



Personal pronouns and “flexible minds”: Shaping Māori academic identities

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Māori academic identity research

Research with Māori academics from various New Zealand universities and disciplines:

- ethnicity an important component of their identity;
- dual identities as both Māori and academics;
- not a question of whether their Māori identity *may* impact on their identity as academics but *how* it does.



“mental rigidity”

VS

“flexible mind”

“sharply delineated
identities simultaneously”
(p. 1095)

“maintain multiple
intellectual enclaves”
(p. 1100)

Zerubavel, E. (1995). The Rigid, the Fuzzy, and the Flexible: Notes on the Mental Sculpting of Academic Identity. *Social Research*, 62(4), 1093- 1106.

Method of analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) used to code interview data collected from Māori academic staff about their academic experiences, aspirations and needs.

Smith, J., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009).
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis:
Theory, Method and Research. London:
SAGE Publications Ltd.



Process

(1) Read and re-read

(2) Note exploratory **comments**

a) Descriptive (e.g. key words, phrases, explanations relating to the interviewee's experiences, events, objects etc)

b) Linguistic (e.g. pronoun use, pauses, repetition, tone, degree of fluency, metaphor)

c) Conceptual (reflexive engagement, i.e. your interpretation of the underlying issues/ideas arising from the data)

(3) Identify **emerging themes**

(4) Identify **super-ordinate themes**



Expressions of Māori academic identity

How does personal pronoun usage reflect the intersection between Māori cultural and academic identity?

Does the “flexible mind” approach come at any personal or professional cost to the Māori academics involved?