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Modelling Inter-Ethnic Partnerships in New Zealand 1981-2006: A Census-Based Approach

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The University of Auckland,

June 2010
Abstract

This thesis examines the patterns of ethnic partnership in New Zealand using national census data from 1981 to 2006. Inter-ethnic partnerships are of interest as they demonstrate the existence of interaction across ethnic boundaries, and are an indication of social boundaries between ethnic groups. A follow-on effect of inter-ethnic marriage is that children of mixed ethnicity couples are less likely to define themselves within a single ethnic group, further reducing cultural distinctions between the groups.

The main goals of the research are to examine the historical patterns of ethnic partnership, and then use simulation models to examine the partnership matching process. It advances the current research on ethnic partnering in New Zealand through its innovative methodology and its content. Previous studies of New Zealand have examined at most two time periods, whereas this study uses six full sets of census data from a twenty-five year period. There are two key components to the methodological innovation in this study. The first is the use of log-linear models to examine the patterns in the partnership tables, which had previously only been analysed using proportions. The second is the use of the parallel processing capability of a cluster computing resource to run an evolutionary algorithm which simulated the partnership matching process using unit-level census data of the single people in the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury regions.

The European group showed a much lower rate of same ethnicity partnering than that suggested by the proportion of homogamous couples. European individuals and Maori individuals showed similar rates of same ethnicity partnering, with little change over time. The Pacific group was the only one to see an increasing tendency for same-ethnicity partnerships, whilst the rate for Asian people decreased dramatically. Individuals with dual ethnic affiliations were more likely to have a partial match of ethnicity than none at all, and there was evidence of gender asymmetry amongst some ethnic combinations. The evolutionary algorithm showed that age and education similarities were the dominant matching factors for recreating ethnic patterns. The rate of same-ethnicity and mixed-ethnicity partnerships also contributed to the matching algorithm, providing some evidence of a micro-macro link.
Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to acknowledge the valuable advice and support of my supervisors, Professor Alan Lee and Professor Peter Davis.

I would not have been able to complete the simulation component of my thesis without the programming and grid-related support of Yuriy Halytskyy and Nick Jones at the Centre for eResearch at The University of Auckland, the simulation advice and feedback from Babak Mahdavi and David O’Sullivan, and general IT support from Stephen Cope.

I want to acknowledge the Marsden Fund for their research funding, and Statistics New Zealand for providing access to the census data I needed to complete this thesis.

I also want to acknowledge my mother for helping with the proof-reading of the final draft.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my wonderful wife Stephanie. Without her love I would only be half a person.
Statistics New Zealand Disclaimer

1. The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
2. Access to the data used in this study was provided by Statistics New Zealand in a secure environment designed to give effect to the confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act 1975.
3. I acknowledge Statistics New Zealand as the source of the Census data used in this thesis.
Table of Contents

Abstract.............................................................................................................................................. i
Acknowledgements............................................................................................................................. ii
Table of Contents............................................................................................................................... iv
List of Figures ...................................................................................................................................... viii
List of Tables ...................................................................................................................................... ix
1. Introduction...................................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1. Definition of Social Stratification and Homogamy................................................................. 2
  1.2. Central Research Questions .................................................................................................... 4
  1.3. Why is Inter-Ethnic Cohabitation and Marriage of Interest? ................................................ 5
  1.4. Cohabitation or Marriage ........................................................................................................ 6
  1.5. Census Data as a “Test Bed” for Inter-Censal Change .......................................................... 6
  1.6. Sociology, Statistics and Simulation ....................................................................................... 7
  1.7. Analysis and Modelling ........................................................................................................... 8
  1.8. Simulation and Parallel Computing ......................................................................................... 10
  1.9. Introduction to the Chapters ................................................................................................... 11
2. Literature Review: Sociology and Statistics .............................................................................. 12
  2.1. Sociological Literature .......................................................................................................... 13
    2.1.1. Social Patterns of Marriage ............................................................................................... 13
    2.1.2. Ethnicity and Marriage Patterns ..................................................................................... 14
    2.1.3. Research in New Zealand ............................................................................................... 18
    2.1.4. Emergence and the Micro-Macro Link ............................................................................ 19
    2.1.5. Educational Homogamy .................................................................................................. 21
    2.1.6. Religious Homogamy ...................................................................................................... 22
    2.1.7. Occupational Homogamy ............................................................................................... 23
  2.2. Statistical Methodology........................................................................................................... 25
    2.2.1. Log-Linear Models .......................................................................................................... 25
    2.2.2. Quasi-Independence Models ........................................................................................... 29
    2.2.3. Quasi-Symmetry Models ................................................................................................ 30
    2.2.4. Crossing Parameter Models ........................................................................................... 31
    2.2.5. Logistic Regression ......................................................................................................... 33
3. Literature Review: Simulation ................................................................. 35
   3.1. Social Simulation and Modelling ....................................................... 35
       3.1.1. Introducing Microsimulation and Agent-Based Simulation .......... 36
       3.1.2. Microsimulation Models of Partnership ...................................... 37
       3.1.3. Agent-Based Simulation Models of Partnership ...................... 44
       3.1.4. Simulation Modelling of the Micro-Macro Link ....................... 48
       3.1.5. Algorithms of Mate Selection .............................................. 50
       3.1.6. Network Models of Cohabitation .......................................... 58
   3.2. Incorporating the Threads .......................................................... 59
4. Data .................................................................................................. 61
   4.2. Variables ...................................................................................... 62
       4.2.1. The Data Laboratory Dataset .............................................. 62
       4.2.2. The Simulation Dataset ....................................................... 66
   4.3. Definitions of Ethnicity ............................................................... 67
       4.3.1. The “New Zealander” Category ........................................... 70
   4.4. Constructing the Couples Data .................................................... 71
5. Descriptive Statistics and Statistical Modelling .................................. 74
   5.1. Descriptive Statistics .................................................................... 74
       5.1.1. Number of Partnerships ....................................................... 75
       5.1.2. Proportion of Homogamous Partnerships - Total .................... 76
       5.1.3. Proportion of Homogamous Partnerships – New Zealand Born .... 79
       5.1.4. Proportion of Homogamous Partnerships – Emergent Partnerships .... 82
       5.1.5. Proportion of Homogamous Partnerships – Married vs. De-Facto ...... 85
   5.2. Log-Linear Modelling .................................................................. 88
       5.2.1. Quasi-Independence Models to Examine Homogamy ............. 91
       5.2.2. Results from the Quasi-Independence Models ....................... 92
       5.2.3. Quasi-Independence Models Controlling for Immigrant Status ...... 94
       5.2.4. Quasi-Independence Models – Emerging and Existing Partnerships .... 98
       5.2.5. Crossing Parameter Models ............................................... 99
       5.2.6. Quasi-Symmetry Models .................................................... 102
   5.3. Logistic Regression Modelling ...................................................... 105
   5.4. Summary of Statistical Analysis .................................................. 107
B.2. R Code.................................................................................................................. 219

C. Appendix C: Simulation Code.................................................................................... 220
   C.1. Netlogo Abstract Simulation Code ................................................................. 220
   C.2. Java Code ........................................................................................................ 224
   C.3. Grid Code ........................................................................................................ 231
       C.3.1. Optimisation Code .................................................................................. 231
       C.3.2. Parallel Processing Code......................................................................... 233
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 - Coleman's Boat ................................................................. 20
Figure 3.1 - Actual vs stable marriage algorithm from Bouffard et.al. (2001) ......................................................... 53
Figure 4.1 - New Zealander ethnic group (Statistics New Zealand, 2009) ................................................................. 71
Figure 4.2 - Diagram of couples dataset construction ....................................................................................................... 72
Figure 5.1 - Proportion of homogamous partnerships (single ethnicity) .......................................................... 77
Figure 5.2 - Proportion of homogamous partnerships (dual ethnicity) ................................................................. 78
Figure 5.3 - Proportion of homogamous partnerships (single ethnicity, NZ born) ........................................... 80
Figure 5.4 - Proportion of homogamous partnerships (dual ethnicity, NZ born) ........................................... 82
Figure 5.5 - Proportion of homogamous partnerships (single ethnicity, NZ Born, Under 30) .... 83
Figure 5.6 - Proportion of homogamous partnerships (single ethnicity, NZ born, Over 30) .......... 84
Figure 5.7 - Proportion of homogamous marriages (single ethnicity, NZ born) ................................................ 85
Figure 5.8 - Proportion of homogamous de-facto partnerships (single ethnicity, NZ born) .................... 86
Figure 5.9 - Diagonal dominance factors: Single ethnicities only ......................................................... 96
Figure 5.10 - Diagonal dominance factors: Dual ethnicity, NZ Born ..................................................... 97
Figure 5.11 - Diagonal dominance factors: Emerging partnerships ......................................................... 98
Figure 5.12 - Diagonal dominance factors: Existing partnership ......... 99
Figure 5.13 - Goodness-of-fit by complexity ........................................................................................................ 104
Figure 6.1 - Netlogo abstract simulation diagram ................................................................................................. 110
Figure 7.1 - Main ethnicity groupings ................................................................................................................. 126
Figure 7.2 - Simulation algorithm .................................................................................................................... 130
Figure 7.3 - Age scatterplot from Logan et.al (2008) ....................................................................................... 139
Figure 7.4 - Education scatterplot from Logan et.al (2008) ................................................................................. 140
Figure 7.5 - Evolutionary algorithm diagram ..................................................................................................... 144
Figure 7.6 - Sensitivity testing: Social network size ......................................................................................... 151
Figure 7.7 - Sensitivity testing: Number of time steps .................................................................................. 153
Figure 7.8 - Male versus female simulated frequencies: Auckland 1981 & 2001 ................................................. 154
Figure 7.9 - European male and European female estimates using a single variable ........................................................................................................ 155
Figure 7.10 - Asian male and Asian female estimates using a single variable ...................................................... 156
Figure 7.11 - Maori male and Maori female estimates using a single variable .......................................................... 157
Figure 7.12 - Pacific male and Pacific female estimates using a single variable ................................................... 158
Figure 7.13 - Maori/European mixed partnership estimate using a single variable ........................................ 159
Figure 7.14 - Asian/European mixed partnership estimate using a single variable .................................. 160
Figure 7.15 - Pacific/European mixed partnership estimate using a single variable .................................. 161
Figure 7.16 - Auckland weights: 1981 ................................................................. 163
Figure 7.17 - Auckland weights: 1986-2001 ................................................................. 164
Figure 7.18 - Canterbury and Wellington weights: 1981 ............................................................................... 165
Figure 7.19 - Wellington weights: 1986-2001 ..................................................................................... 166
Figure 7.20 - Canterbury weights: 1986-2001 ..................................................................................... 167
List of Tables

Table 1.1 - Hypothetical two-way frequency table of eye colour .................................................. 9
Table 2.1 - Hypothetical example table ......................................................................................... 27
Table 2.2 - Coefficients for independence model: Hypothetical example ........................................ 27
Table 2.3 - Quasi-Independence parameters for eye colour table .................................................... 30
Table 2.4 - Hypothetical education table showing crossing parameters ........................................... 32
Table 3.1 - Summary of microsimulation partnership models ......................................................... 43
Table 3.2 - Summary of agent based partnership models ................................................................. 48
Table 3.3 - Stable marriage algorithm example .............................................................................. 51
Table 4.1 - Data laboratory variables ............................................................................................. 63
Table 4.2 - Variable consistency over time ....................................................................................... 65
Table 4.3 - Simulation variables ..................................................................................................... 66
Table 4.4 - Ethnic groupings ........................................................................................................... 68
Table 4.5 - Individuals in the “other” categories ............................................................................. 69
Table 5.1 - Number of couples in New Zealand .............................................................................. 75
Table 5.2 - Partner proportions for the Maori & European dual ethnicity group ............................... 79
Table 5.3 - Deviance residuals for the independence model fitted to 2001 (NZ born) data ........... 90
Table 5.4 - Exponentiated diagonal dominance parameters 1981-2006 ........................................ 92
Table 5.5 - Deviance residuals for quasi-independence model, 2001 data .................................... 94
Table 5.6 - Exponentiated diagonal dominance parameters 1981-2006 (NZ Born) ..................... 95
Table 5.7 - Parameters for crossing effects ..................................................................................... 100
Table 5.8 - Exponentiated crossing parameters .............................................................................. 101
Table 5.9 - Log-linear goodness-of-fit summary ............................................................................ 103
Table 5.10 - Logistic regression explanatory variables .................................................................... 105
Table 5.11 - Logistic regression results .......................................................................................... 106
Table 6.1 - Abstract simulation parameters .................................................................................... 111
Table 6.2 - Social Homogamy Index example ................................................................................ 114
Table 6.3 - Homogamy index values for abstract simulation .......................................................... 115
Table 6.4 - Abstract simulation results ........................................................................................... 116
Table 7.1 - Ethnicity distributions for simulation ............................................................................ 125
Table 7.2 - Highest qualification distribution for simulation ............................................................ 127
Table 7.3 - Age distribution for simulation ..................................................................................... 127
Table 7.4 - Scoring variables .......................................................................................................... 135
Table 7.5 - Standard initial weights ................................................................................................ 146
Table 7.6 - Weight perturbations ..................................................................................................... 146
A.1 - 1981: All couples .................................................................................................................. 189
A.2 - 1981: At least one partner born in New Zealand................................................................. 190
A.3 - 1981: Couples with male partner aged 18-30, at least one partner born in New Zealand ... 191
A.4 - 1981: Couples with male partner aged greater than 30, at least one partner born in New Zealand ................................................................. 192
A.5 - 1986: All couples .................................................................................................................. 193
A.6 - 1986: At least one partner born in New Zealand ................................................................. 194
A.7 - 1986: Couples with male partner aged 18-30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.8 - 1986: Couples with male partner aged greater than 30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.9 - 1991: All couples
A.10 - 1991: At least one partner born in New Zealand
A.11 - 1991: Couples with male partner aged 18-30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.12 - 1991: Couples with male partner aged greater than 30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.13 - 1996: All couples
A.14 - 1996: At least one partner born in New Zealand
A.15 – 1996: Couples with male partner aged 18-30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.16 - 1996: Couples with male partner aged greater than 30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.17 - 2001: All couples
A.18 - 2001: At least one partner born in New Zealand
A.19 - 2001: Couples with male partner aged 18-30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.20 - 2001: Couples with male partner aged greater than 30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.21 - 2006: All couples
A.22 - 2006: At least one partner born in New Zealand
A.23 - 2006: Couples with male partner aged 18-30, at least one partner born in New Zealand
A.24 - 2006: Couples with male partner aged greater than 30, at least one partner born in New Zealand