

***Ethnicity Matters but it doesn't count:
Why Ethnicity may no longer be a valid
analytical concept***

Andrew Sporle
Department of Sociology
Department of Statistics
The University of Auckland

9 August 2006



Ethnicity matters but ...

- **Current descriptive and analytical use of ethnicity statistics**
- **Data quality issues**
- **Theoretical issues**
- **Other options**



Current Use

Descriptive

- Defining sub-populations

Analytical

- Investigating outcomes
- Treated liked age, gender, income etc



Different Data Different Definitions

Different concepts

Different questions

Different categories

Different analysis

Across

- **Time**
- **Regions**
- **Agencies**



Statistics NZ Ethnicity definition

An ethnic group is made up of people who have some or all of the following characteristics:

- a common proper name
- one or more elements of common culture which need not be specified, but may include religion, customs, or language
- unique community of interests, feelings and actions
- a shared sense of common origins or ancestry, and
- a common geographic origin.

This definition is based on the work of Smith (1986).

Source: Statistical Standard for Ethnicity 2005



Self-Definition?

- **Age**
- **Consciousness**
- **False-consciousness**



Ethnic Identity Development

- Ethnic identity development is a process, completed around age 26 – Phinney
- Children's identity is shaped by group membership, but processes vary with age and social change – Vaughan
- Youth identity is peer and location driven - Borell



A Personal Example

	Maori Ancestry	Maori Ethn	NZ European
Grandma	Y	Y	Y
Dad	Y	y	Y
Sis	N	N	Y
Me	Y	Y	Y
Ben	Y	y	y
Phoebe	y	?	y



Common Culture and Origin?



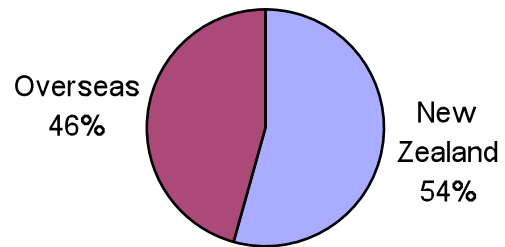
Pacific



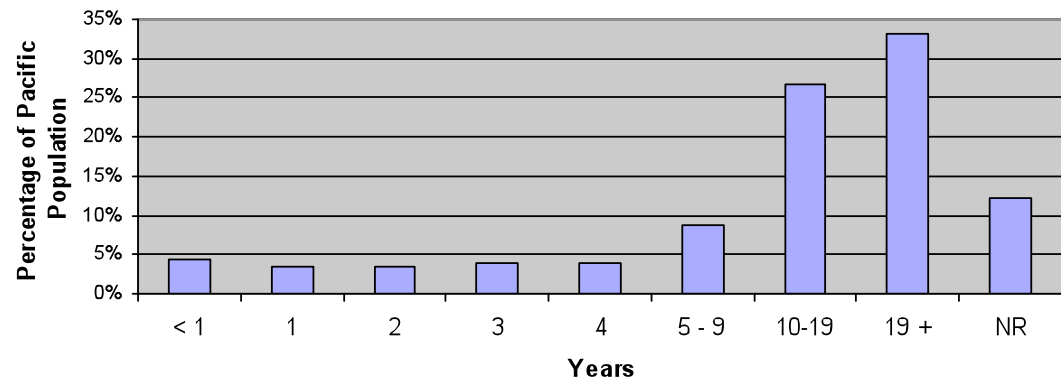
Asian



Pacific Diversity

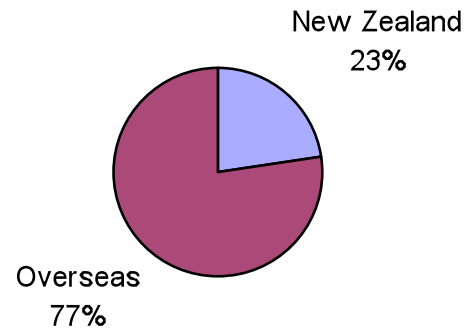


Years Since Arrival in NZ for Overseas Born Pacific People

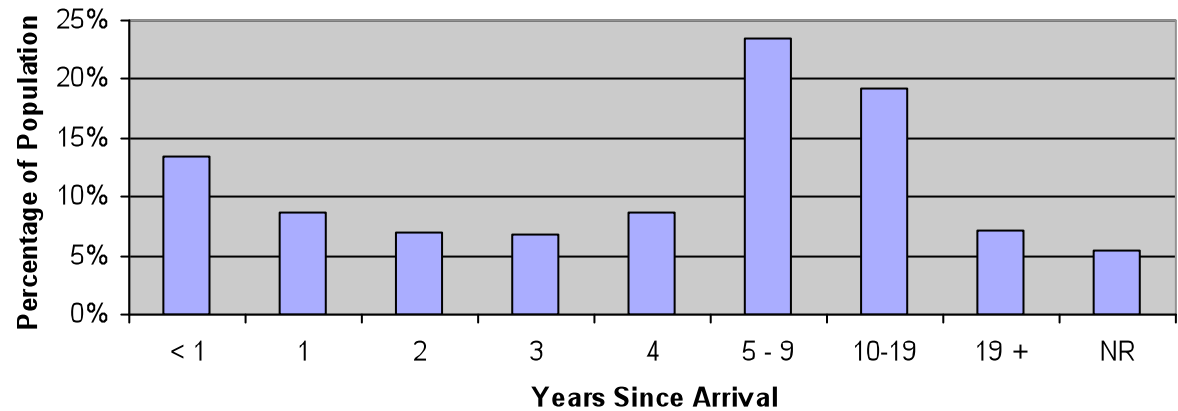


Asian Diversity

Birthplace of Asian People



Years Since Arrival in NZ for Overseas Born Asian People



Maori Diversity

- Collective
 - Hapu
 - Years of contact
- Personal
 - Te reo
 - Marae affiliation
 - Cultural competency
 - Social networks
 - Papakainga links



Summary of Issues

Data Issues

- Inconsistent across time
- Inconsistent across agencies
- Inconsistent across regions

Conceptual Issues

- Identity changes with
 - Age
 - Location
 - Context
 - Knowledge
- Theoretically inadequate
- Grounded in reality?



Possible Alternatives

KEEP MEASURING ETHNICITY

– **Descriptive use only**

- **Maori Ancestry**
- **Born overseas**
- **Years in NZ**
- **Birthplace**



Ethnicity should be the beginning of the analysis – not the end



Questions

