Indigenous identification
Origin plus ...
Current identification question

Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

No

Yes, Aboriginal

Yes, Torres Strait Islander

For persons of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both Yes boxes
General application of identification question

Question has been unchanged for some 20 years
Has been applied across statistical collections
Strong and successful effort to use the question in administrative collections
  – Health: Medicare, hospitals, perinatal
  – Education: Schools, higher education
  – Corrections, child protection
Emerging problems with identification

Under-identification in many administrative data sets:

Extent of under-identification is not known and varies across data sets, state/territory, & time

Two issues from high growth rate from 2006 to 2011 census (5.2% pa)

– 70% of increase is explained by demographic factors (74% of couples include a non-Indigenous partner)

– Remaining 30% ‘error of closure’ results from changing identification
Relevant reading

National best practice guidelines for data linkage activities relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2012
National Statistical Service
ABS and AIHW

Getting Our Story Right
Telethon Kids Institute, ABS, WA Health
Review of Indigenous question

ABS began a review in 2013
SCATSIS hosted a workshop in November 2013
Some quotes from
– Shane Houston, DVC Indigenous Strategy and Services, University of Sydney
– Vanessa Lee, University of Sydney
– Michelle Connolly, International Group for Indigenous Health Measurement
– Kim Farley-Larmour, ABS
The most critical piece of data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is the count of ‘who we are’. The count is intrinsically linked to the Standard Indigenous Identification Question. The Workshop will explore the relationship between the count and identity. A key question will be whether descent on its own is enough to claim Aboriginal identity. The external environment within which this Workshop takes place is particularly charged – not just because we are talking about personal identity – but because of the ebb and flow of public discourse.
Inequitable Government policy, reporting and interventions + Indigenous people = loss of self-determination and increased disparities

*Measuring self-determination: what does it mean for identification?*
Michelle Connolly, US Native American
Co-chair International Group on Indigenous Health Measurement (IGIHM)

Be clear about how data will be used and for what purposes
Indigenous program purposes may need more narrow identification
Societal, cultural purposes may need to be more inclusive identification
May need both approaches
Kim Farley-Larmour, ABS

2013 ABS Review of the Standard

– 41 organisations and groups consulted to Nov 2013
– 38 submissions and other input received

Matters arising from discussions:

– The current Standard Question is strongly supported, but...
– Collection of information about sub-population groups is very strongly supported, but...
– A coding change for ‘multiple responses’ is called for
SCATSIS workshop conclusion: Possible alternative question

After discussion the group summed up the purpose of the Question as

‘This is who we are; this is our number’

The group agreed that descent is a requirement for being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, but that it is descent plus cultural identity that makes a person an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

An alternative question

“Our you an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?”
**Measuring self-determination: what does it mean for identification?**

Defining self-determination – the process by which a person controls their own life (Oxford dictionaries definition, 2015).

Self determination in theory – is a macro **theory** of human motivation and personality, concerning people's inherent growth tendencies and their innate psychological needs. It is concerned with the motivation behind the **autonomous** choices that people make without any external influence and interference (Wikipedia, 2015).
The autonomous self-determination cycle:

Self-Determination Theory

Unwillingness to identify

Individual

Blamed for behavior
The reality of Indigenous self-determination is a process of negotiation, accommodation and participation with communities. Importantly, it is also about Indigenous peoples accepting responsibility and governments removing the controlling hand (evident in policy and decision-making concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) in order to ensure that such acceptance is meaningful and has consequences (HREOC, 2002).
What is happening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at present:

Social Factors + Social Issues = Individual labeled and blamed

What impact does this have on identification?
For Discussion:

What needs to be considered is ‘how do we measure community self-determination?’

and

What actions are needed to make this happen so that ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel safe enough to identify?’
References:

