“But I always say I’m from New Zealand”: intersectional ethnic youth self-representation and identity negotiation on TikTok

Mariana Toledo

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic youth in New Zealand have developed unique and evolving relationships with their national, ethnic and cultural identities, and social media has come to play a significant role in how these identities are negotiated both online and offline. This research examines the self-representation and identity negotiation of intersectional ethnic youth in New Zealand on social media, with a specific focus on TikTok. A content analysis from a sample of 79 TikTok videos was conducted to explore how young people use the platform to represent their national, cultural, and ethnic identities. Additionally, five in-depth interviews were conducted with young consumers and creators of content on TikTok to gain insights into their experiences. Key findings highlight that ethnic young people use different coping strategies to navigate communication dilemmas on social media between their ethnic and cultural identities and dominant discourses in New Zealand society. Ethnic young people exhibit unique relationships with their national, cultural and ethnic identities, with many developing hybrid identities. While social media analysis indicates a strong identification with the ‘New Zealander’ national identity, the interviews show that it is still a nuanced topic. However, engaging with Indigenous Māori culture is shown to increase migrants’ sense of belonging. Furthermore, the findings also showcase how prevalent humour is in navigating these dilemmas, particularly due to its ubiquity on TikTok as well as its importance in New Zealand culture. However, the use of self-directed ethnic humour is shown to have both positive and negative consequences. Humour can increase social acceptance, diffuse tensions and allow a more lighthearted approach to difficult subjects. At the same time, its prevalence meant that participants often found that it was the best or only way to approach
these subjects, and discouraged them from taking experiences of discrimination seriously. Overall, this thesis contributes to the growing body of literature on intersectional ethnic youth, social media, and identity in the New Zealand context. The findings shed light on the multifaceted ways in which young people use TikTok as a platform for self-expression, while also illuminating the challenges and complexities they face in negotiating their identities in a digital context.
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On days I am homesick, Wellington’s Oriental Bay becomes a much fancier Lagoa das Palmeiras, Cabo Frio. It is just a block away from my childhood home, and I go on walks during sunset after school. The sky is dusted pink and orange, and the water gently laps on the sand. I am seventeen again, preparing for university entrance exams and dreaming of studying at the University of Auckland, all the way across the world.

I am grateful to call Brasil¹ my home and the place I whakapapa to, where my mother and grandmother and great-grandmother and the women before them had and raised their children. I am grateful to my parents, Ângela and Marcos, who encouraged my pursuit of education my entire life, and to my sister Rafaela, who I know I can run to at any moment. To my grandparents, Edileia and José Custódio, for being keepers of what home is to me, and the late Laís and Gilberto. To my extended family: my cousins Pedro, Flávia and Carol, for being like siblings to me; my dindinha Adriana, for accepting me as I am; my uncles, aunts, great-aunts, and more cousins. I will not name all of you because I will most certainly leave someone out and create a bafafá in the family WhatsApp group. Just know that I love you and thank you for all the love and laughter. To my friends from the first nineteen years of my life until today: Lara Freitas, Rugeron Caetano, Teresa Rodrigues, Mariana Carvalho, Bia Guimarães, Babi Ripper, Luan Oliveira, Amanda Fernandes, Ana Vitória Sinhorelli, Johanns Eller, Pê Moreira, Nathalia Menezes, Alexandre Caetano. There are many others too, but I am prioritising everyone who commuted to the

¹ The choice of writing Brasil, as it is written in my native language, rather than the anglicised Brazil, is intentional.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Ever since sitting down and starting my thesis, here is a short list of people I have attempted to explain it to: my 80-year-old grandmother; Uber drivers both in New Zealand and Brazil; my therapist; my six-year-old cousin; the researchers at Thriving @ Crossroads; a few customers at my retail job. Those explanations ranged from a ten-minute presentation under the watchful eye of a room full of academics to a simple “have you heard of TikTok?”. The most common explanation is that my research looks at the self-representation of intersectional ethnic youth\(^2\) on social media, TikTok if I want to be specific, which gets reactions ranging from keen interest to a polite “well, that is quite niche!”.

The reality is that the further I went into my research, the less niche it seemed. Intersectional ethnic youth in New Zealand is quite a mouthful, and yet it encompasses such a wide range of people, stories, experiences and lifestyles. It represents so many people I have met since I moved to New Zealand in 2016, some that are in my life now and some that are not, people that I know deeply and others that I only met in passing. It represents many people I love, that I dedicate this research to, and that have taught me so much. And within this group, there is such a broad range of ways we think of ourselves, our relationships with each other, and our relationship with the land we live in.

Ethnic youth in New Zealand is vastly underrepresented on many axes. That was a contributing factor to much of my feeling of isolation when I first moved to New

\(^2\)“Youth” is used in this research to define persons between the ages of 15-24, as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, n.d.).
Zealand. MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American and African), the smallest of the larger racial groups in New Zealand, already encompasses such a wide range of cultural and ethnic groups. The diaspora is small, and even in the largest city in New Zealand, meeting another Latin American person felt like being a dog and seeing another dog on the street. When I first approached joining the Thriving @ Crossroads project and saw my future supervisor’s very Latino-sounding name, I could not help but sign my email with a hopeful “agradeço desde já” (thank you in advance). Throughout the years, I was able to find friendship within the immigrant community with people whose culture I never imagined would be anything like mine, from my Vietnamese best friend to my Indian flatmate. I found that not only were there things we shared culturally, such as a love of rice above all other carbohydrates, but we could understand each other’s homesickness, culture shocks, social blunders, and not seeing your experience reflected in anyone else in most rooms.

Despite the diversity of experiences, identities and worldviews within this “niche” community, we still understand each other. Academia is only one space in which we are underrepresented and a place we are fighting to make our mark in. Thriving @ Crossroads, the research group I am proud to have been taken under the wing of, is a wonderful Asian and ethnic minority, mostly women-led, initiative to shed light on the community. There are so many young ethnic researchers interested in understanding ourselves, our experiences and our outcomes, adding our voices, and making sure in the future we no longer walk into a room and do not see ourselves mirrored in anyone else again. And while there is a bank of existing literature, there are several gaps that need to be filled.
Nowadays, social media is arguably one of the best ways to research young people. The Internet has been, since its inception, a place where youth felt they could express themselves without so many of the constraints of real life, a fact that is especially salient for those young people at the margins. As someone who grew up queer and deeply closeted, the Internet became a refuge for me from a very young age. This was reinforced later in my life when I moved from my home country of Brazil to New Zealand at age 19 and again felt like an outsider in real-life spaces. These types of experiences have interested researchers and academics, who have studied the way in which young people engage with social media for several years. Platforms may change but some things stay constant: that the Internet and social media provide opportunities for community and connection, for becoming and belonging, to those who live in the margins.

TikTok may only be the latest platform young people have been migrating to in the past few years, but it is already sparking the interest of researchers. Studies and articles about it have been coming out in the last few years, being dubbed a fertile ground for research (Schellewald, 2021). And much of this research has centred on those young people at the margins, such as racialised youth (Akinbola, 2022; Jaramillo-Dent, Contreras-Pulido & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2022; King-O’Riain, 2022; Matamoros-Fernandez, Rodriguez & Wikstrom, 2022), queer and trans youth (Hiebert & Kortes-Miller, 2021; Simpson & Semaan, 2021), and other marginalised groups (MacKinnon, Kia & Lacombe-Duncan, 2021; Vizcaíno-Verdú & Aguadé, 2022). My research, despite seeming “niche”, is a continuation of social media research that has been conducted for decades at this point, and of research on TikTok that many academics around the globe are starting to grow interested in.
In the New Zealand context, not much research has been done on the particularities of youth and social media, and even less so on marginalised youth. Examining social media could help better understand how these youth connect with their culture(s) and the nation where they live. Although not focused on social media, existing literature on the development of our cultural and national identities supports that it continues to be something we struggle to make sense of. External pressure from family and peers, adapting to a new culture and sometimes language, and navigating the uniqueness of the combination of cultures have caused many young ethnic people to develop hybrid identities: an in-between space of simultaneous belonging and non-belonging (Handapangoda, 2015; Lei, 2016). The literature also shows that a strong sense of cultural and national identity is associated with better outcomes for migrants (Ward & Lin, 2006), despite many feeling as though their cultural and ethnic identity is incompatible with the New Zealand identity (Ward, Stuart & Adam, 2009).

Although these findings provide good insights into the cultural and national identities of ethnic youth in New Zealand, there is a need for more research that takes into account intersectional approaches. Understanding intersectionality and how different axes of identity affect individual experiences is vital to researching these communities. While a more comprehensive definition of intersectionality will be discussed in Chapter 2, we can understand it as how different marginalised identities overlap and intersect, creating unique challenges and perspectives.

Being able to understand ethnic young people’s relationship with their identities is especially valuable given how some of these populations will very soon no longer be minorities on the basis of numbers alone. The Asian population is set to make up
over a quarter of the New Zealand population by 2043 (Stats NZ, 2022). Growing at a slower but steady rate, MELAA (Middle Eastern, Latin American and African) are projected to grow from 1.8% to 2.9% of the population by the same year (Stats NZ, 2022). Much of that growth is also projected to come less from new migrants and more from new births (Stats NZ, 2022), giving way to newer generations of New Zealand-born ethnic young people who have unique relationships with their national and cultural identities.

However, as previously mentioned, there is a gap in literature exploring ethnic youth and identity in the New Zealand context. There is much opportunity to expand our knowledge on the unique relationship marginalised young people have with social media, how that relationship impacts how young people negotiate and perform our identities, and how it reflects a changing perspective on our national and cultural identity. Researching identity through the angle of social media studies is becoming more and more relevant as we enter new generations who did not grow up in a world without social media. To these new generations, their online presence affects and reflects their relationships with their family, peers, culture, and themselves. What they choose to or not to publicise, to whom they make it public, and the way through which they frame their identity can inform a great deal about these relationships, as researchers in the US and Europe have already found (Dekker, Belabas & Scholten, 2015; Mainsah, 2011; Mitra & Evansluong, 2019; Spjeldnæs & Agdal, 2020; Takhar, Bebek & Jamal, 2021).

Considering these gaps and opportunities, the present study was set up to answer these research questions:
- How do ethnic young people represent and negotiate their identities on TikTok?
- How do other intersections of marginalisation affect their representation and identity negotiation on social media?
- What are the impacts and implications of ethnic youth’s self-representation and identity negotiation on social media to their national, ethnic and cultural identity?

Having found gaps in the existing literature and established the research questions, the next step was to outline the aims and objectives of this study. Given the focus on social media, it made sense to conduct a content analysis to establish an understanding of how identity is being represented and negotiated. To further explore and understand the intricacies of representation and identity online, in-depth interviews with social media users and creators were also conducted. The content analysis will allow this research to identify and understand the common themes in the posts by ethnic youth, which in turn will provide a clearer outlook into identity performance and negotiation practices, the effect intersectionality has on these practices and how cultural and national identity is represented. In order to achieve this, a period of time was reserved to capture videos and posts on TikTok, which were then analysed broadly to determine those common themes. From this, a small number of posts were selected for analysis, which was modelled after Shifman’s three memetic dimensions (2013). The findings from the content analysis have, in turn, informed the interviews with a small number of young ethnic TikTok creators and consumers based in New Zealand. These interviews allowed further questioning into their own performance of identity, how they perceived others’ performances, and their unique insights into national and cultural identity. By having a diversity of
identities and experiences among the participants, I was able to approach how intersectional identities also affected their performance and insights.

Given this approach, the next chapters will guide the reader through a review of the existing literature, followed by a more detailed explanation of the research design, the media content analysis and interview results, and finally, the discussion and conclusion. The literature review chapter has three sections: the first section explores existing research on social media studies in the context of immigration, marginalised communities, and social media's role on identity work; the second section describes the theoretical framework used in this research to explore ideas of cultural identity, ethnicity, intersectionality and performance; and finally, the last section situates the reader in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, historically, socially and culturally. The research design chapter provides a more detailed explanation of the data capture and analysis process, as well as the recruitment for interviews and the analysis process, including how the interviews were conducted and analysed. The data analysis findings will report a small sample of videos containing common themes and ideas, connecting them to the ideas found in the literature review. The interview results will discuss how young ethnic users' thoughts and opinions reinforce or contradict the findings of the literature review and data analysis. Finally, the discussion chapter summarises the key findings of this research and discusses them in light of the literature, before the conclusion introduces new opportunities for future study.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Section 1: Social Media Practices

At the core of this research are the common practices, purposes, uses and gratifications of social media by ethnic youth. There is a large existing scholarship on the use of social media by recent migrants, both during the migration process (Borkert, Fisher & Yafi, 2018; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Dekker, Engbersen & Faber, 2016) as well as during the process of integrating socially (De Jacolyn, Stasiak & McCool, 2021; Ihejirika & Krtalic, 2021; Lei, 2016). Research on second and third generation migrants, although still extensive, has a greater focus on the European (Dekker, Belabas & Scholten, 2015; Mainsah, 2011; Parker & Song, 2006, Spjeldnæs & Agdal, 2020; Takhar, Bebek & Jamal, 2021) and American perspectives (Lam, 2009; Velasquez, Montgomery & Hall, 2019). Although existing (Ihejirika & Krtalic, 2021; Hoffman Nunes, 2016; Lei, 2016), research on the topic in the New Zealand context is scarce. Nonetheless, existing literature from other countries will aid in understanding how migrants from various generations use social media to express, represent or perform their identities.

Understanding TikTok

As previously mentioned in the first chapter, the reasoning behind the choice of TikTok as the social media network of focus in this research is related to both its popularity among young people, as well as the emerging interest researchers have taken on it.

The platform is owned by Chinese company ByteDance, and became available globally in 2018 after merging with another short video app, musical.ly. Its popularity
has skyrocketed since, hitting one billion monthly active users in September 2021 (Dellatto, 2021) and counting 2.6 billion downloads up until 2020 (Chapple, 2020). Allowing users to post videos of up to three minutes, the platform utilises an algorithm which curates a personalised video feed based on the user’s previous engagement. While other short video platforms had been popular in the past, such as Vine and the previously mentioned musical.ly, none have reached the popularity of TikTok. Vine and musical.ly only reached 200 million active users at their peak (Hu, 2018). Other social media platforms have replicated its format into their own apps, such as Instagram’s Reels, YouTube’s #Shorts and Snapchat’s Spotlight (Lorenz, 2021).

Fostering a myriad of online communities of young people from diverse backgrounds and with different interests, TikTok has been capturing the attention of social media researchers for the last few years. Schellewald (2021) argues that TikTok is a fertile ground for digital culture, criticising assumptions surrounding the platform as a fleeting form of entertainment for teens and pre-teens. He argues that meaningful cultural exchanges and forms of self-expression can take place on the platform. The content posted and shared on the platform has been researched by various fields, including dermatology (Nikookam & Guckian, 2021; Roche, Dhonncha & Murphy, 2021; Zheng et al., 2021), marketing (Haenlein et al., 2020; Ma & Hu, 2021), public health (Li et al., 2021; Unni & Weinstein, 2021; Russell et al., 2021), political activism (Hurley, 2022; Subramanian, 2021; Zeng & Abidin, 2021), music (Arrieta, 2021) and many others, with interest growing every day.

Young peoples’ use of TikTok has been the subject of the majority of these studies due to their large concentration on the app. Media scholars have conducted studies into
the uses and gratifications sought by both adolescent and preadolescent users (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020) as well as young adults (Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021), with consistent findings. Bossen and Kottasz (2020) and Vaterlaus and Winter (2021) have found that adolescent and preadolescent users are more likely to be consumers rather than creators of content, and seek community building and self-expression on the platform. However, younger adolescents were more likely to be content creators and seek fame and recognition (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020), while young adults were more likely to have concerns about privacy, cyberbullying and censorship in the app (Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021). It is important, especially for this study, to consider that cyberbullying and censorship disproportionately affect people of colour, queer, disabled, and other marginalised groups in the platform.

Despite these challenges and limitations, users of diverse backgrounds have still found ways to make TikTok, and the Internet in general, a place where they felt comfortable to be themselves. Simpson & Seeman (2021) have observed that TikTok simultaneously empowers and violates the identities of LGBTQ+ people in the platform, fostering a rich online queer community while their policies and algorithm exclude the most vulnerable. Vizcaíno-Verdú & Aguaded (2022) have argued that the platform provides opportunities for growth and empowerment for marginalised communities, motivating activism through musical frameworks. However, the aforementioned policies of censorship can also hurt creators. Jaramillo-Dent, Contreras-Pulido & Pérez-Rodríguez (2022) have found that ethnically diverse content creators have had their videos banned or censored consistently, regardless of the size of their viewership. Despite that, they still find that TikTok affords them an opportunity to share a diversity of opinions.
This contradictory sentiment, albeit not exclusive to TikTok, is a reflection of how these platforms can simultaneously uplift and oppress marginalised communities. Digital systems can work to “disrupt the reproduction of elite (white, male, straight) culture or reinforce it—or both at the same time.” (Cohn, 2019, p. 15). While the systems in place are not the focus of this study, it would be remiss not to acknowledge how the medium impacts the message. When young people utilise TikTok to express themselves and find community, they are doing so within the bounds and limitations of a platform that fosters both supportive and hateful environments and discourses.

**Social media use in the context of immigration**

The use of social media by migrants at various stages of the migration process is an expanding field in social media and migration studies. Those stages can vary from pre, during and post migration, as well as of second and third generation migrants. The relevance of this literature to this research is due to the fact that the ethnic communities it intends to research are mostly of migrant background, differing themselves from the native and settler populations of Aotearoa New Zealand. While the focus of this research is not on their migration journeys, the uses and gratifications of social media by migrants at different stages of the migration process can be correlated with the uses and gratifications of social media by intersectional ethnic youth. Revealing how and why other migrants have used social media can shed light into the reasons why our target demographic does so.

Migrants’ use of social media and its purposes vary during different stages of the migration process. During the stage of pre-migration, social media is mostly used for research purposes, although the accuracy and veracity of the information found can be difficult to pinpoint. Borkert, Fisher and Yafi (2018), after interviewing 83
refugees in two refugee camps in Berlin, have found that social media and cell phones were used extensively to plan their journey, learn more about their destination, connect with friends and family, and follow news about their home country. The authors argue that there is a misconception that refugees are panicked and frantic when migrating, which is untrue and requires a shift in thinking. Dekker and Engbersen (2014) found similar purposes among Brazilian, Ukrainian and Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands, arguing that social media facilitates the migration process for many of them. In their research, they also emphasise the importance of social media in the maintenance of strong ties, enhancing of weak ties and potential of latent ties for migrants. They have drawn similar conclusions again in Dekker, Engbersen and Faber (2016), interviewing Brazilian, Ukrainian and Moroccan potential migrants, finding that they preferred social media over other traditional communication channels during the decision making process of migration. However, they were still wary of information they received online, due to potentially misleading or false advice. In the New Zealand context, Ihejirika and Krtalic (2021) have found similar tendencies among migrant communities in the country, arguing that social media played a fundamental role in deciding when and where to migrate, as well as procuring information and settling in afterwards. They have also found that more settled migrants still often participate in those spaces to assist newer and potential migrants.

Despite the relevance of social media as a source of information, academics have found that its most important role in the migration process is aiding in cultural integration. The acculturation process has been studied to a great extent, and more recent studies have attributed social media a role in this. Although findings regarding whether social media contributes to separation or integration have been conflicting, a
number of authors have found that it allows migrants to both maintain ties to their cultural communities in their destination and home country, as well as remove barriers held by face-to-face interactions (Mitra & Evansluong, 2019). The creation of websites and forums hosted by and for specific ethnic communities has been criticised, as observed by Parker and Song (2006). In their research into British Chinese websites, the authors have fought against the assumption that they encourage separation rather than integration. Instead, they found that these websites foster a diverse range of opinions and identities, and can impact political decisions around the community. In New Zealand, Hoffman Nunes (2016) has mapped the communicative ecology of Latin American women who use groups on Facebook and WhatsApp to create and maintain relationships, seek information and advice, and find community. However, social media is a vital resource not only for maintaining connections with one’s own cultural community, but also for creating opportunities to connect with others.

Social media’s role as a tool of integration carries on to second and third generation migrants as well. While social interaction, community and self-representation are purposes for social media use among all users, the identities of ethnic, migrant, and other marginalised groups are tied to these purposes. Research on this topic tends to focus on interethnic and intraethnic interactions on social media, many with the goal of exploring whether it promotes segregation or integration. For example, in their interviews with second-generation migrants in the Netherlands, Dekker, Belabas and Scholten (2015) found that interethnic contact was rarely pursued but usually found through common interests. However, intraethnic contact happened more often and enabled communities to bond over their shared background, issues of identity and lifestyle, and struggles they faced. They also found that intraethnic connections did
not hinder interethnic contact. Likewise, Lam (2009), after collaborating with a young second-generation Chinese girl and studying her personal use of instant messaging, found that it gave her an opportunity to preserve her cultural identity while simultaneously integrating with the culture of the country she lived in. Lam argued that the medium worked in tandem with other modes of interaction to constitute a network of multilingual connections that the young girl developed through various linguistic and cultural resources. Similarly to Lam, Spjeldnæs and Agdal (2020) studied the social media habits of youth of immigrant background in Norway to understand how it resulted in both challenges and benefits, finding that they shared a desire to successfully integrate in their own ethnic community and the community of the country they lived in. They identified barriers to integration as related to a lack of knowledge on social codes, but as the participants from Dekker, Belabas and Scholten’s study (2015), participants in Spjeldnæs and Agdal’s (2020) research also benefited from discussing issues of identity, stereotypes and representation with people of their community, whilst not hindering their desire and success in intercultural interactions.

**Self-presentation and identity**

Potentially one of the most important aspects of social media, and the one at the core of this study, is its ability to give users a space for self-representation. Researchers have found that self-expression is one of the main reasons young people use social media (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020; Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021). For many of them, social media may not only be where they can express their identity, but it can influence its development too. Online spaces have given communities the ability to gather and discuss without the limitations of physical, language or geographical barriers, and for
those who struggle with identity work this ability also opens the possibility of connecting with others going through the same issues without those limitations.

During the process of using social media for identity work, its role as a tool of social connection is highly relevant. Through sharing experiences, being witnessed by the community and receiving support, users can feel heard and less alone in their identity work. The importance of these connections has been highlighted by previous authors, especially in reference to young people of marginalised communities. For example, social media has shown to play a pivotal role in the identity development of young queer people, serving as a source of connection, validation, well-being and education (Berger et al., 2021; Byron et al., 2019). However, despite the assumption that social media is a safer space for LGBTQI+ people, users still describe encountering discrimination from strangers (Berger et al., 2021), issues with the platforms (Cho, 2018), and confrontations within the community (Byron et al., 2019; Cavalcante, 2019). Bates and colleagues (2020) highlight that while the affordances given by online community building are important, individual identity and self-expression are still vital to users.

Social media users whose identities often intersect with multiple axes of marginalisation, are further affected by the negative aspects of social media. In interviews with queer disabled students, Miller (2017) has found that the gratifications they enjoy from their online presence, such as developing a positive identity, avoiding stigma and overcoming physical barriers, causes them to substitute in-person interactions, where they feel dissatisfied or unwelcome, for online activity. Cho (2018) argues that queer people of colour are disproportionately affected by what the author calls social media’s default publicness, arguing that the design bias in
social media platforms can lead to outing users, who as a result face negative consequences. Other authors also emphasise the unique experience of ethnic youth online, especially in reference to identity work (Dekker, Belabas & Scholten, 2015; Spjeldnæs & Agdal, 2020).

The study of social media behaviour and cyberculture has been criticised for being saturated with white voices and omitting the nuances of racial identity online (Nakamura, 2013). Even research on non-ethnic marginalised groups and the intricacies of identity work on social media gloss over the impact of race and ethnicity, and overrepresent white perspectives (Cho, 2018). However, more researchers have taken an interest in studying these sidelined viewpoints in the last decade, and the scholarship on the nuances of ethnic identity online is growing. Across various parts of the globe and among various ethnic groups, scholars have found that there are tensions when navigating multiple identities, which can cause fatigue among marginalised users (Ayallo, 2019; Handapangoda, 2015; King & Fretwell, 2022; Lei, 2016; Mainsah, 2011; Takhar, Bebek & Jamal, 2021). A number of marginalised users also report feeling pressure to conform to Western and white identities (Ayallo, 2019; Lei, 2016; Takhar, Bebek & Jamal, 2021), achieving a hybrid identity (Handapangoda, 2015; Lei, 2016; King & Fretwell, 2022), and projecting a desired or aspirational identity according to what they deemed socially desirable (Mainsah, 2011; Takhar, Bebek & Jamal, 2021).

While the Internet and social media can afford freedom, connection and empowerment opportunities for marginalised groups, it can also pressure them to conform, subject to stereotypes, and simultaneously expand and limit their self-expression. Mainsah (2011) has analysed how migrant ethnic youth in Norway...
represent themselves on their social media profiles, finding that they displayed multifaceted identities, but still reproduced dominant discourses of belonging in Norwegian society, being too aware of their own perception as outsiders. Takhar, Bebek and Jamal (2021) have observed the process of identity construction of third generation British Sikhs on Instagram. In interviews, these authors found that this population battled pressure to conform to Sikh cultural standards from their family, and to Westernised norms by non-Sikh friends and British society. While some achieved a hybrid identity, most performed what they perceived were desired or aspirational parts of their identity. Furthermore, King and Fretwell (2022) analysed Instagram publications by fifteen Asian American digital influencers over a period of seven months, studying how a hybrid Asian and American identity is constructed and performed on social media. They argue that the platform allows Asian Americans to reconstruct their identity, breaking and avoiding stereotypes and allowing for more authentic representation, displaying multifaceted and hybrid identities. In the New Zealand context, Lei (2016) has framed the creation of a hybrid identity as a tool of survival, rather than an opportunity for empowerment. Analysing and interviewing migrant Chinese youth activity on social media, Lei reports these users feeling like New Zealand European customs and norms were the gold standard, and that attempting to achieve this standard while not forsaking their own culture was a great source of stress and contributed negatively to their mental health.

Performing an online identity
Performativity and online activity have been linked since the popularisation of the Internet (Beyes, Leeker & Schipper, 2017). Social media networks, forums, and websites became another public sphere where people found individual self-expression, and one especially compelling for researchers due to its liminality, its
existence as a limbo of public and private (Mitra & Evansluong, 2019; Takhar, Bebek & Jamal, 2021). The ‘democratic’ nature of these online spaces also allows for new possibilities of self-determination and self-representation, especially for ethnic and other marginalised groups who often do not feel represented or represented in a positive light in mainstream media (Zurawski, 1996). However, there is also tension between this possibility for self-representation and the social contexts in which these groups exist, a tension that also bleeds into the ‘democratic’ cyberspace and frames their identity work (Mainsah, 2011). At the core of this tension is the understanding of social media as a place where performance takes place, and of social media participation as performance. For example, De Kosnik and Feldman (2019) use Goffman’s understanding of individual daily acts as theatrical performances and McLuhan’s theory of the global theatre to argue that Twitter is a global stage, where users are performing for a wider audience.

On social media, however, the audience is no longer immediately visible, but rather imagined. Marwick and boyd (2011), in studying the audience imagined by Twitter users, introduce the concept of networked audience, which consists of both unidentified and familiar faces, both public and personal. It also acknowledges the existence of multiple audiences, which relate not only to the speaker but to each other as well. Being a ‘many-to-many’ model, the networked audience creates a feedback loop in which the speaker communicates to various audiences, yet what the speaker communicates is influenced by these audiences. These authors also propose that, unlike the idea of a broadcast audience, the networked audience also expects a certain degree of authenticity, which users carefully balance. However, there is a distinction between what authenticity is and what is perceived as authentic in the social media space.
Performance and authenticity has become vital concepts in the field of social media studies, particularly with the growth of online personalities and influencers. The formulated authenticity of these microcelebrities is described by Abidin (2018) as tacit labour, or the invisible work put in to make an act seem effortless. Furthermore, Zhang (2021) has taken precisely to TikTok to describe the phenomenon of ‘TikTok Face’, or the importance of facial expressions on social media. Lee and Theokary (2021) have found that the success and sphere of influence of social media personalities is more affected by their emotional behaviour and language than the quality of their content. Additionally, followers’ perception of authenticity and interactivity has been found to affect trust in the human brand, growing emotional attachment among content consumers (Jun & Yi, 2020). These findings cement that oftentimes online performance and perceived authenticity hold more relevant roles in social media and influencer success than quality of content or genuine interaction.

The importance of performance and perception online, however, is not exclusive to social media influencers and users with a large following. Everyday users reap the benefits of social credit while simultaneously risking their own privacy while performing an idealised identity on social media (Livingstone, 2008; Papacharissi, 2012). In particular, young users’ self-presentation online is the subject of more broad criticism, being subject to allegations of vapid and mindless behaviour (Livingstone, 2008; Mazur & Kozarian, 2010). In her exploration of youth self-expression of sexuality, identity and mental health on social media, Gabriel (2014) argues that social media and performance are ways of reconceptualising youth, arguing that “social media create new structures of self-awareness, visibility...
and display, and with this new ways to performatively constitute what it means to become adult, and also to see what young people perceive adulthood to be.” (p. 109).

Social media tethers in the limbo between public and private, which means that anything can be negotiated as performance, and these performances can be authentic or inauthentic, for the self or for the public. It allows greater freedom of self-expression and provides an outlet to explore identity construction, while simultaneously requiring that a calculated decision be made with every click on the ‘post’ button. Performance is ultimately a representation of the self, and an understanding of the concept both as a theoretical framework as well as its application to social media studies is ideal for this research.
Section 2: Theoretical Framework

Throughout this research, some concepts often will come up when discussing the background, the aims and objectives, and the findings of this study. Ahead of this, it is vital to establish how these concepts are understood in the context of this research. The following section will elaborate on the concepts of ethnicity, cultural identity, intersectionality and performance, providing a brief overview of literature surrounding these concepts, and elucidating on how it is interpreted within this research.

Ethnicity

The concept of ethnicity is one that is difficult to explain. The term originated in Ancient Greece from the word *ethnikos*, which meant ‘heathen’ or ‘pagan’. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that it became racialised.

From a practical perspective, Barth (1969) approached the concept of ethnicity through a lens of self-identification. He understood ethnicity as primordialist bonds, and focused on the ongoing negotiation of boundaries between different groups. According to Barth, ethnic groups share similar cultural values; have their belonging identified by others and by oneself; possess common communication and interaction; and continually reproduce. Over forty years after Barth’s research, ethnic self-identification has become a much less simplistic issue due to the increasing acceptance of unions between people of different races and/or ethnicities and the greater flow of international migration (Kukutai & Callister, 2009).
But despite these changes in attitudes, Barth’s definition of ethnicity still lacked the comprehension of interracial encounters that had happened and had been happening for centuries, even before Barth’s research. For example, Indigenous peoples of colonised lands already had much more complex relationships with ethnicity due to decades of encounters with settlers. Alia & Bull (2005) criticise Barth for not accounting for the ways that colonisation impacted Indigenous self-identification. Speaking from their perspective as Māori in New Zealand, they argue that while Barth advocated for identification from outside as a more accurate representation, Pākehā had very different understandings of Māori identity from how Māori understood their own identity. Another example can be found in Sri Lanka, where the exposure to and adoption of Anglo-Saxon habits, intermarriage between natives and settlers, and voluntary and involuntary migration all shaped the way Sri Lankans self-identify (Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020).

A more contemporary use of ‘ethnic’ as an attribute is anything that deviates from Anglo-Saxon whiteness. Italian and Irish migrant populations in the US were considered ethnic despite their race (Alia & Bull, 2005). Nowadays, ethnic is used almost interchangeably with ‘minority’ or ‘migrant’, regardless of self-identification, and almost always ignoring existing power structures (Moffitt, Juang & Syed, 2020).

Alia and Bull (2005) write about this phenomenon:

The concept of ‘Other’ permeates portrayals of ethnicity and divisions marked by ethnic (or pseudo-ethnic) boundaries. We read about ‘ethnic’ political districts, ‘ethnic’ communities, music and food. In the popular media, in government documents, even in

3 Māori term for white people.
communications from social agencies, we almost never read about Anglo-Saxon ‘ethnic’ groups. (...) ‘We’ are the ‘real’ culture. ‘They’ are ‘ethnic’. (p. 6)

Similarly, Moffit, Juang and Syed (2020) criticise the hesitancy of European academics to discuss the different implications of race and ethnicity post World War II, and the exclusion of non-white Europeans from their own national identity:

(...) Notions of who is European and who is Other are naturalized through the use of national monikers (e.g., German, Belgian, Swedish) in opposition to “migrants,” often regardless of generation, citizenship, or self-identification. Despite race not being named, who is cast into which group is highly racialized, while also contingent upon religion, class, and additional social locations. (p. 2)

A similar phenomenon can be observed in New Zealand, where the ‘New Zealander’ national identity is often exclusive of non-settler migrant families and even of New Zealand’s own Indigenous people. Alia and Bull (2005) agree that the term ‘ethnic’ is often applied to Māori in relation to Pākehā, contributing to their otherness in their own land. Ward, Stuart and Adam (2019) have found that Muslim New Zealanders often feel that their national and religious identity are incompatible, a similar conclusion drawn by Handapangoda (2015) about second-generation sinhalese Sri Lankan youth. Smith (2016) has argued that mainstream media in New Zealand reproduces and legitimates the divide between ethnic migrant New Zealanders and mainstream New Zealanders through the use of the term ‘New Zealand passport holder’ versus ‘New Zealander’.
While the ‘ethnic’ label has commonly been used as an otherness to Anglo-Saxon whiteness, the choice to use it throughout this research is due to the even smaller scope of other terms. ‘Minority’ does not accurately represent the statistics of this population, especially regarding the large Asian diaspora in New Zealand, which comprises over 15% of the population (Stats NZ, 2018). ‘Migrant’ does not take into account the country of birth, migration status, and self-identification of these groups.

Although the ‘ethnic’ label is also used in reference to Māori and Pasifika populations, the focus of this research is on African, Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern youth, who are often othered from their national New Zealand identity. In this research, the label also includes people who ethnically identify as one or more of these groups, regardless of their country of birth, nationality and citizenship. Ethnic self-identification is the benchmark used for the content and participants studied.

*Cultural identity*

‘Identity’ is an issue that permeates the present study, as well as many other studies into the practices, perspectives and attitudes of those caught in a limbo between cultures. It appears throughout studies of culture, gender, queerness, history, post-colonialism, indigeneity, mental health, and numerous other social subjects. Identity will be key in this research too, as we navigate how participants’ identities not only are constructed online, but how they are performed and publicised, and how others react to it.

Cultural identity, as we will come to talk about it, will be differentiated from the previous definition of ethnicity. It has been previously established that ‘ethnic’ will be
used in reference to those who self-identify as African, Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern. However, a shared ethnic background does not equal shared cultural practices, although they are commonly linked. Instead, it is understood that cultural identity extends beyond the bounds of ethnicity, and is also affected by regional and national identities, race, generation, religion, and other circumstances (Fong & Chuang, 2004). It is also in constant evolution as these circumstances change.

The existing literature on the identity construction of migrants often refers to Berry’s model of acculturation (2006), which explores the outcomes of adapting to two or more cultures. According to this model, the acculturation process consists of two steps: a) becoming aware of one’s own original culture and the culture of their destination country; and b) selecting and developing an acculturation strategy to manage stressful cultural experiences. There are, in total, four different acculturation strategies: integration, meaning maintaining one’s connection to their original culture while also identifying with the culture of their destination country; assimilation, meaning cutting ties with their original culture and fully identifying with the culture of their destination country; separation, meaning maintaining strong ties to one’s original culture while renouncing the culture of their destination country; and marginalisation, meaning identifying with neither one’s original culture nor the culture of their destination country. Studies have suggested that integration is the strategy with the most positive outcomes for both the migrant and the community (Berry, 2006; Ward & Lin, 2006).

However, this model has been criticised by scholars for a number of reasons. For one, it perpetuates an essentialist view of culture, reinforcing a dichotomy between East and West, and disregarding how intertwined they are in a post-colonial world
(Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020). Furthermore, it also treats culture as stable and constant regardless of changes in circumstances, and disregards the process of hybridisation (Lei, 2016), which will be discussed in later paragraphs. It also sustains the idea that the process of acculturation is linear and solely up to individual choice, unaffected by outside factors (Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020; Lei, 2016). Throughout this research, studies that use this model and their findings will be discussed. However, the perspective of this study on cultural identity development will be of cultural identity as a fluid, evolving process.

Hall (1994) understands cultural identity by two distinct characteristics: as a shared culture, that is, a collective shared self shaped by history and ancestry; and as a mutable, ever-changing aspect, under constant transformation depending on circumstances, in the process of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ simultaneously. They are not simply replications of cultural patterns under new circumstances and in a new environment, or the adoption of new patterns. Identity, including cultural identity, is negotiated constantly, and even core identities are mutable, reshaped by social, cultural, political, geographical, and historical circumstances and contexts (Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020; Hall, 1994). By understanding cultural identity this way, migrating to a new country is not reduced to linear and progressive processes of either assimilating, combining, or separating from characteristics of one’s country of origin and destination country. Instead, one’s evolving cultural identity is negotiated constantly, reshaped by social, cultural, political, and historical contexts. This fluid understanding of cultural identity is vital to this study, which comprehends that there are multiple and dynamic factors at play that characterise and shape the self-expression of ethnic youth.
The mutating characteristics of cultural identity are shaped by a myriad of factors through time, context, and location. Bhabha (1994) argues that “it is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.” (p. 2). Clothier (2005) refers to these identities as a ‘third space’, in-between cultural spaces negotiating their own bounds of authenticity. He argues that while aspects of formative cultures can still be traced in hybrid identities, they are of their own making, and constitute an unique perspective. The identities of the youth studied in this research can be argued to be hybrid: negotiated between their culture and ethnicity or that of their parents and grandparents, and the culture of the country they currently reside in (Mainsah, 2011). Beyond that, their identity is subject to further change and mutation throughout time and change in circumstances.

The understanding of cultural identity as a mutable, hybrid concept is vital for this research, as it is the frame through which this research understands this group. New Zealand has an unique relationship with migrants, as well as they do with the New Zealand identity.

**Intersectionality**

At its most basic definition, intersectionality refers to the overlapping categories of inequality an individual can exist within, and how they are affected by the different power structures at play (Kuper, Wright & Mustanski, 2018). While the term and its popularisation is rooted in Black feminism, its application has extended to studies of philosophy, law, social sciences, humanities, and to encompass a growing library of labels. While intersectionality, its definitions, its study and its application have
provoked an extensive literature over the past few decades, the following paragraphs will provide a basic overview of its history, critiques, applications and implications for this research.

The intersectional perspective was introduced during the 1970s and 1980s in the United States, when social movements were on the rise and the feminist movement was experiencing its second wave. The concept was proposed by Black feminists who felt that the demands and complaints from women’s liberation movements did not account for issues faced by Black women. The foundation of the Combahee River Collective in Boston introduced, in ‘A black, feminist statement’ in 1977, the perspective of black, lesbian and socialist feminists who refer to how their lives are affected by interlocking systems of oppression and demanded a movement that was comprehensive of their adversities (Gouma & Dorer, 2019). The term ‘intersectionality’ was coined into academic thought by lawyer and human rights activist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who compared the multiple discrimination faced by Black women as a traffic intersection. The viewpoint of their experiences, Crenshaw argues, was lacking in both feminist and anti-racist research. She conceptualises intersectionality as the multiple axes of oppression that overlap and cross. This concept strengthened analysis of the impact of social structures and the power relations within various areas of social studies, and has proven highly influential.

Intersectionality has been applied to a myriad of fields, expanded and critiqued, linked with existing theories and concepts and used as the basis for new ones. Its influence, in fact, has caused it to become a ‘buzzword’ widely accepted as essential to gender, race and class theory (Davis, 2008). Marxist theorists have criticised how it
has overtaken discussion of oppression and driven away attention from the oppressive structure of capitalism, arguing that power ultimately operates for capitalists and against the proletariat, regardless of gender or race (Foley, 2018; Gimenez, 2018). While the triad of gender, race and class was initially the basis of applications of intersectionality, it has expanded to comprehend a number of other categories such as sexuality, gender nonconformity, able-bodiedness, and migration status, and thus further criticised for it (Kuper, Wright & Mustanski, 2018). Despite both its critics and its praisers, however, intersectionality is still a misunderstood concept with a variety of implications that requires careful consideration for researchers (Davis, 2008).

At its core, intersectionality aims to question how people are situated and situate themselves by, and according to, the multiple categories of identity such as gender, race and ethnicity (Gouma & Dorer, 2019). This also implies the study of the multiple power structures at play and how they overlap, becoming a complex task. Leslie McCall’s methodological reasoning (2005), is one of the most widely accepted and commonly used empirical approaches of intersectionality in research. Her model distinguishes three distinct approaches: inter-categorical, intra-categorical, and anti-categorical approaches. The anti-categorical approach rejects categories altogether, promoting a deconstruction of the uniformisation of individuals and questioning whether or not categories are useful. An intra-categorical approach seeks to understand multidimensional differences within an individual group, as well as individual experiences that may not be part of the group collective. Finally, an inter-categorical approach compares social groups to one another while taking into account other intersections of identity that can reshape experiences. Research on intersections of inequality within migrant groups has largely focused on the
difference of their experiences versus native groups (Simon-Kumar et al., 2020). However, the chosen approach for this research is a combination of inter-categorical and intra-categorical, which will allow exploring differences in perspectives from non-ethnic and ethnic youth, but also the distinct individual experiences within ethnic youth.

A combination of intra-categorical and intercategorical approaches involves “both comparing individual identities to each other as well as considering intersections and their emergent properties” (Shields, 2008). An inter-categorical approach will support the grouping of ethnic youth from various backgrounds and at various stages of migration, and assist in comparing their position (and how they position themselves) with that of non-ethnic youth. An intra-categorical approach will allow exploring the multiplicity of positions within the group. As previously mentioned, there is a larger literature that focuses on how ethnic migrant youth experiences unequal treatment to that of white and non-migrant peers (Raza, 1997; Smith, 2016; Ward, Stuart & Adam, 2019). However, there is also research focused on elucidating the shared experiences within subgroups of the ethnic migrant community, such as women (Arifeen & Syed, 2020; Mukkamala et al., 2018; Kele et al., 2022), queer people (Dhoest, 2020; Hammoud-Beckett, 2022), and different socio-economic classes (Peng, 2019; Sang & Calvard, 2019). Scholars of migrant studies in New Zealand have applied this method to quantify and qualify inequality and difference amongst the migrant population (Simon-Kumar et al., 2020). For the purposes of this research, it is equally important to acknowledge the variety of experiences within the migrant community, as well as its distinct perspectives from non-migrant communities.
Performance

The comparison between a dramaturgical performance and everyday acts has been articulated by a myriad of theorists and academics in various fields. “All the world’s a stage”, begins Shakespeare’s monologue in As You Like It, “and all the men and women merely players” (Shakespeare, 1623/2004). These first two lines are only one of the Bard’s most famous quotes, becoming a common expression to justify how our actions are shaped by our ‘audience’.

Our self-awareness regarding the intent of our actions and their desired perception has sparked research into the study of performance and performativity in everyday life. Erving Goffman’s The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1969) was a pioneer in the study of dramaturgical analysis in sociology, arguing that individuals, when engaged in face-to-face interactions with others, will attempt to control or direct the impression others will have of them. Rather than focusing on the nature of the performance, or what is being performed, Goffman is pointing out that a performance takes place, quite like in a theatrical stage. He also proposed that this performance work takes place in both ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ areas: certain spaces where the need to behave in a certain way, such as the workplace, are in the front stage, whereas spaces where more candid speech can take place, such as an after work happy hour, are in the backstage. Goffman’s work is also related to other theories of performance, such as the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1962; Strauss, 1993). This perspective outlines that identity and self are constructed through constant interaction with others.

The concept of gender performativity by Judith Butler (1988) is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in both queer studies and performance studies.
Butler argues that gender is not a natural, fixed thing, but a performance: "Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (1988, p. 278). According to her, gender performance is sustained through the repetition of commonplace acts such as speech, behaviour and nonverbal communication. The construction of gender as we understand it only exists because of imposed social norms that intend to uphold hegemonic heteronormativity. Butler’s theory of gender performance has been influential beyond the field of queer studies, inspiring academics on the performances of race and ethnicity (Grosswirth Kachtan, 2017; Nakamura, 2013, Pfeifle, 2012), occupation (Halsema et al., 2006; Jenkins & Finneman, 2018), and youth (Gabriel, 2014).

Despite the highly influential nature of Butler’s work, scholars have pointed out limitations and presented ways of looking at it through different lenses. Nelson (1999) has brought forward a critical application of performativity into geography, arguing that Butler’s original work accounts only for the moment of the act, even if it is repeated over and over. Nelson argues that individuals perform a variety of identities throughout various spaces in their lives, and these performances are affected by different cultural and societal norms.

In studying the acts of ethnic youth that perform hybrid identities and navigate between different spaces, it is important to realise how these spaces impact those acts and their reception. Their performance of gender, for example, can differ between how they act among their friends and how they act among their family, as different expectations, behaviours and attitudes come into play. Performing ‘youth’ would be a similar scenario: a young person may be expected to take on certain roles and
responsibilities depending on the cultural and social environment they find themselves in.

**Summary**

How to define each of these concepts is widely debated by academics, and by no means has a definitive answer. The theoretical framework for this research takes into consideration how these concepts have been used by similar studies, and how they can be applied within this study.

Despite using ‘ethnic’ to only refer to people from Asian, African, Latin American and Middle Eastern backgrounds, it is vital to understand how the concept of ethnicity is understood by researchers, how it has been construed for the past centuries, and the deliberate ways in which it is used to refer to a select group of people now. ‘Ethnicity’ was often understood from the perspective of those who did not possess it, meaning ethnicity was created within Anglo-Saxon culture to refer to those outside of it. Barth’s (1969) understanding of ethnicity, for example, has been used by academics for decades, but also been criticised by many due to its disconsideration of how ethnic identification is defined within Indigenous cultures. However, ‘ethnic’ is still used nowadays to define those that are ‘other’ to Anglo-Saxon whiteness. Within the context of New Zealand, it is important to understand that ‘ethnic’ is often also used to refer to Māori and Pasifika populations. Although this study does not include research on Māori and Pasifika youth, ‘ethnic’ was determined to be the most appropriate word to refer to the groups studied in this research.

It is important to understand how ethnicity is differentiated from cultural identity, despite sharing similarities. Two people may share the same ethnicity but not the
same cultural background, and vice versa. Especially in the context of migrant populations, which are central to this research, cultural identity is under constant change. Although Berry’s model of acculturation (2006) is often used to describe the process of cultural adaptation of migrants to a new country, it also lacks nuance surrounding the development of hybrid identities, and how this adaptation is affected by outside factors. Hall (1994) understands cultural identity through a different lens, recognising its change and fluidity within different social, historical, geographical and political contexts. To that effect, Hall’s understanding is the one which more closely aligns with this research.

The concept of intersectionality has evolved to encompass a wide range of perspectives, but remains, at its core, about understanding how different axes of oppression overlap and affect individual experiences. Since Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality, it has been popularised, criticised, and expanded upon. McCall’s methodological reasoning (2005) defines an inter-categorical, intra-categorical and anti-categorical approach. This research utilises an inter-categorical as well as an intra-categorical approach, which allows for an understanding of the difference and range of perspectives within the ethnic youth community, as well as how it differs from non-ethnic youth’s experiences.

Finally, performance speaks to how many of these concepts are expressed. Goffman (1969) was a pioneer in the field, acknowledging how we attempt to control others’ impressions of ourselves in social interactions, and how this performance differs depending on the social context we are in. Butler's notion of the performance of gender (1988) is a widely influential study regarding how gender is not a state of being, but rather a performance we put on. The understanding of how we represent
ourselves in an attempt to shape opinions, as well as how things such as gender or ethnicity are not fixed statuses but rather performative, is vital in understanding the self-representation of ethnic youth.

In conclusion, this section provided a definition of four key concepts used in this research: ethnicity, cultural identity, intersectionality and performance. The next section will provide context into the history and culture of New Zealand and its migrant population, before moving to discuss the study’s research design.
Section 3: Context

In order to provide context to the experience of ethnic youth in New Zealand and to orient this research, it is necessary to outline the history of ethnic (non-European, non-Māori and non-Pasifika) migration to New Zealand. While the foundation of this country is built upon constitutional biculturalism, New Zealand has grown into a truly multicultural state, although this notion is a source of tension between migrant and Indigenous populations (Lowe, 2010; Revell, 2012; Ward & Lin, 2006; Ward & Masgoreth, 2008). Although non-European migration can be dated back to as early as the second half of the 19th century (Ip, 2003), the ‘New Zealander’ identity remains largely understood as an exclusivity to Pākehā and Māori (Ward & Lin, 2006). The aim of this section is to outline historical waves of ethnic migration in New Zealand and discuss the understanding and construction of a ‘New Zealander’ identity, including the general public perception and self-identification of ethnic people as legitimate cultural members.

A brief history of immigration to New Zealand

New Zealand is considered part of a small group of nations considered “classic immigration societies”, along with the United States, Australia, Canada and Israel (Spoonerley & Bedford, 2012). British arrival in New Zealand is considered to be the first wave of immigration⁴, and Te Tiriti O Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi⁵ is interpreted by many as the country’s first immigration policy (Ward & Lin, 2006).

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⁴ While Māori are formally considered as the native inhabitants of the land known as New Zealand, they are also descendants of the very first group of immigrants that came to the country while it was uninhabited; however, they were preceded by voyagers from Eastern Polynesia, and therefore Māori can also be considered the first settlers of New Zealand (Lowe, 2010).

⁵ Te Tiriti O Waitangi was an agreement signed by over 500 Māori chiefs and the British Crown on principles of protection, participation and cooperation. However, as these values were not honoured, in 1975 the Treaty of Waitangi Act gave recognition to the treaty and established the creation of the Waitangi Tribunal (Orange, 2012, cited in Hoffman Nunes, 2016). Still, to this day, the treaty is a source of tension and disputes, and Māori sovereignty is not respected.
From then onwards, newly colonised New Zealand was designed to be an utopia for white, Protestant Britons, despite its location halfway across the world (Brooking & Rabel, 1995; Lowe, 2010).

Up until 1945, the country had an unofficial ‘white New Zealand’ policy, and by the end of World War II it was the most ethnically homogenous of all European settler societies (Brooking & Rabel, 1995; Ward & Lin, 2006). While non-Britons such as the French, Polish and Italian were tolerated in smaller numbers, Asian (Chinese), Indian and Lebanese immigration were considered undesirable migrants (Lowe, 2010). Chinese migrants had first come during the gold rush of 1860-70, and although many went back to their home countries following the quick depletion of the gold mines, those who stayed were subjected to highly discriminatory policies designed to maintain white British purity (Ip, 1996; Lowe, 2006; Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). Indian migrants, while being exempt from these policies due to their status as citizens of the British Empire, were still subjected to certain policies designed to keep them out (Leckie, 1995). Despite their small numbers, both groups were viewed as undesirable and were victims of racist and xenophobic rhetoric and attitudes, and still are to this day (Ip, 1996; Leckie, 1995). It was not until 1986 that immigration policies changed in order to evaluate candidates on the basis of merit rather than origin, catching up to Australia, Canada and the United States, who had all dropped their Aryan policies by the 1970s (Lowe, 2010).

This caused an influx of migrants from Asia in order to supply a shortage of skilled workers. Between 1991 and 1994, Asian migrants accounted for over half of approved candidates into the country (Brooking & Rabel, 1995). The demand for skilled labour caused a wave of middle-class Asian migrants, largely from China, Korea, Taiwan,
Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore (Ip, 1996). Their growing presence was still deemed undesirable by the ‘host society’, who were unprepared for the change. This caused a spike in anti-Asian rhetoric, claiming that the national identity was being threatened by an ‘Asian Inv-Asian’ (Lowe, 2010). The 1990s and early 2000s saw a spike in anti-immigration rhetoric in politics (Ward & Lin, 2006). South Asian immigrants were not excluded from the public outrage, with attacks on Indian shopkeepers during the 1990s (Leckie, 1995). Despite the growing acceptance of multiculturalism in New Zealand in the last thirty years, which will be discussed in upcoming sections, anti-Asian sentiment still permeates discussions about immigration today (Butcher, Spoonley & Gendall, 2015; Girling, Liu & Ward, 2010).

Nowadays, Asians are the fastest growing population in the country, estimated to surpass the Māori population by 2043 (Stats NZ, 2022), but still vulnerable to discrimination, harassment and social exclusion (Lowe, 2010).

While their numbers are steadily growing, other ethnic groups arrived less frequently and in smaller numbers in the first century of migration. Middle Eastern, Latin American and African migrants (grouped as ‘MELAA’ in the New Zealand census) make up 1.5% of the New Zealand population, with Middle Eastern being the largest group and Latin American being the fastest growing (Stats NZ, 2018). Although Latin American and African migrants were present in New Zealand as early as in the late 1800s, their numbers were very small and many did not stay (Walrond, 2006; Wilson, 2006). The Middle Eastern community, however, settled earlier and in larger numbers with the arrival of the Lebanese, who found opportunities for economic

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6 For the purpose of this study, ‘African’ will be used only in reference to African migrants or migrants of African descent. The majority of the African-born population in New Zealand is racially white (Walrond, 2006), but it would be remiss to consider their experiences, both in their migration journeys and settlement in New Zealand, equal or even similar to that of Black Africans.
growth in the Dunedin gold mines (Veitch & Tinawi, 2006). A large number of MELAA came to New Zealand as refugees, e.g., Chileans fleeing the military dictatorship (Wilson, 2006), Ethiopians and Somalians fleeing wars, Rwandans fleeing from genocide (Walrond, 2006), and Iranians and Iraqis fleeing war (Veitch & Tinawi, 2006).

More recent arrivals of these groups were motivated by a number of different reasons. A wave of Latin American migrants have been attracted by economic opportunities rather than running from political persecution (Hoffman Nunes, 2016). By 2018 the number of people in New Zealand identifying as Latin American was 25,731, more than tripled from the data collected in 2006 (Stats NZ, 2018). There is a lack of more recent research into the motivations of African migrants in the 21st century. Adelowo, Smythe and Nakhid (2016) determined, from interviews with 15 African women in New Zealand, that most of them arrived seeking to secure educational and career opportunities for themselves and their families. The lack of data on African migrants also stems from the discrepancies in numbers shown by immigration and the census, which categorises a number of North African countries as part of the Middle East, and separates data about South Africans from general Africans (Tuwe, 2012). For that same reason, data on Middle Eastern migration is potentially skewed as well. The 2018 census shows that the majority of the African population has been in New Zealand for at least ten years (Stats NZ, 2018). There is also little data on the motivations for migration from the Middle East from the past twenty years, with most research investigating the previously mentioned Lebanese, Iranian and Iraqi diaspora, and smaller numbers of migrants from other countries (Veitch & Tinawi, 2006).
Public perception and discrimination

As a ‘multicultural’ nation (more on this topic in the next section), New Zealand is generally perceived as a country not only welcoming but also embracing of migrants of all origins. However, incidents such as the terrorist attacks carried out in two Christchurch mosques in 2019 show that this perception is not always accurate. Despite the subsequent public wave of support for the Muslim population, the anti-immigration sentiment has existed for decades and still does. While much more detailed analyses of racism, xenophobia and general discrimination faced by migrants in New Zealand can and have been written, the following section will give a brief overview of how the general public perceives migrants, and how migrants perceive discrimination they may face.

In general, the statement that New Zealand is a welcoming country to migrants is true. Compared to other former British colonies such as Australia and Canada, New Zealanders are more likely to perceive immigrants as contributing value to the economy and culture (Butcher, Spoonley & Gendall, 2015). They respond positively to migrants, and strongly endorse multiculturalism (although these attitudes vary, which will be discussed in the next section) (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). They support integration above other forms of acculturation, and generally agree with the statement that a society made up of a diversity of cultures and ethnicities is a good thing (Ward & Lin, 2006).

Still, migrants from majority white and English-speaking countries, such as Australia or the United Kingdom, are more likely to be viewed favourably than those from, for example, India, China or Somalia (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). As much as 40% of migrants report having faced discrimination in the workplace, especially those who
are perceived as different from the majority Pākehā and Māori populations (Girling, Liu & Ward, 2010). In their survey, Gendall, Spoonley and Trlin (2008) have found that 93% of New Zealanders have heard discriminatory rhetoric against immigrants, and most survey respondents agreed that racism was present in New Zealand and was often targeted at migrants. Daldy, Poot and Roskruge (2013) found that non-native migrants are more likely to be exposed to workplace discrimination and lower employment rates, especially recent migrants. Additionally, despite the fact that today's migrants are generally more educated than non-migrant New Zealanders, they are also more likely to experience unemployment and receive lower wages (Ward & Lin, 2006). Most commonly, migrants are perceived to be a threat to the economy and employment, New Zealand culture and identity, and Indigenous rights (Ward & Lin, 2006).

Despite this, New Zealanders generally have a positive attitude towards migrants and their cultural contributions, although that does not erase the existing anti-immigrant sentiment that has existed for over a century. This sentiment is fueled by a history of racist immigration policies, but also by the belief that New Zealand is and should always be a bicultural nation, by and for Pākehā and Māori. This belief and its resulting tensions between migrants and tangata whenua7 will be discussed in the next section.

*Multiculturalism vs. biculturalism*

“New Zealand is a nation of migrants built upon the tribal base of its Indigenous Māori population.” (Ward & Lin, 2006, p. 296). Despite the historical and cultural accuracy of this statement, the fact that New Zealand is one of the most ethnically

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7 Māori term for ‘people of the land’, which are Māori in New Zealand.
diverse nations in the world, and its general acceptance of migrants in comparison to other countries (Ward & Masgoret, 2008), there is tension whenever multiculturalism is brought up in reference to New Zealand. Migrants, especially originating from ‘Third-World’ nations, have been perceived as a threat to New Zealand culture and identity; to the relations between Māori and Pākehā; and to the economy, hindering their integration and the acceptance of New Zealand as a multicultural nation (Ward & Lin, 2006). Waves of Asian migration in the second half of the 20th century sparked anti-immigration rhetoric by New Zealand politicians in the beginning of the 21st century. Most notably, the leader of the New Zealand First party Winston Peters was outspoken about the threat of immigrants, mostly Asian, to the New Zealand identity. His oratory was directed at generations of both Māori and Pākehā who were anxious about the growing presence of a third, foreign culture, who threatened destabilising the economy and overtaking the New Zealand cultural identity. His comments were received with both praise and criticism, being denounced as racist and fear-mongering by a large portion of the population (Revell, 2012).

Despite a broad recognition that aggressive anti-immigration rhetoric is more harmful than beneficial, it does reflect a wider issue of tensions between migrant and Indigenous populations. That is largely due to the assumption that the presence of another ethnic minority will threaten their cultural identity and hinder the advancement of, for example, Māori land rights. Butcher, Spoonley & Gendall (2015) found that Māori were 50% more likely to view immigration negatively, attributing this to a perceived threat to both the economy and culture. They found concerns surrounding foreign investment and land ownership, especially considering the struggles still faced by Māori in reclaiming their land back. Another point of
contention was the assumption that migrants are less likely to view New Zealand as Māori land and Māori as tangata whenua (people of the land), and more likely to assimilate to Pākehā practises. This quote from one of the participants in Butcher, Spoonley & Gendall’s (2015) study encompasses both of these concerns:

> Quite rightly, Māori demand cultural respect... of all immigrating groups. That is why I think Māori answered more strongly about Asian people learning more about our culture; because a lot of NZ culture is tied up in Māori culture. In terms of Asian investment, I believe that Māori are all too aware that ownership = control. Treaty claims have been a major focus for Māori over the last few decades, and we have learnt from the mistakes of giving ownership away too easily. (p. 53-54).

Ip (2003) has used an analogy of guests and gatecrashers to discuss the issue, with Māori describing the state of race relations in New Zealand as “a bit like finding a whole lot of uninvited people in your house... just when you were in the middle of a pretty heavy discussion about who’s in charge of what” (p. 250). New migrants, however, described the issue as “like being invited to dinner and arriving to find your host and hostess fiercely arguing. You are caught in the middle, and suddenly they both started blaming you.” (p. 251).

While the idea of New Zealand as a bicultural nation has been dominant for over a century, multiculturalism is becoming more widely accepted (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). Biculturalism and multiculturalism are “compatible rather than mutually exclusive” (Ward & Lin, 2006, p. 323), and both can and do exist in New Zealand. However, this and other factors cause migrants to feel isolated from the national
identity, creating issues that affect individuals as well as the collective. As a result, many migrants experience distress and turn to different tools of survival to fit in. Over the next section, the difficulty of defining the New Zealand identity will be discussed, as well as how migrants are or are not included in it, and the strategies through which they cope.

*Migrants and the “New Zealand identity”*

A strong national and ethnic identity result in more positive outcomes, being linked to greater satisfaction and self-esteem, fewer behavioural and psychological issues, and increased mental health (Ward & Lin, 2006). Although there is a broad consensus that New Zealanders possess an unique identity, achieving a definition of such is a difficult task. A number of characteristics have been used to describe it, such as “being Māori/Māori culture”; the ‘Kiwiana’ identity promoted by tourism agencies, which highlights things such as pavlova, L&P, and paua shell as national characteristics; and love of sport, especially rugby (Ward & Lin, 2006).

As previously discussed, the New Zealand national identity is still tied to its model as a bicultural nation. These characteristics are normally conflated with Māori and/or Pākehā identities, with little to no room for the inclusion of the migrant population. However, a move towards acceptance of multiculturalism and embracing the multiplicity of identities that make up New Zealand has been observed in the last two decades. There is growing accommodation of ethnic diversity, such as in the promotion of cultural festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year, although these are often still restricted to major cities (Zodgekar, 2006).
Aside from the incorporation or lack thereof of ethnic cultures as part of the New Zealander identity, these migrant populations also struggle to make sense of their own self-identification. In fact, ethnic minorities in New Zealand report feeling that their ethnic identity is incompatible with their national identity as New Zealanders (Ward, Stuart & Adam, 2009), and that whiteness is the gold standard they were supposed to strive for (Lei, 2016; Zodgekar, 2006). Still, most migrants strive for integration, reporting that retaining the cultural identity from their country of origin and “becoming a Kiwi” are equally important to them:

One cultural identity need not be in conflict with another. Old and new cultures do not have to be at war with each other. Immigrant youth resist assimilation as this means giving up their cultural heritage, shedding one cultural identity and replacing it with another. But they also avoid separation, propagating cultural maintenance at the expense of forming new identities. (Ward & Lin, 2006, p. 302).

As a result of that, many young migrants develop hybrid identities as a way of recognising their diverse backgrounds. De Jacolyn, Stasiak and McCool (2021), in their interviews with young migrants about their experiences settling in New Zealand, have found that although their experiences were made easier by the existing multiculturalism, they struggled to make sense of their identity and fit into New Zealand culture. Handapangoda (2015), examining the self-representation of second-generation sinhalese Sri Lankan youth in New Zealand on social media, observed that “they retained, consciously or unconsciously, a strong ethnic identity while also identifying with the host society, thus negotiating and renegotiating bicultural identities online” (p. 47). Lei (2016), in an exploration of
coping strategies and support seeking among Chinese migrant youth in New Zealand, determined that achieving this hybrid identity was a mechanism of survival.

However, achieving this hybrid identity is not a path without its obstacles, and the journey differs greatly depending on the migrant’s background. Ward and Lin (2006) have found that New Zealand-born migrants are more willing to assimilate and less likely to prefer separation, instead embracing their cultural background while identifying first and foremost as a New Zealander. However, De Jacolyn, Stasiak and McCool’s (2021) more recent research shows that new migrants today, after over two decades, are more interested in integration regardless of the recency of their arrival. In that same study, the authors point out that a number of challenges follow these migrants’ attempts to be comfortable in their identity, such as language barriers, cultural brokering⁸, and the struggle of negotiating between two cultures. Furthermore, Cassim, Stolte and Hodgetts (2020) argue that achieving hybridisation or integration are not choices migrants make unaffected by outside circumstances or contexts. In their interviews with Sri Lankan migrants in New Zealand, they point out how one’s country of origin and its history can impact migration differently, and in their case how Sri Lanka’s English colonial past has already created a hybrid identity, and made migration to New Zealand easier. Bartley (2010), in interviews with children of Asian migrants in New Zealand (or “1.5 generation”), has observed that they not only occupy a space in-between countries, but also often in-between childhood and adulthood as well, negotiating the additional responsibilities that come with cultural brokering. Lastly, Lei (2016) has argued that achieving and maintaining hybrid identities is an ongoing, tiresome process that requires migrants

⁸ “Cultural brokering is defined as the act of mediating between two cultures and language brokering is defined as the process of mediating information to caregivers, both concepts which are common across migrant families.” (De Jacolyn, Stasiak & McCool, 2021, p. 8)
to adapt to different environments according to their needs, and leaves them susceptible to stereotypes.

In summary, research over the past decade indicates that rather than negotiating between two different cultures, migrants are more likely to identify with a hybrid culture and accept their own cultural background as part of their New Zealand identity. Throughout this research I will discuss how young migrants of different backgrounds are challenging the idea that they do not belong, confronting the understanding that ethnic identities are incompatible with the bicultural model of New Zealand. Biculturalism and multiculturalism are not only compatible but also increasingly accepted by youth (Ward & Lin, 2006). Although achieving and maintaining this identity is a challenge affected by a myriad of outside factors and tiring work, young ethnic people in New Zealand are growing more confident in their ability to do so.
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN

The goal of this study is to achieve a better understanding of how ethnic youth in New Zealand represent themselves and negotiate their identities on TikTok and how that affects their identity work; how the intersections of their identities affect this representation; and what are the impacts of this representation and negotiation to their national, cultural and ethnic identities. To answer these questions, I collected videos created by ethnic young people on TikTok and conducted a content analysis of those videos. I also interviewed ethnic content creators and consumers and analysed the data using thematic analysis.

The first step was to select the social media platform this research would focus on and determine what constituted relevant content for the purposes of this research. This was followed by data gathering and screening. Subsequently, the data was refined and categorised according to its format and content, providing an overall clearer picture. Following that is a more detailed explanation of how the content analysis will take place.

Furthermore, I will address the steps of the interview process. This includes the selection and screening of interviewees, the methodology that will orient the interviews, and an overview of the questionnaire and expected outcomes for the research. Over the course of this section, the rationale behind each of these choices will be clarified.

**Content Analysis**

*TikTok as the preferred medium*
Although the previous chapter briefly touched upon the reasoning behind this study’s choice to use TikTok as the primary social media platform for data collection, it focused on the affordances, uses and gratifications of the network. The following paragraphs will give better insight into the choice of TikTok over other platforms.

As previously mentioned, the reasoning was largely based on the popularity of TikTok with the group this research intends to study. That group makes up the overwhelming majority of TikTok users, with 16-24 year olds making up 60% of its user base (“TikTok Statistics”, 2023), while 7 in 10 teens in the United States used TikTok (“Taking Stock with Teens”, 2020). In New Zealand, ByteDance has reported 1.46 million users over the age of 189 in early 2022 (Kemp, 2022).

TikTok has quickly risen to become one of, if not the most, popular social media platform among young people. It has overtaken YouTube, the Google owned video based social media giant, in terms of minutes watched. In 2021, kids and teens (8-18 years old) spent an average of 56 minutes daily watching videos on YouTube, compared to 91 minutes on TikTok (Perez, 2022). Compared to other non-video based platforms, TikTok still takes the lead: on Instagram, another social media platform with a younger audience, users10 only spend an average of 29 minutes per day, and Snapchat averages at about 25 daily minutes (Barnhart, 2022). Text-based platforms also lag behind, with Twitter averaging at about 31 minutes (Barnhart, 2022) and Reddit at 24 minutes (Goldman & Orozco, 2022).

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9 The data is limited to users that age 18 years old or older, which excludes a significant portion of our demographic. I believe data into users under the age of 18 would see that number rise significantly.

10 The following data is reflective of all users, so figures may be different for younger audiences, which tend to spend more time on social media.
In addition to these figures, TikTok users are also more likely to create content aimed at the public rather than only for a select few. Vaterlaus and Winter (2021) found that young adults felt creatively stimulated by the influx of trendy sounds, dances and formats, and were more likely to create content for users other than their own friends and family. Similarly, Bossen and Kottasz (2020) found that nearly a third of users interviewed created and produced their own content. While passive consumption was still more common, content creation with the intent of public exposure is more likely to occur on TikTok than other social media platforms (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020; Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021).

The combination of TikTok’s popularity with the demographic this research intends to focus on, along with the public nature of its content, and the variety and amount of videos available made it clear that it was the most relevant and plentiful platform available. It is also a platform that more and more media scholars are paying attention to (Schellewald, 2021). It may be of interest to look at different social media networks in future research, but due to the scope of this study TikTok by itself proved to supply plenty of data.

Defining relevant content

For the purpose of this research, the following criteria was used to determine whether a video would be considered relevant to the study:

1. The owner(s) of the account belong to an ethnic community, which was confirmed through the content of the video (talking about their lived experience as a member of an ethnic community) or public information on their page (such as flags displayed in their name or “about me” section).
2. The content of the video was reflective of their experience as a young person belonging to a marginalised ethnic group, or relevant to their own community or the wider community of ethnic youth in New Zealand.

The initial sample did not take into account whether or not the user belonged to another marginalised group, as this information was often not displayed in their profile and is impossible to assess only visually. However, posts about intersectional experiences and users who spoke about their intersectional identities were prioritised, in line with the intent of this research.

Although this research uses the aforementioned definition of “youth” as detailed by the United Nations, this was not strictly monitored in the data. Taking into account the fact that the majority of users of TikTok are within the age bracket delimited by the United Nations, there is a high likelihood that the users whose posts were captured for this research are too. However, this was not strictly enforced, and some users may fall outside of this category.

**Data capture process**

In order to collect the necessary data for this study, a unique account was created for analysis. This was done in order to avoid unnecessary confusion with the author’s own personal profile and allow contact with users in a more professional and appropriate manner. This approach was undertaken by other social media researchers, such as Simpson and Semaan (2021). The profile was then used to search through videos for 2-3 hours weekly, from March to August 2022. The videos, however, span from as early as 2020.
Due to the way TikTok’s “For You” page is designed, it proved challenging to allow the algorithm to come up with relevant videos organically. The TikTok algorithm understood that I was interested in content produced by users in New Zealand, but was unable to deliver anything more specific than that. This limitation was also observed by other researchers, such as Schellewald (2021), who found that the algorithmic “personalisation” reinforced previous viewing habits and feedback loops.

In order to avoid this, it proved more fruitful to find content through TikTok’s “Explore” page, using a search engine. Using this method allowed me to find videos in different formats and with varying degrees of popularity. The sample was manually collected by following this sequence:

1. Searching relevant terms or hashtags on the “Discover” tab, such as #asianinnz or “african nz”. The search terms used often referenced the ethnic communities this research intends to study (African, Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern) or, on occasion, specific countries of origin (such as “filipino nz” or #chileaninnz) and racial identities (Black, brown). A complete list of terms used is provided in Appendix 4.
2. Filtering content by selecting “last week” in “date posted” and sorting by “relevance”, a feature available on the platform that filters through what the algorithm believes to be the most relevant content to your search term;
3. Scrolling through videos recently posted and selecting the most relevant to the research.

Initial searches did not limit content to videos posted recently, but as time went on the selection proved necessary as searches turned up similar results every time. Some of the content was also found through algorithmic recommendations on the “For
You” page in my own personal TikTok use and then looked up and saved in the appropriate profile.

Data refinement process

The data capture process resulted in an initial total of 81 videos from 77 content creators that were collected and refined. As time went on, some videos were made private or deleted by the author(s), which brought the total down to 79 posts.

The data refinement process entailed a description of what is being expressed in each clip, what means of delivery were used to express it, and how the user positioned themself in relation to it. Through this process, patterns began to emerge. Each video was positioned in relation to common themes in content and form, with the stance of each individual user being coded separately. After this process was over, six common themes were established in relation to content. This assisted in narrowing the scope of videos for analysis, and meant the research could focus on the ideas and genres that were most relevant to the researched group. In addition to that, there were 12 videos in which the content was befitting of more than one category. These were coded in a separate category. The selection process of the videos analysed for each category, however, focused mostly on a single aspect of the video, while also analysing the different content tropes that played into it. Table 3.1 below describes each content category and its definition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interethnic encounters</td>
<td>Describes videos in which the central theme are interactions and encounters between the user(s), as member(s) of a certain ethnic or cultural group, with other/s from different ethnic or cultural groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hybrid identity | Videos in which users express the complexity and multitude of their identities, how they navigate negotiating between different identities and how they represent themselves.
---|---
Cultural expression | Posts in which users share cultural or ethnic festivals, customs, traditions, or cultural political expressions with their followers.
Stereotypes | Videos in which the main topic is stereotypical behaviours and/or appearance of a certain ethnic group. Users may subvert, embody or simply address stereotypes in a multitude of ways.
Immigration experiences | Reflects various stages of the immigration journey shared on social media, ranging from pre, during and post migration, to experiences as 1.5 or 2nd and further generation migrants.
Everyday racism and xenophobia | Albeit in a similar vein to videos concerning stereotypes, these posts focus more generally on the experience of being an ethnic minority, including microaggressions, erasure, and general prejudice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trending sound</td>
<td>Consists of videos in which the punchline or context is given through the use of a popular audio. Most “sounds” become popularised while associated with a specific editing style or type of content. Videos coded in this category consist of those in which the audio is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Videos were also coded in relation to the formal video aspects, or the chosen way through which users elected to share their message. There were five variables identified, which were identified through the contextual understanding obtained through presence in the platform during the data collection process. Given the nature of TikTok as a “meme breeding ground” (Martin, 2019), certain formats became clearly more popular than others. There were five categories of format identified, described in Table 3.2.
imperative for the understanding of the post, and the audio is not of the original user’s authorship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skit</td>
<td>Describes videos in which the user(s) act out a scripted scene, usually of comedic nature. This includes both videos in which a single user plays multiple roles, or when an ensemble is involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Videos coded in this category consist of when the user addresses the audience directly, whether that be through the retelling of an event or moment in their life, addressing a certain topic that has come up, or simply expressing their point of view candidly, without a script or using someone else’s audio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Centres videos in which the user(s) aim to inform or educate their audience about a certain topic or subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlog</td>
<td>Videos in which the user records themself, their surroundings or others, with the goal of sharing a more intimate perspective, inviting the audience to participate, and generally displaying a more candid point of view into their life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Description of different categories of format

Content analysis

Each video was analysed in relation to their content, form and stance, in guidance with the three memetic dimensions established by Shifman (2013). This method was also used by Schellewald (2021) in order to analyse communicative forms on TikTok. “Content”, in this case, refers to the thoughts, emotions and ideas being expressed through the meme. “Form” refers to the means through which the meme takes shape, whether that is visual, textual, or through audio, and therefore to which genre it belongs. Finally, “stance” refers to the position the creator or user takes in relation to the discourse, content and format of the meme and its position within the wider genre (Shifman, 2013).
Given the categorisation of data through common themes in content and common format styles, the content analysis conducted in the next chapter will be sectioned according to the seven identified content categories. Considering the goal of this research to obtain an understanding of the self-representation and positioning of users, the prioritisation of data through its content made sense given the qualitative nature of this research. Within these content categories, an analysis will be presented of how the different format genres affect the delivery of such content, and which stance does the user(s) take in relation to it.

In order to respect the privacy of these users, faces and any identifiable features have been blurred in the exemplifying screenshots. Usernames have also been blocked, and each video is referred as ‘Example #’. Due to privacy concerns, these videos are not included in the references list to avoid identification of these users. This was done in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines established by the Association of Internet Researchers (2019).

**Interviews**

Informed by interview practices outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Lindlof and Taylor (2011), I conducted a small number of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The choice of in-depth interviews was guided by the goal of encouraging participants to share their experiences and allow for unexpected findings. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) describe one of the goals of this interview style as to “understand the interpretations that people attribute to their motivations to act” (p. 229). In the context of this research, my goal was to achieve an understanding of the impact of their self-representation and identity negotiation on social media to their national,
ethnic and cultural identities, as well as how the intersections of their identities affect this representation. Given that, this method seemed the most appropriate.

Interview design

The interview questions were designed to encourage participants to openly discuss their experiences both creating and consuming content about being an ethnic minority in New Zealand. The guide used during these interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

The interview began by asking the participant a few demographic questions. The first section of the interview aimed to discuss the participant’s own experience growing up or living in New Zealand as an ethnic minority person. This section included questions about the participant’s self-identification with the New Zealand identity, followed by questions about whether this self-identification was considered to be in line with who is generally accepted as a New Zealander. There were also questions regarding any experiences the participant may have had with discrimination in New Zealand, if they wished to share any.

The following section then focused more specifically on self-representation on social media, especially that of ethnic minority youth. Questions were designed to determine the relevancy of social media activity to their identity work, how they portray themself on social media, and how they see other ethnic people portraying themselves. Another question also intended on determining if and how any of this has affected their identity work.
Finally, a last section focused on their consumption rather than creation of content on social media. These questions focused on whether the participant had come across other content from ethnic creators based in New Zealand on TikTok. They aimed to elicit a discussion of a possible sense of community or kinship with other creators, as well as if participants noticed a difference between content created by ethnic minority and non-minority creators.

All interview questions also allowed the possibility of discussing findings from the content analysis, giving participants the opportunity to share their opinions, thoughts and feelings about these findings.

*Recruitment process*

Recruiting participants directly on the platform proved challenging, given that most users elect to only allow direct messages from users they follow. Creators with a large following made contact emails available in their profile for business purposes, which opened an easier channel of communication. Other users had their other social media accounts linked to their TikTok profile, where direct messages were possible. For users where neither form of contact was possible, solicitations through TikTok comments became the only viable option. To ensure possible participants that the invite was legitimate and trustworthy, a short video was posted to the research account introducing myself, the research, and what the interview would entail. Furthermore, some users were contacted directly through my personal channels given previous acquaintanceship.

A number of potential participants were selected from the videos gathered in the data capture process described above. Throughout the data gathering process, some users
came up frequently due to their continual publishing of content relevant to this research. They were then compiled into a list of twenty users who could be valuable interviewees. These users ranged from having a following of hundreds of thousands to less than one hundred followers. This sample also included a variety of gender identities, ethnicities, migration statuses, religious and LGBTQ+ expression, to account for a group of participants that reflected a wide variety of experiences, aiming to ensure intersectionality remained a core aspect of the research.

Eligibility criteria was based on the following: (1) participants must be between the ages of 16-24; (2) a regular TikTok user; (3) identify as Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American or African. Identifying with another marginalised identity was not a base criteria, but the sample was intended to be as diverse as possible. Being a regular creator of content was also not necessary, as perspectives from both creators as well as consumers were wanted.

Using this recruitment strategy, I contacted 19 potential participants, and successfully recruited 5 eligible participants for the interview. Of the interviewees, one was recruited via email, and another two via Instagram. A fourth participant was recruited via email through acquaintanceship in research circles, and another through word of mouth from another participant. The small number of participants was intentional as to complement the findings from the content analysis.

*Interviews*

Approval was obtained from the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee (Ref. AH23606) to conduct interviews. The ethics application was submitted through the larger research project Thriving @ Crossroads, led by Dr. Roshini Peiris-John and
her research team, of which this study is part of. The interviews were conducted between the 15th of November 2022 and the 3rd of December 2022, and lasted between 60 and 100 minutes. Prior to the meeting, interviewees were sent a participant information sheet that detailed their voluntary participation in the study (Appendix 2). They also signed a consent form (Appendix 3), and were able to clarify anything before signing it. The interviews were transcribed, and the transcriptions and consent forms were stored separately in a password-protected computer.

They were conducted online via Zoom to ensure an easy recording process and ability to interview participants in different locations. Participation was voluntary and interviewees received a kōha\textsuperscript{11} as a thank you for their participation. Prior to the interview, participants were assured they were free to answer questions to the best of their ability, and were free to not respond to any questions that caused them discomfort. They were also informed that they were free to ask for clarification or elucidation for any questions.

The interview data was analysed using thematic analysis. I utilised Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step analysis guide, first familiarising myself with the data, generating initial codes and searching for themes, then reviewing and defining those themes.

\textsuperscript{11} Te Reo Māori for gift or donation.
CHAPTER IV: CONTENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

As described in the methodology, the content analysis follows the three memetic dimensions outlined by Shifman (2013), which analyse the content, format and stance of posts. The following paragraphs will aim to analyse the content of selected videos, the format through which the user(s) chose to portray the content, and the stance performed by the user(s). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the videos will be analysed according to their different categories of content, which are interethnic encounters, hybrid identity, cultural expression, stereotypes, immigration experiences, and everyday racism and xenophobia. The result of this categorisation is described in Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trending sound/format</th>
<th>Skit</th>
<th>Storytelling</th>
<th>Informational</th>
<th>Vlog</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interethnic encounters</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural expression</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday racism/xenophobia</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of 2 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1. Categorisation of posts by content (left) and format (above).*

The categorisation of content presented in Table 4.1. reflects the most common themes found in the analysed videos, but it also allows for the data to be analysed in
relation to different aspects of identity work. While there is overlap between these categories, especially in relation to styles of humour, performance and self-representation, the categories allow other aspects to be explored. Through that we can observe how other ethnicities are coded and performed, questions of national identity, intersectional perspectives, and analyse the data in more detail in order to draw conclusions about it as a whole.
Interethnic Encounters

Figure 1. Screenshots illustrating the discussed videos: Example 1 (left) and Example 2 (right).

Figure 2. Screenshots illustrating the discussed video Example 3.
The videos categorised as interethnic encounters display various interactions between the user and other ethnic and cultural groups (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). These can range from humorous skits where creators enact these encounters, playing into the impressions and assumptions each group has of each other, to documentations of real-life interactions that address the difference in culture.

Some examples of skits are videos such as Example 1 and Example 2. Both videos portray interactions between Asian and Pasifika teenagers in a comedic tone, with both users acting out interactions among students of different ethnicities. Example 1’s script is about a Filipina student who is being flirted with by a Samoan classmate, and the two of them teach each other words in their respective native languages. In turn, Example 2’s video portrays a son going to his father for help dealing with a bully. Initially the father orients him to fight back, but changes his mind when he finds out the bully is Samoan and orders his son to flee instead. Example 1’s skit relies on an exchange about language, while Example 2’s punchline is about stereotypical assumptions about Samoan men.

It is interesting to note that, in both of these videos, the creators are representing their own ethnicity as well as another which is not their own, and this portrayal comes with their own stereotypes about other ethnic communities. In Example 1, the user plays the role of both the Filipina student and the Samoan classmate, and adopts a South Auckland accent and mannerisms when she portrays the latter. In Example 2, despite not playing the role of the Samoan bully, the user creates a punchline about the stereotypes he and his family associate with Samoan men. In addition to that, both of them are regular creators of content, mostly skits, that
showcase their experiences with Pasifika people growing up, which regularly highlight their associations and assumptions about these groups.

This style of comedy is marked by characterising both the speaker’s own ethnic group as well as others by exaggerated and stereotypical characteristics. This is something that permeated most of the humorous content about interethnic encounters: the punchlines often rely on stereotypes different ethnic groups have of each other. This style of humour is central to New Zealand comedy (Horan & Matthers, 2019), and its prevalence within the ethnic youth community can be looked at as a way of integrating and belonging within New Zealand society and culture. Furthermore, it can assist ethnic migrants to integrate with their peers (Esholdt, 2019) and take control of the narrative (Da Silva et al., 2015). However, these jokes can also fuel colour-blind ideologies (Boza, 2013) and minimise the harm racist and xenophobic stereotypes cause (Da Silva et al., 2015).

Moving away from scripted humour, Example 3 (see Figure 2) instead documents real-life interactions between Asian and Māori people. In the video, the user introduces a friend, who is Singaporean and speaks Te Reo Māori (the Māori language) fluently. They are at Waitangi for Waitangi day commemorations¹², where the friend approaches several Māori attendees speaking Te Reo. Many of them find it unexpected that an Asian man would speak the language so well, and ask him if he is part Māori. The interactions are positive, with the surprising factor being that an Asian man would not be expected to speak Te Reo Māori.

¹² Waitangi day takes place every 6th of February, and commemorates the signing of Te Tiriti O Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of New Zealand between the British Crown and over 500 Māori chiefs (Orange, 2012, cited in Hoffman Nunes, 2016).
The aforementioned tensions between tangata whenua and migrants can be an explanation for this shock factor. For many years, Asian migrants saw themselves as exempt from the debate about racial relations in New Zealand (Ip, 2003; Shui, 2020). However, more young Asian people and migrants are taking the lead by supporting Māori struggles and becoming active Tiriti partners (Shui, 2020). Although Example 3 does not explicitly touch on tensions between groups, it shows a willingness from ethnic tauwi\textsuperscript{13} to engage with Te Ao Māori\textsuperscript{14}. Efforts like the Singaporean young man’s can be a sign of growing solidarity between migrants and tangata whenua.

Another way of looking at it can be of migrant youth engaging with their identity as New Zealanders. As previously discussed, being Māori and Māori culture are considered core aspects of what constitutes the New Zealand identity (Ward & Lin, 2006). However, for several decades, migrants have assimilated with Pākehā culture and standards in their efforts to fit in (Lei, 2016). As more of them engage with Te Ao Māori, they also further negotiate their cultural identity as New Zealanders, which spans beyond ethnicity and encompasses other aspects, such as language and shared history (Fong & Chuang, 2004). As ethnic tauwi, particularly Asian, engage with their shared history of marginalisation with Indigenous Māori, they also open pathways to negotiate and further cement their cultural and hybrid identities (Ip, 2003; Lei, 2016; Shui, 2020).

The documenting of interactions between ethnic youth with other ethnic groups, whether that is in the form of scripted humour or real-life encounters, already sets

\textsuperscript{13} Non-Māori person or people.

\textsuperscript{14} The Māori world.
the tone for two common approaches found within this research: the use of ethnic/race-based humour, and the documentary of more intimate, real-life situations on social media. Both of these seem to play vital roles in how ethnic youth represent themselves online. They also showcase how both ethnicity and cultural identity appear to be negotiated and performed, and which avenues users take to do so.

**Hybrid Identity**

![Images of users with flags and text]

*Figure 3. Screenshots illustrating the discussed videos: Example 4 (left), Example 5 (centre) and Example 6 (right)*

In previous chapters, we discussed the concept of a hybrid identity, how ethnic youth in New Zealand navigates it, and its possible causes and consequences. The videos in this category show how this hybrid identity may be negotiated and expressed by
ethnic young people in New Zealand on social media, and how different individuals represent their identity differently.

Many of these videos are the user’s own takes on a trending format or sound, which is the case of a great deal of content posted on TikTok. Example 4, Example 5 and Example 6 all use popular audios from different authors to discuss their identity. In these videos, the users in Examples 4 and 6 reinforce their identity as New Zealanders, despite being of migrant backgrounds. Example 4 uses a trendy format, which borrows a song from a movie in which the speaker talks about their multiple ethnic identities, to talk about how despite both her and her parents being Iraqi, she primarily identifies as a New Zealander. Similarly, Example 6 hits back on people who claim she cannot be Kiwi because she is Asian by feigning a disregard for their opinion. Meanwhile, Example 5 uses an audio that prompts users to choose between their different cultural backgrounds to reflect on her feelings about different aspects of both Brazil and New Zealand.

Example 4 and 6 show a stance that displays confidence in their identity as New Zealanders, which many other users echo, despite existing backlash. The user in Example 6’s posture and expression of mockery towards the claims that she is not Kiwi because she is Asian showcases that she does not feel threatened in her identity despite those who doubt it. The user in Example 4 affirms confidence and positivity with her dancing and smiles in the original video, which prompted a user in the comments to question if she was having an “identity crisis”. In response, she recorded another video in which she replies that her crisis is deciding between being “a bad bitch” or “just a bitch”. This is one of many videos where users feel compelled to reaffirm their confidence in their identity after being accused of not being New
Zealanders due to their ethnic background, and respond with confidence showcased by a cheeky attitude and mockery of doubters.

The prevalence of these posts indicate that ethnic young people may be less likely to feel like their ethnic identity and identity as New Zealanders are at odds with each other, compared to what was found by researchers only a few years ago (Handapangoda, 2015; Ward, Stuart & Adam, 2019). Through the frequent consumption and creation of content that reaffirms confidence in the ethnic New Zealander identity, users are likely to shape their own identity in relation to what they see and how they portray themselves online.

It is also important to consider that these feelings may differ between ethnic groups and migrant generations. Ethnic groups that have a longer history of settlement and a higher prevalence in the New Zealand society, such as Asian and Middle Eastern, make up all of the included videos where the user asserts their New Zealander identity confidently. Other ethnic groups, most notably Latin American and African, were more likely to post content negotiating between their identities, such as in Example 5. Another example is a video in which the user, a Black young woman, smiles for the camera and expresses joy about being a Black woman, but her expression turns sour and displeased when she frames it in the context of growing up in New Zealand. Her stance showcases that, despite the fact that being a Black woman is something that brings her joy and pride, growing up in New Zealand as one was an unpleasant experience. The distinction between these groups can possibly be explained by the history of migration from these groups, and how different generations of migration have different experiences which affect their identity work.
While Examples 4 and 6 display confidence in the negotiation of their New Zealand national identity, Example 5’s stance is negotiating both national and cultural aspects. By representing her feelings about the culture she originates from and the country she lives in, she is displaying the multitude of her cultural identity and expressing how she negotiates each aspect of it. Although she feels that certain cultural aspects about Brazil outrank New Zealand, she displays how close she feels to both nations through her answers. Her video displays similar values to the findings of Handapangoda (2015) who found that young migrants, through their use of social media expressed a strong sense of connection to both their ethnic communities and country of residence and negotiated their bicultural identity. Rather than identifying with one or the other, these identities occupy what Clothier (2005) calls a ‘third space’, an in-between where bounds of authenticity are constantly negotiated.

However, working through these hybrid identities, as discussed in previous chapters, is often not by choice, but rather as a mechanism of survival (Lei, 2016), and is a process affected by various circumstances outside of one’s control (Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020). It is also not without its obstacles, being a fundamentally fatiguing process (Ayallo, 2019; Handapangoda, 2015; Lei, 2016). However, developing a strong sense of one’s ethnic and national identity is also tied to better outcomes for migrants and their descendants (Berry, 2006; Ward & Lin, 2006). This negotiation, however, is also not solely reliant on individual choice: the context in which these interactions happen and how they happen can affect one’s identity work.

The expression of these hybrid identities on social media can facilitate identity work and allow for a creative outlet for self-representation, as well as allowing members to
connect with others like them (Berger et al., 2021; Byron et al., 2019). Peer support, being witnessed, and having a space to express themselves on social media are associated with better outcomes in young people’s identity work (Bates et al., 2020). The analysed videos indicate that young ethnic people in New Zealand are publicly displaying confidence in their national identity, and support findings by other researchers about the negotiation of hybrid and multicultural identities online.

**Cultural Expression**

![Screenshot of cultural expression](image)

*Figure 4. Screenshots illustrating the discussed videos: Example 7 (left), Example 8 (centre) and Example 9 (right).*

Another way in which young ethnic people in New Zealand appear to express their identity on social media is through sharing various facets of their culture with their audience. Like other videos, these posts sometimes use formats already popular in the platform, although the trends are more likely to be more commonly used in other
countries, and brought to the New Zealand audience by these users. However, these posts most commonly take on a documentary format, where the user shares an intimate part of their life. The content of these videos range from cultural events and festivals to political expression.

Oftentimes, the intention behind these posts may be to publicise or educate a wider audience about issues they may not know about, or simply express their political beliefs. Example 7, for example, turns to TikTok to raise awareness about the political situation of the user’s home country, Afghanistan, and shares the protest organised by the community and its supporters in Auckland. The video contains short clips of people waving Afghan and New Zealand flags, holding signs in support of Afghan people and asking for help from the international community. In another post, the same user shared a video of people gathered for Eid\textsuperscript{15}. The clips show the crowd chanting “Free Palestine”, followed by the rallying cry “From the river to the sea”, which is a popular chant among Palestine supporters. This user’s cultural expression takes a political form, which is a crucial form of civic engagement for young people.

Social media has become one of, if not the, main ways through which young people engage in civic life and participate in politics (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019). According to Highfield (2016), “social media afford the opportunity for different groups, including citizens [...] to contribute to, discuss, challenge and participate in diverse aspects of politics in a public, shared context” (p. 10). Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik (2019) have found that musical.ly, which later became TikTok, is an

\footnote{Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting in Islam (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023).}
emergent form of political expression and civic engagement by young people, although it is still largely understudied. For young ethnic people, political engagement on social media has been associated with higher levels of group self-definition and connection with the community (Velasquez, Montgomery & Hall, 2019). It is also an aspect of the negotiation of their ethnic identity, as it connects them to public and civic life of the country where they or their family descends from. However, political expression on social media can be a factor that assists the spread of political extremity (Su, Suk & Rojas, 2022; Weimann & Masri, 2021).

Other ways through which young people engage with their communities and publicly express their cultural connections is through sharing events, festivals, customs and other components of their culture. That, for example, is what Examples 8 and 9 have chosen to share with their audience. In Example 8, the user invites the viewer to participate in Chinese New Year celebrations with him and his family. The video consists of short clips showing the decorations, food, and interactions between family members, such as the gifting of angpow (red envelopes). Example 9, in turn, also chooses to celebrate a festival. In the video, two women can be seen wearing traditional Indian clothing and performing bharatanatyam steps during the Diwali festival, which happens every October on Queen Street in Auckland since 2002 (Auckland Unlimited, n.d.).

While both videos celebrate important festivals in Chinese and Indian culture respectively, they present different aspects of how they are celebrated and what the user wishes to share with their audience. Example 8 invites the viewer to participate in the celebrations from a more intimate perspective, with the very first take calling the viewer to “Celebrate Chinese New Year with us”. In the video, the audience is able
to see aspects of the house, the homemade food, and is even introduced to some family members and shown some lighthearted and humorous moments. Example 9, on the other hand, shows a short clip from a public festival, and while it lacks the intimate aspect of Example 8, it still invites the viewer to partake in the celebrations and increases public awareness surrounding it. Their stance positions them as inviting a wider audience to celebrate the festivities with them, whether on a more intimate or public level.

These posts can also be considered interethnic encounters with imagined communities. Although, unlike some of the videos discussed in the previous section, these are not shaped by humour and do not rely so much on stereotypes.

Ever since ethnic cultural festivals have started being celebrated in New Zealand, they have attracted bigger and more diverse crowds every year, showing a growing acceptance for cultural diversity (Zodgekar, 2006). Both videos encourage intercultural interactions through the public sharing to a wider audience, which both dispels possible assumptions about their culture and shows that all groups are invited to take part in the celebrations. Multicultural festivals facilitate meaningful conversations about intercultural exchanges and increase tolerance of diversity (Walters, McGillivray & Guillard, 2022). Dekker, Belabas and Scholten (2015) have found that while intraethnic connections benefit young people due to their shared backgrounds and similar experiences, those who participate in more interethnic interactions are able to thrive in more social situations and integrate better in their host society. In addition to that, Ward and Masgoret (2008) have also found that non-migrant New Zealanders who interact with migrants more regularly tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Contact with cultural content, even
through social media, can better ethnic young people’s opportunities to thrive socially as well as increase tolerance for migrant populations.

Furthermore, the publication of content celebrating and showcasing their cultural background increases pride for young migrants, and may better their connections with their community. For a long time, ethnic young people felt that their culture was incompatible with New Zealand society, and that proximity to whiteness is what they should strive for (Lei, 2016; Ward, Stuart & Adam, 2009; Zodgekar, 2006). As a result, many young migrants report being disinterested in their culture, causing disconnection from their cultural community and identity issues (Handapangoda, 2015; Lei, 2016; Shui, 2020). Through social media and posts like Examples 7, 8 and 9, not only can users display their own pride for their culture, but can create an increasing sense of belonging and joy for other ethnic young people as well.

In sum, whether it is through political or cultural expression, sharing the perspectives of young ethnic people on social media can help achieve positive outcomes for the individual as well as the collective. It can aid in increasing civic engagement from young people and educate them on international issues, in addition to encouraging interethnic and intercultural dialogue, which in turn benefits multiple parties.
Stereotypes

Figure 5. Screenshots illustrating the discussed videos: Example 10 (left), Example 11 (centre) and Example 12 (right)

Another modality of content identified among the included videos concerns the embodiment, address, and even subversion of cultural or racial stereotypes. The majority of videos captured during this research, however, approach the subject with a humorous tone, adapting different sounds and trends to fit the user’s perspective and create a punchline out of otherwise negative stereotypes.

Some videos, such as Example 10 and Example 12, address stereotypes more broadly, while Example 11 covers them in a context specific to New Zealand. Example 10 addresses an imaginary audience that claims she does not look Latina. In response, she changes into a more stereotypically Latina hairstyle and outfit and starts acting in a dramatised manner: overtly sexual, aggressive, drunk, and prone to dramatic displays of emotion, which are stereotypical to Latin American women. Example 12,
on the other hand, pokes fun at oneself rather than addressing an audience. The punchline is around the stereotype that Asian people eat dogs, with her response to her dog biting her being to take it to an oven.

Example 11, in turn, approaches a stereotype contextual to New Zealand. She uses a popular audio about “the land of your people”, with ‘your people’ being Indian and Pakistani people (indicated by her use of flags in the first half of the video) and ‘the land’ being the neighbourhood of Sandringham. This West Auckland suburb is sometimes referred to as “Little India” due to its concentration of a South Asian population and variety of South Asian restaurants (Tan & Singh, 2015). The joke in Example 11 only makes sense within the context of Auckland, so the content is addressing an audience with this prior knowledge. Unlike Example 10 and 12, which only require knowledge of popular stereotypes about Asian and Latin-American people and culture, the joke in Example 11 is reserved for those “in the know”.

In line with most of the content found in this research, these videos are comedic in tone, and this time use self-directed ethnic humour through stereotypes. This style of humour can have both negative and positive consequences: Rapporport (2005) uses the metaphor of the ‘sword and the shield’, describing how ethnic humour can be used to protect ethnic communities against backlash and diffuse tensions, but it can also be used to harm them. However, humour is highly contextual, and although this style of comedy cannot be decisively determined to be inherently deleterious or benign, the space it is promoted in, the audience it addresses and the political and social context during which it is shared matters. The videos presented are all done so with different contexts and to different audiences.
Example 10 is of a similar vein to others discussed in a previous section, consisting of a cheeky response to people who question her ethnic identity. However, instead of affirming her identity as a New Zealander like Example 4 and 6 (discussed above), the user in Example 10 instead is faced with questioning about her Latina identity. However, rather than replying with a direct mockery of the doubter, she impersonates visual and behavioural stereotypes associated with Latin American women. It is a more subtle dig than in Examples 4 and 6, turning it around on the audience to question what exactly is that they expect of how Latinas should look and be like. These stereotypes are rooted in years of Western media (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013), which are often some of the only representations New Zealanders have of Latin Americans (Hoffman Nunes, 2016). Furthermore, it is also interesting to note how Example 10 and the stereotypes she portrays are also affected by gender. She emulates stereotypes about Latin American women that echo those mentioned in Ghavami and Peplau’s research (2013): as promiscuous, feisty and loud, which differed from general stereotypes about Latin American men. This user’s experience sits at the intersection of gender and ethnicity, which frames her content differently.

While Example 10 consists of a response to the audience, Example 11 shares a cultural aspect for a more limited public. There is a stereotyping aspect about the geographical dispersion of the South Asian diaspora, but this stereotype is not necessarily a harmful one. Instead, it draws comedy from the fact that the punchline is reserved only for those who are familiar with the plurality of cultures in Auckland’s neighbourhoods. A similar joke could be made about other ethnic populations and other neighbourhoods in Auckland. Geographical studies of humour have argued that it can be used as a tool to rewrite and contest regional stereotypes and to make claims of belonging by socially marginalised populations (Ridanpaa, 2014). We can
look at Example 11 as being used to assert the multiculturality of the city, and the cultural, regional and social prevalence of South Asian communities.

Finally, Example 12 initially may differ from the other two, but it contains its own interpretation of stereotype-based humour. Although the post is not a direct address to an audience like Example 10, it is a way of responding to stereotypes in the public mind by embodying them. However, it is not inviting the viewer to question these assumptions, but instead to join in laughing at them. This post is more closely aligned with the “dark humour” that is prevalent on TikTok, and with both the sword and shield from the metaphor (Rappoport, 2005). When the humour is self-directed, or created by a member of the affected group, it can ease some of the heaviness and negativity of the stereotype, and allow other members of the community to laugh along with it. When shared with non-members, it can also create more positive social outcomes, easing tensions especially in contexts where this type of humour is appreciated, such as in New Zealand. However, as previously discussed, it can also negatively affect these groups by minimising the harm these stereotypes cause and reinforcing hegemonic social and ethnic hierarchies (Boza, 2013; Da Silva et al., 2015).

All three of these videos portray users taking a different stance in relation to stereotype-based humour: inviting the viewer to question it, using it to assert regional and cultural relevance, and embodying it to invite the viewer in on the joke. It is also interesting to note how these stereotypes are performed, especially in Examples 10 and 12, which are similar to how visual and behaviour markers were used to signify different ethnic groups in Example 1 and 2, discussed in a previous section. In Example 10’s case, the performance is highly self-reflective: the point of
her video is the wide awareness of these stereotypes, and questioning them. In Example 12’s case, the dramatic performance of the play-fighting with the dog and pretending to put it in the oven is combined with a theatrical audio, with a villainous laugh and evil voice saying “bye-bye doggy”. The already harmful stereotype about Asian people is further driven by the nefarious visual and audio elements.

The content in which stereotype-based humour is created and shared matters, and it cannot be definitively labelled as positive or negative. That depends on a number of factors such as the audience, the speaker, the message, the moment and the medium. For ethnic minority youth, it may serve the purpose of taking over the narrative and strengthening bonds as well as avoiding conflict and removing the threat. It is also imperative to consider the implications of how the intersection of other marginalised identities affects these stereotypes. This discussion reinforces the creative ways in which young people are taking their experiences to social media, regardless of whether the consequences of such are exclusively negative or positive.
Immigration Experiences

Figure 6. Screenshots illustrating the discussed videos: Example 13 (right) and Example 14 (left)

Social media has been a source of information, connection and support for migrants at various stages of their migration journey (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Dekker, Engberson & Faber, 2016; Ihejirika & Krtaic, 2021; Mitra & Evansluong, 2019). It is, therefore, unsurprising that many of the captured videos address the users’ migration experiences, whether that is as first, 1.5, second and further generations. These videos range from humorous, as is the case with most content on TikTok, to informational and even documentary.

These posts picture the user’s own experiences immigrating to a different country, as is the case with Example 13, or their experiences interacting with migrant parents or family members, like Example 14. Example 13 points out the contradiction of her
moving from the Philippines to New Zealand seeking better economic prospects, only to spend her money going back to the Philippines on holiday. In contrast, Example 14 is about the user’s relationship with her migrant parents. In her post, she points out that her parents moved to New Zealand with the purpose of having an easier life, but had become upset that their children now do not struggle as much as they once did.

Examples 13 and 14 experiences are ones with which many migrants, depending on their generation, can relate to. In previous sections, we discussed content that was by and for a specific cultural community, or that at least had a different meaning to that community: stereotypes, for example, may be understood by many, but jokes about them hold a different meaning for the community they target. Similarly, videos about cultural events are understood differently by those who belong to the culture. The videos we describe in the previous paragraph, however, are relatable to the migrant community as a whole. Example 13, for example, can be understood by many first generation migrants: we move away from home to make more money, only to spend all of our money going back to visit our home country. In a similar vein, another user jokes in a TikTok about how he had a professional job and a career in Colombia, but works as a barista in New Zealand and is happier (Example 15). Much like Example 13, many first generation migrants can also relate to leaving a professional job to work as “unskilled” employees in search of higher quality of life.

Example 14 is, too, echoing a sentiment felt by many 1.5 and second generation migrants: of having been raised by parents or family members with different expectations of how their child should behave or how their life should be. A similar sentiment is voiced by another user (Example 16), who makes a joke out of the fact
that, despite her parents having moved her at an early age to an English-speaking country, they become upset when she does not speak their native language at home.

It is interesting to note that both Examples 14 and 16 allude to this disconnection between first-generation migrants who are parents of 1.5 or second generation children and their children. This difference is felt even when we compare videos from first-generation migrants, like Examples 13 and 15, who talk about their home country and the hardships of their migration journey, with Examples 14 and 16, who discuss the expectations of their migrant parents. The migrant experience also seems to differ vastly depending on the age in which the individual migrated, which can in turn affect their identity work too. As previously mentioned, those who were born or migrated to New Zealand at a young age are more likely to identify as New Zealanders (Ward & Lin, 2006). The tension between parents and their children likely comes from first-generation migrants feeling a deeper sense of connection to their home country, while their children most likely think of New Zealand as their home country.

Content like this fosters a greater sense of belonging and community to those who have had similar experiences. Researchers have found that ethnic migrants from different backgrounds still find common ground by sharing their experiences on social media (Lam, 2009), which is usually not pursued otherwise (Dekker, Belabas & Scholten, 2015). Humour, which is an ongoing aspect of most of these videos, also serves a particular social purpose. It can assist young people negotiate tensions between their identity and expression and how their parents expect them to identify and express themselves. It can also connect migrants to each other, which promotes better social outcomes for them (Ward & Lin, 2006).
While the videos discussed above take a humorous approach to tackling migration experiences, there was also a number of videos in the sample in which users utilise social media to procure and spread information about immigration or document their own journeys. However, this content was often limited to their native language. Due to this limitation, a number of videos were left out of the sample since I could not discuss or translate their content. Certain videos in Spanish or Portuguese, such as Examples 17 and 18, were included in the sample as I could understand and therefore discuss their content. Example 17 consists of a documentation of her first day attending university, where she takes the viewer with her to classes, lunch and on her journey back home. Example 18, on the other hand, uses her platform on TikTok to discuss pathways to migration. The selected video, which has over one million
views, shows her explaining, in Spanish, the visa she applied for to gain entry to the country, and invites the audience to follow her account to learn more about her journey.

Examples 17 and 18, rather than serving a comedic purpose, are informational and documentary, respectively. Many migrants, such as the user in Example 18, use social media after they have successfully immigrated and established themselves to aid new and potential migrants (Ihejirika & Krtalic, 2021). This exchange of information fosters mutual aid in the migrant community, and while migrants are still subject to false and potentially harmful information (Borkert, Fisher & Yafi, 2018), many online communities are formed with the intention of providing advice (Parker & Song, 2006). The user in Example 18, through her TikTok, informs her audience about details regarding the migration process as well as personal accounts of her emotional journey.

While this content tends to be created by and for older migrants, plenty of young first generation migrants also tell their story through TikTok. The user in Example 17 invites the audience in her native language of Spanish, inviting them to spend the day with her in New Zealand. Unlike Example 18, which intends to inform the viewer, Example 17 documents her life as an immigrant student rather than, say, detailing to the viewer how they can enrol in the university. Examples 17 and 18 also differ from Examples 13 and 14 as they are addressing their own cultural community, expressed by the choice to film the videos in Spanish, rather than the migrant community as a whole or non-migrants. They consist of a different type of content about immigration experiences, serving a distinct purpose. This also supports the idea that
first-generation migrants feel more closely connected to their home country, and identify first and foremost as members of that community.

It is interesting to note how much the identity work of the users included in this analysis seems to be affected by their migration experience, and how that is then represented online. It could be argued that the stance of these users change depending on how they negotiate their identity, from discussing closer connections to their home country to feeling that connection mostly through their parents.

**Everyday Racism and Xenophobia**

![Figure 8. Screenshots illustrating the discussed videos: Example 19 (left), Example 20 (centre) and Example 21 (right).](image)

The sixth and final observed category is racism and/or xenophobia experienced by minority ethnic youth in New Zealand. While similar to the previously discussed
application of stereotypes, these videos tend to act like more of a callout towards behaviours observed from multiple groups. Despite still being humourous and taking shape through trending sounds and formats in true TikTok fashion, their comedy is less lighthearted.

Rather than skits created by the user or references to general stereotypes, these videos are more likely to reflect actual experiences. For example, Example 19 expresses an account of the animosity she encountered by using an audio from a movie to describe the exclusion of Black people from social circles in Christchurch. Example 20, in turn, dedicates a dance to people who dismiss her experiences as a Latina in New Zealand. Although the dance starts as a normal choreography, it evolves to her punching and kicking an imaginary person. The caption of the post clarifies that it is a joke, but it still makes her feelings about people who dismiss her experiences known to the audience.

Example 21 uses a trend format, known as “P.O.V.” (point of view), that was widely popular during the period of this research and vastly used by people to recount microaggressions they experienced. In fact, the meme format was so popular that over a quarter of the posts captured utilise some variation of it. It consists of overlapping stock images of people with racist or xenophobic phrases the user may have heard or experienced from people that look like that (see Figure 9). Example 21 gives an account from the perspective of a Middle Eastern young man in New Zealand. While the video format has been used by many people speaking from various perspectives, from professions to nationalities to hobbies, it was widely used by non-white youth to showcase racist or xenophobic microaggressions, as shown by the overwhelming presence of these videos in the research data.
While there is still an aspect of humour to these videos, it differs from the self-directed humour observed in videos about stereotypes or interethnic encounters. Rather than the joke being at the expense of ethnic groups, it is now the perpetrator of racism who is stereotyped through the use of stock photos. The anonymity of social media can equally embolden racist rhetoric (Rodis, 2021; Ortiz, 2021) as well as anti-racist responses (Eschmann, 2020). During adolescence and young adulthood, the shield that online activity provides encourages them to react more actively and more confrontationally as well (Eschmann, 2020). The larger prevalence of videos that take on this approach in comparison with those that lighten the effects of stereotyping suggests that, despite breaching social norms, young people may prefer to call out discriminatory behaviour from all groups rather than make a punchline out of it.
As a whole, these videos tend to have less focus on identity itself, and more on the experiences of being someone of that identity in New Zealand. Their ethnic and cultural identity are not marked necessarily by their performance, but by others around them, and the discrimination they face. Rather than portraying themselves in an exaggerated manner, or highlighting aspects of their culture, it is their status as “Other” that characterises their identity. The word “ethnic” itself, as discussed in previous chapters, is marked by otherness, and this otherness is highlighted in these users’ experience and treatment. They too represent themselves as Other, as people navigating through life experiencing differentiated treatment because of their ethnicity, race, or culture.

While humour and comedic formats still permeate most content on TikTok, the way in which young people approach and address racial and ethnic discrimination on the platform takes this humour away from themselves and turns it against the racist perpetrators themselves. Emboldened by popular trends that encourage communal sharing, ethnic youth make a punchline out of their anger. Through sharing their experiences, these young people can challenge social expectations of responses to racism, as well as dominant racial discourses and their relationships with non-minority groups (Eschmann, 2020).

**Summary**

Self-representation on social media can inform a great deal about an individual’s or a group’s self-perception. The performance of an online identity is influenced by an imagined audience (Marwick & boyd, 2011), which in turn can influence one’s own
identity work (Blumer, 1962; Goffman, 1969). The identity presented on social media is carefully constructed and idealised (Papacharissi, 2012), therefore what we can ascertain from the analysis of these videos can contribute to a greater understanding of the way in which ethnic youth in New Zealand relate to their identity work and communities, at least on a public level.

Social media, and particularly TikTok, affords users a variety of creative ways to perform storytelling. With a constant rotation of trending sounds and formats, users find new and inventive ways to share their experiences: through skits, performances, vlog-style storytelling, or by replicating a popular sound and format. Vizcaíno-Verdú and Aguaded (2022) have found that the platform motivates activism through musical frameworks and encourages marginalised groups to challenge social discrimination. Similarly, Simpson and Semaan (2021) found that several participants in their research created content on TikTok to promote themselves and state solidarity and community for others members of the communities they belong to.

Humour is highly prevalent, which can be explained by its popularity on TikTok (Schellewald, 2021) as well as its importance in New Zealand culture (Horan & Matthews, 2019). Through it, users showcase how they navigate through interethnic interactions; react to backlash against their identity; turn it against racist perpetrators; and turn it against themselves to embody stereotypes. This humour is largely ethno-racial, which has been argued to have both positive and negative consequences to ethnic populations (Rappoport, 2005). On one hand, comedy can facilitate social integration and foster acceptance, allow ethnic youth to take over the narrative, and diffuse potential conflict (Boza, 2013; Kurylo & Robles, 2015). On the
other hand, this lighthearted approach can diminish the consequences of discrimination and discourage ethnic youth from taking their discomfort seriously (Da Silva et al., 2015). It is important to emphasise that humour is highly contextual, and these consequences depend on the sociopolitical context in which this humour is performed.

The content analysis also showcased how ethnic youth represents and negotiates their national, ethnic and cultural identities. They displayed pride in their ethnic and cultural identity by sharing cultural events, holidays and expressing themselves politically, encouraging intraethnic encounters which in turn can improve their social outcomes (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). Users also showed confidence in their identity as New Zealanders, even in the face of backlash. While this may indicate that ethnic young people are embracing New Zealand as part of their national identity, results still show different perspectives between different ethnic groups and migration generations. While 1.5 and further generations are more likely to feel disconnected from the migration process and embrace the country they grew up in as their own, first generation migrants display stronger ties to the country they were born in.

In conclusion, the content analysis provides key insights into the self-representation and identity negotiation of ethnic young people on TikTok. The next chapter will discuss the findings from five in-depth interviews, conducted to complement and elaborate on the findings from the content analysis.
CHAPTER V: INTERVIEW FINDINGS

As discussed in the research design chapter, in-depth semi-structured interviews were set up to complement the findings from the data analysis and help further understand the lived experience of ethnic young social media creators and consumers. In line with the intersectional approach of this study, this research aimed to interview young people from a variety of backgrounds. Using the recruitment strategy described in Chapter 3, I recruit a total of five participants (Table 5.1). As mentioned above, the small sample size was intentional, as the goal of these interviews was to complement findings from the content analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnic background</th>
<th>Gender identity</th>
<th>Part of the LGBTQIA+ community?</th>
<th>A person with a disability?</th>
<th>Part of a religious minority?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Venezuelan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Fiji Indian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>German, Russian, Ashkenazi Jewish, Middle Eastern</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Congolese</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Middle Eastern/Iraqi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.1. List of study participants.*

These interviews aimed to achieve greater understanding of the ethnic, cultural and national identity work of young people in New Zealand; their self-representation on
social media, and how they choose to portray themselves in different platforms; and their consumption of content on social media, with a focus on TikTok. Some questions also encouraged discussion about findings from the media content analysis, such as questions surrounding ethnic comedy. The first main theme that emerged from the interviews was the national, ethnic and cultural identities of ethnic youth in New Zealand. The second was self-representation on social media, both their own and others’ representation, particularly on TikTok. This theme also included a discussion regarding the impact of their intersectional identities, as well as the use of comedy as a preferred communication style in this platform.

**National, ethnic and cultural identities**

*National identity*

As discussed in the literature review chapter, the promoted image of the Kiwi identity often excludes migrants and ethnic minorities, which can lead to feelings of disconnection and isolation (Ward, Stuart & Adam, 2009). As a result, many people from ethnic minority and/or migrant backgrounds adopt hybrid identities to make sense of themselves and represent the multitude of their backgrounds. The development of a hybrid identity, through which they negotiate their ethnic and national identities, has been described as a mechanism of survival (Lei, 2016), and often is affected by a plethora of outside factors that are not in their control (Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020).

One of the findings discussed in the content analysis of videos is that ethnic young people are taking it to social media to display pride in their national identity as New Zealanders, despite existing backlash. Through the negotiation of hybrid identities,
users fought back against the idea that they do not belong in the country they live in, and claimed their New Zealander identity proudly. However, the results also showed that there were still conflicting sentiments, and that this sense of confidence and pride often differed between ethnic groups and migrant generations.

The interviewees represented a mix of young people both born in New Zealand and overseas, as well as a mix of diverse ethnic backgrounds (see Table 5.1). Each participant had unique insights into their own national identification, and brought in a variety of perspectives that contributed to their different attitudes.

Being New Zealand-born was a contributor to a higher identification with the New Zealander identity. Participants who were born overseas had different experiences in regard to this identity depending on the age in which they migrated to New Zealand. P1, an Australian-born Venezuelan woman, moved to Auckland at the age of 16. To her, the main factor that encouraged her to recognise New Zealander as a national identity was travelling overseas. She also described obtaining citizenship and a New Zealand passport as factors that pushed that identification, which was a gradual process: “I think now I’m Venezuelan and I’m a New Zealander as well, and that’s okay. Maybe I identify more with one than the other but I do [identify as a New Zealander] currently”.

P1 moved between different countries a lot during her childhood and adolescence. She shared that the lack of knowledge people in New Zealand have about Venezuela also contributed to her difficulty in finding a place she fit in, especially at a very formative age:
I was sixteen so I’m a teenager trying to figure out, you know, all those teenager things. Who am I, how do I fit in. What do I like. I’m obviously very concerned about what other people think about me. (...) I think the way that people saw me or the things they would say about me, or the stereotypes they attach to me. (...) in the moment I was just like okay, maybe I am this.

P1 found that she was often reduced to what stereotypes people associated with her ethnic background, which contributed to her feelings of isolation from New Zealand.

P4, on the other hand, is a Congolese woman who moved to New Zealand from South Africa as a one year old, and felt confident in her identity as a New Zealander. Like P1, she also felt as though her New Zealander identity was stronger when she travelled overseas. To her, this national identity was not something she felt the need to claim, but something people gave to her:

(...) when they ask me how long have you been in New Zealand? I’d say my whole life, then they will be like oh, then you’re a New Zealander. They will give me the title; I don’t necessarily have to ‘flex’ it to other people. (...) I guess I don’t feel like I have to claim it because I guess I just live in New Zealand, it’s almost like a given.

She adds that attending a school with a diverse population and growing up in Auckland, a very ethnically diverse city, were also important factors that contributed to a more positive experience than the one described by P1. P4 compared her childhood with that of her boyfriend, a Nigerian man who moved to Christchurch, a predominantly white city, at eight years old. She shared that he and his family
encountered much more racism and discrimination than she ever did in Auckland. Moreover, she recognised that her experiences were likely different from what a lot of African migrants would share. As an example, she told me about a time when she was watching the America’s Cup parade in Auckland city with her partner: “I was feeling this sense of pride, from being a New Zealander, and when I tell him that he corrects me and says no, you’re Congolese”. It is interesting to note how the New Zealander identity was placed upon her by others, but questioned by other African migrants. This suggests how much developing a sense of identity as a migrant relies not only on impressions from others outside your community, but also from those within it, and that these impressions do not always match up.

Both their experiences suggest that developing a sense of identity is affected by outside perception too. P4 and P1’s examples suggest that identity is not something that we solely claim for ourselves, but something that other people give to us as well. P1’s experience with claiming a New Zealander identity is an example of an avowed identity, meaning that this is something she has asserted herself, while P4’s describes an ascribed identity, meaning something that was placed on her by others (Martin & Nakayama, 2007).

P2, P3 and P5, despite having all been born in New Zealand, share different perspectives into what being a New Zealander meant to them. P3, when asked to describe her ethnic identity, mentioned first and foremost that she “is obviously Kiwi”, showcasing not only a strong sense of belonging in the New Zealander national and cultural identity, but also as an ethnic background. However, this has also affected her connection to her Middle Eastern background:
I feel like being from New Zealand, it’s just you’re a New Zealander. I do feel disconnected from my ethnicities. I feel like if I was born in [the Middle East] it would be different, (...) that is still part of who I am and my roots come from there (...). I’m the first generation in my family that has been born in New Zealand. No one in my family is from New Zealand or has any roots to New Zealand.

P3, despite claiming ‘Kiwi’ as both an ethnic and national identity, feels disconnected from her Middle Eastern ethnic background due to having been born in New Zealand, a country no one else in her family was born in, rather than somewhere in the Middle East, which to her would strengthen her connection to her Middle Eastern background.

For P2, a Fiji Indian woman, despite having been born in New Zealand, her self-identification as a New Zealander is described as “fifty-fifty”: “If I was to say I was a Kiwi, no people wouldn’t challenge me on that, but they would say, ‘Where are you really from?’”. This is a sentiment echoed by P5, an Iraqi Muslim woman:

A lot of people tend to undermine me being a New Zealander just because of the way that I physically appear. So I’ve had many incidents of people like ‘no, you’re not from New Zealand because you’ve got that thing [hijab] on your head’, you know, you look a certain way or whatever it is. So they tend to associate that with, like, certain choices that I tend to make in my life such as my religion.

To P5, however, the backlash stressed the importance of her being proud and confident in her identity as a New Zealander, and showing that her identity as both a
Muslim Middle Eastern woman and as a New Zealander can coexist: “It's important to me that people understand I identify as a New Zealander because I think it undermines a lot of my identity when people look at me and say no, you are not”.

P5’s response echoes feelings expressed by other users on TikTok: when analysing videos that dealt with expression of hybrid identities, I found a number of creators who emphasised their identity as New Zealanders, despite backlash even in their own replies, such Examples 4 and 6, discussed in Chapter 4. P5 herself shared that she, in a now deleted video, also used a trending audio on TikTok to create a humorous post in which she reinforced her national identity by responding to the repeated question “where are you from?” with the city, neighbourhood and even the hospital where she was born.

Navigating through national identity work can be a challenging process for young people. Participants’ responses emphasise how self-identification is not unaffected by outside factors, which can be enforced or reinforced by people outside and within one’s community. Both internal and external factors also aid in the development of hybrid identities, which are under constant negotiation as well. Not all of these external factors, however, seem to be solely reliant on ascribed identities. Experiences overseas reinforced the national identity of the participants in some cases, and to more recent migrants, obtaining citizenship and a passport also materialised a stronger connection. Another factor that encouraged identification was expanding their knowledge of Indigeneity. P1 reported feeling that her ethnic identity felt more compatible with a New Zealander identity when she framed it within Te Ao Māori:
I have found that, like, when it comes to maybe some Indigenous values do align more with where I come from and the way I grew up, in terms of how we treat people and support people. I think in that sense maybe [my identity and values] do align a bit more.

This is a similar sentiment to what an Asian migrant showcased in the video Example 3, which was analysed in Chapter 4. This indicates that engaging with Te Ao Māori can encourage a stronger sense of belonging for migrants by connecting them to a ‘New Zealander’ identity different from the mainstream Pākehā from which they feel disconnected from (Lei, 2016; Ward & Lin, 2006).

All five participants had unique insights into how they relate to the New Zealander identity, and how external validation and acceptance (or lack thereof) affected their identity work. To P1, this validation was materialised through obtaining legal citizenship, and identifying as a New Zealander was something she had to work towards during her adulthood. P3, on the other hand, had never felt questioned in her national identity, which has likely contributed to her accepting it as part of her ethnic identity as well. P2 and P5, both of whom felt constantly questioned about their ‘real’ background if they claimed a New Zealand identity, reported distinct responses: while P2 felt more disconnected from it, P5’s experiences encouraged her to claim it more strongly. Finally, P4 felt as though this identity had been given to her rather than something she had to claim or work through, it was also questioned by people in the African migrant community.

These findings do not only expand the results from the content analysis, but also showcase the diversity of young people’s experiences within the ethnic community.
For these participants, being born and/or raised in New Zealand meant stronger ties with its national identity, as Ward and Lin have also found in their study of preferred adaptation strategies to life in New Zealand by adolescent migrants (2006). On the other hand, first generation migrants, such as P1, may feel a deeper sense of connection to their home countries, which leads identifying as a New Zealander to be something that requires active work towards, rather than a granted. These findings also show that efforts towards a harmonious existence with tangata whenua also contribute to feelings of belonging, as reported by other researchers as well (Ip, 2003; Shui, 2020; Ward & Lin, 2006).

Establishing a strong sense of national identity greatly improves outcomes for ethnic and migrant youth (Ward & Lin, 2006). However, there are several factors that affect this identity work, most of which are not under individual responsibility. As shown by the participants, public perception and responses are a key factor that can contribute to a sense of national identity, or lack thereof. Interviewees’ responses also show that there is no one single path to negotiating identity work, and that the ethnic community has a rich range of ways to relate to their national identity.

*Ethnic and cultural identity*

The participants’ sense of national identity was directly impacted by their status as an ethnic minority, as was their ethnic and cultural identity. In Section 2.2, I argue that ‘ethnic’ was a term imposed as an ‘other’ to Anglo-Saxon whiteness, which is hegemonic in New Zealand due to the colonisation of Indigenous people. The theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2 also introduced Stuart Hall’s (1994) understanding of cultural identity as shared collectively by a community, but also...
mutable and under constant transformation. This transformation can be directly affected by a number of social, political, geographical and historical factors (Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020). Thus, it could be argued that the ethnic and cultural identity of our participants has been affected by these circumstances.

Being in New Zealand, a country where participants are considered minority groups, led to conflicting feelings about their backgrounds. P3, as discussed in the previous section, described being ‘Kiwi’ as both part of her ethnic and national identity, but felt disconnected from her Ashkenazi Jewish and Middle Eastern background. In addition to that, her experiences encountering backlash when sharing about her ethnic and religious identity led her to no longer disclose those backgrounds with others:

Especially with my religious and Ashkenazi Jewish side, so I identify as being Jewish as my religion, and some people just don’t accept what I identify with. So, I don’t really tell people when I meet them because I feel like I’ll get discriminated against because it has happened before lots of times.

P1 tells a similar story about a young Venezuelan boy she knew and how he came to respond to people’s questions about his background:

(...I think this was one of the days where I realised ‘wow things are really bad’, like there’s a family friend who’s a young boy (...). I heard him talking to some boys and he was like talking about being Mexican or something, and I was like ‘oh you’re from Mexico that’s so cool’, this and that and then we started talking in Spanish. And then he’s like ‘oh no I’m actually
Venezuelan but I say I’m from Mexico just because it’s easier’. And I’m like
‘wow, you’re so young and (...) you’re already making those choices’. This
is so bad. (...)

Both P3 and the boy described by P1 made choices about what to disclose or not
about their background due to a fear of backlash or to avoid uncomfortable
situations. These are both examples of a communication dilemma that many
participants reported facing in both real life and online settings. Interactional
meanings are shaped by identity work and vice-versa, and dilemmas can appear when
individuals have multiple and conflicting communication goals (Tracy & Robles,
2013), in this case the desire to be authentic and the desire to be strategic about what
information to disclose. Dilemmas such as these were often encountered by the
participants, who felt as though they needed to give in to certain standards or
expectations for a variety of reasons.

Another participant, P5, also reported having gone through periods of her life,
especially during her adolescence, during which she felt pressured to behave or
represent herself differently:

I wanted to try to be portrayed as “Western” quite a bit. That would mean
living a certain lifestyle exhibiting certain behaviours that didn't tie true to
who I am as a person or the things that I personally believe in or the things
that I want to live my life by as well.

Living somewhere where your culture and community are a minority, especially if the
people around you have prejudiced misconceptions or know little to nothing about
your background, can lead to shame and an urge to conform or at least be strategic
about the information you share about your background. In this regard, research on young migrants in New Zealand has shown that they feel pressured to conform to Pākehā standards, even forgoing their language and culture in the process (Ayallo, 2019; Lei, 2016; Takhar, Bebek & Jamal, 2021).

All participants reported feeling a pressure to conform to Pākehā standards at some point in their life. However, the majority of them noted that these feelings were strongest during their adolescence, but have since grown to be proud of their identity despite external pressures. It is interesting to note that the only exception to this was P3, who still felt discomfort disclosing her Ashkenazi Jewish background, and who was the youngest participant at 17 years old. P5 also shared what this journey was like for her, particularly after her teenage years:

I don't think it was like that beforehand, especially growing up in high school, maybe first year university but (...) after the past few years I've definitely tried my best to stay true to who I am, even if it makes me uncomfortable.

Although growing older allowed P5 to become more confident and comfortable in her identity, it was still something she actively had to work towards rather than a given. Similarly, P4 shared that she used to consider how content about her background would be received by her non-Congolese or non-African friends on social media, but that this was something she has since grown out of:

Before, I used to be really like, my Congolese friends in New Zealand or my African friends - majority of them would understand this - this is cool. At times I do worry - well not worry but what about my white friends? My
non-African friends? They might think the music is a bit weird or the dancing is a bit much. (...) Now I’m at the stage where you don’t like what you see, then just unfollow.

P5 and P4 both went through periods of being less assertive of their confidence in their identity, but have worked towards it despite their own discomfort and potential backlash. Pushing through these feelings and fears was active and constant work rather than something they just ‘grew into’, despite it being common among the participants to have this happen to them at a certain age. Rather than simply a question of maturity, different environments were often mentioned as catalysts for the adoption of these strategies. For example, P1 mentioned how going through university encouraged her to solidify her relationship with her culture. P3’s choice to be selective about who to and how she discloses her background, much like P5’s choice to push through her discomfort in order to express herself more authentically, could be seen as coping strategies to deal with tensions or potential tensions. Despite their difference in experience, they both dealt with the same feelings of discomfort and fear of backlash, but chose distinct ways to address it.

It is interesting to note, however, how these strategies differed between participants who were born in New Zealand from those who were not. Previous authors have suggested that while the national identity of 1.5 or 2nd generation migrants as New Zealanders is stronger, navigating through how that coexists with their ethnic and cultural identity requires more work (Lei, 2016; Zodgekar, 2006). Meanwhile, first generation migrants may have a stronger sense of ethnic and cultural identity, but struggle to develop a national identity within the country they live in (De Jacolyn, Stasiak & McCool, 2021).
The identity work of most participants can be described by the process of hybridisation. They occupied a ‘third space’, a term coined by Clothier (2005) to describe a space in which individuals that find themselves ‘in between’ identities continuously negotiate bounds of authenticity, which, as previously mentioned, are also affected by a number of outside factors and circumstances out of their control. And yet, maintaining a hybrid identity and being under this constant negotiation was exhaustive, and according to existing literature, can cause these young people to project to an aspirational or desired identity (Ayallo, 2019; Handapangoda, 2015; Takhar, Bebek & Jamal, 2021).

A lot of the pressure to perform an idealised identity comes from social media, which can also be used as a tool to alleviate it. In Chapter 4, it was discussed how young ethnic people are using social media to create content about their experiences, identity and culture. The findings from the interviews complement those findings, showing that this is not done without some backlash or experiencing insecurity. When studying young people from a generation that grew up largely around social media, it is imperative to understand what role social media plays in their development and how it can affect their identity work.

**Social media: self and others**

*Self-representation*

Social media subjects young people to a bombardment of outside influences, from anonymous replies to an endless stream of content. All of this affects how they represent themselves on social media, which in turn also affects their identity work.
As a result, young people may be strategic regarding the content they consume as well as post on platforms, e.g., considering the audience they wish to post to, the type of content they surround themselves with, the implications of what they post, and how this all affects their own self-perception.

Participants in this study described different ways of engaging with social media, and for each of them their use contributed to an unique understanding of it. For most of them, the content they posted on social media was catered towards more intimate circles of friends and family rather than larger audiences. However, there were other ways in which they engaged with others on social media. P3, for example, shared that most of her interactions on TikTok happened in the comments section, while her other accounts on social media were private. Like other interviewees, most of her content was catered to a more intimate circle.

This reflects not only how the majority of participants in this research use social media, but the majority of social media users as a whole. More than half of social media users in the US have at least one of their online profiles set to private (Dixon, 2022). Our participants mentioned that TikTok, specifically, was a platform where they felt the need to be more careful, given that a video posted publicly could not only appear to their followers, but be blown up by the algorithm without their knowledge.

Although privacy seems to be the preferred option for most users, social media has notoriously caused a boom of ordinary people reaching fame and notoriety through their posts. Despite not necessarily having achieved an ‘influencer’ status, P1 was the only participant who created content for people outside of her immediate circles, in which she showcased her skills as a dancer and talked about her culture. She
recognised that most people would not be as comfortable putting themselves out there the way she had, but she saw it as an opportunity to reach people through social media:

I feel like [her social media username] has become my brand and also part of my identity. (...) I realised I wanted to take everything a bit further in terms of what I put of myself on social media because I know in comparison to other people I am very comfortable in using social media and putting myself out there. (...) I just do it and I know that's a position that not a lot of people are in. And I was just tired of all the misconceptions around Latin American people. (...) So, I just went for it and I think I’m very happy it’s had a good response.

As shown in the findings from the content analysis, P1 is one of many young ethnic people that see social media as an opportunity to reach different audiences and perhaps educate them on their culture. Although the rise of influencer culture has certainly aided in greater representation online (King & Fretwell, 2022), most of this community building happens due to users like P1, who have not achieved fame and wealth, but use social media as a way to connect with others. Online community building is an incredibly important resource for marginalised communities (Simpson & Semaan, 2021; Vizcaíno-Verdú & Aguaded, 2022), and according to my findings, this is the case even if this community building comes from simply viewing and engaging with others.

A highly important factor mentioned by participants that encouraged them to be more authentic and not conform to Western standards was the presence of more people like them on social media. P5, for example, mentioned how “when you are a
minority in New Zealand, you truly are a minority” due to the population size. On social media, however, she was able to come across more people like her who lived in different parts of the world, which gave her “that sense of comfort, providing that normality”. Similarly, P4 said she felt isolated from her Congolese community in New Zealand, but seeing other Congolese young people across the globe, as well as sharing her experience being Congolese in New Zealand, made her feel seen. P1 mentioned this as one of the factors that encouraged her more public presence on social media:

Especially marginalised communities, minority groups, people of colour, black people and there’s just a lot more resources for young people from young people to kind of consume. So, that’s really exciting because I know that for me that’s what I do a lot. Just seeing a lot of other creators talk about their experiences and this and that, and I love consuming that kind of content.

While the diversity of online users seems to provide underrepresented communities with a voice and a sense of community, this has both positive and negative consequences. P2, for example, felt divided about the effects this representation can have, especially when it is concentrated on one or very few people representing a whole community: “I think that’s what frustrates me about ethnic representation online is that it gets to a point where influencers feel like they actually do represent the entire population when they don’t. They only represent themselves (...”). While representation can have wonderful outcomes, marginalised groups hold a plethora of diverse opinions, and it can be very difficult to reflect this diversity.

All participants in this research agreed that representing themselves and their multiple identities authentically and accurately was important to them, in spite of the
pressure they may have felt to accommodate to different standards. Nonetheless, they still had differing opinions on how genuinely they could really portray themselves on social media. For some participants, like P3, the culture online was already a deterrent for accurate self-representation, as it pushed users to only share minimal parts of their lives:

You curate this image of what people think is happening in life, and then you only share with your close friends what’s actually going on. If you don’t see someone outside of their social media page, you’re not going to know what’s going on in their life really.

P5 echoed this sentiment and also mentioned that, aside from this curated content most users can identify with, there are also different pressures and standards that come with being a member of a marginalised group:

There are certain standards for different things. 1. for being a woman. 2. being a Muslim woman. 3. also being a Middle Eastern woman as well growing up in New Zealand. There’s all these different pressures to be a certain way and sometimes that can be really hard to portray yourself accurately on social media.

Although it was highlighted above that ethnic young people feel pressured to conform to Pākehā standards, there are a variety of other factors that affect their online presence and, in turn, their identity work. Marginalised genders for example, such as women and gender diverse people, are subject to a whole set of different standards of behaviour, including online. Even one’s own ethnic community comes with expectations. Handapangoda (2015) discusses how Sinhalese youth in New Zealand were set different norms from their family and cultural community and New Zealand
society, and that in order to attend to all sets of expectations they developed hybrid identities. Additionally, as highlighted by P5, these standards intersect with each other to create unique rules.

Despite these many difficulties, accurate self-representation was still considered important by the participants. For many of them, this meant navigating the cultural standards of New Zealand and that of their cultural background, which created unique insights and hybridised identities. Like other researchers have found, ethnic youth negotiate bounds of identity and display hybridity in their online representation, demonstrating strong bonds with both their cultural background and that of the place they live in (Handapangoda, 2015). As shown by P5’s statement, there are unique challenges in each individual journey, which are also marked by the intersections of their identities.

*Intersectional identities*

While representation, both of oneself and what one sees around them, is a vital aspect of identity work, there are many challenges that affect it. One of those, as mentioned above, is the incredible diversity of opinions, upbringings, and experiences across communities. Analysing this representation through an intersectional lens, as this research has aimed to do, can aid in understanding this diversity.

Within the sample of participants, despite not representing all facets of the community of ethnic young people in New Zealand, existed a diversity of religions, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, ages, sexual orientation, and disability status. All of
these perspectives were highly important in understanding how these users represented themselves, as well as how they interpreted the content they consumed.

Religion, for example, was an element that for some participants was directly related to culture and ethnicity. P3, for example, was Jewish, which is considered an ethnoreligious identity. P5 was a Muslim Hijabi woman in a non-Muslim majority country, which goes hand in hand with her Iraqi ethnic background. P2 and P4, who were both Christian, recognised that their faith was directly affected by their culture. For all of them, religious expression walked alongside cultural representation, and it was a vital component of their self-representation online. For all of them, it was impossible to consider one without the other.

While they all felt a strong bond with their religion, the ways through which they expressed this bond on social media differ. P3 shared that she tended to hide this aspect of her life, feeling as though whenever she did, she was met with resistance and backlash:

> I feel like I can’t openly post on my story about my family sitting at the table for Hanukkah dinner or whatever because people will be messaging me and then, “What the hell is that? Why did you post this, it’s supposed to be Christmas?” stuff like that.

P5, on the other hand, felt as though navigating her identity as a Muslim woman required more thought and consideration, but did not keep her from expressing her faith. However, she curated this content depending on the platform she was posting on, and reported that TikTok was where she felt most comfortable talking about her religion. P2 and P4 both agreed with that sentiment, stating that TikTok allowed
them to interact more with ethnic Christian youth. This was a sentiment that was mirrored in different circumstances by practically all participants: how ethnic people strategically curate an identity depending on the context in which they are in and considering their safety and comfort.

Participants with a disability also reported feeling similarly about representation and connection with other disabled folk online. P2 mentioned how social media allowed her to interact with people who had the same disability or faced similar circumstances, which encouraged her to be more open about it:

Even just with, for example, having an autoimmune disease it’s quite hard to find support groups in reality and things like that, but just to see it brought up in the TikTok world, for example, it makes you feel a little bit more brave to talk about it with other people. You go, okay, this person is talking about it in their sphere online, perhaps I can use a little bit of that courage and talk about it with my friends.

While online representation can encourage people with a disability to be more open about it and feel seen, there are added challenges when it comes to ethnic minority people. They are more likely to forgo healthcare (Peiris-John et al., 2022), report experiences of racism in healthcare settings and are understudied as a whole (Chiang, Simon-Kumar & Peiris-John, 2021). While community building is an incredibly valuable asset to the disabled community, race and ethnicity also colour these experiences differently. P5, who is student in the health field, shared how it felt for her to be aware of these shortcomings in theory and then experience them in real life:
In the health system especially as someone who lives with a chronic illness and you see that even with the route that I've taken studying and stuff. You read a lot about it. You hear a lot about it and when you experience it at the same time it kind of makes it all very real and you understand that maybe it's not all in your head but it is something that happens very, very often. What you did experience was in fact people treating you differently based on the way you look and the things that you identify as, as well.

The knowledge obtained by P5 through her studies about discrimination against ethnic minorities in the healthcare system legitimised her own experiences as an ethnic minority patient with a chronic illness, allowing her to connect the research she read to what she experienced.

Gender was also observed by the participants as something that affected their identity work, lived experiences and self-representation. All interviewees identified as cisgender women, which does not cover a wide variety of gender expressions, but nonetheless affected their life experience. P1, for example, argued that her experiences with discrimination had been less violent due to the fact that she is a young woman who is considered attractive. However, she and I also discussed our shared experiences as Latina women surrounding hypersexualisation and exoticisation. Ethnic and racial stereotypes also differ between men and women, which means that the assumptions inflicted onto people often sit at this intersection (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013). Ethnic women are also subject to bigger pay gaps: Asian men earn 10.8% less than Pākehā men, while for Asian women the difference is at 17.4% (Rovoi, 2022).
It is important to note that these intersections not only interacted with ethnicity, but affected each other uniquely. None of these identities exist in a void, and are all contributors to the distinct experiences shared by each participant. Despite ethnic youth being the focus of this research, the perspectives of all participants were influenced by much more than this identity.

Comedy

The content analysis of social media posts by ethnic youth did not only showcase a rich tapestry of perspectives and experiences, but also highlighted the communication style in which these perspectives and experiences were addressed and how the user positioned themselves in relation to them. The analysis showed how predominant comedy was in how these narratives were shared, and interviews with our participants from both the perspective of creators and consumers reinforced these observations regarding the cultural aspect of comedy in New Zealand, as well as how comedy can be a double edged sword.

Most participants agreed that comedy can have a positive impact on how young people communicate and process information, lending it a more lighthearted perspective. P4, for example, believed that shifting one’s point of view about a certain experience can have positive consequences: “If you want to turn these stories or turn your experience into a way that everybody can have a good laugh about then I say why not? I see it as sometimes healthier that way”. P2 echoed this perspective, highlighting how that can be especially valuable for ethnic youth, given the particular challenges they face:
I don’t like the word trauma because it’s been overused, but I do think that comedy is a good way for young, ethnic people to connect with each other in terms of the difficulties or just unpacking a lot of the intergenerational stuff that has happened and presenting it in a way that perhaps does not feel like the world is ending.

Both P4 and P2 also highlighted how TikTok in particular was a platform where ethnic creators had a greater platform to do so, and how it encouraged a more humorous approach to these subjects as a whole.

Another relevant factor found in both the content analysis and interviews was how a culture of humour also contributes to the prevalence of this content. As previously discussed, comedy is central to New Zealand culture, with ethnic and racial-based humour as an essential part of it (Horan & Matthews, 2019). The findings from the content analysis highlight just how ubiquitous comedy is in the content created by ethnic young people, and responses from the participants emphasised how much that differed from videos and posts by ethnic young people overseas, particularly in the US. The majority of interviewees, when asked about content by ethnic creators, thought first of users outside of New Zealand who discuss issues pertinent to ethnic communities. P2, for example, shared that much of what she saw is dominated by an American perspective: “(...) It’s very rare for me to come across a New Zealand ethnic person that’s talking about ethnic identity. So, a lot of the content that I consume around ethnic identity comes from the American space (...”). Additionally, it is interesting to note that the majority of participants, when asked about content by ethnic creators, tended to think first of content that is more political rather than humorous.
Participants noticed differences between the content produced by creators overseas versus those who are based in New Zealand. Several of them observed that there was a cultural component in how ethnic identity was treated, making similar observations about wanting to avoid feelings of self-pity or being too serious. P2 observed how this differed from American culture specifically:

The only time that I can remember seeing something that was remotely related to migrant identity and that kind of stuff, again, a humorous context of these are the issues that we face that are underlying very hard hitting and very like, oh man. But it’s presented in humour. It’s never presented in “woe is me”. I think that’s because our culture is not “woe is me”. The American culture is very ‘oppression Olympics’. ‘I am oppressed’. But over here we’re kind of like ‘nah, just keep on pushing man’. And people who do bring out that ‘woe is me’, they get shoved down quite quickly. It’s like, Bro, just chill’. But I think that’s because of the culture that we have.

P3 brought up a very similar point, saying that if she were to post more content online about her background, she felt as though a humorous approach would be best to avoid being a “Debbie Downer”. There was, again, a communicative dilemma which culminated in a choice to adopt a strategic position: P3 felt as though there was a tension between her desired approach and the cultural expectation to keep subjects light and humorous.

The prevalence of comedic content on TikTok, combined with what ethnic young people seem to feel is a general attitude of dislike for what is interpreted as ‘self-pity’
in New Zealand, can contribute to pressure towards using a comedic approach. P3, despite not being a very active creator of content on TikTok, shared an instance in which she enacted and posted a video of herself and a friend joking about how tattoos are perceived in Judaism, which she then had some mixed feelings about:

When I made that video and I posted it, I felt like it was just so funny and light-hearted and nothing would come out of it, but after I posted it, a few days [later], I looked at it again and was thinking, am I making fun of my religion? Am I making fun of my background? It’s weird. I guess it’s pleasing other people as well that happened when I made that video, but also educating and [pleasing], making a funny skit that educates people. It’s funny, but I’m making fun of myself.

P3’s conflicting feelings stemmed from a similar place to what she discussed about the pressure she felt to conform to certain behavioural standards on social media.

The lightheartedness of this approach may also contribute to the banalisation of certain topics and encourage young people to not take their discomfort seriously. For example, P5 shared an instance in which she created and posted a video on TikTok that poked fun at people asking where she is from and not accepting ‘New Zealand’ as an answer. The experience led her to realise how comedy can be a double-edged sword:

I think comedy is such a great way to do things, but a lot of people tend to miss that point and that makes it harder to make content like that. Where it’s light-hearted and you speak about being kind of normalised and hey, this does actually happen. These are the experiences that people have (...).
P2 also pointed out that self-directed comedy, in particular from an ethnic person presented to a white audience, might contribute to banalisation: “You think it hurts no one, and maybe it will never hurt anyone, but at the same time (...) is setting a dangerous precedent if they’re constantly engaging in those stereotypes”.

Comedy and humour are highly contextual and, as discussed previously, can be a shield or a sword to racialised people (Rappoport, 2005). The responses from our participants reinforce findings of the content analysis: and the positive and negative implications humour can have to ethnic young people’s wellbeing and identity. This could indicate that a culture of humour and avoiding negative attitudes in New Zealand is potentially contributing to ethnic young people undermining instances of discrimination, which could be an interesting topic for future research.
CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

The goal of this study is to achieve a better understanding of how ethnic youth in New Zealand represent themselves and negotiate their identities on TikTok and how that affects their identity work; how the intersections of their identities affect this representation; and what are the impacts of this representation and negotiation to their national, cultural and ethnic identities. To answer these questions, I first collected relevant posts on TikTok and conducted content analysis, and then conducted in-depth interviews with young ethnic social media users which complemented the findings from the content analysis, as explained in Chapter 3. Chapter 2 first discussed the literature on this topic, and Chapters 4 and 5 presented the findings from both the media content analysis and the interviews, respectively.

This chapter will restate the gaps and initial questions that informed this research, followed by a summary and discussion of the key findings, and implications for future research.

This study was devised from, as well as a personal interest in the field, gaps identified in existing research. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 provided an outlook into what has already been researched into the field, and most importantly, gaps within the New Zealand context in terms of adopting an intersectional perspective and engaging with social media as a window into research on ethnic young people that can provide a more novel perspective into their identity work. These gaps informed the questions of how do ethnic young people negotiate their identity on social media, how the intersections of their marginalisation affect their identity work, and how that impacts their national, cultural and ethnic identity.
To answer these questions, I conducted a content analysis of a number of social media posts, as well as interviews with young ethnic users. Some of the key findings indicate that 1.5 and further generations of migrants have a stronger sense of national and cultural identity with the country they live in than first generation migrants. In turn, first generation migrants identify with the country they were born in. They also suggest that learning and connecting with Indigenous populations have played a significant role in the development of a stronger sense of national identity. However, it should be noted that while results from the content analysis argue for this more confident stance in their cultural and national identities, the interviews highlight how there are still tensions to be negotiated.

One other significant finding indicates how national and cultural identity work was negotiated by ethnic young people in New Zealand, particularly on social media. Humour proved to be a significant tool of communication among the included videos, which could arguably be an aspect of culture or of the platform studied (or, as it is most likely, a combination of both). This humour was highly contextual and was perceived by interviewees as having both positive and negative consequences, which is in line with existing research on ethnic humour (Rappoport, 2005). Similarly, the exposure to other ethnic young people provided by social media was also understood to be beneficial but not without its detrimental effects. Finally, one of the key findings was the coping strategies utilised by ethnic young people when navigating dilemmas between authenticity, comfort, and acceptance when representing themselves on social media.

*Unique relationships to national and cultural identity*
In the present study, 1.5, second and further generation migrants were more likely to describe themselves as ethnic New Zealanders, while first generation migrants identified as an ethnic person residing in New Zealand. Previous authors have also suggested that one’s cultural and national identity are felt differently depending on whether one is a first, 1.5 or second and further generation migrant. Echoing the findings from the present study, Bartley (2010) has found that 1.5 generation Asian migrants in New Zealand occupy a space in-between the country they reside in and the one where their parents grew up. Similarly, Handapangoda (2015) argues that second-generation Sinhalese youth in New Zealand have to negotiate between their identities as both Sri Lankan and New Zealanders. Those born in New Zealand or that moved to New Zealand at a young age are more likely to identify as New Zealanders (Ward & Lin, 2006). Meanwhile, first generation migrants, while more inclined to desire integration today than first generation migrants from twenty years ago, are more attached to the country they grew up in (De Jacolyn, Stasiak & McCool, 2021).

This distinction was also observed in how the migration experience was described among the videos analysed in this study. First generation migrants often drew comparisons between their country of origin and New Zealand. They also used the platform to provide information to others about their migration journey and daily activities in New Zealand. Their content was also more likely to be directed at an audience from their home country, speaking their native language and producing more informational content. Meanwhile, 1.5 and second generation migrants tended to discuss their experiences growing up as an ethnic minority in New Zealand. They would also discuss their parents’ immigration journey and how their different upbringings created tensions. For example, 1.5 and second generation migrants
would talk about expectations in maintaining the culture and language. These differences could be explained by the different attachments these individuals have developed with the different countries and cultures depending on their migration generation, suggesting a stronger attachment to the place one is born or raised in.

Key findings from the content analysis were echoed by the interviews. The majority of interviewees were 1.5 or second generation migrants, and while their relationships with their national identity were diverse and varied, they still reflected a different emotional and cultural attachment to New Zealand than to the country where their parents or older family members were raised in. Only one participant (P1) was a first generation immigrant, and as one myself, I related to the way she viewed her identity work. Other participants related their sense of national identity to cultural and social aspects, such as growing up in New Zealand and understanding the culture. Meanwhile, P1 and myself both developed stronger ties to the country after obtaining citizenship and feeling more connected to Indigenous culture, but still considered our home countries to be our true homes.

*Migrant identities and indigeneity*

Another key finding in this research was how engaging with Indigenous people and culture contributed to strengthening a sense of belonging and developing more confident national and cultural identities for young migrants in New Zealand. As discussed in the literature review chapter, the state of race relations between Māori and migrants, especially from Asia, has been the subject of research for decades now, given the long history of Asian migration into Aotearoa and many waves of xenophobia and racism perpetuated by migration policies and the media. Many of these migrants did not feel as though they had a role in the discussion about race
relations in New Zealand (Ip, 2003; Shui, 2020). In their efforts to fit into Pākehā standards and become a model minority, many adopted neutral or even antagonistic stances on Māori issues (Ip, 2003; Shui, 2020), and even forwent their own culture and language (Lei, 2016). However, there are also many efforts from migrants to become more active Tiriti partners. The creation of groups such as Asian Supporting Tino Rangatiratanga (ASTR), their continuous support for Māori sovereignty, and their support during Protect Ihumātao are some examples of this (“Ihumātao: Asians Supporting Tino Rangatiratanga”, 2019).

For many migrants in New Zealand, these efforts have resulted in a greater sense of belonging and of national identity. Shui (2020), an ASTR member, shares how she and many others were able to strengthen their ties to their own culture, as well as feel more meaningfully connected to the whenua through her engagement with ASTR. This was also echoed in the interview with P1. As previously mentioned, P1 also identified that her cultural connection to New Zealand was strengthened upon learning more about Māori social practices, which more closely aligned with her values compared to Pākehā standards. The content analysis also revealed other examples of ethnic young people in New Zealand engaging with Indigenous people and culture. For instance, the video showing a young Singaporean man speaking Te Reo Māori is a good example. Through these and other pathways, ethnic young people are finding more ways to feel a sense of belonging within New Zealand.

*Ethnic migrants and the ‘Kiwi’ identity*

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16 Protect Ihumātao was a campaign and land occupation between 2016 and 2020 led by activist group Save Our Unique Landscape (SOUL) to stop a housing development from happening in sacred heritage Māori land and restore Māori sovereignty (Haunui-Thompson & Fernandes, 2019).
While findings from the media content analysis indicated increasing confidence in young ethnic users’ assertion of their status as New Zealanders, results from the interviews showed that the subject is very nuanced.

The content analysis found that youth on social media emphasised their ‘Kiwi-ness’ even when faced with trolls and critics, a sentiment echoed by some interviewees. However, when explored in more depth with individual participants, the issue proved to be more complicated. For some, this identifier was an avowed identity that they claimed from feeling culturally or socially connected to New Zealand; for others, this was an ascribed identity given to them by others due to a perceived belonging. Whether this identity was avowed or ascribed depended on a number of factors, and even among participants in the same migrant generation experiences were dependent on race, perceived ethnicity, class, religion, and region. This, again, emphasised the importance of adopting an intersectional approach to this and any future research surrounding ethnic young people’s identity work.

*Hybrid identities*

Ethnic young people’s national identity is also often closely tied to their sense of cultural identity, developing a hybridisation between the two. As migrants, they have complicated and sometimes conflicting identities, which often means they occupy what Clothier (2005) calls a ‘third space’ in between the country they live in, and the country where they or their parents or grandparents were born in. Previous authors have found that occupying this third space is affected by a myriad of outside factors (Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020), and can create a sense of otherness (Bartley, 2010). Also, it has been suggested that the space itself is often created as a mechanism of survival (Lei, 2016). It is interesting to note how, again, the interviews
revealed a more complex picture of these tensions compared to what could be observed solely from the content analysis. While the content analysis showed that ethnic young people posting content on TikTok negotiated a bicultural identity and displayed confidence in their ethnic community and country of residence, the interviews allowed a look at what was behind these posts.

According to the literature, hybrids identities and a stronger sense of national and cultural identity, while allowing for better outcomes for migrant youth (Berry, 2006; Ward & Lin, 2006), demand a great deal of work and often lead to tensions and dilemmas (Ayallo, 2019; Handapangoda, 2015; Lei, 2016). These findings were mirrored in the interviews conducted in the present study, particularly in the context of social media. While negotiating these hybrid identities offline is already a nuanced process, for the participants in this study, these tensions were brought to the forefront when confronted with how they would be addressed publicly. Participants often felt pressured to conform to Pākehā standards, questioned in their identity (whether that is national, ethnic or cultural), and trying to navigate between authentic representation and social norms. Trying to navigate the bounds of authenticity and social acceptance led participants to develop different coping strategies. For example, P3, whose main concern was being questioned in her ethnic identity, chose to omit it when interacting with others; on the other hand, P5, who experienced pressure to appear more ‘Westernised’ and was questioned in her identity as a New Zealander, became more assertive in her identity as a New Zealander.

Again, this highlights the importance of adopting an intersectional lens when examining how people navigate these communication dilemmas. P3’s strategy of not
disclosing her ethnic and religious identity was possible due to the way she was perceived, which was often as Pākehā. Meanwhile, P5, a Hijabi woman, was immediately read as an outsider in a non-Muslim majority country due to both her perceived ethnicity and religion. Migrants who are perceived as white have improved social outcomes and are less likely to experience discrimination (Simon-Kumar et al., 2022). Religion and gender also matter here, as P5’s hijab visually signals her status as a Muslim woman and a religious minority in New Zealand. While both participants are part of ethnic and religious minorities, they experience unique sets of circumstances that affect their coping strategies.

The role of humour and comedy

While there is more than one common theme throughout the data collected from TikTok, perhaps the most salient is humour. As a platform hosting primarily comedic content, TikTok is arguably the perfect setting for users to push the boundaries of humour, reassignifying and subverting harmful tropes they may have been subjected to. The majority of videos gathered for the content analysis were humorous in tone, whether that be through the use of skits, trending joke formats or sounds, or funny commentary. In most cases, this humour was self-directed, meaning that the individual user would make a punchline out of their own ethnic or cultural group. This was often done through the embodiment of stereotypes, creating humour around racism and discrimination, but also by making a punchline out of the perpetrator of prejudice.

By responding with humour, users can provide the general audience a chance to get “in” on the joke and laugh without guilt. Research into ethnic and racial stereotype-based humour tends to agree that it balances the benefits of stronger
social bonds and agency with the trivialisation of negative assumptions (Caparoso & Collins, 2015; Da Silva, 2015; DeCamp, 2017; Kurylo & Robles, 2015; Sierra, 2019). Tolerant responses to discrimination, such as comedy, are often used by affected groups to regain control of the narrative and avoid conflict, which would breach social expectations for civil inattention (Boza, 2013; Da Silva, 2015; Kurylo & Robles, 2015). Considering the pressure put on racialised migrant populations to adapt to the dominant white culture and conform to standards of ‘model minority’ (Lei, 2016), humour can be an easy alternative to confrontation.

Interviewees reported that comedy allowed for a more lighthearted approach to otherwise difficult subjects, such as discrimination or generational trauma, making them easier to address and process. However, they also recognised that this lightness may have lingering negative effects, such as the banalisation of these topics. Participants also expressed that, due to the prevalence of comedy both on TikTok and in New Zealand culture, comedy was often seen as the best or even the only way they could address these topics both online and offline without breaching social expectations. More serious approaches about identity work and ethnicity were seen as more common among migrant diasporas overseas, particularly in the United States. Comedic content is prevalent on TikTok, which may have an effect on how users represent and perform their identities on the platform. It is interesting to note that, despite the ubiquity of humorous content, participants first thought of these serious, hard-hitting approaches (described by participant P2 as “oppression Olympics”) when initially asked about content from ethnic creators. There is, perhaps, something to indicate that more political discussions of ethnicity are seen as incompatible with the centrality of comedy in New Zealand (or even undesirable, as
indicated by P2’s comment), where laid-back approaches are more socially acceptable.

Additionally, there are further facets to consider from an intersectional perspective, such as colourism, sexual minorities and gender stereotypes. Researchers have found that stereotype-based humour was more likely to negatively portray young people of darker complexions (Caparoso & Collins, 2015), have negative outcomes on the sexual and romantic lives of queer men (Grov et al., 2015), and produce meaningful differences in gender stereotypes about the same ethnic group (Ghavami and Peplau, 2013). The findings from this research also showcase how stereotype-based humour can be affected by these intersecting identities, such as how Example 10 (see Chapter 4) displays stereotypes specific to Latin-American women, or how P3’s experience creating content surrounding stereotypes about her religion caused feelings of shame (see Chapter 5).

Overall, humour was found to be central to the dominant communicative style on TikTok as well as the social culture in New Zealand. It simultaneously improves social outcomes for ethnic youth while discouraging more serious approaches, potentially promoting the trivialisation of socially uncomfortable topics.

Through the content analysis and interviews, this study aimed to answer questions pertaining to New Zealand’s intersectional ethnic youth, their identity work and their social media presence. These findings showcase a rich tapestry of experiences within this community and add to the growing literature on these topics.
CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will conclude my research by pointing out its strengths and limitations, and make recommendations for future research. This study set out to achieve a better understanding of self-representation and identity performance of ethnic youth on TikTok through an intersectional lens, as well as what are the implications of this representation (of themselves and others) to their identity work. My research has found that young ethnic people in New Zealand experienced tensions and dilemmas when representing and negotiating their identity, but developed various coping strategies in order to support their identity work. My findings indicate that there is a variety of experiences within the ethnic youth community, which deserves further research in order to understand these different experiences and perspectives.

Strengths and limitations
This research has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of how ethnic youth represent themselves on social media and how that affects their identity work. A unique aspect of this study is the use of both content analysis and in-depth interviews. This allowed me to not only observe patterns in the content posted by ethnic youth on TikTok, but hold conversations with consumers and producers of these posts to understand the implications of their representation to their identity work. Being able to do so provided more in-depth insights into my findings, and reinforced or clarified what the content analysis found. By adopting an intersectional approach, I was also able to observe and analyse how intersectional identities can affect ethnic young people’s experiences, allowing my research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity within the ethnic youth community.
Through this research, I was able to expand on to the still small but growing literature on ethnic youth in New Zealand, utilising a social media platform of increasing interest to researchers.

Still, a number of limitations must be acknowledged. First, the nature of trends on the chosen social media platform, TikTok, means that, in the five month period during which the data was collected, a few trending formats or sounds tended to oversaturate the sample, meaning the data reflected mostly the content which was popular at the time. A second limitation was in the recruitment process for interview participants. Creating trust over social media proved difficult, given that TikTok does not allow direct messaging between users who do not follow each other, which led me to rely on other ways to contact potential interviewees. Even so, the majority of them only consented to participate when mutual acquaintanceship was found, which legitimised my personhood and my research in their eyes. Another limitation in the recruitment process is the fact that all participants identify as cisgender women and most as heterosexual, which did not allow for vital discussions on masculinity, gender diversity, and sexual diversity. These perspectives were missed from the interviews, despite how fundamental intersectionality was to this research, as well as the author’s own identity as a gender diverse and queer individual. Finally, it is also important to note that all interviewees resided in two of the biggest cities in New Zealand, Auckland and Wellington. Ethnic youth in non-urban areas would certainly share different perspectives of growing up and/or living in New Zealand, which would have contributed greatly to this research.

**Recommendations**

1 3 7
The findings of this research, by shedding light on aspects of identity, online behaviours and self-representation, open up a number of possibilities for future research. There is a gap in research on migrant identities in New Zealand, especially from an intersectional perspective. Further research should also seek to explore further how the New Zealand identity is perceived and constructed, how ‘otherness’ may be built within this identity, and whether migrants identify themselves with it, either through avowal or ascription. Adopting an intersectional in this further research could also contribute to a better understanding of how other marginalised identities impact belonging at the level of national identity. Future researchers that wish to conduct interviews with ethnic young people within this intersectional approach would also benefit from recruiting a larger, more diverse group of interviewees in order to obtain a wider range of perspectives. Future research that uses content analysis on TikTok can also be improved by extending the data collection period in order to avoid being limited by trend cycles that are common in the platform.

One of the key findings of this study is how prevalent humour is among this group. The impact of New Zealand’s comedy culture on ethnic youth and its potential consequences for their identity work would also be an interesting topic for research. Another key finding highlights the possibly changing attitudes of young ethnic people to their identity as New Zealanders. How migrant youth in New Zealand has (or not) developed their sense of national identity is also an interesting topic for future research that could contribute greatly to our understanding of belonging as an ethnic minority in New Zealand.
In conclusion, this research sought to achieve a deeper understanding of how ethnic youth in New Zealand represent their identity on social media, and how that in turn affected their identity work. Through an intersectional perspective, this study was able to discuss the multitude of experiences within this vast community, while identifying common themes of identity struggles, communication dilemmas, and pathways to negotiate these tensions and achieve better outcomes. It has addressed key gaps in existing research while raising interesting topics and questions that could guide further research.


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APPENDIX 1

Individual interviews question guide

1. Navigating identity work
   - Do you identify as a New Zealander?
     - Do other people identify you as a New Zealander?
   - Does your identity as an ethnic young person affect your experience living in New Zealand? If yes, how?
   - Would you say you have experienced discrimination because of your identity in New Zealand?

2. Self-representation on social media
   - Is representing yourself on social media important to you? If yes, how?
   - Is part of that representation related to ethnicity?
   - Has social media affected the way you portray yourself online?
     - Do you tend to adapt how you behave differently depending on what platform you are on?
     - How do you tend to portray yourself on TikTok?
   - Has social media affected how you identify, or relate to your identity? If so, how?
   - How do you feel ethnic young people are generally represented in social media?

3. Consumption of content on TikTok
• Do you tend to see other users that post about being ethnic young people in New Zealand? If yes, how do you relate to them?
• Do you feel a sense of community with other ethnic young people on social media?
• How do you feel ethnic young people in New Zealand tend to represent themselves on social media? Do you feel like it differs from how non-ethnic minority people do?
• Has your social media use changed the way you think about your identity?
• TikTok is a platform where comedy is very prevalent. What role do you think humour plays for ethnic young people?
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
(Interview participant)

Project Title: Intersectional ethnic minority youth: harnessing creativity for health gains

Principal Investigator: Associate Professor Roshini Peiris-John

Research Team: Dr Rodrigo Ramalho, Kristy Kang, Dr Renee Liang, Professor Shanithi Ameratunga, Dr Arier Lee, Associate Professor Rachel Simon-Kumar.

Project description and invitation:

Young peoples’ lives are framed by multiple and shifting identities. In this project, we use the metaphor of borders and border dwellers to explore these multiple and intersecting identities. The project focuses particularly on one group of ‘border dwellers’: ethnic minority youth (i.e., with Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African ethnic origins) who self-identify with one or more additional minority identities. The goal of our project is to develop a better understanding of the diversity and multiplicity of identities experienced by youth in Aotearoa New Zealand, as we believe this is vital to promoting their wellbeing.

We recognise that public discourse can have an impact on this populations’ mental health and wellbeing. So, as part of this project, we will explore how border dwellers are viewed, portrayed or referred to in the public discourse. We will collect and analyse publicly available texts, such as newspapers, government policy documents, websites, and selected blogs. But we would also like to complement this analysis with individual interviews.

You have been identified as someone who can help us better understand how public discourse is shaped in this area and its impact on border dwellers mental health and wellbeing. With your consent, we would like to invite you to participate in an interview.
Project procedures:

Participation is voluntary. Your non-participation will have no impact on your relationship with the research team or the University or any other organisation. Your employer has given assurance that your participation or non-participation will have no impact your employment or your relationship with the organisation. If you have any doubts or concerns about this project, please let us know. We would be happy to answer any question.

With your consent, we would like to invite you to one 60 to 90 minutes interview. This one-on-one interview may be carried out in-person at a location convenient to all or via zoom (whichever you prefer). The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Transcribing will be carried out by research staff or an external transcribing service who will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to transcription.

As mentioned above, the interview will focus on how ‘border dwellers’ (i.e., ethnic minority youth with Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African ethnic origins who self-identify with one or more additional minority identity) are viewed, portrayed or referred to in the public discourse.

We will particularly focus on the following dimensions: (i) border dwellers’ identity (as New Zealanders) and their contributions to society; (ii) their identity/ies as ethnic minorities and as border dwellers; and (iii) issues of health and wellbeing.

Data storage/retention/destruction/future use:

We will ask you to sign a consent form. A digital copy of the consent form will be stored safely on the University of Auckland server for 6 years and destroyed after that period. The recording from the interview and its transcription will also be stored safely at the servers of the University of Auckland. Only the research team will have access to this data.

The information you provide us will help us better understand how public discourse is shaped in this area and its impact on border dwellers mental health and wellbeing. This information may be used in future projects on this or related topics.

Right to withdraw from participation:

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can still withdraw your participation at any time without giving a reason. During the interview, you can also they can ask for the recording device to be switched off.
at any time without needing to give a reason. After the interview, we will share with you the interview transcription. You will have up to two weeks from the date of the transcript being sent to review/edit the transcript or withdraw it from the project.

**Anonymity and confidentiality:**

Confidentiality of all participants is of high priority. We will use the collected information to inform the development of manuscripts to be submitted for publication in academic peer reviewed journals, and other academic publications, reports, and presentations, including a Master and a PhD thesis, and a summary report to be shared with organisations working in this area. However, we will ensure that no information used in these disseminations can be traced back to you as its source. For example, we will use pseudonyms and other strategies to ensure your confidentiality.

**Contact details:**

If you want to ask any questions about the project or offer any comments, please, feel free to contact

1. Roshini Peiris-John, Section of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Population Health, Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland. Email: r.peiris-john@auckland.ac.nz
2. Rodrigo Ramalho, Section of Social and Community Health, School of Population Health, Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland. Email: r.ramalho@auckland.ac.nz

If you want to talk to a counselling service, you can contact Healthline on 0800 611 116. This is a free service.

**Head of Department contact details:** Judith McCool, Section of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Population Health, Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland. Email: j.mccool@auckland.ac.nz

**Chair contact details:** For concerns of an ethical nature, you can contact the Chair of the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee at ahrec@auckland.ac.nz or at 373 7599 ext 83711, or at Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142.
CONSENT FORM

(Interview Participant)

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project Title: Intersectional ethnic minority youth: harnessing creativity for health gains

Principal Investigator: Associate Professor Roshini Peiris-John

Research Team: Dr Rodrigo Ramalho, Kristy Kang, Dr Renee Liang, Professor Shanthi Ameratunga, Dr Arier Lee, Associate Professor Rachel Simon-Kumar.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation is voluntary.

I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that my participation will involve taking part of an interview of approximately 60-90 minutes, which will be recorded and transcribed.

I understand that my employer has given assurance that my participation or non-participation will have no impact on my employment or my relationship with the organisation.

I understand that I can withdraw my participation, without having to give any reason, within 2 weeks of the transcript being sent to me.

I understand that I can edit the transcript of my interview within 2 weeks of receiving the transcript.

I understand that no material which could identify me will be used in any reports in this study, and that all information will be held in strict confidence by the researchers.

I understand that a summary of the results of the study can be made available to me upon request.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I consent to participate in an approximately 60-90 min interview</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wish to receive an electronic copy of the transcription</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish to receive a summary of the results of this project</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name:________________________

Signature___________________  Date__________________

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on ... for three years. Reference Number ...
APPENDIX 4

Search terms used during data collection on TikTok:

- #africaninnz
- #africannz
- #arabnz
- #asianinnz
- #asiannz
- #chineseinnz
- #chesenz
- #indianinnz
- #indiannz
- #koreaninnz
- #koreannz
- #latinanz
- #latinonz
- #middleeasternnz
- #pakiinnz
- #pakistaninz
- afghani nz
- african in nz
- african new zealand
- african nz
- algerian nz
- angolan nz
- arab in nz
- arab nz
- argentinian nz
- asian in nz
- asian new zealand
- asian nz
- bangladesh nz
- being afghani in nz
- being african in nz
- being algerian in nz
- being angolan in nz
- being arab in nz
- being argentinian in nz
- being asian in nz
- being bangladeshi in nz
- being black in nz
- being bolivian in nz
- being brazilian in nz
- being brown in nz
- being cambodian in nz
- being chilean in nz
- being chinese in nz
- being colombian in nz
- being congolese in nz
- being ecuadorian in nz
● being egyptian in nz
● being ethiopian in nz
● being filipina in nz
● being filipino in nz
● being indian in nz
● being indonesian in nz
● being iranian in nz
● being iraqi in nz
● being kenyan in nz
● being korean in nz
● being lebanese in nz
● being libyan in nz
● being malaysian in nz
● being mexican in nz
● being middle eastern in nz
● being mongolian in nz
● being moroccan in nz
● being nicaraguan in nz
● being nigerian in nz
● being pakistani in nz
● being palestinian in nz
● being paraguayan in nz
● being peruvian in nz
● being puerto rican in nz
● being saudi in nz
● being senegalese in nz
● being singaporean in nz
● being south african in nz
● being sri lankan in nz
● being sudanese in nz
● being syrian in nz
● being thai in nz
● being ugandan in nz
● being uruguayan in nz
● being venezuelan in nz
● being vietnamese in nz
● being yemeni in nz
● being zambian in nz
● being zimbabwean in nz
● bolivian nz
● brazilian nz
● cambodian nz
● chilean nz
● chinese in nz
● chinese new zealand
● chinese nz
● colombian nz
● congolese nz
● ecuadorian nz
● egyptian nz
• ethiopian nz
• filipina nz
• filipino nz
• indian in nz
• indian new zealand
• indian nz
• indonesian nz
• iranian nz
• iraqi nz
• japanese nz
• kenyan nz
• korean in nz
• korean nz
• latin american new zealand
• latin american nz
• latina in nz
• latina nz
• latino in nz
• latino nz
• lebanese nz
• libyan nz
• malaysian nz
• mexican nz
- middle eastern in nz
- middle eastern nz
- mongolian nz
- moroccan nz
- nicaraguan nz
- nigerian nz
- pakistani nz
- pakistani in nz
- pakistani nz
- palestinian nz
- paraguayan nz
- peruvian nz
- puerto rican nz
- saudi nz
- senegalese nz
- singaporean nz
- south african nz
- sri lankan nz
- sudanese nz
- syrian nz
- thai nz
- ugandan nz
- uruguayan nz
- venezuelan nz
- vietnamese nz
• yemeni nz
• zambian nz
• zimbabwean nz