Unpacking the Impacts of Cultural Diversity: Why Multiculturalism Matters

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Defining Multiculturalism

- **Descriptive / Demographic:** A social context in which many different ethnic communities live together

- **Ideological:** An approach to dealing with cultural diversity that endorses acceptance, equality, and pluralism

- “A society that is at ease with the rich tapestry of human life and the desire amongst people to express their own identity in the manner they see fit”

  - Kevin Bloor, Political Scientist
Unpacking Multiculturalism

- Multiculturalism is a societal level variable
  - It is often measured by using aggregates of individual levels attitudes
- Individual level attitudes do relate to societal multiculturalism
  - Personal views about diversity do not necessarily reflect how one views the acceptance of cultural diversity in the wider society
Unpacking Multiculturalism

- Multilevel function of multiculturalism

**Societal Level**
- Policies
- Multicultural Ideologies
- Diversity Indices

**Individual Level**
- Attitudes towards diversity
- Social identity
- Acculturation attitudes

**Subjective Multiculturalism**
Societal Multiculturalism

- **Elements of societal multiculturalism:**
  - Policies
  - Percentage of immigrants / cultural heterogeneity
  - Linguistic diversity
  - Multicultural ideology

- **Multiculturalism in NZ society:**
  - NZ is demographically multicultural, but this is not articulated in law
  - New Zealanders endorse a multicultural ideology, although endorsements tend to be symbolic and some types of cultural diversity are preferred over others
Societal Multiculturalism

- **Ideology**
  - Better adjustment for immigrants and ethnic minorities
  - Identity affirmation
  - Positive out-group evaluations

- **Policy**
  - Better adjustment for immigrant youth

- **Density**
  - Both positive and negative economic, social and psychological outcomes
  - Higher levels of threat
Individual Multiculturalism

- Characteristics of individuals relate to endorsement of multiculturalism
- Characteristics of the society constrain individual choices, and influence attitudes towards multiculturalism
- Characteristics of ethnic group relate to endorsement of multiculturalism
Summary

- Multiculturalism is known to contribute to favorable intergroup relations, but it is differentially beneficial for majority and minority members.
- It is beneficial for everyone when majority and minority members approach diversity in the same way, particularly where both sides endorse integration.
Subjective Multiculturalism

- Integration can only be successfully pursued by minority groups when the wider society inclusive
  - Subjective multiculturalism is necessary for integration
  - Subjective multiculturalism relates to greater flexibility, adaptability, and empathy for others, which in turn are beneficial to social relationships
  - Subjective multiculturalism relates to higher achievement for all students in ethnically diverse environments
Subjective Multiculturalism

- “I think another cool thing was meeting people from different backgrounds. Not just Kiwis but other cultures... that makes things more interesting, you know, the multiculturalism in New Zealand. And I think being open to other cultures and accepting. I don’t think you find that a lot in other countries”

- “New Zealand is a great country with many people with different backgrounds. It’s really interesting to be here because you can gain a lot of experience from different cultures, different people, you can learn about who you are, so I enjoy being here.”
Subjective Multiculturalism

- The most important fact is that New Zealand is a multicultural community where you have all these different people. I think that’s why I have no problems, because I have a lot of different friends here...

- although not even one (of my friends) is Kiwi. But they’re all from other countries and I have quite a few of them. I guess that’s why I say I adjusted well here, because I have so many friends from other countries. Our ideologies kind of match. But the Kiwis, no... here we just don’t get along, I don’t know why.
NZ & the UK

NZ
- 67.6% Pākehā
- 23% overseas born

Religious diversity
- 56% Christian
- 35% No religion
- 5.5% Non-Christian
- 1% Muslim

Multiculturalism
- 89% positive
- 25% threatening

UK
- 92% White
- 11% overseas born

Religious diversity
- 71.2% Christian
- 15.5% No religion
- 5.4% Non-Christian
- 2.7% Muslim

Multiculturalism
- 62% positive
- 32% threatening
Participants

- **NZ: 155**
  - Age: $M=20\; SD=3.6$
  - 23% refugee
  - 70% female
  - 77% 1st gen

- **UK: 142**
  - Age: $M=21\; SD=3.2$
  - 22% refugee
  - 49% female
  - 29% 1st gen

Largest ethnic group South Asian, followed by Middle Eastern, African and mixed European heritage
Analyses

- MANCOVAs were conducted on each of the measurement domains; 1. Resources, 2. Stressors and 3. Outcomes, controlling for gender, generational status, and refugee background.
- Hierarchical regression models on stressors and adjustment outcomes
Resources

- Multivariate main effect of country
  - **Subjective Multiculturalism:** UK ($M=3.84$) NZ ($M=4.32$)
  - Religious Identity: UK ($M=3.94$) NZ ($M=4.33$)
  - Religious Practices: UK ($M=3.51$) NZ ($M=4.04$)

- Effects of covariates
  - Current Assistance:
    - 2nd gen ($M=3.83$) 1st gen ($M=4.09$)
    - male ($M=3.86$) female ($M=4.04$)
  - Religious Identity
    - male ($M=3.98$) female ($M=4.21$)
    - refugee ($M=3.96$) non-refugee ($M=4.17$)
  - Religious practices
    - male ($M=3.55$) female ($M=4.21$)
    - refugee ($M=3.51$) non-refugee ($M=3.85$)
Stress and Adaptation

- Stress main effect of country
  - Cultural Transition: UK (M=2.24) NZ (M=1.81)
  - Discrimination: UK (M=2.67) NZ (M=1.89)

- Adaptation main effect of country
  - Psychological Symptoms: UK (M=2.25) NZ (M=2.00)
  - Behavioural Problems: UK (M=1.86) NZ (M=1.55)

- Effects of covariates
  - Behavioural Problems:
    - 2nd gen (M=1.85) 1st gen (M=1.55)
    - male (M=1.89) female (M=1.57)
    - refugee (M=1.84) non-refugee (M=1.65)
## Predictors of Stress

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- $p < .10$  
- $p < .05$  
- $p < .01$  

NZ = 0  UK = 1  Male = 0  Female = 1  2$^{nd}$ gen = 0  1$^{st}$ gen = 1
## Predictors of Adjustment

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Summary

- Multiculturalism is multifaceted, examining the impacts at one level does not give a picture of the lived experience of cultural diversity.
- Multiculturalism does not exist “out there”, but rather is dynamically constituted by individuals within a society.
- Multicultural contexts foster or strengthen ethnic identity while also cultivating positive evaluation of and belonging to the wider society.
Thank You

- Contact: j.stuart@auckland.ac.nz
- Please visit http://cacr.victoria.ac.nz/ and fill out the survey