

Biculturalism in Employee Selection or 'Who Should Get the Job'? Perceptions of Maori and Pakeha Job Applicants in a NZ European Student Sample

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The current study reports an experiment assessing how Pakeha/European New Zealanders' perceptions of job applicants are shaped by ethnicity, merit and need. A sample of 114 undergraduate students viewed the curricula vitae of both high and low merit New Zealand European/Pakeha and Maori job applicants. Individual versus group need was made salient before participants provided general ratings and recommended salaries for the job applicants. Participants provided more positive assessments of high merit Maori than high merit New Zealand European/Pakeha applicants, but less favourable assessments of low merit Maori in comparison to low merit New Zealand European/Pakeha applicants. This trend was also observed for recommended salaries, but only if individual need was made salient. The implications for employee selection, Affirmative Action policies, and attitudes towards biculturalism in general are discussed.

The issue of personnel selection and minority representation in the workforce is of increasing concern in both private and public organizations. Anecdotal evidence as well as conversations with Maori employees in more senior positions suggests that there is an inherent, but implicit bias in the way selection processes are operating in New Zealand/Aotearoa. The numbers of Maori in the public sector have been increasing up to 2002, but they are still underrepresented and participation increases have levelled off, especially in areas with potential to feed into senior management (State Services Commission, 2003, 2005). The percentage of Maori in the private sector is even lower (State Services Commission, 2003). The present study tries to investigate one particular aspect that might contribute to this situation, namely the perception of Maori applicants in terms of their ethnicity. Three interrelated aspects

are investigated in an experimental study with NZ European/Pakeha undergraduate students: (a) the perception of high-versus-low merit Maori and New Zealand European/Pakeha applicant CVs; (b) whether the manipulated salience of public discourse about individual versus group needs influences perceptions of applicants; and (c) whether perceptions of applicants are resource-dependent. The study contributes to a better understanding of factors influencing perceptions of job applicants among NZ European students and explicitly links research on micro and macro organizational justice, biculturalism and Affirmative Action research.

Biculturalism and Public Discourse in New Zealand/Aotearoa

The ways in which biculturalism is represented and communicated in society have important implications for the meanings and interpretation

of Maori/Pakeha intergroup relations, including the perception of job applicants. Wetherell and Potter (1992) undertook a discourse analysis on several controversial areas of Maori versus New Zealand European/Pakeha intergroup relations. They argued that notions of individual rights, freedom and equality are among the resources utilised by Pakeha in opposition to certain aspects of biculturalism. One phrase that summed up this perspective was that 'people must procure what they want through life through their own efforts' (Potter & Wetherell, 1989, cited in Wetherell & Potter, 1992, pp. 181-182). This perspective emphasises the idea that not only do people possess individual rights, but they also possess the freedom to exercise these rights in order to reach a desired outcome. Sibley, Liu and Kirkwood (2006) studied the justifications given for supporting or opposing targeted scholarships to Maori and Pacific Island students. They found consistent discourses of equality in terms of individual merit when asking students to write essays in favour or against these scholarships. The Orewa speech by Don Brash (2004) followed similar lines: 'finally we ask Maori to take some responsibility themselves for what is happening in their own communities.'

Therefore, this liberal view of equality has to be understood in the context of meritocracy (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Equal rights at the outset are stressed (i.e. all people should *begin* with equal rights and

opportunities) which clashes with Affirmative Action (AA) policies that aim for equality in *outcomes* (for example, equal representation of minorities in certain careers). Although the meaning of AA is debated (e.g., Crosby & Franco, 2003; Crosby, Iyer & Sincharoen, 2006; Harper & Reskin, 2005), generally it is a set of policies aimed to correct or compensate for past or present discrimination (Vasquez & Jones, 2007) and aims to achieve equality in outcomes. Research in the US has shown (see Crosby et al., 2006; Linton & Christiansen, 2006; Vasquez & Jones, 2005, 2007) that such policies are perceived as primarily negative by majority group members (white and males). Equality of outcomes as implied in AA is therefore seen as unfair from this meritocracy perspective of the majority (for a critique of the applicability of AA research in NZ/Aotearoa contexts, see Humpage & Fleras, 2001).

A second issue is the disjunction between support for biculturalism in principle versus in practicality. Although the current political and social climate appears to be supportive of biculturalism in principle (i.e. equal rights and recognition of Maori culture), unequivocal New Zealand European/Pakeha support is not found for practical or material aspects of biculturalism. Sibley and Liu (2004) found differential support in a student sample for these two forms of biculturalism. Although there was majority support for biculturalism in principle (i.e. the notion of cultural equality between New Zealand European/Pakeha and Maori New Zealanders), there was majority opposition to policies that advocated the privileged distribution of resources (scholarship money) to Maori. A distinction was therefore made between the general and resource-specific aspects of biculturalism (Sibley & Liu, 2004).

Therefore, a number of salient principles used in arguments by New Zealand European/Pakeha can be identified. New Zealand European/Pakeha discourse takes an individualistic perspective that considers equality in the context of meritocracy. Equality is perceived in terms of the application of equal rights or principles (such as merit) at the outset, rather than in the equality of outcomes. In addition, New Zealand

European/Pakeha discourse relating to biculturalism tends to be contradictory with conflicting attitudes towards biculturalism in principle versus in praxis. The varying perspectives in this discourse can be understood in terms of principles of justice.

Organizational Justice and Distributive Criteria

Organizational justice theory distinguishes between a number of distributive principles, of which equity, equality and need are the most commonly studied (Adams, Adams, 1965; Deutsch, 1975, Leventhal, 1976; for reviews and critiques see Fischer, in press, Fischer & Skitka, 2006; Fischer & Smith, 2003; Fischer, Smith, Richey, Ferreira, Assmar, Maes & Stumpf, 2007). Equity specifies that outcomes are seen as justified if they are proportional to inputs. If there is some perceived imbalance, tension will arise that motivates individuals to restore balance between their inputs and outcomes. The equality principle mandates that all individuals receive the same regardless of their contribution. Finally, the need rule specifies that organizational members receive allocations depending on their need (Deutsch, 1975). These principles are typically studied and applied to individuals at the individual level. This has been defined as micro-justice (Brickman, Folger, Goode & Schul, 1981). Equity is the meritocracy based on individual rights and contributions invoked in Pakeha discourse discussed earlier. The speech by Don Brash (2004) also implied that consideration of the need of individuals would be acceptable, again taking an individualistic or micro-justice perspective. In contrast, affirmative action implies equality through decisions considering group needs.

This higher level of equality and need is related to macro-justice as the allocation of rewards to groups within society (Brickman et al., 1981). This distinction between micro and macro perspectives is widely ignored in research and practice, but is important to distinguish. Opposition to preferential selection or privileged allocation of resources takes a micro-justice view of fairness. In particular, opponents to AA argue that these policies are unfair to individuals because they ignore the

attributes of individual applicants (e.g., ability and achievement; see Crosby et al., 2006). Affirmative action based on group needs follows a macro-justice perspective. These arguments view preferential selection as fair because they are leading to greater equality (in terms of outcomes) between ethnic groups at a group level.

The central dilemma hence lies between the individualistic selection criteria of individual merit (based on equity theory, micro-justice) and the more collectively oriented criteria of considering group needs (redressing existing inequalities in society by considering group need, macro-justice). Individual need represents an intermediate position in that it is focused on the individual, but considers non-merit factors that may redress existing inequalities.

The Present Study

The present study investigates broader bicultural issues in New Zealand European/Pakeha - Maori intergroup relations from a New Zealand European/Pakeha perspective in the specific context of personnel selection. Previous research on the influence of ethnicity in employee selection in New Zealand/Aotearoa has looked at the effects of ethnicity on cognitive test scores (Guenole, Englert, & Taylor, 2003), and in interview situations (Singer & Eder, 1989), but relatively less research has been conducted on the effects of applicant ethnicity in written job applications (i.e. *curricula vitae* or application forms), particularly comparing Maori and New Zealand European/Pakeha applicants. As legislation (Human Rights Act 1993) prohibits discrimination on the basis of such variables as ethnicity, age and gender, organisations are required to have selection practices that do not discriminate on these grounds (Taylor et al., 2002). However, (unconscious) biases might still operate and it is important to investigate these. Given that *curricula vitae* (CVs) are usually the first step in the selection process and may present the first barrier for employment, it is suggested to study the effects of ethnicity in this context.

The present experiment will look at the effect of written information (names of applicants and languages spoken) in cueing ethnic discrimination (for

applications of this technique in the context of selection research in NZ, see for example Ward & Masgoreth, 2004; Wilson, Gahlout, Liu & Mouly, 2005). As CV's contain both job-relevant (such as educational and employment history) and job-irrelevant information (gender and ethnicity), this study will look at the effect of these job-irrelevant cues (especially surnames) in shaping perceptions of job applicants among New Zealand European/Pakeha undergraduate students.

Three main research questions are addressed. Firstly, the study will explore the extent to which individual merit shapes New Zealand European/Pakeha perceptions of job applicants. Maani (2000) found that Maori with higher education qualifications fared relatively well in terms of income levels, whereas Maori without qualifications are more disadvantaged than comparable non-Maori New Zealanders. Social identity and self-categorization research (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986) offer one possible explanation of these findings. High merit Maori provide positive benefits for organizations and allow organizations to 'bask in the glory' of their successes (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Hence, these Maori are more likely to be seen as 'positive deviants', are evaluated more positively and are given higher salaries. On the other hand, low-merit Maori are seen as 'negative deviants' (if categorized as members of the ingroup) or are classified as exemplars of a negative out-group stereotype of Maori. These Maori are marginalized and perceived as more negative. Based on social identity/ self-categorization research, we would predict that New Zealand European/Pakeha participants will react positively to high-merit Maori applicants and react more negatively towards low-merit Maori applicants (*hypothesis 1*).

Secondly, most New Zealand European/Pakeha arguments surrounding biculturalism take a micro-justice perspective (i.e. emphasising the importance of individual merit), whereas AA and biculturalism arguments are made from the perspective of macro-justice (i.e. the relative disadvantage of ethnic minorities, group need).

Previous US research has demonstrated that majority members react negatively towards and oppose group-based AA policies, but may react neutrally or positively towards individual-specific considerations (Crosby et al., 2006; Haley & Sidanius, 2006). Given the comparable discourses in NZ/Aotearoa, we predict that New Zealand European/Pakeha participants are more favourably disposed towards Maori applicants if individual need is highlighted rather than group need (*hypothesis 2*).

Lastly, there is evidence of support for the general principles of biculturalism among NZ European/Pakeha students, but less support for resource-specific aspects of biculturalism (Sibley & Liu, 2004). The present study will investigate whether New Zealand European/Pakeha attitudes towards Maori vary according to the type of assessment used. General ratings of applicants have no direct material implications, whereas recommended applicant salaries are resource-specific. Based on previous research (Sibley & Liu, 2004), we predict that general ratings are more positive towards Maori applicants in general, whereas resource specific ratings of Maori (salary recommendations) will be more negative (*hypothesis 3*).

Method

Participants

One hundred and fourteen undergraduate psychology students received course credit for participation. The selection criteria specified that participants must be 'New Zealand European/Pakeha'. Participants (39 male, 74 female, 1 unspecified) ranged in age from 17 to 53 years ($M = 19.33$, $SD = 3.77$). Participants were able to sign up via the intranet for study participation. Therefore, participation was voluntary and no information about response rates can be calculated.

Design

The study had a $(2 \times 2) \times (2 \times 2)$ mixed-model design. The within-subjects factors were merit (high/low) and ethnicity (Pakeha/Maori). The between-subjects factors were individual need (highlighted versus

not highlighted) and group need (highlighted versus not highlighted). The dependent variables were hiring decisions, ratings of applicants, and recommended applicant salaries. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions and completed the study in half-hour sessions. The order of CVs for each individual was randomized to avoid order effects. The study was approved by the School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were told that the study was about how people make decisions when selecting and hiring new employees. No information was provided about the specific aims of the study. Participants were reminded that the study was anonymous (and therefore no personally identifying marks should be made in the booklet). Participants were also told that they were free to withdraw without penalty at any time. All participants (regardless of condition) viewed a hypothetical job advertisement and the following instructions. "Imagine you are responsible for recruiting employees for the vacancies advertised above. Several applications have been received from potential employees. Your task is to read over the application forms and complete the questionnaires that follow."

The advertisement described graduate level 'Marketing Analyst' positions for an information technology company, and listed the required candidate attributes. It was specified that candidates must have a tertiary qualification in marketing or a related discipline, a solid academic background, desire for a career in marketing, an interest in information technology, and excellent analytical and numerical skills. The content and layout of the advertisement was modelled on examples of job advertisements placed in NZ newspapers during the period of February to March 2004.

Independent Variables (Between-Subjects). Following the presentation of the job advertisement, and before viewing applicant CVs, there was a manipulation of individual need and group need. For each need type there were two different levels (highlighted versus not highlighted), meaning

that there were four different need conditions: individual need but no group need, group need but no individual need, individual *and* group need, and neither individual or group need highlighted (control).

Participants were presented with short paragraphs ('Job Agency Notes'). There were three different versions, one for each need condition excluding the control (participants in this condition did not receive any note). The notes were written in line with discourses used in political speeches (Orewa speech by Dr Don Brash) and US research on AA. The first version highlighted individual need by outlining the issue of student loans for graduates. This paragraph discussed the financial and social restrictions placed on individuals through continuous repayment of accumulating student debt. The second version highlighted group need by describing the employment disadvantage faced by members of ethnic minority groups. This paragraph discussed the relative difficulty for ethnic minorities in obtaining a job after graduation, and the under-representation of minority groups in professional positions. The third version highlighted both individual and group need. This paragraph discussed the problems that student loans create for individual graduates already facing employment discrimination as ethnic minorities. The notes are listed in Appendix A.

Independent Variables (Within-Subjects). Participants viewed six different applicant CVs, presented in random order. The CVs were constructed to vary along the dimensions of applicant merit (high versus low) and ethnicity (New Zealand European/Pakeha versus Maori). There was one curriculum vitae for each combination of merit and ethnicity and two filler CVs containing irrelevant information (to serve as distracters). Each CV contained applicant information under the following headings: name, nationality, education (institution), year of graduation, highest qualification and major, grade average, achievements, work experience and skills.

Ethnicity was not explicitly stated on the CVs, but indirectly suggested through surnames associated with

New Zealand European/Pakeha (*Jones, Henderson*) and Maori (*Rewa, Poata*). For Maori applicants, ethnicity was further indicated through the listing of language abilities (i.e. Te Reo Maori) under the skills section. To ensure gender-neutrality, only a surname and first initial was provided (e.g. *D. Jones*). All applicants had New Zealand nationality.

Merit was defined as correspondence between the applicant's attributes (as listed on the CV) and the required candidate attributes (as outlined on the job advertisement). We manipulated merit by varying information relating to applicant qualifications, grade average, achievements, work experience and skills.

All high merit applicants were described as having *A*-grade averages and relevant qualifications and achievements (for example, Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing and Prize for Achievement). Each high merit applicant also had the required numerical skills (e.g. competent at using statistical programs), and interests in marketing and information technology (e.g. marketing director for a student newspaper and help-desk assistant for university computing services). All low merit applicants had lower grade averages (*C+*), an unrelated qualification (e.g. Bachelor of Arts in History), and their achievements, work experience and skills were irrelevant to the advertised position (e.g. lead role in a local theatre production, part-time work in a café, and typing speed of 50wpm).

Although the CVs contained details unique to each applicant, an attempt was made, through systematic variation, to maintain consistency across the different ethnicities within the two levels of merit. To reduce possible bias of different universities or degree types, three different New Zealand universities were used, and all information within the high and low within-subject condition was counterbalanced within each level of merit.

Dependent Variables. There were three dependent variables: hiring decision, general applicant ratings and recommended applicant salaries. After viewing the CVs, participants were first

asked to choose one candidate they would offer the job to and explain why they would make that decision.

Participants were then required to provide a general assessment of each applicant on ratings sheets. Applicants were rated on the following 6 dimensions: achievement, suitability for the position, an overall rating, and in terms of the likelihood that he or she would employ the applicant, keep the CV for future reference, and refer the applicant to another company. Ratings were made on a scale of 1-10, with higher scores reflecting a more positive assessment of the applicant. Factor analyses revealed that five items (except the last item on likelihood that the participant would refer the applicant to another company) loaded highly on a single factor. In a second analysis using these 5 items, eigenvalues ranged from 3.18 to 3.45 and this single factor explained between 63.58 and 68.92 percent of the variance. A mean score of these 5 items was computed with higher scores reflecting a general positive assessment of each applicant. Cronbach's alpha scores ranged from .84 to .88 indicating good reliability.

The dependent variable of recommended applicant salary was measured using the final item on the questionnaire (*If you were to hire this applicant, what salary would you suggest?*). A median salary for a holder of a Bachelors Degree in New Zealand (\$35,100) was provided as a guiding figure (based on median salaries of Bachelor Qualified New Zealanders provided by www.stats.govt.nz, last accessed March 2004). Participant responses on this question ranged from \$10,000 to \$100,000 ($M = \$37,061$; $SD = 8,285$). The median response (\$35,650) was similar to the salary provided as an example (indicating that participants did not have difficulty in estimating a reasonable salary). An exploratory factor analysis that included both the salary as well as the five rating items listed above suggested that the recommended salary either formed a separate factor (for high-merit Maori applicant) or loaded weakly on a single factor (loadings $< .4$). Since we are interested in differential effects between general and resource-specific ratings (see hypothesis 3) we chose to

analyse the recommended salary item separately.

Participants then provided background information relating to age, gender, nationality, ethnicity and employment background. Finally, all participants were debriefed about the specific purposes and aims of the study.

Results

Using a mixed model ANOVA, the within-subjects variables (merit and ethnicity) and the between-subjects variables (individual need, and group need) were analysed in relation to the each of the dependent variables (general applicant ratings and recommended applicant salaries). An alpha level of $p < .05$ was used for all statistical tests.

Main Effects

Participants' ratings of high merit applicants ($M = 9.02, SD = .61$) were higher than ratings of low merit applicants ($M = 4.21, SD = 1.24$). This effect was significant, $F(1, 110) = 1592.28, p < .001$. The starting salaries recommended for high merit applicants ($M = \$41,800; SD = 7,749$) were also significantly higher than those for low merit applicants ($M = \$32,314; SD = 4,758$), $F(1, 106) = 235.31, p < .001$. No main effects of ethnicity, individual need or group need were

found on general applicant ratings or on recommended starting salaries.

Two-way interactions

Hypothesis 1 focused on how individual merit would shape Pakeha perceptions of Maori and New Zealand European/Pakeha job applicants. Relating to this research question, a significant two-way interaction was found between merit and ethnicity on general ratings of job applicants, $F(1, 110) = 8.96, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .075$. This interaction effect is illustrated in Figure 1. Participants' ratings of the high merit Maori applicant ($M = 9.12, SD = .70$) were higher than ratings of the high merit New Zealand European/Pakeha applicant ($M = 8.92, SD = .79$). However, participants' ratings of the low merit Maori applicant ($M = 4.15, SD = 1.26$) were lower than those of the low merit Pakeha applicant ($M = 4.28, SD = 1.37$). Therefore, this partially supports hypothesis 1. No other two-way interaction was significant for either ratings or salary recommendation.

Three-way Interactions

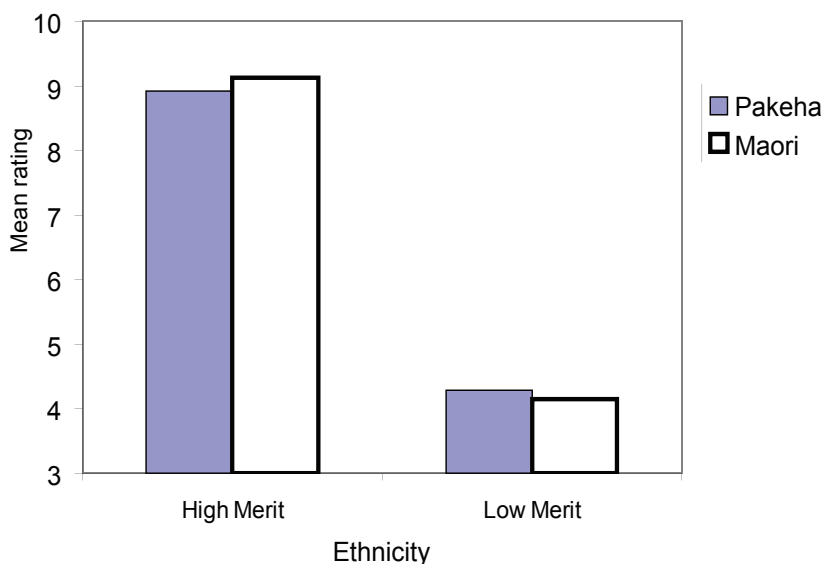
A significant interaction effect between ethnicity, merit, and individual need was found on recommended salaries, $F(1, 106) = 6.18, p < .025, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .055$. Figure 2 shows the interaction. When individual need was highlighted, the

pattern of results for high and low merit New Zealand European/Pakeha and Maori job applicants was similar to that described for the two-way interaction between merit and ethnicity on general applicant ratings. However, when no individual need was highlighted, the pattern was reversed. First, the New Zealand European/Pakeha high merit applicant (adjusted $M = 42,473.02, \text{Std. Error} = 1,131.20$) was given a higher salary than the Maori applicant (adjusted $M = 41,859.99, \text{Std. Error} = 1,043.52$). Second, both low merit applicants received essentially the same salary (the difference was a mere \$46 in favour of the Maori applicant: \$32,747). This provides partial support for hypothesis 2 in that individual need, but not group need was considered by participants when making salary recommendations.

Overall the two interactions show a more complex pattern than implied by hypothesis 3 (which stated that general attitudes towards Maori should be more positive compared with resource-specific attitudes). High merit Maori applicants were seen as more positive, but low merit Maori were seen as more negative, whereas resource-specific attitudes depended on a combination of merit and manipulated individual need salience.

A significant interaction effect between merit, individual need and group need was found on recommended salaries, $F(1, 106) = 6.18, p < .025, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .055$. Overall, the highest salary irrespective of ethnic background was recommended for high merit applicants, when both individual and group need were made salient (adjusted $M = 43,323.08, \text{Std. Error} = 1,537.47$). For high merit applicants, the lowest salary was recommended when individual need was highlighted, but no group need (adjusted $M = 39,744.83, \text{Std. Error} = 1,455.78$). For low merit applicants, the recommended salary was always lower than \$32,000, except for individuals with no individual need but salient group need (irrespective of ethnicity, adjusted $M = 34,187.50, \text{Std. Error} = 887.28$). As this interaction does not involve ethnicity, it is not of high relevance to the current research questions and therefore will not be discussed further.

Figure 1. Interaction effect of merit and ethnicity on ratings of job applicants



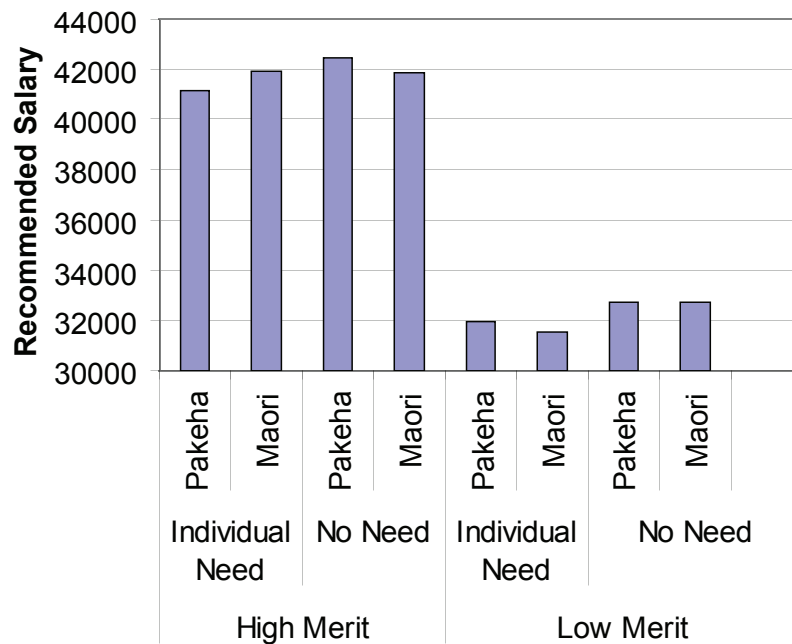


Figure 2. Interaction between need, ethnicity and merit on recommended salary

No other three-way interactions were significant for either ratings or salary. We also did not observe any significant four-way interaction involving any of our variables.

Hiring Decisions

A final dependent variable involved the hiring decision of the participants (i.e. which candidate they would give the job to). Out of 114 participants, 57 chose the high merit Maori applicant, and 27 chose the high merit New Zealand European/Pakeha applicant. The remaining participants chose applicants from the 'filler' CV's. Therefore, the Maori high merit applicant was clearly preferred.

In addition to choosing an applicant to hire, participants also provided reasons why they would make this decision. When looking at these responses there is a main difference between the responses for the New Zealand European/Pakeha and Maori applicant. All of the participants who chose the New Zealand European/Pakeha applicant listed reasons to do with the job-relevant variables of academic background, work experience and necessary skills. Responses included such things as 'solid grades', 'substantial practical work experience', and 'fits all the criteria.'

Responses for the Maori applicant also included job-relevant reasons (for example, 'grade average was high', 'previous work experience in the field' and 'covers all the requirements from the ad'). However, in addition to these job-relevant variables, many of the responses also included mention of Maori culture. Out of 57 responses, 19 mentioned Maori culture in addition to job-related variables as reasons for choosing the high merit Maori applicant. The most common cited reason relating to culture was Te Reo Maori (e.g. 'he has knowledge of Te Reo which is a very useful skill to have in a New Zealand job'). Only one response cited *only* reasons related to ethnicity for choosing the higher merit Maori applicant (i.e. 'it is important to give advantage to this minority').

Discussion

The present experiment examined Pakeha participants' perceptions of job applicants in a hypothetical employee selection situation. Three aspects were examined. Firstly, the study aimed to determine how individual merit shapes New Zealand European/Pakeha perceptions of job applicants. Secondly, the study looked at the effects of highlighting individual and

group need on shaping New Zealand European/Pakeha assessments of job applicants. Thirdly, the study examined whether New Zealand European/Pakeha assessments of job applicants varied according to the type of assessment used (i.e. general rating versus recommended salary).

Addressing the first aspect, a strong overall merit effect was found. This is in line with the strong individualistic and merit-oriented nature of New Zealand society described in previous research. A recent six-nation study by Fischer et al. (2007) found the highest rate of reported equity in a sample of NZ employees. More importantly, the predicted interaction with ethnicity was found. High merit Maori are seen as very positive, but low merit Maori are seen as more negative. This result is consistent with the predictions based on social identity and self-categorization theories (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Equally important is that high achieving Maori applicants were preferred over high achieving New Zealand European applicants. The examination of the justification of the hiring decision shows that possessing Te Reo Maori skills is of significant advantage. Future research should compare New Zealand European/Pakeha and Maori applicants with Te Reo skills directly. It may be that knowledge of Te Reo is a significant advantage, independently of ethnicity. Nevertheless, this would be an avenue for Maori to achieve greater participation in the labour force. However, these findings also suggest that low achieving Maori are seen as more negative compared with low merit New Zealand European/Pakeha. Therefore, it is essential to decrease the persisting education and achievement gap between Maori and New Zealand European/Pakeha (Maani, 2000).

The second hypothesis concerned the effects of making individual versus group need salient. Individual need interacted with the manipulation of merit and ethnicity, showing a pattern that partially supports hypothesis 2. Participants were willing to recommend a higher salary to high achieving Maori applicants, if the consideration of individual need was made salient. This resembles patterns found in the US where majority members are more favourable

to individualistic consideration of needs, rather than group based interventions (see Crosby et al., 2006 for reviews). This result is also consistent with micro-justice and individualistic arguments among NZ European/Pakeha (Potter & Wetherell, 1992). Majority applicants might be positively inclined towards high-achieving minority group members that overcame significant difficulties. On the other hand, if members of the same minority group do not show good results, they are more discriminated against. This might be an indication of 'benevolent' discrimination. Overall, the interaction suggests that psychological processes of opposition to group-based interventions by majority individuals that were observed in US contexts are also found in NZ/Aotearoa when looking at hypothetical job applicants. Therefore, this points to the generalizability of these effects across socio-cultural and experimental contexts.

Finally, we included variables that tap both general as well as resource specific attitudes. Compared to previous research, a complex picture emerged. High achieving Maori applicants were more likely to be hired and were also seen as more positive. If individual needs are brought to people's attention, Maori high achievers may also be given more money. However, low achieving Maori applicants were perceived as less favourable, and if individual needs are highlighted they are also being recommended lower salaries. In the condition where no need is highlighted, Pakeha were actually given a higher salary. This pattern resembles some of the arguments found in media and politics (e.g., Brash's Orewa speech). When these individualistic positions are made salient through short notes given to participants, New Zealand European/Pakeha students are willing to consider needs of individuals, but seem to be unwilling to address systematic inequalities in the larger society (e.g., Sibley & Liu, 2004).

Previous research has found support for biculturalism in general, but this support is not as strong when specific and tangible resource issues are involved. The present study further shows that support for minority members is more forthcoming if their needs are stressed in individual terms, rather than

collective grievances. However, this is unlikely to achieve a balance within the society overall since the starting conditions are unequal and Maori face significant difficulties in obtaining access to resources and opportunities to compete with majority New Zealand European/Pakeha individuals.

Limitations and Implications

The study does have several limitations which could be addressed in further research. The study is based on a rather small number of students. Fischer (2004; Fischer et al., 2007) provided criticism of scenario-based experimental studies and their generalizability to organizational processes. However, the study is important in showing that manipulating publicly available opinions (through a simple presentation of a hypothetical 'agency note') shows significant effects in the rating of job applicants. Studying students as the future elite in society provides one snapshot of ongoing processes in the larger society. Students in our study might have selected what they thought of as a politically correct answer. These pressures might change in real-life settings and it is possible that the (discriminatory) effects are even stronger in real-life contexts. It is also worth noting that the effect sizes were in the range of small to medium effect sizes (Cohen, 1992). However, given the artificial nature of the task and potential social desirability pressures (towards positive perceptions of Maori in general), the findings are noteworthy and important. Effect sizes smaller than the ones observed in our study may have important practical implications (Rosenthal, 1994). For the example, the two-way interaction explained about 7.5 percent of the variance. Taking the baseline salary of \$37,061, this will yield a difference of about \$2,778.58, which may make a huge difference to particular individuals or organizations. This study therefore shows that irrelevant cues (ethnic surnames) can provide enough information to elicit intergroup racial attitudes with noticeable effects. It is inevitable that cues to ethnicity (such as ethnic surnames) will be present in employee selection (particularly on written job applications). Other research has also demonstrated that

merely changing the name on the CV has dramatic consequence about whether applicants are considered in real-life contexts (Ward & Masgoreth, 2004). Managers and recruitment staff should be made aware of how these cues could result in possible bias.

Focusing on a positive trend, many of the open-ended responses included positive statements about cultural benefits (i.e. Te Reo Maori) of having Maori employees, illustrating that people are aware of the benefits of diversity in organisations and generally support biculturalism. Pakeha students in this study were willing to hire and provide favourable assessments of potential Maori employees. This result was achieved though the highlighting of micro-justice principles (namely individual merit and individual need). Strategies to increase Maori representation might therefore have more success through framing in terms of individualism (i.e. emphasising individual need), than in terms of Maori group need or disadvantage. Sibley et al. (2006) showed that these individualistic views are firmly anchored in society and are unlikely to be changed easily. Hence, framing of need in individualistic ways would have more of an influence on New Zealand European/Pakeha than using appeals based on collective grievances. This trends is also visible in the US where AA policies have been changed in favour of considerations on a case-by-case basis (Harper & Reskin, 2005).

The current manuscript did not focus on Maori perspectives. Even broader social justice focused interventions such as AA might not be sufficient from a Maori perspective (Humpage & Fleras, 2001). It is certainly welcome to devote significant resources to Maori to enable equal chances of participating in society. As indicated by this study, once Maori are high achievers they seem to be well accepted. The path to achieving this is riddled with hurdles due to lack of access to resources, barriers to educational achievement, lower socioeconomic status, greater family responsibilities, etc. Furthermore, AA policies do not address the equal partnership associated with the Treaty

of Waitangi and only help to perpetuate the imbalance in power within the larger NZ/Aotearoa context. Therefore, bold initiatives of self-governance and true equal participation in legislation and policy are needed for lasting equality.

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Appendix A

Manipulations of individual versus group need (job agency notes)

1. Individual need manipulation

The vast majority of students in New Zealand have a student loan. Students are forced to take out loans while studying to pay for rising university fees and necessary living costs, such as food and rent. The burden of debt creates numerous financial and social problems for university graduates. A large proportion of the repayments do not go towards the initial amount borrowed, but instead towards the interest that accumulates on top of the loan. This extends the repayment period and many students will not repay their loans during their lifetime. This debt creates genuine hardship for graduates. It is difficult to save for the future with a proportion of weekly earnings going towards loan repayments. Many graduates report difficulty in obtaining a mortgage and as a result will put off buying a home. Graduates also face restrictions in their everyday lifestyle, and may even put off having children. To escape the impact of student debt, many graduates feel they have little choice but to leave behind the benefits of a New Zealand lifestyle and instead pursue a career overseas. The impact of several years as a student is felt through a lifetime of debt repayment.

2. Group-level need manipulation

Ethnic or national origin is one of the grounds for unlawful employment discrimination in New Zealand. While prohibited by the law, ethnic minorities continue to face inequalities in the workplace. Ethnic minorities face barriers in a number of work-related areas, including disadvantage in recruitment practices, promotions and access to training. Maori face disproportionate rates of unemployment compared to New Zealand Pakeha. One survey showed that Asian students were more than twice as likely as Pakeha students to be unemployed after graduation, despite possessing equal qualifications. Ethnic minorities might face racial harassment in the workplace or disadvantage through culturally insensitive organisational policies and practices. Employment discrimination results in a range of financial and social issues for ethnic minorities. Statistics reveal that ethnic minorities tend to have lower incomes, and therefore lower standards of living than New Zealand Pakeha. Discrimination in the workplace leads to stress and anxiety, which has an impact on both work performance and the personal life of the employee. Discrimination in recruitment practices results in the under-representation of minorities in professional or high paid positions. Some companies have tried to overcome this problem through the implementation of affirmative action policies, which make allowances for the employment of individuals from minority groups.

3. Individual and group-level need manipulation

The vast majority of students in New Zealand have a student loan. Students are forced to take out loans while studying to pay for rising university fees and necessary living costs, such as food and rent. The burden of debt creates numerous financial problems for graduates, including restrictions in lifestyle, difficulties in saving, buying a house, and providing for a family. Large portions of loan repayments go towards accumulating interest, making it difficult to get on top of the debt. Many graduates will not repay their loan during their lifetime. The issue of student loans is even more problematic for ethnic minorities in New Zealand. People from ethnic groups such as Maori, Pacific Islanders and Asians already face inequality in the workplace. They are over-represented in unemployment figures and under-represented in professional and well-paid jobs. Despite having equal qualifications, ethnic minorities are more likely to be unemployed following graduation than New Zealand Pakeha. Employment discrimination combined with the burden of a student loan debt creates increased hardship for graduates from ethnic minorities. They face an increased length of time for loan repayment and subsequently a greater accumulation of interest. The social and financial problems stemming from this burden of debt creates a disincentive for people from ethnic minorities to participate in tertiary study and contributes to a cycle of social inequality.

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