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# **MAORI IDENTIFICATION AND ALCOHOL BEHAVIOUR**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
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## ABSTRACT

The impact of Maori identification on mental health and alcohol behaviour has been neglected in the psychological literature. This research attempted to investigate potential relationships between these variables and to examine drinking motivations and alcohol related opinion amongst Maori. It was initially hypothesised that strength of Maori identification would be associated with better mental health and well-being. Stronger Maori identification and better mental health were also expected to relate to lower average alcohol consumption and less frequent drinking. It was hypothesised that better mental health would be associated with greater social motivation, greater positive affect, and less negative affect after drinking. Heavier drinking was predicted to be directly related to coping and conformity motivations and inversely related to positive affect. In addition, it was anticipated that frequent drinkers would be internally motivated.

This sample contained 447 Maori aged 18 years and over. Participants were found by e-mailing Massey University students registered as Maori and by utilising a snowball technique. Respondents were required to complete demographic, Maori identification, mental health, alcohol behaviour, reasons for drinking and opinion measures either online or by mail. Non parametric methods were then used to analyse all data.

Results showed no significant relationships between Maori identification and mental health. Stronger Maori identification was significantly related to drinking less frequently but not with lower average consumption. Better mental health was found to be significantly related to lower consumption of alcohol, but not to drinking less frequently. Better mental health was also related to drinking for socially motivated reasons, increased positive emotions, and decreased negative emotions after drinking. Average consumption was not significantly related to coping and conformity motivations. Heavier consumption was related to less positive affect after drinking and more frequent drinking was related to internal motivation.

Limitations of this study included difficulties measuring these variables, a lack of comparative studies to provide reference, and a non representative Maori sample.

Recommendations for future research include studying an adolescent population, measuring smoking behaviour, and conducting a qualitative analysis. Further interventions and policies targeting cultural and societal norms will be needed for these patterns of drinking to change. These results suggest that relationships between Maori identification, mental health and alcohol behaviour are complex and worthy of further analysis.

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