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Seminar on Official Statistics - Past and Future
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SESSION 4: CONFLICTS BETWEEN INNOVATION AND CONTINUITY

**CONFLICTS BETWEEN INNOVATION AND CONTINUITY: A CASE STUDY OF
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC STATISTICS IN NEW ZEALAND**

Report submitted by Statistics New Zealand */

Summary

The Census of Population and Dwellings provides the longest standing series of population statistics in New Zealand and an excellent vehicle for reviewing the development of ethnic statistics. An examination of this development shows how the nature of the statistics have been shaped by the changing nature of public policy and race relations in New Zealand. This paper focuses on the development of statistics about Maori (the indigenous people of New Zealand), and more recently, statistics for Maori. The driving force of change in the statistics has been the imperative to reclaim relevance as the axes of policy and race relations have shifted. I have used the term reclaim rather than maintain because changes to the statistics have often occurred well after the phenomena they purport to measure have changed. This is, of course, a characteristic of official statistics and one to which the theme of this session is probably empathetic. However, it might be equally argued that failure to maintain relevancy over time poses a greater threat to statistical integrity than failure to maintain comparability.

*/ Prepared by Mr. Paul Brown, Statistics New Zealand.

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