ETHNIC INTERMIXTURE IN AUSTRALIA

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Australians are somewhat divided on the extent and value of ethnic intermixture. Some Anglo-Celts feel that ethnic groups so perpetuate themselves that Australia is 'fast becoming a conglomerate of warring tribes, not a nation'[1]; at the very least, some groups are preserving undesirable customs such as subordination of women or violent action against opponents, as when Croats fight Serbs or fundamentalist Moslems threaten bookshops selling Salmon Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Many non-Anglo-Celts agree that their groups are perpetuating themselves but claim that this is the essence of multiculturalism, does not threaten underlying national unity and makes Australia a civilized country happily embracing many different traditions, cultures and customs.

Certainly the world around us shows multiculturalism can work very well, as it has for centuries with the German, French and Italian peoples of Switzerland. But it also shows that multicultural societies can run into grave trouble, as in former Yugoslavia and USSR, India, Canada and elsewhere. A major protection against such troubles is continuous mixing between ethnic groups so that a major part of the population is ethnically mixed, not belonging to any one ethnic origin or culture. To what extent is this happening in Australia?

The best answer lies in the marriage patterns of the second and third generations, the extent to which they marry within or beyond their own ethnic group. One can obtain third generation statistics only from special surveys but second generation statistics are available from A.B.S.; see Table 1. This shows that the in-marriage levels - about 25 per cent for all brides and 22 per cent for all grooms - are higher in the periods 1981 to 1986 and 1987 to 1990 than in the period 1965 to 1972 (14.4 per cent and 10.1 per cent), largely because opportunities for in-marriage between second generation persons greatly increased with the massive growth of the second generation, from about 800,000 in 1971 to 2.5 million in 1991. This pattern will probably continue for some time. (It is worth noting that Greek and Lebanese in-marriage was quite high 1965 to 1972 because pre-war settlers had by then produced numbers of second generation children.)

Some second generation groups obviously in-marry much more than others. Half or more of second generation brides of Greek, Italian, Lebanese and Turkish origin now marry within their own ethnic community, about one-third of Yugoslav and Portuguese, and about one quarter of Chinese and Maltese. In sharp contrast less than 10 per cent of brides of western European origin marry within their own ethnic grouping; so also with some second generation women from south and south-east Asia, Africa and the Pacific. We need care when assessing these proportions because some

Table 1: Second Generation In-group Marriage: Percentages

(Australian-born brides and grooms with mother born in country of origin marrying grooms and brides themselves born in, or with one or both parents born in, same country of origin)

Country of Origin	Brides			Grooms		
	1965-72	1981-86[1]	1987-90[2]	1965-72	1981-86	1987-90[2]
England	14.4		15.6	12.1		16.4
Wales	1.1		1.4	0.7		0.9
Scotland	3.8		5.7	3.3		2.1
Ireland	3.0		2.1	2.3		2.0
New Zealand	}1.0	4.6	6.5	}0.6	3.8	5.9
Canada		0.4	0.7		-	0.7
U.S.A.		4.2	8.0		0.7	-
South Africa		2.2	0.1		1.2	1.5
Germany		3.0	3.5		3.7	4.0
Netherlands		9.1	8.4		9.0	8.3
Scandinavia	0.6	0.6	3.0	0.2	4.0	0.8
Austria		3.1	1.1		1.4	-
France		0.4	0.8		1.1	0.9
Baltic States	4.6	7.6	7.6	4.5	7.9	7.9
Czech/Slovak	2.9	3.5	5.3	-	3.7	4.3
Poland	12.7	14.6	12.1	12.7	11.5	9.7
Russia + [3]	5.5	6.9	4.3	8.7	7.5	1.4
Yugoslavia	17.8	29.2	35.0	10.4	18.5	24.4
Hungary	7.2	6.9	7.0	7.8	6.1	7.9
Greece	46.1	63.8	58.0	29.4	55.2	55.9
Italy	17.8	53.1	49.2	7.8	46.8	47.5
Malta	29.8	29.9	28.0	16.6	27.9	28.2
Spain		22.0	8.7		15.6	8.1
Portugal			32.4			28.9
Lebanon	36.6	61.9	64.7	19.7	48.9	50.1
Turkey	2.4	16.3	65.8	-	-	45.3
India		4.2	4.2		2.9	3.1
Sri Lanka		2.4	4.8		2.7	4.8
China + [4]	10.8	12.4	23.1	10.4	12.3	20.5
Philippines		9.7	9.7		-	5.0
Malaysia	}2.6	2.2	5.4	}0.9	2.5	9.6
Indonesia			2.9			2.3
Africa		6.9	6.5		7.5	5.7
Pacific		4.3	3.7		4.7	4.7
TOTAL	14.4	24.9	25.0	10.1	22.1	22.8

Notes:
[1] Blank means no figures are available.
[2] 1987-90 excludes 1988 as A.B.S. no longer has those statistics.
[3] Russia + means former USSR excluding Baltic States.
[4] China + means China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore.

Australians had Anglo-Celtic or west European parents who were born in these regions before moving to Australia; Dutch from Indonesia; British from India, Africa or the Pacific and so on. It is too early to assess the marriage patterns of second generation Indo-Chinese; arriving in numbers only since 1976, parents have not had time to have Australian-born children reaching marriageable age. (Probably these will not have such high in-marriage rates as the first generation; over 90 per cent of ethnic Vietnamese immigrants marrying in Australia marry ethnic Vietnamese.)

Some ethnic groups will unquestionably continue solidly into the third generation and later generations but, taken as a whole, only one-quarter of the second generation marry back into their own ethnic communities. In other words, three-quarters or more are inter-marrying with families of other ethnic origins. Their children - the 'ethnic mix' - are growing very rapidly. In 1988 the pure Anglo-Celtic element made up 48 per cent of the population, the non-Anglo-Celtic element about 22 per cent, and the mixture between Anglo-Celt and non-Anglo-Celt the remaining 30 per cent. To get the larger ethnic mix (here excluding mixing between English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Cornish in

the major Anglo-Celtic division) we should add to this 30 per cent any mixing within the major non-Anglo-Celtic division; Poles with Germans, French with Italians, Russians with Chinese, Dutch with Indonesians, and so on. In 1988 this was about 7 per cent, giving an ethnic mix of at least 37 per cent. By the turn of the century this will be well over 40 per cent, providing Australia's best protection against becoming a battle-ground of 'warring tribes'.

All this mixing has been greatly helped by the fact that post-war immigration has involved many different ethnic groups, none numerically dominant - the largest non-Anglo-Celtic group, the Italian, has made up only 6.3 per cent of post-war net migration - and that most have dispersed widely round the continent. Should migration patterns change and there arrive large numbers of immigrants from a few ethnic origins only, and these form solid geographical concentrations and inter-marry very little, then we might have cause to worry. At present multiculturalism seems to pose little threat to the development of Australia's national identity and unity.

References
[1] Lionel Duncombe, Immigration, Kalgoorlie Press, Canberra, 1992, p. III