

The Ethnic Research Hui Aotearoa 2023 – Outputs and opportunities: *Exploring ideas for action to enhance ethnic voices and evidence in public policy*

2 August 2024 webinar/workshop

Co-hosted by Aotearoa Migration Research Network and Community Research

Small group discussion notes

Thank you to the 2 August webinar/workshop speakers, attendees and the smaller group discussion session facilitators and note takers. Below are the notes for the break out discussions at the webinar.

A. Nothing about us without us

- What are the ingredients for ethnic community research?
- Community research code of practice
- A conduit for promoting community research

These were discussed earlier in the initial discussion.

The discussion picked up from there in reflecting the challenges and suggestions for the future by the group members.

It was discussed that,

1. AMRN works as a platform to discuss positionality and understanding.
2. The International Association for Community Development discusses colonisation, decolonisation and the challenges thereof.
3. Aotearoa has a colonised past; where do the Ethnic communities sit in this context?
4. Communities working on research projects should collaborate and communicate with each other to avoid duplications taking place and conduct collaborative projects connecting with each other, bringing everyone together to identify what is most important and to get into a broader way of doing it by engaging communities and academics.
5. Bridge the academic and community spaces to identify where research is needed mostly. Basically, connections need to be across all sectors.
6. Create a directory for researchers to collaborate on potential research areas, network and publication research directory, shared document space, and discussion forums.
7. Fill the gap in the research space as to what needs to be done and how to achieve that.
8. The language in which the research is presented should be accessible and understandable to everyone in the community, not only the academics.

B. Ethnic Data Sovereignty

Here are the discussion points from our group:

- Definition of data sovereignty and its application for ethnic communities.

Indigenous and ethnic groups have the authority to collect, store and share their own data, rather than having these decisions by others.

- Definition of ethnic communities in Aotearoa.

We critiqued the definitions of ethnic communities framed by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, particularly the term MELA. As participants from African, Middle Eastern, and in-between backgrounds, we found this category to be somewhat vague, and assumed it might stem from the geographical distance of these regions from New Zealand.

- Ethnicity indication in daily life data collection.

We discussed the implications of daily data collection and the requirement to indicate our ethnicities for the purpose of diversity tracking.

C. Networks, collaboration, funding and models

Some themes from the introductions of researchers and government advisors included:

- How to make sure contributions to research were equitable for all including research participants and for young researchers.
- How to best draw on expertise of the community, making sure it's done in active collaboration.
- Everyone's doing something but not everyone is getting connected. How to efficiently use our resources.
- A lot of mahi falls on junior people. How to keep everyone well sustained. How to keep everything focused and ethical in its approach.
- Everyone wants to connect more! Cross sector collaboration.

D. Results dissemination and evidence use

- It is extremely difficult to get research evidence transferred into practice, policy the operationalisation of policy.
 - Research is currently a very tiny element in the forces that drive change.
- Funding is very important – particularly for academics and students who are writing up dissertations and putting them into peer reviewed journals and literature.
- Despite the hard work that academics and students put into their research, it sometimes ‘gathers dust on the shelf’. Outputs such as dissertations and journals may not be accessible, particularly to communities and government (who are not subject matter experts). One way of making it easier for research to be transferred into policy and practice, and to ensure that academics and students’ research is actually being used, is to make it more accessible for these actors - for example, through concise policy briefs which do not use too much academic jargon.
- Overall, planning for research outputs needs to be done in a more sustainable way.
- Complications arise from the fact that:
 - There is a concentration of researchers in Auckland – which makes it isolating for those who are located outside of Auckland.
 - Minorities doing research tend to be ‘othered’.
- There is a need for researchers to become better connected, with each other (across the country), as well as partnering with communities and government (be it central or regional).
- On the government side, there are issues in not knowing what resources are available, and what groups exist which it can partner with/consult. There are also issues with the political element of policy – as decision-makers may need convincing to consult with researchers and use their research in policy.
 - Making research more accessible and easily available may be a good first step in addressing this issue.

Notes emailed after the session:

I am volunteering in an organisation that provides community services (e.g., psychological support, employment advice) to Asian groups. Based on my limited experience, what I observed is:

1. This organisation is building relationships with academic researchers by supporting the recruitment of ethnic research participants. In the past six months, I've translated research materials for two studies, which are still in their early stages. Neither of them talked about their community-level dissemination plans in the information sheets, but participants could request their individual results and a copy of the research result summary.
2. Practitioners in this organisation are pretty busy providing services, which directly relates to the amount of funding. I would doubt that they have the capacity to digest academic findings and make decisions by comparing evidence from different studies. So, findings in plain language and reviews identifying the key findings and controversies across studies might be helpful. However, integrating what they learn from the research results into their services is another story. There are also many factors affecting the design of community programmes, such as the funding requirement.

As a person interested in research findings and evidence-based programme design, I am also worried about my accessibility to those resources after I leave [uni]