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# Re-imagining multiculturalism: Small steps towards indigenizing acculturation science

Colleen Ward[1*], Tia Neha[1], & Tyler Ritchie[1]

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[1] Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. *Please address correspondence to Colleen Ward, Colleen.Ward@vuw.ac.nz, Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research and School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington, 6140, New Zealand. 

Although acculturation is among the most extensively studied topics in contemporary social science, research concerning the processes, outcomes and conditions of acculturation in Indigenous communities is relatively rare. This is a critical omission given that much of the intercultural contact across the globe is occurring in the Native lands of the world's 476 million Indigenous Peoples. Before examining the proposition that the condition of multiculturalism is the most "advantageous" approach to cultivating positive intercultural relations or that it promotes enhanced psychological well-being in Native, Aboriginal and First Nations communities, we must understand what multiculturalism means to Indigenous Peoples and how they experience it in their everyday lives. Accordingly, we focus on notions of multiculturalism in a post-colonial settler society, working with Māori, the Indigenous Peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Adopting a Braided River framework, combining Western and Indigenous perspectives with inductive and deductive techniques, we describe an emerging program of mixed methods research that has yielded rich, nuanced data about Indigenous conceptualizations of multiculturalism. The results indicate that the defining features of multiculturalism found in acculturation science overlap to a limited extent with Indigenous perspectives and that additional social, political and historical issues must be addressed to ensure that multiculturalism can benefit Indigenous Peoples.

**Keywords:** acculturation, Braided Rivers, decolonialisation, Indigenous, Māori, multiculturalism

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Psychology has been slow to engage with Indigenous issues in general (González et al., 2022), and this is particularly apparent in connection with acculturation science. Although acculturation is among the most extensively studied topics in contemporary social science, and early psychological theorizing on the topic has its roots in work with Aboriginal Peoples (Berry, 1970), research concerning the processes, outcomes and conditions of acculturation in Indigenous communities is relatively rare. Despite numbering 476 million and making up 6.2% of the global population (World Bank, 2023), Native Peoples have been largely overlooked by acculturation scientists in favor of research with immigrants and international students. This is a critical limitation in the field that impedes the development of acculturation theorizing and its application for social good. Much of the intercultural contact across the globe is occuring in the Native lands of the world's Indigenous Peoples, who are socially, politically, and economically disadvantaged and have poorer health outcomes and lower life expectancy than non-Native peoples (González et al., 2022; World Bank, 2023). Accordingly, there is an urgent need for acculturation scientists to turn their attention to Indigenous communities.

Acculturation science encompasses theory and research about the processes, outcomes and conditions of intercultural contact. In terms of *processes*, acculturation science has drawn heavily on Berry's (1997) theoretical framework, which examines the interaction between the principles of heritage cultural maintenance and participation in the wider society to delineate four acculturation strategies: integration, separation, assimilation and marginalization. In terms of *outcomes*, the relationship between acculturation and adaptation has been a major area of interest with psychological (psycho-emotional well-being) and socio-cultural (social skills, intercultural competence) adaptation, receiving the greatest attention (Berry & Sam, 2016; Bierwiaczonek & Waldzus, 2016; Ward & Szabó, 2019). In terms of *conditions*, the importance of historical, demographic and socio-political contexts has been highlighted (Geeraert et al., 2019; Kus-Harbord & Ward, 2015; Miller et al., 2009; Phalet et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2010; Ward & Geeraert, 2016), with diversity ideologies, policies and practices often the focus in this line of research (Bourhis et al., 1997; Hui et al., 2015; Schachner et al., 2019; Vedder et al., 2006).

The massive body of international research on acculturation that has grown rapidly over the last two decades has important implications not only for the advancement of acculturation theory, but also for its application to benefiting individuals and their communities. It may be for this reason that studies of the adaptive outcomes of integration (dual engagement, maintaining heritage culture and participating in the wider society) and multiculturalism have received priority attention (Berry, 2006; Berry & Sam, 2014; Berry & Ward, 2016; Bierwiaczonek & Kunst, 2021). Both the process of integration and the condition of multiculturalism have been proposed to lead to positive outcomes for individuals in terms of the psychological and social well-being and for societies in terms of greater social cohesion (Berry, 1997, 2006, 2017).

Berry's eco-cultural theorizing and his acculturation framework were originally proposed to provide a comprehensive overview of acculturation that could be applied to all ethno-cultural groups, despite differences in the extent to which they were engaged in voluntary or involuntary intercultural contact and whether their groups were mobile or sedentary (Berry, 1979, 2006, 2011). Even so, Berry pointed out that the 'operating parameters' for individuals from minority groups are constrained by the larger society's expectations and preferences about how these

communities should engage and adapt (Berry & Sam, 2014). Unfortunately, the vast majority of acculturation studies has focused on conditions of voluntary intercultural contact, such as the experiences of immigrants, neglecting the impact of involuntary contact as experienced by Indigenous Peoples (Sam & Ward, 2021). This is an important caveat in acculturation science.

In this paper we address this caveat. We emphasize the relative invisibility of Indigenous Peoples and highlight the interplay of historical and contextual influences in their acculturation experiences. In working with and for Māori, the Indigenous Peoples of New Zealand, we adopt the Braided River paradigm, bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to elicit Māori perspectives on multiculturalism. In sharing Indigenous views, we consider the compatibility of Māori voices with conceptualizations of multiculturalism in contemporary acculturation research and take small steps toward indigenizing acculturation science.

## 2. MULTICULTURALISM AND COLONIZATION AS ACCULTURATION CONTEXTS

Multiculturalism is but one condition that affects acculturation processes and outcomes. To examine the acculturation experiences of Indigenous Peoples in post-colonial settler societies, the negative effects of colonization must also be examined. Regrettably, theory and research on indigeneity, which emphasize impact of colonization, and acculturation, which highlight the process of immigration and the condition of multiculturalism, have developed as two relatively independent bodies of literature with little, if any, conceptual overlap (Bauder, 2011; Kamp et al., 2018). In this section we present brief overviews of the two bodies of work and then describe the New Zealand context to set the scene for our research.

### 2.1 Multiculturalism

Global trends indicate that we are exposed more to cultural diversity now than ever before (Bai et al., 2020). This is due in large part to immigration with recent figures indicating that there are now 304 million immigrants globally, making up 3.7 % of the world's population (United Nations, 2024). This does not mean, however, that multicultural societies are the norm. Berry (2005) and Berry and Ward (2016) have argued that cultural diversity is a necessary, but not sufficent, criterion to define multiculturalism. Rather, multicultural societies are defined by three key components: Multicultural Ideology (a widespread valuing and appreciation of diversity), Multicultural Contact (diverse ethno-cultural groups interacting with each other rather than leading parallel lives) and Multicultural Policies and Practices that support and accommodate diversity. When these criteria are met, multiculturalism can ensure cultural maintanance and equitable participation for all ethno-cultural groups.

The social and psychological outcomes of these facets of multiculturalism have been widely examined in social science research. Multicultural attitudes and multicultural contact are positively associated with indicators of national and neighborhood social cohesion, particularly increased trust and a stronger sense of solidarity (Breidahl et al., 2018; Hewstone, 2015). The presence of national multicultural policies has likewise been shown to relate to higher levels of trust; additionally, for immigrants and members of minority groups, multicultural policies are associated with lower levels of perceived discrimination, better socio-cultural adaptation and greater life satisfaction, benefiting both individuals and the wider society (Jackson & Doerschler, 2016; Vedder et al., 2006; Wright & Bloemraad, 2012). Not only objective indicators, but also individuals' perceptions of multicultural contact, ideology and policies are linked to positive social outcomes (Guimond et al., 2013; Van Assche et al., 2023). This is because these perceptions are frequently and widely shared

among individuals and become normative, thereby shaping our attitudes and guiding our behaviors (Guimond et al., 2013, 2014).

Drawing on the tri-partite conceptualization of multiculturalism advanced by Berry and colleagues (Berry, 2005; Berry & Sam, 2014; Berry & Ward, 2016) and empirical work on multicultural norms by Guimond et al. (2013, 2014) and by Breugelmans and van de Vijver (2004), Stuart and Ward (2019) developed a Normative Multiculturalism Scale, which assesses individuals' perceptions of the degree to which their country manifests multicultural contact, ideology and policies. Their research, conducted in the United Kingdom, United States and New Zealand, has shown that perceived multicultural norms are positively associated with trust, national attachment, and psychological well-being, not only for minority group members, but also often for members of the majority group (Ward et al., 2020, 2023; Watters et al., 2020).

Of note, studies of multiculturalism as a context for acculturation have been primarily undertaken with immigrants and their descendants with a nod toward majority group members in culturally plural societies. The time has come to expand our research repertoire. First, the extension of studies of multiculturalism to Indigenous Peoples can inform us about the external and ecological validity of our current theories. It also permits us to broaden our notions of context and its impact on acculturation processes and outcomes, demanding consideration of both the contemporary context of multiculturalism and the historical context of colonization. Second, the findings gleaned from research on indigeneity and multiculturalism can be applied to addressing the legacy of colonization that is manifest in the social, economic, and health inequities experienced by Native Peoples across the world.

### 2.2 Colonization

It is widely recognized that colonization has exerted devastating effects on Indigenous Peoples in post-colonial settler societies. Native communities have been decimated by war, genocide and disease; Indigenous languages, cultures and spiritual practices have been lost through forced assimilation; kinship systems have been disrupted; and Native lands have been stolen, displacing Indigenous communities and depriving them of their natural resources (Crabbe, 2007; Dudgeon et al., 2014; Fitznor, 2006; Paradies, 2016). The mistreatment and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples have been rife in political, social and cultural spheres. Treaties were signed and broken to serve colonial interests and foster economic and political dominance. Indigenous knowledge and culture were disparaged by European colonial settlers who viewed Native Peoples through a lens of racial superiority — so much so that Indigenous children were removed from their homes in an attempt to 'civilize' them. So destructive and debilitating were the experiences of colonization, Pugh and Cheers (2010, p. 48) argue that "the very fact of the survival of local Indigenous People itself is remarkable and is a testimony to their resilience."

The costs of colonization have been great, and the negative impact of dispossession and deculturation continue today in contemporary societies characterized by systemic racism and Indigenous deprivation. Indigenous Peoples remain disadvantaged in terms of their socio-economic status and have poorer health outcomes (Valeggia & Snodgrass, 2015). They are more likely to live in poverty and reside in deprived neighborhoods than the general population (Dhongde & Dong, 2022; Eversole et al., 2005; Loring et al., 2022). They are also comparatively more likely to be unemployed and have lower levels of income and educational qualifications (Ward & Liu, 2012). There is evidence that Native Peoples are over-represented in the prison population and in mental health facilities as non-voluntary patients (Liu, 2007); they are also more likely to be

both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence (Fergusson, 2003). Furthermore, elevated rates of child abuse and suicides are found among Native communities (Crabbe, 2007; Kirmayer et al., 2009). The negative social, economic, psychological and health conditions found in Native populations are intertwined with the dynamics of oppression (Sidanius et al., 2017), and the long-lasting and persistent inequities experienced by Native Peoples have prompted Indigenous scholars to remind us that settler-colonialism, reflected in systemic social and institutional racism, is still widespread (Rata, 2020).

Although colonization is one form of intercultural contact that has precipitated acculturative changes, beyond the acknowledgement of forced assimilation, it has rarely been considered within an acculturation framework. Rather, the experience of colonization and its devastating consequences for Native Peoples are more often discussed in terms of 'historical trauma' or 'soul wound' (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998), "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations emanating from massive group experiences" (Brave Heart, 2003, p. 5). Historical trauma has been used as an explanatory construct to explicate health inequities for Native Peoples. From this perspective, high rates of diabetes, addiction, PTSD and suicide are seen as the social and psychological responses of Indigenous Peoples to the historical trauma of colonization (Gone, 2023; for a recent review see Nagata et al., 2024).

Both colonization and multiculturalism provide conditions for acculturation. The extent to which the historical experience of the former influences attitudes toward the latter is unknown. What is known, however, is that collective narratives about the historical relationships between groups, including collective memories of colonization, can and do affect current intergroup relationships and acculturation practices (Ayalon & Sagy, 2011; Figueiredo et al., 2018).

### 2.3 *Aotearoa*/New Zealand: Brief History and Current Context

The lands now known as *Aotearoa* (the land of the long white cloud) or New Zealand were first settled by ocean-faring Polynesians who arrived in waves 800-1000 years ago.[1] Europeans initially set eyes on the islands in 1642 with the arrival of Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, but it was only after the arrival of James Cook in 1769 as an envoy of the British Empire that European settlement began (King, 2003; R. Walker, 1990). As British settlement increased over the next six decades, so did the need to formalize relations between Māori and the colonists.

In 1840 this was accomplished by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (the Treaty of Waitangi), an agreement between Māori and the British Crown (the government with its executive, legislative and judicial branches). In the absence of a written constitution, *Te Tiriti* is considered New Zealand's founding document, broadly stating the principles on which the British and Māori agreed to found a nation and build a government in the country. Its first article, which pertains to governance of the country, has been – and still is – the subject of considerable controversy due to the Treaty's two language versions. In the English version Māori agreed to cede sovereignty to the Queen, while in *te reo* Māori '*kawanatanga*' was understood as governance. The second article ensures that Māori retain undisturbed possession of their lands and treasures. The third article specifies that the Crown extends protection to Māori along with all rights and privileges of citizenship.

Despite the Treaty agreements, disputes over

[1] Translations of Māori terms (in italics) are provided when they are first introduced in the manuscript. Thereafter, we may use either English or te reo Māori (the Māori language) in the paper.

land and sovereignty continued intermittently through the early 20th century, incurring significant loss of tribal territories (Belich, 1986); however, it was not until the 1950s that Māori began to migrate to urban centers in search of economic opportunities. As Māori became embedded in Western institutions and subjected to assimilationist pressures, Indigenous ways of doing and being were devalued and suppressed (Orange, 2004). By the 1960s *te reo* Māori was barely surviving, and Māori culture was at risk (Smith, 1989).

The 1970s saw political protests over landlessness and cultural loss and the beginnings of a Māori renaissance. Community-based initiatives such as *kohanga reo* (Māori pre-school language nests) were established to support cultural and linguistic revitalization. The government became more responsive to Māori issues and established the Waitangi Tribunal with the objective of investigating Māori claims relating to alleged breaches of the agreements made in *Te Tiriti*. In the years that followed the government began adopting a 'bicultural' approach to policies, and increasing reference to Treaty Principles of partnership, protection and participation became apparent (Hayward, 2004; Hill, 2009; Moon, 2013). However, amidst these positive cultural and political developments, the government was revising the national immigration policy, and without consultation with Māori as Treaty partners, proceeded with the 1986 and 1991 changes that transformed the demography of New Zealand.

The new era of immigration was characterized by a large influx of settlers from Asia in contrast to historical migration from Great Britain and Pacific nations (New Zealand Immigration Service, 1991). Populist politicians of the time often pitted new immigrants against Māori describing "... a flood of migrants – many of whom will directly compete with Māori in terms of jobs, housing and access to health service" (Ward & Lin, 2005, p.165), and national surveys showed that Māori held more negative attitudes toward Asian immigrants than did New Zealanders of European descent (Leong & Ward, 2011).

A steady stream of Asian immigration continued into the 21st century. The most recent census figures indicate that New Zealand Europeans remain the largest group at 67.8%, Māori make up 17.8% of the population, followed by 17.3% Asian, 8.9% Pasifika, and 1.9% made up of Middle Easterners, Latin Americans and Africans (Statistics New Zealand, 2024a).[2] At present 28.8% of the population is overseas born (Statistics New Zealand, 2024b). Although the cultural landscape of *Aotearoa* has undergone significant changes, the relative disadvantage experienced by Māori has remained the same. Like Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, Māori as a group are disproportionately affected by racism, poverty, unemployment, incarceration, crime, poorer health and educational disadvantage (González et al., 2022; Houkamau et al., 2020; Kahukura, 2015; Kennedy, 2017; Kukutai & Rata, 2017; McIntosh & Workman, 2017; Simpson et al., 2015).

## 3. RE-IMAGINING MULTICULTURALISM: SMALL STEPS TOWARD INDIGENIZING ACCULTURATION SCIENCE

With this background, we provide an overview of an emerging program of research that examines Indigenous understandings of multiculturalism along with a synopsis of our findings. The work described here is part of a larger project that addresses the question, "Is multiculturalism helpful or harmful to Indigenous Peoples?" Our overarching objective of the work is to draw on *Mātauranga* Māori (traditional knowledge) to explore Indigenous perspectives on the meanings and perceived consequences of multiculturalism and recommendations for managing cultural diversity in *Aotearoa*. In doing so, we showcase *He Awa Whiria* (a Braided

[2] New Zealand census permits self-identification with more than one ethnic group; therefore, the ethnic group total exceeds 100%.

River approach) to demonstrate how partnerships between Native and non-Native researchers can facilitate the indigenization of acculturation science.

### 3.1 Our Approach: *He Awa Whiria*- A Braided River

*"The braided rivers really is a representation of different streams of knowledge and different ways of thinking and perceiving particular things. It's about weaving together the knowledge streams to get a shared understanding. So that you look at, what is the Western view, what is a Māori view? How can we weave and braid so there's a common space where there's a shared understanding?"* Sonja Macfarlane (Science Learning Hub, 2022).

*He Awa Whiria,* the Braided River approach, is grounded in and emerged from the experiences of Māori researchers working in Western-dominated academic spaces in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand (Macfarlane et al., 2024). The fundamental premise underlying the approach is that each knowledge stream, that of Western science and *Mātauranga* Māori, has its own integrity, sometimes interacting and blending with the other and sometimes remaining apart. Like the flow of water, the knowledge streams are dynamic and shifting, reflecting the fluid nature of knowledge and the need to continually reflect and revise.

The architects of the Braided River approach present it as a unifying, multidisciplinary framework, one that can uncover answers and create solutions for everyone. They also suggest that the inclusive approach to research, policy and practice is more powerful than either stream on its own. To date, the conceptualization of *He Awa Whiria* has been applied to research across social (Dionisio et al., 2024; Lovell et al., 2021), behavioral (Clifford & Arahanga-Doyle, 2024) and health (Bright et al., 2024; Davies et al., 2024; Dawson et al., 2024) sciences as well as education (Derby & Macfarlane, 2024). In accordance with Macfarlane et al.'s (2024) vision, *He Awa Whiria* has also been applied to policy development and program evaluation (Baker, 2024; Cram et al., 2018).

The essence of the Braided River framework is reflected in the composition of our research *rōpū* (collective), the diversity of our ontological and epistemological positions, and the implementation of our mixed methods approach. Members of the *rōpū* include Māori and non-Māori, both New Zealand- and overseas-born. Our positionalities within the discipline of psychology vary somewhat though leans toward post-positivist critical realism, which has been recommended as a philosophical framework for social and cultural psychology (de Souza, 2014). In many instances, we draw on the principles and practices of *Kaupapa* Māori, conceptualized as research by Māori, for Māori and with Māori, which highlights the active role of participants as research collaborators (S. Walker et al., 2006). At other times, we adopt a WASP, Western Academic Scientific Psychology position (Berry, 2024), distinguishing the roles of researchers and participants while still engaging in culturally appropriate *whakawhanaungatanga* (the process of establishing relationships, connectedness). We strive to incorporate both inductive and deductive approaches, prioritizing emic and bottom-up perspectives, but also finding space to explore a top-down (imposed) etic. Our methods include data collection from focus groups and the use of a free-listing technique with individuals; our analytical approaches involve reflexive thematic analysis and both manifest quantitative and latent qualitative content analysis. Across our mixed methods research, we can be seen to prioritize *Mātauranga* Māori, placing emphasis on Māori values and voices in the emergence of Indigenous perspectives on multiculturalism and to rely on *tikanga* (customary practices) and Māori protocols in conducting our research. In keeping with the tenets of *He Awa Whiria,* we view the diversity of our research *rōpū*, philosophical frameworks, methods, techniques and perspectives as strengths of our work. This diversity, captured by a Braided

River approach, also permits us to triangulate our research findings to explore their validity and credibility.

When situated in an international context, it is worth noting that the principles of *He Awa Whiria* are very much in line with historic efforts to advance the development of Indigenous perspectives in cross-cultural psychology. The complementarity of emic (culture specific) and etic (culture general) approaches and the incorporation of 'indigenization from within' and 'indigenization from without' strategies are familiar paradigms (Berry, 1999; Enriquez, 1979; Ho, 1990; Yang, 2000). More recently, the necessity of Indigenous perspectives has been highlighted by advocates of multicultural research, who have argued for emphasis on research applications and the implementation of diverse methods. They have also noted that the interpretation of data without Indigenous inputs, which is presented as scientifically based knowledge, can be used to perpetuate injustice and oppression (Yakushko et al., 2016). This risk is at the forefront of the theorizing that arises from our research findings.

### 3.2 The Research

Our research was guided by a *kaitiaki* (Māori guardianship group) to ensure cultural safety. With their support, we addressed three interrelated questions to uncover Māori perspectives on multiculturalism. Our research questions are: 1) How do Māori conceptualize and engage with multiculturalism? 2) How do Māori perceive the benefits and risks of multiculturalism in *Aotearoa*? 3) Is the tri-partite model of multiculturalism found in acculturation science compatible with Māori conceptions of multiculturalism?

Questions 1 and 3 were addressed with data drawn from the same focus group research participants; however, as these focus groups were designed and conducted in two parts, each with a distinct set of questions for a specific research objective, they are separated in the discussions of our research findings that follow. Across our enquiries, data collection always involved Māori facilitators/researchers, and data analyses and interpretation were undertaken by multiple members of the research team, which, in each case, included both Māori and Western researchers. In each of the three subsections that follow, we first describe the research objective, followed by a brief description of methods with emphasis on cultural protocols and Indigenous research practices, and a summary of the research findings.

#### 3.2.1 How do Māori Conceptualize and Engage with Multiculturalism?

The primary objective of this research was to explore Māori understandings of multiculturalism by adopting a bottom-up, data led, inductive emic approach (Ritchie et al., 2023). This involved 29 Māori adults who participated in one of six *hui* (gatherings, meetings) conducted across urban and provincial centres in *Aotearoa*. Consistent with Māori *tikanga*, the sessions began with *whakawhanaungatanga* and sharing food. When the participants were ready to commence the research, a *karakia* (prayer or invocation) was performed to open the discussion. Without providing a definition of multiculturalism, facilitators prompted participants with the following questions:

1. What does multiculturalism mean to you?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism?
3. Is multiculturalism compatible with biculturalism?
4. How does multiculturalism affect you in your everyday life?
5. Do you think that *Aotearoa* can have a Treaty-based multiculturalism? If so, what would that look like?

This format enabled participants to rely upon Indigenous practices such as storytelling and providing oral histories in their discussions.

With participants' permission, the sessions were video-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis by one Western and two Māori researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). Following the early stages of data analysis, consultation was arranged with the participants. This initial consultation occurred after transcription was complete, with all participants who requested a transcript or a summary of results sent one via email. Consultation occurred again after further data analysis when the final themes had been proposed. In this instance, participants were asked to review and approve the themes. They were also asked for their consent to use their quotes when disseminating the research findings. Of the participants who responded to the emails and calls regarding the consultation process, all approved the themes and quotations. The reflexive thematic analysis yielded four themes: *Manaakitanga*, Belonging, Envisioning and Enacting (Ritchie et al., 2023).

*Manaakitanga* (hospitality, kindness, generosity, support, the process of showing respect and care for others) was positioned as a core Māori value that should be present in discussions of immigration and multiculturalism. *Manaakitanga* has both historical and contemporary significance as articulated in the following quote:

*"The mana whenua (people who have territorial rights over the land) of the area had a great responsibility to care for and nurture those who came later so that that sort of multicultural world of, you know, the immigrants, refugees, people coming from other countries, that responsibility to nurture and care for and respect the different cultures coming in."*

Essential to this theme is Māori capacity for *manaakitanga*. This includes the capacity to take into account the needs of migrants and welcome them into Native lands and the capacity for relationship-building beyond initial contact. Māori want to be involved in the settlement of new migrants, rather than participate in a Euro-centric immigration system designed to exclude Māori and diminish their responsibilities as *tangata whenua* (people of the land, Indigenous People). The current system is seen not only as disenfranchising Māori from exercising their Treaty rights in the immigration space, but also as continuing to maintain a state that distances immigrants from Māori. In terms of what welcoming newcomers might look like through a Māori lens, this could include *tikanga*-based initiatives, such as the inclusion of the Māori language in citizenship ceremonies and conducting *pōwhiri*, which is a formal Māori welcome ceremony to a *marae* (a tribal community center) for immigrants.

Despite the desire and intention for *manaakitanga*, participants felt that they had limited capacity to engage with immigrants. On one count, research participants cited incomplete knowledge of and restricted access to Immigration New Zealand's programs, goals and strategies as a challenge. In addition, the resourcing required to create a Māori-led national system for *manaakitanga* is practically beyond the reach of an Indigenous community that experiences a high level of deprivation (Loring et al., 2022). This is exemplified in the following quote: "If we were able to … just step back… so we can take care of ourselves again, cause yeah once we take care of ourselves, we can *manaaki* them. Once our cup is full, we can keep overflowing."

Finally, participants emphasized the importance of building and sustaining relationships. They described how they felt *whanaungatanga* (kinship) with migrants, and how many migrant communities in *Aotearoa* shared similar values and histories with Māori – especially those from colonized nations. These relationships were viewed as sources of mutual support. In addition, the positioning of Māori and migrants as two groups both marginalized by a *Pākehā* (New Zealand European) majority illustrates how decolonial processes can be

empowering for both groups and enhance *manaakitanga*. As expressed by one participant,

*"For me, you know it's- it's about forming relationships and lots of multiple relationships. So for me, you can come in with that perspective, but the other person has a responsibility as well, and so, if the- the other group, person, doesn't believe in the really important place that the Tiriti holds and therefore tangata whenua's rights, then that means, we start at a position that's quite difficult."*

*Belonging* conveys how people living in *Aotearoa* navigate space within a colonized country, who is considered a New Zealander, and the language people use when discussing who belongs. What it means to belong and who belongs are integral to discussions surrounding indigeneity and social cohesion. Despite being the Indigenous Peoples, Māori have often been made to feel like they do not belong in *Aotearoa*, particularly with respect to their language and culture. One participant noted, "In terms of Rotorua (a town in New Zealand renowned for Māori culture), we're able to practice being Māori there, and it's probably one of the few places that we can still do that in terms of 100% our *reo*, our culture." Feelings of exclusion were particularly intense when moving within *Pākehā* dominated contexts colored by both racism and tokenism**.**

A critical component of the belonging theme related to navigating space, a topic that participants often discussed in relation to tangible, place-based resources, such as housing, land and home ownership. Colonial practices have served to diminish Māori resources over time and often exclude them from enjoying the same assets as other New Zealanders. Although research participants made reference to political narratives popularized in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which portrayed migrants as competing with Māori for limited resources, by and large, they wanted a space for immigrants to be included. In their own words, "I think they should be supported and fostered here because everyone deserves to be happy in their country, and if they need to be empowered through their own religion, their culture, I reckon that should be done."

At the same time, Māori did express concerns that immigrants could undermine the significance of indigeneity because they lack knowledge of Te Tiriti and the significance of Māori status as First Nations People. Even with that concern, however, participants did not express desires to exclude migrants from *Aotearoa* or to prevent them from identifying as New Zealanders. Instead, emphasis was placed on the detrimental effects of a Euro-centric ideology and its associated discourse on belonging and national identity. This was seen to reinforce power dynamics that benefit the majority group, while dividing Indigenous and immigrant groups and threatening the country's social cohesion.

*Envisioning* encapsulates an ideal imagining of a culturally diverse *Aotearoa*. At the core are multicultural structures and systems grounded in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. This vision of *Aotearoa* provides a space for Māori, immigrant, and *Pākehā* cultures to thrive while *tangata whenua* play a central role in the construction of national identity. This sentiment was echoed by many research participants, e.g., "It's that pinning down of a secure foundation of the Treaty relationship in itself would have to be the strong foundational platform for the next stage of development." Emphasis on the Treaty, which lays out the relationship between Māori as the Indigenous Peoples of *Aotearoa* and all others who subsequently settled in the land, was seen as critical for a successful multicultural society. Indeed, both our research participants and Māori scholars, such as R. Walker (1995) and Rata (2021), have argued that the Treaty included our country's first immigration policy and provided a foundation for multiculturalism.

There was also overall agreement with the

principle that 'biculturalism' and 'multiculturalism' are compatible. The question of compatibility is asked and answered in the following quote: "If you have biculturalism, are you dismissing multiculturalism? Or if you do multiculturalism, is that not then saying we shouldn't have biculturalism? But actually, those can be compatible depending on what function they're serving." Justice Eddie Durie (2005), a Māori legal authority, has argued along similar lines that 'biculturalism' and 'multiculturalism' are about different things, with biculturalism being about the relationship between the state's founding cultures and multiculturalism being about the acceptance of cultural difference. While acknowledging that Indigenous Peoples have distinctive claims arising from their Native status, he also argues that for the most part, "the two policies are mutually supportive" (Durie, 2005, p. 43). Furthermore, a Treaty-based multiculturalism was seen as a possible pathway to decolonization. In the words of one research participant, "Whereas for me it's like multiculturalism is associated with leaving that colonization that we were brought up under, behind."

*Enacting* highlights potential ways forward, how *Aotearoa* as a country can surmount the challenges of implementing a Treaty-based multiculturalism and move towards achieving an ideal multiculturalism for all. Accomplishing these objectives is seen as dependent on the effectiveness of government's ability to initiate and manage multiculturalism, the revitalization of Māori language and culture, and reciprocal support between Māori and immigrants. As such, enacting multiculturalism was seen as a distant goal.

Despite the acknowledgement of government's role and responsibility to effectively manage diversity in *Aotearoa*, participants in our research were sceptical about the likelihood of success in realizing a Treaty-based multiculturalism. We found a widespread acknowledgement that there is still much that government must do to ensure that the Treaty partnership and principles are honored — so much so, that it may not be feasible to enact a Treaty-based multiculturalism. The difficulties in achieving biculturalism were noted, "Our nation's still coming to terms with our own Treaty…the Treaty of Waitangi aspirations are only just starting to be realized, and still it is a daily battle for *iwi*" (tribes).

This sentiment was sometimes accompanied by the implication that biculturalism should be 'sorted' before *Aotearoa* could proceed to multiculturalism. Moreover, because the government has been seen as failing to deliver on biculturalism, there is little hope or trust that it can deliver on multiculturalism. In the words of one research participant: "To answer your question, biculturalism and multiculturalism can work um provided the government don't take a lead role on the policy change or on the implementation of change."

More generally, there was a call for a 'reset' of the immigration system with emphasis on developing a strategy that supports the needs of Māori, immigrants and the country as a whole. Of critical importance is a Māori voice in the decision-making; however, cultural revitalization was seen as a prerequisite for Māori to engage effectively. Even so, Māori demonstrated concern and empathy for new settlers, discussing issues such as lifting the refugee quota in general and welcoming Pacific neighbors who are experiencing hardship due to climate change. More humanitarian concerns were expressed in contrast to the perception that current policies for admission to *Aotearoa* are all about money.

### 3.2.2 What are the Perceived Benefits and Risks of Multiculturalism?

We adopted an emic, bottom-up approach eliciting data using a free-listing technique to address this question. Free-listing provides information on categories, classes or cultural domains and offers insights into the vocabulary people use to conceptualize objects, phenomena, and mechanisms (Stausberg, 2021). We used this as an inductive, data-led technique to determine the range and salience of Māori perceptions regarding the benefits and the risks of multiculturalism in *Aotearoa* (Below et al., 2024).

In line with sample size recommendations by Weller and Romney (1988), 25 self-identified Māori adults participated in the free-listing exercise. Each participant responded to prompts about the positive and negative features of multiculturalism. Specifically, we posed the questions: "How could multiculturalism be good/bad for *Aotearoa*?" We then asked participants to list all the things about multiculturalism that could benefit/harm our country. The technique was piloted in two formats, individually generated lists and interviews. The participants in the pilot study expressed a strong preference for the interview format, and this not only produced more responses, but was also completed more quickly. After the content of each list generated in the interviews was examined and coded, the benefits and risks were subjected to a salience analysis, which considers both the frequency and placement of coded items across all lists (Quinlan, 2018). The positive and negative codes are listed in rank order of salience in Table 1.

Analyses indicated that *Exposure to Cultural Diversity* was perceived by far as the most salient benefit of multiculturalism with this diversity bringing different languages, cultures, foods, ideas, solutions to problems, and ways of thinking and being. In short, diversity per se was viewed in a favorable way both affectively and instrumentally. This was followed by a set of themes that centered on the benefits of intercultural encounters and relationships. *Increases Intercultural Knowledge and Understanding* was the most salient of these themes, highlighting and promoting understanding of different cultures and worldviews and exposure to different ways of thinking and living. Next in the rank-ordering of salience were *Bridging across Communities* (building intercultural

**Table 1**

*Rank Order of the Perceived Benefits and Risks of Multiculturalism*

| Benefits | Harm |
|---|---|
| Exposure to Cultural Diversity | Undermines Indigeneity |
| Increases Intercultural Knowledge & | Ethnic Conflict |
| Understanding | Pressure on Inadequate Resources |
| Bridging across Communities | Culture Clash |
| Fosters Acceptance and Inclusion | Intercultural Misunderstandings |
| Enriches National Development | Socio-political Outcomes of Poor Governance |
| Enhances Global Connectivity | Cultural Threat |
| Provides Opportunities for Positive Social | Negative Impacts of Globalization |
| & Political Change | |

friendships, sharing language, culture and customs) and *Fosters Acceptance and Inclusion* (increases in acceptance of difference, tolerance, mutual respect, and empathetic concern). Less common were themes related to country-level national and international issues. These included *Enriches National Development* (e.g., contributions to economic growth, introduction of new skills, technologies and conservation practices) and *Enhances Global Connectivity* (e.g., reducing *Aotearoa's* geographical isolation, putting the country on the world stage). Finally, *Opportunities for Positive Social and Political Change* were seen as beneficial, particularly as they offered the possibility of joining forces with multicultural partners to enact Treaty principles.

*Undermining Indigeneity*, jeopardizing the status of Māori as *tangata whenua*, including unnecessary distractions from the Treaty and the likelihood of labelling Māori as just another ethnic minority, was viewed as the most salient risk arising from multiculturalism in *Aotearoa*. This risk was followed by salient themes of *Ethnic Conflict* (e.g., prejudice, division, racism) and *Pressure on Inadequate Resources,* which was seen as precipitating and magnifying intergroup competition, threatening the sustainability of natural and technological resources, and straining the national infrastructure for public services. Prejudice and discrimination are core topics in intergroup theory and research, and the significance of limited resources is a core feature of Esses et al.'s (1998) Unified Instrumental Model of Group Conflict. Next in the rank ordering of risks were *Culture Clash*, problems arising from differences in expectations, beliefs and values, and *Intercultural Misunderstandings*, largely due to lack of intercultural knowledge and language barriers. Less salient among the risks were *Socio-political Outcomes of Poor Governance*, which reflected the belief that government is unable to manage immigration and diversity in a fair and equitable way; *Cultural Threat* to the vitality and retention of Māori language, culture and values; and *Negative Impacts of Globalization*, the risk to the unique character of *Aotearoa* through globalization. Contrary to widespread findings in intercultural research, the risk salience of Cultural Threat and Culture Clash, which are akin to realistic and symbolic threat, respectively, was low to moderate (Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

#### 3.2.3 Multicultural Ideology, Contact and Policies: A WASP Model for Māori?

In addition to addressing the questions about how Māori conceptualize and engage with multiculturalism and what are its perceived benefits and risks, we also tested the construct validity of a popular tri-partite model of multiculturalism found in acculturation science (Berry, 2005; Berry & Ward, 2016). This model has provided a theoretical framework for international research with immigrant and majority groups (Berry, 2005; Ward et al., 2018), but it has never been tested with Indigenous communities. In contrast to adopting the bottom-up, inductive, data-led technique previously described, in this instance, we assumed a hypothetico-deductive approach, tentatively probing an imposed WASP etic in a series of *hui* with Māori participants. This permitted us to determine to what extent the tri-partite model of multiculturalism might be generalized to Māori, or in other words, if we can find a derived etic (Berry, 1989).

The same 29 research participants from the six *hui* described previously responded to a discrete set of additional questions that followed the original five prompts about the meaning of multiculturalism. Participants were asked about the extent they would like to see or think it is important that we have...

1. A general and widespread recognition, appreciation or valuing of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity?

2. Kiwis from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds getting to know each other, interacting and building relationships (versus

being separated in their own ethnic group)?

3. Policies and practices in place that support and accommodate diversity?

Basic content analysis was first conducted by independent coders to quantify the support of or opposition to the ideology, contact and policy facets of multiculturalism (Ward et al., 2024). Following this, codes were developed and latent content analysis conducted to identify the underlying reasons for the support or opposition to the importance of multicultural ideology, contact and policies. This work permitted us to determine the extent to which Māori and WASP perspectives on multiculturalism are compatible.

**Multicultural Ideology**. Analysis revealed unanimous agreement about the importance of recognizing and valuing cultural diversity. We identified three themes that elaborated the reasons for this. First, participants recognized and acknowledged the Intrinsic Value of every culture. In their words, "It is important for our *rangatahi* (youth) to grow up in a space where diversity is accepted and nourished to ensure that there's no one way or right way of being, and that it's ok to be different." Second, the expression of one's culture and identity was seen as promoting resilience for individuals and as being beneficial for the wider society. We labelled this theme *Hauora* (a Māori concept of physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being). "Being able to express our own culture and our own values are central to good health and well-being...I would say that's essential for a strong society." Finally, the respect and appreciation of cultural diversity were viewed as consistent with traditional Māori values, particularly *Manaakitanga*. As previously described, "*Tikanga* Māori requires the best of people to be at the fore all the time. At the front of that is *aroha ki te tangata manaakitanga*" (love and care for people).

**Multicultural Contact.** Responses concerning multicultural contact were mixed with half of the coded statements in agreement with the principle of relationship-building across cultures and half in opposition. Multicultural contact was seen as promoting Intercultural Understanding and as necessary to enhance intercultural knowledge and improve intercultural relations. As suggested by one research participant: "Everyone needs to understand everyone, and you won't know that unless you've met an African or Indian..." Contact was also viewed as providing an opportunity for community development by newcomers forging relationships and joining forces with Māori to benefit New Zealand. This Community-Building via Bridging was described by one participant who noted, "I see a lot of non-Māori really deferring to *tangata whenua* in terms of *kaitiakitanga* and *taiao* (guardianship for the sky, sea and land) and how to look after the environment, and I think that's a strong space for the notion of community-building." Converging with the emphasis placed on *Manaakitanga* in other strands of our research, participants talked about the importance of demonstrating hospitality and caring for others. In this way, multicultural contact was seen as in accordance with "*tikanga*...where we are actively showing people that we honor and welcome them to our country." Finally, in line with theorizing by Berry and Ward (2016), intercultural contact was seen as an Avenue to Integration. As described by one participant, "I think with immigrants it's awesome to integrate, and I feel like you could do multiple things, integrate and be together."

The receptiveness to multicultural contact was countered by concerns about Cultural Threat and the need to Preserve and Protect Māori language and culture. Common concerns were that Māori culture has been "contaminated by external ways of being" and that contact threatens Māori cultural preservation and authenticity. As noted by one participant, "Separating cultures protects them," a view largely arising from the interpretation of contact within the context of colonization. This was clearly conveyed in the focus groups' discussions: "We

don't need to theorize what happens when a majority culture goes into a minority culture. We can look at the islands (i.e., the colonized islands in the Pacific) … their cultures have been completely changed and overwhelmed." In addition to themes relating to cultural threat and preservation, though emerging far less frequently, was the notion that multicultural contact is 'unnatural.' Here emphasis was placed on the norm of Homophily, the acknowledgement that people 'naturally' like others who are like themselves. As articulated by one of our research participants: "We are attracted to people who are like-minded, have the same values, speak the same way, so you know multiculturalism is almost science fiction."

**Multicultural Policies and Practices.** Although most of the statements that emerged in response to the question about multicultural policies and practices reflected an endorsement of their importance, very few statements articulated a generic need for multicultural policies, e.g., "There will always have to be policies to keep things on track." Rather than naively accepting these policies as Necessary, our findings indicated that Māori support for multicultural policies was almost always conditional. Of central importance was the explicit requirement that these policies should not undermine a Commitment to Biculturalism and Indigenous priorities. In the words of one of our research participants, "It (multicultural policy) is really important, but with the caveat that not when it's used to undermine the bicultural partnership in the place of Māori." Beyond this critical concern, support for multicultural policies was contingent on Māori playing an active role in Policy Formulation. As aptly expressed by this research participant, "As long as we are addressing a need and have the right voices at the table to deliver that in policy form, yeah." Finally, support for multicultural policies amongst our focus group members was dependent upon effective and sensitive Policy Implementation**,** closing the gap between policy on paper and practice in daily life, as well as anticipating and avoiding potentially harmful outcomes.

Opposition to multicultural policies and practices was common and found in just under half of the statements. Among the most common anti-policy responses were that policies are Ineffective and that Prioritizing Biculturalism is more important. On the first count, participants were sceptical about these policies evoking change. As articulated by one research participant, "I'm not so sure that legislating something makes it happen." On the second count, opposition to multicultural policies was often grounded in the assumption that they inevitably undermine or deflect from bicultural priorities. Many members of our focus groups believed that biculturalism should be consolidated before multiculturalism is tackled. This sentiment is aptly expressed in the following quote:

*"Yeah, I think our nation is still coming to terms with our own treaty let alone having another one which could supersede what we are trying to do… I don't think that would be a good idea. I wouldn't support that whatsoever until they get it right with us."*

Beyond these concerns, respondents objected to tokenistic Political Correctness: "Part of this multicultural approach, I think, is born out of our PC gone mad world, and it's idealistic, and some of it is just so tokenistic." Importantly, there was also some mention of Structural Racism embedded in policymaking and the limited, culture-bound perspective adopted by policymakers. "A policy is a *whakaaro Pākehā* (New Zealand European idea). It comes from a *Pākehā* institution so I don't necessarily think that a *Pākehā* institution with *Pākehā* processes will be the solution for non- *Pākehā* issues."

## 4. DISCUSSION

Our research was designed to elicit Indigenous perspectives on multiculturalism in a post-colonial settler society. More specifically, we have

drawn on *Mātauranga* Māori to explore Indigenous understandings of multiculturalism, its risks and benefits, and its suitability as a diversity ideology and practice in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand. In addition, we consider if the tripartite (contact, ideology, policies) conceptualization of multiculturalism found in contemporary acculturation science is compatible with Indigenous perspectives. To achieve these goals our culturally diverse *rōpū* adopted a Braided River approach, combining Māori and Western knowledge streams in mixed methods research. In examining the weaving and parting of these streams, we also reflect on their implications for contemporary acculturation science.

Overall, we found substantial convergence of Indigenous perspectives across our enquiries. At the core of Māori visioning of multiculturalism is the Treaty of Waitangi. Originally an agreement between Māori and the British Crown, now understood as a partnership between *tangata whenua* and *tangata Tiriti* (Māori, the Indigenous People of the land, and all others, those who settled later and are people 'of the Treaty'), *Te Tiriti* creates space for everyone to belong in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand. Indeed, we found little evidence of a desire from Māori to exclude newcomers from the country. Rather, there was a desire to *manaaki,* welcome and support migrants and to build long term relationships— but on their own terms and in accordance with traditional Māori *tikanga* and values. Important in *whakawhanaungatanga* are the recognition of Māori as the Indigenous Peoples, hosts and caretakers of the lands; newcomers' understanding of Māori history and culture; and the development of relationships that are characterized by mutual respect. Māori scholars Kukutai and Rata (2017) have discussed the role and importance of *maanaakitanga* in relationship-building between Māori and migrants and how this can ultimately provide an alternative to "integration into a Euro-centric mainstream" (p. 33). Additionally, Rata and Al-Asaad (2019) have suggested *whakawhanau-ngatanga* provides a means of creating solidarities between Māori and settlers of color to generate transformative social change. These discussions overlap with conceptualizations of multiculturalism advanced by our research participants, who also saw multiculturalism as a potential vehicle for developing alliances that could work towards positive social and political change.

The reclamation and revitalization of Māori language and culture are also viewed as a critical component of an Indigenous visioning of multiculturalism in *Aotearoa*. This requires more than the relatively straightforward process of cultural continuity or 'cultural maintenance,' understood as a basic tenet of multiculturalism in acculturation science. Decades of colonial assimilationist pressures have had devastating effects on Māori ways of being and doing. At present only a minority (34%) of Māori can speak *te reo* 'fairly well;' one-third do not know their ancestral *marae*; and most (82%) live in urban areas (New Zealand Treasury, 2022; Statistics New Zealand, 2020, 2022). In light of assimilation-induced changes in Indigenous ways of life, cultural restoration is essential for Māori to be effective Treaty partners and to play an active role in shaping the future social landscape of *Aotearoa*.

Perhaps because of historical (and many would say current) pressures to assimilate, Māori are able to recognize the importance of cultural maintenance for immigrant groups. Our research showed that the ability to express one's culture was seen not only as a foundation for health and well-being, but also as essential for a resilient society. Our findings also revealed that Māori highly value diversity and the opportunities it brings; exposure to cultural diversity, seen as offering access to new and different choices, perspectives, solutions, opinions, worldviews and experiences, was the most salient perceived benefit of multiculturalism. This appreciation of cultural diversity has likewise

been demonstrated in a national survey where Māori (79%), compared to New Zealand Europeans (67.8%), were significantly more likely to see multiculturalism and ethnic diversity as defining features of New Zealand (Kukutai & Rata, 2019).

Beyond centering the Treaty, cultural revitalization and the incorporation of traditional values and *tikanga* in an Indigenous vision of multiculturalism, Māori propose more involvement in immigration-related policy-making. There are two issues that underpin Māori aspirations for participation in this sphere. First is a fundamental distrust of government, which has failed to deliver on biculturalism and Treaty promises. Second, and more importantly, is the larger issue of the political positioning of Māori and their self-determination, *tino rangatiratanga*.

Across three discrete but inter-related research questions, findings have converged to highlight Māori distrust of government and the perception that neither previous nor current governments have served Māori well. This distrust was also observed in a national survey where Māori were less likely than Pasifika, Asians and New Zealand Europeans to place trust in government institutions such as the police, courts, parliament, and the education and health systems (Kukutai & Rata, 2019). Dissatisfaction was also expressed with a *Pākehā* vision of "ethnicity and immigration" and the ways in which economic factors are prioritized over humanitarian needs. In reference to the former, it is worth noting that New Zealand has established three 'ethnic' Ministries: Māori Development, Pacific Peoples, and Ethnic Communities, which is responsible for people who identify as African, Asian, Latin-American, Middle-Eastern and Continental European (Ministry of Ethnic Communities, 2024). These arrangements seem to imply that everyone— other than New Zealand Europeans of British and Irish descent— are 'ethnic peoples.' With respect to the latter humanitarian considerations, Māori have advocated for an increase in New Zealand's small refugee quota and more pathways to immigration for our Pacific neighbors who are likely to become climate refugees in the relatively near future.

Clearly, immigration and the accompanying increase in cultural diversity have consequences for Māori as our Indigenous Peoples and for New Zealand as a whole. Māori want to be more involved in the formulation of immigration priorities and policies, and as Treaty partners, this is appropriate; however, there is the view that this inclusion offers only a limited form of recognition that is promised in the Treaty and that Māori self-determination has yet to be achieved. Kukutai and Rata (2017) believe that constitutional reform is almost certainly necessary to accomplish *tino rangatiratanga* (sovereignty, the right to self-determination), and encouragingly, there is evidence that such a reform is supported by some sectors of New Zealand's Asian communities (Wang, 2023). For example, Asians supporting *Tino Rangatiratanga* (https://asians4tino.weebly.com) recognize the interconnection of social and political challenges that Indigenous and immigrant groups face, rather than accepting the simplistic "mainstream" narrative that pits newcomers against Māori. Along similar lines, Multicultural New Zealand (https://multiculturalnz.org.nz), a non-governmental organization that represents the interests of *Aotearoa's* ethnic communities, has a long-standing history of advocating for Treaty-based multiculturalism in the country. Considering avenues for *kotahitanga* (unity and solidarity), Kukutai and Rata (2017, p. 40) suggest that "Māori–migrant relationships might be fruitfully reimagined through a Treaty-based approach founded on *rangatiratanga* and *manaakitanga*, while also giving substance to the fullness of multiculturalism."

Synthesizing our findings on Māori conceptualizations of multiculturalism and its associated benefits, Figure 1 presents an ideal Māori visioning of multiculturalism in *Aotearoa*. The key

features of the model are incorporated into a *koru*, an unfurling frond of the *Aotearoa's* native silver fern. The *koru* is both a national symbol of New Zealand and a meaningful feature in Māori art and carving, representing new life, growth, strength and harmony. At the core of multiculturalism is *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* that provides a foundation for the relationship between Māori as the country's Indigenous Peoples (*tangata whenua)* and later settlers (*tangata tiriti*). Expanding outwards from the Treaty, the graphic depicts Māori aspirations for themselves: Indigenous Recognition, *Tino Rangatirantanga* and Cultural Revitalization, all of which have been previously discussed by Māori scholars such as Kukutai and Rata (2017). Next, the multicultural aspirations for all groups are incorporated into the image; these are Cultural Maintenance, Equity, Belonging and Participation, which largely overlap with Berry and Sam's (2014) discussion of multiculturalism. Moving from within to between group dynamics, Māori value relationships with newcomers, emphasizing the importance of *Manaakitanga,* Intercultural Understanding *and Whakawhanaungatanga.* Specifically, Māori want to welcome newcomers, understand them and bridge communities by establishing more long term relations. Notably, discussions of multiculturalism among our research participants were framed in relation to migration; interest in intercultural contact and relationship building did not appear to be extended towards New Zealand Europeans. Finally, at the macro-societal level, Māori had aspirations for national social cohesion evidenced by their visioning of multiculturalism in terms of recognition, belonging, participation and equity. Beyond Berry and Sam's (2014) work, these features are encapsulated in Jenson's (1998) key indicators of social cohesion.

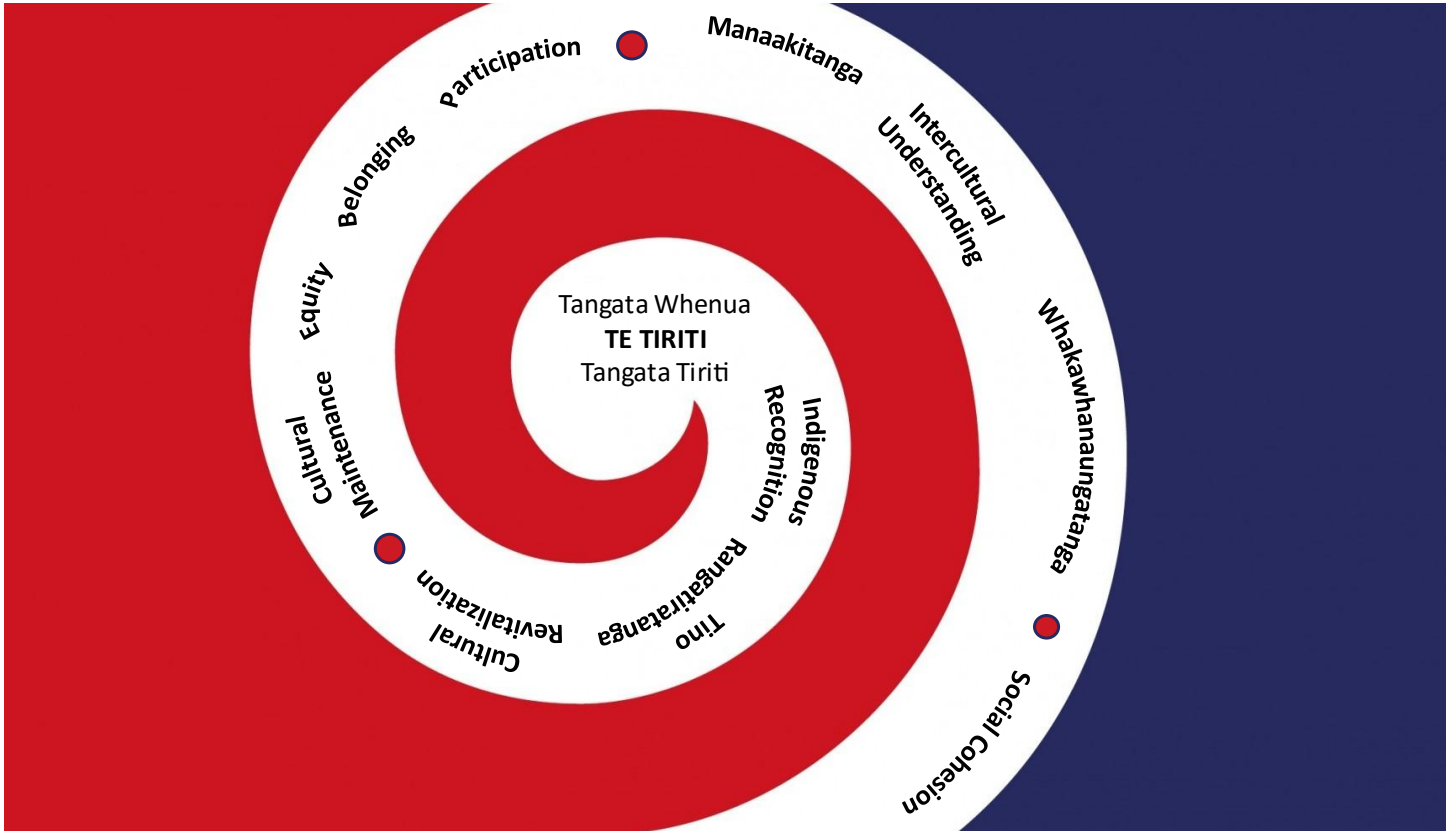
None of this is to suggest that Māori are uniformly supportive of multiculturalism. The most critical condition for acceptance of multiculturalism in *Aotearoa* is new settlers' recognition and acknowledgement of the Indigenous status of Māori as *tangata whenua* and the rights that accompany this status. It is imperative that multiculturalism is not used as an 'excuse' to undermine biculturalism or Indigenous priorities. Beyond that, there are concerns that rising immigration may lead to greater competition for limited resources, which is not surprising given the relative deprivation experienced by Māori. There are also some apprehensions that increasing cultural diversity may encourage ethnic conflict. On the whole, however, our research participants expressed more positive than negative or exclusive attitudes toward immigrants, and they conveyed a desire to welcome newcomers to their lands.

### 4.1 Small Steps toward Indigenizing Acculturation Science

It has been argued that the first step towards indigenizing psychology is "adding in" those groups that have been invisible within the discipline (Ho, 1990; Ward, 2007). In acculturation science few studies have examined the processes, outcomes and conditions of acculturation in Native communities. For the most part, those that do, including studies with robust features such as large samples and longitudinal data, share a common limitation. These studies are almost exclusively confined to the extension of WASP models and measures of acculturation to Native contexts rather than emerging from Indigenous knowledge and experiences (e.g., Kvernmo & Heyerdahl, 2003; Mallett et al., 2021; Stonefish & Kwantes, 2017; Zagefka et al., 2023). It is no wonder, then, that Indigenous scholars have argued that adding Native Peoples to acculturation research is not sufficient and that we should be changing the acculturation conversation. More specifically, an Indigenous perspective on acculturation that is "grounded in decolonization, the struggle for social justice, cultural reclamation and the development of Indigenous knowledge" is needed (Dudgeon et al., 2016, p. 115).

**Figure 1**

*A Māori Model of Multiculturalism*




*Notes.* Where appropriate, the graphic uses *Te reo* Māori. At its center is *Te Tiriti* (the Treaty of Waitangi), an agreement between *Tangata Whenua* ( Māori, the First Peoples of the land) and *Tangata Tiriti* (the people of the Treaty, all others who settled after the First Peoples). Māori re-imagining of multiculturalism includes: *Tino Rangatiratanga* (Māori self-determination), *Manaakitanga* (hospitality, love and care for others) and *Whakawhanaungatanga* (building and strengthening relationships).

The novelty of our research is that we have taken small steps toward these goals and toward indigenizing acculturation science. The adoption of the Braided River framework has permitted us to combine Indigenous and WASP approaches to acculturation. We privileged Mātauranga Māori in uncovering Indigenous conceptualizations of multiculturalism, but we also examined the compatibility of these conceptualizations with a popular WASP model of multiculturalism. Consequently, we were able to provide a foundation for indigenization of acculturation science at the same time as offering feedback to acculturation scientists about the limits of our theories, models and measures when extended to Native Peoples. All of this is necessary before we can address the question "Is multiculturalism helpful or harmful to Indigenous Peoples?"

What does our research tell us about Māori Indigenous perspectives on multiculturalism? Broadly reflecting the direction set by Dudgeon et al. (2016), we highlight three points. First, historical context is important. Indigenous experiences of acculturation and visioning of multiculturalism cannot be understood without reflection on the process and outcomes of colonization (Dudgeon et al., 2016). Take, for example, Māori discussions of multicultural contact. On one hand, there is a resistance to contact because it has a colonial legacy of cultural contempt and assimilation pressures that have threatened Māori language and culture. Cultural revitalization is required before cultural maintenance can be achieved, and keeping cultures separate is seen as protecting them and keeping them authentic. On the other hand, Māori desire contact with new immigrants, to welcome and support them, and to build long term relationships that can foster mutual benefits. Imbalances in power and privilege influence attitudes toward multicultural contact; only contact that is empowering, rather than subjugating, can support equitable outcomes for Indigenous communities.

Second, the multicultural principles found in acculturation science cannot be uncritically applied to Māori experiences. With respect to the tri-partite model of multiculturalism, Māori strongly agree about the importance of multicultural ideology. As noted previously, views about multicultural contact are varied depending on the circumstances. Contact can pose a threat to Indigenous culture or offer an opportunity for its expression. As for multicultural policies, only those that give voice to Māori in their development and do not undermine Indigenous priorities would be welcomed. In short, we cannot simply transplant our WASP conceptualization of multiculturalism for research with Native Peoples. Even if this version of multiculturalism has the potential to advantage Indigenous communities, it is not sufficient.

Third, only a re-imagining of multiculturalism can meet Indigenous needs. Necessarily, at the core of this re-imagining is the acknowledgement, recognition and respect for the historical and legal status of Indigenous Peoples and their enduring attachment to their homelands (United Nations, 2007). Because this criterion is often seen as lacking in liberal multiculturalism, Indigenous Peoples have not sheltered under the umbrella of multiculturalism (Eisenberg, 2023). They simply refuse to be considered just one of many ethnic communities in culturally plural societies (Curthoys, 2000; Dandy et al., 2018; Ivison, 2015; Srikanth, 2012).

In *Aotearoa*, Māori have re-imagined multiculturalism to place *tangata whenua* and *tangata tiriti* at its centre, ensuring a voice for all ethno-cultural communities and a space for everyone to belong, but this is likely to be a unique visioning based on specific historical, political and demographic features of *Aotearoa*. The extent to which the tenets of this Indigenous vision could be generalized is unknown. Compared to other countries colonized by the British, New Zealand's features include a single treaty that is recognized as a partnership

between Māori and *tauiwi* (non-Māori people of *Aotearoa*) and a relatively large (17.8%) proportion of Indigenous Peoples in a small country. In Latin America the historical, political and demographic differences from New Zealand are even greater. For example, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador have already engaged in constitutional reform that recognizes Indigenous authorities and their customary law, and Indigenous Peoples make up over half of the national population of Bolivia and Guatemala (Sieder, 2002). While it is imperative to acknowledge a shared history of colonization, it is also essential to recognize the heterogeneity of Native Peoples and their diverse socio-political circumstances around the world. Clearly, more research is required to understand Native experiences of acculturation in the international arena.

### 4.2 Concluding Comments

There are, of course, many routes to indigenizing theories and methods in psychology and allied fields, and there are different views about who can do it and how it must be done (Dudgeon, 2017; Enriquez, 1990; Moko-Painting et al., 2023; Neha & Reese, 2018; Neha & Ward, 2024; Smith et al., 2016; Yang, 2012). We have adopted a Braided River approach to indigenizing acculturation science, developed by Indigenous Māori researchers working in Western spaces (Macfarlane et al., 2024). We believe this framework is fit for purpose to advance acculturation science in *Aotearoa* and beyond. The Braided River approach has demonstrated that the combination of Indigenous and WASP perspectives can be fruitful, not only for supporting the further development of Indigenous psychologies, but also for providing critical feedback for Western psychology about the external and ecological validity of its theories. With respect to theory and research that address the conditions and contexts of acculturation, we are in agreement with the position advanced by Indigenous and non-Western psychologists in their paper "Changing the Acculturation Conversation:"

*"Collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous psychology researchers is an essential element of a decolonization agenda that constructively and critically challenges the hegemony of Western psychology, develops psychological knowledge with Indigenous Peoples themselves and has the potential to play a significant role in assisting the discipline and profession of psychology to achieve its potential"* (Dudgeon et al., 2016, p. 127).

In this way we have made progress in indigenizing acculturation science — even though the steps are small.

## 5. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no competing interests.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 7. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CW designed studies. TR and TN collected data. All authors were involved in data analysis. CW drafted the paper. All authors provided critical revisions.

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