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**Being Accepted:  
The Experience of Discrimination and  
Social Exclusion by Immigrants and  
Refugees in New Zealand**

**Andrew Butcher, Paul Spoonley and Andrew Trlin**

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(A.P. Butcher, P. Spoonley and A.D. Trlin)*

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Our special thanks go to those immigrants and refugees in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch who took part in the focus groups for this research. We hope that by sharing their experiences and perceptions, other New Zealanders will better understand the reality of life for new settlers in this country.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report identifies the nature of discrimination experienced and/or perceived by new settlers in New Zealand. The research results presented are derived from data collected via four focus groups conducted by the first author (Butcher) in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, with participants from the South African, various Asian and other ethnic communities. Care was taken to secure if possible the participation of both immigrants and refugees, as new settlers within each of these two categories are known to have different characteristics, needs and experiences. Additional information has been drawn from the annual reports of the Office of the Race Relations Commissioner as well as both national and international literature in this field.

There is an extensive and still growing body of research literature on the settlement experiences of immigrants and the resettlement of refugees in New Zealand. Regrettably, the experience of discrimination, exclusion and prejudice figures prominently in this literature. For example, surveys have found that Asians, recent immigrants and refugees were identified as the top three groups likely to be the targets of discrimination (Human Rights Commission, 2003). Furthermore, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of complaints lodged with the Race Relations Office. While this increase may represent a tangible indicator of discriminatory and racially based acts, international studies suggest that such 'formal' complaints are likely to be only a fraction of the total number of negative experiences faced by ethnic communities, including those of recent immigrants and refugees.

In the literature in this field, a distinction has long been made between attitude (prejudice) and behaviour (discrimination). Discrimination is an act or policy which advantages or disadvantages individuals and/or groups. In this study, the majority of the focus group participants noted that the discrimination they experienced was subtle, rather than overt and explicit. Their perceptions of discrimination were often based on assessments of particular situations or their sense of the attitudes, assumptions and stereotypes of other people, which in turn influenced behaviour toward them. It should be noted that they also drew on the experiences of others (friends or cases they had read about in the media), from which they extrapolated to all members of their particular ethnic or national group. What is important here, therefore, is what the immigrants and refugees *perceived* to be the case in the course of their day-to-day life.

## Key Findings

- Aside from discrimination directed toward a specific group (see below), the main types of discrimination experienced or perceived by focus group participants were in the arenas of employment, accessing goods and services (notably education and housing), and neighbourhood discrimination.
- Within the arena of employment, undoubtedly the most important with repercussions in other areas or aspects of (re)settlement, there were two broad categories: pre-employment and acquiring employment; and in the labour force. Significant issues within these two categories included: the recognition of overseas qualifications; the desirability of New Zealand qualifications and work experience; application procedures; the sense of being an outsider; and language and accent. As revealed in other research, it was clear that some immigrants and refugees, particularly those from visible ethnic minority groups and/or the most different cultural backgrounds, faced formidable barriers in gaining employment in New Zealand.
- Discrimination with regard to accessing goods and services related mainly to education and housing, rather than everyday shopping, and was more likely to be experienced or perceived by refugees and older immigrants. Schools were found to be less than accommodating and often cross-culturally unaware, while some landlords were reluctant to let to refugees and certain immigrant groups. Language appeared to be the greatest barrier to accessing goods and services, a factor related to the availability and/or accessibility of information in languages other than English. Unlike most other participants, the South Africans reported no discrimination in either education or housing.
- Neighbourhood discrimination appeared to stem from a lack of knowledge and understanding among host communities about the backgrounds and situations of new settlers, the nature and importance of ethnic residential concentrations, and was believed to be fuelled by negative media reporting. However, both refugees and immigrants indicated that with only a few exceptions (of verbal abuse), they found New Zealanders to be friendly and helpful in their neighbourhood social interactions. Comments were nevertheless made, especially by South African participants, about the (at least initial) reserve or aloofness of New Zealanders, a feature attributed in part to life-style differences.

- In addition to the above, participants who were Muslims or from the Middle East reported encountering discrimination related directly to the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001. Subsequent negative media reports and images of their groups were seen to have a significant role in propagating and maintaining such discrimination. The participants concerned believed that racialised responses to these terrorist attacks affected their employment prospects, making the difficult task of acquiring employment even more difficult. It should be noted, of course, that this type of discrimination is neither peculiar to New Zealand nor historically unique.
- The participants regarded the issues canvassed in their focus group discussions as important not only to themselves but to New Zealand and New Zealanders. It is a view that can be readily accepted given the nature and effects of the findings summarised above in relation to the process of settlement and the implications for New Zealand society.
- When asked what could be done about the difficulties of discrimination, prejudice and social exclusion they experienced or perceived, three broad courses of action were identified:
  1. promote the development of knowledge and understanding in the host population with regard to the backgrounds and situations of new settlers;
  2. promote equality in access to goods and services, and in social interactions via education about the Human Rights Act and the Race Relations Act;
  3. improve communication between New Zealanders and new settlers.
 Action and adjustments are undoubtedly required on both sides, but there can be no doubt as to where the prime responsibility lies.



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## INTRODUCTION

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The aim of this study was to identify the nature and incidence of discrimination experienced and/or perceived by new settlers (both immigrants and refugees) in New Zealand, and the implications for the host society. In the context of a society that has been built via active immigration policies and that has encouraged (since the late 1980s) the settlement of skilled immigrants and entrepreneurs from diverse ethnic and national origins primarily for their economic contribution, the question of their post-arrival experiences, both positive and negative, is a very important one. If prejudice (negative attitudes) and discrimination (negative behaviour), along with consequent variations in social inclusion and exclusion are part of the experience of being a new settler in New Zealand in the twenty-first century, then some fundamental questions need to be raised about social attitudes and policies.

These questions and associated concerns are reflected in the comments of Dr Rajen Prasad, a former Race Relations Conciliator. In the introduction to his 1999 *Annual Report*, Dr Prasad commented that:

*It is time that New Zealand took its race relations issues more seriously.... One can safely conclude that there is in the world today a significant gap between the rhetoric around concepts of cultural diversity, celebration of cultural differences, and positive race relations and actual performance. New Zealand is not exempt from this (Office of the Race Relations Conciliator [ORRC], 1999: 4).*

*This year saw a 47% increase in complaints lodged and the level of cases closed has also surpassed previous years.... We now have the majority of our complainants belonging to the majority culture of New Zealand (ORRC, 1999: 6)*

*We cannot afford to be complacent. There are disturbing signs that all is not well. Instances of racially-motivated violence appear in the media periodically.... Racial discrimination and harassment are on the increase.... Immigration policies which encourage a wide range of new settlers are seen as a threat to the well-being of those already here (ORRC, 1999: 7).*

And in his final *Annual Report* in 2000, he noted that:

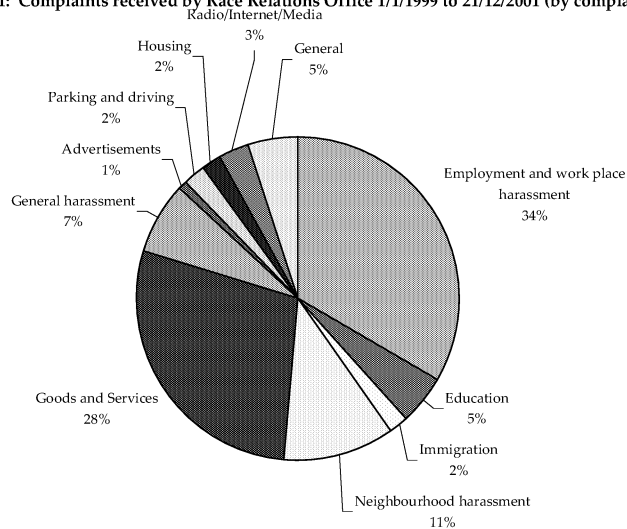


*Racial discrimination is a serious and growing problem in New Zealand. The Evening Post recently offered a telling editorial comment, "Racism might be outlawed, but its seeds litter every community and sprout in environments where grievances, greed and envy flourish" .... Economic stringency and the predictable impacts of some poorly-explained recent policies are combining to increase racially-focused intolerance among New Zealanders (ORRC, 2000: 5)*

Furthermore:

*Race relations is largely about perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. It is enhanced when a sense of comfort develops between members of different ethnic groups. This is more likely to happen when accurate information about each other is shared by all groups and when basic competencies for interacting positively with each other are exercised by all. When leaders place a premium on getting along with each other respectfully, race relations is enhanced (ORRC, 2000: 7).*

Figure 1: Complaints received by Race Relations Office 1/1/1999 to 21/12/2001 (by complaint)



The type of complaints received from all sources (i.e. *Pakeha*, Maori and members of other ethnic groups) by the Race Relations Office over the period 1999-2001 can be seen in Figure 1. Three categories clearly account for the bulk (73 per cent) of the total complaints received, namely: (a) employment and work place harassment; (b) the provision of goods and services; and (c) neighbourhood harassment. However, two points must be noted with respect to the complaints recorded in Figure 1: first, most of the complaints were from persons of either Maori or *Pakeha*/European ethnic origin, although the

percentage of complaints they accounted for declined dramatically from 71 per cent for the year ending 30 June 1999 to 49 per cent for the six months to the end of December 2001 (ORRC, 1999: 24; ORRC, 2001d: 15); and second, that persons of other ethnic origins (i.e. non-Maori, non-*Pakeha*/Europeans, who were mainly new settlers and/or their children from Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere) figured more prominently among complainants in some categories than in others. To illustrate the latter point, Table 1 presents data for complaints received in four categories from non-Maori, non-*Pakeha*/European complainants for the years ending 30 June 1999 and 2000 (comparable data for all categories were not published by the Race Relations Office for the year 2000/2001).

**Table 1: Complaints received in four categories by the Race Relations Office from non-Maori, non-*Pakeha*/European complainants, 1998/1999 and 1999/2000.**

	1998/1999	1999/2000
% total complaints received	29	33
% distribution of complaints received by ORRC from non-Maori, non- <i>Pakeha</i> /European complainants by selected categories		
Racial harassment	28	32
Employment	24	23
Provision of goods and services	18	16
Inciting racial disharmony	7	7
Other	23	22
% total complaints received by ORRC accounted for by non-Maori, non- <i>Pakeha</i> /European complaints in selected categories		
Racial harassment	41	50
Employment	47	48
Provision of goods and services	26	30
Inciting racial disharmony	21	22

Source: Office of the Race Relations Conciliator (1999, 2000).

The main features of Table 1 are as follows. First, with respect to the distribution of complaints made, the categories of racial harassment (in the workplace, neighbourhood or other places), employment and the provision of goods and services accounted for 70 per cent of the complaints. Second, in comparison with the other categories, racial harassment (usually involving name calling, the use of derogatory terms or comments on the basis of race) accounted for an increased percentage of the complaints received. Finally, bearing in mind that they accounted for no more than a third of all complainants during each of the two years, persons of non-Maori, non-*Pakeha*/European ethnic origin were definitely over-represented among those

lodging complaints for both racial harassment and employment. With complaints of racial harassment singled out as "...a worrying trend which reflects adverse reactions to the increasing diversity in our communities" (ORRC, 2000: 28), the situation was even more acute for the year ending June 2001 when "79 per cent of the [racial harassment] complaints received were from ethnic groups other than Maori or Pakeha" (ORRC, 2001e: 23).

The information presented in the annual reports of the Race Relations Office undoubtedly provides an important insight with regard to the way in which immigrants and refugees (and others on their behalf) feel that they are being treated by New Zealanders. Nevertheless, as the Race Relations Office itself has frequently noted, these complaints represent only a fraction of the total number of negative experiences suffered by new settlers. Quite simply, the act of laying a complaint requires a degree of confidence and understanding of the host society which is not the case for all immigrants and refugees, especially those from a non-English speaking background.

### **Definitional Differences: Refugees and Immigrants**

Given the inclusion of both immigrants and refugees in this study, it is necessary here to briefly establish the nature of and differences between these two categories. New Zealand is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention and to the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which defines a Convention refugee as:

*Any person who by reason of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion (a) is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, by reason of such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or (b) not having a country of nationality is outside the country of his former habitual residence and is unable or, by reason of such fear, is unwilling to return to that country.*

New Zealand is amongst a small number of countries that have traditionally provided for the resettlement of refugees. Just before the Second World War, the refugees were most likely to be European Jews (see Beaglehole, 1988) and since then, New Zealand has resettled people (typically non-English speaking) from Eastern Europe, South East Asia, South America, the Middle East and Africa. New Zealand currently accepts 750 refugees per annum, all referred by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Selected overseas by representatives of the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS), they are referred to as "mandated" or "quota" refugees. Although many of

those selected have gained (at least high school) qualifications before arriving, illiteracy and a lack of skills are not uncommon. New Zealand also assists another 200-300 persons per annum who arrive independently, claim asylum for a variety of reasons and who, after a determination process by the NZIS, are confirmed as refugees and allowed to remain. The number of asylum seekers increased significantly during the 1990s and the issues and public debates surrounding their circumstances and how New Zealand authorities treat them have remained politically contentious.

“Mandated” refugees have their status determined according to five key criteria (Dibley and Dunstan, 2002):

1. That the person has to be outside their country of origin;
2. The reason for flight has to be a fear of persecution;
3. The fear of persecution is well founded;
4. The persecution has to result from one or more of the following grounds (race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion); and
5. They have to be unwilling or unable to seek the protection of their country.

New Zealand often accepts such refugees on the basis of need, under three main categories: (a) protection (i.e. needing protection from an emergency situation); (b) women at risk (i.e. women alone and at risk in a refugee camp, with or without dependent children); and (c) medical/disabled (i.e. those with a medical condition that cannot be treated in the country of refuge and who can be helped in New Zealand, or those with a disability). The two latter categories are unusual (even among countries that have long accepted refugees) and this aspect, together with the numbers (per head of population) resettled since 1945, makes New Zealand somewhat different.

Skilled immigrants, in contrast to refugees, arrive as part of a selection process that stresses the economic benefit of their skills, resources or other personal attributes. Traditionally, a preferred country of origin criterion reflected views about the desirability of certain cultural backgrounds to facilitate assimilation, but this was changed by the 1986 immigration policy review and subsequent policy developments during the 1990s (especially in 1991 and 1995) and the start of the new millennium (see Trlin, 1992, 1997; Bedford et al., 2005). Policy changes since the introduction of the points system in 1991 have been primarily motivated by government’s desire to more effectively meet New Zealand’s needs for economic development and/or to defuse damaging public and political debates on various negative aspects of contemporary immigration. For example, when Lianne Dalziel, then Minister of Immigration, announced policy changes that came into effect in July 2003, she noted that (Dalziel, 2003: 3):

*My experience tells me that people are still coming to New Zealand with inflated expectations of their prospects here. It is for this reason, we are developing a process that will allow us to assess an applicant's potential, and more importantly, to ensure applicants have realistic expectations.*

As the Minister noted (Dalziel, 2003: 4):

*New Zealanders do not want to see skilled migrants driving taxis, cooking hamburgers and cleaning offices.*

Under the changes introduced, prospective migrants register expressions of interest, but only those invited to apply for residence (having fulfilled the relevant criteria) are able to lodge a formal application. Skilled immigrants, therefore, are not subject to the significant and traumatic 'push' factors of refugees, and they have chosen New Zealand as a preferred destination as much as New Zealand has chosen them. The exceptions to this dual selection process are mainly those persons granted admission under the family reunification provision, which allows immediate family members to rejoin those approved for residence on other grounds.

One important outcome of policy changes since 1986 has been the move from very homogenous to increasingly diverse flows of immigrants in terms of their national origins and ethnic backgrounds. Immigrants from over 140 countries gain New Zealand residence every year (NZIS, 2003a). In 2001/2002, 59 percent of all residence approvals were through the General Skills Category (NZIS, 2003a). with the dominant source countries being Great Britain, the People's Republic of China, and India (accounting for 45 percent of all approvals in 2001/2002). At the 2001 Census, 19 per cent of the population identified themselves as overseas-born. Of these, 47 per cent were living in Auckland, 11 per cent in Wellington, 8 per cent in Christchurch, 3 per cent in Hamilton and 2 per cent in Dunedin (NZIS, 2003b). Just under half of the overseas-born population in 2001 was made up of people from Europe (including Russia), South Africa and North America (hereafter referred to as ESANA), followed by people from the Pacific (17 per cent), North Asia (13 per cent), Australia (8 per cent), South East Asia (7 per cent) and South Asia (4 per cent). Forty-three per cent of the immigrants had been resident in New Zealand for 16 years or more, while 21 per cent had been resident for 6-15 years, 18 per cent for 2-5 years, and 12 per cent for less than 2 years (NZIS, 2003b). This diversity and the perception of a (culturally or 'racially') different 'other' makes the questions of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion that much more significant.

## Prejudice, Discrimination, Racism and Legislation

The literature has long distinguished between attitude and behaviour. In the first case, prejudice involves positive or negative attitudes towards in- and out-groups, and might well involve stereotypes or unfounded generalisations about another group (Fleras and Elliot, 1996: 68). Prejudice is apparent in the way in which groups are described, particularly if they are racialised (i.e. defined in racial or phenotypical terms and then seen as a problem in some sense). Discrimination, on the other hand, is an act or policy which advantages or disadvantages groups. This is typically apparent in an impact or an effect, especially in accessing goods or services such as housing, gaining employment or healthcare, and it results in different outcomes for different ethnic or racialised groups. Since the 1970s, particular attention has been paid to institutional racism, which is the way a key institution (e.g. health, education or justice) operates to privilege some groups and marginalize or disadvantage others. The institution in question might not do so deliberately or with intent but the cultural nature of its collective organisational policies and systems operates to negatively impact on certain groups. Prejudice and discrimination often co-exist together, although it is possible for prejudiced people not to be discriminatory (they might not be in a position to discriminate) while others might not be prejudiced, but discriminate to reflect customer, client or co-worker views. Almost inevitably, prejudice and discrimination co-exist in individuals and tend to co-exist in organisations.

As will be seen later in this report, the majority of the participants in the focus group discussions indicated that the discrimination they experienced was usually subtle. They were rarely called names or verbally insulted in the streets, and what they experienced was often based on their own perceptions and assessments of particular situations (such as the atmosphere in a conversation or room changing when they entered) or what they thought were the assumptions held by people that influenced their behaviour toward them. With reference to racist discrimination, Ip (1996: 111) refers to this as “benign racism”, whilst Prasad (2000) calls it “everyday racism”. Drawing on the work of van Dijk (1993), Castles (2000: 173-174) argues that:

*Racism is still part of common-sense: the accumulated, taken-for-granted and often contradictory set of assumptions used by people to understand and cope with the complex social world around them. In ostensibly non-racist societies, the influence of past ideologies and practices makes itself felt indirectly through discourses in the media, politics and popular culture. The received ideas of racist culture are not expressed openly, but rather in the form of ahistorical common-sense notions about the character and achievements of specific groups, and about the inevitability*

*of competitions and conflict between different races. This hidden and often unconscious power of racist discourse allows elite groups to claim enlightened and meritocratic views, while in fact applying racist definitions of social reality.*

Castles (2000) goes on to define racism as: (a) not an aberration or result of individual pathology, but rather a set of practices and discourses, deeply rooted in history and tradition; (b) a process of categorisation of other different or inferior groups on the basis of phenotypical characteristics, cultural markers or national origin; and (c) of varying intensity, from everyday racism to more violent forms (which may include discrimination in legal status, employment, housing, eligibility to services and access to public places).

There is an understandable reluctance to acknowledge discriminatory behaviour, or a readiness to excuse it, and this was reflected in comments made by those who chose not to take part in the focus groups for this study (they felt they had nothing to contribute). Even those who did participate expressed, at times, these same views. The discrimination discussed by the participating immigrants and refugees reflects their *perceptions*, their beliefs about what happened – a mixture of prejudice (perceived attitudes) as well as discrimination (action[s] negatively affecting the refugee or immigrant in question); it was not our role to point out what was and what was not discriminatory behaviour. Nevertheless, as their comments show, there was a significant difference between subtle and more blatant forms of discrimination.

The principle of non-discrimination is fundamental to human rights as expressed in various international codes. Whilst each of the instruments in the International Bill of Rights states that the rights outlined should be applied to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture and so forth, the principle of racial non-discrimination was given fullest expression in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965. It encouraged member states to both eliminate all forms of racial discrimination and to permit and encourage “positive discrimination” (i.e. to treat disadvantaged ethnic groups differently if that treatment would enable them to access their human rights and freedoms). In New Zealand the principle of racial non-discrimination has been given force in a number of pieces of legislation including the Race Relations Act 1971, the Human Rights Commission Act 1977, the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, and the Human Rights Act 1993. It is evident also in Section 14 of The Police Amendment Act 1989, Section 20(5) of the Hire Purchase Act 1971, Section 33A(I) of the Property Law Act 1952, Section 44(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 1986, Section 21(I) of the Broadcasting Act 1989, Section 3(3) of the Films, Videos and Publications Classification Act 1993, and Section 4(a) of the Mental Health Act 1992 (McMillan, 2001).

## Discrimination Research in New Zealand: A Brief Review

As Fletcher (1999: 61) notes:

*Discrimination and prejudice have the potential to make the process of settlement more difficult for newly arrived migrants. It may be a factor affecting economic, socio-cultural or personal aspects of settlement, and is more likely to affect those from culturally dissimilar, non-English speaking backgrounds.*

Recent research on discrimination in New Zealand (Human Rights Commission, 2003; Asia2000 Foundation, 2003) found that the key shift since a similar survey in 2001 was that Asians are more likely to be identified as the targets of discrimination. In 2001, 14 per cent of respondents identified which groups they thought were generally most discriminated against and this increased to 28 per cent in 2003. When survey participants were asked whether there was a “great deal”, “some”, “only a little” or “no discrimination” against a list of groups (Table 2) it was established that Asians, recent immigrants and refugees were the top three groups against which participants thought there was a “great deal” and “some” discrimination.

What is significant here is that these questions were asked of New Zealanders from a wide range of backgrounds, not necessarily the targets of prejudice or discrimination and not simply immigrants or refugees. Their answers confirm that there is prejudice and discrimination directed at immigrants and refugees, and that not all immigrants are characterised in the same way. For example, given that among “recent immigrants” there have been large net gains from non-English speaking backgrounds, might well reflect the perception that language and/or culture are targeted. This is confirmed by the high ranking of “Asians”. Similarly, refugees are often seen (globally and in New Zealand) as “problem” arrivals, and have been the subject of political campaigns to reduce the numbers arriving or to exclude them entirely. The research findings involving immigrants and refugees presented in the following pages of this report endorse the survey results shown in Table 2 as well as the distribution of complaints received by the Race Relations Office (see Table 1).

Within New Zealand, there is an extensive body of micro-level research (qualitative rather than quantitative) on the experiences and issues concerning both recent Asian immigrants and refugees that yields valuable insights with respect to prejudice and social exclusion. For skilled Asian immigrants, business migrants or entrepreneurs a dominant theme has been the difficulty of finding employment when faced by prejudice and discrimination (e.g. Basnayake, 1999; Henderson, 2003; Ho and Lidgard, 1998; Ho et al., 1999; Ho et



al., 2000a; Lal, 1998; Lidgard, 1996; Lidgard and Yoon, 1999). For refugees, on the other hand, the research has been somewhat broader in scope, including the everyday life and settlement experiences of Somali refugees (Guerin et al, 2003a; Guerin and Guerin, 2002), particular risks and needs of refugee populations (Uprety et al, 1999), and their mental health and access to health facilities (Holt et al, 2001; Abbott, 1989; Cheung, 1994, 1995; Cheung and Spears, 1995a, 1995b; Pernice and Brook, 1994, 1996). More detailed reference to studies in this body of micro-level research will be made as and where appropriate elsewhere in this report.

**Table 2: Tracked discrimination levels, December 2000-January 2003**

<i>I would like your opinion on discrimination against different groups in today's society. Would you say there is a great deal of discrimination, some discrimination, only a little discrimination or none at all against the following?</i>			
	Total ("a great deal" + "some")		
	Dec 2000	Dec 2001	Jan 2003
	%	%	%
Asians	73	73	79
Recent immigrants	-	68	77
Refugees	-	68	72
People on welfare	75	70	68
People who are overweight	72	65	65
Pacific Islanders	71	65	65
Gays and lesbians	74	65	61
Maori	70	62	57
People with disabilities	61	55	53
Older people*	53	48	49
Women	50	44	41
Base: All respondents (N=750)			
*Previously 'The elderly'			

Source: Human Rights Commission (2003).

In his survey of research on immigrant and refugee mental health, Abbott (1997) notes that feelings of being discriminated against, inadequate language skills and conflicts concerning the perceived moral standards of New Zealand were frequently identified as post-migration cultural stressors, and that financial, cultural and loneliness/boredom stressors were closely linked to

increased rates of mental disorder. Abbott (1997: 255) further notes that there are several factors, which have been strongly and consistently linked to these increased rates of mental disorder (cf. Berry, 1990; Berry and Blondel, 1982; Nguyen, 1989; Williams and Berry, 1991), including unemployment and under-employment, a drop in socio-economic status, and negative public attitudes towards, and rejection of, immigrants and refugees generally and/or some groups specifically. Indeed, according to Abbott (1997), prejudice and discrimination are important post-migration stressors among refugees in particular. However, as Pernice and Brook (1994) note, depressive and anxiety symptoms have been observed in all voluntary immigrant groups in England, in British immigrants to Australia, and in Pacific Island immigrants to New Zealand. Although their research did not support the hypothesis that refugees suffered more emotional distress than other immigrants, Pernice and Brook (1994) did find that the strongest predictors of the symptoms of experiencing discrimination in New Zealand were not having close friends, being unemployed and spending most of one's time with one's own ethnic group. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that discrimination can have profound impacts on the lives of both immigrants and refugees, especially in relation to social exclusion and its affect on their mental health.

Finally, it should also be acknowledged that discrimination against immigrants and refugees within New Zealand needs to be considered within its historical context. As Ip (1996; cf. McKinnon, 1996) argues, Chinese New Zealanders and Chinese immigrants were openly discriminated against for years through anti-Chinese legislation and bore the burden of negative attitudes from Maori and Pakeha alike. Similar historical discrimination has occurred against other groups, be they: temporary immigrants from Dalmatia competing with locals on the gumfields of Northland in the early 1900s (Trlin, 1979) or defined as 'Austrian nationals' and, like earlier German settlers, treated as enemy aliens during the time of the First World War (Bassett, 1999; Burr, 1999; King, 1998); Jewish refugees seeking to establish themselves in the professions in the 1930s (Beaglehole, 1988); or, more recently, Pacific people seeking employment in Auckland (Loomis, 1990). From this perspective, the problems experienced by Asian immigrants in Auckland since the early 1990s (e.g. Boyer, 1996; Friesen and Ip, 1997; Henderson et al., 2001; Ho and Lidgard, 1998; Lidgard and Yoon, 1999) serve to remind us that surprisingly little appears to have changed with respect to public attitudes and behaviour during the last century.

## RESEARCH METHOD AND ISSUES

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Rather than replicate the efforts (i.e. national surveys and micro-level studies) of previous researchers, the decision was made to complement their efforts by using focus groups as the method for data collection. While difficult to organise and conduct, focus groups have several advantages. These advantages include: ready access to a potentially broad range of perspectives, rather than the restricted view of an individual or specific group; a setting that encourages participants to share (often similar) experiences as well as to challenge certain views or assumptions; and the opportunity to engage in constructive discussions on issues with the benefit of inputs from those with different backgrounds, experiences, knowledge and perspectives. If well organised and conducted, a focus group yields not only a rich body of information but may also be a learning experience for both the participants and the researcher(s) involved.

With the above in mind the original intention was to arrange five or more focus groups in three urban areas – Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch – where the great majority of New Zealand’s immigrant and refugee settlers are to be found. It was hoped to involve people who were articulate, could speak English, were ‘representative’ of a diverse range of ethnic or national origins, were able to speak on behalf of others, and were part of either an immigrant or a refugee community (bearing in mind the differences between them). In these terms, even though they provided detailed and powerful information, not all of the four focus groups eventually arranged (one each in Auckland and Wellington, two in Christchurch) were equally successful. Particular research issues or difficulties encountered are discussed below in relation to participant recruitment and the execution of focus group meetings.

### **Participant Recruitment**

Participant recruitment was undertaken via contacts made through migrant resource centres, language schools (e.g. PEETO in Christchurch), the Migrant and Refugee Service, and personal contacts. To ensure that their involvement in the project would be informed, prospective participants were provided with details of the study in both a letter from the second author (Spoonley) as well as an official Information Sheet (Appendix 1) in accord with Massey University’s research ethics requirements. A prospective participant’s decision to take part in the study on a voluntary basis was signalled by completion of a Consent Form (Appendix 2), again in accord with research ethics requirements. The outcome of this process (i.e. the location of the focus groups, the number of

participants and their national origins) are summarised in Table 3. An additional individual interview was also conducted with an Iraqi unable to attend a scheduled focus group meeting. At that time she was understandably more concerned about family members in Baghdad because the city was being bombed by United States forces.

**Table 3: Focus group characteristics**

Focus group location	No. of participants	Participant national origins
Auckland	7	South Africa
Wellington	8	India (2), Philippines (2), Hong Kong, Sudan, Iran, Fiji
Christchurch		
1. Skilled migrants	4	Surinam, China, Nigeria, Russia
2. Refugees	4	Pakistan, Somalia, Iran, Afghanistan

The process of participant recruitment and focus group organisation proved to be more difficult than expected for a variety of reasons. Aside from the familiar and perfectly understandable excuse of just being “too busy” to take part, these reasons included the following:

- where (as in Auckland, unlike Wellington and Christchurch) there was no prior personal connection with prospective participants, the researchers were just another group wanting information that the persons contacted may have given before or were simply unwilling to give to somebody with whom they or their community were unfamiliar (especially if it meant speaking “out of turn” or outside a community hierarchy);
- some potential participants did not feel confident enough to use English in focus group meetings. The researchers’ decision to use English (for practical reasons of effective communication with participants, between participants themselves, and for ease of subsequent data analysis) appears to have been an important disincentive;
- some potential participants did not feel qualified to take part because: (a) they had not been discriminated against and therefore felt they could not add anything of value to the research; and/or (b) they were not recent arrivals and therefore felt that their earlier experiences would not be representative of those of recent migrants;
- despite the explanation and details provided in the introductory letter and Information Sheet, some of those contacted declined to participate because of concerns as to the reasons for the research and the use of the data collected;

- finally, there were also occasions when focus groups were set up, usually through a well-worked link and after several meetings with key individuals, only for the group to be cancelled or postponed indefinitely. In the case of a group of Middle Eastern refugees, for example, the process was disrupted by the war in Iraq in mid-2003. In such cases, rather than face further lengthy delays and negotiation it was decided to put a final data collection deadline in place (having extended it numerous times before) and to proceed accordingly.

Overall, these recruitment difficulties may be summed up as a combination of: the unwillingness, lack of confidence and concerns of potential participants; the research design criteria for participant selection; the inability of the research team to convince some of those contacted or their communities to participate; and factors external to the immediate research situation and environment.

## **Focus Group Meetings**

Each focus group was facilitated by the first author (Butcher), in English, tape-recorded, conducted at a time that suited the participants (weekday afternoons in the case of Christchurch, and weekday evenings in Auckland and Wellington) and usually ran for about 2 -2.5 hours. With an eye to previous research, media reports and the interests of the researchers, discussions in the meetings focused on: discrimination in the areas of employment, neighbourhood harassment, and the provision of goods and services; as well as the importance of the problems discussed and what could be done to make the settlement process easier (see Appendix 3). To protect participants in terms of what was said about such sensitive matters, each of them was required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix 2). Privacy was further assured with an undertaking not to identify individuals in the report produced. The topics addressed were nevertheless not easy to discuss and much was expected of the participants, especially in a situation where: the language used (English) was their second or third language; they were not necessarily known to each other; and the focus group facilitator was not only a relatively young, 'junior' member of the research team but also a *Pakeha* New Zealander rather than a former immigrant or refugee who could relate to the issues involved and to the participants as a fellow 'outsider'.

Readers will find in the next section of this report that the focus groups yielded a reasonably rich body of information and insights with regard to the experiences of new settlers in contemporary New Zealand. That said, it is important to acknowledge particular issues relating to the meetings that may nevertheless have restricted the breadth, depth and/or quality of the information collected. These issues included the following:

- on one occasion the participants, exercising a right to do so (see Appendix 1, Information Sheet), asked to have the tape recorder turned off temporarily because of sensitive information. The researcher complied. However, this incident raises the possibility that some participants may, for whatever reason, have avoided sharing certain experiences or discussing aspects of a particular topic rather than cause embarrassment or disrupt proceedings by asking for a halt in recording;
- the age and 'junior' status in the project team of the focus group facilitator caused some concern among participants from ethnic communities where status and age are highly regarded. Speculatively, some participants had the impression that allowing a 'junior' researcher to facilitate the focus groups reflected negatively on the importance of the research. Could this have deterred some participants from contributing as fully and as frankly as they were able to? In hindsight it may have been desirable to have the senior designated project leader (Spoonley) present, if not actually facilitating the focus groups, rather than rely on an introductory letter alone;
- finally, the issue of researchers perceived to be suitably qualified for the task was not helped by the unanticipated departure from Massey University, just prior to the commencement of fieldwork, of Dr Rajen Prasad. A senior academic, an immigrant from Fiji of Indian parentage and well known in his recent role as New Zealand's Race Relations Conciliator, Dr Prasad was the initial designated leader for this study and superbly qualified to facilitate the focus groups. His absence may have affected not only the quality of discussion but also the recruitment of participants.

## Conclusion

On balance, the issues identified for participant recruitment and focus group facilitation lead to a key question. While focus groups have several advantages and while the information gained was informative and valuable, would it have been logistically easier, less time-consuming and more fruitful for a selection of key stakeholders and leaders in immigrant and refugee ethnic communities to be interviewed individually? Not necessarily. Many of the same issues would still have applied to securing suitable potential interviewees and the focus group facilitator's perceived fitness for task. Moreover, the costs (of time, travel, accommodation etc.) to set up and interview as many individuals as were involved in the focus groups, and to then transcribe and analyse a significantly larger body of tape recorded information (say 20 interviews of at least an hour or more in duration) would have exceeded the research budget approved for the project as part of the contract for the New Settlers Programme. As is often the case in the real world of research, the researchers were obliged to do the best that they could under the circumstances. There are, of course, useful lessons to be learned here by researchers planning future projects, and it is

hoped that the issues identified will also assist readers in their assessment and appreciation of the results presented.

## ARENAS OF DISCRIMINATION

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Four key arenas of discrimination were identified. Discussed below in order of importance, they are: discrimination in employment; discrimination against Middle Easterners and Muslims; discrimination in accessing goods and services; and neighbourhood discrimination.

### Employment

International research shows that adverse labour market experiences are strongly associated with a number of negative outcomes for the process of immigrant settlement and the wellbeing of immigrants, including poor mental health for both those who are unemployed and their families (McKee and Bell, 1986). Employment, and the financial and emotional security which follow, has long been recognised as a key element in the welfare of modern urban industrial populations (see Rosenberg, 1977). It is crucial, therefore, to recognise that it is no less important to immigrants and refugees, and that their welfare and successful socio-economic integration will be adversely affected by barriers to employment – be they aspects of the host society's structures or the attitudes and behaviour of its members.

There is an extensive New Zealand literature in this area. Research by the Department of Internal Affairs (1996) found that skilled immigrants, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds, faced formidable barriers in gaining employment. These barriers included misinformation and misunderstanding, the denial of opportunities, the reluctance of employers to recognise overseas qualifications, an inability to access the job market, and an inability to gain the training or experience necessary to meet the standards required for their particular trade or profession. For many, this meant accepting positions with less responsibility or remuneration than their education or experience warranted. This research also found that an increased length of residence in New Zealand and a greater competence in English advantaged skilled immigrants in finding employment that either partly or fully made use of their qualifications.

Amongst recent immigrants (i.e. those in New Zealand for five years or less), a survey undertaken by the New Zealand Immigration Service found that (NZIS, 2003b):

- Recent immigrants were more likely to not be in the labour force (40 percent) than the total immigrant population, this was particularly so for those between 15 and 24 years of age (60 percent). As the duration of



residence in New Zealand increased, there was an increase in the proportion of immigrants employed and a decrease in those unemployed and not in the labour force;

- Overall, immigrants from Europe (including Russia), South Africa and North America (ESANA) had the highest proportion employed (75 percent), the smallest proportion unemployed (4.2 percent) and not in the labour force (21 percent). Immigrants from South Asia, the Pacific and “other” regions had the highest proportions unemployed (9.8, 9.3 and 10.5 percent, respectively). A high percentage of immigrants from North Asia were identified as not being in the labour force (56 percent).
- A slightly higher proportion of recent immigrants in employment were paid employees (79 percent) as compared with the total immigrant population (74 percent). It should be noted that employed immigrants from North Asia were less likely than other immigrants to be paid employees (54.1 percent) and more likely to be self-employed or an employer (19.6 and 9.6 percent, respectively). In general, however, immigrants were more likely to be self-employed or employers the longer they had been resident in New Zealand.
- Recent immigrants were more likely than those who had been resident in New Zealand for longer than two years to be in both “Professional” and “Elementary” occupations.
- A higher proportion of recent immigrants (than the total immigrant population across all age groups) had zero income, particularly those aged between 15 and 24 years and over 64 years.
- To sum up, immigrants from Australia and ESANA had much better outcomes in the New Zealand labour market (i.e. high labour force participation, low unemployment, and higher incomes) than any other immigrants. On the other hand, immigrants from Asia (especially North Asia) and the Pacific have done less well in the labour market with lower rates of participation and higher rates of unemployment (particularly for recent immigrants).<sup>1</sup>

In another study, Basnayake (1999) asked Sri Lankan immigrants whether they faced discrimination during their search for employment or thereafter and to identify the three main barriers to finding employment. The most frequent responses were: a lack of New Zealand experience; employers not understanding applicants from different countries; a lack of New Zealand qualifications; and limited knowledge of English. Basnayake’s (1999) research is largely descriptive and, given that it considers only Sri Lankans, cannot be extrapolated to all other skilled immigrants. Nevertheless, the findings provide a useful adjunct to the present study. Lal (1998) similarly found that among her

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<sup>1</sup> However, given that the Census does not ask for visa type, it could be that a large proportion of these recent immigrants from Asia are international students.

research participants racial prejudice in the course of finding employment or being promoted at work was the most frequent form of discrimination perceived or experienced.

Research has also been done on immigrant self-employment, particularly amongst recent Chinese immigrants (Ho et al., 1999; Forsyte Research, 1998). This research has shown that the Chinese have had great difficulty in setting up businesses for various reasons, including: a lack of information about business investment and procedures; structural barriers, including an inability to speak English; and discrimination by members of the host society. It should, of course, be noted that skilled Chinese immigrants failing to find suitable employment, because their overseas qualifications and previous work experience are not recognised, may be driven into self-employment which therefore becomes involuntary rather than a matter of choice.

Other research has been undertaken on company attitudes and policies toward the utilisation of the linguistic and cultural skills of immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds (Watts and Trlin, 1999a; 1999b). The three main factors influencing the use of such skills were identified as: the kind of activity involved; the customer base; and attitudes to immigration.

For focus group participants in the present study, discrimination in employment fell into two broad categories: (a) pre-employment and the acquisition of jobs, and (b) in the labour force. Within these two areas, issues of qualifications, application procedures, expectations of New Zealand work experience, and language and accent were identified as being important. These findings tend to fit with those of other research on the practices of employers (Henderson et al., 2006; Fletcher, 1999; North and Higgins, 1999).

### *Pre-employment: Getting Work*

The gap between their expectations and experiences in gaining employment was greatest for immigrants rather than refugees. Many immigrants expected that they would find employment more easily than they actually did, and expected also that they would obtain employment commensurate with their qualifications and pre-migration work experience. Some of the focus group participants recognised, however, that an inability to get work is not necessarily the result of racist discrimination by employers; rather, it may simply be that the immigrants concerned are not as well qualified as other candidates for particular jobs. That said, the immigrants felt that they did face discrimination as they sought to obtain employment. For example, a frustrated South Asian immigrant said:

*There is civil discrimination against people who are not white, or not Caucasians.... [I] can speak as good English as anybody else can... [Yet] each time I applied, I would send my application I would get a very nice reply: "Your CVs are interesting, but others who have applied are better than you." It happens once, it can happen twice, but it cannot happen 100 times!*

The possible reasons for such discrimination varied from one participant to another. A South African immigrant suggested that:

*I think one of the reasons this happens is because the Kiwis might feel a little bit threatened, because a lot of them disappear and go off to Australia or [elsewhere] overseas. A lot of them leave for better jobs, better money and who is filling those places? It's us [immigrants]. Not all of us, but here we are, and those [Kiwis] that are left behind kind of think: "Oh here we have got another South African, or another Asian, in my place".... I think that is the fear... [and a] "How many more?", and "How many are left?" mentality.*

Another participant, an immigrant from South Asia argued that there was a criteria hierarchy involved:

*I think that within the immigrants, there is priority of discrimination. You have to appreciate that fact, because then you break it down... [the first priority is for] those of English speaking background. Then there is like the professional background. These are all priorities*

Like most immigrants, South Africans identified gaining employment as a priority upon arrival in New Zealand. Often it was in order to gain residency and to educate their children in a "safe environment" and the "New Zealand education system". They believed that finding employment, as a precondition to residency, would yield security at one level and enable them to buy a house in a high decile neighbourhood so that their children could have a high quality and physically safe education.

For refugees, as compared with skilled immigrants, the situation in terms of finding employment is rather different. Reporting on a major study of refugees, Dibley and Dunstan (2002) found that about half of those over 15 years of age had difficulties in getting paid work with the most common reasons being that they were unable to speak English well enough and lacked New Zealand

qualifications and work experience. A refugee in the present study, obviously struggling to express a point of view, identified the importance of employment as follows:

*I think the issue of employment or like a meaningful job, [is one] which will get people a sense of meaning and collectiveness in the new life. [Pause] So I mean, I think of all these problems, this is maybe the [key] one.*

In essence, the point being made is that employment is important for both the settlement and self-worth of immigrants and refugees. Aside from the financial advantages, employment offers a stake in New Zealand and an opportunity to extend social networks via workplace contacts. However, finding a “meaningful job” was not always easy. A major issue for both immigrants and refugees was whether they were appropriately qualified and suitably proficient in English in the eyes of potential employers.

### Qualifications

Recognised and appropriate qualifications, particularly from New Zealand institutions, were perceived by participants to be a major factor in getting employment. Previous New Zealand research has shown that even if the language barrier is overcome, immigrants may suffer a loss of status when qualifications and work experience gained in their countries of origin are not recognised by potential employers (Basanayake, 1999; Department of Internal Affairs, 1996; Ho et al., 2003; North et al., 1999; Winkleman and Winkleman, 1998; NZIS, 2003a).

In research on skilled immigrants, the NZIS (2003a) found that amongst English-speaking immigrants (ESMs) and those resident in New Zealand for 0-2 years with university qualifications, immigrants from the United Kingdom/Ireland had the highest overall labour force participation rates, whereas those from North East Asia had the lowest. However, it was also found that the majority of non-English speaking migrants (NESMs)<sup>2</sup> had either no qualifications or school-only qualifications (87 percent for both males and females). It was not surprising, therefore, that NESMs had lower employment and labour force participation rates than ESMs and the New Zealand-born. Labour force participation and employment rates were generally lowest for immigrants resident for 0-2 years, with females having lower participation rates than males. Furthermore, while labour force status and employment status were generally higher for those resident in New Zealand for longer than 2

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<sup>2</sup> The main source regions of non-English speaking migrants were North East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific (NZIS, 2003a).

years, they did not show the steady increase with duration of residence that was present for ESMs. Similarly, unemployment rates for male NESMs were higher than that of the New Zealand-born and (unlike the pattern for ESMs) did not decrease with a longer duration of residence.

Finally, it should be noted that previous research has found high levels of both unemployment and under-employment among immigrants. Under-employment – that is being unable to find work in an area of expertise or working in a job of lower status than previously achieved – is well known in international research to be more prevalent among migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds (see Flatau et al., 1995). Like unemployment, it can lead to frustration and stress not just for the individuals concerned but their family members (Ho et al., 2002, 2003; Boyer, 1996; Abbott et al., 1999; North et al., 1999; Pernice et al., 2000) and thereby delay the settlement process. Unable to find suitable work, some immigrants leave New Zealand and seek work overseas (Ho, 2001, 2003) or leave the family in New Zealand and return to a business or other employment abroad. The latter, the so-called “astronaut phenomenon”, is or has been a common practice in Australia and Canada (Kee and Skeldon, 1994; Lam, 1994) as well as New Zealand (Ho and Lidgard, 1998; Ip, 2000; Ho et al., 2000a, 2000b; Friesen and Ip, 1997) but it too may have negative effects upon the family and settlement process (Aye and Guerin, 2001).

Many of the focus group participants expressed annoyance and frustration that their overseas qualifications were not recognised or that they had to retrain or undergo further study in New Zealand before they could be accepted for employment. A refugee, for example, said:

*Getting a job in New Zealand is very difficult and... [one] must be study first [for a] course...but that course takes a long time. For example, two months ago... I found a job... and said “I have certificates from my country from four years”, but he [the employer] said... “I can’t use you [for] my work because you must be first a certificate from New Zealand”.... [I said] “I have [done this sort of work] before, I can understand everything” [but] he said “No, you must have certificate from New Zealand or study a course here”.*

Those seeking employment in the trades, like the individual above, expressed considerable frustration in trying to understand what the differences were in qualifications and experience between builders, plumbers and mechanics in their countries of origin and those in New Zealand. For many in this situation, it was not a question of finding employment commensurate with formal educational qualifications (as in the case of the professions) but finding

employment where their on-the-job trade qualifications and experience were recognised.

Gaining qualifications in New Zealand is expensive (sometimes prohibitively so), especially for professionals, as an Iraqi refugee explained:

*I was a medical doctor in my past life, and of course at that time we applied and we weren't told that we have to sit for an exam or whatever... I came and I was surprised that I should [then have to] sit for an exam, which means there was a lot of hard work which I was actually prepared for, but at the same time it was quite expensive for somebody who is sitting it: it was \$5,000 at that time and they won't give you a loan, they won't give you anything, any sort of support actually, or get you into a class or whatsoever. It was only years later that they started the Bridge programme, which did not include everybody.*

As shown by North et al. (1999), the experience of this doctor was by no means unique. The issue then is complex. It is not just the recognition of qualifications that concerns immigrants and refugees as they seek employment, but the re-training and further study that may be required before they even enter the labour market. This training and study, often in areas in which they have had extensive pre-migration experience, can be so expensive and discouraging that they may not be able to work in their chosen profession or trade.

The importance attached by employers to qualifications and previous work experience was well illustrated by a South Asian participant who was often consulted when foreigners applied for employment in the company she worked for:

*With...[foreign applicants] especially from Africa or from Asia... and maybe some of the Eastern European countries as well... who on paper look very qualified... the problem is that they don't have the New Zealand experience that everybody wants. New Zealand employers look at these qualifications with a question mark. Only because of what has happened in the past: there might be one person who has fabricated some qualification and that managed to get through the system. Always one rotten apple [will spoil it] for everyone, so I think that it's sad that this happened because I am sure 95 percent of the people that come through with qualifications...[have] very valid qualifications, but as to how you deal with it I am not sure... [M]ost of the people we get are recruited for us through employment consultants, but even then, if there's someone with a foreign degree or qualification... I get asked for my opinion....*

*“Do you recognise this university?”, “Do you know the business about it?”*

A South African employer of tradespeople also noted the difficulties faced by immigrants in getting work, even if they were skilled, and suggested that the difficulties reflected more on the employers than the immigrants themselves:

*I think they [New Zealanders] have to be prepared to learn from immigrants as well as teach them. At the moment they are trying to just teach you. But they are not actually prepared to accept that they have to learn and [that] they can. It is not only us [South Africans]; we are talking [about] Asians and we are talking [about] lots of others... just because of who they are and the fact they can't communicate they have a problem working and that is when they are ostracised... We [South Africans] are lucky in that we speak English, we are... sort of 80 percent there, but there are others that are brilliant [who miss out]. I mean in the trades I can tell you some of them are excellent, but they just can't communicate. They struggle, particularly on building sites and stuff... and they look... lost ... whereas those guys would actually get up and do the work instead of some of the locals, but that is just not recognised... and it's difficult for them to come right.*

This South African noted a finding that resonates with research findings more generally; namely, that English-speaking immigrants have an easier time in gaining employment. While language was not an issue for South Africans (the discrimination they perceived had more to do with their qualifications or prior work experience in South Africa), other immigrants found that their accent and English language proficiency were barriers to employment.

### **Language and accent**

A number of studies have identified English language proficiency as a significant factor in determining social and economic settlement outcomes for immigrants and refugees (see, for example, Fletcher, 1999; Montgomery, 1996). Indeed, qualitative studies show that NESB immigrants themselves recognise language as a key element to successful integration (e.g. Lidgard, 1996; Barnard, 1996; Ip et al., 1998). Some studies have also demonstrated a correlation between English proficiency, income and labour market status (Wooden, 1994; Miller and Neo, 1997; Winklemann and Winklemann, 1998; Lidgard et al., 1998; NZIS, 2003a). In addition, other research (see Henderson et al., 2006) indicates what might be called an ‘accent ceiling’, or a reluctance to appoint to senior positions skilled immigrants who speak English with an accent, especially an Asian accent.

The issue around language and accent in getting a job is particularly salient for refugees, who may speak no English at all and have particularly strong accents. Frustrations experienced in the refugee communities were well illustrated by a refugee from the Middle East:

*It's really very difficult sometimes, trying to get a job... Perhaps the first impression they [have of you, they] make a decision about you and they'll conduct the interview anyway, but you don't have a chance of getting that job... So as soon as you've finished the interview he is telling you he will call you, [but] they never call you... Most people... are qualified people, but the problem is they cannot speak English well... so in that situation it's a big obstacle...*

An Iraqi refugee made similar remarks:

*Especially for the Middle Eastern people... even if they have English, they have a strong accent, and they don't have, like most of us... a better written-English than spoken English... I mean we learn it as a second language, it is mostly grammar; it is mostly how you write it... There are other immigrants who are in a... better situation, because they speak English and they know how to communicate themselves, like Indians, for example... But for us... it is a big issue. And I am talking about people with the qualifications, not people without [for whom] it is even worse...*

Finally, it is also worth noting here the statement made by a female participant who identified an issue faced by some immigrants with a 'difficult' foreign name:

*And the latest thing that really irritates me is that employers [and] other people [i.e. employment agencies] bluntly ask the immigrant to change their name into an anglicised name, because it is easier to pronounce. I can see that it is a little bit more effort to listen [but] the longer names can be broken down and a little bit of learning how to pronounce the name would help. But it hurts you that your identity is taken away and that you can't be yourself just to get a job.*

The ability to speak English well appears to be a significant advantage for some immigrants and refugees. However, the perceived discriminatory behaviour of employers and employment agencies suggests that the issue is deeper than



language or accent and may instead be a contemporary response to historical prejudices about the superiority of particular (Western) qualifications, people and languages. If so, this is racism, where there is an ideological belief that 'races' can be ranked in terms of superiority and inferiority (Miles, 1989).

### *Previous New Zealand work experience*

Another significant barrier that focus group participants felt prevented them from getting employment was their lack of New Zealand work experience. According to a South African immigrant:

*When you have been here for six days or whatever and you walk in for a job application and you are asked, "Do you have Kiwi experience?", [you are understandably surprised and reply] "No, because we have been here only six days, but I do have 15 years of experience in my field now." A lot of professions worldwide are the same: if you are a plumber here then you are a plumber anywhere in the world; if you are a pharmacist, you are a pharmacist anywhere in the world. But you are sort of prejudiced against, because you don't have the experience here [in New Zealand] and the only way you are going to get that is if you are given the opportunity to do that... I found that to be a huge stumbling block and still to this day a lot of migrants coming in get told the same thing.*

The Catch-22 of needing work experience to get a job but being denied the opportunity to get the experience required has been noted by Henderson et al. (2001) in relation to skilled Chinese immigrants. It is clear also that refugees (who may have a more sporadic and unsettled work history given the circumstances of their migration) face the same issue, as illustrated by an Iraqi woman who had trained and worked as a doctor in her home country:

*I tried for years when I came... I applied for all sorts of jobs. I have six years experience in the labour room, I have been with many babies; I have tried to have any sort of job in any of the antenatal clinics... And nobody will take you, for all sorts of reasons. I mean, if you have somebody who is nice they will tell you "You are over-qualified" [but if] you have somebody who is not that nice they tell you go and have New Zealand experience before you apply for the job. I mean, it doesn't really matter what qualifications you have, so it is quite sad.*

### ***Post-employment: In the Labour Force***

The difficulties experienced by immigrants and refugees are not limited to those associated with simply getting a job. Having gained entry to the labour market they often find themselves grappling with a new set of difficulties concerning the type of work they do or wish they could do, and being perceived and treated as an outsider.

#### **Type of work**

Some of the focus group members felt they were not appreciated for the qualifications and work experience they could bring to a job once they had been appointed. They felt they should be given more responsibility and/or more remuneration. As one South African immigrant put it:

*There's something there that must be addressed and that's why I'm saying just respect us, we've been there, done it. If they ask us something, we could tell them something and... actually help them... I could bring some things [skills, experience and insights that would be useful] at work... particularly our age group because we've been through the military services and we've been there and had the headaches that have come out of this and I'm sure we could help [them at work].*

But for many, it was more than being under-valued, under-utilised or not being appointed to the positions of responsibility they felt they deserved. Often there was the enduring problem of being (or feeling that one was being) perceived as an outsider.

#### **Being perceived as an outsider**

A Fijian-Indian lawyer described this difficulty in the following way:

*...even within [the legal] profession... there are subtle ways in which one can feel not quite included.... I have always taken the view that I am different, I am [an] outsider, I have to make the extra effort to fit in. And I suspect that most people accept that. Almost [fitting in] is not enough. Accent and language are very different and play a part.*

A South African pharmacist made a very similar point:

*I found problems where you... tend to be ostracised to a certain extent where you don't feel that you fit in. You sort of know, you're meeting... New Zealanders or Australians or whatever and you actually feel like*

*you're sitting on the outside of that circle, you're just never invited in to actually get any further in the profession... it's just that circle you can never break in[to], that old school...*

Add to the equation the factors of gender, age and 'race' and the sense or reality of exclusion becomes multi-dimensional as a Chinese businesswoman noted in relation to her workplace:

*...I think in this organisation, traditionally, unless you are young, unless you are male, play sport, and drink, you know [what I mean]. Those are the categories... that move on in terms of career path and if you are a woman... I wouldn't say [it's] a problem, but an obstacle. And an Asian woman, I think that is a slightly bigger obstacle. If you are an Asian woman who is not young, but middle-aged, that is another obstacle, and also if you are an Asian woman and if you are capable and outspoken, [that is] another bigger minus. But of course in an organisation such as ours there is no way you can admit to this, but as I said, this is that subtle difference.*

Such forms of discrimination, however, are not exclusive to professionals. A South African plumber, for example, drew attention to the resistance to change experienced in the trades:

*I think that some things in South Africa are way more advanced than they are in New Zealand, [particularly] in the trade that I am in... [T]he whole industry is kind of run by "old school", and it is difficult to get into, to get information from... [and] the guys that are in the industry... will find it difficult to change because they live here. They find it difficult to change, so anyone coming in with new ideas [will find that] it is going to take a lot more than just a couple of years to change. It is something that is difficult.*

Taken together, the above examples illustrate some of the more subtle forms of discrimination that contribute to a sense of social exclusion even when an immigrant has found employment. Though not necessarily 'racial', the perceived discrimination is nevertheless born out of prejudice and a distrust of outsiders and differences. It is noteworthy also that even though they were well established in their careers and companies, and long-term residents in New Zealand, both the Indo-Fijian lawyer and the Chinese businesswoman still perceived themselves as being discriminated against.

## Discrimination Against Middle Easterners and Muslims

The terrorist attacks in the United States (11 September 2001) and the subsequent political and media portrayal of Muslims created an increased level of suspicion, prejudice and discrimination against Muslims in many Western countries. New Zealand was not an exception. An increase in racial harassment complaints in the weeks following the attacks was described by the Race Relations Conciliator (ORRC, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) as follows:

*This harassment has taken the form of abusive telephone calls; hate mail; religious buildings being sprayed with graffiti; and bottles used to break windows; physical and verbal abuse on the streets; incidents reports of people being spat on; school children being accused of terrorism and harassed by other children.*

Responding to this situation, the Conciliator noted that (ORRC, 2001d: 10):

*...the anti-Muslim feeling... required the office to consider strategies to pre-empt the possibility that Muslims living in New Zealand might be targeted in retribution.*

Considerable time and effort went into the pre-emptive strategies, especially the task of “coordinating the consultations with the communities affected” (ORRC, 2001d: 12). There are, of course, precedents for the anti-Muslim feeling and behaviour described by the Conciliator, particularly in relation to tensions in the Middle East, and in the prejudice and discrimination against New Zealand’s Dalmatian and German immigrants during the First World War (Bassett, 1999; Burr, 1999; King, 1998).

Putting the events of 9/11 to one side for a moment, research by Dibley and Dunstan (2002) showed that while host community prejudice against refugees constitutes a significant barrier to resettlement, few of those participating in the study felt they had experienced discrimination in New Zealand. However, Dibley and Dunstan (2002) also note that commentators in both the United States and New Zealand have found that prejudice is directed against some Muslim communities as a result of their religious practices, and that women in particular face discrimination because of the way they dress.

So how did the events of 11 September 2001 affect Muslim and Middle Eastern immigrants and refugees participating in focus groups for the present study? Apparently 9/11 and its aftermath had far-reaching effects on employment prospects, kinship ties and responsibilities, and the incidence of harassment. One Muslim refugee, for example, said:

*People have been struggling... to get a job. I mean we get people calling this [New Zealand] a great society... and all of a sudden this tragedy has happened to the US and the World Trade Centre has been destroyed and... so the jobs that we were allowed were cut out... and most of us actually have got some families back home and we are very connected with each other and we are still trying to support them and its our Mum or Dad or brother or sister or anyone who is still in that bad situation, still living back home in Pakistan or Somalia or another Muslim country and they are desperate to get our help and we can't close our eyes [to] them... Some people are making fun of us and saying you are a terrorist or perhaps you are from bin Laden family and you are a Muslim so that makes you a terrorist. ...They hear [on the news] that all Muslims are terrorists and they are here to destroy or kill someone and that's not true...*

The following comments, all drawn from the refugee focus group meeting held in Christchurch, add a further dimension to the effects of 9/11 – namely, the attempt to avoid prejudice and/or discrimination by hiding one's ethnic identity:

*They are afraid of us, I think... One example, I guess, is my small son. He is at school and he is ashamed to say that "I am from Afghanistan." But I always tell him to say that "I am from Afghanistan", don't be ashamed, don't be afraid from anybody and he always tells me, that "If I... [do as you] say Father – the students, they make fun of me".*

*You know, most people now feel... guilt about being a Muslim. We try and hide it... They call themselves some other nickname or some other African name so that other people don't know what sort of name it is, whether Christian or Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist or whatever...*

It should be pointed out that this discrimination was as much against those of Middle Eastern descent as against Muslims in general. According to the focus group participants, comments with reference to Osama bin Laden and the Taliban were frequent, as were other derogatory comments in supermarkets or on the streets. The role played by the media in this was also interesting. Refugees saw the media as encouraging the propagation of particular (discriminatory) images about Muslims and people from the Middle East in general. For example, one refugee participant asserted that:

*One of the problems... is that the media... spread bad news about all of the countries and all of the Muslims, and those people [New Zealanders], they get the information from the media, and they don't know the actual situation of the countries and the people...*

This claim has merit. Although a review of the print media's coverage from 1993-2003 (Spoonley and Trlin, 2004) has shown that there had been a distinct improvement in terms of how information was presented, the issue of refugees (typically confused with asylum seekers) had begun to receive considerably greater negative coverage by 1997. Thereafter, certain refugee communities (such as Somali) were the target of negative comment and the case of the Algerian asylum seeker, Ahmed Zaoui, kept the issue of 'undeserving' refugees/asylum seekers before the public. The interest and concern about Muslim terrorism after 9/11 added another dimension to media coverage and the comments offered by politicians. Certainly those participating in the focus groups for the present study were well aware of these media-conveyed concerns and public suspicion about refugees and asylum seekers, especially Muslims.

## **Discrimination in Accessing Goods and Services**

Difficulties were experienced by both immigrants and refugees in accessing goods and services. The participants gave particular attention to such difficulties in relation to education and housing, though not all of them were affected (or affected to the same degree) in all areas.

### ***Accessing Education***

A key issue, particularly among the refugees, was the need to access education for, as one participant noted, "...some of the refugees who have come have high qualifications, but still they are not recognised here". According to Dibley and Dunstan (2002), 56 percent of the refugees participating in their investigation needed help in accessing training and study, including English language education. That said, it was the needs of their children that dominated the discussion of participants in the focus groups.

The children's experiences were better than those of their parents; schools were generally seen to be accommodating and if there were problems, they tended to be with fellow pupils rather than the staff. However, although the refugees were largely positive about the education their children were receiving it was clear that some children faced particular issues. As one Iraqi refugee mother noted:

*...With the kids... especially the younger kids, it is better, because they get the language, and they get into that.... [but] we are talking about older kids who came from refugee camps, especially, at 15 or 16: they don't have any English and they put them in Fifth Form or Sixth Form and they come to do a couple of years or so. And then they suffer...*

Where complaints were made about the staff, they tended to suggest a lack of staff experience and/or training. The Iraqi refugee quoted above illustrated this issue as follows:

*I mean some teacher[s], especially in high school, they don't really make the effort... to save the person embarrassment. I mean, when somebody doesn't know [the answer to a question] because they don't know, [and] they don't even have the language... [why do teachers] keep asking them, [when] they will keep embarrassing them... I mean in primary schools maybe it is fine for children... to go in the mainstream classes... Maybe it is fine because there is not much expected from them, they can speak for themselves eventually... But for older people, and for teenagers who are already self-conscious and they just look like idiots [it is not right]... I mean when they talk to me, and they cry... honestly I can understand their position exactly. I mean, they are the idiots in a big class, and it is just not right to push them into that Form immediately, with the other kids. I mean, [they] don't know what is happening to them. I mean, some of these people haven't been to schools before, and if they have they don't know the language at all, or sport or... [anything].*

Following the above statement, some participants suggested that research should be undertaken to determine what (if any) discrimination the children perceive or experience. However, while the concerns of parents are understandable, it is important to recognise: first, that a substantial body of New Zealand research on the school experiences of immigrant and refugee children already exists (see, for example Trlin and Barnard, 1997; Trlin, 2005); and second, that what the above statement may suggest is not that teachers are being deliberately discriminatory but that they lack the cross-cultural awareness and/or expertise required to effectively respond to the particular needs of immigrant and refugee children in the classroom.

Another issue for refugees concerned children entering the labour force while parents would prefer them to continue their education. As one refugee put it:

*So most of the refugee children just remain working for a low income, you know, just a low income so they forget about the school. If they learn to work just to get money, then they forget education.*

Another made a very similar point:

*This is very important... if he study and if he get higher qualification then he can find his way in the community. But if he does not study but got work I am sure that once he got interested in work and taking money he would never pay attention to his education. Never.*

This issue highlights the complexities of refugee resettlement, particularly where the parents' employment – reflecting discrimination – yields insufficient income for the family, and children are asked or expected to contribute to the household but may themselves be discriminated against with regard to the type of work available and the remuneration they receive. It resonates also with particular issues surrounding the integration of refugee children into a host society (see, for example, John et al., 2002).

Significantly, the South African immigrants expressed no difficulty with respect to education. On the contrary, they were very complimentary about the efforts made by education providers to accommodate their needs. It may be that the South Africans' experiences were better or different simply because the schools and/or teachers found it easier to deal with them when most (if not all) of them were able to speak English.

### ***Accessing Housing***

Although previous New Zealand research in this area is limited (see Macdonald, 1986; ORRC, 1991), housing (usually rental accommodation) is a problem for many new settlers for two reasons: (a) they have very little discretionary income; and (b) landlords and estate agents may not want to let properties to certain prospective tenants for reasons of prior experience and/or prejudiced attitudes and beliefs.

Dibley and Dunstan (2002) found that one-third of the refugees in their study had difficulty finding suitable housing, many were dissatisfied with their current housing and those in Auckland and Wellington had shifted accommodation more often than refugees in other centres. They also found that (Dibley and Dunstan, 2002: 49):

*A focus group noted a lack of suitable housing, particularly in Auckland... Many communities have settled in inner-city areas which*



*makes finding houses close-by problematic. Houses that are the right size are further out of town... away from the community, appropriate services and public transport. As well as this, there is some prejudice from private landlords who, at times, view refugees as undesirable tenants.*

The reluctance of landlords to rent to immigrants was illustrated in the present study by a focus group participant in Christchurch:

*Someone I know has been looking for a bigger place because they are having many children. And [he] finally found a house that could accommodate the children, rang, and the house was available, and when he arrived and they found he was black, the house was 'taken'. Someone else rings just to check [it] out and is taken out [and] the house is vacant.*

Other immigrant participants shared similar stories, even to the extent of a landlord commenting on the accent of the prospective tenant and perhaps refusing a house viewing. Refugee focus group members also had difficulties. For example, an Iraqi refugee said:

*Housing is a nightmare... I mean if you don't look right, there are very few houses... But some people, I mean some migrants who are like from a good background... are all right. I mean they can present themselves as how they are... so they have a better chance. And if they are employed they have a better chance. But the majority don't have money, or employment and they have bigger families, no [English] language, and if they are covered like me [in the Muslim headdress], I mean, they are not presenting the best at every moment ...People also act upon personal assumptions, which are not always true... People are stereotyping in many ways anyway... You are really stuck when you don't have many options... So you pay more for something and you get much less.*

It is significant that none of the South African focus group participants noted any difficulties in accessing accommodation.

### ***Accessing Other Goods and Services***

Most participants indicated that they did not experience any discrimination when they went shopping or were involved in similar activities. However, one comment is worth noting. This woman said:

*My personal experiences have been good things so far and positive. But I am a sensitive person picking up vibes, and I can tell [if] someone (through their reactions)... [is] sometimes wondering if I am able to afford certain things or... able to pay the bill... So that is one of things [where] I am not getting the benefit of the doubt - that I am capable, and intelligent, and can manage my finances.*

This is the notion of subtle discrimination that other participants perceived in their workplace and elsewhere.

Accessing key information about a range of goods and services, especially income support, was also a significant factor noted by focus group participants. In the Wellington focus group, for example, a participant commented how she, as a new immigrant, was not told how to access information about goods and services and had to seek that out for herself. Another participant in the same focus group thought that this was not necessarily discrimination, just a gap in service provision. It could, however, become discrimination if it was a deliberate withholding of information – an error of commission rather than an error of omission.

Finally, there are three other points to be made in relation to discrimination in accessing goods and services. First, there was a surprising (but gratifying) lack of comment about access to health services which has been noted in previous research as an issue for refugees in particular (see Abbott, 1997, 1989) and one often related to the formidable barrier of English language proficiency (see Holt et al., 2001). Second, a refugee noted the reluctance of other refugees to complain about discrimination when it occurred because: “People are frightened... about whether it would affect their citizenship... [and] would never mention it to save face.” In other words, it is possible that discrimination in access to goods and services as well as in other arenas has been under-reported by the participants. And third, there was evidence of tension among some immigrants in relation to ‘positive’ discrimination in favour of refugees who appeared to be treated more favourably in their entry and residence procedures and post-arrival assistance. This ‘positive’ discrimination was perceived as ‘negative’ discrimination toward immigrants, notably by the South Africans. For example, one of the latter made the following comment:

*You get upset when you hear the refugees are just let in. They get a house basically, to stay in... Even in the hospital [they are] getting treated with government funded money... I mean, oh what do I have to do? I have to be interrogated, and I have my qualifications interrogated, etc. etc... and this guy walks in and says, “I’m a refugee” and he gets in and within a couple of months he’s doing exactly what I am. He’s*

*bypassed [all the usual entry requirements, and] maybe that is what we should have done and arrived here in a boat. You know, that's how I look at it in a way because, you know, maybe I would have been treated better, as far as a job's concerned. I don't know, they [refugees] get more status in a way. And maybe they get locked up and that when they arrive but when you look at what happened to them and what we have to go through, that is not recognised. But if it was recognised then I think we would be in a... better position from the word go...*

The sense of injustice pervading this comment is understandable given the often substantial costs incurred by some skilled immigrants in gaining New Zealand residence. It is true also that post-arrival resettlement assistance of various types has long been available to refugees (although a heavy burden has fallen on host community sponsors) whereas official moves toward similar assistance for skilled immigrants effectively date from the beginning of the new millennium (see Trlin and Watts, 2004). Late though the moves have been, they are welcome as an attempt to meet the needs of new arrivals and to counter what has been perceived as a form of institutional policy discrimination.

## **Neighbourhood Discrimination**

Neighbourhood interaction and relationships are influenced by a variety of factors, including the actual or perceived immigrant density (i.e. the numbers living in close proximity to each other in particular neighbourhoods) and media coverage which promotes or reinforces a view that some groups are unwelcome or unsafe in certain neighbourhoods. For example, a front page headline "Moves against 'Asian City'" leaves little to the imagination, while another – "Safety fears add to struggle" – sums up the Auckland experience of an immigrant couple subjected to burglaries, racial taunts, and difficulty in getting work (Taylor, 2003a, 2003b).

A Sri Lankan member of the Wellington focus group noted the tendency for immigrants to congregate in particular neighbourhoods and the often negative impressions this created:

*Like in Auckland, Howick is now called "Chowick" because there are so many Chinese there, and... in parts of Churton we have Sri Lankans there... we have these people that live in this area and they then bring all the problems and issues that they have in Sri Lanka into that neighbourhood, because they have to do what the Jones' [i.e. other Sri Lankans] do, the kids go to a certain school ...and if they have a BMW, the other person must have a BMW... There is the perception of that sort of thing*

*[which] gives the migrant group a bad feel... a bad sort of... reputation... and I think the same thing happens with Chinese as well...*

Another participant offered a suggestion as to how this residential concentration might engender discrimination. She felt that:

*...the discrimination is because it's [i.e. the residential concentration] not the norm: that what the migrants are doing is not what is normal in New Zealand. And so, because of this, New Zealanders don't understand that [i.e. why migrants concentrate in a certain area], the way they react is... discrimination, for want of a better word...*

The suggestion that immigrant or ethnic residential concentrations are “not what is normal in New Zealand” is not supported by the evidence available (see, for example, Trlin, 1984; Poulsen et al., 2000). The lack of understanding of this phenomenon among New Zealanders, on the other hand, is undeniable and has motivated a number of researchers since the late 1960s (e.g. Burnley, 1972; Trlin, 1976). An important outcome of this research (in New Zealand, and especially overseas) has been the realisation that in-group social networks are a notable feature of immigrant/ethnic neighbourhoods founded and sustained by chain migration, and that such networks are very helpful in the process of international migration and immigrant settlement (see Burnley, 1972; Trlin, 1979; George and Fuller-Thomson, 1997; Massey et al., 1998; Tilly, 1990; Vertovec, 2002; Rogers et al., 2001). It is hardly surprising that many of the social networks of the immigrants and refugees participating in the focus groups were intra-cultural.

Putting aside the perception and understanding of immigrant/ethnic residential concentration, the nature and quality of neighbourhood social interaction and relationships usually comes down to the willingness and ability of people – especially members of the host community – to engage with new settlers. This was very clear in the responses of participants when they were asked if they had experienced any discrimination in the neighbourhoods in which they lived. For example, an Iraqi refugee in Auckland said:

*Again it depends on the people... I mean my own experiences of these people... are very positive, especially when their neighbours are church people or god-fearing people... But, I mean, there are certain people who have really bad experiences... some neighbours are just so awful.*

And in Christchurch a Middle Eastern refugee said:

*Some people do not even talk to you, even if they are your neighbours for years. They don't even bother to say "Hi", [unless] all of a sudden if something goes wrong, if you park your car wrong... And that could be the first time those folks spoke to you and you have been living there for years.*

Like many other individuals, participants in the same Christchurch focus group reported that they did not regularly experience specific acts of discrimination from their neighbours as their New Zealand neighbours in general had little to do with them. As one Filipino immigrant put it:

*I have found the Kiwis are very private. They tend to stay at home so you don't really... get to... mingle with them as much as [you would mingle with people in Asia]... You don't get the chance to know what they think, unless you ask them for dinner. So I get this feeling that they are somehow private. But I don't really feel any discrimination in that sense, because there is not enough time to mingle with them.*

Another Christchurch participant stated, quite succinctly: "Most people are positive, but some never say hello". A possible explanation for this behaviour of New Zealanders, their maintenance of privacy with restricted interaction, was offered by a Middle Eastern refugee:

*The neighbourhood knows exactly who we are, but they don't know deep down anything about what you are, the situation, where you came from... or anything like that. They don't know; they have no idea about that... So people are just the same [everywhere]: there are good people [and] there are bad people.*

The perceived lack of knowledge and/or understanding among New Zealanders referred to by this participant is important and is discussed in more detail below.

Obviously the actions of New Zealanders as described above are not necessarily indicative of prejudice or discriminatory, although they may be perceived as such by the new settler involved. It could be that New Zealanders also find their neighbours aloof and impolite, although the following statements by South African immigrants in Auckland suggest otherwise:

*We came from a neighbourhood in South Africa where we all sort of knew each other, and we communicated, and we could speak over the fence... And that just doesn't happen in Auckland.*

*It is the only place where you start giving invitations, well maybe to some people at work, and maybe through your schoolkids, some of their parents perhaps... South Africans will invite South Africans, I think, which is in our nature, I think, but you don't see that happening very quickly with the Kiwis. Maybe once again it's that threatened feeling [i.e. Kiwis feeling threatened by immigrants], I don't know.*

*I think we all have the same thoughts. When we left South Africa we weren't going to associate with South Africans, we were going to live in New Zealand, we were only going to associate with New Zealanders. But I promise you, after six months, you think... how [many] doors do I have to get [through], before I get to go out to dinner?*

Of all the participants, the South African group felt particularly confused as to the difficulties they faced in interacting with New Zealanders and devoted more time than the other groups to trying to explain the vagaries of New Zealanders' social habits. The conclusion reached was that New Zealanders, unlike South Africans, entertain out rather than at home. Noting that a brother had observed and experienced the same thing in Australia, one participant suggested:

*...perhaps it is because everyone has to do their own housework and that type of thing, and rather than actually invite people over to the house, they would rather go... to a restaurant.*

Another added:

*I must be honest. The people who live in our locality, you don't actually see them with a number of cars and lots of people visiting and...[that] type of thing. So perhaps it is not that they are shutting us out, but perhaps it is the way that they socialise - you know?*

Recognising the need to seek alternative interaction opportunities, however, one group member cited a possible strategy and personal success story:

*We've had the same experience... to start with they don't even look at you, but eventually I've got to greet them and they sort of respond to that. But... I think perhaps in social clubs it might make a difference and we are sort of very involved in church life and we've made friends with two very nice families very easily, spontaneous and that took place right from the start and so we are well set up...*

To sum up, therefore, it appears that the neighbourhood experiences of focus group participants were largely positive. With only a few exceptions (e.g. where some families or individuals made derogatory comments), New Zealanders were found to be friendly and helpful – albeit with the caveat, particularly among the South Africans, that Kiwis initially tended to be reserved, not to entertain guests in their own homes and to keep to themselves. Interestingly, the views of many participants about their interactions with New Zealanders stemmed not from their personal experiences alone but also from the vicarious stories of compatriot neighbours and friends from which they often extrapolated.

### *Perceived knowledge and attitudes of New Zealanders*

Reference has already been made in passing to the perceived lack of knowledge and understanding of New Zealanders, a perception that warrants further attention at this point in relation to its impact upon neighbourhood social interaction. Many of the participants were concerned by Kiwi ignorance of their national origins and expressed frustration with assumptions that their countries were or might be technologically, economically and/or socially inferior to New Zealand. While the perceived ignorance and assumptions might seem surprising, given that New Zealanders are among the world's most travelled people, it should be borne in mind that this travelling is usually done in Western Europe and North America, not in those Asian and African countries from which many immigrants and refugees have come since the late 1980s. Participants felt that the long histories of their countries were unrecognised, while contemporary political or social difficulties in their homelands were not as simple as portrayed by the media or individual New Zealanders. They also expressed frustration with the fact that many of the prevailing media images of their countries were negative, while much that was positive was ignored. Inevitably these negative images tended to feed public perceptions of the immigrants and refugees.

When asked what they perceived to be the attitudes of New Zealanders toward their particular group some participants readily identified certain unfavourable attitudes toward Muslims and Middle Easterners (discussed in an earlier section above). They were not alone. Other participants also identified specific – usually negative – public perceptions of their group. A South African, for example, drew attention to material on the internet and elsewhere which led New Zealanders to believe that South Africans coming to these shores “are arrogant.” As indicated below, this comment provoked a lively discussion on Kiwi perceptions of South Africans:

*I can tell you on the sport field they [New Zealanders] don't respect South Africans, and I have noticed that they are very arrogant, like the Australians, and very arrogant about how they are going to beat everyone. And when they are beaten, it is suddenly "Oh those guys can play rugby". So it is the same in the workplace. They are on the top, but they actually find somewhere along the line [that] these other guys can do something. We [South Africans] are not better than them [New Zealanders], but we can do some things better than them. And if they recognise it and respect it that is all we want, you know.*

Others expressed similar views, reiterating also the Kiwi lack of knowledge and understanding:

*...you must remember we have come here because of what has happened over there, what's going on, but we have not come from a backward area, you know, at all. It is actually quite advanced, and South Africans are really pretty deft... And they have managed to get here under a helluva [lot of] stress and all sorts of headaches... And I don't think they [New Zealanders] recognise that. They don't understand where we have come from.*

Another participant identified the construction of the historically negative perceptions about South Africa and how these had not changed:

*...there is so much negative focus on South Africa, I don't think they have ever been in focus from a positive perspective, because... all they were fighting against was the apartheid, which they knew very little of... I don't think, South Africa has ever been... promoted as a country that is up and coming.... I mean [there is] discrimination... all around the world, but unfortunately... we were [the] ones who were the scapegoat for the rest of the world... It is happening all the time, I mean it is not something new. We have come from a country that has been through it and done it. And what I am saying [is that] it is just the respect that we have been there and done that, and we have learned from it.*

Other participants also noted what they perceived to be general (often negative) public perceptions about immigrants and/or refugees. A key factor in such perceptions appeared to be competition for jobs or other economic opportunities. For example:

*[New Zealanders] consider [immigrants] come here and take jobs and opportunities, or... think that I am especially Asian for higher rent.*



Another said:

*In terms of business, many of them [New Zealanders] are happy to see more people coming to buy more products.... They're happy with money coming in, business would be more for them, [but it's] different when they don't like foreigners because they can't get a job.*

## DISCUSSION

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Given the nature of the issues identified, the key question should be self-evident. What can be done to improve matters? The focus groups were given the opportunity to respond to this question and their comments are presented below. This section of the report then concludes with a brief consideration of the implications for host society institutions.

### What Can Be Done?

An obvious course of action, clearly signalled in the previous consideration of neighbourhood discrimination, is to promote the development of knowledge and understanding in the host population with respect to the backgrounds and situations of the new settlers. A refugee in Christchurch made this point clearly:

*... I understand the meaning of [being a] refugee. It doesn't mean it is [a] bad thing because where you live with no hope and go somewhere else, you are still [a] refugee... But people [here in New Zealand], they don't understand it...*

Another Christchurch refugee noted that even when he was feeling welcome, a comment that betrayed a lack of understanding of the refugee's situation could alter that:

*It affects you like that - it has got to be very shocking you know when you see yourself in New Zealand and you believe you've come to a very safe country, a very beautiful place to be and then all of a sudden somebody says to you, "Oh you're a refugee, why don't you go back to your country?" So you've already lost one country and there's no way you can go back...*

The effect of this lack of knowledge and understanding, of course, was not only being made to feel unwelcome but also being denied a new identity, with possibly far-reaching implications for cultural, social and economic integration. Refugees, in particular, expressed their desire to be seen as "New Zealanders". For example:

*We are not... [just] Somalian, you know, we are New Zealanders. ...we are keeping our culture. Everyone has a culture... we have [a] good culture...[but] we have to believe that we are New Zealander and [New Zealanders] have to accept that we belongs to them.*

It should be noted, however, that such expressions of identity (or even loyalty to New Zealand) were not expressed to the same degree by all participants. Members of the South African focus group were less likely to identify in this way.

If knowledge and understanding was to be promoted, how was this to be achieved? A Christchurch focus group suggested that there needed to be more public education, particularly via the media but also in schools and churches. The South African focus group identified the importance of educating children so that the “next generation” could do better in terms of ethnic relations. Echoing the comments of other groups, the Wellington focus group also suggested it was important to educate children about discrimination and, in the case of (second-generation) immigrant and refugee children, help them to explore issues of identity in New Zealand. This group also suggested having a youth forum in order to explore the particular issues of discrimination faced by the young.

The issue of equality was another matter addressed by the Wellington focus group as a basic human right that should be advanced. In this regard, it must be noted that some participants expressed annoyance at what they believed to be the absence of an appeals authority to which new settlers could make complaints about acts of discrimination in employment and other areas. This annoyance was surprising and disturbing in that it indicated a lack of awareness, a lack of use and/or (by some) a distrust of the redress opportunities available through the Human Rights Commission and the Race Relations Commissioner. It seems, therefore, despite the efforts made in previous years (see, for example, ORRC, 1999: 14-17; ORRC, 2000: 16-18; ORRC, 2001d: 12-14), even more resources need to be devoted to public education about the Human Rights Act, the Race Relations Act and the work of both the Commission and the Race Relations Commissioner.

Finally, in accord with their comments on neighbourhood relations, the South Africans identified a need for improved communication. How this could be achieved was not explained, but it is reasonable to assume that it would be associated with better knowledge and understanding, and reductions in social distance as new settlers enter mainstream voluntary associations and work alongside New Zealanders. Less easy to tackle, however, are the calls by South Africans for respect for what they could contribute to New Zealand, and for New Zealand to deal with its internal race relations problems. As illustrated in the two following quotes, these calls appear to be a mixture of injured pride, a rebuke and genuine concern for the future of their host society.

*... even some Kiwis, Pakehas, Maoris, don't get on. And it is their country... I laugh because these are the guys who are telling us they won't play rugby with us because of our policies in South Africa. You see what I'm saying... They're at each other [here in New Zealand], sometimes even worse vibes than ever we had with our blacks.*

*...The Asians that come here, there is quite a bit of discrimination against them. I mean some places are openly discriminating... And that is basically the same apartheid as we had in South Africa... And some of those Asians are incredibly intelligent... And they have come from a country that is way ahead in certain fields, and now are here. But they are all being discriminated against purely because they can't speak English... that is the bottom line, because they can't speak English. They can't connect with you positively so they are ostracised. And look at South Africa, where did we have that problem? Blacks were ostracised because they couldn't speak English, their cultures are different, and they were from a different way of life, or whatever. That's it, put them in a box. And that is exactly the same thing, it can happen here, and it is happening all around the world...*

The emphasis placed in the latter quote on an ability to speak English signals an obvious and relatively straight forward way to improve a situation where the settlement process is marred by discrimination and social exclusion. Albeit imperfect, the English language ability and proficiency of skilled immigrants, business migrants and entrepreneurs seeking residence in New Zealand is now well established as a requirement in immigration policy (see Henderson et al., 1997; Bedford et al., 2005) but has not been applied to either refugees or to immigrants seeking to enter on grounds of family reunion. Rather than introduce further and/or more stringent immigration restrictions on applicants, a sensible alternative approach is to increase the post-arrival (re)settlement resources for the teaching of English as a second language, and to do so with an eye to the findings and recommendations of reports such as those by Watts et al. (2001a, 2001b) and White et al. (2001, 2002).

## **Implications for Host Society Institutions**

The discussion throughout this report has focused upon the experiences and perceptions of immigrants and refugees. Issues of prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion have been considered from the perspectives of new settlers, rather than those of various host communities. However, as Bauböck (1996: 7) points out, immigration affects *receiving* societies in profound ways as well, raising questions of collective self-identification: “who are we?” and “who

belongs?" Indeed, the settlement process is one of mutual self-adaptation: as new settlers adapt to their host society, so the host society adapts to them. However, this process is not equal or symmetrical: immigrants and refugees become members (in one form or other) of the receiving society, but individual members of the receiving society do not typically become members of the immigrant or refugee communities.

Without going into any great detail, the emphasis here is upon the need to consider what the experiences and perceptions of immigrants and refugees tell us about New Zealand and New Zealanders, and above all what concessions or adaptations the host society and its members are prepared to make for new settlers who are prospective New Zealanders. For example, as indicated in an earlier section of this report, there are certainly implications for employers and employment agencies in terms of their willingness to recruit new settlers (especially from non-English speaking backgrounds), their concerns about such employees and the utilisation of particular linguistic and cultural skills – all matters which are consistent with the findings of other researchers (see North and Higgins, 1999; Burns, 2000; Henderson et al., 2006; Watts and Trlin, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b). There are also important issues around providing information about and access to a variety of goods and services – be they education and housing (indicated in this report) or health and social services (identified in recent research by, for example, Guerin et al., 2003b; North et al., 2006) – and recognition by professionals of the need for new knowledge, skills and practice procedures to more effectively engage with and meet the needs of clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Nor should it be forgotten that there is a need for improved information on and access to complaint mechanisms when people are discriminated against.

A final point of consideration, as Bauböck (1996: 12) notes, is that:

*...[m]ost voluntary migrants might not be able to negotiate the conditions of their entry and admission, yet this does not imply that they have no other choice but to accept them.*

Immigrants (voluntary migrants) should be understood as agents in their own right, albeit with constrained options not of their own making. Refugees (forced or involuntary migrants), on the other hand, have few choices, certainly not in their homeland or in which country accepts them as refugees. New Zealand has adopted an enlightened approach in accepting refugees in the first place and in the priority categories for refugee selection. But there are significant post-arrival issues for refugees and for host community understanding of the issues that refugees have and will face. For example, by the late 1990s both refugees and asylum seekers attracted a lot of negative comments in the media (see Spoonley,

1995: 95). This suggests, as some focus group participants were at pains to point out, that an important task for the host society is to endeavour to ensure that the public and especially gatekeepers to employment, education, housing and other goods and services are appropriately informed about refugees in particular and immigrants generally.

## CONCLUSION

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This study has identified various aspects of both the nature and incidence of discrimination experienced by immigrants and refugees in New Zealand, their perception of these experiences and some of the implications for members of the host society, policy makers and government agencies. Information was collected via focus groups held in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, from the reports of the Office of the Race Relations Conciliator and other national and international research in this field.

New Zealand has a long and distinguished history in refugee resettlement, accepting (under well established and internationally recognised criteria) a higher proportion of refugees per head of population than many other similar countries. In contrast to the humanitarian principles and ideals governing the admission of refugees, New Zealand's approach to immigrants has been far more pragmatic. Immigrants have traditionally been sought and approved for residence in terms of the desirability of their cultural backgrounds and ease of assimilation, but in 1986 this policy began to shift toward an emphasis on their skills and economic benefit to New Zealand. This shift in policy was more or less accomplished by the mid 1990s. Coupled with the continuing acceptance of refugees from the world's trouble spots in Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans, an important outcome of this policy change has been the rapid growth and enhanced cultural diversity of New Zealand's foreign-born population. It has proved to be an outcome not always welcomed by New Zealanders, fuelling public and political debates on the nature and impact of Asian immigration, and posing challenges and difficulties for both new settlers and their hosts in the process of settlement.

Since the late 1980s a substantive body of research literature has been produced on the experiences of New Zealand's immigrants and refugees. Micro-level analyses in particular, which consider the experiences of specific groups of new settlers, offer relevant information on prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion. In addition, recent surveys have found that Asians are more likely than any other group to be the target of discrimination (Human Rights Commission, 2003). It is not surprising, therefore, that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of complaints lodged with the Race Relations Office. However, while this may represent a tangible increase in discriminatory and racially based acts, these complaints can be assumed (on the basis of overseas research, as well as the fortitude, knowledge and skills required to lodge a complaint) to be only a fraction of the total number of negative acts experienced or perceived by immigrants and refugees.

In the literature on discrimination, there has long been a distinction made between attitude and behaviour. In the first case, prejudice involves positive or negative attitudes, may involve stereotypes and is apparent in the way individuals or groups are described. Discrimination, on the other hand, is an act or policy which advantages or disadvantages individuals or groups. The majority of the participants in this study noted that the discrimination they experienced or perceived was subtle; rarely were they called names or verbally or physically abused. Their perceptions were often based on assessments of particular situations, the assumptions they believed other people held and which influenced behaviour toward them, and they also drew on the experiences of others (friends or cases reported in the media) from which they extrapolated to *all* members of their particular ethnic or national group. Understandably they were reluctant to acknowledge discriminatory behaviour, and at times were ready to excuse it. Nevertheless, what is important here was what the immigrant or refugee *perceived*.

The most significant arena in which discrimination was experienced or perceived was that of employment and it tended to fall into two categories – pre-employment (getting a job), and in the labour force. Within these categories there were issues concerning: qualifications (their appropriateness, utility and recognition); application procedures; the expectation that applicants would have New Zealand work experience; and English language ability and accent. In common with the findings of numerous other studies since the early 1990s it was found that these issues were formidable barriers or obstacles for both immigrants and refugees (particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds) in gaining employment and being able to advance in a profession or trade in New Zealand.

Middle Eastern and Muslim participants also perceived and/or experienced discrimination in response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Confirmed by the Race Relations Office, which noted an increase in complaints of racial harassment in the weeks immediately following the attacks, this type of discrimination was not peculiar to New Zealand (more explicit and blatant discrimination occurred in other countries) nor was it unique historically (other ethnic and national groups have similarly experienced discrimination in times of conflict). Nevertheless, Muslim and Middle Eastern participants in this study perceived that racialised responses to the attacks affected their employment prospects, making the already difficult task of acquiring employment even more difficult. It is noteworthy also that they perceived the media to have a significant role in propagating and encouraging particular discriminatory images about their groups.



Discrimination in accessing certain goods and services (other than those involved in the retail trade of everyday shopping) was identified by some participants. For example, reflecting on the requirements they had to meet to gain residence in New Zealand, some South Africans complained not only about the relative ease with which refugees (or perhaps asylum seekers) gained entry but felt also that with the support provided by the state it was easier for refugees to obtain employment and to access services such as education, health and housing. This was not a view shared by other participants, especially refugees themselves who recounted the difficulties experienced in accessing goods and services such as education. In particular, they found schools to be less than accommodating with regard to the circumstances and needs of their children and often cross-culturally unaware. Significant difficulties were also experienced in accessing housing, usually rented accommodation. There was a strong perception that landlords did not want to let properties to certain immigrants and refugees. The South African participants, on the other hand, reported no difficulties with either education or housing.

Putting aside the alleged positive discrimination toward refugees, two factors seemed to be of prime importance with regard to accessing goods and services. As found in other studies, language (i.e. English language knowledge and proficiency) was undoubtedly the greatest barrier, especially for refugees and older immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds. The availability of and access to relevant information about goods and services was also a problem. While the difficulty with information may be cited as a gap in service provision rather than one of discrimination, it becomes somewhat more complex when recognised as an issue that is often directly related to the problem of language.

With only a few exceptions (e.g. cases of verbal harassment) the neighbourhood experiences of the focus group participants were largely positive. Both refugees and immigrants were quick to assert that in general New Zealanders, although at least initially somewhat reserved, were friendly and helpful. That said, the South Africans, in particular, found New Zealanders to be reserved, not to entertain guests in their own homes, and to keep to themselves. Life-style differences may (as the South African participants observed) account for some neighbourhood interaction difficulties where they occur, but the influence of other factors cannot be ignored. Among the latter are: a lack of understanding and fears about the nature and causes of immigrant/ethnic neighbourhood concentrations (especially the importance and role of in-group social networks); communication difficulties for both New Zealanders and new settlers where the latter are from non-English speaking backgrounds; and the role of the media, perceived by participants to unfairly present negative images that promote and

perpetuate public ignorance and fears about new settlers and their countries of origin.

Needless to say, the research participants regarded the issues canvassed in their focus group discussions as matters of importance not only to themselves but to New Zealand and New Zealanders. Whether actually experienced or simply perceived, the difficulties, obstacles and barriers of prejudice and discrimination were real to the immigrants and refugees involved and real in their consequences for the process of settlement. Dealing with this prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion, therefore, is not only important but necessary if New Zealand is to reap in full the economic, social and humanitarian benefits of its policies governing the admission of immigrants and refugees.

Three broad courses of action to tackle the difficulties experienced or perceived were identified:

- promote the development of knowledge and understanding in the host population with regard to the backgrounds and situations of new settlers;
- promote equality in access to goods and services, and in social interactions via education about the Human Rights Act and the Race Relations Act;
- improve communication between New Zealanders and new settlers.

Action and adjustment is undoubtedly required on both sides, but there can be no doubt as to where the prime responsibility lies. To quote Bauböck (1996: 21):

*Immigration has become a meta-issue. It is used in political discourse to explain many other social and economic problems, and it involves functional aspects (of costs and benefits), ethical aspects (of collective identities) and moral aspects (of solidarity and justice). How societies accommodate their new members who come from somewhere else does not depend so much on the immigrants' characteristics as on these societies' own interests, identities and norms.*

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## APPENDICES

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Appendix 1:	Cover Letter and Information Sheet
Appendix 2:	Consent Form and Confidentiality Agreement
Appendix 3:	Focus Group Questions

## Appendix 1: COVER LETTER AND INFORMATION SHEET

[Official letterhead]

### **Discrimination Against Migrants and Refugees Project**

The New Settlers programme is funded by the government to look at the settlement of immigrants in New Zealand. It has now been going for some years and has produced some excellent research which helps improve policy and the help available to immigrants and refugees in New Zealand.

This particular part of the project is concerned with discrimination, which would include anything that might indicate that immigrants and refugees are being excluded in some way. This might include health, employment, education and so on. One of the things that we have been asked to do is to look at the experience of immigrants and refugees to find out whether they have experienced discrimination of any sort. We would like to invite you to participate in this important research.

Discrimination is a sensitive issue and we are aware that there might be some difficulties in talking about personal matters and experiences. **If you feel awkward, you should say so. You always have the right to decline to answer questions or to provide information when you feel that it is not appropriate.**

However, we would like to ask you some questions about your own experiences or those of other members of your particular group. The purpose of asking these questions is to understand the issues faced by immigrants and refugees. But we also want to ask you about the possibility of doing something positive to improve the situation. We also will ask you what you think ought to be done.

Thank you for taking part in the research. On behalf of Andrew Butcher and myself, we want to thank you for your time and willingness to offer your thoughts. If you have any queries, then please do not hesitate to contact me. My direct dial number at Massey University is (09) 441-8171 and my mobile number is 021-422-881.

Yours sincerely  
**Professor Paul Spoonley**

**Regional Director (Auckland), College of Humanities and Social Sciences**



[Official letterhead]

## **New Settlers Programme**

### **Discrimination Against Migrants and Refugees in New Zealand**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET**

This research, on the discrimination against migrants and refugees in New Zealand, is part of the New Settlers Programme in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University, Palmerston North under Associate Professor Andrew Trlin. Other members of the research team include Professor Paul Spoonley and Andrew Butcher, both of Massey University at Albany.

Using focus groups, this project, which is funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, will explore whether there is discrimination against migrants and refugees in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. This research will be published in a report and a series of articles and book chapters. It is designed to help New Zealanders understand the experiences of migrants and refugees, and to improve policy.

We would like to invite you to participate in this important and valuable research.

Your name has been provided to us by a refugee or migrant organisation, or from the contacts of the research team.

We are really interested in the discrimination experiences of migrants from Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe and of refugees from a range of different countries.

These focus groups will consist of between six and ten members. This small size means that they will be manageable, allow everybody to have a say, and will also be representative of people's different experiences.

Depending on the time of day at which the focus groups are held, they will include morning or afternoon teas or supper, provided by the researchers. These focus groups will probably last approximately 90 minutes.

These focus groups will be either recorded on audiotape or notated by the researcher and this data will then be transcribed. All information will be kept

confidential by the research team and securely kept during the course of the research and destroyed five (5) years after the completion of the research.

Participants' information will be confidential and the final report will not identify those who have participated by name. To this end, participants will be asked to sign a consent form and a confidentiality agreement.

You have the right to:

- decline to participate;
- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (*at any time before 30 March 2003*);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

This research will be valuable in identifying and reducing discrimination against migrants and refugees in New Zealand.

This research has been peer-reviewed by researchers not directly involved in this project and they have established that this research meets the ethical guidelines required by Massey University.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Professor Paul Spoonley on 09 441 8171 or <P.Spoonley@massey.ac.nz>, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University at Albany, Private Bag 102 904, North Shore Mail Centre, Auckland

Thank you for reading this information sheet,

Paul Spoonley

Andrew Butcher

Andrew Trlin

## **Appendix 2: CONSENT FORM and CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

### *Discrimination against Migrants and Refugees in New Zealand*

#### **CONSENT FORM**

**THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5)  
YEARS**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the focus group interview being audio taped.

I agree/do not agree to being notated by the researcher.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Full Name -  
printed**

[Official letterhead]

*Discrimination against Migrants and Refugees in New Zealand*

**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

I ..... (Full Name - printed)  
agree to keep confidential, other than for the purposes of this research, names  
discussed in this focus group on discrimination against migrants and refugees  
in New Zealand.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Full Name -  
printed**

## **Appendix 3: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

### **Preamble**

As part of a Massey University research project, we are interested in finding out about the experiences of migrants and refugees in New Zealand. We are particularly interested in how you, and others like you, have been treated. Obviously, it is important to hear about the good things that have happened to you, but it is also important to hear about anything that has not been so helpful.

We are particularly interested in knowing whether migrants or refugees – such as yourself – have been discriminated against. When we talk about discrimination, we mean something that somebody has said which means that they do not like you because of who you are, or something which somebody does to stop you getting something – housing, a job, education – because of who you are.

We are interested in hearing about these experiences, even though they might not be very nice. But it is important that New Zealanders hear your stories, and we hope that you will help us in telling these stories.

We are also interested in hearing what you think will make things better. What should we do to improve relations between migrants and other New Zealanders, or make your life in New Zealand better.

### **Introductory Questions**

- Where are you from?
- Why did you come to New Zealand?
- How long have you lived in New Zealand?

### **Accessing Goods and Services**

- What are the experiences of migrants in accessing goods and services they require in their daily lives (e.g. housing, education, shopping, tradespeople etc.)?
- What are the areas in which migrants have the least difficulty? The most difficulty?

- Responses to particular case studies.
- We are interested in knowing why you think that you, or your friends, had these problems?
- What do you think we should do about these? Who should do it?

## **Employment**

- What are your experiences of migrants getting employment?
- From your experiences, are migrants working in fields that are consistent with their training and experience?
- What are the experiences of migrants while in employment?
- Responses to particular case studies.
- What could be done to ensure migrants have positive experiences in securing employment?

## **Neighbourhood Harassment**

- What are the experiences of migrants in the neighbourhoods in which they live?
- What are the areas in which migrants have the most difficulties?
- Responses to particular case studies [provided by Rajen/RRO]
- What makes an experience positive?
- What can be done to ease migrant transition to their new communities?
- How do you think New Zealanders view you and/or your group?
- Have you, or your friends, ever been called names? Have you been spoken to in a nasty way?
- Do you think we can do something about these attitudes and the things people say? Can you make some suggestions?

## **General**

- Do you have many New Zealand friends? Do you see them often? When?
- Do you think they know about the problems you might have?
- In general, do you think some of the problems we have discussed are a very important issue for New Zealand?
- What would make it easier for migrants to settle in their new communities?

## AUTHORS

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### **Andrew Butcher**

Dr Andrew Butcher was a researcher in the New Settlers Programme, Massey University from 2002 to 2004. In addition to work on immigration, he has researched extensively on issues related to New Zealand's export education industry. He has published articles in the *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* and *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*. Andrew is the author of *A Report on the Economic, Social and Demographic Impact of International Students on North Shore City* (Massey University, 2003), and co-author of *Nga Tangata: Partnerships in the Pastoral Care of International Students* (Asia Pacific Migration Research Network, 2002), *Campus-Community Linkages in the Pastoral Care of International Students* (Ministry of Education, 2004) and *Engaging Asian Communities in New Zealand* (Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2005). He now works as a Senior Researcher in the public service.

### **Paul Spoonley**

Professor Paul Spoonley is the Regional Director (Auckland) and Research Director for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University. He is programme leader for a research project on New Zealand labour markets, which has been funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology since 1996, and the team have received a further funding for the 2003-2008 period. One aspect that is part of the new project is the labour market integration of immigrants. Paul is also part of the New Settlers Programme and is involved in migrant (temporary and permanent) settlement and integration. He chairs the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology's Social Reference Group, the Top Achiever Doctoral Reference Group, and was a member of the Social and Cultural Studies Panel for the Tertiary Education Commission Performance Based Research Fund exercise in 2003. Paul has completed numerous contracts for organisations such as WINZ, Enterprise Waitakere, North Shore City and Enterprise North Shore.



## Andrew Trlin

Until his retirement in April 2004, Andrew was an Associate Professor in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, Palmerston North. Leader of the New Settlers Programme from its inception until June 2006, his main research interests are in the broad area of social demography, social policy and programme evaluation in contemporary New Zealand, but he is best known for his work on immigration policy and immigration settlement. Andrew's numerous publications on aspects of international migration include: (as author) *Now Respected, Once Despised: Yugoslavs in New Zealand* (Dunmore Press, 1979); and (as co-editor) *Immigrants in New Zealand* (Massey University Press, 1970) and the series *New Zealand and International Migration: A Digest and Bibliography* (Department of Sociology, Massey University, 1986, 1992, 1997, 2005). A life member (and Past President) of the Population Association of New Zealand, he served on the Ministerial Committee for the report *Drawing on the Evidence: Social Science Research and Government Policy* (Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, 1996). Andrew remains active in research and is also a panel member of the Human Rights Review Tribunal, Ministry of Justice.

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