Implications of the New Census on Māori Data Sovereignty

Māori data sovereignty is the inherent rights and interests that Māori have in relation to the collection, ownership, and application of Māori data. Traditionally, the census dataset was comprised of individuals’ responses. Participation meant providing consent for data collection by the government.

In the case of the new census form, the Māori data drawn from administrative datasets through Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI). This new census challenges the Authority principle of Māori Data Sovereignty. By relying on administrative datasets, it does not allow for self-determination among the Māori community. Individuals By relying on administrative datasets, may not be aware that it is being used to form a census and wish for their data to remain private.

Historically, Māori and other marginalised communities have been victim of systemic issues, where their data is colonized and used to further discriminate them. The new method of data collection approach is lacking by not addressing Kaupapa Māori. Failing to consider the framework grounded in Māori philosophy, values, and practices. Without such additional context to the data that’s been integrated, this new form of data collection risks undermining Manaakitanga and continuing to stigmatise and misrepresent Māori communities.