

Name: Praveen Nandagopal

Student ID: 82689244

Title: Applying the Principle of Relationships to the Census and Māori Data Sovereignty

Scrapping the traditional Census and relying on administrative data poses risks for Māori Data Sovereignty and Governance. A key concern is whether ethnicity, descent, and iwi affiliation will still be captured in ways that reflect Māori identity. As Chris noted, Māori population totals can vary significantly depending on whether ethnicity or descent is used, with differences of up to 200,000 people. If administrative datasets fail to recognise these distinctions, Māori may be miscounted, directly affecting representation, funding, and service delivery.

The principle of *relationships* highlights that data must be collected and defined in partnership with Māori, respecting context and lived realities. Without consultation, reliance on existing government datasets risks reinforcing colonial definitions rather than Māori understandings of identity.

To mitigate this risk, Stats NZ should actively engage with Māori in designing the new Census model. This includes co-developing metadata standards that record both ethnicity and descent, and ensuring iwi data is preserved. By embedding Māori voices in decision-making, Stats NZ can strengthen trust, improve accuracy, and uphold the principles of Māori Data Sovereignty.

Thank you.

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