

# **The Changing Face of New Zealand's Population and National Identity**

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## **Introduction**

International migration has been a major feature of New Zealand's history and is an important factor influencing almost all aspects of social life. Particular areas affected include: the size and ethnic composition of the population; composition and skills of the labour force; and the demand for, and provision of, various services. Immigration is more than just an inflow of population, since immigrants bring with them a variety of cultures and traditions that may influence those of their adopted countries. Who comes, why they come, how they are chosen, the conditions of their arrival, the conditions of their settlement and the condition that help shape will increasingly become important. Like many of today's Western societies, New Zealand contains increasing racial and cultural minorities. These ethnic groups, with very different cultural and religious backgrounds and practices, must try to get along in this country. According to recent immigration policy (implying the ideology of multiculturalism), these diverse groups are encouraged to maintain their unique cultural background, while sharing the New Zealand experience. Immigration and multiculturalism are inseparably linked. Together they are integral to the evolution of national and cultural identity. Canada is a country of diversity and under a policy of multiculturalism have faced similar issues (Berry,1984; Berry & Laponce,1994; Esses,1996) This increasing diverse composition of New Zealand society along with a growing sense of independence from the colonial past and quest for competitive advantage in the global market is bound to be reflected in a range of developments relating to citizenship, national and cultural identity. As a result, the policies and programmes that regulate immigration, both with respect to size and composition, will surely

influence the future of New Zealand society. It is not surprising, then, that immigration is a widely debated topic in policy circles and beyond.

### **Immigration Policies & immigration Streams**

The Government's programme of economic restructuring has been a major feature of New Zealand policy since the early 1980s. Governments have pursued a programme of economic liberalisation and its implementation had wide ranging implications. Immigration was an important feature of this economic restructuring, and it was in this context of pressure for economic/social change and competing interests that a review of policy was undertaken and announced in August 1986 (Trlin,1992:2). The review established three new categories of permanent migrants: economic/occupational immigration, family reunification and humanitarian/refugee admission. The long established freedom of movement of New Zealand and Australian citizens between the two countries was maintained.. The objective of the policy review was to regulate immigration so that it was consistent with current economic and social policy. Other objectives mentioned in official documents were to enrich the multi-cultural fabric of New Zealand society, facilitate full participation of immigrants into New Zealand life and maintain health, safety and good order in New Zealand society (for details, see Burke,1986). In 1986, the Government removed a vestige of the "White New Zealand Policy" by abolishing the rule that gave preference to migrants from "traditional source countries" (such as Britain, northwest Europe and North America). Since 1986, only strictly personal criteria like skills, English language ability, qualifications, adaptability to life in a multicultural society and capacity to settle, have officially been regarded as relevant. Selection of immigrants since 1986 has been based on a general policy of attracting skilled people or people with money to invest. A separate category in economic immigration provides for the admission of entrepreneurs and business people. Since 1986, the latter policy has been applied more flexibly. Several thousand business immigrants have been admitted over the past decade.

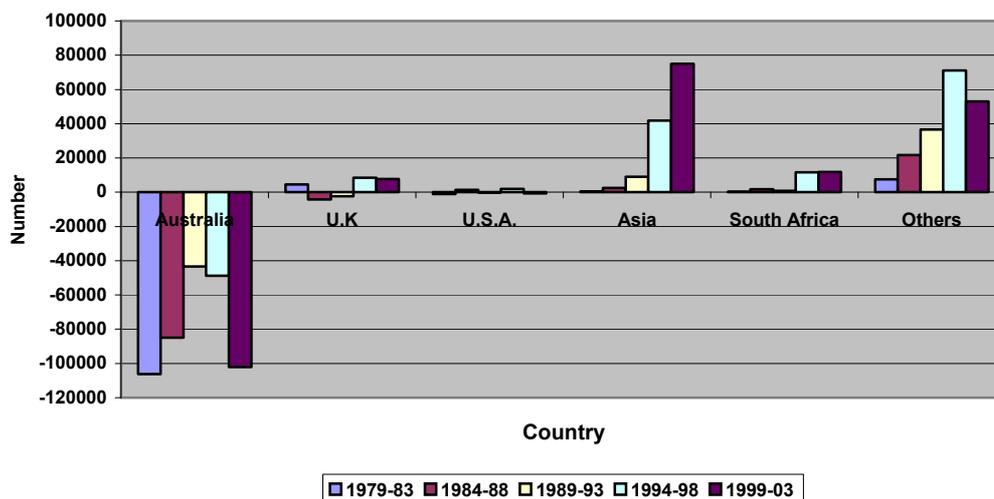
In the light of significant changes in the pattern of demand for permanent entry to New Zealand since 1986, a review of policy was undertaken in 1991. It was argued that New Zealand should adopt a point system by which to rank applicants for residence, as a substitute for the existing inflexible occupational basis. The entry on occupational grounds through an occupational priority list was replaced by the introduction of a point system in 1991. The principal factors in assessing eligibility for points were employability, the components of which were education and qualification; business or work experience; special skills including entrepreneurial ability; and existence of an offer of skilled employment in New Zealand. Points were also allocated for the age and degree of financial independence of the applicant. Under this system, which remained in operation in 1997, although with some refinements introduced in October 1995, applicant who gained a certain number of points qualify for residence. Before October 1995 they automatically gained approval for residence. Since that date a more controlled target for the number of migrants has been in operation. This system has delivered a high percentage of skilled immigrants from wide range of countries (New Zealand immigration Services,1995:4). Overall revamping of the point system was also undertaken in 1995. Under the new system, where applicable, professional registration was also required before an applicant qualifies for points, equivalent to their qualifications. These changes were designed to more accurately match transferable qualifications with points (New Zealand Immigration Services 1995:12). These changes were designed to facilitate the immigrants' adjustment to labour market. Ease of settlement and commitment to New Zealand were also emphasised in the new policy.

The recent history of New Zealand's immigration policy has certainly undergone considerable changes and developments. This policy by removing the preferences for traditional sources of migration has increasingly facilitated the entry of wide ranging cultural group into New Zealand. This has fundamental implications for the

maintenance of immigrant minority cultures and New Zealand's long-term cultural identity. The liberalisation of the immigration policy has eliminated a large element of discrimination in policy on the grounds of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, sex or marital status, and religion or ethical belief. Hence the barriers have been removed for entry of a wide range of immigrant groups.

The policies and programmes summarised above not only had their effect on the volume of migration to New Zealand, but also influenced the streams of migrants arriving from different parts of the world. A notable feature of migration flows has been the gradual decrease in the preponderance of immigrants from the British Isles (see chapter by Ward & Lin). In the 1960s and 1970s, Pacific islands and trans-Tasman migrations have been a visible element of international migration. However, the biggest net migration gains to New Zealand's population since 1986 have been from Asian countries due to the strong emphasis in official immigration policy on attracting migrants with skills and investment capital from Asia.

Figure:1:Net Permanent & Long Term Migration by Country of Last Residence,1979-2003



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Demographic Trends 2003, Wellington.

Other migration category also accounts a significant share of the net migration gains. The main countries included in this group are Pacific Islands, Canada, all Asian

countries (other than India, Japan, China and Republic of Korea), and all European countries...etc.. International migration to New Zealand is now marked by greater diversity. This is mainly because the August 1986 immigration policy review abolished national origin as a criterion in immigration selection.

The data presented in figure-2 also clearly shows that we are experiencing a net loss of New Zealand Citizens and a net gain of non New Zealand citizens. The 1991-95 period has particularly shown a significant gain of non New Zealand citizens. This perhaps was the result of the introduction of a new immigration policy in 1991 which was based on a point system. This high migration of non New Zealander created a significant negative reaction towards non New Zealand citizen immigrants and resulted in the bad publicity overseas as well as tightening of the immigration policy. This is reflected in the smaller net gains of non New Zealand citizens during 1997-2001 period. A significant loss of New Zealand citizens during the mid 1980s can be attributed to the economic down turn experienced in New Zealand (Liberalisation of the economy resulting in the loss of employment opportunities, share market crash of

Figure:2-Net Permanent and Long-term Migration by Citizenship, 1979-2003



Source: Same as for Figure 1.

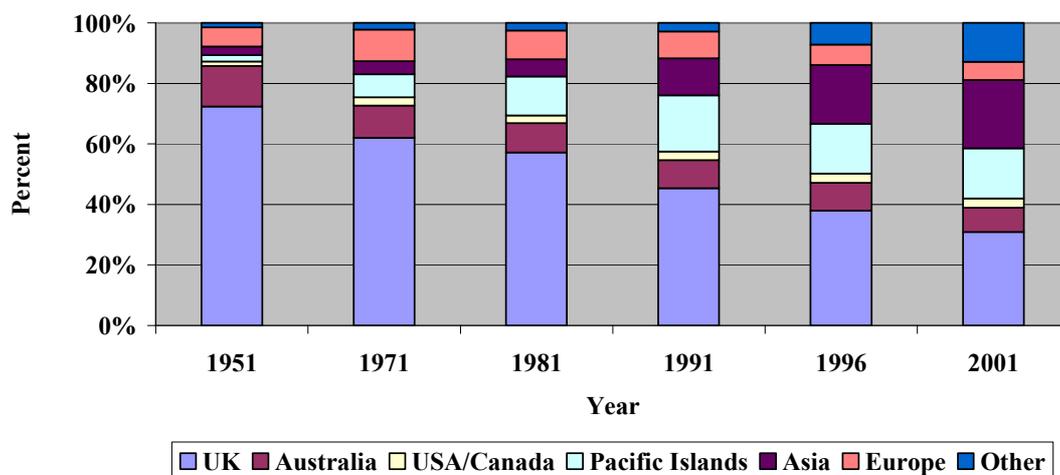
1987....etc). Out migration of New Zealand citizens in their 20s and 30s has been the major feature of this migration trend and there has been and will be surges in the out flow reflecting both the sizes of the cohorts in these age groups as well as conditions in New Zealand and overseas (Bedford, Ho, Lidgard & Mcleay 2003). During this entire period the out flow of New Zealand citizens exceeds returnees of New Zealand citizens especially during the peak outflow years of 1988 and 2001. This means recent international migratory flows to and from New Zealand is increasingly resulting New Zealand citizens being replaced by non New Zealand citizens. These changes are having and continue to have a significant bearing on the citizenship debate in New Zealand. The main thrust of the debate is that conceptions of us and 'them' are intertwined with ideas of citizenship and who is worthy of 'belonging' and can affect social aspects of New Zealand society. For most New Zealanders a sense of belonging was tied to 'whiteness'. According to Murphy (2003) while equal legal status was conferred on all New Zealanders, in reality there was conflict between inclusion in law and exclusion in practice.

### **Overseas-born Population and Distribution by Birth Place.**

Major waves of immigration after 1986 produced a steady numerical and slight proportional increase in the overseas-born population in New Zealand. Since 1981 the percentage of the overseas-born population in New Zealand has increased from 14.4 percent to 19.5 in 2001. Census data up until 1951 reveals the overwhelming predominance of migrants from societies with a core culture similar to if not the same as, that of New Zealand (see figure 3). Predictably, given New Zealand's history and the nature of its immigration policies, immigrants from United Kingdom comprised the most dominant group. In 1951 the percent of the overseas-born population from United Kingdom comprised nearly 75 percent of overseas-born population of New Zealand.

This has progressively declined and stands at 30.9 percent according to the 2001 Census. The increasing prominence of non-Europeans among the overseas-born population is probably the most obvious and important compositional change, which has occurred since 1945. There is now a considerable diversity in the birthplace composition of the overseas-born in New Zealand. The increasing prominence of non-Europeans among the overseas-born population is probably the most obvious and important compositional change that has occurred as a result of changes in New Zealand's immigration policy since the 1970s. The two highest group birthplace groups, Asians and Pacific Islands people accounted for nearly 39.2 percent of the overseas-born in the New Zealand 2001 census.

**Figure:3- Overseas-Born Population of New Zealand by Place of birth, 1951-2001**

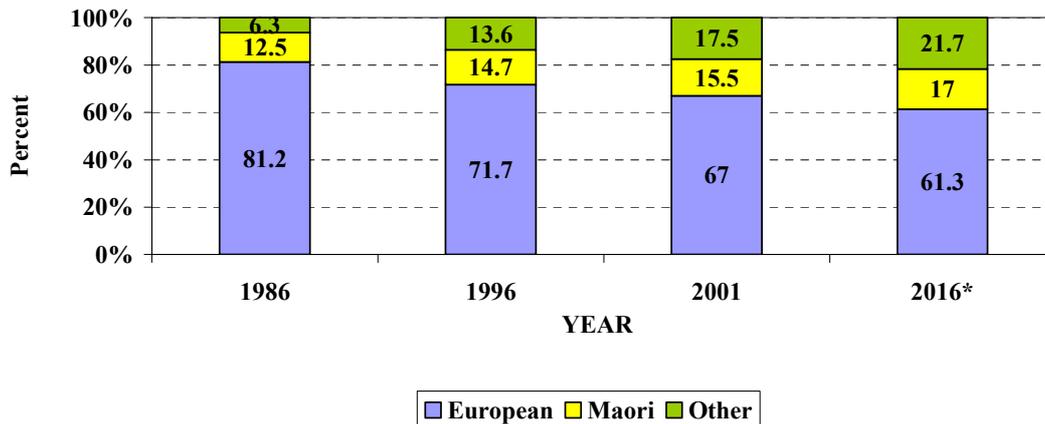


Source: Statistics New Zealand, *Census of Population and Dwellings, for various Years*, New Zealand Department of Statistics, Wellington.

The data referred to thus far only reflects the flow of immigration and sources of overseas born population of New Zealand. The impact of migration on society goes beyond that, as migrants become part of the society. Arrival of immigrants from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds has contributed to the changes in the ethnic composition of New Zealand's population. Further increases in the ethnic diversity of the population also take place through the children born to these immigrants in New

Zealand. Given the various growth dynamics for all ethnic population and increasing miscegenation, New Zealanders will become ethnically more diverse, with minority groups accounting far greater share of the country's population.

**Figure:4-Ethnic Composition of New Zealand Population, 1986-2016\***



Source: Same as Figure 3.

Figure-4 reflects the changes in the distribution of New Zealand's population by broad ethnic groups. The figures for each ethnic group are not mutually exclusive, and so should be interpreted with caution. In 1986 81.2 percent of New Zealanders identified themselves as of European ethnicity and 12.5 percent as Maori and only 6.3 percent as others (Chinese, Indians, Pacific Islanders....etc.). By 2001 this distribution has changed significantly and Europeans now account for only 67 percent of the New Zealand population while Maori and Other ethnic groups account for 15.5 and 17.5 percent respectively. There is also a significant increase in the percentage of people who identified with more than one ethnic group. In 2001, 7.9 percent of people identified with more than one ethnic group, compared with 4.1 percent in 1991. Further significant changes are anticipated in New Zealand's ethnic composition according to Statistics New Zealand's future population projections. It will be fair to say that New Zealand like many Western societies now may define itself, in a presumed new age of 'globalization', as multicultural. These changes

clearly indicate that New Zealand is in the process of becoming a multiethnic society and New Zealand's racial and cultural set up is certainly becoming more rich and varied.

This increasing ethnic diversity, which is the result of the changes initiated in 1986 immigration policy, has raised a number of issues related to biculturalism and multiculturalism in New Zealand. Many considered that this policy initiative directly challenged the dedication to biculturalism. The majority of research and analysis carried out by academics concerning New Zealand's immigration policies (post 1986) has largely concentrated on the development of immigration policy (Trlin 1992, 1997), its economic impact (Kasper 1990; Poot 1993; Watts & Trlin 2000), and the social effects (Bedford, Ho & Lidgard 2002) on New Zealand society. According to Walker (1995) little research has been carried out concerning the relationship between Maori and the impact of immigration policy on issues such as the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural discourse. Maori concern over immigration largely stems from successive government's policies to incorporate the ideology of multiculturalism as a means to subvert their rights as Treaty of Waitangi partners and their efforts for greater bicultural power sharing. Since the 1970s there has been an ongoing ideological debate over government policies based on multiculturalism and Maori calls for greater bicultural power sharing based on the tenets laid down in the treaty. As Bedford et al (2002) suggested, 'immigration was (seen as) one catalyst for the renaissance of Maori culture and political awareness in the 1970s which lead to growing debate over a bicultural society'. Yet, despite the obvious tensions created by these divergent ideologies, both multiculturalism and biculturalism during this period has gained greater social and political currency within New Zealand society.

Fleras & Spoonley (1999) argue that only a biculturalism that acknowledges the inclusion of multiculturalism as part of ongoing partnership involving all New

Zealanders can hope to solve the challenges of society building in post colonizing Aotearoa. The term “multicultural” or “multiethnic” is seen by some as a more comfortable alternative to “bicultural”, because multiculturalism does not priorities the status of any ethnic/cultural/racial group. Instead, it aims to celebrate the diversity of the groups in society. While the term multicultural addresses the problem of defining the greater diversity of the non-Maori population, it also threatens to dilute the importance of Maori as the indigenous people or tangata whenua of New Zealand ( de Bres, 2003; Wetherell & Potter, 1992:138).

### **Migrant Experiences: Towards Integration & Marginalisation.**

The question of how easily immigrants from a range of backgrounds adapt to New Zealand environment should be a matter of more than passing concern to policy makers and others. In the past, the solution is felt to lie in the elimination of differences rather than in the willingness of differing groups to accommodate themselves to each other (Thomson, 1963). The numerical and proportionate increase of various ethnic communities in recent years is beginning to be recognized in New Zealand. Despite the significant progress made over the past two decades, past discrimination against indigenous people and immigrant ethnic minorities mean that New Zealand still has a considerable way to go. There are reasons for this skepticism, especially when politicians play the opportunistic ‘race card’ either distracting legitimate place of Maori or the recognition of the multitude of cultures and ethnicities that comprise contemporary New Zealand.

Questions concerning adaptation and particularly economic integration are also important to immigrants themselves for their successful integration and achievements in New Zealand. In addition, the answers to these questions reflect on the extent to which New Zealand society provides equal opportunity to its immigrants and demonstrates concern for the welfare of immigrants. In recent years immigrants to

New Zealand (except refugees) have been selected primarily on the basis of education, vocational training, occupational and family reunification with the expectation that they have the best chance of succeeding and integrating into New Zealand society. The inclusive policy statements from the then Minister of Immigration, espousing a country where migrants would be welcomed, have not been reflected in practice.

Many research studies and anecdotal reports in recent years have shown that immigrant's experiences of discrimination in the work place, housing and socially. Individuals and groups within society are often marginalized or excluded. The overall pattern of inequality in average income clearly showed that immigrants from traditional sources (UK,USA/CANADA & Australia) achieve parity or exceed the incomes of New Zealand born person, but those from non-traditional sources do not perform as well (Zodgekar,1997; Zodgekar,1998; Winkelmann & Winkelmann,1998; NZIS,2003). Many of these migrants also have experienced barriers to gaining suitable employment in New Zealand. Particularly the recent migrants from non-traditional sources experienced difficulties in getting their qualifications and overseas work experiences recognized in New Zealand and were unable to obtain suitable employment (Dept. of Internal Affairs,1996; Dept. of Labour,2004; CACR, 2004; Boyer,1996). These difficulties experienced by immigrants from non-traditional sources are further compounded by their lack of English language competency and limited knowledge of the New Zealand labour market. The demographic Crossroads Programme, an interdisciplinary inquiry into contemporary population change in New Zealand has significantly contributed to the understanding of the East Asian migrants' experiences in New Zealand (Ho, Lidgard, Bedford & Spoonley, 1997). In fact Spoonley (1988) has argued that discrimination on racial and ethnic grounds results in many forms of inequality in New Zealand. Many recent studies also provide further evidence of general discrimination on ethnic grounds in New Zealand (Ward &

Masgoret,2004; Human Rights Commission,2004).If we do not want migrants and non-migrants to go to extremes, then the policy makers, politicians and others must examine the ways in which they portray the image of these immigrant groups. It is essential to advocate to the general public that a degree of adjustment would be necessary on the part of resident citizens. This would confront New Zealanders with the challenge - and the opportunity - to learn new ways of doing things. This learning process should not be seen as a threat to 'New Zealand culture'; instead, it is only through an ongoing process of testing and adapting, choosing what to preserve and what to transform or reject, that the culture will stay alive. Successful integration of immigrants in New Zealand will depend on new ideas and new neighbours being seen as an asset in meeting the challenges of an ineluctably changing world. Migrants will also need to take an equal responsibility in this process of adaptation and integration by making an effort to adjust with new social and cultural environment.

Many of these evidences presented so far show that New Zealand is still far from being either a bi-cultural or multicultural society. The promotion of multiculturalism will go a long way if we are able to facilitate the process of integration and assimilation of immigrants. In the past successive governments have tried to address these issues by making changes to its immigration policy and have ignored the responsibility concerning the issues related to migrant settlement. The real concern for New Zealand's future is not so much to do with immigration policy, but the lack of government investment in mechanism to ensure understanding and tolerance between entities, especially in tough economic circumstances. The concerns regarding immigrant integration and assimilation could be alleviated to a greater extent if more attention was given towards facilitating settlement at the early stages of their arrival in New Zealand.

## **Immigration and Immigrants Identity**

The recent history of New Zealand immigration policy has certainly undergone considerable changes and development. It has increasingly incorporated the cultural identity objective. This was explicitly elaborated in the August 1986 policy (Burke, 1986).

“..the selection of new immigrants will be based on criteria of personal merit without discrimination on grounds of race, national or ethnic origin; (Burke,1986:11)

...Immigrants will be encouraged to participate fully in New Zealand’s multicultural society while being able to maintain valued elements in their own heritage. (Burke,1986:11).

“..the old notion of assimilation is no longer seen as the desirable outcome of immigration...our society clearly now sees a positive value in diversity and the retention by the ethnic minorities of their cultural heritage” (Burke,1986:48).

Trlin (1992:4) argues that while these principles can be observed in the rules of entry, but it falls short of permitting immigrant groups to engage effectively in maintaining their presence, ethnic heritage and hence their effective contribution to ‘the multi-cultural social fabric of New Zealand society’. However, this has changed slightly in recent years through some symbolic accommodation of ethnic diversity in municipal and national celebrations of ‘cultural days’.

The past ‘melting pot’ policy aiming at the ultimate absorption of these different ethnic groups in a common-undifferentiated – New Zealander is no more desirable under the changing dynamics of the New Zealand population. This increasing ethnic diversity of the New Zealand population warrants the advocacy of a policy of diversity – in unity. Such a policy makes it possible for each group to preserve its distinctive personality, to add its own quota to enrich our New Zealand way of life. We must

some how in our planning creates a social environment in which each of these communities can maintain and develop their own values and way of life. Because all human beings need a sense of who and what they are and where they belong in order to function socially. To assert an identity is to distinguish oneself or one's group from others. In my opinion social assimilation should require not that the immigrants forget their own culture, but that they are fully at home in that of their adapted land (Zodgekar, 1980).

This has fundamental implications for the maintenance of immigrant minority culture and New Zealand's long-term cultural and national identity. The changing immigration system, which is increasingly stimulated by globalization, has brought a changing face of what it is to be a New Zealander and what it is like to live here. Diversity is the new national identity so to speak. New Zealand is moving away from a sort of mono-cultural domination by Europeans, the colonists, to the wrenching process of coming to grips with the bicultural focus on many of our policies now and I imagine increasingly moving towards a multicultural focus which is/will be increasingly reflected in every one of us one day. This has raised a number of issues related to adaptation and assimilation for New Zealanders and immigrants equally.

This increasing diversity and the growth of various minorities have raised the issues concerning how to legitimize their presence in the society. The debate about citizenship, national and cultural identity has become an important issue in New Zealand in recent times.

The definitional complexity of these concepts will always provide an endless supply of fuel for debate. These conceptual issues are discussed in the other parts of this book (see chapter by Pearson). Here I am only reflecting on the impact of these compositional changes on the issues of citizenship, national and cultural identity. Generally citizenship is regarded as nothing more than a civil document that

legitimises the individual's presence in the society. This status is generally granted to an individual, as long as he/she fulfills some administrative requirements for naturalization and is prepared to take on the responsibilities as well as the privileges. This was easily administered in the past since the majority of the migrants to New Zealand were of European origin. But in recent times the increasing diversity of migrants has questioned the past criteria of entitlement for citizenship. Some of the people in recent times are arguing that immigrant's commitments to New Zealand and their knowledge and cultural familiarity of New Zealand society should be incorporated in the citizenship criteria. This debate is not unique to New Zealand. In a recent report, released by the United Kingdom's Home Secretary David Blunkett, a requirement of 'Britishness test' for all the would-be citizens is proposed (Barrett, 2003). Some politicians have portrayed Asian immigrants in particular as a problem because of their lack of interest and familiarity with the New Zealand culture. This does come across as forthright and provocative which is characteristic of a politician's rhetoric.

National identity is generally seen through some iconic events which give individuals a sense of belonging to a nation. Individuals usually take some pride in identifying themselves to such iconic events and express their sense of unity and belonging to a nation. This can be independent of individual's ethnic and cultural heritage. The changing composition of a population may put some pressure on national identity but it is still possible to be able to develop a national identity under the diverse cultural and ethnic mix of the population. This raises the question of how we treat these communities. Other chapters in this book by Ip & Pang, Teaiwa & Mallon discuss the issues of attitudes and treatment which was received by specific ethnic groups in New Zealand. We as a New Zealander will need to respect their dual heritage as both New Zealander and something else (Indian, Chinese ...etc).

Cultural and ethnic identity is usually accorded to individual due to their ethnic and cultural heritage. It gives individuals a sense of belonging to a community within a nation. The other chapters in this book by Ward & Lin, Ip, Teaiwa and Mallon discuss the issues of national and cultural identity for specific ethnic groups. Incorporation of cultural or ethnic identity within the national identity raises the possibility of a nation becoming multicultural. Kymlicka (1995:14) suggests that vital part of life in Australia, Canada and USA has exhibited cultural pluralism since it accepted large number of individuals and families from other cultures as immigrants, and allows them to maintain some of their ethnic particularity. Under the circumstances of increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of New Zealand's population, any attempt at cultural standardization will be increasingly difficult to pursue. This means immigration and multiculturalism may become important elements in New Zealand's approach to nation-building.

According to Kymlicka (1995), demands of ethnic and national minority groups have taken over center stage of political life in many countries. The recent developments in New Zealand suggest some similarity with other countries experiences. It is now widely accepted in many countries that immigrants should be free to maintain some of their customs and ethnic particularities (Kymalicka,1995). For liberalism to succeed in these countries it is essential to address the needs and aspirations of ethnic and national minorities. The liberal democracy in New Zealand should be able to handle immigration of other cultural groups with greater and lesser degree of difficulty under the rubrics of recognition and resources. There is some evidence of some symbolic accommodation of ethnic diversity in municipal and national celebration of 'cultural days' in New Zealand. Cultural festivals such as the Chinese New Year, the Pasifika festival, St. Patrick's Day, Matariki and Diwali attracted hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders of all ethnic backgrounds in an increasing number of centers. These events are a clear evidence of the transformation and

secularization of the public celebration of these events in New Zealand. These things cost nothing and society has been generous but genuine tolerance and mutual recognition has been slow to come by in New Zealand. This is because, culturally based needs are harder and they involve targeting resources. If the multicultural diversity to be fostered and encouraged in New Zealand, then it is essential for the government to pour the necessary resources and develop a set of policies in respect of culturally based needs. The cultural and social dimensions of these celebrations are useful in recognizing the presence of these groups but these celebrations also serve the purpose of raising the public's general awareness and familiarity with the diverse cultures. Such a development should facilitate the emergence of a multicultural society as long as these cultural and social dimensions are not expressed for political means or leverage.

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