

Innovation Connections Project

Evaluating Cultural Infusion's Ancestry Atlas

Final Report

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1. Executive Summary

Diversity Atlas (DA), created by Cultural Infusion (CI), is a response to two connected problems that policy stakeholders have drawn attention to in relation to Australia's growing cultural diversity:

- a. The proliferation of intersecting cultural identity groups in the Australian population, whose presence makes it more difficult for businesses and national agencies to "read" Australia's diversity; and
- b. The recognition by businesses and bureaucratic organisations that they must improve the diversity of their staff and managers to retain a social license to operate.

DA is a data collection and knowledge management tool aimed at enabling organisations to understand the diversity of their workforces, a step which CI believes will support them to drive better outcomes for all their staff no matter their various forms of cultural difference. Notionally, it can also be used to help organisations understand markets and constituencies, in order to better design their workforces to complement external stakeholders. DA presents this data to consumers in the form of attractive visualisations that are well-received at conferences and presentations.

In responding to the problems outlined above, however, DA makes three important mistakes:

- a. DA treats as fixed and clear a set of concepts whose meaning is unstable and whose salience varies in specific political contexts. These concepts include DA's so-called "pillars of diversity," namely "ethnicity," language/s spoken, religion or "worldview," and country of birth, under which DA seeks to fix respondents within specific categories;
- b. DA posits a "diversity formula" and index that artificially weight these "pillars" in a manner that CI cannot justify with reference to the vast social science literature on the shifting sources of cultural identity; and
- c. DA uses the work of organisational theorists like Geert Hofstede to associate certain cultural groups with a range of traits and tropes purported to be essential to their character.

This report draws on the literature referred to above to assess the validity and utility of the various assumptions about cultural identity that are embedded in the DA platform. It argues that CI should pursue a program of further research and testing to ensure that the risks of using DA are understood and can be alleviated.

2. Recommendations:

- a. CI should cease use of the diversity formula and index; and
- b. CI should cease referring to the work of Geert Hofstede. These two aspects of DA risk perpetuating cultural essentialism and cannot be defended against the social scientific literature on cultural diversity.
- c. CI should subject the remainder of the existing DA platform to a rigorous process of testing with real responders in real organisations, just as this project initially set out to do in 2020, before being scaled back with the onset of the pandemic. Such a process could bring CI to a better understanding of the risks involved in using DA and enable it to revise some of its choices before taking the product to market.
- d. CI should seek closer dialogue and feedback with policy stakeholders calling for forms of cultural enumeration in national tools and datasets, to explore how DA might meet the needs of the agencies that run these tools and datasets.
- e. CI should consider other uses for DA than in organisations, including in educational technology product offerings that use the platform for teaching purposes only.

3. The Policy Problem

a. Australian Society is More Diverse than Multicultural Policies First Imagined

Australian society is now culturally diverse to an extent not imagined when the first multicultural policies were drawn up the 1970s and 80s.¹ These policies envisaged an Australia in which a predominantly white society would be “tolerant” towards visibly different, even non-European and non-white, minority groups such as refugees from Indochina. Australia’s new migrants would be “permitted” to observe their cultural practices without losing access to services, opportunities, or the attainment of Australian citizenship, albeit on the basis that collectively, they still constituted a small demographic minority. In turn, this minority was assumed to consist of various smaller, notionally distinct and discrete cultural groups, whose affairs the state would manage via consultation with officially recognized community groups and leaders. Throughout Australia’s transition from its previous White Australia Policy to multiculturalism, the assumption remained that Australia would possess a clear white majority whose power and privilege was under no threat from these new arrivals or their cultural differences.²

Non-white migration continued at a steady pace through the 1990s, sparking occasional moral panics about “Asians” which ultimately gave way to new debates about the character of refugees

¹ For a glimpse of this older generation of policies, refer to the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission Act 1980, which remains the state’s key piece of multicultural legislation, despite being forty years old. Recognising that its policy framework was ageing, in 2015, the Government of South Australia commissioned a public policy consultation and design workshop to consider ways forward for updating the state’s understanding of its own diversity, especially in the context of South Australians’ increasing interaction with Asia and Asians as it searched for ways to reinvigorate its economy. In 2020, the Government of South Australia finally introduced a new South Australian Multicultural Bill 2020 into Parliament, aimed at “bring[ing] South Australia’s multicultural legislation into the 21st century.” See Amrita Malhi, Gerry Groot, and Annie Drahos, *InterculturAdelaide: Cultural Adaptivity for the Asian Century - Policy Directions Report*, University of South Australia & University of Adelaide (2015); “Multicultural Legislative Review,” Government of South Australia, 2020, accessed 6 May, 2021, <https://www.dpc.sa.gov.au/responsibilities/multicultural-affairs/policy/multicultural-legislative-review#:~:text=The%20South%20Australian%20Multicultural%20Bill%202020%3A,new%20South%20Australia%20Multicultural%20Charter>.

² For a quick overview, refer to Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Routledge, 2012), pp. 82-85. For more details, refer to early policy documents such as Australian Population and Immigration Council. and Australian Ethnic Affairs Council., *Multiculturalism and its implications for immigration policy* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979); *Multiculturalism for all Australians : our developing nationhood*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1982); *Multiculturalism and its implications for service delivery in Australian society : a collection of papers*, (Richmond, Vic.: Clearing House on Migration Issues, 1982); Lois Foster and David Stockley, *Multiculturalism : the changing Australian paradigm*, Multilingual matters (Series), (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1984); David Penman, *Multiculturalism in Australia : a Christian perspective* (Footscray, Melbourne: Footscray Institute of Technology, 1984); Mary Kalantzis, Bill Cope, and National Advisory and Co-ordinating Committee on Multicultural Education, *Pluralism and equitability : multicultural curriculum strategies for schools*, NACCME commissioned research paper, (Canberra: National Advisory and Co-ordinating Committee on Multicultural Education, 1986); Antigone Kefala and Australia Council., *Multiculturalism and the arts* (North Sydney, N.S.W.: Australia Council, 1986); Vasiliki Nihlas and Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services., *Multiculturalism discussion paper* (Australia: ROMAMPAS, 1986); Office of Multicultural Affairs, *Multiculturalism and immigration* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988); Kenneth Stanley Inglis and Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia., *Multiculturalism and national identity : annual lecture 1988* (Canberra: Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, 1988); Lois E. Foster, *Diversity and multicultural education : a sociological perspective* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989); James Jupp and Office of Multicultural Affairs, *The Challenge of diversity : policy options for a multicultural Australia* (Canberra: Australian Govt. Pub. Service, 1989).

and Muslims, especially after 2001 and start of the “War on Terror.”³ Yet even as refugee policy tightened from the early 2000s, the volume and composition of regular migration flows to Australia both increased and diversified, and net overseas migration surpassed natural increase as Australia’s leading cause of population growth. Asian migration, partially facilitated by Australia’s international student intake, increased rapidly.⁴ Resulting from these changes, at the most recent census in 2016, almost half the nation’s population (49 per cent) consisted of first- or second-generation migrants, and a greater proportion of these migrants originated from China, India, and Southeast Asia than traditional sources of mostly white migration such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand.⁵

Further, despite increasingly restrictive policies towards refugees, the proliferation of conflicts and other forms of displacement crises around the world has continued to increase the number and diversity of “multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified” asylum-seekers and refugees present in Australian society.⁶ Examples include some members of Australia’s Afghan, Somali, Uyghur, and Sri Lankan communities, in which many individuals are likely to have migrated to Australia as refugees on one or more temporary visas, often through third countries and often serving periods of detention. Influenced by these factors, the number of cultural identity groups now present in Australian society has proliferated, while the layers of nested identities, and overlaps and intersections between identity categories, have also multiplied. Reflecting this development, in today’s contemporary Australian discourse, the rubrics of “diversity” and “intercultural interaction” are now practically interchangeable with “multiculturalism.” This older formulation usually assumed that Australians would always value one identity category, usually that denoting their “original” national or ethnic group, above all other sources of cultural identity. In fact, like many other historically “white” nations that have been transformed by migration, Australia is now increasingly “superdiverse,” a condition which American anthropologist Steven Vertovec argues is characterised by “the diversification of diversity.”⁷ These original assumptions reflected in Australia’s multicultural policies are now under increasing strain.

b. Understanding this Diversity is not Straightforward

While Australia’s increasing diversity is not always easily visible in its national and social institutions, including the media, it is entirely obvious in its capital cities, especially the larger ones. It is also increasingly likely to be observed in the population data that is collected by state agencies and other interest groups. As discussed above, however, the “diverse” are no longer easily enumerated in straightforward cultural categories, either in relation to each other, or in relation to Australia’s notional white majority. At the same time, however, as their numbers and population share both grow, Australia’s “diverse” are increasingly politically assertive, interculturally competent, and economically influential. Holding a growing share of the nation’s social and cultural capital, they are

³ A good selection of perspectives on these debates is available in Raymond Gaita, ed., *Essays on Muslims and Multiculturalism* (Text Publishing, 2011).

⁴ Net overseas migration volumes eventually collapsed in 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effective closure of Australia’s borders that resulted from the Australian Government’s pandemic control measures. For an analysis of Australian migration trends, drawn from the Australian Treasury’s Intergenerational Reports, refer to Jackson Gothe-Snape, “How John Howard Boosted Migration and Embraced Foreign Students, in Five Charts,” *ABC News* 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-20/migration-figures-under-prime-minister-john-howard/9465114?nw=0>.

⁵ “Cultural Diversity in Australia,” 2071.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stories from the Census, 2016, Australian Government, 2017, <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Cultural%20Diversity%20Data%20Summary~30>.

⁶ Steven Vertovec, “Super-diversity and its Implications,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, 6 (2007).

⁷ Vertovec, “Super-diversity and its Implications.”

causing Australia's powerholders to have to work harder to understand and cater to their needs, fuelling public debate on diversity and how to manage it. Further, despite the overwhelmingly white identity of these powerholders, it is no longer so acceptable for them to express views depicting "multicultural" Australia as an arena in which a white state and society allow minorities to express their differences within discrete, pre-determined limits.⁸ One result is a growing effort by the state and interest groups to try to "read" the many distinct and overlapping cultural identity groups that now make up the Australian population, at precisely the same time that this effort is made more difficult by the diversification of their diversity.⁹ This difficulty can mean, for example, that public and private sector agencies find it more complicated to determine which of the civil society organisations (CSOs) purporting to represent Australia's "diverse" constituencies actually enjoy broad-based legitimacy among the "represented." Further, owing to increasing political diversity within cultural identity groups, first generation community "leaders" may not understand why second and third generation migrants do not hold the same views that they do. Sometimes, they do not even use the same national or ethnic labels. It is therefore no longer as straightforward as it once was to consult with identified "community leaders," including for the purpose of designing policy that is inclusive and appropriate for as many Australians as possible.¹⁰ The new space for debate and representative claims created by these developments is also producing a new generation of purported leaders (or more accurately, creators) of new constituencies of the diverse, including by channelling some of their frustrations and demands.¹¹

Among state agencies and interest groups alike, then, this situation is now driving new debates on how Australia might know its population better, including in terms of the number and size of its cultural identity groups and the social and political dynamics operating within and between them. Some of the questions that researchers, analysts, and advocates are now asking include how these dynamics might relate to issues as wide-ranging as unequal health and labour market outcomes, unfair media reporting, and who to consult to provide informed, responsive government services. What these stakeholders all have in common is how complicated it can be to derive meaningful data from national datasets and the indicators they use for enumerating these identity groups. The category "ethnicity," for example, is not directly used in major datasets like the Australian Census. This decision is making it difficult for interest groups to demonstrate how ethnicity, and specifically membership of non-white or "non-European" ethnic groups, might correlate with other facts in

⁸ For the way in which Australia's white majority has historically sought to set the terms on which "Third World-looking" migrants have been able to participate in Australian society, refer again to Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*.

⁹ The present situation recalls instances in which colonial powers have sought to rule over highly diverse groups of "natives," only to find that they require a new set of tools to enumerate, categorise, and sort them, all the better to "read" and understand their real or imputed characteristics. Refer to Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006 (1983)); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 2020 (1998)); Farish A. Noor, *Data-Gathering in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1800-1900: Framing the Other* (Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

¹⁰ For an example of how this new complexity can frustrate those responsible for managing Australia's ageing model of "multicultural" consultation, refer to my discussion of a South Australian government Minister's obvious frustration with having to consult the committee members of "three Sikh temples" (i.e., instead of just one), not to mention a vast array of other Indian diaspora associations. See Amrita Malhi, "Intercultural Futures: The Fraught Politics of Multiculturalism," *Griffith Review* 55 (2017), <https://www.griffithreview.com/articles/24501/>.

¹¹ See, for example, the creation of an award for Asian Australian leaders under 40 by the Centre for Asian Australian Leadership (CAAL), based at The Australian National University, and the Asian Australian Leadership Summits organised by CAAL and PwC in 2019 and 2020.

unequal social outcomes. For example, in relation to the Australian Public Service (APS), Osmond Chiu, of the Community & Public Sector Union (CPSU) and the Labor-aligned thinktank Per Capita, has raised as a problem the data collected by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). Further, a recent study by Yun Jiang for the Lowy Institute has suggested that Chinese Australians in the APS are suspected of “dual loyalties” in performing policy work concerning Australia’s relationship with China, causing them to miss out on promotions and security clearances.¹² Yet at the same time that such concerns are being raised by analysts like Jiang, the APSC, which used to collect cultural and linguistic diversity data in its regular APS Employee Census, has removed the relevant questions from its most recent questionnaire.¹³ Chiu has, quite reasonably, criticised the APSC for making it more difficult for APS staff, unions, and the public to scrutinise the APS on its equity and diversity record.¹⁴

The question of whether and how to count people also extends beyond the APS, which employs only Australian citizens, in conditions that are reasonably well-regulated in terms of employee safety. Other sections of the workforce, however, are unregulated or insist that their workers are not employees, and regularly feature concentrations of new and/or temporary migrants who, arguably, are in a much more vulnerable position. For example, in hospitality, cleaning, security, and food delivery – industries where new migrants are concentrated as workers – the COVID-19 pandemic might be disproportionately affecting workers from a range of South Asian ethnic groups. Yet, as sociologist Andrew Jakubowicz points out, the National Notifiable Diseases (NND) database does not record patients’ ethnicity, nor does it employ other proxy indicators such as language/s spoken at home or elsewhere, or country of birth. This lack of interest in understanding the intersection of ethnicity with other susceptibility factors means that Australian researchers cannot build up a picture of whether certain groups of people are more likely to be adversely affected by the pandemic, especially at work. Nor do we understand other aspects of the “political economy of ethnic groups” in Australia, including the characteristics of the secondary labour market in which many newly arrived migrants are concentrated, or the social communication channels that these migrants use to share information about how to manage their exposure to the pandemic.¹⁵

c. The Australian Census and its Critics

Chiu and Jakubowicz are not the only commentators raising criticisms about Australia’s national datasets. For Labor MP Andrew Giles, there is an additional “dark data hole” for Australia to address, as he outlined in a 2019 speech at the annual conference for the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA).¹⁶ In his remarks, Giles called for the most prominent and well-

¹² Yun Jiang, *Chinese-Australians in the Australian Public Service*, Lowy Institute (12 April 2021), <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/publications/chinese-australians-australian-public-service>.

¹³ Sarah Basford Canales, “More Data, Not Less” APS Employee Census Skips Questions on Multicultural Diversity,” *The Canberra Times*, 7 April 2021, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7198177/diversity-questions-snubbed-in-aps-census/>.

¹⁴ Osmond Chiu (@redrabbleroz), “This by @yun_au nails the Australian Public Service’s problem w/ CALD representation. When you have Harmony Day events but only cull cultural & linguistic diversity questions from the APS Census, you can’t help but think efforts are superficial,” <https://theconversation.com/australia-is-failing-to-recognise-an-urgent-need-recruiting-more-chinese-australians-into-public-service-158528#auspol>,” Twitter, 12 April, 2021.

¹⁵ “Dark Data Hole Leaves Multicultural Australia in Danger in Second Wave Pandemic,” 2020, <https://andrewjakubowicz.com/2020/06/22/dark-data-hole-leaves-multicultural-australia-in-danger-in-second-wave-pandemic/>.

¹⁶ Helen Davidson, “Labor MP Calls for Questions on Race and Ethnicity to be Added to Census,” *The Guardian*, 10 October 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/oct/10/labor-mp-calls-for-questions-on-race-and-ethnicity-to-be-added-to-census>.

regarded of Australia's national datasets, the Australian Census, to be "updated" on the basis that it fails to measure Australia's diversity well enough. He has called for the 2021 census to include new and specific questions on race and ethnicity, noting that in 2016, only proxy indicators like "ancestry, language [spoken at home] and place of birth" appeared on the census form. In contrast, as Giles pointed out, New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States all have ways of enumerating ethnicity or race, by which he means they ask people if they are "Asian," "Latino," "Black," or "Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME)." Giles' comments have been supported by University of Sydney academic, former Labor staffer, and former Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Soutphomassane, who notes it is not obvious how many Australians have "a non-European or Indigenous background" (i.e., they are not white), making it difficult to identify how they might experience "disadvantages or barriers."¹⁷



Figure 1: As reported in *The Guardian* on 10 October 2019, Labor MP Andrew Giles has called for the census to include questions on race and ethnicity.

In these comments, the Australian Census appears to be a target precisely because it is Australia's most important dataset that is explicitly concerned with the characteristics of its population. In many countries, national statistical agencies make decisions that are replicated by other state agencies, so these advocates likely believe that if their calls are heeded by the ABS, they can then also be adopted in other sectors, presumably including healthcare through the NND. Certainly, the census does not include specific questions on ethnicity or race, which presumably are the categories Soutphommasane would aim to use to identify who is "non-European," notwithstanding the problem of defining which ethnic groups should be grouped as "European." It does, however,

¹⁷ Davidson, "Labor MP Calls for Questions on Race and Ethnicity to be Added to Census." Note that Soutphommasane nevertheless developed an estimate of the "non-European" segment of the Australian population and arrived at a figure of 21 per cent. See Australian Human Rights Commission, *Leading for Change : A Blueprint for Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Leadership Revisited*, Australian Human Rights Commission (2018), https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/publications/leading-change-blueprint-cultural-diversity-and-0?_ga=2.13444407.146292800.1620377129-63181825.1620377129.

enumerate the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander population, which is the only aggregate “ethnic” proxy category that the census carries (i.e., contrary to Soutphommasane’s statement).

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<p>19 What is the person’s religion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering this question is OPTIONAL. • Examples of ‘Other’: LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, JUDAISM, TAOISM, HUMANISM. • Remember to mark the box like this: <input type="checkbox"/> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No religion <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic <input type="checkbox"/> Anglican (Church of England) <input type="checkbox"/> Uniting Church <input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism <input type="checkbox"/> Islam <input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox <input type="checkbox"/> Baptist <input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism <p>Other (please specify)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="810 1406 1082 1541"> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>																									<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No religion <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic <input type="checkbox"/> Anglican (Church of England) <input type="checkbox"/> Uniting Church <input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism <input type="checkbox"/> Islam <input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox <input type="checkbox"/> Baptist <input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism <p>Other (please specify)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1114 1406 1385 1541"> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>																																																																								

Figure 2: The Ancestry question in the Australian Census.¹⁸

For those who are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, however, the Australian census has, to date, used only the broader category of “ancestry” – along with language spoken at home and place of birth – as means towards gaining an impression of Australia’s cultural diversity. The use of this category does not allow researchers or analysts to easily quantify numbers of second- or third-generation non-white migrants living in Australia, who might have been born here and/or speak English at home. These second- and third-generation Australians have access only to the “ancestry”

¹⁸ The full census form is available at <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2901.0Main%20Features802016/%24FILE/2016%20Census%20Sample%20Household%20Form.pdf>.

question as a way of showing that they might belong to a non-white group. Further, the category “ancestry” is genuinely confusing in the way it is presented as well as in the results it generates, as the term – even more so than other possible (and also contested) terms like “ethnicity” – denotes a category with no commonly agreed meaning. In short, it is not at all clear which commonly used marker of identity one should prioritise when naming an “ancestry” – country of birth, language spoken at home, religious identification, name, “racial” appearance (e.g., “black”), or indeed any other. When used in the context of enumerative exercises like census in the United States and United Kingdom, the category has been found to confuse respondents. Some respondents have found it difficult to differentiate this category from “race” or “ethnicity,” including whether the term might allude to a historical ethnic “origin” as distinct from a more contemporary identification.¹⁹

In Australia, the impossibility of determining what “ancestry” means is demonstrated in the very list of examples provided alongside the question, which asks people to nominate up to two self-identified answers. The form provides the categories “English,” “Irish,” “Scottish,” “Italian,” “German,” “Chinese,” and “Australian,” the last of which offers respondents an opportunity to decline to identify any connections that might locate their origins beyond the borders of the nation-state. Alternatively, respondents can self-identify another ancestry, prompted by a list of examples from a variety of categories, including “Greek” (both a national and ethnic designation), “Kurdish,” and “Hmong” (ethnic identities that do not correspond to a single associated nationality). It also offers “Australian South Sea Islander” (a geographical term spanning diverse ethnicities). The results from such questions can make it difficult, as Giles and Soutphommassane have argued, to determine exactly how many Australians come from non-white ethnic or racial backgrounds. Respondents can, and do, nominate national (such as “Pakistani,” “Indonesian,” or “South African”) and religious (such as “Sikh” – but not “Hindu,” “Muslim,” or “Christian”) labels as well as “ethnic” ones (such as “Kadazan,” “Sindhi,” or “Zulu”). It is therefore not straightforward to disaggregate white from non-white South Africans, nor is there a science to determining precisely how many Punjabis are present in the “Sikh” category, nor a firm reason for Black British respondents not to write “British.”²⁰

¹⁹ Peter J. Aspinall, “Approaches to Developing an Improved Cross-National Understanding of Concepts and Terms Relating to Ethnicity and Race,” *International Sociology* 22, no. 1 (2007): pp. 44-45.

²⁰ Aspinall, “Approaches to Developing an Improved Cross-National Understanding of Concepts and Terms Relating to Ethnicity and Race.”; Peter J. Aspinall, “Answer Formats in British Census and Survey Ethnicity Questions: Does Open Response Better Capture ‘Superdiversity’?,” *Sociology* 46, 2 (2012).

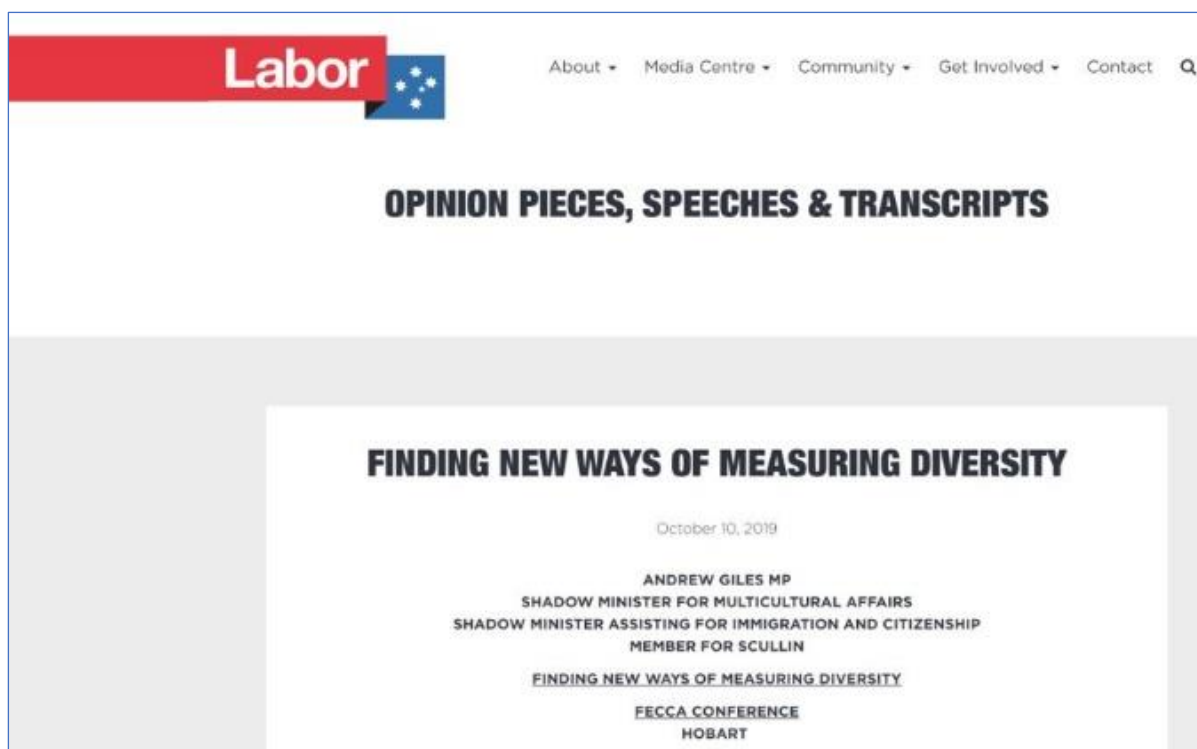


Figure 3: Figures in the ALP, including Andrew Giles, are calling for new ways to "measure" diversity to be developed.

It is therefore not surprising that political parties are finding it difficult to determine who they should prioritise as targets when competing for votes, or what messages they should push to them. The contest for non-white voters is becoming more intense, and more of these voters are supporting the Coalition at elections than in the 1970s or even the 1990s, when Labor used to present itself as the "party of multiculturalism" against the Coalition and its right-wing competitors such as Pauline Hanson's One Nation. Indeed, polling by Resolve Political Monitor has found that 44 per cent of "those identified as non-Anglo Saxon" voted for the Coalition at the last election, while only 31 per cent voted for Labor. While the proportion of these voters who claimed to support Labor rose to 36 percent in the most recent poll in April 2021, as Chiu points out, "Labor must not take their support for granted."²¹ Recognising the more competitive nature of "ethnic politics," Labor is working to modernise its approach, including by testing ways to identify (and mobilise) second- and third-generation, non-white constituencies that might benefit from its efforts to advocate for them specifically, and against racism in general. For example, it has established a Multicultural Engagement Taskforce and is investing in constituency-building work among Asian Australians, including in partnership with The Australian National University (ANU). Here, its outreach is directed through a Centre for Asian Australian Leadership (CAAL) led by Jieh-Yung Lo, a former Labor staffer and assistant to the previous ANU Chancellor, former Labor Foreign Minister Gareth Evans. In its search for data to deploy, CAAL is increasingly working with the ANU Centre for Social Research

²¹ Osmond Chiu (@redrabbleroz), Twitter, 24 April, 2021, <https://twitter.com/redrabbleroz/status/1385748969792278529>; David Crowe, "Voters Frustrated but Not Furious as Coalition Hopes Teeter on a Needle Point," *The Sydney Morning Herald* 2021, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/voters-frustrated-but-not-furious-as-coalition-hopes-teeter-on-a-needle-point-20210423-p57lv6.html>.

Methods, which conducts polling at regular intervals in collaboration with the Centre.²² This approach is likely to yield better-quality results than some previous methods, including scanning down the electoral roll for Indian-looking names – an approach that has led to some badly-targeted election material being sent to voters who might not appreciate the low-quality profiling.²³

Whatever the problems currently experienced by political parties, it seems the ABS is not willing to entertain Labor's criticisms, responding that it will consider only minimal changes to the "ancestry" question.²⁴ This response is perhaps unsurprising, considering that Labor intellectuals have not elaborated how to create a system of enumeration that might better account for race or ethnicity. Indeed, Giles and Soutphommasane have only offered an outline of a rationale for doing so, including the general aim of "help[ing] identify the population's untapped potential," and, more specifically improving the cultural diversity of Australia's public- and private-sector leaderships.²⁵ In any case, regardless of the thinking that Labor might be doing, as the agency responsible for operationalising decisions about census categories, the ABS states that its current methodology is consultative, well-researched, and defensible. That methodology is to sort respondents' "ancestry" answers into broader categories using a database of identity labels known as the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG). This database, delivered in the form of a website and a linked Excel spreadsheet, contains the ABS' own set of decisions around identity categories, against which respondents' "ancestry" answers are ultimately coded without respondents being involved.²⁶ Scholars of enumeration have pointed out that there are various problems with such methods, yet at the same time, they are not uncommon in national censuses, and the Bureau periodically revises its approach in a reasonably transparent manner, sometimes responding to criticisms.²⁷ When addressing the public through the census form, however, the ABS' use of "ancestry" is based on its definition of "ethnicity" as "a multi-dimensional concept" pertaining to a shared identity held on the basis of one or more distinguishing characteristics. These characteristics might include "a long, shared history," "a cultural tradition," "a common geographic origin," "a common language," "a common religion," "being a minority," and/or "being racially conspicuous." For the ABS, the priority is to give respondents the opportunity to demonstrate their "active association" with categories relevant to them. Whether or not these categories are conceptually consistent or historically determined is not important to the Bureau, nor, apparently, is their utility in showing interest groups specifically which Australians are not white.²⁸

²² "Labor's Multicultural Engagement Taskforce," Australian Labor Party, 2021, <https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/asian-australians-hit-hard-by-the-covid-19-pandemic>.

²³ Refer to the discussion of the letter written in Hindi in Malhi, "Intercultural Futures: The Fraught Politics of Multiculturalism."

²⁴ Personal communication with Labor staffer, 2016.

²⁵ This lack of Asian Australian figures in Australian policy and managerial ranks is a serious problem, as Soutphommasane has previously found. Refer again to Australian Human Rights Commission, *Leading for Change: A Blueprint for Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Leadership Revisited*.

²⁶ "Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG)," Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/australian-standard-classification-cultural-and-ethnic-groups-ascecg/latest-release>.

²⁷ Aspinall, "Approaches to Developing an Improved Cross-National Understanding of Concepts and Terms Relating to Ethnicity and Race."; Aspinall, "Answer Formats in British Census and Survey Ethnicity Questions: Does Open Response Better Capture 'Superdiversity'?"; Daniel Bochsler et al., "Exchange on the Quantitative Measurement of Ethnic and National Identity," *Nations and Nationalism* 27, no. 1 (2021).

²⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG)."

4. Cultural Infusion and Diversity Atlas

a. Creating and Servicing a Diversity Tech Market

Diversity Atlas (DA) is an enumerative platform developed in 2017 by the Melbourne B Corp/social enterprise Cultural Infusion (CI), led by CEO Peter Mousaferiadis, originally a director and producer of large-scale concerts and ceremonial events. CI, which Mousaferiadis founded in 2003, has worked with schools and youth organisations, mostly in Australia and Asia, to promote intercultural experiences through exposure and involvement in music and the arts. In recent years, CI has also developed a line of ed-tech (educational technology) products that teach world cultures through gamified experiences, for which it has won a United Nations Alliance of Civilisations Intercultural Innovation Award and recognition as a UNESCO partner. In 2015, Mousaferiadis was elected as a board member of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, a position that places CI at the heart of the nation's debates around diversity and multicultural policy, in Australia's fastest growing and changing capital city due to international migration. This history and context have informed CI's entry into the diversity policy and technology market.

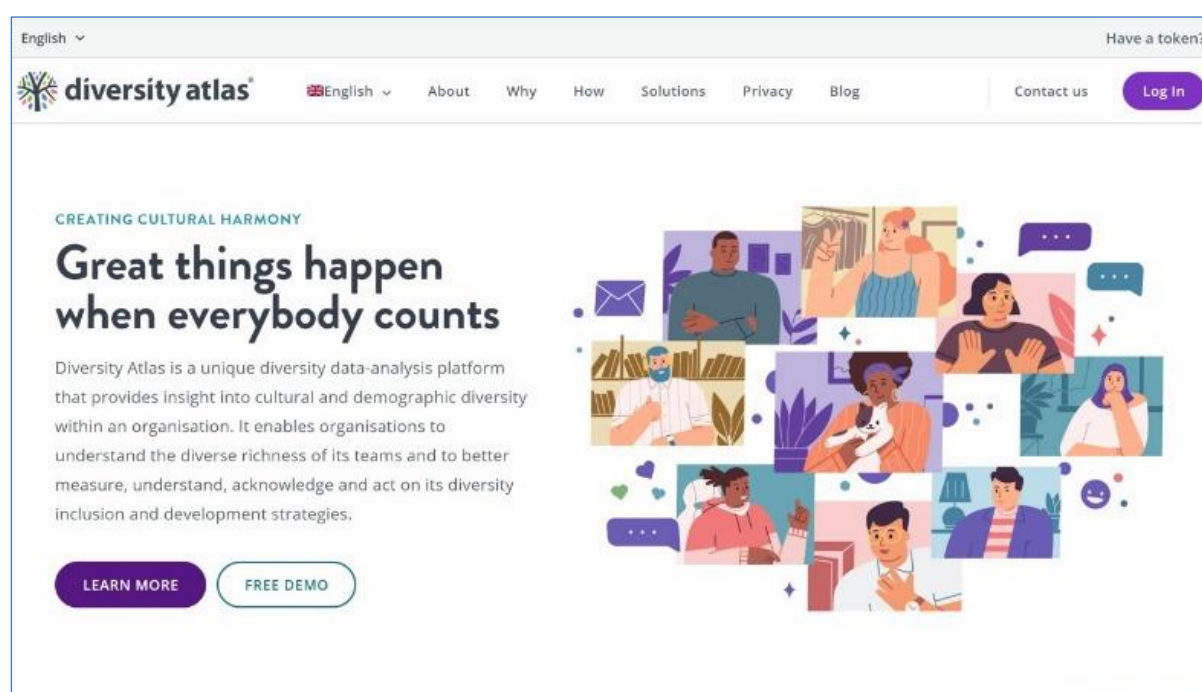


Figure 1: Image from the Diversity Atlas website, featuring the brand's most recent imagery.

DA is built on the foundational premise that organisations in Australia and elsewhere are increasingly under pressure to adopt, demonstrate their commitment to, and improve their performance against, employee diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) targets. These organisations must manage this internal pressure from staff while also simultaneously responding to enormous change in the products and services marketplace, the most important of which in this context is the superdiversity of their customers and clients. Aiming to service organisations in the process of making the first of these changes, CI is pitching DA as a "unique diversity data-analysis platform that provides insight into cultural and demographic diversity within an organisation. It enables organisations to understand the diverse richness of its [sic] teams and to better measure, understand, acknowledge, and act on its diversity inclusion and development strategies."²⁹ At the same time, as it has more recently also sought to respond to the second change, CI is arguing to

²⁹ "Diversity Atlas," n.d., accessed 7 May, 2021, <https://www.diversityatlas.com.au/>.

these organisations that using DA to improve the diversity of their staff (and leadership) profiles will enable them to better match and reflect the diversity of their markets. By using DA, CI argues, organisations will be able to adopt a “continuous improvement” approach to diversity, progressively improving their performance when assessed at reviews that their management teams would conduct at regular intervals. Ultimately, they should reach an end point that CI refers to as “workforce mutuality,” or a condition in which “the diversity of an organisation or a sector reflects the diversity of the community served by the organisation.”³⁰ By implication, therefore, although CI does not market DA in this way, the platform could be used to measure organisations’ external diversity too, so that both diversity and mutuality can be assessed. It could, for example, be used on sample groups not only of staff but audiences, markets, and constituencies. Indeed, to date, it has only been tested in this direction, for example via product demonstrations to conference audiences, and the product has not been tested inside a modern bureaucratic organisation.³¹

In marketing DA to organisations and workforce sectors, CI does not set out to compete with the Australian Census. In creating the platform however, it has directly taken on precisely the set of problems that Giles and Soutphommasane have glossed over, and that the ABS has resolved flexibly as discussed above.³² This is because DA’s approach to enumeration takes in “cultural identity” as the quality it wishes to capture, and its numerous questions expand the number of indicators considered far beyond those included by the ABS. Further, DA’s approach flips that of the ABS, which uses ASCCEG to code respondents’ “ancestry” answers against the Bureau’s own “cultural and ethnic groups.” In contrast, in DA’s approach, “ethnicity” is one of the questions, serving as one of many indicators through which a diversity of cultural identities is quantified. In addition to ethnicity, DA also asks respondents to select their:

- Country of birth
- Parents’ countries of birth
- Grandparents’ countries of birth; and
- Languages spoken (i.e., this question is not limited to “language spoken at home”).

In addition to these categories, DA can also ask respondents to volunteer their:

- “Race,” albeit CI intends to offer this option only in certain markets where the use of this category is normalised and consistent with existing statistical practices; and
- Religion, or, to account for a range of views that are more or less secular, “worldview,” an idea that DA elaborates by offering a range of political and philosophical labels.

Further, instead of offering free-text response boxes for these answers, as the Australian Census does, DA sets out to move past any potential confusion in relation to what each category means. It attempts to do this by offering drop-down menus from which respondents must select an answer.

³⁰ “5 Reasons Why it is Important to Consider Workforce Mutuality,” n.d., accessed 7 May, 2021, <https://www.diversityatlas.com.au/5-reasons-why-it-is-important-to-consider-workforce-mutuality/>.

³¹ At this stage, it is not clear that DA will, or should, be taken up commercially in the way that CI intends. It should be pointed out that DA has not undergone rigorous product testing in a controlled, organisational environment as this CI/ANU project was initially designed to perform. Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting financial impacts on CI and proposed organisational partners for this project, the project was scaled back so that it would consist instead of a literature review supplemented by conversations with accessible commercial and policy stakeholders.

³² According to the B Lab, which certifies B Corporations, B Corps are “businesses that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose.” Refer to “About B Corps,” n.d., accessed 7 May, 2021, <https://bcorporation.net/about-b-corps>.

Answers are pre-loaded into the software, and to pre-empt potential criticisms that the menu is stifling respondents' choices or offering them too few or inappropriate answers, CI has elected to include as many answers as possible in each menu. So, for example, if one's parents or grandparents were born in Rhodesia, British India, or the Ottoman Empire, and not Zimbabwe, Pakistan, or Turkey for example, those options are available for selection, along with a staggering number of ethnic, religious, and linguistic labels. There are almost 8,000 language categories, 10,000 ethnic groups, and 650 religions and "worldviews." All these categories are sourced from a wide range of available databases, created by organisations as diverse and varied in credibility as Ethnologue and the United Nations, which CI has sourced and spliced together, removing duplicate labels. By opting to offer as many categories as it can, CI is aiming for a comprehensive list of possible options so that respondents always understand what forms of identification any particular category might encompass (e.g., "ethnicity" vs "religion" vs "language), while also being able to make accurate choices without being left unable to find the right label. The resulting individual profile should, in theory, be precisely accurate, as the respondent should not have to decipher potentially confusing questions that conflate language or nationality with ethnicity or religion. The assumption CI makes is that each of these categories can be clarified conceptually in respondents' minds.

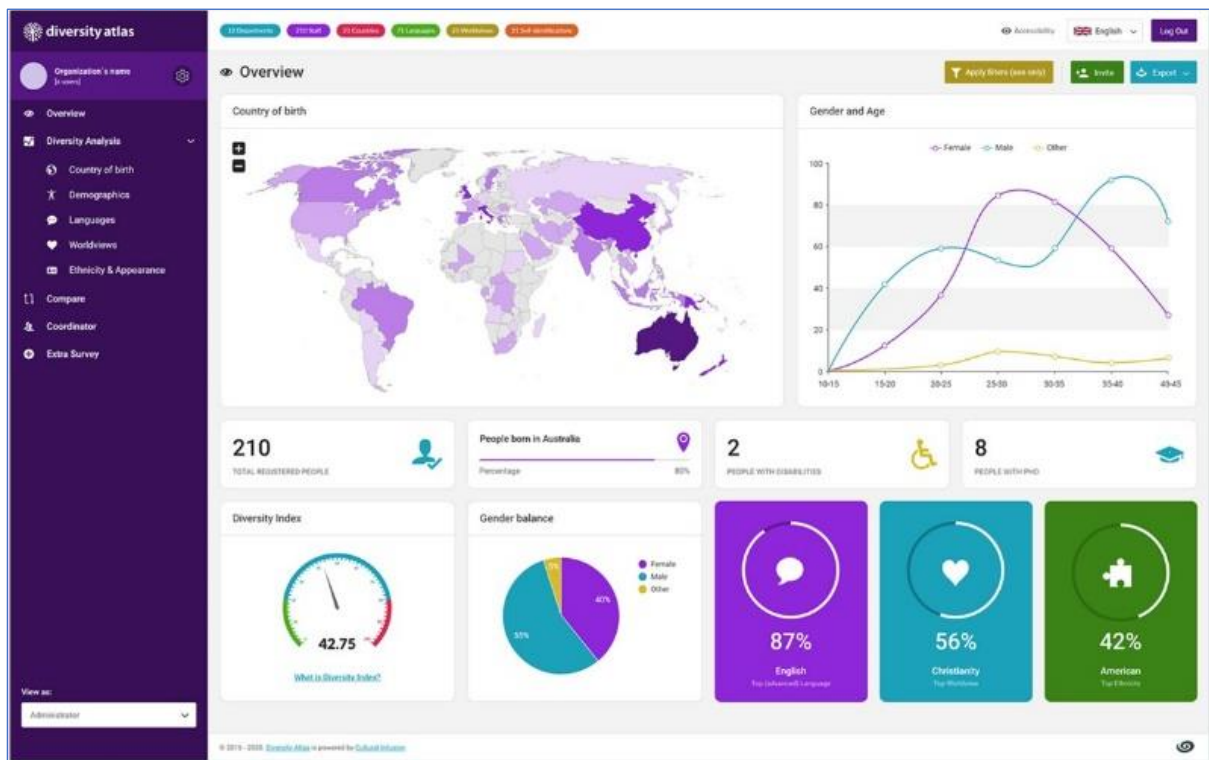


Figure 2: Diversity Atlas dashboard prototype, showing attractive visualisations of respondents' answers.

Once respondents have entered their data – all of which is notionally provided voluntarily (questions can be skipped) – then organisations can analyse and display it in a range of easy-to-understand charts using a central dashboard. Producing these charts involves categorising answers in ways they might not have selected, however. For example, answers can be placed on a world map (which does not show the former Ottoman Empire or British India), or presented in bar or pie charts, or as a simple database display. The display is attractive and intended to be easily understood, including by organisational managers or human resources professionals. Such professionals should, in CI's view, be able to visualise the organisation as a whole as well as specific departments, enabling them to understand if all their "diverse" staff are in IT and accounts while all their policy managers are white,

and so on. Further, these displays are intended to be attractive to children of all ages who might be participating in social studies, Asian Studies, or world culture curriculum modules. That the visualisations DA produces are attractive is reflected in the positive reception they receive at conferences and presentations as well as classrooms, where they have been used as an educational device aimed at giving the participant cohort a glimpse of its diversity. This success can be attributed to CI's background as a provider of school curriculum add-ons such as cultural performances and world music experiences, and as a creator of gamified ed-tech products for children.

b. Creating a "Diversity Index"

Beyond these seemingly simple and attractive representations, DA's dashboard also reveals CI's entry into the marketplace for diversity indices. One of the graphics, the dial in Figure 2: Diversity Atlas dashboard prototype, showing attractive visualisations of respondents' answers. above, represents CI's "weighted cultural diversity index," a feature it is marketing as a key support for DA's continuous improvement function. The number on the dial, which is calculated using a formula developed by CI, is purported to show the *degree* of diversity achieved, and users are encouraged to conclude that their aim should be to "shift the dial," pushing their organisation to become more diverse over time. The formula was devised by CI's in-house team of researchers, despite considerable disagreement, and is published in a 2017 article co-authored by CI's Digital Products Director Rezza Moeini, Mousaferiadis, and Spanish engineer and scientist Carlos Oscar Sorzano in an unrefereed journal.³³ According to the article, the formula is intended to depart from, and improve on, established tools like the Ethnic Fractionalisation Index (ELF), which denotes ethnic diversity with a single number ranging from 0 (totally homogenous) to 1 (totally heterogeneous). According to European political scientists Erin Jenne and Daniel Boschler, despite their problems, indices like the ELF are used to conduct cross-national statistical analyses of ethnic diversity, often in the context of studying changing social and political relationships between identity groups.³⁴ Indeed, such indices tend to be used to portray diversity not in a positive light, as CI wishes to do, but rather as a source of polarisation, conflict and underdevelopment in post-communist, developing, and postcolonial nations. It can also be presented as a source of growing tension in European nations that link concepts of ethnicity and nationality in their national ideologies but have to accommodate the presence of diverse people whose roots lie in their former colonies, such as France.³⁵

This is a segment of the diversity literature that CI never refers to, preferring instead to situate its discussion of diversity within debates about multiculturalism as a positive development in wealthy, majority-white societies (i.e., European nations and their colonial settler offshoots). Further, CI's own pitch tends to echo the kind of writing that one would read in the *Harvard Business Review*,

³³ Rezza Moieni, Peter Mousaferiadis, and Carlos Oscar Sorzano, "A Practical Approach to Measuring Cultural Diversity on [sic] Australian Organisations and Schools," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 7, no. 12 (2017), <http://www.ijssh.org/vol7/917-S014.pdf>. That the journal, published by the International Association of Computer Science and Information Technology, is unrefereed is confirmed by UlrichsWeb. Further, one of the publication's listed authors, Sorzano (whose name appears to be misspelled as Sorezano on the publication), does not list the title on his CV, which is available online at http://i2pc.es/coss/CVA_COSS_formato_MEC.pdf.

³⁴ Boschler et al., "Exchange on the Quantitative Measurement of Ethnic and National Identity."

³⁵ Refer to Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, *Ethnic Diversity and Economic Performance* (2005); Alberto Alesina et al., "Fractionalisation," *Journal of Economic Growth* 8 (2003); James Laurence, Katharina Schmid, and Miles Hewstone, "Ethnic Diversity, Ethnic Threat, and Social Cohesion: (Re)-Evaluating the Role of Perceived Out-Group Threat and Prejudice in the Relationship between Community Ethnic Diversity and Intra-Community Cohesion," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 3 (2019).

citing diversity as intrinsically desirable and an asset for problem-solving inside organisations.³⁶ It also reflects developments in thinking about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and maintaining a social license to practice, not to mention a tool for connecting better with stakeholders, potential critics, and the marketplace. On these bases, organisations should aim to improve their “rate” of diversity for its own sake as well as the other benefits it purportedly facilitates, such as improved social justice outcomes on the one hand, and increased performance and profitability on the other.³⁷ Derived from this preferred mode for framing diversity, CI’s authors criticise the ELF’s creators, American economists Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, for including only a narrow range of indicators and a small number of identity groups. This approach is inadequate, CI’s authors argue, because “Alesina adopt his method [sic] based on the country breakdown suggested by original sources, mainly the Encyclopedia Britannica. This index has been criticised as Britannica only provides list [sic] of ethnicity for 124 countries so Alesina had to use other resources for the rest of countries [sic].”³⁸ In place of this approach, CI’s authors argue instead for using an expanded set of indicators and a greater number of identity labels, as described above.

In addition to this expansion, CI’s authors draw on the work of Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist working in “organisational anthropology” after a long international career at IBM. His two sole- or co-authored books, *Culture’s Consequences*, published in 1980, and *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind*, published in 1991, put forward a framework of “national cultures” as a way of explaining the persistence of cultural difference under globalisation. CI’s authors use Hofstede’s “values” framework, including his characterisation of certain cultures as “individualistic” and others as “collectivist,” to establish a measure called “cultural distance.” They then elaborate by drawing on an article by Andy Stirling, a British science and technology policy researcher who created a “general diversity heuristic ... with particular reference to conservation management and technology policy,” that is, his article was about the diversity of systems.³⁹ Although Stirling did not directly address cultural diversity, CI’s authors say they can use his model to generate an index value not only for ethnic diversity, but all the variables of diversity they include in DA, i.e., country of origin, ethnicity, language spoken, religion, or “worldview.” CI’s authors describe each of these variables as a “pillar of diversity.”

Finally, to create their formula, they enter DA’s index values corresponding with each of these pillars into the weighted formula shown below in Figure 4. Each is assigned a weight determined by CI, and here, it seems, CI has adopted at least three different weighting schemes since 2017, as the article’s proposed weightings differ from those outlined in a presentation shared by Moieni in 2018.⁴⁰ In the presentation, ethnicity was weighted at 30 per cent, country of birth at 23 per cent, language at 23 per cent, and religion or “worldview” at 24 per cent, while in the article, ethnicity was weighted at 52 per cent, language at 22 per cent, and “belief diversity” at 26 per cent. In addition to these two weighting schemes, CI’s website states that there are now *four* “pillars” of diversity: ethnicity, a

³⁶ See, for example, David A. Thomas and Robin J. Ely, “Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity,” *Harvard Business Review* (1 September 1996); David A. Thomas, “Diversity as Strategy,” *Harvard Business Review* (1 September 2004); Robin J. Ely and David A. Thomas, *Cultural Diversity at Work: The Effects of Diversity Perspectives on Work Group Processes and Outcomes* (2001).

³⁷ PowerPoint presentation by Rezza Moieni, shared in personal communication in 2018 and Moieni, Mousaferiadis, and Sorzano, “A Practical Approach to Measuring Cultural Diversity on [sic] Australian Organisations and Schools,” p. 735.

³⁸ Moieni, Mousaferiadis, and Sorzano, “A Practical Approach to Measuring Cultural Diversity on [sic] Australian Organisations and Schools,” p. 736.

³⁹ Andy Stirling, “A General Framework for Analysing Diversity in Science, Technology, and Society,” *Journal of the Royal Society Interface* 4, no. 15 (2007): p. 707.

⁴⁰ PowerPoint presentation by Rezza Moieni.

“new pillar,” has been added and weighted at 30 per cent, country of birth at 23 per cent, language at 23 per cent, and worldview/religion at 24 per cent.⁴¹ It should be noted that none of these weightings are explained with reference to any rationale, literature, or study of any kind, aside from an unnamed survey referred to in the 2017 article in which 200 respondents from 30 backgrounds purportedly gave CI their preferred weightings. On what basis respondents selected their preferred weightings is not explained in the article, nor does CI explain why it might have changed these weightings in any of its subsequent announcements. Nevertheless, these weightings were used to generate a Diversity Index score. If every person in the sample group spoke a different language (in any context), held a different ethnic affiliation, was born in a different country, and had a different religion or “worldview,” the score would be 100. If they were all the same, it would be zero. There is no explanation provided for any of these decisions in the article, only the resulting formula as shown below in Figure 4. Regardless, CI argues that it aims for this index, and its embedded “ontology for recognising and classifying human cultural diversity,” to become the “industry standard” for assessing cultural diversity in workplaces.⁴² Using this formula, CI purports that DA can show organisations not only whether they are diverse enough to achieve their aims, but also teach them to measure their performance against an external, purportedly objective, scale. In CI’s terms, its formula measures organisations’ results against a “set of quantifiable dimensions of diversity that can be benchmarked, compared over time, evaluated against adjustable variables, and used to provide recommendations.”⁴³

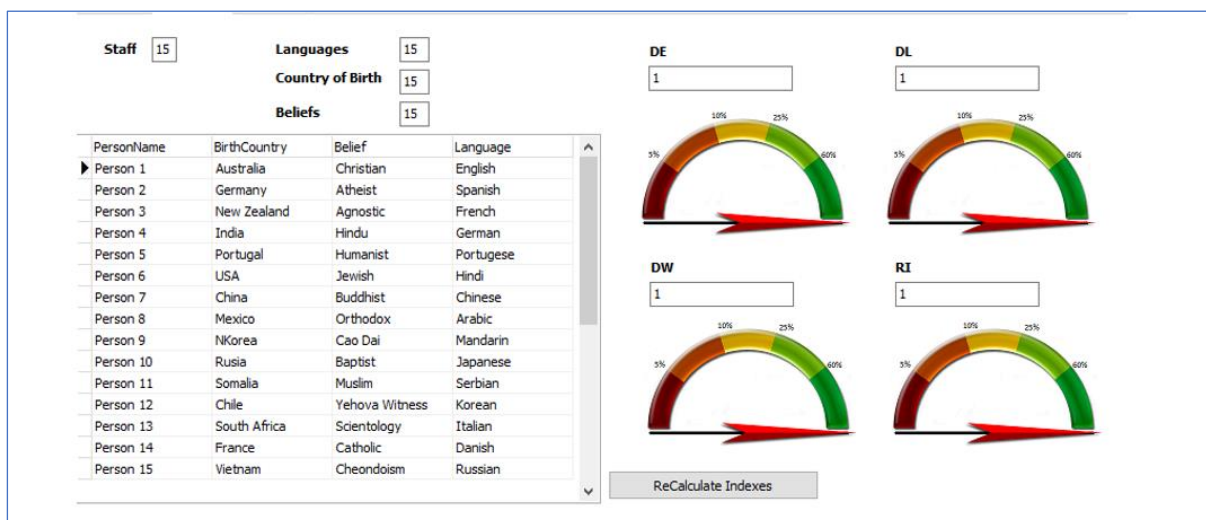


Figure 3: Database display (older prototype), with indexes shown. Together, these are used to calculate the “cultural diversity score.”

⁴¹ "Launch of New Cultural Diversity Index: New Pillar of Diversity Added to Diversity Index," Diversity Atlas by Cultural Infusion, n.d., accessed 6 May, 2020, <https://www.diversityatlas.com.au/launch-of-new-cultural-diversity-index/>.

⁴² PowerPoint presentation by Rezza Moeini.

⁴³ Moieni, Mousaferiadis, and Sorzano, "A Practical Approach to Measuring Cultural Diversity on [sic] Australian Organisations and Schools," p. 735.

$$\text{Diversity}(C, L \text{ or } W) = \frac{L1}{N} \times \frac{\text{Entropy } V}{\text{Entropy } V_N}$$

$$\text{Cultural Diversity}(R_i) = 0.52 D_C + 0.22 D_L + 0.26 D_w$$

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[doi: 10.18178/ijssh.2017.V7.917](#)

Figure 4: Cultural Infusion's diversity index formula

DA's index, then, builds a formula on a shifting platform of weightings that are not explained and might change at any time. Despite this lack of clarity, DA is one of a number of new generation data tools or indices either already in use in Australia or in development for the purposes of understanding who Australia's "diverse" might be and driving increased representation via "diversity management." Another prominent Australian example consists of the "Counting Culture" principles developed by the Diversity Council Australia (DCA) and the University of Sydney Business School, which, like DA, advocates for the use of multiple indicators to achieve an intersectional understanding of diversity.⁴⁴ Organisations can use these principles to design their own in-house tools, such as the aid and development sector's Humanitarian Action Group (HAG), which has used them to create its own scorecard on the sector's diversity, responding to (reasonable) criticisms that the industry is too white. The DCA's principles were developed in consultation with Soutphommasane's Sydney colleague, organisational diversity scholar Dimitria Groutsis. CI's approach has differed from that of Counting Culture in terms of its intent to guide organisations towards using a diversity score assigned by an external agency, and in the complexity of its approach to categories, which it sets out for respondents rather than allowing free text inputs. Unlike the DCA's principles, DA was created in a private company by a computer scientist, and this report is the first independent assessment that CI has commissioned from a social scientist, although the platform aims to represent complex, shifting human dynamics.⁴⁵ This consultation gap, however, has not prevented the DCA from collaborating with CI and adopting the use of DA in a 2021 survey supporting its own Inclusion@Work Index. This survey, the DCA's third, has developed "in consultation with an [unnamed] Expert Panel of practitioners and academics," whose results will be presented using DA's dashboard. For this purpose, the dashboard will display eight "diversity dimensions," namely "Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, age, caring status, cultural background, disability status, gender, LGBTIQ+ status, religious affiliation." The survey will be conducted between July and September 2021, and organisations deemed eligible after the survey will be able to show an "Inclusive Employer 2021-2022 logo." Organisations will need to pay to participate in the survey, based on a sliding scale related to organisation size and for-profit or not-

⁴⁴ Humanitarian Action Group, *Annual Report 2019-20*, Humanitarian Advisory Group (2020), p. 19, https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/HAG_AR_2020v13Interactive.pdf.

⁴⁵ I was employed by The Australian National University to complete this project, funded by an Innovation Connections grant from the Department of Industry and Cultural Infusion.

for-profit status, ranging from AUD \$1,200 for the smallest not for profit, to “please contact us” for the largest organisations. For those that sign up to participate, payment will be taken by CI.⁴⁶

5. Does CI’s Solution Match the Original Policy Problem?

CI’s DA attempts to speak to two policy market segments: that seeking a way forward for sorting, categorising, and making legible an increasingly diverse population, and that seeking to drive, or respond positively to, calls for more DEI efforts in Australian workplaces. These markets are not distinct from each other, in the sense that where organisational DEI efforts are seen as inadequate, weak, or failing, data regarding the (non-white) population segment that needs better efforts will be mobilised by advocates to call for it. As these market segments are interlinked, DA’s attempt to speak to both audiences is not confused, although it is the workplace DEI segment that CI seems to have targeted as most relevant for building its market presence at this time. For both segments, DA has an important quality that should be listed at the outset. Its attractive displays are valuable for demonstrating to interested audiences that human populations are generally very diverse, including in Australia, which has been transformed by “multiculturalism” (and, relatedly, an increased willingness to recognise the diversity of its Indigenous people). As CI has found in product demonstration meetings in schools, businesses, and conferences, audiences respond well to attractive visualisations that simplify complex data.

Beyond such demonstrations, however, and digging deeper into the assumptions that underpin DA’s workings, observed feedback indicates that the product contains too many categories and/or too much data, offering organisations more than they need to know, beyond their targeted data needs.⁴⁷ In addition, the formula lacks transparency and is not easily understood, raising suspicion, while CI’s use of moral typologies like Hofstede’s is also a problem.

a. Resolve Category Problems by Giving Respondents Agency

DA’s treatment of indicators and categories raises a wide range of questions about how it would be used by diverse Australians in workplace or other contexts.

To begin with, the decision CI has made to gather as many categories as possible might suffer from drawbacks such as offering respondents too many choices, decreasing their willingness to participate in surveys that use DA. CI appears not to have performed UX testing aimed at testing users’ tolerance for these choices when under pressure in their workplaces. Further, even if users’ choices are limited by drop-down menus that are activated by typing the first few letters of their preferred category, where does one category end and another begin? For example, why does DA retain Ethnologue’s decision to list “Lahnda” as a separate language from Punjabi, while “Pakistani Punjabi” is listed as a separate language again? These decisions cannot make sense to users, as they stem from a) colonial schemes for classifying Punjabi dialects – a “Lahnda” speaker would normally simply choose “Punjabi,” and b) the 1947 India/Pakistan partition and subsequent, internal, Indian partitions of Punjab into Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. These partitions have influenced how people speak colloquially, but not enough to split the Punjabi dialect continuum into “Indian” and “Pakistani” Punjabis, in line with the 1947 border. There are likely many other examples of such category “boundary” problems inside DA.

⁴⁶ "Inclusion@Work Index 2020-2021: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)," 2021, accessed 6 May, 2021, https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_inclusionwork_index_2021-2022_faqs.pdf.

⁴⁷ Personal communication with two CEOs of organisations represented at the Asian Australian Leadership Summit, 2019, and a former ALP staffer, 2020.

Additional questions also arise. One such question is how does CI determine how DA will treat nested categories that might confuse, or even offend, its users? For example, how will it treat the category “Ahmadi” – as a sub-category of “Islam,” potentially upsetting some Muslim users, or as a separate religion, potentially upsetting some Ahmadis? How will members of these groups respond to CI’s lack of consultation? How will CI accommodate the potential melding or separating of identity groups? For example, the category “Asian Australian” might gain acceptance now that Labor is seeking to build an Asian Australian constituency, and over time, it could begin to function as an “ethnic” aggregate category, depending on whether it gains political salience. Further, ethnic and religious identities often exist at several levels, many of which are hybrid identities, or which deploy categories that are nested inside others, and simply offering more categories does not in itself ensure greater accuracy. For example, an “Asian Australian” might also recognise their ethnicity via any combination of national, ethnic, and linguistic labels, any or none of which might be salient in their circumstances at any given time. In addition, the complexity of political change over the last century alone means that offering a precise country of origin to all respondents is likely impossible.

This broad discussion of anomalies in DA’s classification system raises another question: how will CI begin to make sense of a vast number of additional potential inconsistencies in DA, other than by consulting community representatives? If it adopts this approach, it will be taken right back to a point made at the beginning of this report, which noted that it is increasingly difficult to identify “community leaders” who enjoy broad legitimacy among the Australians they purport to represent. Ultimately, CI’s attempts to impose order on the thousands of categories cannot lead to a decisive or permanent resolution, and CI could benefit from testing other options, such as allowing respondents to write in their own preferred identity labels, in line with how respondents see themselves at any given point in time. Such an approach would bring DA closer to the Australian Census, although CI may wish to adopt a different methodology than coding answers to the ABS’ ASSCEG.

At heart, the CI approach is problematic because the way DA operates is to assume that ethnic categories can be pinned down in a fixed “ontology,” as it puts it, whereas they are in constant flux and sometimes self-defined in a conscious manner. Ethnic and cultural categories do not have fixed or stable meanings but are produced in a range of intersecting and dynamic social and political processes as identity categories become more or less salient in the context in question. For example, identity labels can emerge, expire, expand, or contract over time, not only as distant historical processes but also as their members claim recognition within multicultural systems.⁴⁸ Even the nations that Giles and Soutphommasane point to as good examples of classificatory practice are themselves the subject of serious and long-running debates about the value and meaning of the categories they use. In the US and UK, for example, the use of terms like “Asian” (or “Latino,” or “Black”) are the subject of growing criticism because they group large and diverse groups of people together based on logics that seem frozen in time, using categories that might no longer be relevant to respondents. Or they might be understood only by the state and not by people themselves, whose cultural, ethnic, linguistic, national, class, and migration origins are very different from each other. The census therefore does not reflect the existence of actually existing racial categories, rather, it is a “race-making instrument.”⁴⁹ In the UK, the use of the category “BAME,” an acronym for “Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic,” has recently come under criticism because it obscures the different experiences of members of this meaningless aggregate, many of whom dislike its use in

⁴⁸ For more discussion of the flexibility of ethnic categories, refer to Michael Banton, *What We Now Know About Race and Ethnicity* (Berghahn Books, 2015), ch. 6.

⁴⁹ Debra Thompson, *The Schematic State: Race, Transnationalism, and the Politics of the Census* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), chp. 1; p. 6.

contexts other than statistical reporting.⁵⁰ In short, ethnic identification is not only an encapsulation of identifiable racial and cultural attributes, but can be an assertion of power by individuals or groups who wish to change their real or perceived positions in society.

The examples above are from the Anglophone world, from which comparisons in discussions of “multiculturalism” are generally sourced, and where the “schematic state” has sought to classify populations based on normative racial categorisations often founded in colonial settler histories. The categories used in these contexts have generally been used not only by states for establishing racial hierarchies, however, but also flipped by members of these categories to advance claims for racial belonging.⁵¹ In addition to these examples, there is also a significant literature on the long-term problems created by state-led exercises to categorise people by ethnicity, religion, or race (or caste) in colonial and postcolonial states. In many such contexts, categories used for enumeration have become reified and currently perpetuate a wide range of inequalities, although there is often widespread political opposition to removing them, particularly from their beneficiaries. In many such contexts, as many Australians of diverse cultural backgrounds have already experienced, ethnic and racial census enumeration has played a major role in hardening identity categories and accentuating differences between them instead of equalising opportunities across their boundaries. Examples abound in the former British colonies of Asia, including Myanmar, Malaysia, and India, where racial, religious, and caste categories first introduced in colonial censuses gradually became entrenched in regimes allocating basic rights like national citizenship, or access to jobs and scholarships. These regimes are now tantamount to politically impossible to dismantle despite arguably having outlived their purpose, or indeed having justified murderous violence against their targets.⁵² Because of these problems, it is difficult to identify a way forward in terms of how best to count and classify Australians in ways that are meaningful to them as well as to national agencies, so that access both to opportunities and to better outcomes is improved.

b. Remove all References to Hofstede and Retire the Diversity Index

CI’s decision to use Hofstede’s work and its methodology for creating a Diversity Index cannot be justified with reference to the social scientific literature and there is no public policy case for their use. By associating itself with Hofstede, an index which cannot be properly explained, and a publication that could not possibly pass peer review, Cultural Infusion is likely making its program impossible for organisations to use beyond a trial basis. These aspects of DA must be retired at once as they cannot hold themselves up to scrutiny.

To begin with, Hofstede’s work has been extensively criticised for stereotyping entire national populations, mainly by assigning them the same moral characteristics despite the many differences in values and forms of cultural expression present within national populations. In its marketing collateral, CI repeats many of Hofstede’s conclusions, including, for example, the argument that cultures differ based on their propensity to collectivism or individualism, power distance, femininity and masculinity, levels of uncertainty avoidance, short- or long-term orientation, and level of indulgence. CI’s survey term “cultural dimensions” is directly borrowed from Hofstede to describe

⁵⁰ Sunder Katwala, *Beyond 'BAME': What Does the Public Think?*, British Future (2021), <https://www.britishfuture.org/beyond-bame-what-does-the-public-think/>.

⁵¹ Refer to Thompson, *The Schematic State: Race, Transnationalism, and the Politics of the Census*, chp. 1.

⁵² There is an enormous literature on these experiences, and not only related to the former colonies of Britain. For a sample of this literature, refer to Nick Cheesman, "How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017); Joel Kahn, *Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World* (National University of Singapore Press, 2006); Gyandendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

and quantify these differences, although CI applies the term to groups of categories, similar to its use of the term “pillars.” Further, CI’s marketing materials for DA refer directly to Hofstede, including, for example, in a website discussion of whether “collectivist” cultures might be containing the spread of COVID-19 better than “individualist” ones. As CI elaborates:

“[a]s COVID-19 continues to spread in the United States and other countries and governments work towards ‘flattening the curve’, arguments have emerged as to why some countries have dealt with the coronavirus better than others. The individualist vs collectivist dynamic has been a popular answer in providing an explanation for differences in approach. Collectivist and individualist cultures are often differentiated by the societal point of reference. While collectivist cultures tend to gravitate around the group or the ‘whole’ and encourage conformity, individualist cultures focus on the individual and the self as a priority.

CI then goes on to categorise “Anglosphere and Western European countries like Australia, United States and Canada” as “generally individualistic and correlate highly towards low power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, medium-term orientation and indulgent cultures.” In contrast, CI argues, “Confucian, South-East Asian, Islamic, African, Eastern European and South American cultures are more collectivistic, have higher power distance, lower uncertainty avoidance, a similarly masculine society, long-term orientation and more restrained cultures.” CI then goes on to discuss the Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map, the idea that “massive social coordination” might be better associated with “more collectivistic cultures” than individualistic ones, and the hypothesis that “social collectivism serves as a natural guard against disease transmission.” CI concludes that “strategies to combat COVID-19 may be easier to implement in collectivistic societies given the custom in these cultures of following rules, edicts, and norms,” while individualistic cultures “are geared towards unsustainable consumerism, intellectualise away responsibility, and are immune to shame, contributing to a tendency to disregard social distancing measures.” CI then provides a link to its “specialised COVID inclusion survey” page, where it argues that “[d]iversity traits such as cultural background, age, health and disability might imply unique challenges for team members—challenges which aren’t obvious to leaders if they’re not looking for them.”

It is difficult to understand how CI would explain the COVID-19 crisis now prevalent in Brazil, given it is presumably a “South American culture,” or that is causing India’s health care system to collapse, given that India is projected to have 311 million Muslims by 2050. This development will make it both the country with the most Muslims in the world, as well as the country with the greatest number of Hindus. These Muslims will presumably have an “Islamic culture” by CI’s reckoning. Further, Indonesia, a country that is both Southeast Asian and home to the world’s largest number of Muslims at this time, is also poised for a COVID transmission crisis, according to media reports.

By associating it with “cultural” typologies and tropes, CI is doing DA an enormous disservice. The associations that Hofstede created between certain cultural groups and these various tropes cannot be defended, especially if CI’s aim is to create enumerative systems and datasets for use in rectifying inequality. CI’s use of Hofstede will generate criticisms that CI is effectively reproducing racism or enabling its reproduction by organisations.⁵³ Such criticisms would not be surprising, given

⁵³ Again, there is a great deal of literature available on the problems with associating cultural traits with moral characteristics, and the origins of this practice in racism. For an effective summary of this literature in a discussion directly concerning Hofstede (and Dutch organisational theorist Fons Trompenaars, and the use of these two theorists by a galaxy of intercultural consultants), refer to Pal Nyiri and Joana Breidenbach,

Hofstede's historical popularity in human resources departments. Despite its popularity in such circles, however, as anthropologist Pal Nyiri has pointed out, "cultural anthropologists now broadly agree that cultures previously depicted as static and monolithic entities have in fact always incorporated outside influences, and that beneath their facades of homogeneity lie conflicts between individuals and groups who had quite different views on and uses for common cultural practices."⁵⁴ It is not impossible that Hofstede's essentialist tropes will be used as weapons against particular groups of workers in organisations. Indeed, the fear that even the best-intentioned attempts to enumerate race and ethnicity will be weaponised to support racist attacks on minorities is precisely the objection Jakubowicz has encountered when advocating for such attempts to be made. More importantly DA's potential use as a tool for grouping thousands of categories into a human classification system bears more than a passing familiarity with past and present forms of "racial science," colonial census-taking, and more recently, the Human Terrain System attempted by the United States military.⁵⁵ Yet because the idea that human populations can be categorised via classification systems has been so decisively disproven, those ethnic and cultural indexes that are used by quantitative social scientists nowadays are generally required to be context-sensitive in their choice of indicators. They must also consider that all forms of identity may be politicised, not all forms are salient in specific contexts, respondents might hold cosmopolitan identities as well as more particularistic ones, and ultimately that quantitative analysis is best performed in conjunction with other methods. As for the Diversity Index, the fact that CI has already made two sets of changes to its weighting system since publishing its article in 2017 point to the well-documented reality that identity categories vary in their salience according to respondents' contexts. Recognising that multiple and nested forms of identity carry varying levels of salience, some transnational surveys ask respondents to weight the salience of one or more identity categories themselves.⁵⁶

6. Conclusion

Despite the many knotty issues discussed above, ultimately CI is not the only private entity working to "resolve" such complex questions in response to calls issued by a range of policy stakeholders, in a field in which federal public agencies are unable to risk making the wrong decisions. Alongside CI, the DCA (with Sydney University), and technology firms Culture Amp and Atlassian are also working on tools for use by diversity-focused organisations in Australian and international markets. Together, these various tools apply the techniques of technocratic management to quantifying and managing human diversity in the service of the nation-state, businesses and bureaucratic organisations, or political parties. Underlying their efforts is a shift from an older language of social justice and equal opportunity to enhancing productivity, profitability, and corporate social responsibility. This shift is taking these firms, with roots in educational technology, human resources, or business process improvement, into fields of social scientific understanding that they might not have navigated previously. In DA's case, CI has embraced forms of cultural essentialism, as seen in Hofstede's work, while hitherto neglecting to engage decades of literature on human cultures and identities as

"Intercultural Communication: An Anthropological Perspective," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. James D. Wright (Elsevier, 2015); Sierk Ybema and Pal Nyiri, "The Hofstede Factor: The Consequences of Culture's Consequences," in *The Routledge Companion to Cross-Cultural Management*, ed. Nigel et. al. Holden (Routledge, 2015).

⁵⁴ Nyiri and Breidenbach, "Intercultural Communication: An Anthropological Perspective," p. 360.

⁵⁵ Again, the literature on this relationship is too large to cite in a single list. For useful recent examples, however, refer to Mara Loveman, *National Colours: Racial Classification and the State in Latin America* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Thompson, *The Schematic State: Race, Transnationalism, and the Politics of the Census*. On the Human Terrain Index, refer to Montgomery McFate and Janice H. Laurence, eds., *Social Science Goes to War: The Human Terrain System in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵⁶ Bochsler et al., "Exchange on the Quantitative Measurement of Ethnic and National Identity."

dynamic, constructed, and reconstructed through political and historical processes. Yet while such essentialism has retained a certain salience in the literature on multiculturalism, intercultural communication, management, and human resources, it is heavily critiqued in the social sciences.

Processes of human cultural production and reproduction are not easily enumerated in datasets and expressed on a dashboard, no matter how attractive that dashboard might be. This difficulty is precisely why the Australian Census allows respondents to write in their own preferred terms. While its use of the “Ancestry” category presents its own problems, CI needs to consider how to ensure its own attempts to address these problems are acceptable both to the public and to policymakers. CI should consider more carefully whether respondents are truly in a position to consent to how their identity categories are used in formulas that CI might invent – or reclassify in larger aggregate categories – in database management decisions that it does not make transparent to users. CI should also ask why it is attracted to the cultural essentialism presented in Hofstede’s work – because so many of the tropes he uses are consistent with received “common sense” ideas about race and culture, they could be used against respondents in ways that might harm them. For example, if respondents’ data is in the wrong hands, such as a human resources manager with negative views about particular identity groups and their purported cultural traits, CI should not reinforce these views by presenting certain groups as deficient in long-term thinking.

In addition, CI should reflect on why it is attracted to the idea of classifying the population in such fine and specific detail. It has received feedback in forums such as the Asian Australian Leadership Summit that DA simply offers too much detail. Such feedback is in keeping with Vertovec’s comments that many firms have rolled their anti-racism work into overarching strategies for representing “diversity,” often adopted with avoiding discrimination lawsuits while presenting their actions as “celebrations” of their employees. Given that “diversity” can encompass any type of difference, from culture to gender, sexuality, disability, and so on, all that firms generally need to do is show a roughly appropriate-looking mix, without drilling down into individual employees’ specific migration journeys over three generations. That CI has invested in developing so many categories without considering such feedback demonstrates its lack of product testing with respondents in real organisational contexts, investigating the impact of using DA in situations where users might be vulnerable to genuine consequences. Nor can CI purport to genuinely understand how organisations might misuse their access to so much employee data or predict what it might do with all that data if it elects to hold it for the organisations in the question, creating genuine privacy concerns for users. Further, how would CI react to organisations removing permanent employees behind a screen of “diversity” rhetoric, a possibility that might appeal to employers who could perceive benefits from reducing labour costs by hiring cheaper, yet more “diverse,” temporary migrants for example. CI should consider that DA has the potential to make users very uncomfortable, especially users with experience living in highly racialised societies. While DA was ostensibly created to enable progress towards diversity targets, it could be used for any other purpose if desired, including facilitating discrimination or perpetuating the idea that identity categories can be associated with fixed and damaging tropes. Further, any data and tools that are collected or produced by Cultural Infusion could be used in this manner regardless of the aims that Cultural Infusion espouses at present, for example, if the tool and data are bought by another business, or if Cultural Infusion’s clients simply decline to align themselves with its professed aims.

CI should consider undertaking a program of testing and recalibrating the decisions it has made inside DA. Such a program could be funded, for example, by a new grant, say from a philanthropic foundation or research fund, with a team of researchers qualified in Asian Studies, Digital Humanities, and Computer Science, such as the cross-disciplinary ANU team created by this project.

While this project initially envisaged performing some testing with the Whittlesea Council or PwC, this testing was made impossible by the onset of the pandemic in 2020. It should now become CI's top priority for DA before the product is taken out to market.

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