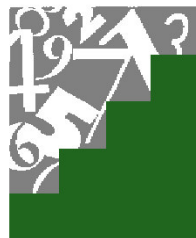


# **The allocation of ethnicity to children in New Zealand: Some descriptive data from the 2001 census**

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# The allocation of ethnicity to children in New Zealand: Some descriptive data from the 2001 census

...all my ancestors are Pakeha and all my descendants are Maori...

Rata (2002: 26)

## Introduction

In recent years in New Zealand there has been much interest, and debate, over the way adults construct their own ethnicity, how they should be able to record this ethnicity in official surveys, and over the way these data should then be reported (e.g. Broughton, 1993; Dupuis, Hughes, Lauder and Strathdee, 1999; Robson and Reid, 2001; Statistics New Zealand, 2003). However, with the exception of the work of Kukutai (2001), there has been little recent attention given to how the ethnicity of children is being constructed. In particular, there is lack of research on how the children of ethnic intermarriages record their own ethnic group or have it recorded for them by their parents or guardians. This gap in the research on children's ethnicity has been recognised in Maori studies, with Walker (1997: 81) noting there is little study of "the extent of the identification of children of mixed marriages as Maori". While this issue goes well beyond Maori studies, the issue of Maori identity is particularly important in New Zealand.

In many settler societies, including Australia, the United States and Canada, there is recognition of the growing number of marriages between people from different ethnic groups (eg Birrell, 2000; Kennedy, 2002; Pearson, 2001).<sup>1</sup> Data from the New Zealand 1996 census shows that half of Maori living as part of a couple have non-Maori partners (Callister, 2003). There is recognition that the children from inter ethnic unions have the potential to affiliate with more than one ethnic group. The five yearly Census of Population and Dwellings provides a dataset that allows a partial exploration of how ethnicity is allocated to children in New Zealand, including children with parents of differing ethnicity. In the census, in each childrearing household the ethnicity of parents and of all children is potentially recorded.

This paper provides a series of tables from the 2001 census. While a time series would be of interest, given changes in how ethnicity data has been collected it is extremely difficult to assess if either rates of ethnic intermarriage or the way ethnicity is being allocated to

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<sup>1</sup> When using the term marriage in relation to New Zealand data this includes both legal unions and de facto relationships.

children are shifting. Aside from ethnicity, variables considered in this analysis are single parents and couples and, at the beginning of the paper, two age groups, under 12 and for 12-18 year olds, of children.<sup>2</sup> It is important to consider household type given that both Maori and Pacific People are over-represented amongst sole parents (Statistics New Zealand, 1998). If, for example, sole parenthood tends to result in the simplification of ethnicity to that of the ethnic group of the custodial parent, then given the relatively high rate of sole parenthood amongst Maori and Pacific Peoples sole parenthood in itself could be an important factor in the determination of the ethnic composition of the youth population of New Zealand.<sup>3</sup>

However, while sole parents are important particular attention is given to couples as this household type provide a record of the ethnicity of both adults, the majority of whom will be in a parenting role as a biological parent, a stepparent or as an adoptive parent.

It is likely that a parent or guardian will have filled in the census forms for children under 12. There is a higher likelihood that children aged 12-18 would have filled in their own form or at least had some input into how they were classified. The first question explored in the paper is whether there are major differences between the ethnic groups recorded in these two age groups. However, it is also worth remembering that the ethnic groups chosen by children's parents or by the children themselves may not be the groups the children will affiliate with when they become adults.

Given both the complexity of the transmission of ethnicity, this paper is primarily descriptive. However, based on this initial analysis some ideas for future research are presented.

## **What is ethnicity?**

The construction of ethnicity for individuals is a complex process and there is much debate about how this process takes place. Allan (2001: 5-6), in a background paper to the 2001/02 Statistics New Zealand Review of ethnicity statistics, lists a set of factors that may influence the construction of an individual's ethnicity. Many of these are interrelated. In particular, the differences between ancestry and race are somewhat clouded. This list is:

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<sup>2</sup> This dataset is based on families rather than households. Two families could live in one household. However, families are still ultimately defined on a household basis and do not include couples who are separated and live in two households. I use the term sole parent household throughout the paper rather than sole parent family, even though in some households there will be other people, including extended family, in parenting roles. See Callister and Hill (2001) for a justification of this approach. It is recognised that extended family members in a household may be having an influence on the ethnicity of children. However, trying to understand this influence is beyond the scope of this project.

<sup>3</sup> Due to possible differences in partner selection and stability of couples it cannot be assumed that the absent partners in sole parent households would have similar characteristics to the partners in couples. This issue is partially tested in the paper by examining if there are major differences in the ethnicity patterns of children with mothers in couples versus similar mothers in sole parent households.

- ancestry
- culture
- where a person lives and the social context
- race
- country of birth and nationality
- citizenship
- religion and language

Statistics New Zealand note that while any of these factors can influence the construction of a person's ethnicity, "they do not necessarily determine a person's ethnicity" (Statistics New Zealand, 2003: 4). While biology and descent can be important aspects of defining ethnicity, ultimately ethnicity is self-perceived. This means, for example, a person could have ancestors from a range of ethnic groups but, for a range of reasons, consider themselves to belong to only one ethnic group. Potentially, a population could be biologically mixed but with official statistics indicating pure ethnic groups. This needs to be kept in mind when considering the transmission of ethnicity to children.

### **International research on the allocation of ethnicity to children**

Research shows that the construction of ethnicity by adults is often not a straightforward process (e.g. Statistics New Zealand, 2003; Waters, 1990). The construction of ethnic identity can be particularly complex when a person's parents or other ancestors are from different ethnic groups (e.g. Williams and Thornton, 1998).

In recent years much of the overseas literature on the allocation of ethnicity to children has, not surprisingly, been connected to discussions of ethnic intermarriage. As a U.S. example, Labov and Jacobs (1998) argue that Hawaii is of particular interest to people studying both ethnic intermarriage and the allocation of ethnicity to children as there is a high rate of intermarriage. This is connected to Hawaii's plural population composition. Labov and Jacobs estimate that in the 1980s the majority of children born in Hawaii had some mixed ancestry. Based on examining the ethnic group of parents, they demonstrate that the proportion of mixed ethnicity children is considerably higher than official birth data would indicate. However, they point to a limitation of their study, in that they did not know whether parents themselves were of mixed ethnicity.

In a discussion drawing in Hawaiian research, Kukutai (2001) puts forward one possible reason for an undercount of mixed ethnicity children in Hawaii. While most ethnic groups are mixed genetically, very often cultural and social boundaries are maintained.

In much of the early research on the transmission of ethnicity of children, the children and the parents could only affiliate with one ethnic group. As an example, Waters (1990) used a mixture of qualitative research and 1980 census data to study the ethnic choices of white American adults and their children. Waters found that the father's ancestry had a greater impact on the ethnic group chosen than that of the mother. She suggests in this process the child's surname, usually taken from the father, is important. Waters points out

that another influence on ethnic choices is who fills out the census form, whether it is the mother, father, child or some combination.

Xie and Goyette (1997) used 1990 census data to study the racial identification of biracial American children with one Asian parent. They note that with a high rate of outmarriage by Asians the racial identification of children with one Asian parent has a direct impact on the size of the future Asian American population. Again, in this study both the parents and the children could belong to only one ethnic group.

Xie and Goyette discuss both “assimilation” and “awareness” perspectives when determining the ethnicity of children. In the assimilation process an individual gets absorbed more into mainstream society and will start to increasingly identify with the dominant group. Assimilation for immigrants is influenced by the time since the family’s immigration and by socio-economic status. In turn, socio-economic status is highly associated with parental education. However, education can also enhance an awareness of ethnic background. According to this theory, minorities face more conflict and competition as they increase their socio-economic status and this enhances their sense of identity. One outcome is that if these individuals intermarry they will then identify their children as having two ethnic groups. Research in both the U.S. and New Zealand also shows that better educated individuals are more likely to marry someone from another ethnic group so if they have children there is a stronger potential for having multi-ethnic children (Callister, 2003).

Xie and Goyette also discuss a “constraining” effect where “ethnic identity is less of an option for racial minorities than for the white majority...” (p. 554). The authors note that under the constraining theory in the U.S., Asian-Black or Asian-Hispanic children would be under social pressure to be labelled as black or Hispanic. This construction of ethnicity towards a minority group may also be influenced by visible characteristics such as skin colour.

In their review of previous research, Xie and Goyette also note there are competing theories as to whether it is the mother or father who will have the greatest influence on determining a child’s ethnicity. Much of this research has been based on concept of choosing a single ethnicity. In couple families they suggest that the determination of ethnicity can be complex. They argue that (p. 554)

...the family should be viewed as a site of struggle and compromise, where a child’s racial and/or ethnic identification must be negotiated between both parents (when the child is young) and children and parents (when the child becomes older).

Xie and Goyette note that when parents from different ethnic groups are faced with choosing just one ethnic group for their child this creates major problems. They suggest there are a number of options open for such parents if they cannot agree on which group to assign the child to. These include flipping a coin or choosing a neutral “other” category.

Xie and Goyette argue that ethnic choices can also be influenced by the concentration of ethnic groups in a local neighbourhood. Finally, while there is research that indicates that ethnic choices over a lifespan can be fluid (e.g. Harris and Sim, 2001; Waters, 1990), Xie and Goyette argue that parents' current racial designations for biracial children will strongly influence, and may even constrain, these children's own racial choices in adulthood.

The results from Xie and Goyette's own research indicate that the racial identification of biracial children with an Asian parent was to a large extent an arbitrary option within the racial classification scheme used in the 1990 census. Overall, their empirical evidence supports the proposition that both assimilation and awareness of Asian heritage affect the racial identification of biracial children with an Asian parent.

Again in the U.S., Harris and Sim (2001) show that household type can matter in the determination of a child's ethnicity. They found that when compared to youth who lived with both biological parents, those who did not were more likely to report being multiracial. Thus, they suggest that studies that focus on intact two parent families may underestimate the proportion of children that are multiracial. Finally, they confirm earlier research (Davis, 1991) that shows that having parents of different races is not a sufficient condition for expressing a multiracial identity. One of the potential reasons for children in one parent households having a higher rate of mixed ethnicity could be indicated by the research of McPherson, Smith and Cook (2001). They found that ties between non-similar individuals dissolve at a higher rate than if they come from similar backgrounds.

In parallel to the research on the allocation of ethnicity to children of parents from different ethnic groups, there is a U.S literature that examines the effects on children of being 'biracial'. Hall (2001) discusses the psychological health of biracial Americans while Herring (1992) discusses the increasing number of biracial children who may have special needs related to their 'ambiguous ethnicity'. McFadden (2001) has commented that many multiracial children have been faced with discrimination from all races, leaving them to feel like outsiders, while Milan and Keiley (2000) present research that suggest that biracial/biethnic youth are a particularly vulnerable group in terms of self-reported delinquency, school problems, internalising symptoms, and self-regard.

Foeman and Nance (1999) note that while early U.S. scholars dealing with issue of biracial children argued that they lacked firmly established self-identities more positive studies are now emerging. They cite a range of studies that suggest "some biracial individuals see themselves as multicultural rather than marginal" (p. 547). They also discuss other research that suggests biracial children, like other non-majority individuals, "can evolve toward a sense of pride and positive uniqueness" (p. 547 -8). How children, and parents, feel about being biracial is likely to feed back into how these individuals respond to surveys on ethnicity/race.

There is limited research on the allocation of ethnicity to children in New Zealand. However, in the past there have been studies of intermarriage and, by extension, some comments have been made about ethnicity of children. In a study of marriage between Maori and Pakeha, Harré (1968) outlines possible problems of intermarriage. These

include problems for the intermarried couple themselves, reactions of others to the marriage and “the place of their children” (p. 130). Based on qualitative research, Harré notes (p. 131)

The children of a mixed marriage are also usually very readily accepted by their grandparents, both Maori and Pakeha. In the wider community such children are nearly always looked on as Maori if their ancestry is at all obvious (the term ‘half-caste’ seems to be used less now than formerly), and their problems are therefore those of the Maori people..There is a minority, however, who resent their status as Maori and who would prefer to be looked on as Pakeha.

Harré goes on to argue that if people of mixed ethnicity behaved culturally as Pakeha then categorisation of them by other members of the community as Maori will have little effect on them

O’Regan (2001: 88), herself a person acknowledging both Maori and non-Maori ancestry, outlines how the transmission of ethnicity to children may not be a straightforward process.

[t]he reality is that a person or group may form a web of interwoven identities with corresponding interwoven boundaries. For those of mixed ethnic descent, for example, the development of an ethnic identity based on the ethnicity of one parent does not necessarily preclude that individual from possessing or developing an equally robust and valid identity based upon the other parents ethnicity. Plural cultural identities are a living reality for many of the world’s indigenous populations.

In an empirical study, Metge (1967) reported that in 1956 in the Auckland province about 13 percent of Maori children had a European parent and in 1961 the figure was 15 percent. When only single ethnic groups collected, it was sensible to ask questions like ‘how many Maori children have a non-Maori parent’. However, this question becomes more complex when multi-ethnic groups are collected.

Also in New Zealand, Chapple (2000) quotes official birth data from 1998 that indicates that of the total group that recorded Maori as one of their ethnic groups, only 43.4 percent claimed only Maori ethnicity. The next largest group was Maori and European at 44.3 percent. He notes that these mixes indicate a high rate of marriage between Maori and non-Maori.

Kukutai (2001) has carried out the most recent, and the most detailed, study of children’s ethnicity in New Zealand. She used two data sources to examine the transmission of three ethnic categories. These are sole Maori, mixed Maori (Maori and one or more other ethnic group) and non-Maori. The data sources used were the 1996 census and Waikato University’s retrospective survey *New Zealand women: Family employment and education*. Kukutai found that in couples where both parents were sole Maori, mixed Maori or non-Maori, the children were nearly always reported as having the same ethnic group as their parents. However, outside of these combinations there was considerable variation in how ethnicity is transmitted to children.

Kukutai found that just under a third of children from both data sources who were reported as sole Maori had a non-Maori mother or father. She also found that in inter-ethnic unions, the decision to emphasise a child's Maori ethnicity depended on whether or not the Maori partner identified as Maori only or affiliated with several ethnic groups. However, in Maori / non-Maori couples there was a tendency to emphasise Maori ethnicity when identifying the child. Kukutai also found that children who were assigned or claimed Maori ethnicity, and especially those who reported sole Maori ethnicity, were more likely to have separated parents. This pattern was stronger for more recent cohorts. However, overall the multivariate analysis undertaken by Kukutai points to cultural rather than biological or socio-economic factors being important in the transmission of ethnicity to children.<sup>4</sup>

Kukutai argues that her data on the transmission of ethnicity casts some doubt on the idea that intermarriage will eventually lead to a blurring of ethnic distinctions between Maori and non-Maori.<sup>5</sup> She notes that many families are continuing to value Maori ethnicity even when children could potentially be classified as belonging to the dominant non-Maori group.

Finally, when examining patterns of ethnicity it is worth keeping in mind that official data collections not only record ethnic or racial categories but also can create them (Graves, 2001; Hirschman, Alba and Farley, 2000). Research suggests that when statistical agencies recognise and support multi-ethnic people in official record keeping, then more people may be willing to acknowledge, or even rediscover, such identities. In addition, in response to various incentives or disincentives particular ethnic groups can come into and go out of favour. For example, in Canada, a census taken during WW2 showed that very few people classified themselves as German when compared with censuses taken prior to the war (Ryder, 1955). In the United States growth of American Irish has been far faster than natural population growth would predict (Hout and Goldstein, 1998), as has the growth of Native Americans (Light and Lee, 1997).

## **New Zealand census data**

In New Zealand, the ability to record more than one ethnic group was first possible in the 1991 census. In 2001 up to six ethnic responses were captured and coded. At the highest level of aggregation (1 digit level) Statistics New Zealand create five single ethnic groupings. These are European, Maori, Pacific People, Asian and Other. Statistics New Zealand note that, apart from Maori technically, all the 1 digit ethnic groups are not individual ethnic groups but collections of groups (Allan, 2001). This research uses data prepared by Statistics New Zealand specifically for this project and varies the boundaries of these groups slightly.<sup>6</sup> The total European group is reduced to those claiming to be New Zealand European, and those claiming ethnicities such as British or Dutch are

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<sup>4</sup> However, the data Kukutai uses are self reported and do not provide an actual measure of Maori biological links.

<sup>5</sup> How such intermarriage might lead to such blurring is discussed in more detail in Callister (2003).

<sup>6</sup> The full database can be obtained from the author.

shifted to the ‘Other’ group.<sup>7</sup> When the individuals affiliating with two of the 1 digit groups are added, there are 15 different ethnic groups either a parent or child could be allocated to. Even restricting to those who chose one and two ethnic groups, in two-parent households this means that, theoretically, there could be over 3,000 combinations of ethnic groups of parents and children. Therefore, in this initial overview paper the analysis and reportage is very much simplified. While some of the analysis brings in individuals with three ethnic combinations, in the general data is presented for the ten most common ethnic groupings. These are NZEuropean, Maori, Pacific People, Asian, Other, NZEuropean / Maori, NZEuropean / Pacific People, NZEuropean / Asian, NZEuropean / Other and Maori / Pacific People. These groups represent 98 percent of children under 12 who identified their ethnic group(s), and 99 percent of children 12-18. However, particular attention is given to just three broad groups of children. These are NZEuropean, Maori and NZEuropean/Maori children. These groups represented 82 percent of total children under 12 and 84 percent of children 12-18.

While most people record only one ethnic group, in 2001 just under a tenth of the total New Zealand population recorded two or more ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup> However, amongst young people a much higher proportion record, or have recorded, two or more ethnic groups (Callister, 2003). For example, in the under five year old age group around a fifth of the population recorded more than one ethnic group. The reportage of two or more ethnic groups is particularly common amongst children where Maori is recorded as one of the ethnic groups.

The data used in this paper are based on counts of children. All children in each age group are considered, not just one child randomly selected per family as some other researchers have used (Xie and Goyette, 1997). This means that if there is more than one child in a family within the target age group their parents will be recorded more than once.

While this is a useful dataset, like most data it is not perfect. For instance, there is no way of determining whether the parent(s) in couples and single parent households are actually the biological parents (Callister and Hill, 2002). In addition, in sole parent households no information is available on the absent biological parent. Finally, the way the census ethnicity question was worded in 2001, there was some confusion as to whether respondents could record more than one ethnic group (Callister, 2003). Nevertheless, despite these problems census data does give some guide as to how ethnicity is being transmitted from parents to children.

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<sup>7</sup> The NZEuropean group includes those individuals who recorded New Zealander or Kiwi as their ethnic group. In 2001 93 percent of adults and 96 percent of children in the wider 1 digit European group were NZEuropeans.

<sup>8</sup> Due primarily to a change in the census questionnaire the multi-ethnic response is just over half the rate recorded in 1996.

## Is the age of the child important in ethnic choices?

Table 1 shows the relative sizes of the ethnic groups of children under 12 and 12 to 18. Sole NZEuropean ethnicity is by far the single largest category in both age groups. Depending which age group is examined, it is sole Maori or ethnicity not defined which vie for the next largest group.<sup>9 10</sup> Again, depending on which age group is focussed on, NZEuropean/Maori or sole Asian takes third place. If the traditional system of ethnic prioritisation had been used children from the wider Maori ethnic group would have been the second largest group after NZEuropean.

When the ‘not defined’ ethnic group of children are removed, in the under 12 group 13.8 percent of children could be defined as multiethnic. This reduces to 8.8 percent in the 12-18 age group. This is not surprising as parents with younger children are, on average, also likely to be younger than those with older children and multi-ethnic status is more prevalent amongst younger people.

While the ‘not defined’ group is important (for instance the group is larger than the sole Pacific Peoples group in both age groups), in terms of children’s ethnicity for the rest of the analysis this category is excluded in all calculations.<sup>11</sup> However, except where specifically noted otherwise when considering parental ethnicity the ‘not defined’ group is included. In couple households one partner might define their ethnicity while the other might or both may not record their ethnicity despite the ethnicity of the child being recording.

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<sup>9</sup> The higher proportion of children not defined in the age group 12-18 might reflect that the children themselves are filling out the form and are less able/less inclined to record their ethnic group(s).

<sup>10</sup> For children under 12 in couple households 6.4 percent of children had ethnicity not defined. This compares with 5.4 percent in sole mother households.

<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly when children’s ethnicity is not defined there is also a strong tendency for one or both the parents ethnicity to be also not defined.

**Table 1: Percentage of children in each ethnic group, 2001**

	Percentage	
	12-18	Under 12
NZ European	64.30	58.64
Maori	7.45	10.25
Pacific People	3.45	5.59
Asian	7.61	5.79
Other	0.53	0.55
NZEuropean/Maori	5.29	7.76
NZEuropean/Pacific People	0.71	1.17
NZEuropean/Asian	0.36	0.68
NZEuropean/Other	0.53	0.90
Maori/Pacific People	0.28	0.69
Maori/Asian	0.05	0.07
Maori/Other	0.01	0.01
Pacific People/Asian	0.08	0.10
Pacific People/Other	0.00	0.01
Asian/Other	0.01	0.01
NZEuropean/Maori/Pacific People	0.22	0.59
NZEuropean/Maori/Asian	0.08	0.13
NZEuropean/Maori/Other	0.27	0.43
NZEuropean/Pacific People/Asian	0.02	0.04
NZEuropean/Pacific People/Other	0.04	0.09
NZEuropean/Asian/Other	0.02	0.03
Maori/Pacific People/Asian	0.01	0.02
Maori/Pacific People/Other	0.00	0.00
Maori/Asian/Other	0.00	0.00
Pacific People/Asian/Other	0.00	0.00
More Than Three Ethnic Groups	0.06	0.15
Not Defined	8.60	6.26
Total	100.0	100.0
N=	123,393	372,429

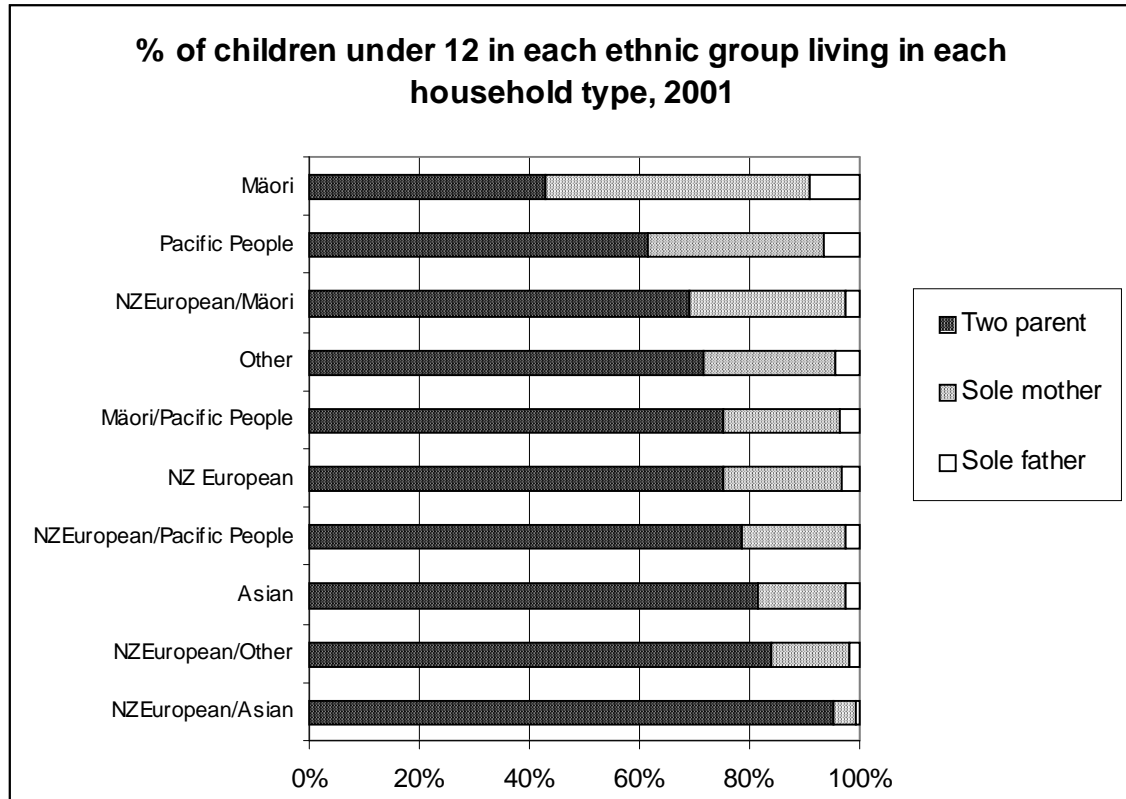
Note: All the data in the paper is for children living in either one or two parent households. This means that if the parents did not define the type of household they lived in, then the children are not recorded in the analysis.

There are some differences in the mix of ethnic groups between the two age groups, but these are not major. The biggest difference is in the proportion of sole NZEuropean, with a nearly 6-percentage point decline amongst the younger age group. However, given the similarities between the two age groups the remainder of the paper primarily concentrates on children under 12 years of age.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of children under 12 in each of the main ethnic group(s) who lived in a sole versus two parent households. While there is some variation between most ethnic groups, the table shows that sole Maori ethnic group children are far more likely to be living in a sole parent household than children from the other ethnic combinations. There are a number of possible explanations. These are: 1) couples where both are Maori are more likely to separate than couples where one partner is Maori; 2) respondents in sole parents households are more likely to allocate sole ethnicity to their

child than couples as the parents define the ethnicity of the child only in relationship to themselves, 3) the characteristics of sole parents might mean they are more likely to simplify ethnicity.. When this table is repeated for 12-18 year olds it shows an increasing proportion of children living in sole parent households. This reflects higher rates of separation of parents as children age. If the ethnicity of children reflects primarily the adult living in the household, one result might be a slight decrease in multi-ethnic children amongst older age groups as the data has already shown. This idea is further explored later in the paper.

**Figure 1**



While these data are based on children, not counts of parents, and so do not take into account different family sizes between the two household types, they do indicate that sole Maori parents are considerably more likely than other groups, including mixed Maori, to live in sole parent households. This suggests that in order to fully understand the transmission of Maori ethnicity to children from both parents information on the absent parent needs to be collected. However, such information is currently not available in New Zealand.

U.S. research has shown that children living in sole parent households are more likely to be recorded as multi-ethnic than those living in couple households (Harris and Sim, 2001). The New Zealand data show the opposite. For children under 12, 14.4 percent of those children living in a two-parent household could be classified as multi-ethnic. The figure for sole mothers was 12.8 percent, and 8.8 percent for sole fathers. The figures for

children 12-18 were respectively 9.6 percent, 7.2 percent and 5.6 percent. The differences between sole fathers and sole mothers may reflect real differences or, alternatively, that men are more likely to simplify their children's ethnic groups.

### Ethnic combinations of parents

Table 2 sets out the ethnic combinations of parents of all children with a recorded ethnic group who were aged under 12.<sup>12</sup> It shows that the couples where both partners recorded NZEuropean represented over a half of all parents. This primarily reflects the overall larger size of the NZEuropean population. The second largest single group was Asian for both partners. That this is higher than for Maori or Pacific Peoples reflects two factors. One is that Asian people are less likely to marry outside their group than Maori or Pacific Peoples and, secondly, sole Asian ethnic people are more likely to live in couples when raising children than other single ethnic groups (Callister, 2000). However, it should be noted that at this level of classification there would be disguised examples of multi-ethnic people and inter-ethnic marriage. For example, if one partner in a couple records Tongan and the other Samoan they will be seen as both belonging to the Pacific Peoples group.

**Table 2: Main ethnic combinations of parents with a child under 12 - Top twenty combinations**

Ethnic Group of Mother	Ethnic Group of Father	Total number of children	%
NZEuropean	NZEuropean	136,398	55.0
Asian	Asian	16,434	6.6
NZEuropean	Not Defined	12,750	5.1
Pacific People	Pacific People	11,877	4.8
Maori	Maori	11,001	4.4
Not Defined	NZEuropean	8,364	3.4
NZEuropean/Maori	NZEuropean	5,829	2.3
NZEuropean	NZEuropean/Maori	5,220	2.1
NZEuropean	Maori	4,950	2.0
Maori	NZEuropean	3,381	1.4
Not Defined	Not Defined	3,180	1.3
Asian	NZEuropean	2,547	1.0
NZEuropean/Maori	NZEuropean/Maori	2,223	0.9
NZEuropean/Maori	Maori	1,809	0.7
Other	Other	1,359	0.5
NZEuropean	Pacific People	1,191	0.5
Pacific People	NZEuropean	1,053	0.4
Maori	Pacific People	1,047	0.4
Maori	Not Defined	987	0.4
NZEuropean/Maori	Not Defined	957	0.4

These 20 combinations represent 93.7 percent of couples raising children in this age group

<sup>12</sup> Given that this table is based on counts of children, and therefore there can be double counts of parents, the proportions of ethnic groups will vary somewhat by differing fertility rates between groups.

The data shows that 71 percent of couples are both from the same single ethnic group. The other thirty percent either have one or both partners recording two or more ethnic groups, the partners are from different single ethnic groups or one or both partners are not defined. Excluding parents where one or both had their ethnicity undefined, leaves 17 percent of parents who were known to have had the potential to record their child as being multi-ethnic. When compared with the proportion of children who were defined as dual or multi-ethnic, the proportion of who could have potentially been defined as multi-ethnic was slightly higher. For the under 12 age group the two figures are 17 who had the potential to be multi-ethnic and 14 percent who were recorded as multi-ethnic. These differences are small. There are many reasons why a group of parents, or the children themselves, would simplify the child's ethnicity. One is that it is easier for respondents to simplify to one group. However, another possible explanation is that the 2001 census ethnicity question, while recording multiple responses, guides people to single ethnic responses (Callister, 2003).

Ethnic intermarriage research, using 1996 census data, shows that around two thirds of all partnered sole Maori men and women had a Maori partner, while around a third of mixed Maori men and women had a Maori partner (Callister, 2003). Overall, around half of the wider Maori ethnic group had a non-Maori partner. While the data used in this paper are from the most recent census, are restricted to couples with a child under 12, and are based on children rather than adults, the broad patterns of intermarriage for Maori are similar. This confirms a high rate of ethnic intermarriage for Maori, and particularly for those Maori who affiliate with more than one ethnic group.

### **The transmission of ethnicity for particular child ethnic groups**

The following tables focus on children in two parent households. They provide information on the ethnicity of both parents for all Maori children,<sup>13</sup> sole Maori children, those who were recorded as Maori/NZEuropean, and those with sole European ethnicity. The first table shows the top twenty combinations of parental ethnicity, while the others reduce this to the top ten (the full tables are available from the author). In each of the tables over 90 percent of children in each group are counted.

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<sup>13</sup> This is all children who had Maori recorded as one or more of their ethnic groups

**Table 3: Ethnicity of parents of Maori children under the age of 12 living in a two parent household, Count of children with each parental ethnic combination- Top twenty groups, 2001\***

Ethnic Group of Mother	Ethnic Group of Father	No of Maori children	% of all Maori children (Maori as one or more ethnic group)
Maori	Maori	10,863	25.8
NZEuropean/Maori	NZEuropean	4,848	11.5
NZEuropean	Maori	4,119	9.8
NZEuropean	NZEuropean/Maori	3,894	9.2
Maori	NZEuropean	2,931	7.0
NZEuropean/Maori	NZEuropean/Maori	2,175	5.2
NZEuropean/Maori	Maori	1,779	4.2
NZEuropean	NZEuropean	1,257	3.0
Maori	Not Defined	918	2.2
Maori	NZEuropean/Maori	906	2.2
Maori	Pacific People	873	2.1
NZEuropean/Maori	Not Defined	837	2.0
NZEuropean	Not Defined	528	1.3
Not Defined	Maori only	510	1.2
NZEuropean/Maori	Pacific People	456	1.1
Pacific People	Maori	360	0.9
Not Defined	NZEuropean/Maori	324	0.8
Not Defined	NZEuropean	252	0.6
Maori	Maori/Pacific People	165	0.4
Maori/Pacific People	Maori	162	0.4

\* This table represents 91 percent of Maori children living in a two-parent household.

Table 3 shows that only a quarter of children from the wider Maori ethnic group had both parents record sole Maori ethnicity. The next single largest group (at nearly 12 percent) is where the mother recorded both Maori and NZEuropean as her ethnic groups but the father recorded only NZEuropean. Under an earlier system of proportions of blood, the first group of children could potentially have been seen as being full blooded Maori, while this second group could be seen as being ¼ Maori.<sup>14</sup> However, trying to determine such proportions has little value. In all but one of the categories shown, one or both parents record some Maori ethnicity. However, three percent of Maori children have both parents recording NZEuropean ethnicity. There are a number of possible explanations for this. One is that these could be step-parent households, with the absent biological parent having Maori ethnicity. Equally, some of the children in this group could be adopted. A third option is that these are incorrect ethnic classifications.

Table 4 shows the top five combinations of parental ethnicity where the child was recorded as being sole Maori. The recording of sole Maori ethnicity is more strongly linked to having both parents also record sole Maori as their ethnic group. A total of 64

<sup>14</sup> This calculation assumes that people are giving equal weight to the ethnic groups listed. This, of course, is an unrealistic assumption.

percent of children were in this category. However, this means that 36 percent of sole Maori children in two-parent households did not have both parents record sole Maori ethnicity. The two next largest combinations are where either the mother or father was sole Maori and their partner NZEuropean (total 17 percent). This combination shows that a significant number of sole Maori children could technically be classified as being in the Maori/NZEuropean group if only their parents' ethnicity were considered. This suggests that boundaries between the sole ethnic and the dual-ethnic Maori group are somewhat fluid. This supports the finding of Kukutai (2001).

**Table 4: Ethnicity of parents of sole Maori children under the age of 12 living in a two parent household, Count of children with each parental ethnic combination - Top ten groups, 2001\***

Ethnic Group of Mother	Ethnic Group of Father	Number of sole Maori children	% of all sole Maori children
Maori	Maori	10,461	63.7
NZEuropean	Maori	1,473	9.0
Maori	NZEuropean	1,311	8.0
Maori	Not Defined	687	4.2
Maori	NZEuropean/Maori	471	2.9
NZEuropean/Maori	Maori	447	2.7
Not Defined	Maori	357	2.2
NZEuropean	NZEuropean	240	1.5
Maori	Pacific People	126	0.8
NZEuropean	NZEuropean/Maori	105	0.6

\* This table represents 96 percent of sole Maori children living in a two-parent household.

Table 5 shows that children classified as Maori/NZEuropean have parents with a variety of ethnic affiliations. The biggest single group is where the mother recorded both Maori and NZEuropean ethnicities and the father NZEuropean only (23 percent). This largest single group is much smaller than the largest single group for sole Maori. A total of 1.4 percent of Maori/NZEuropean children had both parents record sole Maori. These data suggests that there are more ways for children to end up being classified as mixed Maori than there are ways of children being defined as sole Maori.

**Table 5: Ethnicity of parents of Maori/NZEuropean children under the age of 12 living in a two parent household, Count of children with each parental ethnic combination - Top ten groups, 2001\***

Ethnic Group of Mother	Ethnic Group of Father	Number of NZEuropean/Maori children	% of all NZEuropean /Maori children
NZEuropean/Maori	NZEuropean	4,653	23.4
NZEuropean	NZEuropean/Maori	3,759	18.9
NZEuropean	Maori	2,610	13.1
NZEuropean/Maori	NZEuropean/Maori	2,103	10.6
Maori	NZEuropean	1,569	7.9
NZEuropean/Maori	Maori	1,296	6.5
NZEuropean	NZEuropean	963	4.8
NZEuropean/Maori	Not Defined	537	2.7
Maori	NZEuropean/Maori	420	2.1
NZEuropean	Not Defined	378	1.9

\* This table represents 92 percent of Maori/NZEuropean children living in a two-parent household.

Sole NZEuropean children are the most likely of the three groups shown to have both parents recording the same level 1 sole ethnic group. While it is relatively rare, in percentage terms, for a sole NZEuropean child to have one parent record Maori as one of their ethnic groups, an example is shown in this table. When all possible combinations of parental ethnicity are considered, there were 4.6 percent of children classified as sole NZEuropean where one or both parents was not from the sole European group.<sup>15</sup> Of these children about a third had one parent record sole NZEuropean and the other NZEuropean/Maori. In total 4,215 sole NZEuropean children in this household type had one or both parents record Maori as one of their ethnic groups. This is 2.6 percent of all sole NZEuropean children. It may be that, as these children become adults, they draw on this Maori ethnicity of their parent(s) when creating their own ethnic group.<sup>16</sup> While not tested, it may also be that Maori ancestry is recorded for a high proportion of these children given that in recent censuses the total number of Maori defined by ancestry is higher than that defined by ethnicity.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This calculation excludes those parents who did not define their ethnic group.

<sup>16</sup> These and other children may go back further, for example to grandparents or great grandparents, when constructing their ethnicity.

<sup>17</sup> The ratio of people noting Maori descent to those affiliating with the Maori ethnic group has changed over the last three censuses. In the 1991 the number with Maori descent was 18 percent higher than the Maori ethnic group, this declined to 11 percent higher in 1996 but rose back to 15 percent higher in 2001.

**Table 6: Ethnicity of parents of NZEuropean children under the age of 12 living in a two parent household, Count of children with each parental ethnic combination - Top five groups, 2001\***

Ethnic Group of Mother	Ethnic Group of Father	Number of NZEuropean children	% of all NZEuropean children
NZEuropean	NZEuropean	134,712	82.0
NZEuropean	Not Defined	11,355	6.9
Not Defined	NZEuropean	7,419	4.5
Not Defined	Not Defined	2,574	1.6
NZEuropean	NZEuropean/Maori	1,302	0.8

\* This table represents 96 percent of NZEuropean children living in a two-parent household.

These tables can be calculated for all the recorded ethnic groups of children. However, simply focussing on children who were recorded as having a sole ethnic group, Table 7 shows the proportion of children in each group who had parents who also both belonged to the same ethnic group. Sole Maori children stand out in the proportion who did not have both parents record the same ethnic group. Around a third of sole Maori children living in a two-parent household did not have parents who both recorded sole Maori as their ethnic group. One interpretation of these data is that the sole Maori category for children is potentially overstated in official data. Another is that it simply supports the idea that ethnicity should be a self-defined concept and if a person feels they are sole Maori then that is what they should be recorded as. These data reinforce the idea that while there is likely to be some biological underpinning of the sole Maori category is primarily culturally constructed.

**Table 7: Proportion of sole ethnic group children in two-parent households where both parents had the same sole ethnic group as the child, Children under 12**

Ethnic Group of both mother and father	Ethnic group of child					
	NZ European	Maori	Pacific People	Asian	Other	
NZEuropean	82					
Maori		64				
Pacific People			88			
Asian				91		
Other						87
N=	164,265	16,428	12,804	17,577	1,482	

Another way of looking at this is to examine how couples that both did have the same ethnicity then allocated this sole ethnic to their children (or the children chose their own group). When both parents had a sole NZEuropean ethnicity then 99 percent of children whose ethnic group is recorded in these households have the same sole ethnicity. For sole Maori the figure is 95 percent, for sole Pacific People 95 percent, sole Asian 97 percent

and for “Other” 95 percent.<sup>18</sup> While children with sole ethnicity can come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, when both parents have the same sole ethnicity they, or the child, have a strong tendency to record this sole ethnic group for the child.

As an example of how mixed ethnic parents, or their children, can make different choices as to how to allocate the ethnicity to the children, Table 8 show counts of children in three main ethnic groups who have one parent identifying as sole NZEuropean and the other parent recording NZEuropean/Maori ethnic groups. This table suggests that if all children with some Maori ethnicity recorded by parents had this ethnicity also recorded for the children, then the number of children claiming some Maori ethnicity could increase.

**Table 8: Number of children from three main ethnic groups who have one parent claiming to be sole NZEuropean and the other parent recording NZEuropean/Maori, Children under 12**

Ethnicity of child	Number of children
NZEuropean	2,256
Maori	183
NZEuropean/Maori	8,412

Further research could usefully identify other characteristics, such as education, income, Maori ancestry, whether the respondents speak Maori, whether they record their iwi affiliation(s) and geographic location of the parents of these three groups of children in order to assess the association of these parental factors with the three possible ethnic choices for children. However, based on Kukutai’s (2001) research where she examined many of these factors in relation to Maori and non-Maori children, it is highly likely that information not collected in the census will also be strongly influencing choices.

**Is it the mother or father who is primarily influencing the ethnicity of the child?**

Tables 9 to 11 examine the ethnic allocation of children to three main groups relative to the ethnicity of the mother and father.<sup>19</sup> Four single ethnic groups for parents are chosen. These are NZEuropean, Maori, Pacific Peoples and Asian, in combinations with a partner who is from these four groups. Some patterns emerge:

- With the exception of children with a Maori mother and NZEuropean father, in all the ethnic combinations of parents over half of the children have the ethnicity of both parents
- The greatest influence by the mother’s ethnicity on the ethnicity of the child is in couples where the mother is Maori and the father NZEuropean

<sup>18</sup> The following shows these figures recalculated to include those children whose ethnicity was not recorded. When both parents had a sole NZEuropean ethnicity then 96 percent of children in these households had the same sole ethnicity. For sole Maori the figure is 91 percent, for sole Pacific People 91 percent, sole Asian 95 percent and for “Other” 92 percent. Although using different censuses, and slightly different methodologies, the figure for sole Maori is similar to that found by Kukutai (2001)

<sup>19</sup> The three tables do not add to 100 percent. There are some children that have other single or complex ethnic groups other than the ethnic group(s) of their parents.

- The greatest influence by the father’s ethnicity on the ethnicity of the child is in couples where the mother is Asian and the father NZEuropean, and also where the father is Maori and the mother NZEuropean

**Table 9: % of children whose ethnic group was that of both the mother and the father by combinations of sole ethnic group of parents, children under 12<sup>20</sup>**

	Father			
Mother	NZEuropean	Maori	Pacific People	Asian
NZEuropean	-	53	76	69
Maori	46	-	67	76
Pacific People	67	63	-	59
Asian	51	56	67	-

**Table 10: % of children whose ethnic group was simplified to that of the mother by combinations of sole ethnic group of parents, children under 12**

	Father			
Mother	NZEuropean	Maori	Pacific People	Asian
NZEuropean	-	16	12	16
Maori	39	-	12	10
Pacific People	14	18	-	15
Asian	15	13	13	-

**Table 11: % of children whose ethnic group was simplified to that of the father by combinations of sole ethnic group of parents, children under 12**

	Father			
Mother	NZEuropean	Maori	Pacific People	Asian
NZEuropean	-	30	7	13
Maori	13	-	15	0
Pacific People	15	11	-	20
Asian	33	13	13	-

When Tables 10 and 11 are compared, there are some ethnic mixes of parents in which the father appears to have a slightly stronger influence on the ethnicity of the child (in terms of it being of the parents’ sole ethnic group) but in others it is the other way round. In the examples where the father has a stronger influence, this may reflect a more traditional pattern of determining ethnicity.

The tables show that in some combinations of Maori and non-Maori, the Maori ethnicity is particularly emphasised. These are the Maori / NZEuropean combinations. In contrast, when Maori have a partner from the Pacific Peoples or the Asian group, there is less emphasis on sole Maori ethnicity. This highlights the dangers of combining all non-

<sup>20</sup> In some of these ethnic combinations the numbers are relatively small and the results should be treated with some caution. For example, 2,547 children with a defined ethnicity under 12 had an Asian mother and NZEuropean father, but only 600 had a NZEuropean mother and Asian father. The smallest groups are those with one Asian parent and the other parent from either the Pacific Peoples or the Maori group. The smallest combination was a Pacific Peoples father and an Asian mother with 45 children with this parental combination. The full dataset is available from author.

Maori ethnic groups into one single category, which becomes swamped by the trends taking place within the NZEuropean group.

Finally, when tables 9 to 11 are combined, in no category do the totals add to 100 percent. This means that some children’s ethnicity includes a group or groups not recorded by their own parents. While the numbers are small, the main groups where additional ethnicities were included were where either the mother or father was Asian and their partner Maori. In these combinations, the main ethnic group added was that of NZEuropean.

Overall, the data based on combinations of single ethnic groups of parents suggests that in most mixed ethnic households it is the ethnicity of both parents and not just the mother or the father who influence the ethnic group of the child.

The idea that it might be the mother or father who has a strong influence on the ethnic group of children can be further explored with combinations of Maori and European ethnicity where one parent affiliates with both Maori and European ethnicity. Table 12 shows this combination with a sole European partner while in Table 13 the partner is sole Maori. When the tables are compared it shows that in three combinations of parents the child is most likely to be classified as both Maori and European. The exception is where the mother is sole Maori. In this situation the child is much more likely to be classified as sole Maori. These tables suggest that while the ethnicity of fathers is important, in families where mothers strongly associate with Maori ethnicity through classifying themselves as sole Maori, then many of these mothers do have a strong influence on the construction of ethnicity of the children.

**Table 12: % of children in each main ethnic group by ethnicity of parents, Children under 12**

Mother’s ethnicity	Father’s ethnicity	Ethnicity of child		
		NZ European	Maori	NZEuropean / Maori
NZEuropean/Maori	NZEuropean	16.4	1.3	79.8
NZEuropean	NZEuropean/Maori	24.9	2.0	72.0

Note: Totals add across rows. Total may not be 100 percent as children can be in other ethnic groups.

**Table 13: % of children in each main ethnic group by ethnicity of parents, Children under 12**

Mother’s ethnicity	Father’s ethnicity	Ethnicity of child		
		NZ European	Maori	NZEuropean / Maori
Maori	NZEuropean/Maori	1.0	51.1	45.6
NZEuropean/Maori	Maori	1.0	24.7	71.6

Note: Totals add across rows. Total may not be 100 percent as children can be in other ethnic groups.

Table 14 shows a further set of combinations. This table shows either the mother or father is sole Pacific Peoples and their partner recording a mix of Pacific Peoples and NZEuropean. This table indicates some higher recording of the child’s ethnicity as sole Pacific Peoples group when it is the mother rather than the father who is also from this group. However, this tendency is nowhere as strong as when it was a Maori mother who

was in a similar mixed marriage. This suggests that there are stronger incentives, or disincentives, for emphasising sole ethnicity in some ethnic combinations than in others. More in-depth research, possibly of a qualitative nature would be needed to understand how ethnicity is constructed in some of these ethnic combinations.

**Table 14: % of children in each main ethnic group by ethnicity of parents, Children under 12**

Mother's ethnicity	Father's ethnicity	Ethnicity of child		
		NZ European	Pacific Peoples	NZEuropean / Pacific Peoples
Pacific Peoples	NZEuropean/ PP	0.0	30.0	65.0
NZEuropean/PP	Pacific Peoples	1.2	22.4	71.8

Note: Totals add across rows. Total may not be 100 percent as children can be in other ethnic groups.

### **Does household type have some association with the ethnicity of the child?**

Table 15 allows some exploration of whether living in a sole parent household may be having some influence on ethnic choice for children. When comparing two parent and one parent households when the mothers recorded only one ethnic group, then one ethnic children of the same ethnic group as that of the mother are over-represented in sole parent households. This tendency was particularly strong where the mother was from with the Maori, Asian or the ‘Other’ ethnic groups. Conversely, children of the same ethnic group of their multi-ethnic mothers’ were under-represented in sole parent households relative to two parent households. In general, in sole parent households the child’s ethnicity was more likely to be simplified down to one group (Table 16). Without further information, it is difficult to assess what these patterns mean. It could be that there are some differences in the ethnicity of the ex partners of sole mothers and partners in couple households. But, it could also be that for sole-ethnicity sole-mothers, these mothers are less likely to take into account the ethnicity of their ex-partner. This supports the idea explored in the previous section that fathers, if present in a household, do have an influence on the construction of ethnicity for children. For mixed ethnicity sole mothers, there seems a strong tendency to simplify their child’s ethnicity to one ethnic group, but the reason for this is unknown. These data suggest that the higher the proportion of sole parents amongst a particular ethnic group, the more likely that the ethnicity of children will be simplified to one ethnic group.

**Table 15: Proportion of children under 12 years of age having the same ethnicity as their mother, 2001**

Ethnic group of mother	Two parent households	Sole parent households	Difference (sole less two parent)
NZEuropean	92	96	4
Maori	74	89	15
Pacific People	83	92	9
Asian	85	98	13
Other	81	94	13
NZEuropean/Maori	72	49	-23
NZEuropean/Pacific People	45	20	-25
NZEuropean/Asian	39	7	-32
NZEuropean/Other	33	18	-15
Maori/Pacific People	53	17	-36

**Table 16: Proportion of children under 12 years of age with two ethnic group mothers who had their ethnicity simplified to one ethnic group**

Ethnic group of mother	Two parent households	Sole parent households	Difference (sole less two parent)
NZEuropean/Maori	14	50	36
NZEuropean/Pacific People	21	75	54
NZEuropean/Asian	36	91	55
NZEuropean/Other	48	78	30
Maori/Pacific People	18	77	59

## Conclusion

Based on descriptive data from the 2001 census, this paper has examined the way in which ethnicity is allocated to children. It expands on recent research on the transmission of ethnicity undertaken by Kukutai (2001) by bringing in a wider range of single ethnic groups and more combinations of ethnic groups. It also explores differences in the allocation of ethnicity by sole parents and two parent households.

Like Kukutai's research, I find that in many households the transmission of ethnicity from parents to children is not a straightforward process. Particularly when one or both parents affiliate with more than one ethnic group, then there is a range of options open when choosing the ethnic group(s) the child belongs to. When children are able to be allocated to more than one ethnic group, then in a significant proportion of two parent households the ethnicity of both parents, rather than that of just the mother or the father, influences the choice of ethnic group(s) for the children. However, the data suggest that while the ethnicity of both fathers and mothers is important, the outcome varies according to the ethnic group being considered.

The data shows there are some minor differences in ethnic allocation by age of child. This may be a sign of who fills in the census forms at various ages, but more likely reflects a higher level of multi-ethnic status amongst younger parents. Household type is

also associated with small differences in the proportion of children who are multi-ethnic. In contrast to the U.S., children in two parent households in New Zealand are more likely to be multi-ethnic. The reasons for this association are not clear. One possibility is that in New Zealand sole parent households the custodial parent will simplify the ethnic group of the child to match their own ethnic choices. While there was some support found for this hypothesis, more detailed scrutiny of the all the potential ethnic combinations would be required to confirm this. However, given that Maori and Pacific parents are more likely than other ethnic groups to live in sole parent households than other ethnic groups, this could have a significant influence on how ethnicity is allocated to children.

When children are able to be allocated more than one ethnic group through having parents who have mixed ethnic groups, then in a significant proportion of two parent households the ethnicity of both parents, rather than just the mother or the father, influences the choice of ethnic group for children. However, the data suggest that while the ethnicity of both fathers and mothers is important, the outcome does vary according to the ethnic group of both the mother and the father. In some ethnic combinations where mothers or fathers strongly associate with Maori ethnicity through classifying themselves as sole Maori, then such parents appear to have a strong influence on the construction of ethnicity of the children. This influence of Maori parents can be seen in the Maori / NZEuropean parental combinations. In contrast, when sole Maori have a partner from the Pacific Peoples or the Asian group, there is less emphasis on sole Maori ethnicity for the children. Whether this is solely an ethnicity effect or whether it relates more factors such as education was not tested in this research.

The data also suggest that, based on the ethnic groups of parents, the multi-ethnic figure for children may be slightly understated. More in-depth research, possibly of a qualitative nature, would be needed to understand why some parents from different ethnic groups simplify the ethnicity of their children. Part of the answer may relate to how the 2001 census question was set out in that it encouraged respondents to list one group rather than groups. Another is that parents may be, for a variety of reasons, valuing one ethnicity more than others. However, it also worth keeping in mind that simplification of ethnicity, or any other characteristic, may just reflect the easiest response by people quickly filling in a questionnaire.

The data presented in this paper suggest that the ethnic boundaries between the sole and the multi-ethnic Maori group, and even across to some children classified as NZEuropean, are somewhat fluid. In two parent households, over a third of sole Maori children did not have both parents who recorded sole Maori ethnicity. Mixed Maori children come from a wide range of parental ethnic combinations. In contrast, some children with a parent affiliating with the Maori ethnic group are not recorded as having Maori ethnicity. This in part, probably reflects that the ethnic groups of the parents are also somewhat fluid and that there is much overlap between the categories sole Maori and Maori plus other ethnic group(s).

Finally, these data are primarily descriptive. Census data could usefully be explored further in order to gain some insights into what factors may influence ethnic choices for

children. While the research of Kukutai (2001) suggests that variables such as parental education and household income may not be of major importance in influencing ethnic choices amongst children, other variables such as geographic location (including the spatial concentration of particular ethnic groups), country of birth, age of parent, and, specifically for Maori, responses to the ancestry, iwi affiliation and language questions, could be tested in models in order to gain better insights into influences on the transmission of ethnicity to children. However, it is likely that variables not included in the census, such as the physical features of children but also wider cultural factors, as well as the ethnicity of non-custodial parents, will also be influencing ethnic choices.

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