

Preserving Māori Whakapapa in the Shift from Census to Administrative Data

Scraping the census and replacing it with administrative data imposes the risk on Māori data sovereignty of erasing or misrepresenting family lineage knowledge and whakapapa connections. The census allows Māori to describe and self-identify their heritage information. In contrast, administrative data is collected for purposes such as health and tax which are not focused on genealogy. Administrative data does not capture detailed iwi, hapu or family lineage.

This undermines the principle of Whakapapa, because Māori lose control over how their identity and ancestral information is collected, recorded, and used. Questions in administrative datasets provide little detail of genealogical information so the depth of relationships may be lost overtime which undervalues Māori Whakapapa.

When administrative data is repurposed for something as impactful as the census it creates harm to Māori Whakapapa beyond just misrepresenting their identity. It risks underrepresenting Māori, losing critical genealogical information, and allowing whakapapa knowledge to fade over time. This weakens Māori's ability to preserve evidence of their heritage for future iwi planning, land claims etc.

Solution to this problem could be creating a database alongside administrative databases to preserve the intergenerational relationships and heritage of Māori. This would document and restores Māori authority over genealogy information.

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