

Review of the Measurement of Ethnicity

A question of ethnicity — one word, different people, many perceptions: The perspectives of groups other than Māori, Pacific peoples, and New Zealand Europeans.

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A question of ethnicity – one word, different people, many perceptions: The perspectives of groups other than Māori, Pacific Peoples and New Zealand Europeans

Review of the Measurement of Ethnicity in Official Statistics
Perspectives paper for consultation

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1. BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS OF 'ETHNICITY'

An increasing mobility of populations, particularly through globalisation and migration, has led to the growth of ethnically more heterogeneous societies. As a consequence, cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity is found in most societies around the world. This is particularly true in countries that have experienced a large amount of immigration such as New Zealand, where there is also an existing indigenous population, similar to the situation of Canada or Australia. Determining the demographic profiles of these pluralistic societies is therefore becoming more and more complex. The ongoing review of the meanings and understanding of terms such as 'ethnicity' as well as data collection procedures represents an important step towards more relevant and valid official information on ethnic diversity and the associated needs of specific groups. This paper attempts to highlight the issues relating to defining and measuring ethnicity of groups other than Māori, Pacific peoples and New Zealand Europeans in New Zealand, ie those groups which are often collected under the general categorisation of 'other'.

The New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils has adopted a definition that reflects the understanding of ethnicity as a way of differentiation from the dominant group, ie as:

relating to any segment of the population within New Zealand society sharing fundamental cultural values, customs, beliefs, languages, traditions and characteristics that are different from those of the larger society. (Constitution, cited in New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils, 2000).

While the focus of this paper is on ethnicity, the term 'ethnic identity' needs clarification. "Whereas ethnicity serves to differentiate subgroups of the population, ethnic identity may vary within as well as between ethnic groups" (Yancey et al 2001:2). Ethnic identity therefore arises from self-perception of group membership, rather than classification by others. Ethnicity as a form of self-defined identity can thus be seen as a mental construct as much as a physical experience of reality (Tilbury 1999).

For Linnekin and Poyer (1990: 2) ethnicity refers to the "proposition that people can be classified into mutually exclusive bounded groups according to physical and behavioral differences".

2. Review of literature

2.1 General

Much of the writing on ethnicity is concerned with the status or role of minority groups within a larger dominant society. Research has dealt with three major categories of issues, which are concerned with:

- racism arising from differences that are seen as the source of inequality and ethnic conflict
- positive dimensions of ethnicity based on a shared sense of group belonging (while not negating the side of ethnicity in situations of ethnic cleansing which "brought the very idea of ethnicity into political disrepute") (Guibernau and Rex 1997: 1)
- minority rights and ethnic revival.

Literature in New Zealand has focussed on Māori/Pākehā ethnicity (Tilbury 1999; Fleras and Spoonley 1999; Spoonley et. al. 1996; Spoonley 1993) as well as Pacific peoples issues (Pearson 1990; Macpherson 1984). This is clearly a reflection of the bicultural framework of New Zealand as a nation under the Treaty of Waitangi, which "acknowledges the fact that only two New Zealand 'ethnic' groups, Māori and Pākehā, are particular to New Zealand ... and that the recent

history of this country reflects contact between these groups” (Spoonley 1993: 93). However, this emphasis has, as Tilbury acknowledges, brought about policy developments also of critical importance to “New Zealanders of other ethnic descents, about their own ethnic identities, culture and rights” (1999: 294).

The debate on ethnic relations in New Zealand often revolves around power dynamics between the Treaty partners. The concerns of ethnic minority groups tend to be considered only where the tensions between bicultural and multicultural positions become an issue. For example, Pearson refers to a reality of cultural and ethnic diversity embedded in a bicultural framework where “the other ‘ethnic minorities’ are still waiting in the wings in the theatre of local ethnic life” (1996: 263). To date a few studies have attended to issues of ethnicity in the ‘other’ group allowing at least an initial insight into issues pertaining to groups such as second-generation Indians (Raza 1997), four generations of Croatians in Auckland (Jancovic-Kramaric 2001) and first-generation Malay Chinese in Christchurch (Mowe 1997). Small but emerging refugee groups eg Bosnian and Somali, may have their own very complex ethnicity issues due to often traumatic experiences. Their concerns are only just starting to be considered (Humpage 1998; Humpage and Madjar 2000).

A wider range of ‘other’ ethnicities has been considered in studies dealing with migration or employment-related issues where ethnicity is linked with unemployment, discrimination and language barriers in the workplace. These issues have been found to affect groups and individuals as well as the economy (Department of Internal Affairs 1996; Ho et al 1997; Palat 1996).

The effects of actual or perceived discrimination on ethnic identification are yet to be investigated. One of the few studies to address the psychological impact of negative connotations or experiences on ethnicity looked at the correlation of migrant status with mental health (Pernice 1994). Interestingly, high anxiety and depression levels were also found to be linked with migrants’ socialising being limited to one’s own ethnic group (Pernice and Brook 1996). Negative connotations associated with ethnicity have been described as a “fundamental threat to identity, especially if self-esteem is threatened” (Jancovic-Kramaric 2001: 22). Where negative experiences result in decreasing an individual’s or group’s ‘value’ or status, ethnic identification is likely to be affected.

The main interest for economists in aspects of ethnicity has been to find explanations for the economic and social well-being of populations, for example as a predictor of income. Writings in this area reflect the potentially two-fold impact of ethnic diversity on economic growth. For example, Medlicott (1997) in her study of ethnic diversity and economic growth found that diverse ethnicities have the potential for creating conflict. This is likely to have a negative effect on businesses in diverse contexts such as South Africa. The fear of a perceived risk of workplace disharmony through ethnic difference is based on linguistic and cultural barriers. They exist despite English language fluency and high qualifications, as a survey of Sri Lankan migrants to New Zealand found (Basnayake 2000). Ethnic diversity in the workplace is, however, valued by those who see it as a way to create synergy of different values and approaches (Scarborough 1998; Harris and Moran 1996).

Studies of the use of language in the workplace have also highlighted how ethnicity plays an important role in workplace communication through its language component (see below). Members of ethnic minorities often differ from mainstream colleagues in their linguistic habits. For example, failing to use small-talk strategies or ‘appropriate’ body language can result in

misunderstandings and affect work relationships and communication (Holmes 1999; 2000; Stubbe and Holmes 2000).

2.2 Ethnicity and language

Language is the "most single characteristic feature of ethnic identity" (Romanucci-Ross and De Vos 1995: 23). This means that language is more than a communication tool; it also serves to perform 'acts of identity' both individually and collectively. As one of Walker's (forthcoming) respondents put it, "It identifies me as a person and as part of a group."

According to this view, group inclusion or exclusion depends on the use or knowledge of a community language.

The individual creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behaviour so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which ... he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished. (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985: 181)

There has been an increasing focus on the link between ethnicity and language. It is based on a wider interest in non-material well-being, which allows members of a society to participate in and benefit from economic activity, for example through language. Today "research on the relationship between language and income remains numerically the most important in the economics of language and ethnic identity" overseas (Grin 1996: 15).

Knowledge of minority languages and being bilingual may thus be an economic advantage (Grin and Vailancourt 1997), especially where second or foreign language skills are viewed as an asset or as 'linguistic human capital' (Grin 1999). In the Hispanic areas of the US as well as French speaking Canada, knowledge of the dominant languages has been associated with more earning power (Grin 1996). In New Zealand, Watts and Trlin (1999) highlight the economic importance of ethnic minority languages as a linguistic skills base for enterprise such as tourism and trade.

Humans are socialized through language; it is how we pass on our value and belief systems. Ethnic minority parents may face a dilemma when their children do not share a common ethnic language with them anymore. English may not be seen as an appropriate substitute for expressing ethnicity, as one of Walker's (forthcoming) respondents highlighted.

[The ethnic language] is the children's home language. Their culture, religion and history depends on the language

In social life we rely on language to connect with others and express thoughts. Groups use language as a unifying factor, and language itself may be one of their core values as they promote shared culture, access to ethnic social networks and a sense of belonging (Jancovic-Kramaric 2001: 46). The use and maintenance of ethnic languages can also reflect a certain level of ethnic involvement and often becomes highly politicised, especially when associated with resource allocation. For example, seeking support for first language maintenance, eg Samoan language nests for Samoan children, may involve lobbying government agencies through advocacy groups such as the New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils, the Community Languages Association or individual ethnic organisations.

The connection members make between ethnicity and language is expected to be stronger where members feel their identity is threatened. Threats to identity are typically experienced through fear of assimilation or negative associations with ethnicity, for example the situation experienced by

the Dalmatian community in relation to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia (Trlin and Tolich 1995).

First language maintenance is part of maintaining cultural and ethnic identity. But how important language is for ethnicity may vary according to culture. For example, Johri (1998) in her study of Samoan and Korean participants, (see also Hunkin 1987) found that second-generation Samoans accepted someone's ethnicity as Samoan even if that person had shifted to speaking English. Non-Samoan speakers were therefore not excluded as members of that ethnic group. In contrast, language appeared to be a crucial ethnicity component for the Korean group who see their language as something they are born with. The strong reliance on Korean could also be explained by the fact that the language is necessary for communication within this community, as 40 percent of Koreans in New Zealand could not speak English according to the 1996 Census (Thomson 1999).

In the Samoan case, language may have a more symbolic role, which means that belonging to that ethnic group does not depend on mastery of a language alone. In comparison, the Korean language clearly fulfills a functional role, at least where English proficiency is still weak. This may change after a generation or two when English levels are high and the community language level weakens or disappears.

Language maintenance and shift studies are based on the assumption that languages reflect cultural or ethnic identity and are therefore worth keeping. In New Zealand there has been a small number of studies of individual community languages¹ such as Fiji Hindi (Shameem 1995), Dutch/Chinese/Samoan (Roberts 1990, 1999), Greek (Verivaki 1990) or Korean (Starks and Youn 1998). These studies show varying levels of language maintenance in different ethnic groups and generations. For example, Roberts (1999) found a differing degree of support for language maintenance among the three groups studied. Post-war Dutch migrants, who showed the strongest tendency to assimilate, had made an almost complete shift to English. The link between language and ethnic identification appears to be getting stronger for the New Zealand-born Dutch, however, who were showing increasing support for keeping the Dutch language alive in New Zealand. This sentiment has also been illustrated by one of Walker's (forthcoming) respondents:

Being Dutch is part of being me. Dutchness, [Dutch] language, and me go together.

2.3 Multiple ethnicity

In New Zealand, multiple ethnicity is measured by 'multiple ethnic responses', ie the number of ethnic groups to which respondents indicate they belong. In the 1991 Census, 5 percent of respondents identified with two or more ethnic groups compared with 15 percent in the 1996 Census (Thomson 1999). This increase is probably largely due to the change in layout and wording of the 1996 Census question, which allowed for identification with more than one ethnic group. Another explanation is that more inter-ethnic relations/mixed marriages may be a factor, as younger people reported multiple ethnicity more often. This means that children were most likely to have a multi-ethnic identity, and 23 percent under the age of five did so (Statistics New Zealand 1997: 35).

¹ The term community languages refers to the languages of ethnic community groups. An alternative term in usage is 'heritage language'.

The Cambodian and Korean groups showed the lowest level of multiple ethnicity with 5 percent and 4 percent respectively (Thomson 1999). Also younger Asians increasingly reported belonging to more than one group in the 1991 Census (Statistics New Zealand 1995). The proportion of younger European people fell from 77 percent to 67 percent between the 1986 and 1996 Censuses, while Asians accounted for the greatest growth among the young, especially in the 16–19 year old group (Statistics New Zealand 1998).

The increasing complexity of ethnic identification has been conceptualised by sociologists in terms of 'hybridity' (Modood et al 1994; Bradley 1996). Hybridity is seen as the consequence of a global society where no 'pure' cultures exist and where communication technology, migration and travel have led to 'hybridisation' and increasing ethnic fragmentation of all cultures. According to this view, multi-layered hybrid ethnic identities offer a 'third space' as the alternative to assimilation to one culture only. Hybridity means "to learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them" (Hall 1992: 310).

The existence of multiple ethnicity, at least for certain groups, is certainly born out in census data (see above). However, there is little information on whether a third 'new' identity is emerging or whether people simply adopt a 'dual/multiple' sense of two or more separate identities. Raza (1997) and Jankovic-Kramaric (2001) found evidence of dual affiliation among their respondents. Their respective Indian and Croatian identities were not in conflict with their New Zealand identity, indicating the development of complementary dual ethnic identification rather than hybridity. Qualitative data from Walker (forthcoming) indicates that multiple identity goes with being bilingual/multilingual, and can involve a complex array of linguistic, cultural, national, and psychological dimensions:

"You are as many people as you know languages."

"I value my language because it is one of my identities."

"I sound different when speaking my mother tongue. Different languages can express different feelings."

"I am this person only in my language. [It is] the language of the people I share my identity with."

Multiple identity appears to be affected by the potential loss of a first language, where English does not necessarily embrace both identities, particularly for first generation migrants.

"[It is] like I have lost part of me, part of my identity and pride."

"I would feel neither a New Zealander nor Chinese and a cultural identity crisis would arise."

When ethnic group members have a positive relationship with the majority group they may not experience competing ethnic identities as Mowe (1997) found in her study of Malay Chinese. Her respondents therefore seemed to experience their multiple ethnic identities in a complementary way.

2.4 Ethnicity as a process

Looking at ethnicity as a process offers an alternative perspective beyond that of ethnic identification by group. Evolving ethnic identity is connected with the process of integrating into a new society. Ethnic minority groups integrated into the dominant society can follow different paths and are involved in a complex process of social and psychological adaptation. The continuity or evolution of ethnic identification is more difficult in assimilation contexts (ie 'melting pot') which attempt to "eradicate linguistic and cultural differences by assimilating immigrants into the same

common characteristics” of the dominant society (Cummins 2001: 387). Integration into the host society can also happen through acculturation, ie the gradual modification of values or practices without giving up ethnic identity.

Jancovic-Kramaric's (2001) study of the Auckland Croatian community challenges the idea that “ethnic descendents become progressively less members of one group, as they become more fully members of another” (124). Findings by Jancovic-Kramaric as well as Raza (1997) indicate a selective process of acculturation where some features go and some stay. This suggests a constant renegotiation of ethnicity and its constituents. The result is likely to be a synthesis of traditional ethnic and dominant society features, which may result in assimilation eventually after successive generations.

Mowe (1997) investigated the process of ongoing modification of one's ethnicity in her study of first generation Christchurch Malaysian Chinese. The study highlights the highly individual and situational quality of ethnicity where the context determines whether people utilize criteria to set themselves apart from others or not. These criteria, objective or subjective, can be different for different people. Boundaries may for example not be prominent or necessary when mixing with other ethnic groups in friendly socializing contexts where similarities might outweigh differences. For example the ‘Chineseness’ of Mowe's Malaysian respondents was reportedly diluted after regular contact with non-Chinese Malaysians. In contrast, in situations of conflict or competition, ethnic identification is more emphasized in order to confirm boundaries.

Identity is based on what are recognized and accepted as shared qualities or similarities, which stand in contrast to other shared qualities and which give rise to boundaries. Where there is no contrast, there is no boundary and the need to identify in a certain way is not felt. (Mowe 1997: 71)

Mowe's data further reflect the procedural nature of ethnicity in that many subjects increased their Chinese identification in New Zealand compared with what it was in Malaysia, even though they were in a multi-ethnic context there too. Mowe's findings portray ethnicity as an interactive and fluid phenomenon with very complex dynamics, and more than just a matter of possessing certain objective attributes. She suggests a different approach to ethnicity to capture its nature more adequately:

In the present world of high communication and interaction between and within societies, ethnicity can no longer be analyzed in terms of distinctive concrete ethnic entities on which boundaries are imposed on some predetermined criteria. Ethnicity must be analyzed within the context of interactive situations where boundaries are erected. (Mowe 1997: 33)

Perceptions of similarity and difference were found to vary in a study by Kunishige (2001). He investigated cross-ethnic friendships and the role of ethnic and linguistic difference among Chinese high school students in New Zealand. The findings showed that perceived similarities were an important factor in the formation of friendships. However, where both sides originated from outside New Zealand ethnic differences became less important.

2.5 Measurement

Ethnicity is interpreted and practised differently across groups. Ethnic identification, like social identity in general, changes in the process of adaptation to different needs in the local context.

Ethnicity is something that changes in response to internal and external circumstances and which means different things to different members of the respective communities. It is quite misleading to assume that any group is unified around its ethnicity. (Spoonley 1993: 57)

For example, changing linguistic or religious habits and traditional practices in general may be the result of settlement and accommodation pressures. This situation presents a major challenge to defining ethnicity, not to mention measuring it. The range of New Zealand's ethnic diversity is reflected in 200 different ethnicities having been reported in the 1996 Census. The majority of these were small, ie fewer than 4,000 members (Thomson 1999).

Assessment becomes even more difficult where there is diversity within superficially united ethnic groups who have shared practices, but don't have a common language to bind them together. A case in point is the wide range of backgrounds in the Jewish community (Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Middle East) or the inherently very complex Pākehā/New Zealand European category. A large number of people associated with the latter group have "cultural values and behaviour ... primarily formed from the experiences of being a member of the dominant group of New Zealand" (Spoonley 1993: 57). However, minority groups such as the Dutch often retain a strong association with their cultural heritage.

Raza (1997) cautions against a static 'ethnic group' approach pointing out that it would be misleading to include the diverse groups she investigated together under the label 'Indian'. Her respondents preferred ethnicity labels ranging from New Zealand Indian, Indian, Indian Kiwi, Local Kiwi, Fijian Indian, Gujarati Indian, Punjabi, and Goan. Similarly Jancovic-Kramaric (2001: 80) states that "a single ethnic score cannot capture the multidimensionality of ethnic identity". To deal with the complexities of ethnicity, her study assessed the degree, level of importance, as well as attitudes and feelings towards ethnic identification. Similarly, Mowe (1997) suggests a conceptualisation of ethnicity that reflects more adequately its individual and therefore flexible nature.

A great deal has been written on ethnicity-related issues in the educational context, particularly to investigate potential correlation with educational success. In their report on the Smithfield Project, Hughes et al (1996) state their concern about possible misclassification of ethnicity, especially the 'New Zealander' group.

Establishing precisely how the family views its ethnicity might be critical in understanding the data, for it may be, that subtle distinctions in ethnic identity are linked to differences in educational performance. (Hughes et al 1996: 24)

The project's careful attention to ethnicity was aimed at addressing inconsistent use of the concept observed in previous studies, which were also reported to have shown little procedural clarity in the measurement of ethnicity. (Dupuis et al 1999)

Ethnicity was perceived to be complex and difficult to operationalise. The study thus opted for the use of 'cultural background' to replace 'ethnicity' in the questionnaire in order to avoid connotations of race and biological interpretations. Instead of ticking boxes, the chosen wording was to encourage responses in participants' own words to convey their subjective understanding of ethnicity:

People living in New Zealand see their cultural backgrounds in a variety of ways. For example, some people regards themselves as Europeans, Māori or Tongans, others

as new Zealanders of Samoan or Chinese or Dutch descent and others see themselves as from a mixture of cultures such as Pākehā/Māori, Anglo/Irish or Fijian/Scottish.

How would you describe your family's cultural background? (Hughes et al 1996: 9)

Responses varied in length and so did the extent of detail given on variables such as birthplace and citizenship, language, descent, church and family connections. The responses nevertheless reflected the complexity and range of views of the concept.

Researchers in the field of language maintenance and language shift have used a variety of methodologies and questions ranging from in-depth interviews to questionnaires and assessment tests to investigate minority language use and proficiency. However, when it comes to ethnicity measurement, most studies use simple 'tick box' or 'gap fill' type of questions.

A language question has been included in the census since 1996 to assess proficiency levels in ethnic languages. It is important to bear in mind that the answer to the question only establishes functional oral ability: "conversation about a lot of everyday things" (Census 1996/2001). Without knowing more about respondents' emotional attachment to their languages (see section 2.6) it will be difficult to establish a link with ethnicity. This is especially important where the symbolic value of language plays a role but is not easily identified, ie people make use of basic oral skills, eg greetings, but do not have functional communication skills, eg often not writing at all (see section 2.2).

2.6 Difficult-to-measure dimensions of ethnicity

2.6.1 Ancestry

Biological descent is widely regarded as the most significant feature in determining who belongs to one group or another (Tilbury 1999: 14). In Australia, for example, ancestry has been used as indicator of ethnicity:

A person's ancestry, when used in conjunction with the person's birthplace and whether the person's parents were born in Australia or overseas, provides a good indication of the ethnic background of first and second generation Australians.
(Australian Bureau of Statistics: 2001)

In New Zealand, current census data on ethnicity is obtained through questions related to cultural affiliation, not descent. In comparison, Canada employs questions based on ancestry and race (Marshall 2001). However, the concept of ancestry is used for electoral roll classification in New Zealand, which seeks to establish Māori tribal affiliations (Tilbury 1999). Although not used explicitly in ethnicity measurement, ancestry rather than other variables such as birthplace may influence respondents' ethnic identification. A case in point is an example of ethnicity/birthplace discrepancy in the 1996 Census. Nearly twice as many people reported an Anglo-Irish ethnicity compared with those actually born in Britain or Ireland (Thomson 1999: 18).

Ancestry, together with language and culture has symbolic significance and refers to the ancestral relationships with family or kinship in the wider sense. According to Fenton, “the way in which these relationships are remembered, in societies with stronger or weaker kinship systems, is the social foundation of ancestry” (1999: 7). Where people identify with an ethnic group or category by virtue of shared ancestry they thus refer to both a biological and social bond.

Ethnic boundaries depend on, amongst other things, real or perceived common descent.
(Cummins 2001: 390)

The different possibilities of social and ancestral affiliations are reflected in Jancovic-Kramaric’s findings on a range of preferred self-identification labels (2001: 82). The majority of her respondents selected an ethnic label (62 percent, eg Croatian, Dalmatian), followed by the choice of a bicultural one (18 percent, eg New Zealand Croatian, Croatian New Zealander), which was preferred by the New Zealand-born respondents. The host label (eg New Zealander, Kiwi, Pākehā, European) was only selected by 15 percent. This study also highlights that, from a psychological perspective, ethnicity is a multidimensional phenomenon, reflected in key factors she identified as:

- strength of Croatian identity
- degree of New Zealand identity
- religious affiliation
- ethnic knowledge
- situational ethnicity.

Walker’s (forthcoming) study investigates the role of migrants’ languages for their self-conceptualisation and found that ancestry, or the notion of common roots and kinship, played an important role for the respondents in her study. This is reflected in statements such as:

“I am a Filipino and it will stay there even [if] I’m here in New Zealand, my flesh and blood [is] still a Filipino.”

“It is important to speak my ancestral dialect.”

“I believe it is important to know one’s origins in this global melting pot as we are a product of our heredity and environment.”

“I use my language I am showing more than language I’m showing a part of me, my ancestors, my people my country.”

“After being in New Zealand for 60 years ... I still remember my youth in Croatia, and reminisce about my family history and remember my great heritage.”

Mowe’s data shows that ethnic identifications of the Malaysian Chinese in the study were highly descent-based. Chinese ethnicity was perceived to be a matter of birth and socialization while being Malaysian was described as ‘an acquired culture’ (Mowe 1997: 91), the result of living in Malaysia. The ‘inevitability’ of ancestry-based perceptions in ethnic identification is the very reason why Hughes et al (1996) circumvented ethnicity altogether in order to avoid racial and biological connotations.

2.6.2 Intensity of ethnic identity: sense of commitment/belonging

It is difficult to estimate the strength of ‘ethnic’ sentiment. In the New Zealand context Pearson (1990) has stressed the need to distinguish ethnic categories such as ‘Pacific Islanders’ from ethnic communities such as ‘Tongans’, which are based on a sense of solidarity or commitment.

Instruments have been designed overseas to measure these more complex dimensions of ethnicity. For example, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Phinney 1992) assesses ethnic attitudes and sense of belonging, ethnic identity achievement and ethnic practices. Ethnic diversity measurement has also employed proxies or indicators such as language, birthplace, practice of customs, religion, etc. For example, a single indicator such as linguistic differences within the same nationality was used by Medicott (1997) while Zhuojun Chen (2000) designed a whole range of proxies in her study of Chinese American children's ethnicity. These included: family members' ethnic identity, feelings about Chinese background, contact with China, ethnic social networks, familiarity with written and spoken language, as well as music and food preferences.

The need for a sense of belonging may be enhanced as a consequence of the migration experience. A sense of belonging is partially constructed through a sense of place-identity (Dixon and Durrheim 2000, cited in Jancovic-Kramaric 2001: 123) and heightened ethnic identification may be a way to cope with the social and geographical displacement experienced after migration. Belonging to an ethnic group may thus contribute to an overall sense of cultural survival where the physical link with one's place has been lost. Jancovic-Kramaric (2001) found the proportion of ethnic club membership increased with each generation, which is possible evidence for a heightened sense of belonging expressed through active engagement. Identifying with an ethnic group or groups by ticking social survey boxes may well be a reflection of such a sense of belonging. However, the ticks do not give an indication of the strength of commitment.

Sense of belonging, or 'ethnic attachment', as Raza (1997) calls it, is an important aspect of ethnicity. She found that identification with a group or label may not correspond with the emotional involvement with or sense of belonging to that group. Raza used self-rating scales to assess the degree or strength of affinity respondents had with an ethnic label "to understand the complex emotional significance of this self-identification" (1997: 8).

Although affective and behavioural aspects are usually expected to go together, ethnic group participation or practices do not automatically reflect positive sentiments as Yancey et al (2001) point out. It is difficult to determine to what extent ethnic behaviour reflects ethnic self-definition or level of acculturation. Raza (1997) suggests they are independent because strong ethnic identification is possible without maintaining traditional ethnic behaviours such as language (see section 2.2: Dutch, Samoan). For example, Roberts (1999: 304) found that over 70 percent of her Dutch respondents did not want to forget their being Dutch and simply regard themselves as New Zealanders, even though their Dutch language maintenance rate was not high and not all respondents wanted to belong to the Dutch community in New Zealand. This category of people may experience a sense of community by 'feeling psychologically close' to other individuals with a shared "sense of homeland, historical consciousness and collective memory" (Garcia et al 1999, cited in Jancovic-Kramaric 2001: 123).

Mowe (1997) found that the majority of her respondents' intensity of identification with Chinese or Malaysian-Chinese was moderate to strong. This study also identified a number of influencing factors ranging in order of importance from language/dialect (65 percent), behaviour (40 percent), attachment to territory/state (33 percent), world view (23 percent), dress (23 percent) and kinship (12 percent).

2.6 3 Values

A recent publication (Webster 2001) that analyses the personal, social, public and cultural values of New Zealanders highlights the diversity of beliefs in New Zealand society. Ethnic group

identification resulted in six separate groups: New Zealand Māori 14 percent, New Zealand European/Pākehā 72 percent, Other European 14 percent, Pacific Islander 2 percent, Chinese/Indian/Other Non-European 3 percent. In this study 46 percent, including half of the Māori respondents, see themselves above all as New Zealanders. In analysing these groups' value patterns Webster argues that it is important to be aware of value conflicts rather than core values in order to avoid social divisiveness. Unfortunately, despite its claim of representative coverage of "the peoples who make up New Zealand" (Webster 2001: 17) the author's insights into different 'mindsets' does not extend to the Asian people of New Zealand due to insufficient sampling.

Raza (1997) examined the role of traditional values in her study of New Zealand Indians. The most highly ranked values included the importance of family, marrying within the community and traditional Indian ceremonies. However, little support was found for the traditional role of women. Holding those values was found to be independent of the actual maintenance of traditional practices. Differences in values do not only determine group boundaries but can help distinguish differences within groups too. For example, Muslim participants among Raza's Indian group showed stronger maintenance of traditional values compared with the Hindu respondents.

3. Ethnic communities' perspectives

The literature review has outlined a range of issues relating to ethnicity and ethnic identification. Given the diverse nature of groups other than New Zealand European, Māori or Pacific peoples, their perspectives of these issues are likely to differ. Some of the major aspects that may be relevant to cover include the following:

3.1 Ethnicity as political

Ethnic identification may be guided by strategic purpose: "ethnicity becomes a way of activating individuals to act in their group's interest" (Tilbury 1999: 10) for reasons of ethnic equity. This form of ethnic commitment is often borne out by individuals' or groups' membership in ethnic associations.

Definitions of ethnicity (see section 1) can apply to both indigenous and migrant groups who may have shared experience of marginalisation or lack of equity. While the aspirations of indigenous groups may be perceived to 'clash' with those of migrants in the sense that there may be a "rivalry of resources" (Spoonley 1993: 93), migrant ethnic identification, in the more political sense, is aimed at more visibility and recognition of their needs, not rights of independence.

3.2 Self-identification

The census ethnicity question encourages self-reporting but the categories used are themselves other-produced and do not allow for more in-depth information. Group labels, as found in censuses, do not express the social and psychological complexities of the way people see their ethnicity. The use of major group categories is pre-determined by others (eg 'Chinese'). They do not necessarily give information on:

- how people feel about belonging to the ethnic group: eg proud, ashamed, neutral
- how appropriate the labels are here - they may be different in the home country
- commitment/sense of belonging as ethnicity marker, eg through active group membership
- identification of people who do not want to belong to a defined ethnic group but who associate with its cultural content

- what makes up people's ethnic identity: common history and cultural practices, religion, belonging to a family or group, speaking the language, nationality or citizenship, etc (these may not be equally important across groups; some may not be needed at all)
- multiple identifications and how they relate to each other, ie whether each 'part' is of equal importance
- identity/multiple identity of children born in New Zealand as a function of cultural maintenance in the family, mixed marriage, level of adaptation to majority group, etc
- the range of possible ethnicities across or beyond a geographic/national area (eg South African – Afrikaans, Zulu, English, etc; Indian – Fiji Indian, Gujarati, Tamil, Sikh, etc; Malaysia – Malay, Chinese, Indian, etc).

Self-identification with static groups may be useful for the larger picture but is not sufficient for capturing the dynamic and situation-based ethnic identification on an individual basis. Describing one's preferred self-identification (eg *How would you describe your ethnicity?: _____*) could be a better way to cover a wider range of aspects but may be more difficult to administer.

3.3 Role of birthplace

Many overseas-born migrants and refugees experience 'discontinuity' of language and culture through the migration process. Ethnicity can no longer be invoked through heritage of place, but language and ancestry are likely to remain crucial. Connection with territory may not be important in determining ethnicity. For example, just over half the South African-born respondents in the 1996 Census reported South African ethnicity (Thomson 1999).

The place of one's birth determines citizenship rights. It does not affect one's ethnicity. My son was born in New Zealand, but how can he ever doubt that he is ethnically an Indian? Whether he has any connection with India is immaterial. I am a 3rd/4th generation Fiji Indian but my ethnicity is undoubtedly Indian. (personal communication to author 31/7/2001)

Under certain circumstances communities may maintain close relationships with the country of origin, for example, when faced with adverse conditions such as discrimination or an extremely small community. This may result in a strong sense of cohesion among community members and strengthen the bond with 'home'. Similarly, marital customs which arrange overseas marriage partners can strengthen ethnic groups' "bond with their places of origin" (Palat 1996: 43). While Palat mentions these situations in relation to the Chinese and Indian immigrants early last century, it is quite possible that these factors continue to play a role as they still exist in our society.

3.4 Language(s)

The languages of ethnic minority groups have a central role to play in more ways than one; to see language only as a communication tool would be to ignore its important affective dimension. In fact, first languages may play a crucial role in the psychological well-being of individuals and some ethnic groups. In multilingual situations, identity can be experienced in a dual way:

- exclusion – discrimination from dominant group,
- recognition – familiarity among members of shared language.

Children in particular face competing demands in terms of mastering English and maintaining first languages. What possible impact does this have on their ethnic identification? Can they share the parents' ethnicity without the parents' language? Bilingualism/multilingualism as medium for multiple identity is often ignored where English is hailed as lingua franca for all. Functionally, a

one-for-all language makes sense; however, English may not express the kind of symbolic value that ethnic languages can in relation to ethnic identity.

3.5 Multiple ethnicity

The inclusion of different dimensions of ethnic identity in ethnicity data collection, may be particularly necessary for younger generation(s) given the possible further increase in multi-ethnic self-identifications among young people (see above). Knowing how children identify ethnically is important for understanding how new generations are growing up/settling into New Zealand society and what their social, cultural and educational needs are. How will families be affected by and cope with changing/multiple identifications? The need to accommodate both the values and expectations of home and wider society puts a lot of pressure on children, with a possibly huge impact on how they see their ethnicity. For example, peer pressure may become the reason for denying one's 'other' part of ethnic identity. The extent to which a child grows up biculturally will presumably have an impact not only on social adaptation in general but also on the child's ethnic identification. A major challenge in accommodating more than one ethnicity in a complementary way is to do so without 'sitting on the fence' resulting in a feeling of not belonging anywhere.

3.6 Process of change

The aspect of change is not only a matter of change in New Zealand's demographic profile, especially with an increasing proportion of Asian groups (4.8 percent in 1996, Statistics New Zealand 1997). There is a later estimate that points to there being more Asians than Pacific peoples in New Zealand. Together with these overall population changes, the personally experienced changes may make ethnic identifications a "matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'" (Hall 1990: 225). Ethnicity is constantly exposed to a process of transformation and adaptation during a person's lifetime. For example, Latin-American identity in the community was found to be developed or reinvented while preserving strong national identity (Rivera 1997). Identifying and quantifying ethnic groups as fixed categories, therefore, does not do justice to the ongoing process of changing loyalties, values and identifications over time. As Raza (1997) points out, measuring ethnicity solely through objective features such as language, cultural practices or religion "results in a static definition of what is meant by ethnicity and ethnic identity" (11).

3.7 Labelling by others

Members of the dominant as well as Māori groups use ethnicity labels for members of ethnic minority groups. This may not always coincide with individuals' or groups' own labelling, which may have implications for their self-esteem. There are some important questions for many who have been lumped into the 'other' ethnic category while going through the processes of settlement and acculturation. If regarded as a New Zealander/Kiwi, can one still be Korean or something else in the eyes of mainstream society? Does 'New Zealand European' or 'Pākehā' apply to European minority groups or only to those of Anglo-Saxon background? Can Dutch, Hungarians, or Italians identify with this category? Does becoming a New Zealand citizen change one's ethnicity?

At the recent Community Development Conference in Auckland (15–18 August 2001) 'New Kiwis' discussed this issue and a range of issues and questions emerged (personal communication to author 21/8/2001):

- What is a Kiwi?
- What relationship do 'new Kiwis' have to the Treaty?
- Is a Māori a Kiwi or is a Pākehā a Kiwi?
- Why can we not be called African New Zealanders?
- My son looks African, is treated like an African at school, was born in New Zealand and thinks he is a Kiwi.

- I never thought of only the Anglo-Saxon background. If Māori say 'Pākehā' who is actually meant by it? All white faces in New Zealand? Are we also Pākehā to them? I do not think that Dutch, Germans or others identify themselves with that word.

3.8 Valid ethnicity statistics

Race and ethnicity are predictors of difference and – more often than not – disadvantage in New Zealand's pluralist society. Most social and economic indicators show that in areas such as health, education, housing and employment, most non-white groups, and particularly Māori, fare worse than white New Zealanders. "The existence of ethnic data makes these comparisons possible" (McKegg 1997: 94). Understanding and defining ethnicity and the underlying factors for ethnic self-identification is crucial for obtaining quality and relevant ethnic statistics. But it is equally important to consider different purposes for ethnicity statistics which may require different types of measurement. School or health statistics, for example, may require more detailed or in-depth data. Identifying patients or school children in general categories, for instance, may not be sufficient for planning or decision-making purposes. For example, knowing the proportion of 'Pakistani' patients/pupils without knowing their religious background would be insufficient for establishing the need for halal or vegetarian food or for accommodating religious practices (such as prayers).

Valid and reliable ethnicity data are needed to inform on policy advice and needs. These data play a crucial role in a better understanding of the complexities of contemporary New Zealand society and its multi-ethnic composition. The development of policies must reflect the social, cultural, psychological, educational and economic needs of New Zealand society. It must also facilitate social cohesion, deliver relevant services to ethnic communities and distribute resources equitably.

Postscript

"Sir,

"Your tabulation of child victims of homicide (May 16) has columns recording the 'ethnicity' of the victim and the offender. Some are classified 'Caucasian'. That is a race, not an ethnicity. I take it that 'Māori' is a race or descent classification, too. Are those for whom, say seven of their eight grand-grandparents are Caucasian classified as Māori?

"How does the classification treat those with Māori and Samoan great-grandparents? If the notion of ethnicity is the standard one (say, as used in the census) of self-classification, why is no one reported of mixed ethnicity?

"These classification issues are troubling enough to social statisticians. They are potentially inflammatory in public. It would be helpful if the police, who supplied the table, were to state what their policies are on the subject of ethnicity classification."

Brian Easton
Letter to the Editor
The Dominion
26 May 2001

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