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The role of business agglomerations in stimulating static and social activities in multicultural streets

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ABSTRACT

Urban designers and city planners are increasingly interested in how streets can support social activities. Street-based social activities are influenced by relationships between the street's physical characteristics, the business activities that take place there and how these two factors are managed over time. As New Zealand's population becomes more diverse, a key challenge is to design and manage public spaces so that people from different socio-cultural backgrounds can enjoy spending time there. The ethnic retail phenomenon is considered one of the most recognisable symbols of multiculturalism. In many cases, the identity of an ethnic neighbourhood has developed around a specific mix of retailing activities. Despite this, very little work has been done to identify the characteristics of shops and businesses along streets that can help stimulate social intercourse. This paper explores how commercial business agglomerations can support efforts to make streets more culturally diverse. Through observations of activity along streets and interviews with people from three ethnically diverse communities in New Zealand, it was revealed that the extent to which streets become the public domain of different ethnic groups is dependent on the retail activities on offer. We conclude with reflections about the importance of municipal intervention and management for multicultural planning practice in streets.

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Streets; multiculturalism; business agglomerations; social activities

Introduction

Public spaces are intercultural places (platforms) where people find opportunities to interact with others with different ethnic backgrounds (Hou 2013; Mehta 2013; Velden and Reeves 2010). Moreover, high quality public spaces include those that enable people belonging to different cultures to peacefully co-exist (Mulgan et al. 2006). These spaces invite people to engage with their differences and to challenge conscious and unconscious personal boundaries. In this regard, public spaces can be areas for learning and education as they encourage the progress of maturity and enhance personal growth (Sennett 1971; Young 1990).

Streets and their sidewalks/footpaths represent an important part of urban public open space systems and can play a significant role in enriching public life in cities. '*Lowly, unpurposeful and random as they may appear, sidewalk contacts are the small change from which a city's wealth of public life may grow*' (Jacobs 1961, *72)*. Many urban scholars and practitioners have stressed the importance of streets as social spaces in addition to their role as movement channels (Lesan and Gjerde 2021; Appleyard 1981; A. Jacobs 1993; J. Jacobs 1961; Mehta 2013). Streets can provide a means for sociability, including a range of passive and active encounters, each of which can also be formal or casual. Therefore, as with other urban public spaces, streets can be places to encounter differences and learn (Mehta 2013).

Street character emerges and changes over time, in most cases through uncoordinated activities of building owners, residents, business owners, public space managers and those who visit. In some cases, the character of a street may develop around a particular ethnic culture or social culture. The *Chinatowns* that can be found in many large North American cities provide a vivid example of this phenomenon, as they were originally established in alignment with the ethnicities of people living in the surrounding neighbourhood. Evidence of this could be manifested in many ways, including through architectural features (such as Chinese gates) and public activities, to ethnic festivals and branding. Once a critical mass of characteristics can be tied to a particular culture or ethnicity, the identity of the area is also closely linked. In other cases, streets have a more diverse character, also reflecting the make-up of the surrounding population. As urban populations become more diverse through migration and relocation, the character of many streets also follow suit. Single ethnic streets and their more diverse multicultural counterparts develop over time despite, rather than because of, municipal planning and management (Carmona, de Magalhães, and Hammond 2008). On the one hand, urban planners look to

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provide for urban diversity through land-use planning in a broad, non-specific manner. On the other, urban designers emphasise the physical characteristics of public spaces, often separating them from those of the businesses around them. This research focuses on the phenomenon of ethnic retailing, developing empiric findings that can help bridge current knowledge gaps around municipal planning for multicultural contexts. The questions that drive this research include whether connections can be identified between businesses activities and cultural diversity along streets; whether there are particular characteristics of businesses and land use that enable cultural diversity; and if so, what are the implications for urban planning? A mixed-methods, qualitative approach comprising behavioural mapping and in situ, semi-structured interviews formed the basis of the research. The findings suggest that business activities such as services, fashion and food retail and cafes/restaurants help to stimulate social life in streets; accordingly, these activities may best be thought of as the foundations of multicultural streets.

Land-use planning for multicultural communities

Diversity has become the orthodoxy of contemporary planning practice (Burayidi 2015; Fainstein 2005). The term diversity has different meanings to the various disciplines contributing to this field; designers, for example, consider diversity as different building types and variations in physical characteristics, planners relate it to different mixes of land use activities and for sociologists, diversity primarily means social and racial-ethnic heterogeneity, where different groups can practice their rights to the city (Fainstein 2005). Urban diversity is considered as a basis for a just city (Sandercock 1998; Young 1990). In Cosmopolis II, Sandercock describes her ideal city as a metropolis where different ethnic and racial groups have equal rights to city spaces. According to Francis (2011), designing for mixed-use does not in itself guarantee that places will be diverse and mixed-life. Mixed-life public spaces are places that are diverse, democratic, inclusive, and memorable. While the intention of mixed-used projects is to create a positive public realm, other factors are also important for public spaces to support a diversity of people, experiences, and meanings (Francis 2011, 436).

Urban researchers endorse the objectives of multiculturalism in pluralist societies, where cultural values are taken into account in planning and design practices (Appleyard, 1976; Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Madanipour, 2010; Qadeer, 1997; 2015; Sandercock & Kliger, 1998). Fincher and Iveson (2008) suggest that the aim of planning is to foster encounters, viewing it as interaction between unlike individuals and groups occurring in local places such as streets, public spaces and 'third spaces'. In their opinion, planning should foster rather than inhibit the kinds of disorder that facilitate encounters among strangers. However, even though populations are rapidly becoming more culturally diverse, the called for changes in practice have rarely emerged. While progress has been made in bringing diversity to the attention of planners, planning legislations and frameworks are still largely based on the norms and values of the dominant culture (Burayidi, 2015; Harwood, 2005; Sandercock, 2000; Thompson, 2003). Researchers suggest that such planning could inadvertently act as a tool for social and cultural exclusion and control (Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Yiftachel, 1998). In this vein, decision making in multicultural societies has been very controversial where city officials and planners are struggling to embrace differences in land-use planning (Harwood, 2005). Cultural diversity can and should influence different aspects of land-use planning; from housing type and location to where people gather to worship and commune.

Ethnic forms of retailing are also considered to be important symbols of multiculturalism (Zhuang, 2013). Researchers stress the importance of ethnic expressions in retail spaces in multicultural communities and that public policies should facilitate ethnic landscapes and enable them to flourish (Preston & Lo, 2009; Zhuang, 2015). Accordingly, ethnic commercial activities impact the development of ethnic landscapes. Landscape here is not just related to aesthetics, but also refers to the interactions between people and place (Groth, 1997; Rapoport, 1977; Zhuang, 2019). In other words; 'ethnic businesses make and mark ethnic places' (Kaplan & Li, 2006, p. 10). Furthermore, it has been found that ethnic retailing and entrepreneurship provides benefits for urban economies, immigrant integration, building communities, neighbourhood retrofitting, and placemaking (Zhuang, 2013; 2019).

Concentrations of ethnic shops in inner-city neighbourhoods are often signposted with well-recognised names such as Chinatown, Little India, Koreatown, and Little Italy. Such ethnic enclaves are considered as the most striking spatial manifestation of cultural diversity in cities. While these have not generally been initiated by city planning departments, they have often enjoyed their support once established (Qadeer, 2015). Kay Anderson (1987) describes such ethnic enclaves (for example Chinatowns) as a Western construct, illustrative of a process of cultural domination that embodies the white Europeans power in the host societies to define and shape the area according to their imagery and interests. As communities become more mixed and culturally diverse, land-use planning could also extend beyond the largely monocultural ethnic enclaves of the past.

Relationships within a multicultural community can be weakened where the mix of retail activities concentrate on a single ethnicity (Zhuang, 2013). The other version of a multicultural city is a pluralist city, where the city works as a whole towards social integration and where all people have equal access to resources (Madanipour, 2007). This approach recognises cultures as able to mutually influence, constitute and transform urban environments rather than to isolate them from each other (Hou, 2013). In this vein, some developers and business owners believe that businesses need to exhibit more ethnic assimilation on the basis that a more toned-down expression of ethnicity might appeal to a wider range of customers (Zhuang, 2008).

Retailing is recognised as an important factor in the cultural, economic and public life of the city (Goodman & Coiacetto, 2012; Montgomery, 1998). This is perhaps more critical in streets than any other types of public spaces, as social activities are related to the interrelationship between retailing, the physical elements of the streets, and planning and design strategies that manage both (Mehta, 2006). However, land-use activities and retail management that can help foster people's social activities have been less addressed in the literature.

Research approach

In order to define the characteristics of an appropriate agglomeration that could lead to successful multicultural streets, the main shopping street in each of three socially and ethnically diverse New Zealand communities was studied. The streets were selected through analysis of the neighbourhood demographic characteristics in Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand's two largest cities. The first case was Riddiford Street in Newtown, a Wellington neighbourhood renowned for its cultural diversity but where Europeans remain the dominant cultural group. The second case was St George Street in Papatoetoe, an Auckland neighbourhood with a balance of all ethnic groups. The third study was conducted in Great South Road in Otahuhu, a district that is dominated by Pacific Islanders. The streets are each the main thoroughfare in the suburb, based on the centrality and connectivity they have within the area's spatial network. They each have carefully managed traffic systems, exhibit similar macro characteristics, (for example, each has a similar width dimension, spatial enclosure and footpath width), are symbolically diverse and have comparable combinations of land use activities (shops, eating spaces, etc.). They also have closely related micro-scale physical characteristics along the footpaths (landscape, seating, etc.) and are popular social spaces.

Businesses along all three streets have evolved organically. As these are public streets – in contrast to privately owned shopping centres – there is no overarching system of control, with decisions on how the businesses operate and present to the public made by individual owners. Diversity of business activities in each street was assessed, taking into account the number and type of businesses. The commercial heart of Riddiford Street comprises small, independent shops including cafes, social and economic services, second-hand shops along with at least one international chain restaurant. Businesses along St George Street include two fruit shops, several takeaway food shops, bakeries and a chemist. With a predominance of low cost, flat-rate consumer good shops, takeaways and liquor shops, St George Street lacks the diversity of retail activities seen in Riddiford Street. Business agglomeration along Great South Road targets ethnic populations such as Pacific Islanders and Asians (Indians). Images of each street can be seen in the appendix.

The social and cultural life of each street was examined through a mixed-methods qualitative approach, utilising behavioural mapping and semi-structured interviews with respondents carried out in-situ. Data collection took place in the autumn (March and April) and at times when it was not raining. This time of year was selected as the weather is predictably stable and still warm enough for people to enjoy being outdoors. People's lingering and social activities along each street were mapped every hour between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM on weekdays and weekends. A total of 4,784 people were recorded during the observation period. During these sessions, the lead researcher walked slowly along both footpaths to record the different activities and where they were taking place, the number of people participating in these activities and their approximate age, gender, and ethnicity. Behavioural mapping has been used in relation to documenting different persons' race/ethnicity in the studies of urban parks (Cohen et al., 2007; Hutchinson, 1987; Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995). The researchers also coded people's ethnic backgrounds in the behavioural mapping exercise. Codes were developed for the four largest ethnic groups in the New Zealand population, based on the most recent census. Others not clearly fitting into European, Māori, Pacific Islander, and Asian ethnic classifications were recorded separately.

During the pilot study observations it became apparent that there would be a high risk of incorrectly distinguishing between Māori and Pacific Islanders. Accordingly, these ethnicities were coded under one group for the behaviour mapping exercise. People's ethnic backgrounds during this stage of the fieldwork were recorded in four categories; European, Māori/Pacific Islander, Asian and Others.

The manual data collected from each observation was then transferred into GIS software for analysis. The GIS tool generated a rich database that could be filtered to highlight relationships between activities, locations, and people's characteristics (age, gender, and ethnicity). Each point in the GIS database represented a person and the data associated with their behaviour (Figure 2). Arranging the data in different layers enabled different occupancy patterns to be analysed relative to the spatial configuration of different locations (Figure 1).

Face to face interviews with people in each of the three streets provided opportunities for the observed behaviours to be elaborated upon. The interviews examined the nature of participants' street-based activities, the places they selected to conduct these activities and the rationales for the choices they made. Participants' suggestions for improving the street environment were also recorded to help understand the needs and expectations of people from different cultural backgrounds, particularly where there were differences.

In general, the interviews comprised three sections. The first recorded demographic information such as the participant's cultural background, homeland if not from New Zealand, age classification, level of education, length of live/stay in New Zealand and level of familiarity with the street. In the second section, participants were queried about their social/leisure activities on the street without reference to cultural background. The questions in this part were based on the participant's activities and where these took place, their preferences for street features particularly as they might influence their activities, the duration of activities, and preferred time for visiting the street. In the final section of the interview, the researchers asked participants about their specific cultural activities and types of environments that could accommodate their needs in more detail. People were also invited to share their opinions about how the street spaces could better accommodate their ethnic social activities. In order to capture the views of a broad range of people, interviews were conducted at different times of day and on different days of the week. Recruitment sought to secure input from diverse ethnic classifications in connection with the behaviour mapping exercise. People who were observed sitting, standing and otherwise lingering along the street were approached randomly and in accordance with guidelines on human ethics. The time for the interviews ranged from 10 min to 50 min, with an average time of 15–20 min. Frequent users of the street spent more time answering the questions. In total, 85 persons were interviewed: 16 European, 20 Māori, 26 Pacific Islander and 23 Asian. The responses were categorised and coded and analysed in relation to business activities. Approval for the project was granted by the university's Human Ethics Committee.

Analysis

Two sets of analysis were undertaken. Firstly, the number of people from each of the different cultures involved in different types of activities (standing, sitting, shopping, …) were logged and compared to the overall number of static and social activities of each group. Refer to Figure 2 above. Comparisons were also made against the demographic characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood. The extent that a neighbourhood commercial street is inclusive could be measured and understood by the type and range of activities and the actors that it supports (Mehta, 2014). Jan Gehl (1987) differentiated between outdoor activities in public space, placing them in three classifications; those that are necessary, those that are optional and then those that are social. Optional (recreational) activities are those in which people participate if they have a desire and in consideration of what the place has to offer (both the weather and the physical setting). Optional activities include walking, sitting, standing, and people watching. According to Gehl, the frequency of optional activities increases when the quality of public space is desirable. Social activities relate to the presence of others in public space. This includes children's play, greetings and conversations between people, communal activities, and simply seeing or hearing others. Social activities take place when the quality of the environment supports necessary and optional activities (Figure 3).

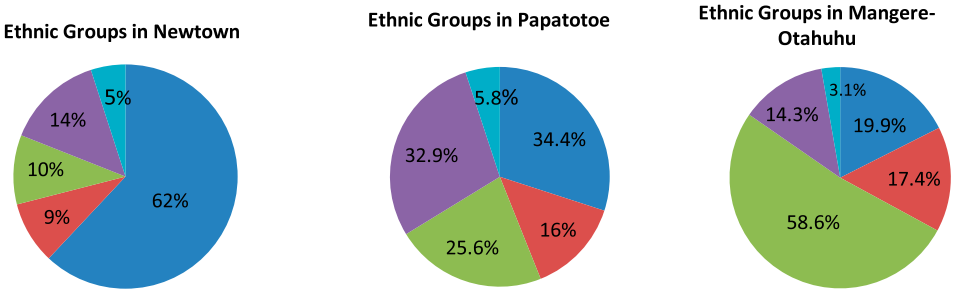

Figure 1. Ethnic composition of the studied neighbourhoods (Statistics New Zealand, 2013).

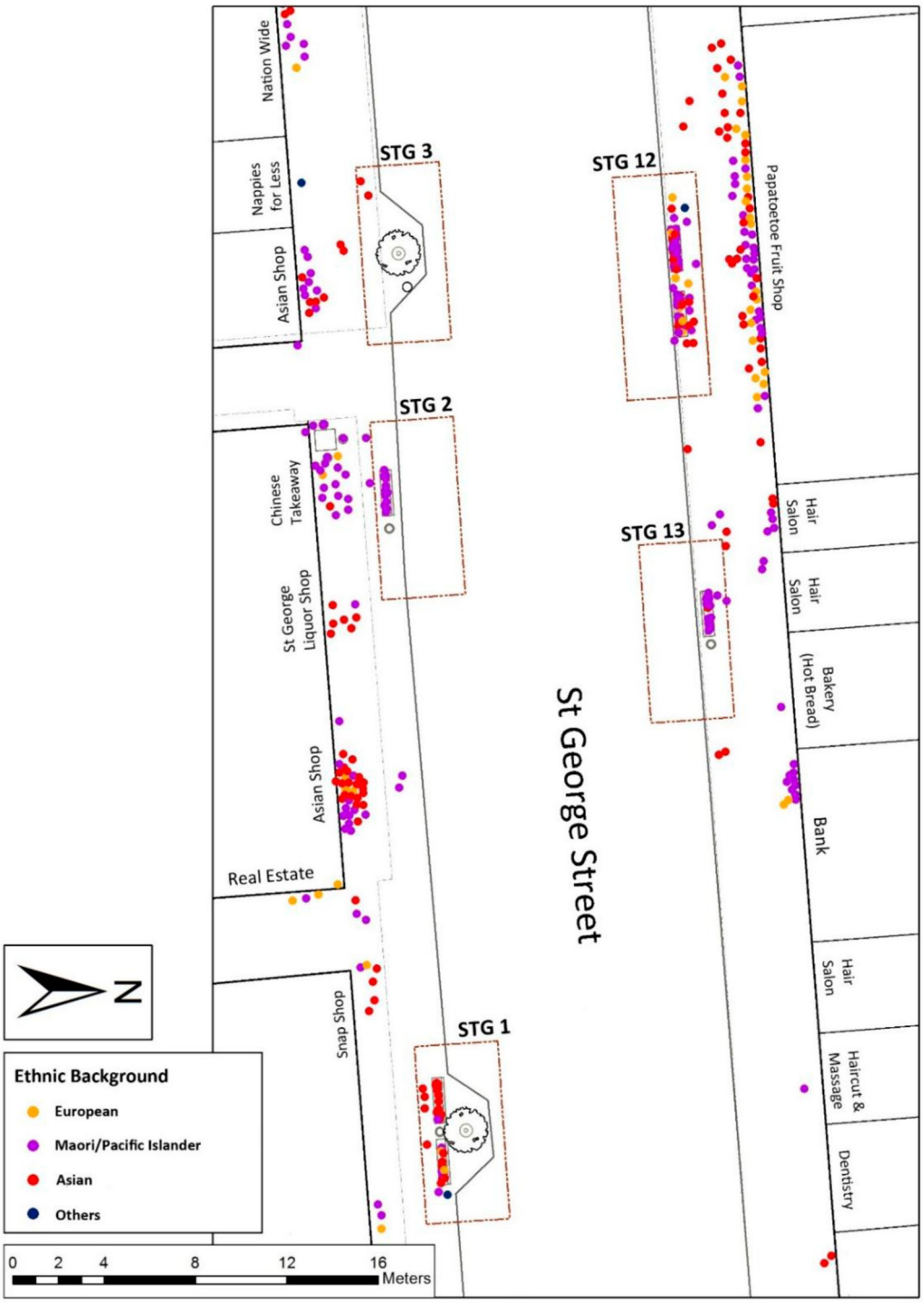

Figure 2. An example, from St George Street in Otahuhu, of how people of diverse ethnic backgrounds were recorded in the study. Each point in the GIS database represented a person, their characteristics and the data associated with their behaviour.

The percentages of each ethnic group participating in static and social activities of each street were recorded and compared with the percentages of each ethnic group residing in the relative neighbourhood (Figure 4). Similarly, the range of activities (necessary, optional, and social) of each ethnic group was used in order to measure how each street served different ethnic groups. Whether each ethnic group visited the street alone or in groups, and their types of activities was an indicator on how well each group perceived the streets environments as a social space.

Secondly, the number of users, their ethnicity, and the locations of various behaviours and different cultural groups were analysed in relation to nearby business activities and footpath features. The number of people of each ethnic background engaged in different activities in specific locations were considered indicators for how well each section of the street serves the needs of different cultural groups.

The research framework informed development of a coding system for analysing responses to open-ended questions. This information provided a basis

for comparisons within each cultural group and across groups to understand perceptions and preferences for choosing various street spaces for social activities. The following sections discuss the characteristics of a business agglomeration that could lead to streets becoming to become more diverse and multicultural.

Business agglomeration

This research can be seen to reinforce the findings of earlier studies where the retail tenant mix and the diversity of shops offering goods and services along a street are the main reason people are attracted to use the footpaths (Teller, 2008; Teller & Elms, 2012). Static and social activities on streets were mainly related to the periods that retail activities and services were available and decreased dramatically once these businesses closed for the day. A majority of respondents mentioned businesses, retail activities and buildings with public use as the elements they liked most about the streets and what they would want to add more of, if given the chance. Social and financial services, fashion shops and cafes and delicatessens were seen to stimulate activity around them and could therefore be understood as foundations of social life along these streets.

Business owners tend to set up where they believe they will best be able to attract customers. This helps explain higher numbers of ethnic shops in neighbourhoods where people from the same ethnic background reside. Such businesses may also draw people from other neighbourhoods, not only to access the services but, perhaps more importantly, in order to participate in the social communities that develop. In this sense, people will travel to satisfy their ethnic shopping needs as well as their social needs. The overall usage patterns revealed that there was one dominant user group in each street. The dominant ethnicity amongst residents of the surrounding area was also the ethnic group observed most often in the main shopping street. In two of the three cases the proportion of members of that group using the street was equal to or higher than in the area. In other words, Maori and Pacifica people were seen more often in St George Street and Great South Road than they were represented in the populations of Papatoetoe and Otahuhu respectively. Similarly, Asians were a higher proportion of the people observed in St George Street than they are in the population of Papatoetoe. In Riddiford Street, the proportion of the Europeans using the street was only slightly lower than that of the neighbourhood. See Figures 1 and 4 above. Clearly there was something in the business activities and/or the public space amenities on offer that served to attract members of the major resident group into their local shopping street. Perhaps more importantly in terms of this research, a proportion of other ethnic groups chose not to visit or to simply visit only for necessary activities. Could there be something in the spatial configuration or activities on offer that led to this?

The main activities people engaged in across the three cases were standing, window shopping, sitting and talking. Although these were the most regularly observed activities in each street and for each of the four ethnic groups in the study, the frequencies with which they were observed varied with what the street had on offer. Europeans were the most frequent visitors in Riddiford Street and they were involved in greater numbers in seated, standing and window-shopping activities. Māori/Pacific Islanders and Asians were observed in smaller numbers and were mostly involved in standing and seated activities. Only small numbers of Māori and Pacific Islanders were seen window shopping along Riddiford Street. On the other hand, very small numbers of Asians spent time sitting along the street, preferring instead to be standing or window-shopping.

Māori/Pacific Islanders and Asians were the most frequent users of St George Street. Both groups were recorded in standing, window shopping and seated activities. Europeans visited the street in smaller numbers. They were mostly involved in standing and window-shopping activities and were less observed to be seated. Europeans engaged in social activities were rarely observed In Great South Road while Māori/Pacific Islanders were observed most often, engaged in the full range of activities. Asians frequented the street in smaller numbers compared to Māori/Pacific Islanders and were mainly involved in standing and window-shopping activities. Only a small number were observed to be sitting (Figure 5).

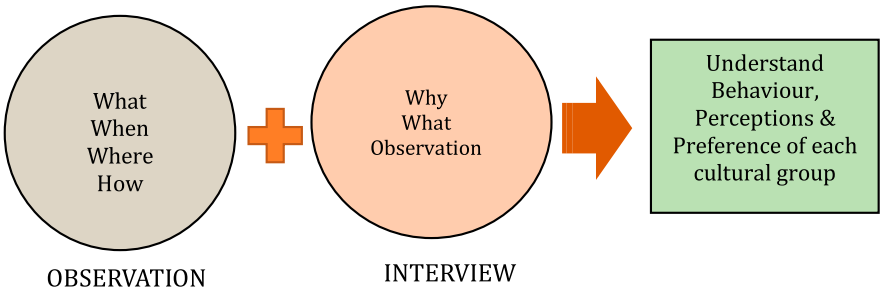

Figure 3. Observations and interviews help understand behaviours, perceptions and preferences.

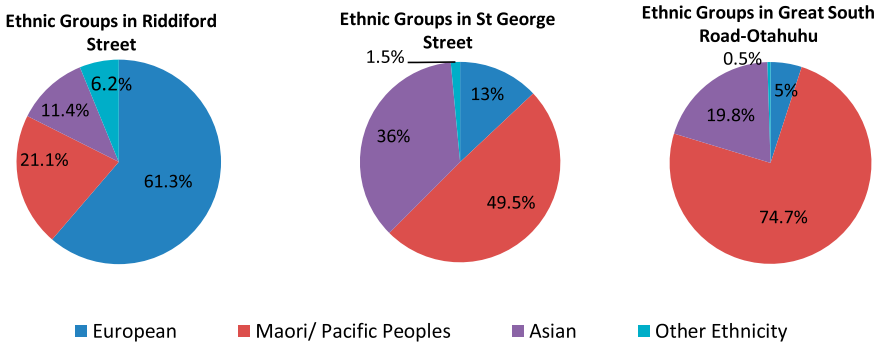

Figure 4. Percentage of observed ethnic groups in the studied streets.

Seated and standing social engagement between people, as well as lingering activities such as window shopping, were understood to be indicators of their preferences for spaces along the street. Data from the observations were reinforced by the interviews. Our analysis of the three cases suggests that the business type and associated characteristics facilitate or limit each street as a public space, in terms of accommodating different cultural needs. There were more opportunities for leisure and social activities among the members of specific ethnic cultures on the streets when a wider range of businesses applied to the members of that culture.

Spaces of everyday life and leisure destinations

Our observations of street-life in the three cases aligned with earlier findings by Ehrenfeucht and Loukaitou-Sideris' (2010) that footpaths are spaces where people's daily lives play out and are places for recreation in addition to their key infrastructure role. People frequented the streets for economic and social purposes as well as to attend to their daily necessities. Streets are different from other public open spaces such as parks, as discretionary and social activities are usually mixed with more functional activities such as shopping. Many of the businesses that offered daily goods and services, such as fruit shops, supermarkets and banks, were most commonly preferred and attracted people from different cultural backgrounds to the street setting. Others, such as ethnic delicatessens, mostly targeted specific cultural groups.

Ethnic food shops and eating places were seen to draw members of those cultures into streets. While many of the ingredients needed for certain ethnic foods are now commonplace in supermarkets, some people with more specialised requirements prefer to shop at ethnic delicatessens and fruit markets. A Pacific Islander participant on Riddiford Street explained the importance of raw cultural vegetables in their cooking;

> *"Pacific Islanders go to vegetable shops to buy green banana and Taro, […] Islanders like to eat Island food, and it is good to have a shop to buy our grocery, also, they are quite cheaper in these shops rather than other shops [supermarkets]".*

Ethnic minority groups, classified in the research as Other, were most often engaged in social activities along Riddiford Street in close proximity to cultural shops, eating establishments and the Halal butcher.

Ethnic shops and restaurants had a greater role for Asians and Pacific Islanders compared to Māori and Europeans. Many Asians and Pacific Islanders used ethnic shops to buy specific goods such as Asian/ Pacific ingredients for meals or outfits for special occasions. One Tongan (Pacific Islander) we spoke to along Great South Road noted that;

> *"the diversity of shops caters to my culture more than anywhere else in the country. We can buy Tongan stuff and clothes here, where we cannot find anywhere else or in the mall".*

Having a fine business agglomeration that serves daily/weekly shopping, and leisure places to eat/ drink and other services such as fashion and footwear, among other services is important for streets to become diverse and multicultural.

Food and sociability

Eating and drinking were common activities along the streets we studied. Different food premises, such as cafés, takeaways and ethnic restaurants increased the number of static activities on the footpaths (Crankshaw, 2009; Parham, 1992, 2012). The places people chose for leisure/social activities varied between socio-cultural groups. Cafés had an important role among the European cultural grouping. Europeans, who were 85% of all people recorded as sitting on private seating associated with cafes, bars and bakeries in Riddiford Street, significantly outnumbered users from other cultural backgrounds. Being celebrated as a part of street life since the nineteenth century (Loukaitou-Sideris, Blumenberg, & Ehrenfeucht, 2005), cafés often provide seating that can increase levels of

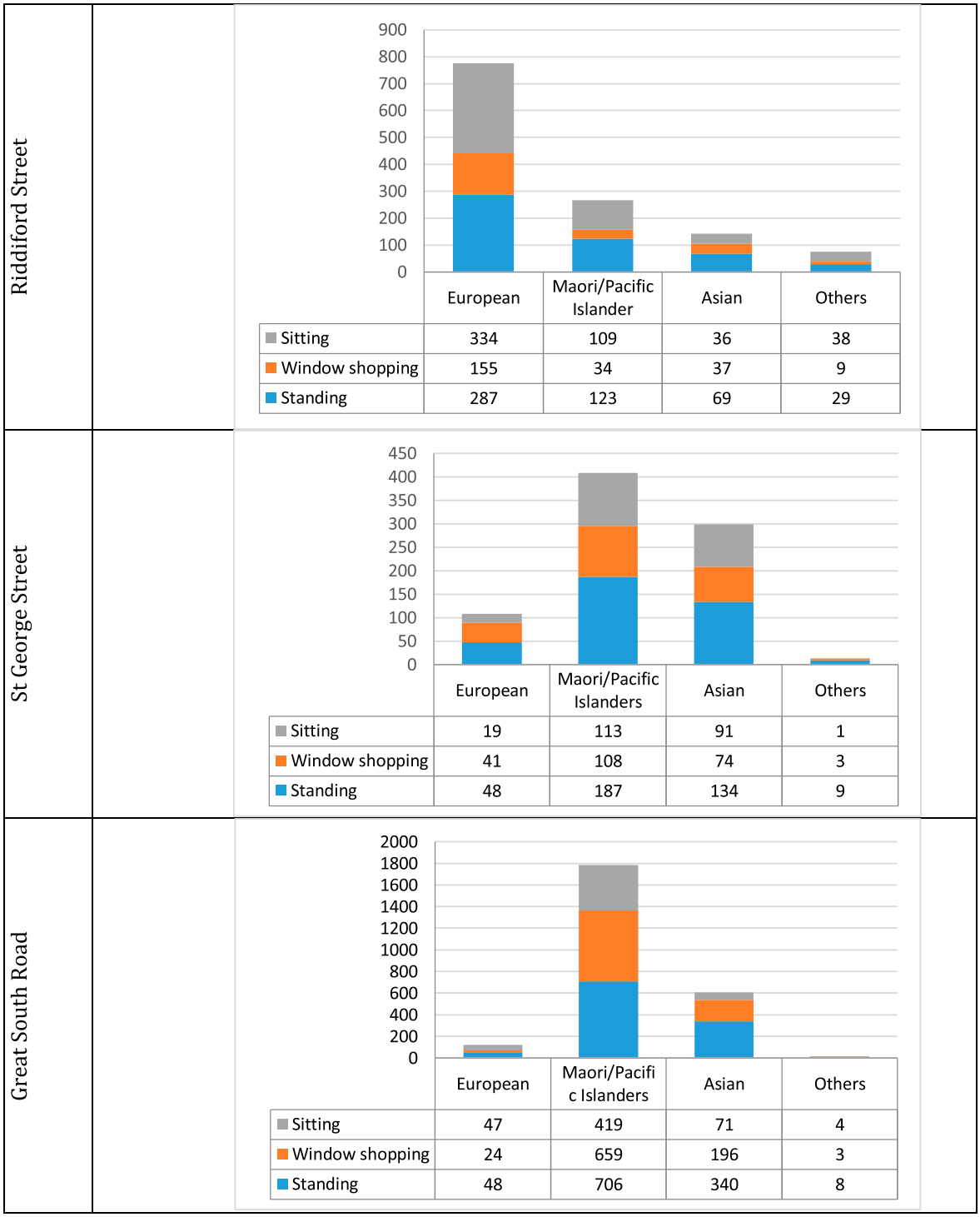

Figure 5. Differences between the proportions of different cultures involved in standing, window shopping and seated activities in the studied streets.

liveliness and social activities along streets. However, the cafés along Riddiford Street were not seen to increase levels of social activity among non-Europeans (Table 1).

Cultural food seems to play an important role in streets as social spaces among specific and ethnocentric cultures. Ethnic restaurants become community places where ethnic groups interact and

Table 1. Seated activity among people with different cultural background, age and gender on private seating (Riddiford Street).[1]

Type of business	Cultural Background	E/I	E/G	PM/I	PM/G	A/I	A/G	O/I	O/G	Total/I	Total/G	Total
Cafés		**42**	**106**	5	3	2	0	1	0	50	109	159
Bakeries		14	14	8	5	3	0	2	2	27	21	48
Bars		1	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	8
Total		57	125	15	8	5	0	3	2	80	135	215

strengthen their community bonds (Preston & Lo, 2009). The offer of a culturally specific menu at restaurants seems more important for Asians than for other cultural groups. Many noted that Asian eating places serve as a gathering place for their community. Religious requirements are also still a matter of importance for a specific range of Asians. Muslims comprise part of the Asian cultural group and it may be self-evident that Halal eating places are important for them. Chan and Ahmed (2006) observed that Halal certification at the McDonald's franchise in Punchbowl, Australia led to an increase in attracting Muslim customers. Pacific Islanders also stressed that food premises are important for their social gatherings. However, compared to Asians, Pacific Islanders were less ethnocentric and often observed visiting Asian takeaway and non-ethnic, fast-food restaurants. One Pacific Islander along St George Street commented;

> *"We wouldn't bother to have an Island restaurant here; the Chinese takeaways are similar to Island food."*

This could be a key reason that the majority of Pacific Islanders' social activities took place in front of Asian takeaways. While a number of Asian and Pacific Island food establishments were seen to attract people from their own culture, others also targeted the mainstream and were hospitable to other ethnic cultures. These establishments provided an opportunity to learn about other cultures (Ang, Brand, Greg, & Wilding, 2002). However, there were also instances where an exclusive image and commensurate menu prices were sought by their owners in an effort to cater to more affluent audiences. The perceptions of many we spoke to were that this disregards the financial capability of less affluent community members, often from the ethnic background aligned with the restaurant. In addition to ethnicity, age and acculturation influenced participants' food choices (Ang et al., 2002). Acculturation and the preference for a food retail diversity made it difficult to define a line between ethnic shops, especially restaurants and the customers they appeared to attract. Due to the phenomenon of globalization, boundaries between ethnic and mainstream markets are becoming closer. An example for this is outdoor cafes, where they were once considered ethnic, such as in Toronto's Corso Italia in the 1960s. Today, they can be seen as mainstream around the world (Zhuang, 2015) (Table 2).

Other than specific ethnic food establishments, fast food chain restaurants and takeaways found great preference among a diverse range of ethnic groups. Chain restaurants such as McDonalds have been successful by creating an inclusive public culture for different ethnicities and socio-economic groups. Still, the embodied public culture that they represent, and their popularity in multicultural contexts, have been disregarded. Economic accessibility and spatial configurations that allow large groups to gather have helped to make such restaurants attractive to a range of people.

Cafés, cultural food shops, chain restaurants and other food related businesses can broaden opportunities for people from different cultural backgrounds to use street spaces for their desired social and leisure activities. This can enhance the ethnic character and associated gastronomic diversity of a place (Parham, 1992, p. 34) of streets. Our analysis revealed that a diverse range of eating places can help to attract people from different ethnicities, thereby increase diversity along the streets.

Affordability and economic access

Ethnicity and inequality are often intertwined among ethnic minorities (Pearson, 2011). Therefore, socio-economic conditions have an important role among ethnic minorities to access streets for leisure and social activities. Economic mobilisation and accessibility are important features that attract diverse people from different classes and ethnic groups to visit local shopping areas (Walzer, 1986). Many of those who visited the study areas did so to purchase daily goods and other necessities at discounted prices. Many businesses, including second-hand shops, those charging a flat dollar rate for all goods, and takeaway food, were associated with budgeting, bargaining and affordability. Economic access and affordability were important issues, particularly in St George Street and Great South Road where it was often mentioned by people from different cultures. Economic accessibility was mentioned less frequently by those we spoke to in Riddiford Street. This could be more a reflection of the socio-economic profile of these neighbourhoods than of ethnic culture. Not only does Newtown have a higher socio-economic profile compared to Papatoetoe and Mangere-Otahuhu, a higher percentage of Europeans also reside there.

The findings support Hutchinson's (1987) concept on differences. Hutchinson argued that cultural differences are related to complex interactions between race and social class rather than simply being influenced by each of them individually. In some cases, the ethnic background of the users was the key reason for differences in preference, whereas in many others they appeared to be related to social class. Thus, social class and economic access inevitably influence perception and choice. There are links between ethnicity and poverty for many New Zealanders. Māori and Pacific Islanders are among the most economically and socially disadvantaged ethnic groups in the country (Pearson, 2011). Preferences for different businesses and places of social encounter such as takeaway food shops, bakeries, and international restaurants were

Table 2. A considerable number of window shopping and static activities on Riddiford Street occured in front of affordable shops where they attract a diverse range of backgrounds.

Fashion/Household Shops	Cultural Background	European	Māori/Pacific Islander	Asian	Other	Total
Flat-rate shops (3 stores)		26	16	11	0	53
Second-hand shops/diverse (4 stores)		45	16	10	5	76
Second-hand shops/furniture (2 stores)		33	4	12	3	52
Used Book shop (1 store)		18	1	1	0	20
Shoe shop (1 store)		9	1	4	0	14
New shops with window display (2 stores)		0	2	2	0	4
Jewellery shop (1 store)		11	0	1	0	12
Appliance store		0	0	2	0	2

mainly associated with affordability. Many similarities between choices for social encounter among Māori and Pacific Islanders could also be traced to economic disparities from the mainstream. Many Asian and European visitors also found the affordable shops and eating places to be attractive to them and it became clear that affordable shops attracted a diverse range of people, regardless of cultural background.

Streets that are destinations for consumption usually exclude non-consuming users and activities that do not add to the economic proliferation of the semi-public space (Ehrenfeucht & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2010; Williamson, 2013). In each of the three cases we studied, it was the combination of daily services, affordable products and the general atmosphere that allowed for less-affluent and non-consuming members of the public to visit in pursuit of leisure activities.

Diversification

Most of the fashion/household item shops in the three streets were limited to affordable second-hand and Asian flat-rate shops. There were only a few mid- to high-quality fashion shops to be seen. The emphasis on affordability appeared to be unattractive to those in higher socio-economic groups. Whyte & Underhill (1988) noted that expensive and higher quality shops may also be attractive to less affluent groups, thereby helping to attract a more diverse range of users. Exterior retail appearance along streets provides an impression regarding service level, price, and available merchandise (Lange, Rosengran, & Blom, 2016). A number of participants in the three case study areas expressed concern about the low standard of shops and businesses and preference for those they perceive to be of higher quality. As one participant in Great South Road said:

> *"There must be another bracket from these shops, you see the shops over there, their prices are $5 to $25, I would like to have shops with the prices of $25-50; a better quality of shops".*

This appears to be a response related more closely to socio-economic circumstances and personal preference than cultural preference. While one of the best ways of increasing publicness in streets is to make sure that retailers of different economic ratings fit within the overall profile, the small independent quality retailers might not thrive due to the inequitable distributions of wealth in the studied areas. The economic viability of the retail activities on shopping strips, as multi-owned spaces, is related to individual owners and operators who must ensure that they choose the right business to minimise the risk of their investment. Thus, the provision of retail activities is linked to the economic profile of the area. This is contrary to privately owned shopping malls, which often have a regional catchment and can focus on attracting people with sufficient means with the range and mix of their tenants, as well as offering free car parking (Lloyd & Auld, 2003).

We found that similarity between the shops and eating places along streets in many cases reduced respondent satisfaction and led to complaints about the quality and attractiveness of the area. Mehta (2006) argued that only limited numbers of a particular business type could be supported by the surrounding neighbourhood. Homogeneity through the dominance of retailers was a key concern expressed by the participants in St George Street and Great South Road. These two streets, with their multiple flat-rate shops and similar takeaway businesses, presented flavourless mono-cultures of retailing activity. While there was an absence of chain stores seen along other high streets, and most of the shops are privately owned, economic globalisation on the one hand and limitations brought on by the socio-economic status of the area on the other, have led to similar retail offerings along these streets. In contrast, the diversity of businesses along Riddiford Street was valued by respondents from each of the four different cultures.

Planning for the most diverse range of activities that enable social and economic access is an important factor for streets to become 'more multicultural'.

Atmosphere

A number of the respondents we spoke to referred to an intangible aspect of the street that they favoured; a quality that can most clearly be referred to as atmosphere. They described the friendly environment of the streets and the people who used them with many going into considerable detail when discussing their

lively, multi-cultural character. Atmosphere lies in the relationship between the footpaths and the semi-private businesses lining the streets (Bosselmann, 2008). Business activities are not just important, they also play a significant role in creating meaning and sense of place among different cultural groups. One discussion is that business agglomeration targets different ethnic populations. The social life of places including the presence of people and their activities is the essential ingredient of place making (Pyatok, 2001; Relph, 1976) which could reflect the distinctive character of a place (Laniado, 2005).

One of the primary features that made Great South Road distinctive for Pacific Islanders was the presence of Polynesian people and the chance to meet many friends and acquaintances. Being with people who share a similar language, culture and ethnicity can increase the sense of social comfort (Mazumdar et al., 2000). However, respondents did not simply rely on the presence of their own ethnic culture as they also referred positively to the cultural diversity of these areas. A European participant quoted walking along Riddiford Street to be similar to traveling to different countries around the world as one gets exposed to different cultures;

> *"[There are] lots of interesting shops to look at, different outlets that have different cultural elements. It feels like we can travel, otherwise we are at the same place".*

It has been suggested that the potential to meet and interact with friends and acquaintances, as well as strangers, is essential to creating meaning and sense of place. The informal social interactions that take place among various groups on the footpaths might also help develop and enhance a sense of community (Laniado, 2005; Stokowski, 2002). Therefore, business assortment is not only important for attracting a diverse range of sociocultural groups to streets; it also has a central role for creating meaning and sense of place.

Social structure of the business environment

The ethnic backgrounds of owners and shop keepers/ are not often incorporated into considerations of ethnicity. For example, in the definition by the Centre for the Study of Commercial activity (CSCA), ethnicity is based on the ethnic component of the signage and commodities (Zhuang, 2015). Social relations within a space and the ethnic group(s) who manage the semi-public space influence how welcome and comfortable users of different groups might feel about the street environment. While shops being operated by one or two cultural groups might appear welcoming to members of some cultures, it can also be less welcoming to others. For example, a number of respondents held positive views on the social structure of the premises run by Asians in Riddiford Street, where they believed ethnic differences were better tolerated among ethnic minorities. This could also reflect underlying tensions arising where traders are European or where shopkeepers from other ethnic backgrounds are visible. The current study did not explore discrimination, but it quickly became evident that a key reason that many respondents enjoyed the street was the social structure of the businesses; the traders themselves, the shoppers and other users.

Interestingly, the fact that members of a specific cultural group operated a business did not automatically mean that it would be run specifically for that culture. Not all immigrant-owned businesses targeted ethnic populations; many served the mainstream (Qadeer, 1997; Zhuang, 2015). Examples of this could be seen in St George Street, where many shops and the hairdressers are operated by Asians but which attract and serve a wide range of ethnic cultures. Nevertheless, this led many users to consider that the overall social structure of the street to be Asian. Thus, having a composition of European (white) and non-European (ethnic) traders along the street could influence users' perceptions on the general atmosphere of the street.

Apparent ownership of the retail activities along the streets we studied was not equally distributed among the different cultural groups nor did it conform to the prevailing population ratios. Asians and Europeans were seen to manage the commercial and retail activities in higher proportion with correspondingly fewer managed by Māori and Pacific Islanders. Several Māori commented that Māori people are culturally proud and that they would love to see something that reminds them of their culture, even in the retail management profiles. A Māori participant on Riddiford Street explained;

> "*I think they should have a Māori shop where they have the Māori food. There is nothing here. Māori have to have a function where they can meet".*

Even those shops that were selling souvenirs and mementos connected to Māori culture were managed by Asians. Some of those we spoke to suggested possible barriers and impediments to Māori involvement in the business activities along the Street, ranging from cultural preferences to more complex social and political exclusions. This is consistent with Madanipour (2003), who sees business ownership and operation as key aspects of social and political discrimination.

Representing different ethnic groups in the social and cultural characteristics of premises is an important aspect to retain a meaningful place for people of various backgrounds and help streets become more multicultural. The trade communications between

patrons and sellers are associated with social interactions between cultures (Rapoport, 2005) and have a potential in creating a sense of social comfort among ethnic minorities.

Shop frontages

People were observed to engage in social activities along the street in close connection with the business activities. While shops that extended out beyond their premises appeared to create the most sociable settings, other shops with closed shopfronts and only making use of their display windows, were also seen to foster lingering activities with variable effect. Those that provided interesting opportunities for window-shopping in their displays attracted higher numbers of people. On the other hand, businesses that had visually impermeable frontages or buildings that created blank or monotonous frontages did not generate many activities.

Businesses generated different levels of static activities based on their type and shop frontage management. However, Mehta (2006) suggests that neighbourhoods are likely to support only a limited number of businesses of a certain type and therefore, it would be unrealistic to plan only for businesses that will generate static and social activities along streets. Furthermore, planning for specific businesses without specific frontage design and management could also lead to attracting people to footpath spaces. Many of the places for day-to-day shopping, such as ethnic shops, supermarkets and banks, attracted people of diverse backgrounds to the footpaths. However, most of these services did not provide permeable and engaging interfaces with the footpath spaces, and, therefore, did not create sociable frontages. Nevertheless, they attracted different ethnic groups to the street and sometimes a number of chance encounters and interactions occurred in proximity to these businesses.

Fernando (2006) examined a range of streets in different cultural contexts and suggested open-endedness as a key characteristic of urban environments that can accommodate a range of uses without altering the overall appearance of the street. The open-endedness of the business shopfronts might also lead to conflicts and incompatible needs and uses of streets. In her ethnographic study of Little Shanghai, Wise (2011) suggested shopfronts have a key role in spatial orientation of streets. While signs in the Chinese language produced a sense of movement and trans-local connection among Chinese inhabitants, they created a sense of closure and dislocation for many elderly non-Chinese. The competing claims on shopfronts is not limited to shop signage. Open shopfronts in the study areas allowed many Asian businesses to expand their merchandise onto the footpaths and led to many social activities on footpaths. Different ethnic groups had different viewpoints and thresholds for the acceptance and tolerance of shops with open frontages that often added to the perceptual complexity of streets. In many cases, Pacific Islanders and Asians complimented the way shops with open displays presented their items on footpaths. On the other hand, there was no positive feedback from the Europeans and Māori about the type of shops that displayed their items onto the footpath spaces. It could not be concluded that the preference for different types of shop displays is merely related to cultural background. Cultural background is only one factor influencing preference. However, it is important to note that, while open-endedness is a prerequisite for streets to become culturally specific, it is not the only way to make streets multi-cultural and more public.

Discussion and conclusion

Business activities such as cafes, services, food and fashion shops were seen to variously stimulate activity amongst people belonging to different ethnicities in the three streets we studied. We found these activities to be the foundations of a successful multicultural street. The businesses target different ethnic groups through the products they offer, the messages conveyed through their signage and the way their shops were configured. Furthermore, while this study has confirmed that streets play a significant role as a social space for different ethnic cultures, it was also found that the specific mix of business activities in each location attracted people from relatively narrow ranges of culture and socio-economic status.

The types and co-locations of businesses might create settings that are familiar to people from specific socio-cultural backgrounds, helping to encourage them to visit to engage in social activities as well as to partake of the services on offer. Similarly, certain agglomerations may serve to discourage people from visiting. However, none of the streets included in this study related exclusively to a specific culture and in each case, the mix and percentages of ethnic groups observed in social activity varied. Through the study it became evident that if the range of different businesses appealing to specific ethnic cultures on the street is widened, so do the opportunities for leisure and social activities among the members of that culture.

Riddiford Street attracted diverse cultures through the number of services such as supermarkets, banks, fruit shops and ethnic stores. The diverse range of food establishments, from affordable takeaways to pricier and more upscale ethnic restaurants, generated interest among all different cultures. The type of fashion and household item, however, attracted larger numbers of Europeans and Asians compared to Māori/Pacific Islanders. The overall composition

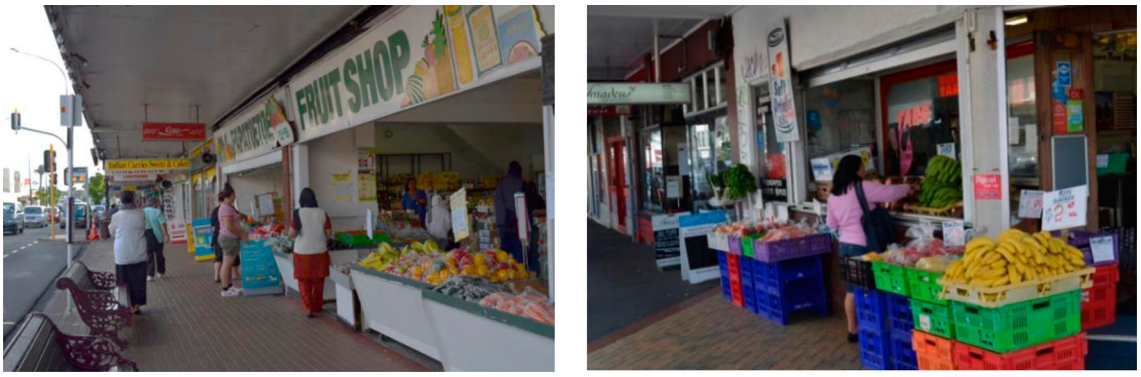

Figure 6. Left image: The fruit shop attracted a variety of diverse cultural backgrounds on St George Street. Right image: Fruit shop selling ethnic food ingredients such as taro and plantain (green bananas) attracted a considerable number of Pacific Islanders on Riddiford Street. Source of both images: First author

of businesses that encourage lingering may be perceived as less affordable among these groups. St George Street and Great South Road on the other hand, attracted greater numbers of Māori/Pacific Islanders and Asians. The tenant assortment comprising services, flat-rate fashion/household shops and takeaways attracted great numbers of these groups to the street.

Europeans were observed in smaller percentages along these streets. Europeans mostly came to St George Street by themselves and their activities took place mainly in relation to different daily services. The flat-rate type of fashion shops and Asian takeaways did not generate interest amongst Europeans nor were they often seen sitting. When we spoke to them, they were not prone to refer positively to the street's atmosphere. Together this suggests that St George Street was not seen by Europeans as a place for social/leisure activities and instead; their presence indicated that they were engaged in 'necessary' activities. Great South Road comprises a high number of Asian fashion/household item shops that seems to overwhelm the narrow range of services and food establishments. The business mix did not attract many Europeans to the footpaths and they were largely only seen at the bar. While the bar became a place for social encounter among Europeans, it is also a destination that did not encourage patrons to stroll up and down the street to contribute to a multi-cultural character. Different aspects ranging from the type and quality of businesses, the social structure of businesspeople, and the management of the shop frontages among other possible reasons might have created an unfamiliar setting for Europeans and thus decreased their desire to use the space in Great South Road. It can also be noted that the same type of premises might function or be perceived differently in different settings. Mazumdar et al (2000) describe how a similar coffee shop might function differently in a traditional environment to an American mall. Having a limited number of businesses offering familiar goods and services might not make enough interest in attracting specific cultures to streets. Instead, the tenant mixture is an important factor to attract different cultures to a place. Thus, the variety of businesses and tenancy mixture of retail activities, such as cafés, fruit and grocery stores, takeaways and bakeries, ethnic premises, and their associated characteristics, could provide the means for the static and social activities of different ethnic groups.

Figure 7. Premises advertising cultural materials and merchandise attract people of own culture and other cultures in Great South Road. Source: First author

Figure 8. Placing street benches near takeaways and bakeries increases the static and social activities of Pacific Islanders in St George Street. Source: First author

Figure 9. A second-hand shop and an Asian flat-rate shop (Riddiford Street). Many static activities were recorded in front of affordable shops where they extended their items onto the footpath spaces. Source: First author

Unlike ethnic enclaves, in which the familiar is created in an unfamiliar setting through a range of familiar retail and business activities (Mazumdar et al., 2000), in multicultural streets the familiar and unfamiliar together shape the environment. The businesses and other characteristics of the street that appear familiar to one culture may be unfamiliar to the others. If business activities along the street create an exotic and non-familiar image for ethnic cultures, it is less likely to be used as a place for recreation. The findings of this

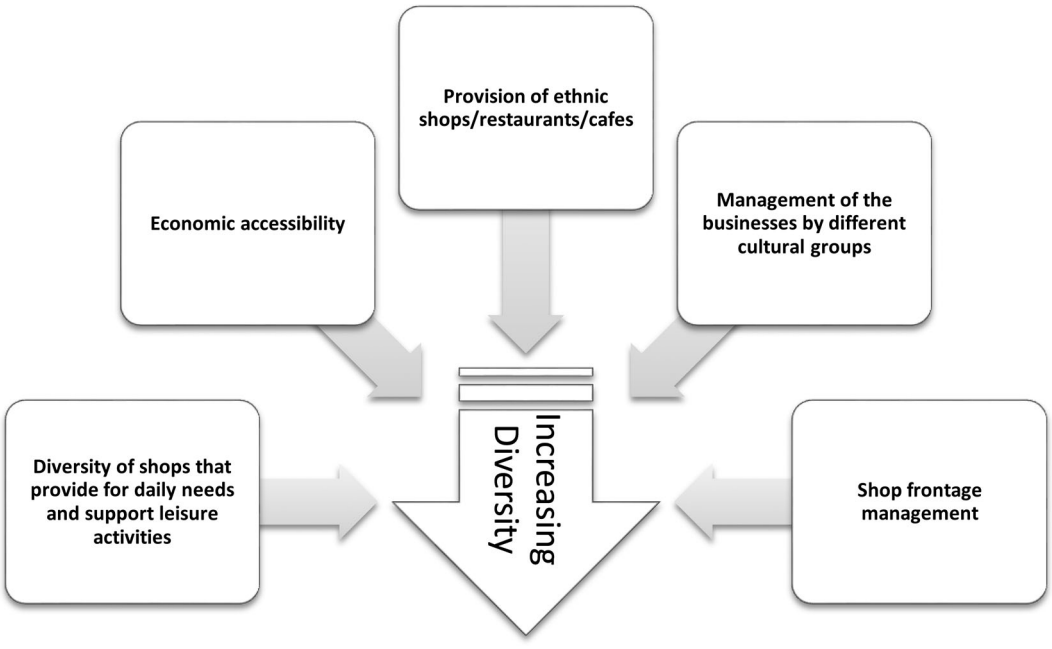

Figure 10. How streets could become more multicultural in terms of the management of land use activities

study suggest that retail and tenant management could create environments where visitors and shoppers of various backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and identification and reinforce their social bonds. It can however be noted that culture is never entirely static and ethnic groups are subject to change and adaptation to the cultural characteristics of the mainstream.

Cultural diversity on streets would most effectively be achieved through strong management strategies of the business, retail activities and services and their associated characteristics. The most common suggestion for all three cases would be to retain the existing variety of uses and services and simply add more. This confirms the importance of a pluralistic approach towards land-use planning and inclusionary retail activity controls on commercial streets in multi-cultural contexts. Planning could guarantee a mix of businesses that target a diverse range of cultures and others that serve to specific ethnic groups. As Preston and Lo argue:

> "*Planning at the neighbourhood level should ensure a mix of retail activities, some serving a diverse clientele and others that cater to specific ethno-cultural groups*" (*2009, p. 73*).

The findings suggest that, while streets are the ubiquitous public spaces in a city, the ways they are used by people coming from different socio-cultural backgrounds is mainly influenced by the nature of the businesses, retail activities and services that line them. In other words, the nature of the private property development and operations have much more influence than do the nature of the public spaces. The extent that footpaths become public or a common property of different ethnic and cultural groups greatly depends on the context of the privately-owned businesses along the street (Figures 6–9).

Having a right mixture of land-use activities on the street that supports a wide range of necessary, optional and social activities for different cultural groups is critical for streets to become more public. Thus, it is important to note that promoting cultural diversity on streets could happen in the collective action of both public and private sectors. It could be concluded that when assessing publicness in the public spaces of multicultural societies, five factors should be considered simultaneously. These five factors are; diversity of shops for daily use and leisure/recreational activities; economic access and affordability, provision of ethnic shops, restaurants and cafés, business management by different cultural groups, and shop frontage management (Figure 10).

These levels together could ensure the success of the street in terms of their retail activities and services which seems to have a major role in attracting a diverse range of users. Underestimating the role of each one may lead streets to become inefficient places for a heterogeneous public and activities. However, the notion of planning for all is not an easy one to operationalize. Due to the private ownership of the businesses, municipal intervention is limited and the shop owners control how their shop fronts look like and what cultural meaning they convey. City officials can play a key role in reflecting community needs. In this regard, they should take business agglomeration as a challenge in order to improve cultural inclusion and street life as well as ensuring profit and economic viability for individual businesses.

Note

1.

	Measurement Units	
Cultural Group	Individual	Group
European	E/I	E/G
Māori/Pacific Islander	MP/I	MP/G
Asian	A/I	A/G
Others	O/I	O/G

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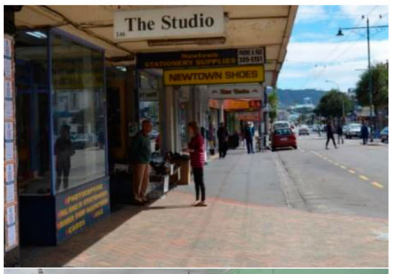
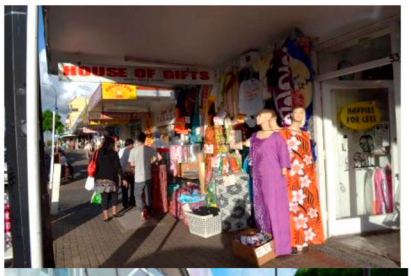
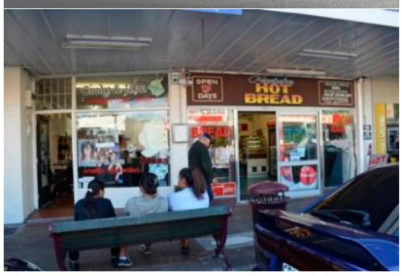
Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of the studied area of Riddiford Street and photos of different sections of the street



Appendix 2: Map of the studied area of St George Street and photos of different sections of the street





Appendix 3: Map of the studied area of Great South Road and photos of different sections of the street