lee (2003) argues that this view is beneficial as adoptive parents are more likely to engage in enculturation and racial inoculation parenting strategies, which equip adoptees psychologically and with the abilities to develop a positive racial/ethnic identity. However, Brodzinsky (1993) argues that taken to the extreme an "insistence-on-difference" or a "denial-of-difference" (p. 158) may also be detrimental to the adoptee. What is important to assess, in the context of this thesis, is how the adoptees believed that their parents

concluded with or negated past adoption philosophies, and if this affected their connection with their Māori ethnic identity.

As perceived physical appearance is a strong contributor to global self-esteem (Santrock, 2007, p. 167), this study took into consideration how the adoptees internalised their parent's perceptions of their skin colour and ethnicity. The findings indicate that the majority of the Māori adoptees believed that their adoptive parents were colour-blind to their skin complexion, or as Jackie put it, her *beige* colouring. Jackie, Charlene and Nadia believed the differences between themselves and their adoptive family and their siblings (non-adoptees) was ignored or downplayed. However, despite this normalising, they were aware of these differences, which became particularly apparent when meeting people outside of the family. Nadia remembers how at high school people would compare her against her two older Pākehā brothers (non-adoptees), who were considered intelligent and it was assumed she would share this trait. Comparisons of physical likeness were also made between Nadia and her adopted sister who was Māori (but not biological related to Nadia). Nadia thinks people often attempt to find family likenesses even if they do not exist.

For some adoptees, feeling different from their adoptive family was internalised and related to feelings of low self-worth, rejection or feeling like a misfit. Paula comments; *You are told you are not different from anyone else and we love you the same, as if I was theirs - it was obvious I was not* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). Paula's scepticism of her adoptive parents colour-blindness may have also lead her to disbelieve their comments 'we love you the same'. Paula admits she felt inferior and awkward as a teenager, and said that she had a mistaken sense of superiority because of her inferiority. This inferiority could have been related to Paula's perception that her adoptive mother rejected her personality and that she could not meet her mother's expectations. Paula remembers her mother recording on a whiteboard her misdemeanours for the day and then being whipped with a jug cord: *I thought I was naughty. I come from a vivacious and outgoing birth family... and here I was in a family who was quiet, and introverted. I didn't talk too much as I thought I was too talkative* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). In Paula's case, feeling that her personality was not valued and her adoptive parents were negative towards Māori, compounded her feelings that her Māori ethnicity and her own identity was not valued.

This sense of differentness may have also contributed to her feelings of identity confusion. This thought supports Archer and Waterman's (cited in Santrock, 2007) theory that when adolescences sense weak family connectedness they may experience identity confusion.

In another example, Paula remembers contemplating adopting her child out. Her dad said to her she should adopt out to her own [ie. Māori]: *He said, he didn't know that brown babies were different from white babies and should be treated differently* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). Here, Paula recognises that her father has shifted his thinking by recognising that differences can exist between an adoptee and their adoptive family, particularly when the child is of a different ethnicity.

Even though Jackie's parents made no distinctions between herself and her non-adopted Pākehā siblings, Jackie felt different and still feels this way; *my brothers are both highly successful very good well - rich and then there is me. I am the one on the benefit and I am not doing anything. I am a single mum* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). Jackie's comparisons with her non-adopted siblings have affected her self-concept and self-confidence. She was the only participant who did not have another adopted sibling within her family and was also particularly eager to talk to the researcher.

For Lucy and Peter their parents' colour blindness extended to the fact that their Māori ethnicity was ignored. They felt discovering that they were Māori as an adult was a shock, but a positive experience. Lucy and Peter did not mention feeling confused about their ethnic identity or experiencing emotional issues as teenagers. On the other hand, not knowing they were Māori early on in their life may have meant they did not consciously seek te reo and tikanga Māori experiences as they did not consider it part of their ethnicity. Without such experiences and growing up in monocultural (Pākehā) environment meant there was less risk of social rejection from Māori.

The backgrounds of the Māori adoptees in this research are diverse in nature and their choices later in life are correspondingly varied. Parental encouragement to engage in te reo and tikanga Māori experiences in some cases also had a detrimental effect. As mentioned Charlene felt pressured to take te reo lessons, whereas Nadia's parents

allowed her to pursue her own interests, kaupapa Māori based or not. For some, such as Paula and Mark who thought their parents' were negative toward Māori, chose as adult adoptees to embrace the Māori social identity.

As the evidence illustrates, parents can influence Māori adoptees beliefs, but as adults such constructs can change. This suggests that other factors and experiences outside of the adoptive family environment have contributed to the Māori adoptees' emotional adjustment and current ethnic identity. Considering these observations, it is difficult to say definitively that cultural socialisation strategies used by adoptive parents, along with strong social binding towards an adoptive family, has a dominant impact on an adoptee's biological racial/ethnic identity commitment.

4.3 Salient Emotions and Connection

In this section, an assessment is offered of the view that a disconnection with Māori heritage has a negative impact on the Māori adoptee (Department of Social Welfare, 1986). Underlying this notion is the need to understand the origins of the Māori adoptees' salient emotions. To develop such an understanding, it is necessary to use the social constructivist approach, in which emotion is regarded as part of the actors introduction to the beliefs, values, norms and expectations of his/her culture and the shared expectations regarding appropriate behaviour (Harré, 1986, p. 33).

The discussion focuses on how the Māori adoptee internalises others' and their own expectations and perceptions as everyday truths, and how this results in emotional distress or emotional adjustment. Social emotions are a particular focus, in so far as they influence the Māori adoptees' perceptions and connection with their Māori ethnic identity. Interwoven are examples of salient experiences including birth family reunion stories.

Shame, Embarrassment and Whakamā

The most common social emotion expressed by the majority of the Māori adoptees during their navigation of tikanga Māori experiences, was a sense of whakamā. Whakamā is related to feelings of shame, inferiority, embarrassment, self-abasement, shyness, inadequacy, self-doubt or withdrawal (Sachdev, 1990). While very little has been written about the concept of whakamā in this context, various theorists (such as Cooley, Goffman, Erikson, cited in Scheff, 2002) have discussed the concept of

shame and its role in identity formation. Shame has also been described as social, regulating of the self-image, self-oriented, related to the entire self, linked to an undermining of one's values, ideals and goals, is due to a loss of reputation or privacy invasion, and motivates behaviours such as concealment and rumination (Teroni & Deonna, 2008). In trying to decipher the reason for this salient emotion in the Māori adoptees' narratives, it is useful to explore the common experiences that resulted in such a reaction.

From a social constructivist approach the following experiences and associated emotions share a commonality in that they reflect the Māori adoptees lack of a situated genetic history, lack of knowledge, lack of a lived experience, and lack of belonging to the exclusive group (Māori/Pākehā) and its associated expectations. Although not necessarily identical in definition, participants used the words shame and whakamā in conjunction with each other.

Knowing One's Bones - Whakamā/ Shame and Whakapapa

If many aspects of perceived social realities depend on what we take for granted (Flecha et al., 2003), one common domain taken for granted is certainly kinship, and such ties are particularly salient for many Māori. In this study, the majority of the research participants felt whakamā when they were required to identify their Māori lineage. Mark, who now knows his maternal whakapapa, remembers what it was like when he did not know anything: *Every Māori knows where they are from. There was an old expression in those days - where's your bones from? And if you don't know where your bones are from you felt totally embarrassed. I got to the stage where I dreaded sometimes meeting other Māori, because I would be embarrassed* (Mark, Interview, February, 20, 2011). Here, Mark has internalised the construct that it is shameful for a Māori person (any Māori person) to not know their whakapapa. While there are many Pākehā who do not know their ancestors, this does not seem so relevant.

The delivery of a mihi (greeting), which involves reciting whakapapa information, also caused anxiety. Dulcie dreads such situations and *avoids it like the plague* (Dulcie, Interview, March 31, 2011). To deal with such a circumstance, some of the adoptees hurry through the process, some use their adoptive parents names within their mihi and others, such as Nadia, if required, may use the name of the iwi attached

to the community of their childhood: *People can't take that away from me, because I can't prove it or whether it's in my blood or not* (Nadia, Interview, March 12, 2011). It is not clear what Nadia means by 'people' or how they will 'take it away' from her. Despite her argument that her Māori blood should be enough, she subscribes to the belief - even though she finds it unfair - that a whakapapa connection of some sort is needed. Nadia's diverse use of identities reflects the fluidity of her ethnic identity and her ability to save face and meet the required expectations. This behaviour supports theorist views (Stets & Burke, 2000) that an identity may be given salience or activated when individuals want to accomplish personal or social goals.

Not knowing one's whakapapa highlights for the Māori adoptees (and for others in similar situations) a displacement from the wider Māori collective. To cope in such situations the response is to behave whakamā. In the case of Māori adoptees this socially constructed emotion may reflect the consequence of the false identity ascribed to them by their adoption and the need to construct another false identity (e.g. iwi) to fit the expected cultural norm. This notion supports Lynd's (cited in Scheff, 2002) argument that shame is not to do with guilt or acts, but is about "the self and what one is" (pp. 84-99). For the Māori adoptees shame highlights their fictitious identity ascribed by others. Thus, having to relay a mihi invades their privacy and uncovers the secret, that they are an adoptee raised in a non-Māori family.

In some cases the shame of not knowing their genetic history was perceived as an injustice. For example Jackie stated that: *It was sort of like the whole aboriginal thing like they were trying to wipe out the whole aboriginal status of things and turn them into - teach them white ways and it didn't happen though* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). Here, Jackie argues that closed adoptions are designed to assimilate Māori into white families, however this did not happen to the extent that was perhaps envisaged. She relates her own Māori adoptee experience to the oppression of other indigenous groups. Jackie demonstrates how a powerful collective narrative can impact an individual.

Some of the other Māori adoptees perceived that not knowing their whakapapa resulted in pity or judgements from others, and that it was difficult for them to legitimately claim a Māori identity. This is particularly so with regards to applying for tertiary iwi scholarships, wherein whakapapa knowledge and an elder's endorsement

or reference is a requisite. Dulcie wishes she had an elder from her own iwi to verify her Māori identity. In Mark's case even though he has re-connected with Māori whānau, because of his adoptee status, he is not entitled to any of the iwi resources. He says Māori adoptees are classified as *non-persons*.

Feeling White in a Brown Environment - Whakamā/Shame and Knowledge

Understanding language and cultural practices can provide an individual with a sense of cultural belonging. Several of the Māori adoptees are embarrassed because they do not know te reo and tikanga Māori, and some, such as Dulcie, feels whakamā and a *bit white* in marae situations. Perhaps in such situations the adoptees are conscious that their identity is inauthentic and representative of an ascribed fictitious identity. They may not want to reveal this identity to others, hence their discomfort when they feel they are made to stand out. As Miller (1982) notes, "Self-consciousness is most prominent in any of us when we do something of which both we and others are aware and which is contrary to socially approved ways of behaving" (p. 17).

The Māori adoptees were particularly aware that it was important that engaging in Māori tikanga experiences involved certain social expectations. Paula remembers her high school experience as a new te reo learner: *You want to learn it because you know it is yours, but there is a whole lot of emotional barriers. You hear with your heart, but you can't communicate with it* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). Mark remembers his fear of entering his Māori language class for the first time: *I was absolutely trembling, but they made me feel welcome* (Mark, Interview, February, 20, 2011). Paula's comment is particularly intriguing, suggesting that there may be an emotional block that initially prevents some from fully connecting with te reo Māori, whether this block is linked to a sense of spiritual disconnection or related to a sense of shame may be an area worthy of future exploration. Dulcie and Mark shared a similar experience; Mark says as soon as he let go and stopped trying so hard, te reo Māori became easier. He believes he was so committed to using te reo Māori as a marker for his identity that it prevented the natural flow of the language. Mark also had the support of his birth sister and her husband who were stalwarts in te reo Māori.

Some of the adoptees felt whakamā when they are asked to translate Māori words or help others navigate a tikanga experience, such as marae protocol - especially when it is expected that she should know what to do. Several of the female adoptees recalled

experiences where they were asked to perform the karanga and their fear of such situations.

Being the only identifiable Māori in a group of non-Māori when navigating tikanga experiences also caused angst. Charlene described an experience at her children's childcare centre where two Māori ladies were visiting to provide professional development to the predominantly non-Māori staff. Upon seeing the ladies she purposely avoided them, so she would not be chosen to lead the rest of the staff in the appropriate protocol. She identified her apprehension of the situation and the fear of being singled out. A possible reason for why she reacted this way is that she had successfully integrated amongst her non-Māori peers, and the outsider (in this case the Māori visitors) and their expectations were seen as a threat to this integration. It may have also meant that her non-Māori peers would have viewed her differently, whereas Charlene preferred to blend into the group. She also doubted whether she would have had the required knowledge that the Māori visitors could have assumed she would possess – based on her brown skin colour. When she did talk to them, she explained her adoptee status, so they would change their expectation of her.

Adoptee as a Lower Status – Whakamā/Shame and Self-worth

A couple of the Māori adoptees experienced judgements from other Māori because they were adopted. Paula remembers arguing with her Māori husband, who said; '*You are no-one and you have no family*' (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). Paula said the comment was particularly hurtful, as she believed him. Charlene recalled a similar experience; *I don't have a lot to do with Māori now, but when I did a few years ago – yeah my perception was of them quite different, because they were very, very judgemental of me being brought up in a white family rather than Māori* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). Vivid in Charlene's memory was a comment from her ex-sister-in-law who was Māori and who yelled at her '*you're just the adopted one*'. This created a need for Charlene to justify her status; *Just because you are adopted doesn't mean you are any less inferior... just because you are brown doesn't mean that you are inferior to non-Māori* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). The fact that she discusses this experience suggests that such judgements (especially if believed) are impactful and a threat to her personal identity and self worth.

Fighting the Deficit Labels - Whakamā/Shame and the Stereotype

Another area of shame for the Māori adoptees was the deficit stereotypes of Māori. Charlene describes how she becomes self-conscious in situations when others see her as a *dumb Māori*. When she was questioned about why she thought this, she replied; *I can just see it on their faces* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). While no one has explicitly said that she is dumb (because she is Māori) she has internalised this perception of herself as true, despite externally communicating that such a view is fictitious. In essence, she is reflecting the Thomas Theorem (cited in Denzin, 1992) that “if individuals define a situation as real, they are real in consequences” (p. 38). This construct is relevant to the research question as it appears to be a barrier preventing her engagement with te reo and tikanga Māori experiences, and it affects her self-perception and her perception of her Māori identity. It should also be noted that while Charlene relates this construct to the deficit stereotype of Māori, this construct could have also have emerged from other elements of her identity. She described how she self-compares her intellect to that of her non-adopted siblings and her family, who she perceives places importance on intellect.

In O'Rourke and Ortony's (1994) grouping of emotions, pride and admiration share the same attribution category as reproach and shame. Perhaps a lack of pride or admiration for the Māori social identity results in reproach and shame toward the Māori social identity among Māori adoptees; the findings show at least some correlation. The adoptees who did not consider Māoridom as integral to their identity, were also acutely aware of the negative and deficit Māori identity. This issue is discussed in greater depth in the next chapter. On the other hand admiration for the notions defining the positive (and traditional) Māori social identity - such as te reo Māori fluency, tikanga understanding and whakapapa connection - also caused discomfort as self-comparisons were made.

Whakamā/Shame, Morality and Secrecy

Mead's (cited in Miller, 1982) perspective of shame/embarrassment is that it is an emotion that has powerful control over an individual's moral behaviour and it emerges within a social context. Considering this perspective, it is possible that the whakamā that the participants expressed is associated with feeling morally responsible for misrepresenting the Māori ethnicity, as was expressed in Lucy's

comment that she feels like a *traitor*. Furthermore, experiences that highlight the adoptees illegitimacy or ignorance of te reo and tikanga Māori and/or whakapapa knowledge may also produce feelings of whakamā.

In understanding why whakamā/shame is a salient emotion for the Māori adoptee, it is also worth considering the socio-cultural history of the closed-stranger Adoption Act 1955, and the moral values embedded in its formation. This Act was devised in an era when society was encouraged to 'cover-up' the sinfulness of young women having children out of wedlock (Else, 1991). The closing of records (until 1985), which is a defining feature of this Act, kept the shame of illegitimate children a secret (Griffith, K.C., 1997, p. 316). Perhaps the shame that the Māori adoptees in this study experience in their everyday interactions is linked to the legacy that this Adoption Act 1955 was founded upon. The fact that for some of the adoptees the secrecy about their past still exists in flimsy or non-existent records and half-truths may sub-consciously reinforce their sense of illegitimacy and shame of being born. Jackie, who was grateful that she was not aborted, suggests perhaps a sub-conscious reaction that reflects her understanding around the illegitimacy surrounding her birth.

Gratefulness – Acceptance/Rejection of the Family Identity

Several of the adoptees expressed gratitude for their adoptive situation. For example, Peter said; *I could not have wished for a better upbringing* (Peter, December, 15, 2010). After meeting her birth mother, Nadia was relieved that she had been adopted as she recognised her birth mother's emotional instability. She acknowledged her own stable upbringing adding, *I look on it positively that I gave them something and they gave something to me too in giving me life* (Nadia, Interview, March 12, 2011). Lucy expressed mixed emotions about her “white” schooling and indicated a mixture of loss and gratefulness: *I was deprived of a heck of a lot, but at the same time, through that education, I got a lot, but in terms of my ethnicity I suppose...* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). Jackie realises that she should be grateful for her current situation, but struggles with it when she is feeling down as she keeps looking at the negatives. However, like Nadia she recognises that had her birth mother raised her, she would have been rejected, as her birth mother had abandoned her half-sisters.

Expressing gratitude demonstrates to others the Māori adoptee’s emotional adjustment but also concurs with the environmental supremacy philosophy that an

adoptive family can be just as good as the original birth family (Griffith, K.C., 1997). Charlene and Nadia's neutral attitude toward their Māori social identity may be related to how they perceived their sense of belonging in their adoptive family; both are grateful for their upbringing, therefore there may not have been desire to search for an alternative social identity (Māori). Charlene's comment supports this notion: *I've always been quite happy with mum and dad and that is all I have needed. I have never needed anything more than that really* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). For others such as Mark, Dulcie and Paula who felt less of a connection with their adoptive family, perhaps the search for a Māori social identity or place of belonging was more important, hence their greater desire to connect with their Māori identity.

By subscribing to the 'gratitude attitude', the adoptees demonstrate a high degree of self-efficacy. They are able to cope with past experiences by offering a positive self-perception. The correlation between ethnic identification and gratitude in this context minimises the need to search for what one does not have, including one's ethnic identity, birth history and biological culture. Being grateful minimises the value given to politically salient victim-focussed narratives such as Māori children were stolen and assimilated into white families. Instead of adoptive families and government being seen as co-conspirators in a perceived wrongful act, they are seen as saviours. By attributing a different explanation to the historic reasons for their adoption, the Māori adoptees can choose the narrative that suits. Either way, Māori adoptees could be perceived as victims; individuals rescued by an undesirable but an understandable situation, or as a Māori person who was denied full access to their culture.

Being grateful for one's adoption status was also an attitude that some Māori adoptees perceived was reinforced by their social world, as was evident in Paula's comment regarding her school principal: *I am not sure if it was his South African attitude, but he said we (Paula and her brother) should be grateful that us brown children had white parents – actually that is not what he said, but that is the impression I got. He lectured me about bitterness and unforgiveness* (Paula, Interview, February, 4, 2011). For Paula, such perceptions were particularly hurtful at the time, as her parents were physically abusing her and it was assumed that she was exaggerating the situation and telling lies. Paula also internalised her experience, by not what was said, but by what

she perceived was inferred, which further demonstrates how a collective narrative can become a taken-for-granted truth.

Confusion and Directionless

Jackie believes her lack of direction in life is due to her missing core identity. She said she does not know who she is and that she feels lost. This loss may also be sub-consciously perpetuated by her perception that without a secure ethnic identity and the collective support of her biological kinship, she is without roots and a firm foundation to establish her role, purpose and destiny in life. This has affected other aspects of her identity and sense of self. She says she lacks confidence and something to be proud about. This low self-efficacy may be due to feeling different from her family and not knowing her *natural* strengths. As a young adult she tried to become a secretary like her adoptive mum, but realised it was not something she felt inclined to do, yet she did not know what alternative to choose: *I don't know what role I am meant to play and therefore I am misguided a lot* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). Interpreting this comment, Jackie appears mistrustful of her own and others actions. Based on past experiences she realises that others misguidance did not help her and following her adoptive family's expectations was not necessarily reflective of her core self. While Jackie's lack of direction may be related to her life experiences, not knowing one's purpose in life is a common emotion for many people, whether they are adopted or not. However, the perception of disassociation from one's own culture, which was experienced in varying degrees, was certainly one contributing factor to the feeling of being directionless.

Anger, Acting Out and Social Justice

For some of the Māori adoptees, feelings of anger seemed to surface whenever they questioned aspects of their identity. This anger was also related to other circumstances in their life. Dulcie, who could not direct her emotions through her sport due to an injury, says at high school she was *getting sort of angry* and then she got into trouble and went through the courts. Mark says that prior to his birth sister contacting him he had been a violent person most of his life and Lucy says she hates her *violent temper*. Perhaps in Lucy's case the inner anger she recognises is related to a variety of experiences throughout her life; for example, discovering her birth mother had passed on just before she could meet her, having an alcoholic adoptive father, having a

strained relationship with her twin sister, being denied a lived experience of learning te reo and tikanga Māori, and a general sense that such experiences were the result of other people's decisions. As a young adult, Lucy directed her anger and sense of social justice by becoming involved in various causes. Although she equates her strong commitment to social justice to her upbringing and education, to some extent, perhaps she also fights for causes as a means of directing her anger and sense of injustice in a positive way.

Social justice was also strong in Mark's upbringing. His Irish mining dad was a staunch unionist and saw the parallels between how the English treated the Irish and how they treated the Māori. As a boy, Mark remembers the union meetings at his parents' house and their plans for strikes. Maybe it was these early influences of fighting for one's rights and his dad's early teachings that he should not put up with grief from others that impacted Mark's life. Living in a mono-cultural Pākehā community he experienced racism, but followed his dad's advice: *One of the things that I learned from an early age was that violence does work, which it doesn't, but in a young child's eyes that was my way of reacting against them [bullies]*. This early tactic for survival, taught in his formative years, affected his decisions later in life. As a young man Mark rebelled and partook in crime and drugs and admits he had a temper. Mark's behaviour supports Erikson's (cited in Santrock, 2007) argument that delinquency is an attempt to establish an identity, although negative.

Grief, Loss, Intimacy, Missing Birth Parents and the Primal Wound

Erikson argues that tension between intimacy and isolation is a major developmental stage in early adulthood. If intimacy is not achieved, then isolation occurs (Santrock, 2007). A commonality that arose in some of the participants' narratives was a fear of intimacy and maintaining relationships with long-term partners. Verrier (1993) states low self-worth, intimacy and trust issues are common to the adoptee and relate closely to feelings of abandonment and rejection. Taking this into consideration, some of what the Māori adoptees shared may relate to being adopted. However, as emphasis and value is placed on the Māori collective, for the Māori adoptee, a sense of isolation may also be felt, and made salient by adoptive parents who have played down or ignored the adoptee's ethnic differences.

Dulcie discussed her insecurity in intimate relationships and thinks that it might be because she does not know her Māori birth father: *I think back in my baggage in my sub-conscious I have got this feeling, that they [boyfriends] are not going to stick around...I get really insecure* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). As a reaction to this perception Dulcie is independent, has several partners simultaneously, or is distant from the one she is with. Mark and Jackie also shared similar feelings of insecurity in relationships, and along with Peter are currently without long-term partners.

Such emotional reactions related to rejection supports Verrier's (1993) primal wound theory, perhaps by rejecting others who could be significant to them, the Māori adoptees are reflecting a sub-conscious defensive reaction, formed when the bond between birth mother and infant was broken. Extending this concept further to other biological connections, Dulcie's comments suggest she is uncommitted to male relationships, because sub-consciously her ideal male figure (her birth father) abandoned her. Rather than risk rejection in current relationships, it is best to avoid being rejected.

Some of the responses to interrupted intimacy suggest a close correlation with being a Māori adoptee in a non-Maori family. Paula said she has always sought out older Māori women as she has a need for a mother. This may be due to the unhappiness she experienced with her adoptive mother who abused her as a child, or it could be due to the aftermath of a primal wound resulting from the separation from her birth parents? Lucy said that she knew of several lesbian Māori adoptees and wondered if this was related to a need for a connection with their birth mothers. Alternatively, Lucy's observation might be more noticeable to her because she mixes in such social worlds and may have sought consciously or unconsciously others who share similar adoptive experiences.

In this discussion the emotions and responses to issues of intimacy provide an explanation as to why the Māori adoptee at times faces challenges when navigating their ethnic identity. Experiencing mistrust and feelings of rejection makes seeking new social identities challenging, especially when the desired social group is unsupportive or unreachable.

4.4 The Primal Wound - Reunions and Birth Parents

This section examines the role of the primal wound in more depth, analysing the participants' experiences of reunions or attempts at reunions with their birth parents. The intention here is to determine whether reconnections with a birth mother resulted in improved emotional adjustment and the healing of a primal wound, or if it had an adverse bearing on their ethnic identity commitment. Consideration is also given to how the absence of the birth father impacted on the Māori adoptee.

In this research, only Jackie has successfully connected with her birth mother and remains in contact. Dulcie, Nadia and Peter have talked briefly with their birth mothers, but have not maintained the connection. Some of the adoptees desire a reunion with birth parents, but due to incomplete records or their parents' death they have been unable to establish connections. Other adoptees have no desire to meet their birth parents. In the majority of cases where reunion has occurred, adoptees had initiated contact. However, in Mark's case his sister and in Nadia's case her birth mother made the first contact. None of the Māori adoptees in this case study have reunited with both paternal and maternal biological parents and families.

Dulcie discussed her frustration that despite meeting her Pākehā birth mother, information about her Māori birth father has not been provided. She described her birth mother's reticence at their reunion: *I thought - oh yeah I am baggage and seeing me physically made her sick...towards the end of my trip she just couldn't see me* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). Dulcie thinks her presence reminded her mum of past shame, unresolved issues, and/or a bad experience with her birth father. She senses that the potency of this shame made her mother physically sick. This shame could have been generated by past socio-cultural influences and adoption ideology. Alternatively her mother's physical reaction could be due to the resurfacing of repressed emotions that occurred as a result of being separated from her child or other factors unbeknown.

For adoptees such as Dulcie, who desires connection with her Māori social identity, the need to connect with her Māori heritage is strong. When she was younger, this longing affected her emotionally and she felt mixed up and angry: *I do recall I used to dream a lot about meeting him [her Māori birth father] - even now um yeah it's a bit hard, because I have sort of - I don't know if I have gotten over it the real desire to*

meet him... but back then it was... pressing, because I was really fucked up you know mentally and really insecure. I need to find that missing link (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). Here, Dulcie moves between the past and present tenses and but appears resigned to the fact that she may not meet her birth father made more pressing because of her birth mother's rejection. However, Dulcie also recognises that in the meantime, it is important to her that others accept her current identity status, reflected in her terse plea, *Accept me the way I am or get stuffed* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). Unlike the other adoptees, Dulcie possesses a greenstone tiki, a card written in Māori, and a gold cross that had been gifted to her from her birth father. Such tokens may also serve as a reminder to Dulcie of a connection that once was, but currently does not physically exist. Like Jackie's earlier comment about missing her core identity Dulcie believes that part of who she is, is missing.

While Dulcie's motivation for reunion with her birth mother was to gain information so she could provide her children with a whakapapa, the event did not produce the desired outcome. As a result, she is ambivalent about her birth father and observes that: *I am like far he must be really bad, but then I think she [her birth mother] is a bit screwed up, so maybe he is not a bad person. She actually has not said he is bad, but she says I will always tell you about him, but she never has* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). With such comments, it is evident that Dulcie holds conflicting ideas about her dad, and recognises her birth mother's assessment of her dad is implied, not explicitly said. After the unsuccessful reunion with her birth mother, Dulcie became very angry, which could be a reaction both to her birth mother's rejection and her own unfulfilled expectations.

Charlene's full birth certificate lists her birth mother's name and some details about her birth father (except his name). She applied for her birth certificate to find out her iwi, so she could access tribal land for hunting purposes. After receiving the documents, she realised that to find out the name of her iwi, she would have to make contact with her birth mother, which she does not want to do. She says she felt nothing when she found out her birth mother's name and added she always knew she was adopted so it was never really an issue. This reaction supports her construct that difficult situations are best avoided. Interestingly despite having the relevant information, she lost it. Some years later and since participating in this research, she

has resumed her search for her birth mother, although she still does not want to make physical contact with her. Her reasons for resuming the search are the same as before.

Like Charlene, Jackie once thought her Māori birth father could be a criminal, and that she was better off with her adoptive family. Such comments reflect how stereotypes of Māori can impact on Māori who have been brought up outside their culture. At her reunion, with her birth mother Jackie felt like she had met her *true family* and her *blood*. She has attempted to search for her Māori birth father but the name on her birth certificate is unreadable and her birth mother has limited information. Despite her reunion with her birth mother, Jackie's emotional state has not necessarily improved. This may be because she views her biological kinship as integral to her true self and therefore her incompleteness and unresolved ethnicity may be related to her unresolved biological paternal identity.

Peter spoke once over the phone with his Pākehā birth mother, however she did not acknowledge him. The impact of this was particularly painful. Fortunately he has been able to access his Māori heritage through his grandmother's name and uses this iwi name in his mihi, while acknowledging his adoptive parents' Irish-Catholic heritage. He describes the reunion process as a journey: *It was a hard road to follow and it can be painful... and I won't deny that. The hardest bit, and the best bit starts when I start to find out who I really am in my culture and in my people.* (Peter, Interview, December 15, 2010). Like Mark and Jackie, Peter considers Māori as his people and a reflection of his identity. However, while Peter is curious to know more about his history he also acknowledges the strong relationship he has with his adoptive parents. While discovering his Māori identity later in life may have given him the added maturity to deal with the challenges ahead, he still acknowledges the difficulty of the journey. The journey metaphor that Peter and also Mark and Lucy use reflects the perception that identity is not a static state, but rather a domain requiring navigation, searching and new discovery. This reflects the symbolic interactionist view that individuals develop perceptions about themselves and that these perceptions are subject to change (Rohall et al., 2007). Since discovering some of his Māori connection the challenge Peter now faces is how to resituate his identity in the face of this new knowledge. The journey metaphor also supports perceptions of other

searching adoptees who describe the process as a “journey without boundaries and rules, like stepping into the unknown” (Alexander, cited in Donovan, 1997, p. 84).

In this cohort, it appears there is not a strong correlation with a successful or unsuccessful reunion experience, maintained contact, and overall long-term psychological adjustment. In some cases, the reunions also raised new questions, particularly about the absent birth parent in the adoption triangle; that is, the birth father, who in the majority of instances is Māori. Peter acknowledged that finding out who he was requires more than connecting with his birth mother, whom he considers to be; *the vessel that brought him into the world* (Peter, December, 15, 2010). For him the door to knowing his Māori heritage was closed, so his journey ahead is to know more about what it is to be Māori, by learning about his culture.

In this context determining whether there was a primal wound, relied on examining whether the Māori adoptees believed that healing occurred when they reunited with their biological Māori whānau or birth parent/s. For Mark, there was a partial healing. However, as mentioned, he is the only Māori adoptee who has maintained contact with his Māori whānau. Yet, despite this connection, and his strong affinity with his Māori ethnic identity, the aftermath of his adoptive upbringing still, at times, has an emotional effect.

For those adoptees who have met birth parents (mothers) the birth parents have been Pākehā. Determining if the aftermath of a primal wound exists (or can be healed) requires further study with Māori adoptees who have made contact with birth whānau. Considering this point, the question still remains, without full connection with iwi, hapū and whānau, is self-identification as a Māori ethnic identity enough for the Māori adoptee? Such a question extends the primal wound theory to encompass more than the severed connection between a Māori adoptee and their birth mother by proposing that severing the connection between a Māori and their Māori whānau (iwi and hapū) may also be harmful. As the findings show for some of the Māori adoptees there is indeed an “aching sense of loss” (Verrier, 1993). Such a view, while supporting critics of the Adoption Act 1955 (Department of Social Welfare, 1986), warrants further investigation.

The observation made in this discussion is that as the adoptee discovers more about their biological identity, a cycle of discovery occurs, as new forms of identity are navigated. These new identities are revealed through interactions with biological kin, whereby new knowledge is shared or obtained. In cases where a biological connection did not occur, for some of the Māori adoptees, the unanswered questions about their origins proved frustrating. This is consistent with the views of theorists such as Archer (cited in Santrock, 2007), who proposes the idea that individuals are constantly exploring and committing to new identities in an ongoing cycle between the moratorium and achievement phases.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter reveals that being a Māori adoptee can be an emotional experience resulting in diverse self-perceptions. Further research is required with a larger cohort, to determine if growing up in a bicultural/mono-cultural community and adoptive parents' attitudes strongly affect adult adoptees ethnic-identification decisions. However, what was consistent in this study is that the internal commitment that the Māori adoptee gives to their ethnic identity impacts on their ethnic identity choices, irrespective of whether they were raised in a bicultural community or had adoptive parents tolerant of their Māori ethnicity. How this internal commitment evolves is complex and diverse, and reflects the subjective lived experiences, which the Māori adoptee interprets. This study supports similar research, which found that transracial adoptees exhibit a great deal of variability in their racial/ethnic identities (Lee, 2003). This research also reveals that these Māori adoptees had to determine their own ethnic-identity in an era when their society was also questioning the bounded discursive spaces determining Māori ethnic identity. Consequently, for many of the adoptees, the main emotional hurdle that they have had to face is lack of a clearly defined ethnic identity.

The assumptions and taken-for-granted realities of others were also emotionally impactful. As Jackie stated: *Every person who has been born has a birthright to know and it's just taken for granted* (Jackie, Interview March 20, 2011). However, this birth right for the Māori adoptee extends further than just knowing one's biological makeup; a positive outlook of being Māori connects a person to language, history, whenua, and whakapapa. A negative outlook connects being Māori to the gang

identity, low education and benefit dependency. The majority of the adoptees were aware of these conflicting identities. Interestingly, as indicated, some fought against the deficit identity label, but perhaps ironically, reflected it. They seemed to believe that they did not fit the traditional notions ascribed to the Māori identity, so therefore were keen to disprove the alternative negative identities. Ambivalence toward the Māori ethnic identity or their ability to shift identity is an indication of a determination within these adoptees not to be boxed or bounded by categories, that they feel they have been excluded or wish to be excluded from.

As is evident in the preceding discussion, being a Māori adoptee is not a stand-alone identity; what needs to be remembered is that a person's emotional challenges emerge from a variety of domains influenced by their personal histories. In this study, some of the adoptees also grappled with family abuse and dysfunction, additional fostering situations and living in children's homes. The considerable variety of these experiences all contributed to the internalisation of emotions and externalisation of reacting behaviours.

Determining the participants' overall emotional wellness in this research was inevitably subjective, especially as it was based solely on what the participants chose to share or what the researcher chose to interpret. There may be many more impactful memories, which were not verbalised as a result of the researcher's questioning or the participants' ability to remember.

The ability of the mind to forget (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986) and remember is also of relevance to the birth reunion experience. For some, the experience confirmed their belonging and connection, but did not necessarily lead to total fulfilment of identity, which suggests that other contributing factors such as socialisation during childhood and early adulthood experiences can be influential. Maintaining contact with birth families and a full connection with all family members may also influence the adoptee's sense of connection.

Having identified some of the resilience techniques that the Māori adoptees utilised to navigate their internalised perceptions of their circumstance, leads the discussion to the next topic: How does the Māori adoptee externalise their perceptions? This

behaviour is examined through a dramaturgy lens by considering how the adoptee performs their identity when socially interacting.

In describing how Māori adoptees navigate their ethnic identity, Lucy provides a descriptive metaphor that explains her emotional perspective: *You stutter and you go backwards and you end up feeling you have gone into a very hot boiling pool of water and you are being crisped around the edges. I think at the time you become possibly a little less natural - you become tentative, hesitant - you are a bit more suspicious about your own vulnerabilities and protecting yourself* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). This statement describes the power of significant experiences on thoughts, and explains how whakamā can act as a protective strategy.

While this study looks at the interpersonal perceptions of the Māori adoptee and their experiences, perhaps a new narrative needs to be added to the discussion. As Kenwood (1999) attests, “to misallocate a problem at the interpersonal level, when in reality that problem is located at the societal level is to attribute power over a problem to an individual when there is none” (p. 181). On the other hand, placing importance on external factors without considering how they have been subjectively interpreted may also be limiting. This researcher proposes that perhaps the answer for transformation lies somewhere in-between.

CHAPTER 5. NAVIGATING THE IDENTITY PERFORMANCE

The ‘soft’ constructivist view of identity emphasises its fluidity and multiplicity (Butler-Sweet, 2001). This is in keeping with McIntosh’s (2005) description of the ‘fluid Māori identity’, which is heterogeneous and different from essentialist and traditional views of Māori identity. The intention of this chapter is add to such discussions about Māori identity and consider how the Māori adoptee formulates their identity and the effect of this articulation.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, one way to explore the fluidity and multiplicity of the Māori identity is to examine how the Māori adoptee performs their ethnic identity in what Goffman (cited in Lawler, 2008) describes as front-stage (public) and back-stage (private) regions. This dramaturgical approach is helpful for analysing the function of such performances and how they contribute to the reinforcement of the Māori adoptees’ ethnic, social and personal identities. This theoretical approach considers the roles that individuals adopt in social interactions and then how these roles, become part of the person. This leads to an analysis of the impressions that the Māori adoptee constructs in these roles and how these performances reflect deeply embedded meanings regarding the Māori ethnic identity.

This chapter also elaborates further on social identity theory by exploring the resilience and coping techniques that Māori adoptees employ when navigating their social groups and how they self-categorise themselves based on common stereotypes of Māori as a means of social binding. The function of such identity performances is reviewed, as is whether the adoptee experiences a sense of inauthenticity. As Verrier (1993) states that while most people have a social persona, “the discrepancy between the inside self and outside self is more exaggerated in adoptees” (p. 35). Doniger (cited in Lawler, 2008) also argues that masquerades tell a deeper truth and reaffirms an enduring self. Understanding if there is a discrepancy and a deeper truth beneath the masquerade and whether this affects the Māori adoptees’ ethnic commitment is one of the intentions of this analysis.

5.1 Externalising Emotion and Experience: Coping Strategies and Resilience

‘Mastery’ and ‘self-efficacy’ are terms used to describe how individuals perceive and control their environment and cope with problems (Rohall et al., 2007). As shown so far, how the Māori adoptees in this study interpreted their social interactions emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally varied substantially. The next area of enquiry explores how the adoptees resilience techniques empower or constrain their life choices and their engagement with their Māori ethnic identity.

Forgetting and Moving On

A common coping strategy some participants in this study shared was to dismiss and move on from emotional challenges. Charlene noted that: *Things that are negative that happen in my life they get wiped out... I have no recollection of them so they must get pushed into my sub-conscious. I deal with them and move on... and just don't think about it anymore* (Charlene, Interview, December 6, 2010). This selective amnesia can be construed as a form of cognitive rationalising. By not giving any meaning to painful experiences, emotional balance is preserved. Her neutral attitude toward knowing her birth mother's name and her Māori ethnicity may also reflect this coping strategy. Identifying with her Māori ethnicity requires facing the fact that she grew up disengaged from her birth whānau, hapū and iwi. Meeting her birth mother may also bring to the surface feelings she has suppressed or avoided.

Nadia also shared a neutral attitude toward connecting with her birth heritage and her Māori ethnicity. Her reaction supports K.C. Griffith's (1997) observations that ambivalence about a dependent relationship diminishes the desire to mourn or grieve the relationship loss, and that suppressed feelings is a sign of an adoptee's underlying grief. Jackie recognised that to improve her emotional state she needs to change her thought patterns and accept her feelings and the little knowledge she has about herself. Dulcie expressed a similar view with regards to her search for her birth father.

A function of the ‘moving on’ coping strategy is that enables the adoptee to situate their identity in the present. When structuring their ethnic identity, rather than their sense of self grounded upon their unknown birth history, they are able to formulate who they are based upon what they do know. Role distance and stigma are impression management concepts (Ritzer, 2007); by distancing themselves from their birth

identities and other Māori, the adoptees are able to avoid social stigma and social expectations.

Avoidance and Shyness

A similar resilience technique to moving on is avoidance, which serves the purpose of minimising challenging situations and preserving self-esteem. This is related to the social emotion of whakamā/shame discussed in Chapter four. For example, as an adolescent Dulcie says she *went into her shell*, and now as an adult she says she will sometimes withdraw or feel shy, particularly when participating in kaupapa Māori activities: *If I was a confident person... and didn't give a shit about what anyone else thought I would go to those things... or I would probably be able to speak Māori better* (Dulcie, Interview, March, 31, 2011). Dulcie adds that her shyness is related to not knowing her Māori roots. Charlene also said she was shy, although admitted not many people would know it as she appears confident. This shows self-awareness that there is a discrepancy between her public persona and internal self-concept.

Isolation, Trust and Identity Confusion

One consequence of avoidance and moving on tactics is that it develops a sense of isolation. As identity theorist Erikson (cited in Santrock, 2007) recognised, adolescents who suffer identity confusion may withdraw and isolate themselves in their peers' world. Unlike the other adoptees, Mark was fortunate that his birth sister contacted him and enabled him to re-connect with his Māori whānau. However, despite this re-connection, Mark says he still feels a sense of isolation. He observes that: *You can only really rely on yourself. I have always felt that isolation. I find it very hard to trust [others]* (Mark, Interview, February, 20, 2011). It is difficult to determine why Mark feels this way; but it may be because isolation is a deeply embedded construct which has been present throughout his life and reinforces the fact that there are still gaps in his biological history and elements of his identity that need to be formed.

While isolation and alienation can be common emotional experiences amongst Māori adoptees and may be related to grief issues (Verrier, 1993; Griffith, K.C., 1997), such emotions may serve a role in providing respite from the diverse and sometimes conflicting identities that the Māori adoptees feel they must perform, or the associated

expectations that they must follow. This emotional reaction also explains a state of being, which has been internalised as part of the Māori adoptees' core identity.

Feeling isolated and disconnected may be particularly salient for the Māori adoptee who is disconnected from whānau, hapū or iwi, but who believes being 'truly' Māori and 'truly' themselves requires such a connection. Thus, to fully connect in life with one's core self requires knowing the origins of one's core self. For some of the Māori adoptees who believed knowledge of their birth history and Māori identity is important to their sense of identity, and who have not made contact with their birth whānau, their sense of isolation was noticeably intensified.

Compartmentalisation and Diverse Social Identities

Another behaviour that helped the adoptees navigate their diverse social identities was to switch identities like a chameleon. Lucy used this technique to deal with the conflicts between her own thoughts and that of her family: *As I discovered more and more about my own Māori identity and where I felt comfortable, I kept that part of my life closed off from the other members of family* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). Lucy chose to live in a town distant from her family, and says this helped her to discover who she was and what she stood for. She believes this *silo technique* enables her to cope with the different facets of her life and as some of her social groups are exclusive; it is easier to *jump in and out* of these groups rather than mingle her worlds together. She thinks this technique of compartmentalising life, while not unique, is perhaps more heightened with Māori adoptees. Perhaps Lucy also has an understanding of the possible conflicts that may arise between her diverse social groups, and therefore protects her friends and herself by ensuring her worlds do not mix.

Other Māori adoptees, such as Mark and Dulcie, also recognise their ability to adapt to the diverse expectations of others. The multiple selves these adoptees identify are similar to the alternation model, which describes how an individual can know and understand different cultures and alter their behaviour to fit a particular social context (Santrock, 2007). A question worthy of future exploration is whether this chameleon-like identity creates a sense of inauthenticity or confusion. As Kivisto and Pittman (2008) note, "the demands of conflicting roles in an individual's life may be incompatible and cause distinct problems" (p. 285).

Seeking Support from Others

Several of the Māori adoptees admitted that they find it particularly difficult following the finer nuances of cultural practices and when navigating kaupapa Māori situations, they sought the support of an ally or support person. Lucy described how she was asked to bless the house of a deceased relative, so she sought advice from a Māori work colleague: *I knew I had to do it and [colleague's name] gave me the strength by saying - your heart is in the right place, so therefore it is valid - she legitimised me on that* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). For Lucy, receiving support from another Māori person gave her the confidence to try an unfamiliar experience and a sense of social acceptance. Understanding support people helped some of the adoptees redefine or reshape their ethnic identity, by guiding the adoptees in the finer nuances of cultural practice. With this increased schematic knowledge, some of the adoptees felt that they could more authentically call themselves Māori, as they were aware of the protocol (or required script). The adoptees who had received such support appeared to be the ones who were most interested in and engaged in Māori culture. Of course, the need for social confidence is not unique to Māori adoptees, but is another layer of identity that they have to grapple with on top of the other challenges that have been discussed thus far.

5.2 Performed Identities

In this section, an examination is undertaken into the types of identities that the Māori adoptee performs to navigate their diverse social world. Each identity type is given a label and its enduring traits are explained and are described for their role or image that the adoptee is attempting to convey. While there may be multiple identities that these Māori adoptees perform, the types of ‘colloquially-referred-to’ identities discussed in this chapter include ‘the baddie’, ‘the activist’, ‘the traitor’, ‘the high achiever’, ‘the primitive natural athlete’, ‘the hori’, ‘the joker’, ‘the plastic Māori’ and ‘the quintessential Māori’. The motivations that contribute to such performances relate to how the adoptee emotionally interprets their social interactions and how they cope with these interactions. Some of the performances are also examined for their correlation to stereotypical views perpetuated about Māori identity. Such stereotypes may emerge from Pākehā perception of Māori, and/or Māori perception of Māori.

The Baddie

While some research findings differ on their view that transracial adoptees exhibit more psychological and behavioural issues than non-adoptees (Butler-Sweet, 2001), in this study several of the participants exhibited detrimental externalising behaviours during adolescence and early adulthood. For some, this included rebelling at school, taking drugs and/or partaking in criminal behaviour. According to Sroufe et al., (cited in Santrock, 2007) such adolescence behaviours may be related to avoidant attachment in infancy. In this study, the adoptees' teen behaviour is possibly attributable to this observation. This view is also consistent with Verrier's (1993) primal wound theory (see Chapter two).

Another possible advantage of the 'baddie' performance is that it can be used to deflect from the adoptee's cultural identity. As Mark stated, being bad overrode the *cultural thing*. Dulcie and Jackie said their teenage rebellion was due to their identity issues. Jackie comments: *It was definitely something deeper than just being naughty. It was not knowing who I am and not knowing who I look like. It is still very present today* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). In such cases, it was preferential to be seen as bad, as opposed to a person who is Māori, but knows nothing about being Māori.

Acting bad may also be a consequence of the imagined judgements that Māori adoptees may perceive are placed upon them as a Māori person. A poor self-image and fragile self-esteem may mean that there is a need to live up to the expectations of this label. When the visible images of Māori are negative and without direct experiences with other Māori, the Māori adoptee has to base their perceptions of Māori on limited knowledge. As Jackie said, her teenage views of Māori were based on what she saw in the media, and these perceptions were all negative.

Such outcomes also appear to have had a continued long-term effect on some of the adoptees self-perception and identity performance. For example, Mark says he often feels that he has to tell others of his bad past: *I always feel like I have to let people know who I am because sometimes it can be misleading – 'oh you are really a nice person' – and yep I have also been a very bad person too* (Mark, Interview, February, 20, 2011). Mark thinks the reason for this declaration is that he often reminds himself about his past. This action could also be a self-protective strategy, to keep people at a distance. He added that work colleagues say that sometimes he hides behind the bad

persona to remain in the background and Mark agrees. While aware of the discrepancy between his past and present identities, Mark demonstrates the need to warn others that the ascribed identity that they hold of him is incomplete. Giving importance and meaning to his past baddie image indicates that Mark struggles to completely lose an identity that was salient in his life for a number of years. These observations support Goffman's (cited in Lawler, 2008) understanding of identity that the mask (or the doing of identity) is what makes the person or in other words "the self arises in the process of performance" (Kivisto & Pittman, 2008, p. 273). Perhaps when such a performance is conducted over a reasonable length of time and is given importance, it becomes part of a person's expected and then enduring self. When a change occurs, as in Mark's case after he met birth whānau he needed to unravel or redefine his enduring self. Such ideas add to the debate about whether identity is static or fluid. What seems to be the case, based on the participants' experiences, is that some identities are more static than others, and are dependent on the motivation behind the performance.

The Radical Activist and the Traitor

As mentioned in Chapter three, Lucy acquired an activist identity. Her strong sense of social justice emerged after noticing how acquaintances in her *white elite* world behaved. She described taking several of the urban Māori youth she worked with to her surf club: *They [the youth] weren't welcome, because they were automatically bad buggers, because of where they lived* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). For Lucy this experience illustrated the double standards that existed amongst her peers who enacted the white, wealthy and privileged Pākehā stereotype. Lucy's developing 'social conscious' and activist identity may be in response to discovering that she was Māori. She was unable to defend Māori in her younger years, but now sees it as her role to do this. Her work, life and educational choices have enabled her to perform this role and intensify this desire.

Lucy says she often feels the need to question whether she has stayed true to her values and beliefs; *... some of that is my own evaluation. Like I think back as a young person I might have been an activist, but I didn't have the political – the depth of reading and knowledge that I have now* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). The political activist role Lucy currently lives compensates for these earlier shortcomings.

However, she is also aware of others' reactions when she chooses to perform this identity or to question their attitudes and beliefs: *Instead of saying – you know what you said, have you really thought about how that could be heard or received - I would normally say that comment is really racist. So that immediately puts that person on the defensive* (Lucy, Interview, November, 23, 2010). While consciously the intention of such an act is to educate the others around her, Lucy is also aware that her comments may be interpreted too blunt, but makes the comments anyway. Standing firm to her beliefs at the risk of being socially outcast could be the manifestation of a sub-conscious need for punishment that she feels she deserves. For example, she said she feels like a traitor and that before she knew she was Māori she should have done more to stand up for Māori causes. Lucy's identity performance could also be related to her awareness that by acting the radical and political activist role, she is open to certain stereotypical connotations. Wall (1997) notes media perceptions of the 'radical political activist', defines Māori as a 'violent primitive savage' and a 'social deviant'. Lucy recognises that her actions do not always match her ideal identity. The conflict she therefore experiences may be related to the choice she feels she has to make between acting the social deviant (radical activist) and the passive onlooker (traitor).

The High Achiever and Primitive Natural Athlete

Achieving success was another common trait that the Māori adoptees in this study desired. Lucy and Mark found their success through sports. Mark said it was the one arena where physical attributes outweighed where you came from and who you were. Māori as the 'primitive natural athlete' is another common stereotype, which Wall (1997) argues is promoted in New Zealand through 'racialised discourse'. In Lucy and Mark's case, it is unclear whether they subscribe to such an identity or received encouragement from others to pursue their natural strengths as a Māori. Nevertheless, perhaps in other cases this perceived positive and desirable identity when internalised provides a way to act the 'warrior role' as opposed to the 'victim role'.

During her teens, Paula was recognised for her academic and musical abilities. She says playing the piano enabled her to express her real self. For Paula, feeling the odd one out within her adoptive family was perhaps compensated by the recognition that she received for her musical talent.

The seeking of success may relate to an innate need to strive for perfection and prove self-worth. In some cases, adoptees were told they were specially chosen. Verrier (1993) states that a consequence of telling an adoptee that they are special is that adoptees then place an expectation on themselves that they need to succeed to receive parental approval. In regards to ethnicity, a consequence of this striving for perfection is that it may make the Māori adoptee hesitant to try new te reo and tikanga Māori experiences, for fear that they cannot master what is required.

While many people in life seek success, the participants in this study perhaps sought this recognition because it was an identity outside of being adopted or what they perceived as being Māori. Being an adoptee or Māori are identities forced upon them, whereas being successful (or bad, or an activist) are identities that to some extent can be self-created. The creation of such an identity may reflect an innate need to redefine one's self-identity and search for substitute identities, to fulfil an emotional void, compensate for feelings of inferiority, increase self-worth, build self-esteem, and to develop a sense of collective success and belonging. While the participants shared the perception that such identities were unrelated to their ethnicity, perhaps subconsciously they were, in fact, subscribing to stereotypes so embedded and accepted that the need to question them was seen as irrelevant.

The Hori and the Joker

Goffman (cited in Kivisto & Pittman, 2008) says methods of coping or emotional management includes 'joking' or playing out a 'contradictory role' in certain situations. In this study, the participants identified that they used humour to help them navigate their identity. For example, sometimes Jackie demonstrates the caricature of Māori as the 'comic other' (Wall, 1997, p. 42) in her depiction of the *hori Māori*. She uses this act to aggravate others or to generate a laugh. Although proud to identify as part-Māori, Jackie says if others are making stereotypical comments about Māori, she will play into the stereotype: *I will definitely play it up now if I get targeted... I guess it is trying to find humour in something you are not okay with. People don't look at you as much if you make it funny* (Jackie, Interview, March 20, 2011). Jackie added that she felt awful saying that she performs the hori-joker role.

The reason for Jackie's joker performance may be motivated by a need to disguise the real Jackie. It enables the audience to shift their focus from the individual (i.e. Jackie)

to a collective identity. For Jackie, whose main social world has consisted of non-Māori, this act provides a way to relate to her audience, laugh at a stereotype of Māori she finds embarrassing, and trivialise the situation. It also provides a means by which she can establish her own credibility as a Māori person. Rather than being the butt of the joke, she turns the joke upon herself to gain control of the situation. As Vucetic (2004) has found minorities may tell more self-deprecating jokes because they have learned to accept the out-group's stereotype of themselves. In Jackie's performance, it may not necessarily reflect her acceptance of such a stereotype, but rather, provides a means of socially identifying and relating as a minority identity, albeit a negative one.

The adoptees possessing a stronger affiliation to their Māori ethnic identity did not mention that they performed the hori role. Jackie's identity-confusion suggests that while acting the joker serves a purpose, it may also not give her full satisfaction or may mismatch her understanding of an ideal identity. These observations support Vucetic's (2004) suggestion that "jokes are used as a tool to alleviate a loss of a sense of place and identity" (pp. 8-9).

As mentioned in Chapter three, like Jackie, Nadia, Charlene, and Paula were also aware of the hori identity or its equivalent, *pōhara*. However, Charlene was particularly keen that others did not perceive her or her children as hori. She thinks she maintains this view now to uphold her pride. Nadia, at times, during her interview purposefully mispronounced Māori and said *Mari* to indicate a deficit perception of Māori. She described how a Māori boy at her school, who was raised by his grandparents, spoke posh and was different from the other *bros* (the other Māori boys). Nadia equated socio-economic status and generational differences as distinguishing factors that set this boy apart from the poorer and less educated *Mari bros* (hori) raised by a younger generation. Later, Nadia makes the distinction between the two types of Māori more explicitly and laughs as she says: ... *oh yeah the hori ones and the posh ones* (Nadia, Interview, March 12, 2011). While using these terms Nadia laughed or changed her tone of voice, which suggests that a performance was taking place.

While some of the Māori adoptees performed the hori identity as a means of gaining social acceptance, others fought against being categorised this way. The commonality between Charlene, Paula, Nadia, and Jackie is that they are all of the similar age and

appeared the most affected by the hori label. Perhaps this perception is due to the cultural politics that occurred when they were teenagers in the 1980s, and the ensuing humour that arose around this time. Such humour included popular New Zealand television comedians, such as Billy T. James, who used parodies to demonstrate stereotypical Māori and Pākehā identities. As Vucetic (2004) states, “what makes jokes a powerful political tool is their embeddedness in popular culture, through jokes, ideas and beliefs about the self and others can be transmitted to the lives of ordinary people” (p. 25). Billy T. James emerged at a politically salient time; while his television performances not so subtly highlighted given stereotypes, the other effect was that Billy T. James became the Māori stereotype in the “guise of the caricature” (Wall, 1997, p. 42).

The Plastic Māori and the Quintessential Māori

While the aforementioned identities have been seen as performances, another identity some of the Māori adoptees ascribed to themselves was that of the “plastic Māori” label. This was alluded to as the *Pākehāfied Māori*, the *brown-skinned Pākehā*, the *Mallow-puff* and the *Potato*. In this study these terms are used to describe someone who appears physically brown, but who has the inner thoughts and behaviours of a white (Pākehā) person. Often, such identities arose when the adoptees were required to utilise their Māori ethnic identity and explain to others why they might appear inauthentic and could not follow the expected social norms required of being Māori. Such norms might include connecting with a marae, speaking te reo Māori, liking kaimoana (seafood) or talking like a Māori. Some of the adoptees say they were sometimes teased for their *Pākehā ways*. At times too – like the hori act – the Māori adoptees played into this expected performance. This was acknowledged by Dulcie and Paula’s comments where they made excuses for their behaviour based on their Pākehā upbringing. At other times, as in Charlene's case, this label was used to illustrate to others why she lacked the appropriate te reo and tikanga Māori knowledge.

The plastic Māori concept has parallels with the stereotype of the ‘quintessential Māori’. Wall (1997) states the quintessential Māori identity differs from other stereotypes, in that it is generated from Māori “to establish a foundation for political activism” (p. 43). This identity is recognised for its primitive, exotic and romantic

traits steeped in the traditions of land, family and ancestry, where the “past is reified and romanticised...and differences within Māori are erased” (p. 43). For the Māori adoptee, without an understanding of their birth past, choosing the title of plastic Māori pre-empts the possibility that ‘social faux pas’ might occur, and also provides an explanation as to why such mistakes might happen. In this study, the plastic Māori identity usually occurred when the Māori adoptees were required to explain their behaviour to other Māori, suggesting that it is also used as a technique to establish a social connection with Māori. The plastic Māori identity helps minimise whakamā feelings generated by unfamiliar situations. In short, by racialising the Pākehā side of themselves as the other, the Māori adoptee can gain greater sympathy from the listener and hopefully acceptance.

5.3 The Function of Identities

The identity-types explored in the preceding section are based on stereotypes, and serve the function of either distancing others (baddie or activist), or as a means of gaining social acceptance (high achiever, hori, joker, plastic Māori). Each performance and coping strategy, (in their different ways) relate also to a feeling of disconnection with the Māori social identity. Being the joker and hori trivialises the past, makes light of a perceived shameful Māori identity, and highlights what one is not. Being whakamā or appearing inconspicuous and withdrawn hides one's lack of historical knowledge about Māori cultural practices. Acting the bad person prevents others from getting close to the past and provides the option of another identity. Being an activist counteracts feelings of shame associated with past inaction. As a couple of the adoptees mentioned, the shifting of these identities and their associated meanings depended on whom the adoptee was interacting with and which social identity they sought.

The source of identity performances also appears to be driven by emotional directives and how at ease the adoptees feel about navigating situations. For example some identities are performed as a means of gaining reactions from others, to counteract judgements from others, or are motivated by the Māori adoptees' personal history. In line with the constructivist view, that identity is fluid, some of the adoptees could pinpoint various stages in their lives at which identity shifts had occurred. For example, Mark recognised a shifting of identity as he acquired new knowledge about

his past and also when he began learning te reo Māori. Lucy recognised how her social justice identity was enhanced after her tertiary studies, and Jackie is now more aware of herself when she acts the joker or puts on the hori Māori act. Such observations suggest that these adoptees are conscious of their performances; however they may be conscious of such performances because they were asked to reflect upon them. Further analysis is needed to determine whether during their performances they are conscious of their self-personifications.

The Adoptee's Perception of their Identities and its Effect on Ethnic Commitment

While various identity performances have been analysed for their possible origins, some of the Māori adoptees perceived these identities as part of who they are, and a reflection of their core self. For example, Charlene believed she was shy and Mark held to his bad self-image. This supports Goffman's (cited in Lawler, 2008) that "the mask makes us who we really are" (p. 108). Goffman also believes that such performances are something individuals have little control over and are essentially acts of social binding (Lawler, 2008). The diverse Māori identities described in this chapter, while employed as coping strategies, resulted in mixed feelings and at times inhibited the Māori adoptees' confidence in seeking new challenges or knowledge. Considering Lawler's (2008) observations about identity performance, these feelings may stem from the perception that in the pursuit of achieving an identity, the adoptee in such cases is aware of the constraints and limits such performances may impose on them. Furthermore the whakamā or shame discussed in Chapter four further highlights for Māori adoptees the fact that some of them are performing an identity outside what they perceive is the expected social norm. Perhaps the inauthenticity and their identity confusion relates to confusion over the expected social norms and how best to modify their identity performance to ensure social connection.

Choosing the hori or joker label, while providing a social connection for the Māori adoptee wanting to relate to non-Māori, could have the opposite effect for the Māori adoptee wanting to connect with Māori who are likely to consider such portrayals as offensive. Choosing the shy performance keeps the Māori adoptee invisible, making it hard for other Māori to help the Māori adoptee navigate te reo and tikanga Māori situations. By avoiding such situations, the shy Māori avoids risks associated with such experiences. Choosing the bad Māori label also makes it hard for others to

support the adoptee, as the social other may perceive them as unapproachable. Choosing the political social activist role may cultivate the adoptee's inner feelings that there are distinctive differences between Māori and Pākehā, and this may intensify the adoptees' feelings of isolation and culture loss.

5.4 Conclusions

The intention of this chapter was to identify and discuss some of the coping strategies and performances that the Māori adoptees engage in. The examples given are by no means an exhaustive list. Although subjective in its interpretations, the main aim of this discussion was to provide insights into how Māori adoptees form and perform their identities. By exploring the performances of identity, this highlights how within a person's sense of ethnic identity there are sub-types and other motivations at play, such as a need to maintain an intact personal identity, and the influence of socio-economic class and ethnic stereotypes. Such performances demonstrate the complexity that the Māori adoptee faces, which can create identity confusion and inhibit full engagement with the Māori social identity. By identifying common performances, it becomes possible to recognise deeply embedded constructs that individuals can hold about their identity. This offers a means whereby identity performances that inhibit the Māori adoptee's sense of self might be interrupted and new narratives formed.

Being Māori, being adopted, or being a Māori adoptee are identity concepts, which are integral parts of the research participants' lives whether they like it, or not. The importance the participants place on specific identities within their personal identity also varies. This discussion shows how the Māori adoptee modifies their behaviour according to their social other, and highlights the assumptions the Māori adoptee makes about others and themselves. When asked, the Māori adoptees usually provided reasons for their performances and were able to recognise when their backstage and front of stage performances were incongruent. In the 'doing' (Lawyer, 2008) of identity, the Māori adoptees demonstrate their diverse interpretations of their ethnic and adoption experience.

The findings highlight how essentialist and homogenous assumptions about Māori identity can affect the way that the Māori adoptee enacts their Māori social identity.

By promoting tolerance of the fluidity and multiplicity of Māori identity definitions, it is hoped that the Māori adoptee can perform identities that empower instead of constrain. To achieve such a goal requires the performer to recognise how some coping strategies may suppress emotions and obstruct future change. Secondly, individuals and collective groups need to recognise the power of stereotypes on an individual's identity performance. As Goffman (cited in Kivisto & Pittman, 2008) states, “teams are responsible for the creation of social reality” (p. 273); if this is so, then collectives must question how such perceptions of social reality are created. Shame and feeling inauthentic featured strongly in the participants' perception of their social reality. To step outside of unified concepts of what it is to be Māori and appeal to their diverse social groups, the Māori adoptee must constantly assess what is required from their audience. As Goffman (cited in Kivisto & Pittman, 2008) points out, to achieve such expectations individuals must manipulate common understandings and for the Māori adoptee this is achieved through a variety of different performances.

To understand Māori adoptees as a cohort requires unpacking the types of social connections they seek from others. In the course of this research, a strong message that emerged in the scripts is ‘do not judge me. I may be this way, but I am different from what you expect me to be’. Thus, in short, the Māori adoptee perceives that their internalisation and externalisation of their identity and their perceptions of themselves, and others perceptions of them, is at odds. Goffman (cited in Kivisto & Pittman, 2008) was also conscious of the effect of such performances and the insecurity that arises. He argues that individuals must decide the impression of reality that will be projected whether they deem it true or untrue (Kivisto & Pittman, 2008). In other words although the Māori adoptees may not perceive the plastic or hori Māori performances as an authentic self-representation, such roles do perform a function. Finding an impression of reality that the Māori adoptee deems authentic is the challenge. As this chapter has demonstrated, the version of Māori identity that the adoptees perform, come in a variety of guises (e.g. baddie, activist...). Interrupting these performances requires disassembling the taken-for-granted assumptions that the self and the other have about the Māori identity.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION: NAVIGATING THE FUTURE

6.1 The Participants' Voice

Challenging Essentialist Notions of Māori Identity

As mentioned in the introductory chapter some of New Zealand's recent social policy has aimed to meet the needs of some Māori. However, this researcher supports views of others (Durie; Ratima & Ratima; Kupenga, Rata & Nepe; Puketapu, as cited in Houkamau & Sibley, 2010) who contend that for social policies to be effective, there is a need to consider the diverse values, beliefs and thinking of Māori. This requires considering how we measure and define Māori identity. As the participants in this study have indicated, this requires looking beyond skin colour, whakapapa, and the enculturation connection, and beyond assumptions that marginalise people.

To meet the needs of the traditional Māori identity opportunities to foster Māori knowledge is necessary. To meet the needs of the bicultural urban Māori, the educating of non-Māori and tolerance from Māori is needed. To meet the needs of the disconnected and marginalised requires breaking down the constricting ideological stereotypes that disempower the self and the collective. Such proposals may necessitate a healing of the self and an understanding of what identities are important to Māori. This requires consideration of the lived experiences of the Māori identity from a cognitive, behavioural, social and spiritual perspective (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010). Social policy that encompasses such diverse needs can be truly empowering for obtaining Māori self-determination.

The findings of this thesis suggest that even with this small cohort, the subjective experience of the Māori adoptees differ. The various perspectives held about Māori ethnicity are also dependent on the real or perceived support that the adoptee has received, the interpretation, relevance and salience they give to the Māori identity, and the interpretation of their own and others assumptions.

The Emotional Effect of Assumptions

The shared schemas that this cohort held about others' assumptions related to stereotypical, static and essentialist definitions of Māori identity. The participants were aware that their unique circumstances meant at times that they did not adhere to

the social norms and expectations of others. The interpretation of such assumptions resulted in the Māori adoptee utilising a variety of coping strategies to maintain a sense of self. These included exhibiting emotional reactions such as whakamā, avoidance, humour, anger and anxiety. Such emotions were highly influential in directing the Māori adoptees' perceptions, and while adoptees could articulate awareness of such emotions, they were not always conscious of these effects on their everyday experiences.

Evident in the majority of the participants' narratives were common self-evaluations, often formed in their past, that individuals believed and applied to their current sense of self. These perceptions and imagined judgements were sometimes based on stereotypical expectations and included 'looking too white, but feeling brown', 'feeling white, but looking brown', 'feeling dumb' and 'feeling like a traitor'. These roles at times influenced how the adoptees reacted and shifted their identity in their social interactions.

Overseas studies (Grow & Shapiro; McRoy & Zurcher; Keltie; Kim; Shireman cited in Silverman, 1993) suggest transracial adult adoptees' self-esteem and adjustment is as least as high as non-adoptees. Although negative self-evaluations can adversely impact on self-esteem, the participants varied in the degree that they were affected by their transracial adoptive experience. In all instances, though, adoptive family upbringing was highly influential.

Ideological Influences

Participants were aware of the changing dynamics between Māori and Pākehā identities in New Zealand during their lifetime. A consequence was the salience given to positive and deficit representations of Māori identity, and recognition that during their lifetime there had been an increased division between Māori and Pākehā identities.

A consequence of the legal fiction created at the time of their birth is that some of the Māori adoptees felt that they were viewed as second-class citizens. They also felt whakamā or 'less of a Māori', because they were missing whakapapa knowledge and at times were attacked because of their adoptee status. Such assumptions were embedded in ideology promoting a narrow and taken-for-granted perception of Māori

identity. In some cases, this was internalised further to encompass their ethnic identity, with some of the Māori adoptees preferring not to be called Māori or Pākehā, but rather a *New Zealander* or *just me*. This perspective of the ethnic label might be viewed as a coping strategy resulting from past negative experiences where they felt excluded from the Māori social identity.

Social Influences

While being an adoptee had both positive and negative influences on the Māori adoptees' sense of self and their attitudes towards Māori, being raised as a transracial adoptee did not necessarily result in psychological maladjustment, although some had experienced behavioural and emotional issues to do with identity (and other factors) in their youth. Such issues may be because at that age the adoptees were experiencing an 'identity crisis' (Santrock & Bartlett, 1986). For those who had possessed such feelings and had experienced a reunion with biological Māori whānau, the adoptees believed there had been healing and an increased embracing of the Māori social identity. For others, a dismissal of their Māori heritage correlated with ambivalence toward the Māori social identity. A further investigation with a larger cohort would be needed to determine the strength of this correlation. Determining the level with which participants embraced, denied or were neutral about their ethnic identity was complex and was dependent on who the adoptee was interacting with and the value they placed on the Māori ethnic identity for shaping their personal identity.

The Epiphany and Te Reo and Tikanga Māori Acquisition

An example of an epiphany that resulted in life transformation was found in Mark's dialogue at the point when he realised that te reo Māori was valuable to his sense of self and integral to his connection with Māori. Consequently his choice to pursue his Māoritanga had an impact on other facets of his life.

Other Māori adoptees in this study also described salient experiences, but rather than being transformational, they enabled constructs to be established. For example, Nadia and Charlene decided learning te reo or tikanga Māori could result in judgement or rejection from Māori. Therefore, they chose not to pursue such learning. However, despite this type of hesitation, all of the Māori adoptees agreed that te reo Māori was integral to being Māori.

6.2 Theoretical Limitations

Social constructivism, symbolic interactionism, social identity theory and psychology were deemed the most useful theories to apply to this study, in that they aligned best with the intention to explore how Māori adoptees shape and interpret Māori identity. This goal was driven by a need to understand how the individual participants continue to make sense of their ethnic identity, based on their interpretations of their social, cultural and personal histories.

Although the participants were all raised from birth in a closed-stranger adoption, it was assumed that their variable family upbringings and their interpretations of their experiences would differ. And while there were diversities in their experiences, the participants shared the perception that the status of the Māori adoptee's social identity challenges assumptions about the Māori and Pākehā identities.

Researcher and Participant Biases

Although this research focused on testing assumptions about identity and adoptive practices in New Zealand, achieving this through this type of research is challenging. As Cohen et al. (2007) observe a weakness in the interpretive approach is “the power of others to impose their own definitions of situations upon participant” (p. 25). Researchers are in a powerful position, with participants placing their trust in them. Thus, it was important for the participants to know the researcher's insider perspective on the issue, and consequently the researcher discussed her own relationship to the topic as a Māori adoptee. However, despite this admission, it is likely that during the construction of this thesis some biases have emerged. For example, initially the researcher had assumed that the majority of those interviewed would place importance on their loss of Māori identity - this was not necessarily the case. Furthermore, Māori identity was considered the normative identity and the relevance of Pākehā biological identity was not specifically considered.

Throughout this research, there was a clear acknowledgement that it is impossible to make general assumptions for all Māori adoptees based upon the interpretations of a small sample group. In this type of research, it is instead more appropriate to look for common themes, shared language and common interpretations of experiences.

The Challenges: Framing and Measuring Ethnic Identity

Framing, defining, and understanding the implications of terminology such as ‘Māori’, and ‘ethnicity’ is an intricate process. For example, some of the research participants related their ethnicity to their view of their physical self or to their social self only, whereas others viewed it as encompassing their core self. This variance of categorisation was a frequent feature of the Māori adoptees’ dialogue.

Measuring an individual’s level of ethnic identity commitment is challenging, however, the outcome learned is that a variety of measures should be adapted and used for future research. Such methods could include a mixed method approach combining interpretations, questionnaires (such as Kuhn’s Twenty statements test), in-depth interviews, self-evaluations and participant observations. Further work could be conducted on how best to measure the transracial adoptee’s perception of their ethnic identity. For example, consideration should be given to the influence of adoptive parents, an adoptee’s educational background, an adoptee’s temperament, an adoptive family’s socio-economic status, the status of the adoptee’s biological ethnicity, the influence of the political climate, common ethnic stereotypes, and significant adult experiences such as work and partner choices in shaping perceptions.

By following a social psychological approach, finding definitive answers to research questions is not the primary objective. The subjective nature of this research means that it is difficult to fully appreciate how the Māori adoptee navigates their ethnic identity, especially as the level of candid disclosure inevitably varied among the participants. At times it was difficult to recognise when participants were performing an identity with the researcher and when they were describing how they perceived their identity. Recognising the constructs embedded in narratives is a skill that requires practice.

Another area to consider when using a social psychology approach is how to best interpret the fluid nature of participants’ interpretations. In people’s lives, social, cultural and historical events are not static but are instead forever changing as people encounter new experiences. However, whether these new experiences create new beliefs or reinforce static constructs is the challenge that the interpretive researcher faces. In a small case study such as this, captured in a moment in time, it is not possible to fully explore and determine the fluidity or static nature of constructs and

interpretations. At times, only general impressions are possible. For those who participated in this research, it is also possible that their constructs could have shifted as they articulated their opinions of Māori cultural identity. For some, it could be the first time that they have been given the opportunity to discuss or share their experiences and understandings in depth. Acknowledging the fluidity of people's understandings and their ability to remember or change their stance on an issue is critical for the reader of this research.

Despite the benefits of an interpretive approach as a means of gaining rich qualitative data, there are also limitations to consider. For example if reality is not fixed, but constructed, can any assumptions be made? Determining if the New Zealand closed-stranger adoption practice that existed between the mid-1950s to 1980s was assimilative toward Māori means generating more questions about ethnic identity. It also requires considering the tenacity and resilience of the individuals affected; to challenge out-dated ideologies and contemporary socially constructed identities.

The Selection and Interpretation of Facts

The participants' interpretations perhaps reflect a specific time, place, and space. Other meaningful experiences may not have been shared because the right questions had not been asked to trigger such a memory, or because participants may have self-monitored their responses, because they knew the researcher was a Māori person and an adoptee.

The social constructivist paradigm and its associated approaches have both benefits and limitations. In the deconstruction of the narratives it was important not to diminish the value that the interviewee placed on their meaningful experiences. In the analysis of an individual's comments, consideration should be given to an individual's broader narrative. In this study, ideas about ethnic social identity constitute a variety of elements shaped by diverse factors. These include past experiences, education, family and friend influences, self-evaluations, political and social consciousness and stereotypical attitudes, beliefs and values.

Sociology versus Psychology

An assumption held by the researcher prior to conducting this research was the distinctiveness between sociology and psychology. Although from the outset a social

psychology approach was mooted, the final form of the research indicates a greater weighting toward the sociological perspective and social influences. Psychological approaches that more fully explored areas such as self-esteem, ego-development issues and personality characteristics may have yielded different results. In hindsight perhaps a narrower theoretical framework may have made analysing the narratives easier.

Some dramaturgical techniques were employed in this study, but this research only touched the surface of how Māori adoptees form impressions to socially identify and belong. As the adoptees were talking about their performances rather than enacting them it is difficult to fully comprehend the impact of these performances or the context within which they are performed. In regards to the performance that arose during the dialogue between the researcher and the participants, the majority of the analysis was based upon what was verbally said, rather than considering how it was said. If the interviews had been video-recorded perhaps it would have been easier to identify the implicit messages communicated through body language and voice intonations.

6.3 Manu is my Homegirl: The Insider's Voice and the Way Forward

In my lounge is Manu - a plastic Māori doll, dressed in traditional costume, bought from a New Zealand tourist shop for \$25. She stands as proud as she knows how to in her cardboard box, her gaze is not direct but averted. For some reason, I have always had an affinity with Manu and the symbolism she represents. On one occasion I even dressed up like her for a university seminar presentation. For me Manu represents someone who has the appearance of a Māori person, who at times can dress (or perform) appropriately, but who sometimes feels hollow and superficial (or plastic) in her Māori identity. She represents both the false and the real 'selves' as I know them. The false self is commodified ascribed identity and its associated expectations. The performance of this identity is at times forced, staged, and unnatural. Manu's indirect gaze is interpreted as shy/whakamā, but sometimes she is trying to remember the origins of her identity – a knowledge that over the years has been masked and kept secret. However, even her original identity is not necessarily her real self anymore. The real self is a combination of what was and what is, of what one has been told and what one internally believes. The ideal self is the search for an enduring self that

encompasses such dualities and enables the reforming of the Manu identity. My journey forward is to gain insight from the stories shared so I can step outside the packaging, which at times confines me.

As a Māori person who is the transracially adopted child of two English immigrants, the topic of this thesis is of particular relevance. Growing up with ‘non-Kiwi’ parents in a bicultural (Māori/Pākehā) community, I was aware of the challenges they faced as new Pākehā and as individuals remotely removed from their family. Social connection is difficult for anyone who does not necessarily subscribe to the taken for granted givens and reality of the mainstream dominant group. While I once believed as a child that such a circumstance was challenging, I now realise that this experience gave me the insight and empathy to better understand a diverse range of people.

In the process of writing this thesis I have gained insight into my biases and have been challenged to consider the different subjective views of the Māori adoptee. I have also come to better understand how constructs influenced by the self and others can both empower and disempower. Such constructs are reinforced through collective narratives, stereotypical perceptions, and an individual’s personal histories. Hopefully this knowledge will help me minimise the discrepancies I sometimes experience between the selves that I present to the world. This journey has shown me that the isolation that I feel at times may be due to the silence surrounding my Māori adoptee social identity, or equally, it could be an internalised ideology, so deeply embedded it is difficult to identify. Sharing with other Māori adoptees who expressed similar emotions provides comfort, understanding of diverse perspectives, and a collective identity whereby a stance for change, if desired, can be made.

The term ‘Māori adoptee’ is something I have used to define myself, and a certain cohort of Māori who have been raised from birth with non-Māori adoptive parents. I self-identify as Māori and throughout my life have taken an interest in Māoritanga. However, using the identity measure in this study, I would classify myself as someone who is exploring her ethnic identity. I grew up in a small community in the North Island of New Zealand and attended schools and tertiary institutions where I interacted with other Māori. As a teenager and young adult, I have attempted to learn te reo Māori, however I still struggle with the language. I have made connections with my Pākehā birth mother, but do not know as yet my Māori biological heritage. Like

some of the adoptees in this study, the value I have placed on my Māori identity and my lack of knowledge about my heritage has been an important feature of my life.

I consider myself an adaptable person, able to navigate both the Māori and Pākehā worlds. However, I admit I do not necessarily do this with ease. I have often felt like a tourist, an observer, and at times somewhat aloof (whakamā) in my social experiences. To cope with this sense of being the outsider I think of myself as the bridge or intermediary person between Māori and Pākehā. Interestingly, although I have Pākehā friends, like several of the participants in this study, I also am attracted to Māori friends who share a similar situation. In academic terminology, my friends and I would be defined as 'hybridised'. Sometimes classifying oneself as a hybridised bridge between the Māori and Pākehā identities is like being situated in no-man's land without an identity. When the challenge is too great, it is easier to compartmentalise life or live in another country, where people can come to know me, beyond my ethnicity.

Being a Māori adoptee has always had great salience throughout my life, based on the desire to be heard and not categorised (boxed) by others. I was eager to talk about the effects of an adoption practice that I suspected was extremely common during the era of my birth. The need for a voice was also coupled with an innate yearning to understand my own ethnic identity and how others who shared this transracial adoptee experience situated themselves. I wanted to know how being a Māori adoptee impacted on personal identity and on how one's reality was perceived and lived.

To me the word navigate describes a journey and this is what being a Māori adoptee and this thesis has been for me. Through the highs and lows, breakdowns and breakthroughs, one feels slightly jaded, but on a personal level I also experienced great growth. For a transformation of the self to occur it is also vital to be conscious of taken-for-granted assumptions, challenge oneself to enter new situations with openness, experience discomfort, and question the causes of inhibiting emotional reactions.

Sharing the title of Māori adoptee with my participants, my greatest challenge was staying in the role of researcher and interviewer. Frequently I wanted to interject and say 'me too', and I admit sometimes I could not stop myself. Choosing a topic close

to my heart was emotionally challenging as meanings that I had placed on my reality of my world began to shift. Like some of the participants in this study I was also able to identify areas where stereotypical views (my own and others) had affected my sense of self and my understanding of my ethnicity. Perhaps different findings may have been emphasised if I had not had this insider's perspective.

During this research I had a curious reaction to the external factors defining Māori identity, and I wanted to disestablish the word 'Māori' from the common vocabulary. I pondered the outcry and controversy it would cause and then asked myself why I would even consider such a suggestion. I realised it was to do with my social connection with a word, which encompasses much more than what some Māori and some non-Māori define it to be. It was also perhaps a 'stuff you' moment, where I did not want to feel disempowered by its elite exclusiveness or deficit stereotypes.

This experience has taught me that it is important not to blame others for one's interpretations or blame oneself either. Both the self and the other are intertwined in an ongoing exchange, a dance where both are trying to define and redefine themselves, based on current and past knowledge, expectations and intersubjectivity. The formation of meaning emerges from multiple sources; the media, identity politics, education institutions, parental attitudes and peer group influences, all impacting on an individual's thoughts and a group's shared realities and shared expectations.

However, stereotypes or 'feeling like a Manu doll' serves a purpose. Manu provides me with an identity. What is needed, are more Māori identity choices with which people like myself can establish their identity. An empowering heterogeneous identity tolerant of sub-types is needed so that collective groups like the Māori adoptee can establish shared realities, shared expectations and social norms. These shared ideas can then provide the individual with the necessary tools to navigate their identity.

Perhaps one answer for the Māori adoptee without tribal affiliations is to create a new tribal group identity. As Māori adoptees are spread throughout the country, there would need to be discussion pertaining to the geographical location of such an iwi, hapū or whānau. As Mark suggested, the ideal would be to create a marae or a place where the voices of people such as Māori adoptees could be heard.

However, to be Māori in the Māori world is more than just establishing or receiving material and cultural resources. Whakapapa connection and a person's surname enable Māori to establish relationships with each other, through shared commonalities. Through whakapapa, marae access is available. Marae provides a means whereby tikanga, traditions, language and nuances can be practised, a place to remember tipuna, foster existing and new knowledge, and define and redefine identity. For Māori adoptees who seek whakapapa connection, more robust conversations and actions are needed amongst researchers, iwi, policy analysts and adoptees that enable such desires to be fulfilled. Instead of the Māori adoptee navigating their journey alone, it is time for whānau, hapū and iwi to ask – Where are our tamariki?

6.4 Areas for Future Research

Māori are an indigenous identity in New Zealand and in the last few decades have been increasingly vocal in contesting and asserting their identity. The salience given toward a strong and clearly defined identity visible through language use, physical likeness, cultural artefacts, whakapapa lineage has been necessary to create a shared reality amongst its diverse participants. However, the common theme that emerged from this research is that placing the Māori identity in binary opposition to the Pākehā identity can create challenges and a sense of marginalisation for those who share both Māori and Pākehā heritages. In this study, for those Māori adoptees who were the least engaged with Māoridom, feeling judged by Māori because they do not subscribe to traditional notions of Māori identity was a significant factor in their choices and also increased their desire not to be labelled or categorised. At times those undecided about their ethnic identity felt they had little power or control over their circumstances; while the desire to belong to the Māori identity was strong, it was also difficult for them to access the appropriate resources and support. In cases where resources and support had been provided, a greater connection with the Māori identity had been made and incorporated into the adoptee's perception of self. Although switching alliances to the Māori identity had been challenging. It required adhering to the expected social rules, attitudes and norms. These were not necessarily taken-for-granted givens, passed down through kinship, but a learned knowledge that needed acquiring.

Generally, increased discussion about ethnic identity formation is needed. For example how is the collective Māori social identity affected by social trends such as the many Māori choosing to live overseas? In the use of politically salient Māori identities, thought should be given to those who do not ‘tick the right boxes’.

In this study the Māori adoptees exhibited resilience and strength and utilised a variety of coping strategies to deal with their unique social reality. While not all Māori adoptees perceive their experience as emotionally impactful, there are some who do. In-depth research is needed to decide upon the appropriate resources that need to be available to such people.

In the performance of their identity, the Māori adoptees demonstrated the power of the stereotype upon the self, stereotypes embedded with destructive and constructive ideologies. New Zealand-based research into how ideology and stereotypes influence the construction of Māori identity could help raise the consciousness of such issues. Future studies could also take into consideration the zeitgeist of an era and its influence on an individual’s constructs pertaining to their ethnic identity. Such questions consider how the sociology of knowledge about Māori identity has been formed, interpreted and its influence on different individuals’ social reality. A cyclic, as opposed to a linear interpretation, views such knowledge not as a by-product of the *socius* or vice-versa, but rather a colluding partner equally responsible for the shaping and re-shaping of knowledge and society. One should not ignore the power of society and the social other on an individual’s meanings or the influence of an individual’s meanings on the shaping of society and others’ perceptions. If such an interpretation is correct, then this means looking at identity differently and challenging taken-for-granted givens.

In the process of conducting this research, it has become apparent that there is a lack of comprehensive qualitative research exploring the consequences of historical child-placement legislation on indigenous adult adoptees and indigenous communities. As alluded to in the introduction, internationally there are adult adoptees living with the ramifications of such practices. There are also subsequent generations of these adoptees who are likely to have gaps in their genealogy.

While the focus has mainly been on the influence of primary socialisation experiences on an individual's ethnic identity perceptions, future studies could analyse other variables such as an adoptee's community or their biological characteristics and cognitive factors. Furthermore, future case studies could involve birth parents, adoptive parents and siblings.

Finally, all theoretical perspectives have their limitations and sociologists are constantly discussing new ways to interpret our world. The approaches used in this thesis are just one way to look at the social reality of the Māori adoptee. To date, silent in the debates about Māori identity has been the Māori adoptee's voice. Perhaps what needs to be emphasised is that although this research has attempted to provide a space for the Māori adoptee voice, in the analysis and interpretation of this voice new meanings arise, therefore providing a true reflection of an individual's inner world is difficult to achieve. In such deconstructions, it is important not to lose sight of the voice of the original participants. Their meanings are real and unique to them. Their trust in the process needs to be acknowledged and respected. Their interpretations of the Māori adoptee phenomenon may have been quite different in a different context. Therefore the best way to really understand how the Māori adoptee navigates their journey is to talk directly to a Māori adoptee.

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Participant Interviews

Mark (February, 20, 2011), *Face-to-face interview with Emma West.*

Peter (December, 15, 2010), *Skype interview with Emma West.*

Lucy (November, 23, 2010), *Face-to-face interview with Emma West.*

Dulcie (March, 31, 2011), *Face-to-face interview with Emma West.*

Paula (February, 4, 2011), *Face-to-face interview with Emma West.*

Jackie (March, 20, 2011), *Telephone interview with Emma West.*

Nadia (March, 12, 2011), *Face-to-face interview with Emma West.*

Charlene (December, 6, 2010), *Face-to-face interview with Emma West.*

GLOSSARY

If not mentioned translations are from:

Moorfield, J.C. (1995)

Atawhai	Kindness (in some cases related to adoption)
Awa	River, stream
Hapū	Pregnant, kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe
Haka	Performance of the haka, posture dance – vigorous dance with actions and rhythmically shouted words
Hori	Be past by, past, false, falsehood, lie Note: The Urban Dictionary.com (2012) list several meanings of this word, which is seen as a derogatory and racist term for Māori but also a friendly greeting exchanged between youth.
Hōri	George (name)
Iwi	Extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race, group of descendants from a common ancestor
Ingoa	Name
Kaimoana	Seafood
Karanga	Ceremonial call to welcome visitors on to a marae
Karakia	Prayer
Kaupapa Māori	Māori ideology, topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, scheme, proposal, agenda, subject, programme, theme
Kirikiriroa	Hamilton (city in New Zealand)
Manaakitanga	Caring
Māori	Normal, usual, natural, common, indigenous person of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Note: Under Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 ‘Māori’ is defined as “a person of the Māori race of New Zealand”, and includes any descendent of such a person. This was the definition used in the Adoption Act 1955.
Māoritanga	Explanation, meaning, Māori culture, practices and beliefs
Maunga	Mountain, mount, peak
Marae	Generous, hospitable, open area in front of the whareniui

Mātua	Parents
Mihi	Greeting
Ōku	My, mine, belonging to me (more than one thing)
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent, exotic – originating from a foreign country
Pōhara	Poor, destitute, (in some areas used to mean humble)
Rangatahi	Youth
Rātou	They, them (three or more people)
Rāua	They, them (two people)
Tamaiti whāngai	Foster child, adopted child
Tamariki	Children
Taonga	Treasure, goods, property, possessions
Tēnā koutou katoa	Hello (three or more people)
Te Reo Māori	The Māori language
Tikanga Māori	Correct procedure, Māori custom
Tōku	My
Tūpāpaku	Deceased, corpse
Wairua	Spirit, soul (see Māori dictionary online for full explanation)
Wānanga	(Abbreviation) Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (New Zealand Tertiary Provider). May also be used to describe a place of learning.
Whakapapa	Genealogy, to lie flat, recite genealogies
Whakamā	To whiten, be ashamed, shy, bashful, embarrassed, shame
Whaea	Mother
Whānau	To be born, give birth, extended family, family group, sometimes includes friends who do not have kinship ties
Whānui	Be broad, wide, extensive, width, breadth (Personal name) Vega – fifth brightest star in the sky and the brightest constellation Lyra.
Whāngai	To feed, nourish, bring up, foster, adopt, raise, nurture, rear, foster child, adopted child (customary)
Whenua	Land, country, ground, placenta, afterbirth

APPENDIX 1

Tables: New Zealand Adoptions Registered Under the Adoption Act 1955

Table 1: Exclusive of Māori Children

Year	Excludes Māori			Māori children	Total
	Males	Females	Total		
1954	674	673	1,347		
1955	744	711	1,455	170	1625
1956	428	459	887	163	1050
1957	901	790	1,691	199	1937
1958	856	815	1,671	246	1917
1959	958	1,011	1,969	333	2302
1960	967	913	1,880	362	2242
1961	1,144	1,028	2,172	407	2579
				Total = 1880	Total = 13,652
				Annual Average = 268	Annual Average = 1950

Table 2: Inclusive of Māori Children

Year	Includes Māori			
	Males	Females	Total	
1962*	1,369	1,276	2,645	
1963	1,422	1,421	2,843	
1964	1,507	1,378	2,885	
1965	1,557	1,531	3,088	
1966	1,747	1,715	3,462	
1967	1,803	1,710	3,513	
1968	1,854	1,926	3,780	
	Total		22,216	Annual Average = 3173

Table 3: Inclusive of Māori Children and Stranger Adoptions

Year	Includes Māori			Adoptive parents are strangers	
	Males	Females	Total		
1969	1,924	1,964	3,888		2,499
1970	1,972	1,865	3,837		2,286
1971	2,009	1,967	3,976		2,176
1972	1,779	1,863	3,642		2,136
1973	1,749	1,775	3,524		2,000
1974	1,737	1,629	3,366		1,821

Year	Includes Māori			Adoptive parents are strangers
	Males	Females	Total	
1975	1,675	1,647	3,322	1,581
1976	1,457	1,485	2,942	1,347
1977	1 285	1 238	2 523	1 052
Total			31,020	Total = 16,898
Annual Average			3,446	Annual average = 1,877

Notes: The definition of Māori used in the Adoption Act 1955 can be found in the Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 (Māori Land Act).

Statistics were gathered from the New Zealand Official Digital Yearbooks Collections (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.). From the statistics available, (I contacted Statistics New Zealand and searched the New Zealand Digital Yearbook Collections) it is difficult to determine exactly how many Māori infants in total were officially adopted during the period 1955-1979. *After 1962 there are no records to determine exactly how many adoptions involved Maori children.

To provide a snapshot of the situation in the New Zealand Official Yearbook 1972 Statistics New Zealand (n.d.) states that of the 3,837 adoptions in 1970, the Department of Social Welfare administered 3,362 adoption orders, and of these, 84 percent were of children of ex-nuptial birth. “Of those born ex-nuptially, 94 percent were less than a year old at placement and 81 percent were placed with strangers; these proportions have remained fairly constant over a number of years. Only about one-third of children of ex-nuptial birth become available for adoption” (Section 4B – Births).

(This work is based on/includes Statistics New Zealand’s data which are licensed by Statistics New Zealand for re-use under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence).

APPENDIX 2

Participant Information Sheet



Project title: “Manu is my homegirl – navigating the cultural identity of the Māori adoptee.”

Project Supervisor: Paul Moon

Researcher: Emma West

Date Information Sheet Produced: Oct 21, 2010

My name is Emma West and I am a Master of Philosophy student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I extend an invitation for you to take part in this research project. Your participation is purely voluntary and would be greatly appreciated. Should you wish to not take part, or withdraw at any time, this will not reflect on you in anyway.

What is the purpose of this research?

New Zealand’s closed-adoption practice, which was prevalent from the mid fifties to the seventies, resulted in a large number of part-Māori children growing up in a non-Māori environment with family who were not birth-related. This transracial adoption practice has been criticised for being assimilative as it disconnected Māori children from whānau, hapū and iwi (Department of Social Welfare, 1986).

This research has two main aims. The first aim is to test whether this adoption practice was effective in assimilating this selected group of Māori, and if so, to what degree are they assimilated. The second aim is to determine how this group perceives and navigates their cultural identity today.

This research is interested in listening to Māori adoptees stories to discover their perceptions, understandings and experiences about Māori and about being Māori. The reason for this research is to share with other Māori and non-Māori the views of the Māori adoptee, so they may better understand the Māori adoptee’s situation.

The questions asked in this research will explore areas such your attitudes towards Māori cultural identity, the possible influences in your life that have contributed to your understandings of Māori identity and some of your personal feelings you have about being a part-Māori person raised by non-Māori. These questions are included attached to this information sheet.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

Research participants will be chosen through the researcher's personal networks and the web. They will be selected based on their Māori ethnicity and because they were part of New Zealand's closed-stranger transracial adoption practice that existed after the Adoption Act 1955. The chosen participants will be born between the years 1955 to 1979. These years are considered significant as many changes occurred during this era (and since), which influenced the interactions between Māori and non-Māori.

To ensure a wide-representation of views are heard the final selected group will be diverse in background (gender, socio-economic and education). Participants will live in New Zealand.

What will happen in this research?

The researcher (Emma West) will individually interview each participant on two separate occasions (approximately two hours per session). Ideally these interviews will take place in the participant's home. If this is not convenient then a mutual meeting place, such as the university will be used.

The second commitment required of each participant will be a one-hour group discussion with other Māori adoptees. The researcher will inform participants of when and where this discussion will take place.

During these interviews and group discussion the researcher will ask some guiding questions. Participants will be given the choice of reviewing any transcripts and also reflect upon the researcher's perceptions of these discussions.

What are the discomforts and risks?

During the interviews and group discussion it is possible that participants may experience discomfort. If this does occur, and if the participant would like some support, an AUT counsellor is available to provide three free counselling sessions (stella.mcfarlane@aut.ac.nz or phone: 921 9992 to book an appointment.)

Participants may also withdraw at any stage from this research. Participants who feel that they might be at risk emotionally should take this into consideration prior to agreeing to this research.

Although participants in this study may have limited experience with Māoritanga, due to their non-Māori upbringing, a kaupapa Māori approach will be used when conducting this research. The reason for these formalities, is to ensure all participants feel welcome and are an inclusive part of the process, it is not intended to alienate or embarrass.

At the group interview all participants will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves. In Māoridom providing a mihi (greeting) detailing your whakapapa (family history) is customary. For the Māori adoptee a mihi may present challenges. Prior to this occurrence the researcher will explain that presenting a mihi is an optional choice and acknowledgement of adoptive parents is acceptable. Karakia (prayer) will also precede and conclude all interviews and meetings.

In the group interview all participants will be encouraged to be respectful of others and treat them with consideration. This means allowing for full participation from all participants and respecting differing viewpoints.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

To ensure all participants are kept safe, and are comfortable with the research process, a participant may withdraw from the interview, discussion or research at anytime. If this is the case the participant should inform the researcher of their intentions.

What are the benefits?

The researcher of this project is also a Māori adoptee, who envisages the benefits of sharing the stories of people in similar circumstances. In Aotearoa, New Zealand many distinctions are made between being Māori and being non-Māori. Sometimes it is difficult for the Māori adoptee, who may (may not) physically look Māori, but who due to his or her non-Māori upbringing, has no knowledge or experience of being Māori. Dealing with overt and subtle racial slurs, and or assumptions by others (Māori and non-Māori) may be challenging for the Māori adoptee.

Sharing the stories of the Māori adoptee may increase understanding and help both Māori and non-Māori question their assumptions. It is timely to discuss Māori

identity formation and explore the perceptions of this unique sub-group within Māoridom - a group who has had few opportunities to express their voice.

How will my privacy be protected?

Participants' real names, their places of work or their town of residence will not be referred to in the final thesis publication. Signing of the confidentiality consent form is required to ensure participants do not reveal other participants' details to a third party.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

As the researcher intends to travel to participant's homes there will be no costs to participants. Participants will be reimbursed for the cost of travel to the group interview. A total time commitment of approximately five hours is the main cost to the participant.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntarily. Potential participants who are interested in being part of this research can contact the researcher's supervisor at the contact details listed below.

The researcher aims to select a total of eight Māori adoptees for this research. It may be possible that those who have indicated interest in this study are not chosen. The reason for exclusion from this study is that the researcher is seeking a cohort of Māori adoptees who are from diverse backgrounds. Please do not be offended if you are not chosen to be part of this research.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Adoptees who choose to participate in this research should email or write to the researcher's supervisor (Professor Paul Moon) indicating their intention to participate. If potential participants could also please complete the confidentiality form and list the dates they would be available for conducting the interviews.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The researcher will provide participants (upon request) with transcripts of the interviews. The reason for the multiple interviews is to reflect upon the issues and discussions raised in the previous interview. At the conclusion of the interviews and

group discussion the researcher will provide participants a summary of her interpretations and understandings.

If you are an adoptee who has reconnected with their whānau, hapū and iwi and would like to share the information from this research with these groups then this is possible. The researcher will ask for your lead in this respect and will also seek cultural advice from her designated kaumātua. If reporting of this information is required this could be done as a hui or as a written report.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Participants who have any concerns regarding the nature of this project can contact the researcher's supervisor at AUTEK:

Researcher's Supervisor's Contact Details:

Professor Paul Moon

Professor of History

AUT University

Private Bag 92-006

Auckland

Phone: (09) 921-9999 extn. 6838

Concerns regarding Emma West's conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz Phone: 09 921 9999 Extension 8044.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on November 2, 2010 AUTEK Reference number 10/194

APPENDIX 3

Interview Form



Project title: “Manu is my homegirl: Navigating the cultural identity of the Māori adoptee.”

Project Supervisor: Paul Moon

Researcher: Emma West

The following questions are a guide only to prompt discussion.

Questions to determine how the adoptee identifies ethnically and emotional connect with their Māori identity.

Interview Questions

1. What ethnicity/ ethnicities do you identify with? (Please list)
2. How do you identify ethnically?
3. Prior to this interview you identified yourself as Māori (or preferred label first identified e.g. part-Māori). Have you always identified yourself as Māori (or preferred label)?
4. (If chosen identity later in life) When did you decide to identify as Māori (or preferred label)?
5. What prompted this decision?
6. Do you know your whakapapa?
7. (If don't know) Do you want to know your whakapapa?
8. Do you know your Iwi/hapū/marae? (If participant doesn't know Iwi/hapū/marae)
9. Do you want to know your Iwi/hapū marae?
10. (If adoptee knows Iwi/hapū/marae) do you ever visit your Iwi/hapū/marae?
11. No, never and I don't want to
12. No, but one day I want to
13. Yes occasionally
14. Yes regularly
15. Is being Māori a positive or negative experience? Explain.
16. Describe what being Māori means to you.
17. What was it like for you growing up not knowing your Māori side?
18. As an adult are you interested in knowing about Māori culture or language?
19. Have or are you learning te reo Māori?
20. If you have learned te reo Māori – where did you learn this (eg. school, tertiary, Māori community)?
21. Do you participate in any cultural activities such as kapa haka?
22. Do you have children? If so, do you want them to know about things Māori?
23. Is your partner Māori/non Māori? Has or does this have an influence on how much involvement you have with Māori?

Questions to determine participants' attitudes towards Māori presence in the media.

24. What are your perceptions of Māori on television?
25. Do you identify with any Māori on television (If so, why)?
26. Do you watch the Māori television station? What are your opinions of this station?
27. How do you feel and what do you think when you see Māori on television?
28. What are the most impressionable images of Māori that you can recall on television?
29. Do you think Māori are fairly, unfairly represented on television? What are your reasons?
30. Are your impressions of Māori on television the same, different from today compared to your childhood impressions? (If so, describe these differences).

Questions to determine how influential the adoptees childhood was in shaping their perceptions of Māori.

31. What is the ethnicity of your adopted parents?
32. What exposure did you have as a child to Māori culture and language?
33. Were you ever encouraged by your parents, (adopted parents), extended family to pursue your cultural origins? (e.g. through kapa haka, te reo.)
34. Were you ever encouraged by your friends to pursue your cultural origins?
35. Were you ever encouraged by your schools to pursue your cultural origins?
36. What exposure did you have to other Māori people and in what capacity? (E.g. School, Church, family friends...)
37. (If lots of exposure to other Māori) How did this/these person/people influence you in your understanding of Māori?
38. Did you choose to learn Māori language/culture at school, (if relevant) at tertiary level?
39. Were you a member of your school (if relevant) or tertiary kapa haka group?
40. Have you been on a marae? If so, in what capacity (school trip, work...)
41. Describe your feelings about visiting a marae as a child?
42. Describe your feelings about visiting a marae as an adult.
43. Have you experienced racism? If so in what capacity?
44. How did you react to this racism?
45. How did your adoptive parents react to this racism and prepare you for racism?
46. Who are you most comfortable around:
 - a. Māori people
 - b. people of your adoptive parents' race (name race)
 - c. doesn't bother me
 - d. other.
47. Explain your reasons.
48. In your family growing up were references made about Māori usually positive or negative?
49. Questions to determine relationship with birth ties
50. Do you know or want to know your birth mother or father or both parents?

51. Do you know or want to know more about your birth whānau/hapū/iwi?
52. How is knowledge of your birth history relevant to how you function today?
53. What assumptions, pre-conceptions did you have or do you have towards your birth family's culture?
54. What issues arose for you growing up by not knowing your birth history?

Reasons for questions and what I hope to find out:

- The participants attitudes, values, thoughts and feelings towards their Māori ethnic identity;
- What Māori cultural identity means to the participants (e.g. Are they positive, negative, ambivalent about being Māori?);
- What family, environmental influences have helped shape their perceptions of Māori identity;
- Whether their Māori identity is forced, fixed or fluid;
- Whether their understanding of their Māori identity has changed since childhood;
- Whether they participate or engage in Māori language, culture or practices and if so what has contributed to this involvement;
- How Māori cultural identity appears in the television media to the participants;
- What significantly influences the Māori adoptees perceptions of their cultural identity;
- Whether they have made contact with their birthroots and if so for what motivation.

APPENDIX 4

Consent Form

Project title: “Manu is my homegirl: Navigating the cultural identity of the Māori adoptee.”

Project Supervisor: Paul Moon

Researcher: Emma West

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audiotaped and transcribed. A written transcript of the audio-recording interviews will be emailed to participants.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself, or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):
Yes No

Participant’s signature:.....

Participant’s name:.....

Participant’s contact details (if appropriate):

.....
.....

Date: Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 2 November, 2010 AUTEK Reference number 10/194