



ETHNICITY,  
NATIONAL IDENTITY  
AND 'NEW ZEALANDERS':

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MONITORING  
MĀORI HEALTH AND ETHNIC INEQUALITIES

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Opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect policy advice provided by the Ministry of Health, nor represent the views of the peer reviewers or the University of Otago.

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# INTRODUCTION

The labels used to talk about and categorise ethnic groups, both those internally generated and those externally imposed, are areas of ongoing contestation and negotiation. This is particularly evident in debates over the relationships between ethnicity, citizenship and national identity. In New Zealand, the term 'New Zealander' is commonly used in reference to New Zealand nationality and citizenship. In recent years, however, the term is increasingly used in talk about ethnicity and ethnic group belonging. This is most clearly visible in the significant rise in the number of people reporting 'New Zealander' as their response to the ethnicity question in the 2006 Population Census, representing 11% of the total population.

This recent increase followed the incorporation of a separate 'New Zealander' category into the official classification of ethnicity, as well as substantial public discussion and attention at the time of the 2006 Census. However, questions remain over what this shift represents theoretically and practically in terms of the key functions for which ethnicity data is collected, including the measurement and monitoring of diversity, outcomes and inequalities, and the development of responsive and appropriate policies.

This paper is one of a series of topic-based discussion papers that considers key current and

future issues in ethnicity data and the potential implications on measuring Māori health of changes within the broader context of ethnicity data policies and practices in New Zealand. It specifically focuses on the impacts of the 'New Zealander' category on the measurement and monitoring of Māori health and ethnic inequalities, and aims both to identify relevant research and literature in this area and to stimulate further discussion.

The paper first discusses briefly selected conceptual and historical aspects of the relationship between national identity and ethnicity in New Zealand. It then outlines patterns of 'New Zealander' responses in official ethnic statistics, with a particular focus on the population census. Finally, the paper considers practical and philosophical implications of 'New Zealander' responses in official statistics for the measurement and monitoring of Māori health and ethnic inequalities.

The discussion focuses on official data sources and statistics. This is because of their use and importance in measuring and monitoring Māori health status and health disparities between Māori and other population groups in New Zealand. It is also because the official standard for ethnicity developed by Statistics New Zealand is intended to be a 'whole of government' standard and, therefore, has implications for the broader health and disability sector in terms of data collection, analysis, and output practices.

# INTERSECTING IDENTITIES: ETHNICITY AND THE NATION

In New Zealand, as in other settler societies, understandings of 'race' and ethnicity intersect with conceptualisations of national identity in both formal and informal ways (Moran 2005; McLeod & Yates 2003). The development of national identity within a colonial context is intricately connected with the construction of social groups and with social relations between settlers, the Native Other and various other Others<sup>1</sup>.

## THE NATION, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND 'NEW ZEALANDERS'

The work of Benedict Anderson (1991) and the idea of the nation as an 'imagined community' has significantly influenced social science approaches to national identity. The nation, frequently represented in everyday talk as if it were a natural, pre-existing entity, is increasingly conceptualised as discursively produced, through the circulation of shared myths and symbols (de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak 1999).

Notions of Self and Other are fundamental to nationhood (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge 1998). As nations necessarily entail the definition of boundaries and limits, they rely on processes of inclusion and exclusion, achieved through the marking of difference. These processes include formal mechanisms such as the conferment of citizenship and immigrant status, as well as manifold informal processes. In New Zealand, this marking of difference was central to domestic

relationships between colonials and 'natives'. This boundary setting was also fundamental to the construction of social relations between white settler society and other (non-'native') Others. For example, in discussing the discriminatory legislation directed at Chinese and other 'undesirable' immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries, Murphy asserts that the "physical exclusion of Chinese from New Zealand, and by extension from the intellectual construct of 'New Zealand', was instrumental in the formation of New Zealand's national identity" (2003: 48). That is, the construction of national identity involved marking both who belonged as part of the nation and who did not. The processes of denigration and dispossession of the Native Other, and the exclusion of and discrimination against the 'alien Other' have been, therefore, key to the production of Aotearoa/New Zealand's national identity.

Historically, many of the shared symbols and stories underlying the representation of a domestic national identity have drawn on 'Britishness' (Murphy 2003: 49). However, formulations of national identity in New Zealand have also often included reference to egalitarianism and classlessness (Ip 2003), national values that attempt to distinguish between traditional British society and the 'Britain of the South Seas'. Belich (1996; 2001) discusses how the articulation of collective identity among the settler population in New Zealand in the late 19th and early 20th centuries drew on both old and new concepts, including the highlighting of ties with Britain as well as the notion of 'superior stock'. He

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<sup>1</sup> Other is used in this paper in its sociological sense to refer to "anyone and anything deemed capable of disrupting the social fabric and integrity of its imaginary identity: strangers, foreigners, intruders and so-called racial and ethnic minorities, for example" (Cavallaro 2001: xiii). Others are generally those who are seen to be different from the normative Self or 'Us' (such as the dominant majority), positioned as 'outsiders' (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge 1998; Riggins 1997).

suggests that the “game was to demonstrate New Zealand distinctiveness, even qualitative though not quantitative superiority” (Belich 1996: 14). However, there was also the need to emphasise homogeneity in order to market New Zealand as a desirable place for settlement (the phrase used was ‘98.5 percent British’). This led to fudging of official statistics by using place of birth as a proxy for ethnicity for all but descendants of British or Māori (who were regarded as British subjects) in order to conceal the numbers of other population groups, particularly the Irish and Chinese, and present New Zealand as a ‘Better Britain’ (Belich 2001: 217–218).

The need to define and understand the growing population in the new colony meant that the term ‘New Zealander’ changed in meaning over time. In the 19th century, it was used to refer to Māori almost exclusively, as European colonists still emphasised their ties with Europe and, particularly, Britain. However, a more distinctive New Zealand European identity began to emerge in response to changing political and social circumstances. In addition, the percentage of Māori in the population decreased towards the end of the 19th century with Europeans becoming the dominant group. The term ‘New Zealander’, therefore, shifted in meaning, and in the early 20th century came to refer primarily to those of European descent. It indicated those who had become the ‘normal’ or ‘usual’ inhabitants of the country (Bayard & Young 2002: 21). This new national identity might have embraced some Māori symbols and markers, such as a few words or artistic motifs to distinguish it as unique, but it was primarily defined by descent from Britain, and to that extent was exclusionary of Māori.

New Zealand’s national identity remains an area of contestation and debate in contemporary settings,

in both public and private spheres. Discussions of national identity arise periodically in political discourse, from parties all along the political spectrum. This includes, for example, discussion of what constitutes a New Zealand national identity, and what values are seen to represent that national identity. During the 2005 election period, for example, the then leader of the National Party, Don Brash, referred to ‘New Zealand values’ in a speech on immigration:

*Nor, frankly, do we want immigrants who come with no intention of becoming New Zealanders or adopting New Zealand values. We do not want those who insist on their right to spit in the street; or demand the right to practise female circumcision; or believe that New Zealand would be a better place if gays and adulterers were stoned. If immigrants don't like the way we do things in New Zealand, then they chose the wrong country to migrate to (Brash 2005, excerpt from a speech entitled ‘National's Immigration Plan: A responsible middle course’, 9th August 2005, Wanganui).*

National identity was one of the three themes identified by the Labour-led government as government priorities for the period 2006–2016 (alongside ‘economic transformation’ and ‘families – young and old’) (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2006). In relation to national identity, the goal for the government was for:

*all New Zealanders to be able to take pride in who and what we are, through our arts, culture, film, sports and music, our appreciation of our natural environment, our understanding of our history and our stance on international issues (Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet 2006).*



In recent years, there have also been a number of significant state projects in this area, including the dedication of the tomb of the unknown soldier in Wellington in 2004, as well as the dedication of a memorial in London in 2006, commemorating “the enduring bonds between New Zealand and United Kingdom, and our shared sacrifice during times of war” (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2007). Manifestations of national culture, therefore, draw on shared wartime histories, as well as other ties with Britain.

## INTERSECTIONS OF ‘RACE’, ETHNICITY AND NATION IN SETTLER SOCIETIES

Official ethnic categories in New Zealand, as well as many taken-for-granted ethnic labels, overlap with concepts of citizenship and nationality <sup>2</sup>. New Zealand’s official classification of ethnicity includes a number of group labels that are also in domestic use as nationality labels (such as ‘British’, ‘Australian’, ‘South African’ or ‘American’). The term ‘New Zealander’ and variants such as ‘Kiwi’ are commonly used in New Zealand to refer to citizenship status and nationality. However, ‘New Zealander’-type labels are also articulated at times in relation to ethnic group identity.

While the popularity of the ‘New Zealander’ category certainly increased markedly in the most recent population census, it is not a new group label. However, in terms of interrelationships with ethnicity over time, there has been a “permanent and emphatic shift of reference for ‘New Zealander’ from Māori to Pakeha” (Bayard & Young 2002). Bayard & Young (2002) argue that there is some debate about whether or not this shift reflected an increased nationalism by British settlers, or a way of distinguishing themselves from Britain. However, this movement in use of the label away from referring to the indigenous population to marking British settler identity can

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller discussion of the concept of ethnicity and approaches to ethnic classification in New Zealand, see the accompanying discussion paper: Cormack D (2010). The politics and practice of counting: ethnicity in official statistics in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Wellington: Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare.

be seen to reflect both a claiming of the national label and a demarcation of ‘New Zealander’ group membership to be exclusive of Māori and exclusive to British.

This intersecting relationship between ethnic group labels and national naming is one that is evident in other settler societies, including Australia and Canada, in terms of official approaches to ethnic classification (Kukutai & Didham 2009)<sup>3</sup>. In the case of Canada, for example, there has been a significant increase over time in individuals recording ‘Canadian’ as their response to the census question on ethnic origin (Boyd & Norris 2001; Kukutai & Didham 2009). ‘Canadian’ responses represented 0.5% of ethnic origin responses in 1986, rising to 4% in 1991 following a “Count-me-Canadian” campaign that preceded the 1991 Census <sup>4</sup>. In the 1996 census, 31% of the population reported ‘Canadian’ as their ethnic origin, increasing to 37% in 2001, and falling to 32% in 2006. Research in Canada suggests that the increase in reporting of ‘Canadian’ is associated with decreases in reporting of ‘British’ and ‘French’ ethnic origins, as well as some other European ethnic origin groups to a lesser degree (Boyd & Norris 2001).

In the Australian census, while there is not a specific question on ethnicity, a question on ancestry has been included in the 1986, 2001 and 2006 Censuses, and is intended to contribute information (in combination with country of birth questions in the 2001 and 2006 Censuses) on the ethnic composition of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007). ‘Australian’ is the most commonly reported ancestry response, and is included as a tick box option in the ancestry question <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Both Canada and Australia ask questions in their census that draw more on concepts of ancestry and ethnic origins, as opposed to the current New Zealand approach based on cultural affiliation.

<sup>4</sup> The ordering and inclusion of examples in the ethnic origin question in the Canadian census is based on reporting patterns in the previous census. Therefore, as the ‘Canadian’ response increased in popularity across census time periods, so too did its prominence in the examples included with the question.

<sup>5</sup> In the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) Second Edition, ancestry responses that are to be coded to ‘Australian peoples’ include response of ‘Australian’, ‘Australian Aboriginal’, ‘Australian South Sea Islander’ and ‘Torres Strait Islander’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005).

# ‘NEW ZEALANDERS’ IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS

## ‘NEW ZEALANDERS’ IN THE POPULATION CENSUS

The increase over time in ‘New Zealander’-type<sup>6</sup> ethnic group responses is evident from response patterns to the population census ethnicity question. The 1986 Population Census was the first census that enabled people to respond to the ethnicity question based on their self-reported cultural affiliation. In addition to the closed tick-box response options presented, individuals were able to tick ‘Other’ and write in a response. A number of ‘New Zealander’-type responses were recorded in the 1986 Census, and were coded to the ‘European’ category for output purposes. The percentage of ‘New Zealander’ responses increased over subsequent censuses (see Table 1 below).

**Table One: ‘New Zealander’ responses in population censuses, 1986–2006**

Census year	Number	% of total population
1986	20,313	0.6%
1991	20,800	0.6%
1996	58,600	1.7%
2001	85 300	2.4%
2006	429,429	11.1%

Source: Kukutai & Didham 2009: 47

Note: Includes all those who reported a ‘New Zealander’-type response as their only ethnic group or as one of their ethnic groups.

Concerns about the meaning of this category and its potential implications for official statistics – and, more specifically, ethnic enumeration – are not new. The 1988 Review Committee on Ethnic

Statistics discussed the issue of ‘New Zealander’ responses as part of their review report, and expressed the view that “the term “New Zealander” would confuse ethnicity with nationality and could not be an ethnic category” (Department of Statistics 1988: 35). The 1993 *New Zealand standard classification of ethnicity* produced by the then Department of Statistics (now known as Statistics New Zealand) also discussed the ‘New Zealander’ issue, linking it to dominant ethnic group identity and the tendency for some members of dominant ethnic groups to resist being labelled as an ethnic group:

*It has been observed that members of a dominant ethnic majority often find it difficult to see themselves as having a culture or belonging to an ethnic group. Attempts to describe their distinctive culture, either through detailed examination of its elements, or by using labels like ‘Anglo-Saxon’ or ‘Pakeha’, often meet with opposition. This opposition may take the form of an assertion of nationalism, for example, ‘The American way of life’ or ‘We are all New Zealanders’. Such an assertion has the effect of declaring that expressions of minority ethnicity are at best, insignificant, and at worst, ‘unpatriotic’. It serves to reassure members of the dominant group (who may be feeling insecure in the face of growing ethnic awareness among minorities) that theirs is not merely one, perhaps poorly defined ethnicity among a number of competing ethnicities, but is the legitimate one. At the same time this kind of assertion*

<sup>6</sup> Examples Statistics New Zealand give of ‘New Zealander’-type responses include ‘New Zealander’, ‘Kiwi’, ‘Fourth-generation New Zealander’ and ‘Mainlander’ (Statistics New Zealand 2007).

*obscures the ways in which a dominant ethnic group can, through its institutions of power, repress the experiences and claims of other ethnic groups (Department of Statistics 1993: 15–16).*

In the 1996 Population Census, write-in ‘New Zealander’ responses (along with similar responses such as ‘Kiwi’) were coded to ‘New Zealand European/Pakeha’ and output within this category or the broader ‘European’ category in the reporting of census data. However, there remained some inconsistencies in practice, with ‘New Zealander’ responses coded to ‘Other’ in the Household Labour Force Survey and Household Economic Survey, which are also administered by Statistics New Zealand (1997: 5). In the 2001 Census, write in ‘New Zealander’ responses were again coded to ‘New Zealand European’<sup>7</sup>.

## CHANGING APPROACHES TO ‘NEW ZEALANDER’ RESPONSES

Statistics New Zealand commenced a review of the measurement of ethnicity in official statistics in 2000. The Review resulted in the production of a report in 2004 (*Report of the Review of the Measurement of Ethnicity*), followed by a new *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity* in 2005. One of the changes recommended in the 2004 report, and incorporated into the revised standard in 2005, related to the way in which ‘New Zealander’-type responses would be coded and categorised in the future.

In the draft recommendations produced for consultation, Statistics New Zealand recommended that ‘New Zealander’ be included as a separate category at the highest level (Level 1) of the official classification for ethnicity. Following a period of submission and consultation,

a second draft report was produced, with the recommendation revised to propose that ‘New Zealander’ be incorporated into the new classification as a separate category, but that this be at Level 4 of the hierarchy within the broader ‘Other’ category, rather than at Level 1.

Prior to the Review of the Measurement of Ethnicity (RME), the ‘Other’ category was a somewhat larger category, containing more than 50 ethnic groups at Level 4. As part of the revised classification introduced by the 2005 Statistical Standard, however, the ‘Other’ category was split, and the majority of ethnic groups formerly within this category were separated out and assigned to the new ‘Middle Eastern/Latin American/African’ (MELAA) category. This left a small number of groups in the revised ‘Other’ category, in addition to the newly added ‘New Zealander’ code, namely: ‘Central American Indian’, ‘Inuit’, ‘North American Indian’, ‘South American Indian’, ‘Mauritian’, ‘Seychellois’ and ‘South African Coloured’.

In discussing the rationale behind this move to code ‘New Zealander’ responses separately from European responses and formalise the category in the official classification, the 2004 RME report argued that the reporting of ‘New Zealander’ as an ethnic group:

- *reflects dissatisfaction with ‘traditional ethnic categories’ amongst people who feel that these categories do not describe them appropriately; and,*
- *is an articulation of identity by people who have a generational attachment to New Zealand, and do not connect with the other ethnic groupings, such as European (Statistics New Zealand 2004).*

<sup>7</sup> The 2001 Census ethnicity question reverted to the label ‘New Zealand European’, instead of ‘NZ European/Pakeha’, with write-in responses of ‘Pakeha’ coded to New Zealand European.

The report also acknowledged the range of views on this issue, noting that the submissions received by the RME team demonstrated disagreement on whether or not a 'New Zealander'-type category should be included in the census ethnicity question and/or in the official classification, and, if so, at what level. The position taken in the review was that including a specific 'New Zealander' code in the classification at Level 4 would enable Statistics New Zealand to monitor this group (Statistics New Zealand 2004: 11). Related to this, Statistics New Zealand undertook to carry out research, including research into the reasons behind 'New Zealander' responses, and investigate alternatives for dealing with these responses. Research was also planned to investigate how appropriate the current term 'New Zealand European' was to describe the dominant ethnic group (Statistics New Zealand 2004: 15).

Publicity and debate around the 2006 Census The inclusion of a separate 'New Zealander' category in the official classification of ethnicity received some attention upon the release of the RME report in 2004, and again on the release of the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005*. However, in the lead-up to the 2006 Population Census, there was a period of significantly heightened awareness and public debate on the 'New Zealander' issue, and the ethnicity question in the population census more generally. Discussion of the issue featured in the media for several weeks leading up to census day in March 2006.

As part of this period of increased public attention, an anonymous email circulated that promoted the 'New Zealander' category as an appropriate and preferred response to the ethnicity question in the upcoming census (see Box 1).

## TEXT OF EMAIL CIRCULATED PRIOR TO THE 2006 POPULATION CENSUS

Did you know that New Zealand is pretty much the only place in the world that you can not actually be a New Zealander?

Whenever you fill out a form or survey in New Zealand you can tick the box to say you are Maori, Tongan, Samoan, Australian, European (or NZ born of European Decent [sic]), Asian, etc but there is no box provided to say "Yes, I am a New Zealander and I am proud to be one"

In Australia, you can be an Australian...

In fact in Australia you can be a New Zealander. Why is it that we can't be New Zealanders in our own country? Most people are proud of their ethnicity, heritage and family origins and so will tick whichever box they feel applies to them, and they have every right to do so whether they are Maori, Pacific Islander, European etc

Many of us however consider that we, and our families, have been in New Zealand for long enough now that we should be able to claim that as who we are... regardless of where our ancestors may have come from many centuries ago or what the colour of our skin or shape of our face might indicate.

If you support us in our desire to be recognised as New Zealanders in our own country then there is only one way that this can be achieved... On the 2006 NZ Census

form, when you are asked for your ethnicity, choose the option “Other” and state your ethnicity as “New Zealander”

If we can get enough people to do this then maybe, just maybe, we can get the powers that be to sit up and recognise that we are proud of who we are and that we want to be recognised as such, not divided into sub-categories and all treated as foreigners in our own country.

Please Copy and Paste into an email and Send this on to as many people as you can; friends, people you work with, kiwi's you know who are overseas, anyone... No, you won't receive amazing good luck by doing so but you will have the knowledge that you have done your bit to help us, as New Zealanders, fight for our right to be recognised as who we are in this proud and strong country of ours.

And remember... at census time... “Other - New Zealander!” (and proud of it)

While it is difficult to know how widespread the email campaign was, the sentiments were reflected in an increased discussion of the ethnicity question in various media formats, including television, newspapers, radio, talkback, and blogs. During this time, Statistics New Zealand responded to media (and related public interest) by providing comment on television and radio and by producing press releases.

It is not possible to quantify the role that this increased debate had in the significant rise in the proportion of individuals who reported ‘New

Zealander’-type responses in the 2006 Census, although some influence has been acknowledged (Statistics New Zealand 2007: 3). The heightened discussion and debate about ethnic and national identities that surrounded the 2006 Census demonstrated the ongoing vexed and contested nature of group labels and social group relations, particularly in relation to discussions of dominant group ethnicity.

## REVIEW OF THE STATISTICAL STANDARD FOR ETHNICITY 2009

In preparation for the 2011 Population Census, Statistics New Zealand undertook a review of the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005*. This included consideration of the ethnicity question to be used in the 2011 Census. The review dealt primarily with ‘New Zealander’ responses in official statistics, while other issues were considered as part of a broader review of culture and identity statistics. Statistics New Zealand released draft recommendations on their position in April 2009, followed by a period of submissions and consultation prior to the release of the final recommendations in October 2009.

In the final report, Statistics New Zealand, while acknowledging the complexity of the issue and the range of views, took the position that:

*the ‘New Zealander’ response to the ethnicity measure is problematic because it also denotes the national identity of all New Zealand citizens. However, given that it is the preferred response to the census ethnicity question for a significant portion of the population, we also recognize that it needs to be accommodated adequately in both statistical measurement and reporting (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 13).*

In relation to 'New Zealander' responses, six recommendations were made in the final report. Firstly, it was recommended that a 'New Zealander' tick box not be added to the ethnicity question to be included in the 2011 Census. Statistics New Zealand considered various options for responding to questions and concerns about the format of the ethnicity question, and a modified question including a 'New Zealander' tick box, was trialled. Following the testing of the ethnicity question (with and without the 'New Zealander' tick box) and in line with key stakeholder views on the matter, Statistics New Zealand recommended leaving the current ethnicity question unchanged because of the potential implications of changing the question on measuring groups of major policy interest, namely Māori, Pacific and Asian peoples (Statistics New Zealand 2009). While there was a level of support for a 'New Zealander' response option, it was felt that the likelihood of an increase in the number of people who would identify 'New Zealander' as their only ethnic group, who would otherwise identify with a 'non-European' ethnic group if 'New Zealander' was not an included response option, would "distort the existing series of official ethnic statistics in ways that would detract from their usefulness for the public policy purposes they were designed for" (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 19).

Secondly, Statistics New Zealand recommended that a national identity filter question not be included in the 2011 Census. Some stakeholders and users of the data have proposed over a number of years that a question about national identity could potentially improve responses to the ethnicity question. However, according to Statistics New Zealand, testing demonstrated that a question about national identity did not affect the way that

people answered the ethnicity question (Statistics New Zealand 2009).

The third recommendation related to the positioning of the 'New Zealander' code within the official statistical classification of ethnicity. While the draft recommendations had proposed moving the 'New Zealander' code into the broader 'European' grouping, at Level Three, the final report recommended that it be retained in the 'Other' grouping at Level Four of the classification in line with the 2005 Statistical Standard, and that an alternate classification allocating 'New Zealander' responses to the 'European' grouping be added (Statistics New Zealand 2009). By including a 'New Zealander' code within the broader 'European' grouping, this alternate classification would treat 'New Zealander' responses similarly to coding practices prior to the introduction of the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005*.

Statistics New Zealand also recommended that certain administrative data collections be exempt from implementing the official statistical classification of ethnicity as it relates to 'New Zealander' responses. That is, there would be no requirement for 'New Zealander' responses to be coded to a separate category in line with the 2005 Statistical Standard where there was not a 'significant' level of reporting of 'New Zealander' responses (Statistics New Zealand 2009).

Finally, the review recommended that there be good communication between stakeholders and the public about the ethnicity measure, and that Statistics New Zealand undertake ongoing research and investigation in the area.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF 'NEW ZEALANDER' RESPONDENTS IN THE POPULATION CENSUS

Descriptive profiles of those reporting 'New Zealander'-type responses in the 2001 and 2006 censuses have been produced by Statistics New Zealand. In terms of the 2001 Census, individuals who reported a 'New Zealander'-type response (2.4% of the total population) were primarily born in New Zealand, were more likely to be in the 20–49 year age group, and were also more likely to be male (when compared with New Zealand Europeans) (Statistics New Zealand 2003).

In the 2006 Census, 429,429 people recorded 'New Zealander'-type responses, representing 11.1% of the total population and making it the third largest grouping after 'New Zealand European' and 'Māori'. Statistics New Zealand provided a more detailed profile of 'New Zealander' responses for the 2006 Census (Statistics New Zealand 2007), identifying that 'New Zealander' respondents covered a range of ages, but were more likely to be born in New Zealand, to be from the South Island and to be male. In addition, compared with the population as a whole, those responding as 'New Zealanders' were older on average, had higher incomes and educational qualifications, were less likely to report Māori descent, were more likely to live in a rural area, and were less likely to smoke (Statistics New Zealand 2007).

While there should be caution taken in comparing 'New Zealander' responses between 2001 and 2006, as the relatively large increase in responses between the two censuses suggests there may be different contexts to reporting in the two Censuses (Statistics New Zealand 2007), there does seem to be some consistency in the high proportion of those identifying as 'New Zealander' in both censuses as being New Zealand born. This

pattern seems to have been evident for some time. For example, in 1986, 98% of the approximately 20,000 individuals who recorded a 'New Zealander' response were reported to have been born in New Zealand (Department of Statistics 1993: 16).

Statistics New Zealand has recently reported on intercensal analyses undertaken to identify where the movement in ethnic groups came from between the 2001 and 2006 censuses (Statistics New Zealand 2009). Probabilistic matching by Statistics New Zealand shows that 92% of the growth in 'New Zealander'-type responses in the 2006 Census was from individuals who had previously identified as 'New Zealand European' only in the 2001 Census (although some of this movement will reflect the practice of coding 'New Zealander' responses to 'New Zealand European' prior to the implementation of 2005 Statistical Standard). However, the remaining 8% was movement into the 'New Zealander' category from people who had previously identified as an ethnic group other than 'New Zealand European', including those who had previously identified as Maori, to identifying solely as a 'New Zealander' (Statistics New Zealand 2009).

While an increase in individuals who identified as 'New Zealander' reporting multiple ethnicities has been reported (Callister, Didham & Kivi 2009), it is somewhat difficult to quantify this, as there were different coding practices involved in the two time periods. In the 2006 Census, responses such as 'New Zealand Chinese' were considered to be multiple ethnicities and were coded to two ethnic groups, namely 'New Zealander' and 'Chinese' (Statistics New Zealand 2007: 2). It is likely, therefore, that a proportion of the increase in multiple ethnicities will be an artefact of this coding approach.

## TYPES OF 'NEW ZEALANDER' RESPONSES

An ongoing question of interest in relation to 'New Zealander'-type responses has been what they might represent in terms of an articulation of group identity. Recent research undertaken by UMR on public attitudes to and understandings of ethnicity identified that among those involved in the research, 'New Zealander' was generally understood as being different from ethnicity, and was associated with "... tenure in New Zealand, affinity with New Zealand, being born in New Zealand, nationality and for a few, ancestry" (UMR Research Limited 2009: 15).

Based on the UMR commissioned research, and Statistics New Zealand's cognitive testing of the ethnicity question, three 'broad groupings' of 'New Zealander' responses have been identified, namely:

*One relating to how people understand their own ethnicity, another to how people relate to the response categories that are offered in the question, and another to how they perceive the purpose and use of ethnicity statistics (UMR, 2009: 2).*

According to Statistics New Zealand, the first grouping of people are those who are identifying with 'New Zealander' as an expression of their "... unique national and ethnic identity" (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 11). The second group is made up of people who are not satisfied with the available options for response:

*In particular, the 'European' element of the 'New Zealand European' category is not sufficiently relevant to them because their family has lived in New Zealand for several*

*generations and they consider that their roots are now here. Others in this group select it because they believe that none of the other responses offered are sufficient to describe their ethnicity, or simply to express their loyalty or connection to New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 11).*

The third grouping includes those people whose response represents discomfort with distinguishing between ethnic groups and/or some opposition to the use of ethnic group categories in public policy (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 12). These groupings of motivations behind 'New Zealander' responses resonate with the limited other research that has been produced in this area, including research from education in the 1990s (Dupuis, Hughes, Lauder, and Strathdee 1999).

## 'NEW ZEALANDER' RESPONSES IN OTHER OFFICIAL DATA COLLECTIONS

The increase in 'New Zealander' responses has been associated to a large extent with the population census, and has not been reproduced in administrative data collections or other surveys (Callister, Didham & Kivi 2009; Statistics New Zealand 2007). For example, in birth and death registrations, the increase in New Zealander responses appears small. In birth registrations, ethnicity is collected for the mother, father and child (forms are completed by the parents). For the period January 2006 to September 2006, 1.2% of mothers, 1.5% of fathers, and 1.6% of births reported 'New Zealander' as an ethnicity (Statistics New Zealand 2007). There was some increase, particularly in the early months of 2006, but it was substantially lower than that recorded in the census (Statistics New Zealand 2007). For the period 2006-08, 'New Zealander' responses on birth registrations represented 1% (Statistics



New Zealand 2009). The births collection uses the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005* in its current data collection practices, and the question used on data collection forms, therefore, replicates that used in the 2006 Census.

The proportion of 'New Zealander' responses was similar for death registrations, making up 0.7% of total deaths for the January to September 2006 period (Statistics New Zealand 2007), and 1% for the 2006–08 period (Statistics New Zealand 2009). Statistics New Zealand notes that the context of data collection and the different age structure of the death registration population compared with the census population could explain some of this variance, but that it is, nonetheless, "concerning" (2007: 23).

'New Zealander' responses in the 2006/07 New Zealand Health Survey, which was in the field around the same time as the census, were also low compared with the census, at just 0.9% (Statistics New Zealand 2009). Statistics New Zealand also note low rates of reporting in the June 2008 Labour Force Survey (1%), the 2006 NZ Crime and Safety Survey (3.0%) and 2007/08 Housing NZ applicants (1.4%) (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 7).

Implementation of the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005* is likely to vary across the different sectors and government agencies. The health and disability sector approach to ethnicity data collection is based on the Ministry of Health's *Ethnicity Data Protocols*, published prior to the release of the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005*. Classification of ethnicity has, therefore, been based on the earlier Statistical Standard and does not include a separate code for 'New Zealander'. Although some aspects of the 2005 Standard have been implemented in the 2009

National Collections Annual Maintenance Project (NCAMP), the sector has expressed reluctance to separately code 'New Zealander'-type responses (Kamira 2008).

It is clear that the 'New Zealander' response phenomenon is largely a feature of the census, and has not been reflected in a concurrent shift in ethnic group reporting across other sectors and data collections. In addition, testing undertaken by Statistics New Zealand for the development of the 2011 Census found reporting of 'New Zealander' responses was at around the same level of the 2001 Census (2.5%), suggesting that the pattern of responding in 2006 may be specific to a particular census and socio-political context (Statistics New Zealand 2009). This does not mean, however, that it is not a pattern that will be replicated in future censuses or indeed, in other datasets.

## 'NEW ZEALANDER' AND DOMINANT GROUP ETHNICITY

Research looking at the movement of people between the 2001 and 2006 censuses has shown that the majority of those who identified as 'New Zealander' in the 2006 Census had previously identified as 'New Zealand European'. This shift is likely to represent, at least in part, attempts to find a more preferred label for the dominant group. As the labels used to talk about ethnic groups reflect particular historical and political contexts, the ethnic group labels used in New Zealand have changed over time, as different labels have become more or less favourable. This is evident in relation to the ways in which the majority (numerically dominant) ethnic population in New Zealand has been labelled in 'racial'/ethnic data collected in official statistics.

The debate about the most appropriate official label for the dominant ethnic group in New Zealand has been long-standing, in relation to ethnic statistics but also more generally in the public sphere (Spoonley 1988). In their report, the 1988 Review Committee on Ethnic Statistics discussed submissions received by the Department of Statistics (now known as Statistics New Zealand) that expressed some 'dissatisfaction' with the terms in use for the majority group in New Zealand:

*A number of submissions to the Review Committee contended that New Zealanders had their own culture established over many generations and that links with Europe were, therefore, unimportant. "New Zealander" and "Pakeha" were suggested as alternatives to "European" in submissions to the Review Committee. "Caucasian" is another term sometimes used instead of "European" (Department of Statistics 1988: 34).*

In this respect, the Review Committee also noted that it was not uncommon for "a predominant ethnic group not to consider itself as an 'ethnic group'" (Department of Statistics 1988: 35). 'Caucasian' was viewed as inappropriate as an ethnic label, and the Committee also noted that there were mixed views on the appropriateness of Pākehā. The committee did not recommend an appropriate label, but stated that "the non-universal acceptance of a term for the majority ethnic category of the population was a problem that would need to eventually [sic] resolved" (Department of Statistics 1988: 36). The committee then recommended that "the Department of Statistics and Maori Affairs together with other interested parties, investigate alternative

options for describing the ethnicity of the majority, Pakeha/European culture in New Zealand".

In 1986, the term 'European' was used, while the label 'New Zealand European' was employed in the 1991 Census ethnicity question (Statistics New Zealand 1997). In the *New Zealand Standard Classification of Ethnicity* 1993, the arguments for and against the use of the terms 'New Zealand European' and 'Pākehā' were discussed. After consideration of the debates, it was decided that 'New Zealand European/Pakeha' would be the most appropriate label for the majority group:

*The New Zealand Standard Classification of Ethnicity uses the term 'New Zealand European/Pakeha' to describe the ethnicity of the majority culture ... 'New Zealand European/Pakeha' is also seen as the term most suitable for inclusion as an ethnic response category in future censuses and survey questions. Combining the notions of 'New Zealand European' and 'Pakeha' provides more information for respondents, and may also cancel out negative reactions from two opposing viewpoints (Department of Statistics 1993: 17).*

The label "NZ European or Pakeha" was used in the 1996 Census. However the term Pakeha was removed following this census and 'NZ European' has been the label used in the ethnicity question in the last two censuses (2001 and 2006).

In the most recent review, Statistics New Zealand note that there were a range of positions taken in public feedback about ethnic group terms for the numerically dominant ethnic group. These included those who supported the use of 'New Zealander' and opposed 'Pākehā', those who promoted the

use of 'Pākehā' and opposed 'New Zealander', and those who supported the use of 'New Zealand European' (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 18).

There is a distinction between the terms 'New Zealander' and 'New Zealand European', although they have often been used synonymously in popular discourse. The problem, of course, is that many who might label themselves 'New Zealanders' by birth or immigration are not of European descent, although it is often assumed to have the same meaning as Pākehā. This can be a result of confusion between ethnicity and nationality, and a general vagueness around the meaning of all the terms.

# IMPLICATIONS OF A 'NEW ZEALANDER' ETHNIC CATEGORY

The 'New Zealander' category has a number of implications, particularly in terms of its formalisation within official statistical standards for ethnicity, as well as in relation to the significant increase in the number of 'New Zealander'-type responses as demonstrated in the 2006 Population Census. These impacts have both theoretical and practical dimensions, some of which have been discussed and debated elsewhere (see, for example, Callister, Didham & Kivi 2009; Kukutai & Didham 2009; Statistics New Zealand 2009). The impacts, realised and potential, are discussed below with a particular focus on the measurement and monitoring of Māori health and ethnic disparities in health.

## PRACTICAL AND TECHNICAL ISSUES FOR THE HEALTH AND DISABILITY SECTOR

The changes that resulted from the introduction of the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005* and the move to align the government sector with the revised Standard have resulted in some discussion and concern about potential implications for measurement and monitoring in the health and disability sector (Kamira 2008). A number of the issues raised related specifically to the inclusion of the 'New Zealander' category as a separate group<sup>8</sup>, including:

- impacts on time series data and the ability to monitor time trends;
- impacts on data comparability;
- broader resource implications.

These concerns were also raised during the recent review of the official statistical standard, and are reflected in the report of final recommendations (Statistics New Zealand 2009).

## Implications for time series data in health and disability monitoring

### ***Classification and coding***

The change in practice when classifying and coding 'New Zealander' responses under the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005* represented a break in the time series in official statistics. Previously, 'New Zealander'-type responses in the census had been coded to 'New Zealand European', whereas in the 2006 Census these responses were coded to a separate category within the broader 'Other Ethnicity' grouping according to the revised classification. This change in classification practice meant that there was no stable 'European' grouping over time in census data. Census data is often an important source of denominator data for the calculation of population rates and ratios in health and disability monitoring, as ethnic counts form the basis of population estimates by ethnicity. The broad 'European' ethnic grouping (that contains the 'New Zealand European' category) is a useful and important comparator group when analysing Māori health outcomes and ethnic disparities, particularly in terms of being able to examine privilege and advantage alongside disadvantage. The disruption to the time series made comparisons with earlier time periods using census data more difficult, requiring the recreation of a comparable 'European' group through combining the 2005

<sup>8</sup> Further detail on these is provided in the accompanying discussion paper: Cormack D & Harris R. (2009). Issues in monitoring Māori health and ethnic disparities: an update. Wellington: Te Rōpū Rangahau Hauora a Eru Pōmare.

Level One 'European' and 'Other Ethnicity' groups (Statistics New Zealand 2007: 6). This group counted only once those people who responded with both a 'European' and an 'Other' ethnicity. Comparisons with earlier time periods require that data be back cast or two series produced at the same time.

The combined 'European and Other ethnicity' grouping contained a small number of people in the 2006 Census who identified with an Other ethnicity that was not 'New Zealander', meaning that even after implementing the interim measure proposed by Statistics New Zealand (outlined above), there would remain a data comparability issue with census data from previous time periods, albeit relatively small in actual number terms. In addition, post-censal analysis undertaken by Statistics New Zealand demonstrates that while the majority of movement to the 'New Zealander' ethnic group was from those who had previously with a European ethnic group, there were also 'New Zealander' responses from individuals who had previously identified with a 'non-European' ethnic group, including Māori (Statistics New Zealand 2009). The aggregation of the 'Other' ethnic group with the 'European' ethnic group for the purposes of analysis changes somewhat the profile of the 'European' group, with the inclusion of people who previously identified with a non-'European' ethnic group in the 'Other' category. This may impact on disparities analyses, where the 'European and Other ethnicity' (including 'New Zealander') is used as the comparator. The scale of this issue may also increase over time, depending on response patterns in future censuses.

### ***Ethnicity question***

The ability to have a level of consistency and comparability over time was highlighted as an

ongoing concern in the 2009 Review of the Official Standard for Ethnicity. The recommendation by Statistics New Zealand not to alter the ethnicity question for the upcoming 2011 Population Census does provide a level of stability into the future. Recent experience in the 2006 Australian population census demonstrated that the inclusion of 'Scottish' as a tick-box option in the census ancestry question was associated with a large increase in the number of people reporting 'Scottish' ancestry, while the removal of a 'Greek' tick-box option was associated with a decrease in responses (although less marked than the increase for 'Scottish') (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007). Wording changes can, therefore, have a relatively major impact on response patterns. However, the experience from the 2006 Census has demonstrated that even where the ethnicity question remains the same, there can be significant shifts in response patterns between census periods.

### ***Output***

The recommendation to modify the standard classification to provide for two forms of output classification may have an impact on consistency and comparability over time. This recommendation allows for parallel classifications for output reporting, one that assigns 'New Zealander' responses to the 'Other Ethnicity' category as in the 2005 Statistical Standard, and one that allocates 'New Zealander' to the broader 'European' category at Level 3 of the classification (Statistics New Zealand 2009). While the second output classification replicates the practice of coding 'New Zealander' prior to the introduction of the 2005 standard, it is not identical to the pre-2005 classification in that it includes a separate 'New Zealander' code (within the 'European' branch of the classification).

The rationale for recommending two standard output classifications is to provide for different user needs as well as for practical reasons. According to Statistics New Zealand, the first classification is seen to be appropriate “for reports that require more explicit differentiation of ethnic identity, such as the census, where New Zealander respondents tend to express strongly that they do not identify with ‘European’” (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 17). In contrast, the second output format is suggested to be more useful in relation to social monitoring “because it is an appropriate reference group for analyses of social inequality, and because it maintains the consistency of historical time series (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 17). Additionally, it recognises that at a practical level it is not always possible to separate out ‘New Zealander’ responses from ‘New Zealand European’ responses in many existing data collections.

However, a disadvantage of having more than one format for output is that it may lead to confusion and will require clear and consistent labeling of statistics so that data users are aware of the classification that is being used (Statistics New Zealand 2009). Depending on how Statistics New Zealand use the two classification formats in the output of statistical products into the future, there will probably remain some need to backcast and/or produce two data series in order to monitor trends over time. For example, if the first format (coding ‘New Zealander’ to ‘Other’ at Level 4 of the classification) remains the standard output for census products, then the issues with comparability with earlier time periods (pre-2006) remain. On the other hand, producing outputs using both classification formats may increase confusion and the likelihood that inappropriate comparisons are made, both over time and across datasets.

## **Comparability across datasets**

The decision to retain the ethnicity question as is, for at least the next Census, is positive in terms of dataset comparability, as it remains the recommended question format for all health and disability sector collections, as well as other key collections important for monitoring health, such as birth and death registrations. Importantly, this means that the way in which data is collected will be consistent between the census and other key datasets, reducing the potential for numerator/denominator bias that results from different data collection methods.

However, dataset comparability issues remain in relation to the discordance between the level of reporting of ‘New Zealander’ responses in the population census and other data collections, including survey collections and administrative collections such as births and deaths. The reporting of ‘New Zealander’-type responses in administrative datasets that are classifying these responses is 2% or less, compared with 11.1% in the 2006 Census (Statistics New Zealand 2007: 14). This disagreement impacts on comparability between datasets, and between numerators and denominators. In terms of current practice, it requires numerator data to be regrouped in a similar way to denominators generated from population census data.

In line with a Cabinet directive that the *Statistical Standard for Ethnicity* 2005 be a ‘whole-of-government’ standard, there has been movement to align the health and disability sector with the 2005 standard. Consultation with the health and disability sector about this alignment process was undertaken in 2008. As part of the 2009 National Collections Annual Maintenance Project (NCAMP), changes were made to the codeset at Level One and Two to align with the 2005 official

classification of ethnicity. However, the 2005 standard's recommendation that 'New Zealander' responses be coded separately was not implemented, pending a final decision by Statistics New Zealand. This was due in part to the relatively high level of concern about the implications of a separate 'New Zealander' code expressed during consultation with the sector (Kamira 2008).

Statistics New Zealand has since recommended that datasets that have a 'low level' of reporting of New Zealander responses are exempt from aligning with the 2005 Statistical Standard in relation to introducing a New Zealander category as a separate code:

*For administrative collections that contain relatively low levels of 'New Zealander' responses and where the preferred reporting format is for social monitoring purposes, there appears to be little benefit in implementing the requirement of the 2005 standard that 'New Zealander' responses be assigned to the Other Ethnicity branch of the classification. System changes required to implement this may also impose significant business costs. The situation is acknowledged and a waiver is accepted for agencies in this situation. If and when the 'New Zealander' reporting level becomes significant for any given collection, this arrangement should be reviewed (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 18).*

The decision to exempt particular data collections from the requirement to include 'New Zealander' as a separate category within their code sets is responsive to concerns about this category from the sector, including concerns about practicality and resources, as well as broader conceptual questions. However, it does have potential impacts

for data comparability. With the proposal to allow for two standard classification formats, and the exemption of some data collections from fully implementing the 2005 official classification, there will be in essence three different output classifications in use.

While Statistics New Zealand notes that this exemption applies to data collections where the level of 'New Zealander' reporting is "not significant", it is not clear what level is considered significant (i.e. when this exemption would no longer apply). As the exemption appears to apply to input as well as output, i.e., 'New Zealander' responses will not be input as a separate category, it will not be possible to monitor shifts in the level of reporting in these data collections and, therefore, determine when they reach a level of significance.

## **Resource implications**

The introduction of any new standard is likely to have some practical impacts for the health and disability sector. The inclusion of a separate 'New Zealander' category in the official ethnicity classification had flow-on effects for data comparability over time and across datasets, as discussed above. While options are available to address issues of data comparability and consistency, the solutions generally involve extra time, resource and expertise. This can make the monitoring of Māori health outcomes and ethnic inequalities less timely, more complex and more costly. Disparities analyses tend to rely, by their nature, on comparisons between groups, often over time. This requires some stability in the measurement of groups, and means that changes made in relation to data collection and classification may have a differential impact on disparities-type analyses.

## BROADER IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM A 'NEW ZEALANDER' ETHNIC CATEGORY

Alongside practical concerns, a number of issues have been identified that relate more to the potential broader implications of the official incorporation and, by default, validation of 'New Zealander' as an ethnic group. Many of these issues have been raised previously, and have featured in discussions about ethnicity data conceptualisation and classification in New Zealand for a number of years. They are outlined again briefly below, with a particular emphasis on implications for measuring and monitoring Māori health.

### **Confusing terminology and overlapping concepts**

A repeated concern in discussion of 'New Zealander' ethnic group responses has been that of the confusion between the concepts of ethnicity and nationality, perceived or real, related to the use of 'New Zealander' as an ethnic group, particularly in terms of its formal inclusion in the official classification. As a term, 'New Zealander' is already in common use in the domestic context in reference to both nationality and citizenship. Its use, therefore, as a social group label is potentially confusing as to whether it is being used to mark national identity, citizenship status or ethnic group identity. If the increase in 'New Zealander' responses does represent the evolution of a 'new' ethnic group, as has been proposed elsewhere, it is somewhat problematic that the label to represent this group is already in common use to refer to nationality.

Given what is understood about the nature of social group identity construction, as well as the political and historical context within which the

current ethnicity classifications developed, it is not surprising that there is overlap between ethnic and national identity labels. As has been noted, there are a number of seemingly nationality-based terms in the current official ethnicity classification. However, at one level it is an issue of scale. The overlap between the use of some of those labels e.g. Australian as an ethnic group and Australian as a nationality, in official New Zealand statistics is likely to have a much less significant effect than the confusion that may arise from the use of 'New Zealander' as both a nationality and an ethnicity category, given the potential size of the groups it could be referring to.

### **Increasing visibility of the 'New Zealander' category**

For most census-related statistical outputs where ethnicity is included, it is reported at Level One of the classification, the most aggregated level. At this level, the categories reported are not ethnic groups *per se* (with the exception of Māori which stands alone at all four levels of the classification). Rather, the categories are broad aggregate groupings of more detailed ethnic categories. As noted above, 'New Zealander' appears as a separate ethnic category at Level Four of the classification system. It is aggregated up into 'Other Ethnicity' at Levels One, Two, and Three.

In relation to output from the 2006 Census, the 'New Zealander' category, although it is a Level Four category, is visible alongside the Level One categories. This is likely to be in order that people understand that the increase in the 'Other' category is primarily due to an increase in 'New Zealander'-type responses. Statistics New Zealand recommendations relating to time series data require that 'New Zealanders' be identified in the labelling of output data. The issue here is that



while there may be practical reasons for this level of reporting, it continues to make this category visible, and gives it a level of prominence that does not occur for other Level Four categories, or most Level Two and Three categories for that matter. It is not clear what impact this will have on public attitudes to the label, but it is likely to have at least some impact as the more it is seen, the more recognisable it becomes.

### **Specific concerns for Māori**

In the Report of the Review of the Measurement of Ethnicity, Statistics New Zealand identified the following concerns from Māori submissions relating to the inclusion of a 'New Zealander' category in the classification, namely that it:

- creates potential problems for Māori/non-Māori comparisons,
- does not sit easily with concepts of Treaty partnership between two distinct peoples,
- is seen as a first step in the creation of a second indigenous group and this undermines Māori as the indigenous group within New Zealand,
- is seen as a way of denying the existence of ethnicity.

Source: Statistics New Zealand 2004: 50.

These concerns were also raised by Māori stakeholders in the most recent review (Statistics New Zealand 2009: 13). In terms of Treaty considerations, the significant level of 'New Zealander' responses to the 2006 Census ethnicity question present data consistency and comparability issues for the monitoring of Treaty rights and social outcomes. In addition, government obligations to Māori as indigenous

peoples and under international human rights conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) require that New Zealand be able to report on outcomes for different ethnic groups and on progress towards meeting goals to eliminate discrimination (as manifest in inequalities between ethnic groups within states). This requires the availability of ethnicity data that is high quality and complete, and that facilitates monitoring over time.

The use of 'New Zealander' as an ethnic group label can be understood to be problematic where it represents the claiming of a national name to apply to a particular group within a population in an exclusionary way. This may be particularly concerning to some Māori, where it is seen to symbolise a conflation of 'national identity' with ethnicity, without recognition or acknowledgement that the development of national identity in New Zealand is intricately bound up with unequal power relations and the marginalisation and dispossession of Māori through colonisation to the benefit of white settlers. The claiming of 'New Zealander' identity as an ethnic group label potentially further marginalises Māori, as well as other non-numerically dominant ethnic groups, through associating white settler, and more specifically British, traditions with what it is to be a 'New Zealander'.

There is evidence that the motivation for a proportion of those people identifying 'New Zealander' as an ethnic group relates to a rejection of the notion that they have an ethnicity, resistance against the use of ethnic group labels more generally and/or opposition to the idea that ethnicity be used to develop and monitor policy and outcomes (often associated with a belief that this unfairly privileges some groups over others)

(Dupuis et al 1999; Statistics New Zealand 2009: UMR 2009). Kukutai positions this rejection of the importance of ethnicity within the frame of colourblindness, saying colourblindness:

*... is an ideology used by many members of the dominant group to counter the perceived threat posed by ethnic pluralism and minority group rights ... In 2006, a colourblind construction of New Zealander ethnicity might manifest as a response to the twin threats of Māori politicisation and growing ethnic diversification through rising Asian immigration”(Kukutai & Didham 2009: 56).*

This may be of concern to Māori where it represents a denial of the material salience that ethnicity has for Māori in everyday life and obstructs the identification, monitoring and addressing of inequalities between Māori and other population groups in New Zealand. While it has been suggested that at one level opposition to ethnic group categorisation represents a progressive move towards a post-ethnic state, it can equally represent a challenge to Māori rights to count and be counted, and to Māori political identity as reflected through ethnic group affiliation.

# DISCUSSION

Recently, there has been some increase in discussion and research of the 'New Zealander' issue (Bell 2009; Callister, Didham & Kivi 2009; Kukutai & Didham 2009; Statistics New Zealand 2009; UMR 2009). This literature has provided a more comprehensive picture of what the 'New Zealander' phenomenon might represent both at a descriptive level and at a more conceptual level. The literature demonstrates that 'New Zealander' responses reflect a range of meanings. For some people, they represent an articulation of ethnic group identity and an attempt to find a term that is perceived to be more comfortable, appropriate or relevant. It is not entirely clear, however, what the shared values and norms associated with 'New Zealander' ethnic group identity are, although generational attachment is a frequently articulated aspect.

Recent research, however, does suggest that for a proportion of respondents, the 'New Zealander' response does not represent the articulation of a new, emerging hybrid identity, but rather is an objection to the ethnicity question itself and to the assumptions that underpin it (Statistics New Zealand 2009). This is supported by research undertaken in education in the 1990s, which found that a proportion of 'New Zealander' respondents were objecting to the idea of being categorised on the basis of ethnicity, and their response was, in essence, a conscious or unconscious reaction to this. As mentioned earlier, the construction of the nation revolves around the marking of both difference and sameness. Part of this marking process, and particularly one of the ways in which groups are discursively represented as 'in-groups' or 'out-groups', is through labelling and naming

processes and practices. In relation to ethnicity, it is often the Other who is labelled ethnically, as opposed to the Self. This is perhaps why dominant groups (in terms of power and sometimes numbers) are less accustomed to, and often less comfortable with, being categorised or labelled, particularly in an ethnic sense. This process of not naming, or *exnomination*, is identified as one of the principal discursive strategies by which whiteness and white privilege is constructed and maintained (Gabriel 2000). Related to this process of not naming are the discursive strategies of *invisibility* and *indivisibility* (Chambers 1997; Dyer 1997). In relation to dominant groups, it is suggested that it is less common for them to be divided – they view themselves principally as individuals. Others, conversely, are able to be separated into groups, while at the same time homogenised (Chambers 1997). These processes function invisibly and they are, therefore, difficult to identify and challenge. In the Australian context, McLeod & Yates (2003) discuss the way in which Australia is at once generally understood as a white nation, while concurrently "being white is a kind of invisible, unmarked, yet normative identity" (32). Some of the discomfort with ethnic labels for the numerically dominant group, therefore, may reflect a more general discomfort with being marked and being made visible and therefore, challengeable.

While the emergence of a 'New Zealander' ethnic group may not be problematic *per se*, it may have problematic aspects where a rejection of a 'New Zealand European' label reflects a lack of acknowledgement of the strong symbolic and material ties that New Zealand retains with Europe (and more specifically, Britain) in terms of the

prevailing institutions, the dominant language, the holidays that are celebrated, as well as more tangible constitutional arrangements. In this sense, where it reflects universalisation of white settler values and norms, if it does not reproduce white privilege, it certainly does not challenge it.

It is hard to ignore issues of power and dominance in this debate, particularly as it appears that the issue is driven in large part by concerns within the numerically dominant group. It is almost a moot point what the category 'New Zealander' represents or not as an ethnic group – what is as important, or potentially more important, is what it represents as a potential or realised threat to the quality of the larger dataset and to the purposes of collecting the data in the first place. The risk is that the 'need' of the majority group – those who have the most access to resources, power, privilege and voice in New Zealand – may outweigh the statistical needs and rights of less dominant populations. Encouraging the articulation of ethnic identity for the majority group as a part of the unmasking of white privilege needs to be balanced with ensuring that ethnicity data is able to meet the aims for which it is collected, particularly those relating to measuring and monitoring social outcomes.

At a more everyday level, it may be confusing to have a term in common use that refers to both nationality and ethnicity, given that ethnicity is a commonly used and reported collective measure. While it is true that this cross-over between national and ethnic group labels exist for a number of other groups in the population, they are not as commonly output in official statistics. In addition, the label 'New Zealander' when used in New Zealand applies potentially to the overwhelming majority of the resident population. The implications for data comparability and consistency

that relate to the 'New Zealander'-response issue and changing official practices and policies in this area make measuring and monitoring Māori outcomes and ethnic inequalities in health in New Zealand more time-consuming and complex.

There are potentially significant implications of future changes for the monitoring of Māori health and ethnic inequalities in health. In New Zealand, choices about population census content and the incorporation of ethnic labels into the official classification are bureaucratic processes, rather than legislative ones. That is, changes to the labels or categorisations in the official classification are made by Statistics New Zealand as part of their process of determining official statistical standards. Changes to census questions are considered after each census in preparation for the upcoming census. Decisions are generally informed by reviews and consultation with stakeholders. However, Statistics New Zealand ultimately makes the determination and change is achieved through revision to the statistical standard. While the current recommendation is not to include 'New Zealander' as a tick-box response category in the census ethnicity question, there are no major barriers to prevent this from happening in the future. If this were to happen, it is likely that there would be a significant increase in the number of people identifying as 'New Zealander'. It is also likely that there would be an increase in 'New Zealander' responses by individuals who had previously identified with an ethnic group other than 'New Zealand European', where about 90% of the movement came from in the 2006 Census. This would make it increasingly unfeasible to group 'New Zealander' responses with the 'European' grouping to maintain time series, as is current practice. In Canada, responses of 'Canadian' to the ethnic origin question rose from 4% in 1991 to over 30% in 1996, and have remained above 30%

in the last two censuses. The implications of such a shift, were it to happen in New Zealand, would be substantial for data comparability over time and across datasets.

In order to improve Māori health and address health disparities, it needs to be possible to measure and monitor health status and outcomes, and this typically involves the ability to identify Māori in all relevant datasets. Collecting a separate indigenous or Māori identifier, as in the case of some overseas jurisdictions such as Australia (notwithstanding significant issues with the completeness and quality of this data) is a potential strategy for ensuring that data is available for Māori across the health and disability sector, as well as in official datasets such as vital statistics and the census. However, there are also downsides to this approach. Firstly, it does not resolve the issue for other ethnic groups who may also be impacted by shifting patterns of reporting of 'New Zealander' in the census ethnicity question and changing official approaches to 'New Zealander' responses. It also, in and of itself, does not ensure that there is a stable comparator group available for ethnic disparities analyses, making the most attractive comparator groups 'non- Māori' or the total population. In addition, there are significant practical implications involved in adding a question to administrative datasets such as those in the health sector, as it would necessitate changes to forms and recording systems.

The dynamic, political and contingent nature of ethnicity (and national identity) means that there will never be labels that are universally accepted, as every label performs the function of marking difference within a particular spatial and temporal context. In terms of measuring and monitoring Māori health and inequalities in health, it is vital that official approaches to ethnic categorisation

facilitate the ability of Māori to have timely, appropriate and consistent information to inform development of policies and interventions, and allow for the Crown to meet its obligations to Māori under the Treaty of Waitangi and international human rights frameworks. Future decisions about policy and practice surrounding 'New Zealander' responses need to be made with this in mind.

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