



INTERVIEW: Professor Colleen Ward & Professor James Liu
Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research
Interviewer: Chris Laidlaw, Radio New Zealand National
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CHRIS LAIDLAW: Now in Europe, if you believe the outbursts by prominent politicians, multiculturalism has failed. Angela Merkel has said exactly this, so has Nicolas Sarkozy. You can probably discount some of that against political positioning, but they are far from lone voices. All over Europe, even in Scandinavia, questions are being asked about the viability of recognising, accommodating, nurturing or promoting minority cultural identities; usually the product of immigrant groups from beyond the Western European community. Has the belt so tightened in the face of economic austerity? The finger is more often pointed at minority groups.

What exactly is multiculturalism, how do you actually define it and what are its key elements? What's the difference between integration and assimilation? There's as much confusion about how to deal with it in policy terms here in New Zealand as there is elsewhere. So we thought we'd round up a couple of specialists to talk about it. With me in the studio are the Co-Directors of Victoria University's [Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research](#), [Professor Colleen Ward](#) and [Professor James Liu](#). Welcome along. I hope you can shed some light on this.

First of all in Europe, what's your take on what's actually happening and is it somehow symptomatic of new harder attitudes towards diversity?

COLLEEN WARD: I think it's important Chris to start off by defining what we actually mean by multiculturalism. Certainly Merkel, Sarkozy, Cameron have said multiculturalism has failed in Europe. I would argue it hasn't failed because it's never been there, and here I'd like to make the distinction between understanding multiculturalism in three ways.

- First of all we can talk about diversity in terms of demographics. and certainly Europe is culturally plural. There are many different ethnic groups, and the same is true in New Zealand.*
- More importantly we can talk about multiculturalism in terms of policy. When you ask the question 'Do these countries in Europe have multicultural policies?'. By that I mean do they include ethnic representation in government, are there exemptions for public dress codes based on ethnic background, is their acceptance of dual citizenship? You will find that in Europe, the level of multicultural policies is very low, and certainly significantly lower than many of the new world countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand.*
- Thirdly, and I think most importantly, we can talk about multiculturalism as it is lived and this is what I would call 'everyday multiculturalism'. The most important and key points of multiculturalism here are cultural maintenance and participation. We're talking about societies that value diversity, that permit and indeed encourage the various ethnic groups to maintain, to a large extent, their original cultural heritage and tradition, but at the same time they're allowed to participate in a fair and equitable way in the wider society. To have maintenance without participation is what I think we have in Britain. In France and Germany, you don't have maintenance because they're very assimilationist societies.*



So in my view the countries in Europe that are decrying multiculturalism and saying it has failed have never tested it, because they don't bring to the table both traditional 'cultural maintenance' and this 'equitable participation'.

CL: Let's look at Britain for a moment. I mean David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, said recently: "The doctrine of state multiculturalism has encouraged segregation (and he called it a "doctrine of state multiculturalism"). We have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives apart from each other in the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong." James, is there any such thing as a vision and has anybody provided one?

JAMES LIU: I would say that history does give you these resources and these visions. For instance in New Zealand, as we'll transition later on, we have one vision of society as a bicultural society. In Europe many of these ideas of nationhood are embedded very deeply in history.

For example Germany still thinks of itself as a 'blood nation'. Now if you're a 'blood nation' it makes it quite difficult to encompass Turkish migrants within your conception of nation. In France, they have a Ministry of Culture, a Ministry of Language, that attempts to maintain the purity of a culture, and again that makes it quite difficult for other groups to express themselves within that framework.

I'd say Britain is much more culturally plural than either Germany or France, and yet it is very embedded as you know, every neighbourhood has a deep history, and so with that historical embeddedness comes also an amount of rigidity. So that vision is a deeply rooted vision that's rooted in history and probably less flexible for change.

CL: How much of the objections that are being voiced are based essentially on an ethnic dimension here? I mean if they were Poles for instance moving to Germany, that 'blood nation' thing - well there's a bit of bad blood and there always has been. Maybe Poland is not a good example, but you know what I mean - it wouldn't be anywhere near so bad.

JL: That's right. There are huge elements of race embedded with them, and there are huge elements of religion embedded within that. That's not just true of Europe - it's true of New Zealand as well. So in terms of attitudes towards new migrants, these countries are much more tolerant and accepting of those from traditional source migration countries, which means from the UK as opposed to say from East Asia.

CL: Where's this going? I mean one gets the impression that these pressures are going to build. I mean we're going to be in recession for anybody's guess, four or five years, maybe longer - so the pressure is going to be on, particularly on recent immigrants. It's going to build in Europe. What is likely to become of their integrationist policies?

CW: *Again I would reject the notion they have integrationist policies. I think they have very assimilationist policies in France and Germany, and in the UK I think it's almost more separatism. I totally agree with Cameron's account of what's happening in the UK, although what he refers to as a "doctrine of multiculturalism" is more about respect for pluralism. While in Britain there has been respect for diversity, at the same time there's been the notion that you go off and be diverse in this corner, and you practice your culture in that corner, and there is no attempt to bring the cultures together. So that's a separatist version of cultural pluralism, rather than a view*



of multiculturalism, which would engender integration. Again what I mean by integration is that ethnic groups can, to a large extent, retain their original culture but they have to be able to participate in the wider society. There's no point maintaining it and being separate, that doesn't work very well. There's no point trying to assimilate, because that doesn't work very well. Essentially you want to be able to let immigrants retain their culture, and adopt their new culture at the same time, and interact within it.

CL: The dominant culture in so many respects and in so many countries simply is not going to allow that. They say assimilate or leave.

CW: I think that's very true in most of Europe, although ironically enough if you look at the EU written position they do advocate integration. However, what they practice for the most part is assimilation. I think New Zealand's different.

CL: We're going to come to New Zealand. I'm sure in many respects it is. James, you've written about social identity. Its central to this whole premise – please explain what that is.

JL: The way we think of ourselves is located on many levels. Frequently we think of ourselves on a personal level, but social identities when we think of ourselves as members of groups. When we think about ourselves as members of groups, we have ideals or prototypes about what those groups might be. So for our nationhood we have certain ideas. For our ethnicity we have certain ideas. The whole idea is that every person has quite a repertoire of social identities that they can bring to bear. At a given moment in time they might think of themselves within their nationality, other times within their ethnicity, or they could be fused as well.

CL: But doesn't every individual who identifies with one group or another also have in their mind notions of inclusion and exclusion?

JL: Yes absolutely.

CL: That's the hard bit.

JL: That's the hard bit exactly. So when we say "we", it's often ambiguous who we are. We talked earlier about New Zealand - for instance Pakeha New Zealand. There's a white New Zealand, there's a New Zealand European - whichever one you identify with. They would be much more likely to claim a national identity because that would be much more comfortable. Within that "we" the prototype would certainly be a white person, and that's why they feel a comfort level with that. However, in New Zealand we also have biculturalism which allows another ideal of nationhood to co-exist. So New Zealand is very interesting in that its history has given it at least two sometimes competing, sometimes complimentary, visions of who we are.

CL: It's often said, and increasingly said, that the dilution of national populations - the mixture of people within a nation state - is running far ahead of national policy making, the capacity to make national policy. Is that a defining feature of the way in which countries are responding?

JL: I would say the feature of the age is globalisation - globalisation of products, people, services. All happening at a lightening pace, and yet our mentalities aren't necessarily keeping up with it in the same way. Those nations with a history of receiving migrants - that conceive of themselves as an immigrant nation - typically are better placed to absorb this wave than ones that think of themselves as fixed 'blood nations' or historical ancestry nations.



CW: *I think you're right. The demographics are changing more quickly than policy can keep up with it. I also think that 'everyday multiculturalism' is often lagging even further behind.*

As an example, in New Zealand we have what I would consider a very rational immigration policy to select skilled migrants on the basis of their skills and talent, what they can offer to New Zealand. So they come highly educated and prepared to provide us with skills in areas that we need to employ people in, yet they're under employed compared to native-born New Zealanders. So in the terms of 'everyday multiculturalism', they are not being accepted and absorbed into the workforce, although the policy is very rational. It's not working out on the everyday level.

CL: **The policy is too rational.**

CW: *Well maybe that's the case - it's too rational. It is an example of how the policy is trying to keep up with global changes, but the population is lagging behind.*

CL: **Is it reasonable to expect that if you look at identities as a pyramid that national identity should of necessity be at the top of that? Or is it possible for people to say, "I'm a Samoan first," or "I'm a Chinese person, and I'm also a New Zealander, and I'm also a citizen of the world"?**

CW: *That's a great question Chris. I think it's really important to consider both ethnic and national identity. All of our research in New Zealand tells us - we've done this with Samoans and Chinese and Indians and Koreans - that both ethnic and their national identities are very strong, very strong. It does happen to be the case, at least based on my research findings, that for our newer immigrant groups ethnic identity is stronger than national identity, but still they are both very strong.*

These new immigrants spontaneously think about themselves in terms of "I'm a Samoan-Kiwi" or "I'm a Chinese-New Zealander". They use hyphenated identities quite naturally, quite spontaneously. However, part of the issue with our new immigrants being able to take on a national identity is how inclusive New Zealanders are in terms of defining what our national identity is, and this a really, really challenging question.

You ask any Kiwi, "What does it mean to be Kiwi?" or "What is a New Zealand national identity?" and I think it's really hard to define.

CL: **And of course it's complicated by biculturalism and I'll get to that in a minute. There was a report recently in some research findings that young Chinese-New Zealanders are more likely to identify as Chinese first, and when sort of prodded with a stick they would be prepared to admit it. What's interesting is that Manying Ip at Auckland University, who's an expert in this, was surprised by this. Were you surprised James?**

JL: *I wouldn't be surprised by that and the reason is, if you force someone to make a choice much of our research shows that the ethnic identity for ethnic minorities will often times be stronger than the national identity. This would be true for many Maori. So Chinese wouldn't be unique in any way, shape or form. The main finding is that typically both of them are quite strong, but the reason for it is when you're a visible minority, you are treated differently. You've got to manage that ethnic identity somehow, and make sense of it somehow, because it is a marker of difference that you encounter in everyday life.*



So myself for instance I describe myself as a Chinese-American-New Zealander, so two not one hyphen, and it makes sense of my own history and it makes sense how other people treat me. I went through a phase in my life when I wished that I looked just like any other American in the American Mid-West. It didn't work out very well. After these experiences, then you come back to say, "Okay I need to work out who I am, and then I can relate to you on a better basis."

CL: **With vast numbers of particularly younger people of all races moving in and out of countries, the wash back and forward of humanity, it makes a bit of a mockery of a notion of a nation state, let alone national identity, doesn't it? Isn't that going to increase, so that it'll be perfectly normal for somebody to have three or four identities, and resent being told you have to opt for one - your national identity is this or that.**

CW: *I certainly think we already have multiple social identities, and I do think it's unreasonable to say you have to opt for one. Fortunately here in New Zealand, all of our research points to the fact that these multiple identities are strong and are not seen as being in conflict.*

I'll give you an example Chris. In New Zealand, we find amongst our immigrant youth that there's a positive relationship between ethnic and national identity, meaning the stronger one is, the stronger the other. In Germany, there's an opposing relationship - the stronger one is, the weaker the other. I think this reflects on the societies in which these immigrant youth are living.

In New Zealand, we do permit these multiple identities, and we are not so unreasonable as to say "You must choose one instead of the other". You can maintain both. Our national survey research shows for example that over 80% of Kiwis agree with the statement that "Immigrants should maintain their own culture while also adopting New Zealand culture" - that is endorsement of integration, that is an endorsement by saying, "Yes you can have both a strong ethnic and national identity."

CL: **That then begs the obvious question, "How much does the state then set out to codify those rights - the rights of language, the rights to religion, the rights of various other forms of cultural expression - and put a fence around those?"**

CW: *Again a great question and we've got quite a lot to say about that in terms of contrasting multiculturalism in principle and multiculturalism in practice. I'll let Jim start with that because we'll start off with looking at biculturalism, and then expand it out to multiculturalism in terms of those principle and practice domains.*

JL: So as you know New Zealand's history is very much embedded with this bicultural interaction between Maori and New Zealand European migrants. What that's come up with is what Chris Sibley and I have called "The New Zealand dilemma". This is the difficulty in the sense that New Zealanders acknowledge embed their colonial history much more than most settler peoples, but they have difficulty managing the inequality that then results from it.

The pattern of national identity or national psychology that we've found is an acceptance of biculturalism in principle, but a resistance to enacting it in practice when it involves the distribution of material resources. So symbolic biculturalism or biculturalism in principle - things like the haka representing the nation, singing the national anthem in Te Reo and in English etc. It's the symbolic practices, but when it comes to divvying up the pie ... as you know with the river kaffuffle ... we are constantly going through a difficult and negotiated phase. The strength of



this nation is that we're able to do so relatively peacefully. We argue a lot. We have some very tried and true channels to go through - the Waitangi Tribunal, then through the courts, through protest, etc, etc. It's a means of managing this dilemma of biculturalism in principle, and the general principles of equality and freedom for all and liberalism. Also the fact that the resources are limited and you've got to divvy up the pie somehow.

CL: I've often thought that we're hesitant about extending particular rights or recognition to other cultural identities because we still haven't really resolved the boundaries of the bicultural relationship. Is this sort of 'zero-sum-gain' in this sense, in that unless and until we've got biculturalism kind of embedded, maybe constitutionally, or however it's going to become comfortable for us, we're not going to make a lot of progress on the wider concentric circle around multiculturalism?

CW: No, I don't think these are two separate linear processes. We're not going to sort one out before we can deal with the other. They're both pressing and in need of dire attention. I don't think we can think of it as "We fix biculturalism first, then we deal with multiculturalism". In both of these cases, I don't know that we may ever reach an end point. This is a process or this is a journey. It's really hard to say when you reach this precise point you have become a bicultural society, or a multicultural society. We're forever evolving and we need to be evolving in both of those areas. I don't think that biculturalism and multiculturalism are intrinsically incompatible, or in conflict.

What multiculturalism is about is cultural diversity. What biculturalism is about is an agreement between the founding cultures of our nation. It has rights and responsibilities embedded in the Treaty of Waitangi that have to be respected. We haven't done a great job with this. We need to work more around it, but we can't just put multiculturalism to the side while we sort out biculturalism in this country.

CL: It's interesting that when you look back, it was a fear of being culturally and racially swamped was precisely what motivated Maori to strike an agreement with the British. It was exactly that. Can you draw a direct parallel between the dominant culture's response then, Maori, and the dominant culture's response now - that is, now the 'boot is on the other foot'?

JL: I think at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori actually saw New Zealand Europeans as an opportunity. They were actually very entrepreneurial. They were very interested in new technology. They were very interested in the new talents that people brought. The way around the resource-based dilemma is ... I hate to say ... 'growing the pie'. If you think of the pie as fixed and having to divvy it up, there is always going to be conflict. We need to think of ourselves as working together and 'growing the pie'. I think there were quite a lot of Maori entrepreneurs, by the way, in the early-mid 19th Century that were kind of hamstrung by the New Zealand Europeans and not wanting to see them grow together, but I think we could do much better now.

Part of the whole theory ... this kind of rational theory ... of our immigration is to embed talented people within this very outward looking ocean trading state. We then have connections all over the globe and can ride this globalisation better than most to 'grow the pie', as opposed to fighting over increasingly smaller shares of the pie.

CL: Colleen, you've done surveys of attitudes towards immigrants and immigration - the question of assimilation or integration and so on. What do you conclude from that research?



CW: *I conclude that New Zealanders have a very strong multicultural ideology. In fact we've found from our national survey that 89% of New Zealanders agree that it's a good thing for society to be made up of different races, religions and cultures. This is a significantly larger percentage than you find in comparable national surveys in Australia and the European Union. So we're at a good starting point, again in terms of multicultural ideology or multiculturalism in principle.*

However, like with biculturalism, you get in a tangle when you're moving the principles to practice. So I may think that immigrants should be able to keep their own culture, but if that impacts on me personally then I may not be so accommodating. While New Zealanders do agree that traditional culture should be maintained, in one of our surveys drawn from 300 Kiwis on the Electoral Rolls, 44% said they didn't want to have mosque in their neighbourhood. So it's like "Yes, you should keep your culture", but "No I don't want it to affect me".

We have to talk about accommodation ... reasonable accommodation ... if we are going to permit and encourage our new immigrants to integrate. Kiwis tell us they want migrants to integrate. They reject assimilation. Only about one in five Kiwis would endorse principles of assimilation, so we're very fair minded. But moving that to the practice - how do we ensure equitable employment opportunities for example? We know that our foreign-born Kiwis have higher unemployment rates than our native-born Kiwis. How do we deal with issues like that? How do we deal with Pacific peoples in New Zealand who on almost every indicator of social economic or health and wellbeing are disadvantaged compared to Kiwis in the general population?

CL: **Can you have this sort of full mosaic of affirmative action programmes? Life would get very messy wouldn't it?**

CW: *Well not that it'd get very messy but New Zealanders object, in principle, to the idea of giving groups what they regard as 'special treatment'.*

CL: **Are there differences between migrants and their children regarding preserving language culture? Once the generation has reproduced here there's a much more, like you said, fair attitude. Is that right? So this is a continuing kind of 'melting pot' - melting down. Is that right James?**

JL: The Canadian research that Colleen's colleague, John Berry, has done showed that a typical pattern in this migrant research is after three generations the native language is gone. Canada, as well as New Zealand, are one of these leading nations in terms of multiculturalism. So without even trying, there is a degree of assimilation and 'melting pot' and things like that. Whether that's desirable in this day and age is questionable.

I know that in some ways this government is very China-focused for instance, so we would like these people to be both Kiwis and still be fluent Chinese speakers, so they can open up these business opportunities 20-30 years from now. For example we've got a Fonterra farm in China. I think this kind of whole-hearted assimilation, in terms of the set of skills that you have, may not be the best answer in the future. People are so mobile now that this type of 'melting pot' pattern again might not be as natural as it was say 30 or 40 years ago.

CL: **How well do we sensitise new immigrants to things like the Treaty relationship? There's been some criticism about the amount of information new migrants get about the Treaty, or what they get on the principles of multiculturalism. What do they get do you know?**



CW: *They don't get enough in terms of the feedback we hear from new immigrants. They do want to know more about the Treaty. They want to understand more about biculturalism. And there have been some attempts. For example, the New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils has been working with local Iwi, in some of the regions, to provide marae experiences for new immigrants. This has been going very well. I think it would be really helpful if we were more systematic in terms of paying national attention to these issues.*

CL: **You're happy to invite listeners to share their views on multiculturalism and do a survey.**

CW: *Yes. It's on the Centre for Applied Cross Cultural Research's website at Victoria University - www.victoria.ac.nz/cacr - and we would love to hear listeners' views on multiculturalism [UPDATE: Please note this survey has now closed].*

CL: **I encourage listeners to write in. That was the Co-Directors of Victoria University's Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research, Professor Colleen Ward and Professor James Liu. Colleen is presenting a session at the Pathways to Metropolis in the 21st Century on immigration issues.**