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**Living in the City Ain't So Bad:
Cultural Diversity of South
Auckland Rangatahi**

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Abstract

Establishing a 'secure' Maori identity based solely on particular criteria of Maori culture (te reo Maori, tikanga, marae, etc.) continues to be problematic for some Maori. Those who are not seen as connected in this way are often defined by what they are seen as lacking, hence terms such as disconnected, distanced, detached and dissociated. Although young Maori may define themselves in terms of difference from others there is an increasing danger of some urban youth being defined as different from Maori who are 'culturally connected' and for this to be seen primarily as a negative demarcation. Although it may be the aspiration of some to have greater cultural connection, what this means for different groups and individuals may have both congruence and divergence with what are usually considered to be markers of cultural inclusion.

This thesis presents the findings from a wider research project funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand. The project objective was to gather data that can inform and contribute to existing knowledge about cultural identity of rangatahi Maori with a view to establishing a framework(s) for greater youth development and a more positive and embracing perspective of culture.

Kaupapa Maori and social constructionist framings are used to centre the focused life story interviews that were conducted with young people aged between 13-21 years, who identified as Maori and lived in the South Auckland area.

Findings suggest that conventional and experiential indicators of Maori identity as well as a strong localised identity are key factors in this exploration. Challenges for identity theorists, societal institutions and other Maori are discussed.

Acknowledgments



“The future of our people cannot be stereotyped by our current versions of Maoriness. Major cultural markers such as the language of our ancestors, the marae and tangihanga must be retained at all costs, but, under pressure of changing time, many more adjustments are likely. These choices are for Maori to make, they are a matter of mana...How each of us expresses our Maoritanga is the product of a variety of experiences. None of us is today what our ancestors were, and our descendents will not be like us. With aroha, knowledge, strength, commitment and politicisation our descendents will be Maori, their way...Our work as today’s version of Maori is the same as that of our tipuna: to continue our story, to strengthen it according to our times and to add the next chapter. That will be done.” (Ramsden, 1993)

Irihapeti Ramsden 1946 – 2003
Project Mentor

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Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgments	3
Introduction.....	7
Background information.....	9
Literature.....	13
Identity Theories.....	13
Trait Theory	13
Role Theory.....	15
Humanistic Theory.....	16
Social Identity Theory.....	17
Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem.....	18
Ethnic identity and acculturation.....	20
Maori theorising of identity.....	26
Maori identity and cultural markers	30
Indigenous authenticity debates internationally	35
Summary	37
Project Design, Methods and Analysis	39
Kaupapa Maori	39
Purpose of the project	40
Method.....	41
Analysis	44
Findings	45
Conventional indicators.....	45
Awareness of Conventional Indicators	46
Participation in Maori Institutions and practices.....	47
Tribal connections.....	48
Impacts	52
Experiential indicators.....	57
Other Environmental Factors.....	60
Sports	60
Social Lives.....	61
Partying	61
IT, Computing and Kazaa	62
Future Aspirations.....	63
Locality.....	64
Nesian Style	66
Gangs	68
Discussion.....	71
Conventional indicators.....	71
Experiential indicators.....	75
Gangs.....	76

Southside pride	76
We Rock the Polynesians	78
Conclusion	80
References.....	83