

Attitudes towards biculturalism in New Zealand: Asking the wrong questions, getting the wrong answers?

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Sibley and Liu (2004) suggested that young Pākehā students support symbolic biculturalism but these beliefs will not be translated into overcoming inequalities because these students oppose material resources being transferred to Māori. This study is important both in its content and because it has been widely cited in forums in New Zealand. I argue that Sibley and Liu misrepresented the Treaty of Waitangi partnership and, through this, asked the wrong questions in their study. They put responsibility on individual Pākehā to help overcome the disadvantage that many Māori and Pacific peoples face rather than constructing this challenge as a collective responsibility of all New Zealanders. More importantly, their ideas for encouraging more Māori and Pacific students to engage in postgraduate study at university, and especially to study psychology, demonstrate a lack of understanding of where disadvantage starts and the most effective and fairest ways of providing resources for overcoming disadvantage.

Key words: biculturalism, affirmative action, Treaty of Waitangi, psychology

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Attitudes towards biculturalism in New Zealand: Asking the wrong questions, getting the wrong answers?

Introduction

The influential book *The Spirit Level* argues that inequality in society can be the cause of unhealthier, unhappier and often shorter lives (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). So do New Zealanders want to overcome inequalities? If so, are they willing to commit resources to this goal? And if they are willing to commit resources, are they happy to see these resources transferred, on the basis of ethnicity, to Māori and Pacific peoples? In his controversial 2004 speech in Orewa, Don Brash argued against 'race-based' policies. One result of this speech was the Mallard Review, a review run by the State Services Commission to examine a variety of government transfers to ensure they were 'needs based' rather than 'race based'. But what does the wider New Zealand public think about these issues? Unfortunately, the public is rarely asked. A notable exception is a study published in the same year as the Brash speech. An article by Sibley and Liu (2004) considered the attitudes of young Pākehā students to biculturalism, both symbolic and resource based. This study is important both in its content and because it has been widely cited in forums in New Zealand.

Sibley and Liu (2004) demonstrate that young Pākehā students support symbolic biculturalism. However, according to Sibley and Liu, these beliefs will not be translated into overcoming inequalities because these students then oppose material resources being transferred to Māori (and Pacific) peoples, groups who have been clearly shown to be over-represented in poor outcomes in New Zealand. Against a background of discussions taking place at the time about ownership of the seabed and foreshore, Sibley and Liu take from their study that we should not be optimistic about race relations in New Zealand.

I suggest that Sibley and Liu misrepresented the Treaty of Waitangi partnership and, as a result of doing so, asked the wrong questions in their study. They put responsibility on individual Pākehā to help overcome the disadvantage that many Māori and Pacific peoples face rather than constructing this challenge as a collective responsibility of all New Zealanders. More importantly, their ideas for encouraging more Māori and Pacific students to engage in postgraduate study at university, especially to study psychology, to bring a 'Māori perspective' to such studies, demonstrate a lack of understanding of where disadvantage starts and the most effective and fairest ways of providing resources for overcoming disadvantage. Relatively few Māori and Pacific students gain university entrance qualifications. I suggest that tackling educational disadvantage in relation to higher education needs to begin at school or even earlier. In this context, scholarships for people once they are at university represent 'symbolic biculturalism' rather than 'resource biculturalism'.

Setting the scene

Sibley and Liu (2004) begin their paper by describing their understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi and, in this, define who Pākehā are. They state (p 88):

The idea of a partnership between Maori (the indigenous peoples of New Zealand) and Pakeha (New Zealanders of European descent) was enshrined in the Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840.

This understanding of how the Treaty operates is repeated in Sibley and Liu's Appendix B, which sets out that (p 99):

The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 and written into law in 1975, provides a unique foundation for New Zealanders of European and Maori origins to work together reasonably and in good faith to provide the best possible outcomes for all New Zealanders.

Both these statements contain incorrect assumptions. First, the Treaty was not 'written into law' in 1975. Instead, this was the year in which the Waitangi Tribunal was set up.¹ Although the idea of ratifying the Treaty was mooted in the white paper for the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, it has never been ratified in New Zealand law through statute. Instead, in various complicated ways it provides some guidance and constraint on government (Palmer 2008).

Second, and more importantly, the Treaty is not a partnership between Māori and Pākehā. It is a partnership between those iwi and hapū who signed the Treaty and the Crown. Some iwi did not sign the Treaty. However, it is often treated as a treaty between Māori, as a whole, and the Crown. And who is the Crown?

The Crown in 1840 is very different to the Crown now. In 1840, the Crown was the British Government representing British subjects, who, due to the extent of the British Empire, included groups such as ethnic Indians living in India. Now the Crown is the New Zealand Government. As such, the Crown represents all New Zealanders – Europeans, Asian peoples, Pacific peoples, Māori, and all other groups.

Increasingly, the Crown is Māori. New Zealand has had a Māori governor-general, Sir Paul Reeves. In 2011, it will have another, Jerry Mateparae. James Carroll, the first Māori to win a general seat rather than a Māori seat in an election, was a minister in Cabinet as early as 1895. Carroll was also acting prime minister in 1909 and 1911 (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2007). Parliament has also more recently had a Māori deputy prime minister, Winston Peters. The number of Māori members of parliament have increased from 7 in 1993 to 19 in 2002, the election before the Sibley and Liu paper was written.² In 2004, the Māori Party was formed. By signing a confidence and supply

¹ The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 and the Treaty of Waitangi (State Enterprises) Act 1988 constitute the Waitangi Tribunal to investigate and report on allegations of contemporary and historic breaches of the Treaty and make orders for redress in some circumstances.

² This represented 15.8% of members of parliament, slightly above the representation of Māori in the population at the time of 14.7%.

agreement with the National Party in November 2008 and being part of the Government, the Māori Party has played a key role in many important debates.

Māori work for the Crown in a variety of roles, including filling 16.7% of public servants jobs overall and 9.0% of senior management roles in 2008. In addition, when any Treaty settlement is given, the resources come from taxation across the whole population; it is a collective acknowledge of past wrongs. When additional resources go to low decile schools or to health providers in poor communities, where Māori and Pacific peoples are over-represented, these resources also come from all New Zealanders, including Māori, Pacific, and Asian taxpayers.

I also disagree with Sibley and Liu's definition of Pākehā. They state that Pākehā are "New Zealanders of European descent".³ Pākehā is a term that has not been universally accepted in New Zealand (Bedggood 1997; Pearson and Sissons 1997; Spoonley 1993). However, in their definition, Sibley and Liu do not acknowledge a long history of ethnic intermarriage in New Zealand (Callister, 2004). While not focusing specifically on intermarriage, Butterworth and Mako (1989, p 1) note that all Māori have some degree of non-Māori ancestry. So Māori too are "New Zealanders of European descent". Therefore, assuming Pākehā can be only European and not Asian or other ethnic groups, Sibley and Liu should have defined Pākehā as "New Zealanders of *only* European descent". But even this is problematic. This could be someone who is a new immigrant to New Zealand, perhaps from Poland with no historic connection to New Zealand or the historic British Crown. It is puzzling that they would be considered a partner to Māori when a fifth generation Asian New Zealander (who might also have a European ancestor or perhaps a Māori ancestor) would not be included under Sibley and Liu's conception of partnership.

Finally, there is the complication of whether we talking about ethnicity, a self-determined concept, or descent (still self-determined in relation to who you want or can remember as your ancestors and how far back you choose or are able to look). There are of course people who have "Māori origins" (Appendix B in Sibley and Liu) but who do not claim Māori ethnicity. Defining who is Māori has been the subject of a long and ongoing debate (eg, Pool 1991; Robson and Reid 2001; Didham 2005; Kukutai 2004).

These are the conceptual difficulties around identity from which the Sibley and Liu study proceeds.

Who forms the bachelor degree-level student population?

As further background, it is worth putting Sibley and Liu's (2004) study in the context of the overall bachelor level student population. Is this predominantly a bicultural student body or is this now a much more diverse group of people? Who is under-represented or over-represented? These are important issues because those gaining bachelor degrees are the ones most likely to fill positions of power and influence in New Zealand's evolving

³ In footnote 1 of the Sibley and Liu study, it is noted there is considerable debate about the most appropriate name for "New Zealanders of European descent".

society, including potentially developing and promoting concepts of bicultural or multicultural societies. They will also be eventually over-represented among those earning the highest incomes in New Zealand, so have to be a key part of any consideration of emerging inequalities.

I have chosen 2004, the year the Sibley and Liu study was published. Earlier and later data are available from the Education Counts website (<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz>). My analysis is restricted to domestic students and based on total ethnic counts. Total counts means that people who recorded more than one ethnic group are counted more than once.

In 2004, numerically, Europeans were the dominant group studying for bachelor degrees (Table 1). Within this group, females significantly outnumbered males. Numerically, the next largest group are Māori females followed by Asian females. When age-standardised data and the overall participation rate of 3.5% of the population are considered, the groups most represented in terms of their relative population size are Asian women, followed by Asian men, then European women. Overall, Europeans had an age-standardised participation rate in bachelor degree study in 2004 of 3.4%, Māori 3.1%, Pacific 2.8%, and Asian peoples 4.5%. On this basis, Europeans and Māori have similar participation rates, with the standout groups, at both ends of the spectrum, being Pacific and Asian peoples. But these overall participation rates are influenced by having higher enrolments by older Māori and Pacific people, especially women.

Table 1 also shows the rates for those aged 20–24 (based on 2009),⁴ the age group containing the largest number of students. The average participation rate for this age group was 16.6%. Overall, Europeans had a participation rate of 17.7%, Māori 8.9%, Pacific 11.3%, and Asian peoples 20.7%. But as Table 1 again shows strong gender differences underlie these ethnic data.

Table 1 shows a number of important patterns. Clearly, on some measures, Māori and Pacific students are under-represented. But just as importantly, the student body is not simply a bicultural one made up of Māori and Europeans. Asian men and women and, albeit to a significantly lesser degree, Pacific people, are also very much represented around this particular table. Not shown, and further complicating the image of a bicultural society, are the other emerging groups in university study, including those from Africa and the Middle East. Also not shown are the many foreign students now studying in New Zealand universities.

⁴ Data at a detailed age, gender, and ethnicity basis are not available for 2004 on the Education Counts website (<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz>).

Table 1. Students enrolled in bachelor-level study and age-standardised participation rates in 2004 (and 2009), by gender and ethnicity, total ethnic counts, domestic students

Student groups	Number of enrolments	Age-standardised participation rate in 2004 (%)	Participation rates of those aged 20–24 in 2009 (%)
European female	49,120	4.2	21.0
European male	30,596	2.6	14.4
Māori female	9,494	4.0	10.7
Māori male	4,671	2.1	6.9
Pacific female	3,763	3.4	14.1
Pacific male	2,241	2.1	8.5
Asian female	8,339	4.7	21.5
Asian male	6,886	4.3	20.0

Source: Education Counts, Ministry of Education, <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz>.

Under-representation in holding degrees and working as psychologists

These education data are for people in current study, so what do counts of those who have already gained degrees look like? Educational attainment across the whole population is heavily influenced by past education trends, so even if overall Māori age-standardised participation rates were not significantly under the average, past under-representation in enrolments and completions will take a long time to turn around. The education attainment of the population is also highly affected by migration in and out of New Zealand. Table 2 focuses on bachelor and higher degrees and covers the whole population aged over 15 years of age. The table shows the proportion of men and women in each main group holding such qualifications. Asian peoples and the group Middle East, Latin America and Africa stand out in terms of groups with a large proportion holding a degree or higher qualification. At the other end of the educational spectrum, Māori and Pacific have low levels of bachelor degrees, especially among the males in these groups. These data show that a long catch-up period is needed if Māori and Pacific people are to match overall levels of degree attainment.

Table 2. Population aged 15 and over with a bachelor or higher degree, by gender and ethnic group, total counts, 2006

Gender	Ethnic group (level 1)	Bachelor or higher degree	Total (including not elsewhere classified)	Percentage with bachelors or higher degree (%)
Male	European	138,747	981,042	14.1
	Māori	8,523	172,215	4.9
	Asian	35,802	129,771	27.6
	Pacific	3,339	79,713	4.2
	MELAA	3,267	13,131	24.9
	Other	27,372	181,197	15.1
	Total		208,536	1,521,591
Female	European	164,343	1,091,817	15.1
	Māori	14,547	193,191	7.5
	Asian	39,744	147,825	26.9
	Pacific	4,803	85,917	5.6
	MELAA	3,033	12,066	25.1
	Other	26,853	167,883	16.0
	Total		239,241	1,638,783

Note: MELAA = Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

Source: Census of Population and Dwellings, Statistics New Zealand.

Current employment data are also used to consider under-representation. It is these types of attainment data that are most commonly used to justify giving assistance to lift current educational representation of particular groups. Those studying psychology for a degree or higher qualification will end up working in a wide variety of occupations, but some will become professional psychologists. Table 3 shows the current under-representation of Māori and Pacific peoples in this occupation.

Although Māori represented 14.6% of the population in 2006, only 5% of psychologists recorded Māori as one of their ethnic groups. The number of psychologists recording Māori ethnicity would need to triple to match their population share. Even more under-represented, on a population basis, are Pacific peoples at 1.2% against a population share of 6.9%. However, despite the relatively high number of Asian peoples studying for degrees, Asian psychologists are also currently under-represented overall when measured against a population representation of 9.2%. It is important to remember that these data are total counts, so people who recorded more than one ethnic group are counted more than once. Also, of note, are the gender dimensions of the psychologist occupation. This has become a female-dominated occupation, which needs to be kept in mind when considering which groups might be attracted into training for this job.

Table 3: Proportion of psychologists belonging to each ethnic group, 2006

Age group	European (%)	Māori (%)	Pacific peoples (%)	Asian peoples (%)	MELAA (%)	Other ethnicity* (%)	Total (%)	Proportion female (%)
15–29	80.6	6.0	1.5	7.5	1.5	10.4	107.5	84
30–44	83.9	7.1	2.0	3.9	1.6	9.1	107.5	75
45–64	88.5	3.8	0.8	1.6	0.5	10.1	105.5	71
65+	89.2	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.8	102.7	62
Total	86.4	5.1	1.2	2.9	1.1	9.8	106.7	73

Notes

MELAA = Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

* These are mainly ‘New Zealander’ type responses.

Source: Census of Population and Dwellings, Statistics New Zealand

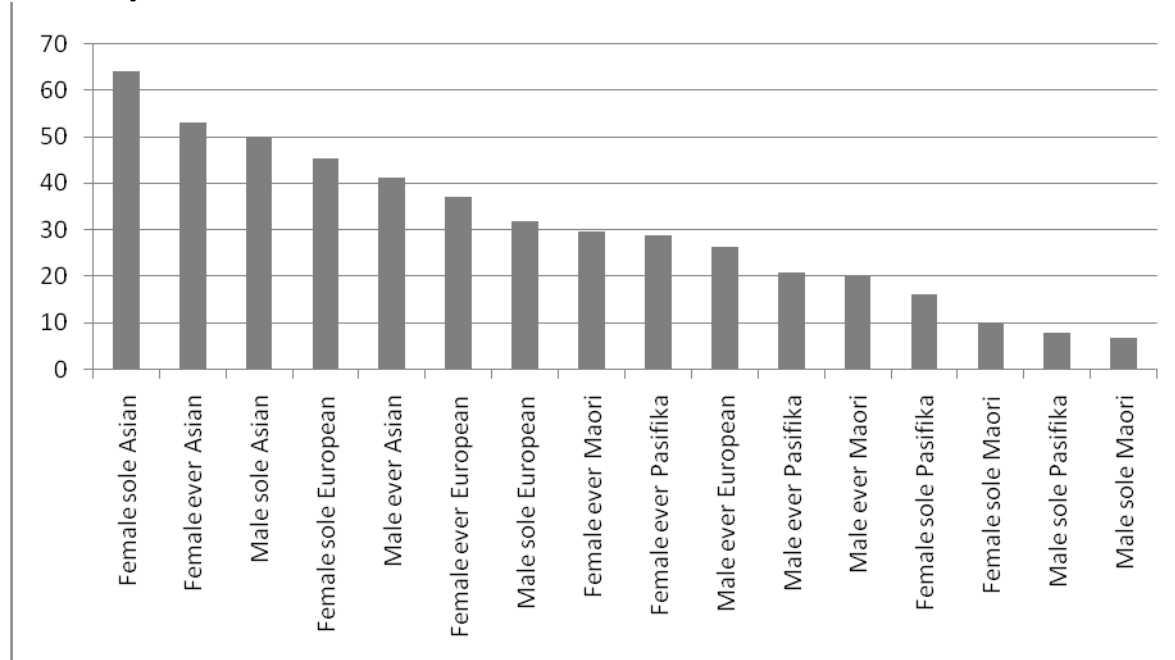
Barriers to entry to university

Before the age of 20, when open access to university is possible, the ability to enrol in bachelor degree study is determined in the first instance by a person meeting the university entrance standard. However, there have always been restrictions on particular courses, notably medicine, and now with enrolment caps placed on tertiary funding, enrolments are increasingly determined by performance in schools at levels 2 and 3 of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). But there are many other barriers including lack of resources to support study. Figure 1 shows attainment of university entrance in 2009 (the figures are broadly similar for 2005).

In terms of ethnicity in Figure 1, where someone records only one ethnic group they are reported as ‘sole’, where a student records more than one group, they are counted as ‘ever’. This means there is some overlap in the data. For example, a person recording Māori and European, either at one point in time or separately at two points when they are recorded in official data, will be reported as ‘ever Māori’ and ‘ever European’.

Figure 1 shows that for university entrance attainment, Asian peoples, both male and female, rank highest. Those with the lowest university entrance attainment levels are sole Māori and sole Pacific men. Raising levels of university entrance attainment for Māori and Pacific people overall is important, but it is especially important for Māori and Pacific males.

Figure 1. Proportion of domestic students aged 19 who had left school in 2009 with university entrance



Source: New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

While family resources cannot be determined using official education data, decile of school gives some indication of community resources. In relation to bachelor degree study, students from high decile schools are over-represented. For sole Europeans (that is those recording only a European ethnicity) transitioning from school and studying in 2005, over half came from decile 8–10 schools (schools with the highest socioeconomic status of the community), with just under a third coming only from decile 10 schools. For Māori (measured as a total ethnic group) there is less concentration. Just over a third of those studying for degrees came from deciles 8–10 schools, with 18% came from decile 10 schools. Eleven percent of Māori studying for degrees came from deciles 1 and 2 schools, and 2% of sole Europeans. This suggests greater diversity among Māori than among Europeans. There are Māori studying from middle-class backgrounds and middle-class neighbourhoods as well as from poor families and poor neighbourhoods.

However, despite some level of diversity, the data suggest that, overall, young people from well-resourced backgrounds are more likely to attend university than those from poor backgrounds. In turn, this suggests that policy areas such as school funding (perhaps through decile funding) or family funding need closer attention. More attention needs to be placed on ensuring that students, from all ethnic groups, have the same opportunities to enrol in degree-level study no matter what their family background or where they live.

Finally, relatively few Māori who record only Māori ethnicity reach university study and then complete their qualifications. Most students who gain degrees record both Māori and European ethnicities. This can be illustrated with census data, which record the highest level of formal education completed. In 2006, of the age group 25–34 years, over 4,400

respondents of those who held a bachelors degree recorded both Māori and European ethnicities. In contrast, the figure for sole Māori was just under 2,800. When calculated as a percentage of each population group, 15% of Māori–Europeans held degrees. In contrast, 7% of sole Māori in this age group held a degree (the figure for non-Māori was 29%). Those recording Māori–European potentially have cultural and/or ancestral connections back to both the ‘colonisers and the colonised’, that is from both the groups Sibley and Liu (2004) conceptualise as the Treaty partners.

Sibley and Liu research findings

At the heart of Sibley and Liu’s (2004) paper are two studies based on small non-random samples of students. Setting aside the issue of how much weight we should put on results from small non-random samples, especially based on one self selected discipline, the study attempts to gain an idea of attitudes towards symbolic biculturalism, then gives a specific example of what the authors term ‘resource-based biculturalism’. In the first study, there were 8 males, 37 females and 1 person of unspecified gender. The second study covered 16 males and 43 females. The gender imbalance reflects an overall shift toward university study, but especially the study of psychology, becoming female dominated.

The students were all New Zealand born and identified as New Zealand European/Pākehā. While not stated, it is assumed that this was the only ethnicity stated at the time of the study. Many of these students had parents who had lived in New Zealand for several generations. Given that the students were relatively young, that they had grown up in New Zealand and that there is relatively little geographically based ethnic segregation, many would have had close contact with Māori. Some were likely to have Māori as close friends, perhaps flatting with them, or as partners (boyfriends or girlfriends). Although socioeconomic status was not mentioned in the Sibley and Liu study, given the patterns of enrolments already discussed, it is likely that these Pākehā students would have come disproportionately from higher decile schools. As such, the Māori they would have associated with would have likely to have come from middle class backgrounds.

The critical test for attitudes towards resource biculturalism were questions around Māori- and Pacific-only scholarships in relation to honours, masters and doctoral study. In the first study participants were (p 91):

...provided with a written overview of policy informing them that 1 of 3 masters scholarships and 1 of 4 PhD scholarships for postgraduate study in psychology were currently reserved for an appropriately qualified Maori or Pacific Nations student. The document continued to outline a proposal to change this policy, in which targeted scholarships for Maori and Pacific Nations students would be expanded to include honors year. This proposal stated that scholarship funds, at both honors levels and further postgraduate levels, were a limited resource and that increasing the number of targeted scholarships for ethnic minorities would decrease the number of general (non-targeted) scholarships available to other students studying at these levels (refer to Appendix A).

As reported in Appendix A of the Sibley and Liu paper, students were asked how they would feel if a fixed proportion of honours scholarships were given to Māori and Pacific peoples (eg, 10 percent) even if they had a lower grade point average. Appendix B of the paper says that such scholarships could be one way to develop more of a Māori perspective in psychology,⁵ would help increase the number of Māori academics and practitioners, and might help New Zealand to become a leader in majority–minority group relations in psychology.

While most students supported ‘symbolic biculturalism’, they were generally not convinced about this form of resource biculturalism. Generally, they wanted competition for scholarships to be what they considered fair, based on performance not on ethnicity. One student noted (p 93) that “...why should other students, who may have better grades and worked just as hard, be disadvantaged for something that happened 150 years ago?”

Does this mean the students were against all resource-based supports for disadvantaged people, including disadvantaged Māori? We do not know because they were never asked. Students could have been asked a variety of other questions, including the following.

- Do you think additional resources should be given to help overcome the educational disadvantage faced by many Māori and Pacific people? If so, how should this be achieved?
- Do you think support should be ‘needs based’ or ‘race based’ or perhaps some mix where race-based funding still has a needs-based component?
- Do you support school decile funding where those schools drawing on poorer communities get higher-per-student-funding?

Perhaps the students had quite sophisticated ideas of how to best support disadvantaged students. For example, through their own experiences, they may have seen that scholarships targeted purely by ethnicity could be subject to middle-class capture. But they may have possibly thought it was unfair that they could individually lose out in a resource competition, yet many have been more happy about a policy that spread the costs across the population and which better targeted the support towards those most in need.

Conclusion

It is important that we gain a better understanding how young New Zealanders think about issues such as biculturalism, educational disadvantage, and concepts of having a more diverse student body in our educational institutions and key occupational groups. It is also important that if young New Zealanders value goals of overcoming disadvantage and supporting diversity that they consider ways of delivering practical resource-based

⁵ In this there is an assumption that only ‘ethnic Māori’ can provide a Māori perspective. Equally, underlying this assumption is that to be a ‘real’ Māori, one has to hold a Māori “world view”. There is also the issue of whether there is any one core “Māori world view” and how useful it is to have “ethnic-based science” (for example, see Marie and Haig, 2009).

support. Attitudinal research is therefore vital, but such research can be misleading if it is not based on sound conceptual foundations and does not canvass a wide set of ideas about how to overcome the disadvantages that Māori (and Pacific) people are more likely to face than other ethnic groups.

Sibley and Liu set up their experiment based on a flawed conceptualisation of the Treaty partnership. Under their model, it would be possible to see responsibility for overcoming Māori disadvantage falling on individual Pākehā whom, it was assumed, were somehow historically connected to European colonisation. Other ethnic groups are left out of the conceptualisation, as is how ethnic intermarriage and the changing nature of the Crown now complicate the story. Based on these factors alone the study is problematic.

However, more importantly, only one option was offered to the students in the study, one based around a win–lose situation concerning a small number of scholarships. Equally importantly, the scholarship option for students already at university does not get at the root cause of why more Māori and Pacific students are not enrolling in university courses, including studying psychology, successfully completing their degrees and then going on to postgraduate study. A very small number of scholarships targeted at Māori students already completing degrees is more an example of ‘symbolic biculturalism’ than ‘resource biculturalism’. The problem of low achievement, particularly by Māori males, needs to be tackled very early on, well before people reach tertiary study age groups. This requires a commitment by all New Zealanders, including all new immigrant groups, to ensure effective programmes are established and implemented to help overcome the educational disadvantage that starts in school or earlier. If a much wider range of options for resource transfer had been offered to the students who were the subject of the Sibley and Liu study, it is possible that the researchers would have been given very different responses.

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