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The ASB Polyfest: Constructing Transnational Pacific Communities of Practice in Auckland, New Zealand

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology, the University of Auckland, 2018.
Abstract

The ASB Polyfest is a competition for secondary school students in Auckland, New Zealand, which features music and dance performance forms of indigenous Māori and New Zealand’s four most populous Pacific cultures: The Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tonga. The festival originated from population shifts in Auckland in the late 1960s, due to Pacific immigration and urban relocation of Māori as migrant labour for New Zealand’s rapid industrial growth. The formation of school ‘Polynesian Clubs’ created social spaces for Māori and Pacific students and communities, with an emphasis on performance. Progressive educational leadership at Hillary College in the south Auckland suburb of Otara encouraged the development of the first festival, involving Polynesian Clubs from four schools in 1976. Following the festival’s inception, the interest from Auckland schools steadily increased. Presently, approximately 10,000 students perform, and an equal number of audience members attend the festival over four days. This research is focused on the Pacific categories, or ‘stages,’ within the festival.

I argue that the individual competing ensembles at the ASB Polyfest, called cultural groups, are transnational Pacific communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) co-constructed by students, their instructors, schoolteachers, judges and festival organisers. Cultural group tutors skillfully engage students and create opportunities for belonging through incorporating markers of school identity, popular culture, and accessibility for students without previous culturally-specific knowledge, as well as constructing performances within the festival’s parameters. While participating in cultural groups, students construct individual meanings of cultural identity, affiliated with ethnic heritage, friendships, and experiences of leadership. I conclude that, as communities of practice, ASB Polyfest school cultural groups are uniquely constructed Pacific spaces that serve as transnational ‘villages’ from which performances distinctive to the festival emerge.

Cultural groups and committees of festival organisers are also sites of contestation, where ideals of tradition, religion, ethnicity, and gender are negotiated in participation, and in the evaluation of performances. Participants employ ‘polycultural capital’ (Mila-Schaaf, 2010) to navigate the construction of transnational Pacific cultures in a multicultural urban environment. These negotiations reflect the dynamic nature of Auckland’s transnational Pacific communities, and of the ASB Polyfest itself.
Acknowledgements

As an immigrant to New Zealand, I am humbled by the indigenous Māori of Aotearoa for welcoming me as manuhiri to these great islands, and the generosity of the New Zealand government. This PhD would not have been possible otherwise.

My research was funded by a University of Auckland Doctoral Scholarship. I am indebted to Dr Melani Anae for including me in the Pacific Studies graduate seminar before I began my doctoral studies, and her legacy of scholarship that has laid a foundation for my own research. I also thank Keneti Muaia and Marjorie Boaz for deepening my knowledge of Samoan and Cook Islands performance; and Angie Smith, whose patience and kindness allowed me to experience kapa haka competition, and to be a part of the Te Waka Huia whanau.

My doctoral supervisors, Dr Greg Booth and Dr Kirsten Zemke, took a chance on a music educationist to cross over to ethnomusicology, allowing me to begin a transformative academic journey I could not have anticipated could be so challenging and rewarding. The opportunity to be a teaching assistant on Dr Zemke’s paper, Popular Musics of the Pacific, established the foundations that led me to my new career direction at Te Reo Reka o Aotearoa, the NZ Music Commission. I thank Dr Mara Mulrooney for her guidance as convenor of People and Cultures of the Pacific, which was a key opportunity to broaden my knowledge of other areas of anthropology. Nigel Champion of the Māori and Pacific Music Archive sourced recordings for me expertly and efficiently, and Pasifika subject librarian Judy McFall-McCaffrey assisted me with tracking down needed items, as did the staff at Manukau City Library. Maria Satele took on a complicated translation when no one else dared – fa’aafetai! Cath Andersen, CEO of the NZ Music Commission, provided steadfast professional support and conference funding. Mona-Lynn Corteau cast her professional eye over my bibliography, essential to the timely completion of this thesis.

This research would never have been completed without the many individuals who welcomed me into their communities, related their personal experiences, and openly collaborated with me on this project. Fakaaua lahi, meitaki ma’aata, malo ‘aupito and fa’aafetai especially to Sefa Enari, Tania Kauraria, Ms Gail Tennant-Brown, the Samson family, ‘Alisi Tatafu, Johnny Rex and Meleua Ikiua; who were crucial in contributing not only to their own knowledge to this research but the mana that opened further doors for me.

Thank you to all of the staff and students at Mangere College for giving me the
best field study imaginable, especially to Principal John Heyes, Vice-Principal Mele Ah Sam, Counselor Kathryn Barclay, Secretary Anna Kasipale, and teachers Henry Fesulua'i, ‘Alisi Tatafu and Ta’i Uamaki. Librarian Paulina Kumar and Tony Searle provided digital copies of the school magazines all the way back to 1971, which were crucial for my historical research. I am so proud to have been a part of the MC family – Seek the Heights!

From AUPISA, AJ, Shailen, Sione, Mary, Sera, Tamm, Melaia, Alyssa, Pele, Tiria, Sam, and all of the officers and fellow members for their open-mindedness of letting me in to your spaces, and tolerating my glacial progress in learning our dance items. It was a privilege to be amongst such greatness in scholarship and leadership, as well as your unmatched creativity and humor. Seeing all of you go from strength to strength in your education and careers during this seven-year journey has been wonderfully rewarding.

The PhD can be a solitary journey without the support and community of fellow scholars. Thank you to my dear friend Dr Andrea Eden Low for our regular ‘seminars’ at your kitchen table, and the half-a-day long brunches and lunches with Gared/Jareth for that were food for the mind, body and soul. Dr Jared Mackley-Crum, you are not only a top colleague in the study of Pacific festivals but a cherished friend. I am honored to be contributing to the body of scholarship you have set forth. You introduced me to the honorary Dr Gareth Dyer; thank you for your friendship, dear one, and for long discussions putting the world to rights. Dr Aleisha Ward, thanks to you for hours over wine and food and never-ending fun and fascinating discourse, and for always making me believe that I can do this. All of my ‘PhD wives’ – Drs Mara Mulrooney, Michelle MacCarthy, Sarah Krose and Nick Tipping – thank you for giving this social butterfly your amazing friendship, fun and support, and evidence that there is a light at the end of the academic tunnel. Jamie Vunivesilevu has constantly encouraged me with her kind words (and wine) throughout.

Sam, aka Schmoopo, aka Schmoopy Bear - after living with a PhD student for only a few months, you are probably thanking your lucky stars that we met 5½ years into a seven-year academic journey! Thank you striking up a conversation when you overheard me talking about my PhD, for all of the miles flown between Kona and Auckland, and for being my best friend to be weird together, forever. Not to mention my workout accountability coach, omelet chef and bike repair expert. You will have your weekend cycling companion back soon, I promise.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents ......................................................................................................... v
List of Tables and Images ............................................................................................ ix
Glossary .......................................................................................................................... xi

## Introduction ................................................................................................................ 1
Research Questions and Significance ......................................................................... 2
The Fieldwork Sites ....................................................................................................... 2
Situating Pacific Peoples in New Zealand ................................................................. 4
Negotiating Identities as Pacific Peoples .................................................................... 4
Situating ‘Culture’ ......................................................................................................... 8
Situating Pacific Languages in New Zealand .............................................................. 9
Thesis Structure .......................................................................................................... 11
Limitations .................................................................................................................... 13

## Chapter One: Overview of the ASB Polyfest ......................................................... 15
Pacific Migrations to New Zealand ............................................................................. 15
Otara and the Beginnings of the ASB Polyfest ............................................................ 17
The Growth of the Festival ......................................................................................... 22
Current Staging of the Festival .................................................................................. 25
  *Stage Rules* ............................................................................................................... 27
  *The Festival Space* .................................................................................................... 29
Situating Polyfest in Pacific Performance and Popular Culture in NZ ...................... 31
  *Urban Dance and Music* .......................................................................................... 32
  *Dance Theatre* .......................................................................................................... 33
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 34

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature ....................................................................... 37
Overview of Ethnographic Research in Music Teaching and Learning .................... 37
The Musical Cultures of Children and Youth .............................................................. 40
Teacher Identity, Authority, and Values ..................................................................... 41
# Table of Contents

## Chapter One: Contexts of Transmission
- Contexts of Transmission ................................................................. 43
- Music and Dance Competitions .......................................................... 44  
  - Music Competitions and Nationalism .............................................. 44  
  - Competitions and Changes to Performances and Performance Practice ........................................... 46  
  - Competitions as Sites of Negotiation .............................................. 48
- Tradition and Authenticity in Transmission and Performance .............. 49
- Pacific Music and Dance ....................................................................... 51  
  - Tongan Scholarship ........................................................................ 52  
  - Studies of Tongan and Samoan Music-Cultures by Foreign Researchers .................................................. 53  
  - Cook Islands and Niue ...................................................................... 55
- Pacific Music and Dance in New Zealand ............................................. 56  
  - Community and Festivals .................................................................. 56  
  - Schools ............................................................................................ 57
  - Popular Music .................................................................................... 59
- Conclusion .......................................................................................... 60

## Chapter Three: Theory and Method
- Chapter Three: Theory and Method ................................................... 61  
- Communities of Practice .................................................................... 61
- Theorising Transnational Communities ................................................ 64
- Transnational Pacific Peoples and Polycultural Capital ......................... 65
- Methods and Methodologies .................................................................. 66
- Relationships in Fieldwork Research .................................................... 68
- Collaboration and Reciprocity ............................................................. 70
- Narratives and Identity Stories ............................................................. 71
- The Research Participants .................................................................... 72
- Applying Research Recommendations: Interviewing Participants ......... 73
- School Case Study: Mangere College ................................................... 74
- ‘Supporting’ at Mangere College .......................................................... 76
- Reflections on Fieldwork and Situating the Self in Research .................. 82
- Conclusion .......................................................................................... 86

## Chapter Four: Constructing Communities of Practice at Mangere College
- Chapter Four: Constructing Communities of Practice at Mangere College .......... 87
- Mangere College and the ASB Polyfest .................................................. 88
- Mangere: the Suburb and the College .................................................... 88
- Organising Cultural Groups and Practices at Mangere College ............... 91
- Vignette: Learning the Samoan Ma’ulu’ulu ............................................ 93
List of Tables and Images

Table 1, p. 5: NZ Pacific Population by groups, New Zealand Census 2013
Table 2, p. 5: Multi-ethnic Pacific/non-Pacific peoples, New Zealand Census 2013
Table 3, p. 24: ASB Polyfest Hosting Schools, 1976-2011
Table 4, p. 25: ASB Polyfest Hosting Schools, 2012-2014
Table 5, p. 31: ASB Polyfest Festival Schedule
Table 6, p. 28: ASB Polyfest Stage Rules

Figure 1, p. 27: ASB Polyfest key personnel
Figure 2, p. 96: Nese teaching *ma'ulu'ulu* at Mangere College Samoan group cultural practice
Figure 3, p. 98: Boys from Mangere College Tongan group practicing *taufakaniua*, 2012
Figure 4, p. 99: Mangere College Tongan group learning words for *ma'ulu'ulu* in the ‘hotspot,’ 2012
Figure 5, p. 100: Mangere College Samoan group Saturday practice practicing *fa'aluma* role, 2012
Figure 6, p. 102: Girls from Mangere College Cook Islands group demonstrating *ura pa'u*, 2013
Figure 7, p. 104: Boys from Mangere College Cook Islands group practicing *peu tupuna*, 2013
Figure 8, p. 105: Girls from Mangere College Samoan group practicing *ma'ulu'ulu*, 2012
Figure 9, p. 107: Help wrapping a *ta'ovola* at Mangere College Tongan group *Fiefie*, 2012
Figure 10, p. 110: Nese’s *siva* at Mangere College Samoan group *Fiafia*, 2012
Figure 11, p. 122: Mangere College Cook Islands group performing *kapa rima* on festival day, 2013
Figure 12, p. 123: Mangere College Cook Islands group student as *rangatira* on festival day, 2013
Figure 13, p. 123: Mangere College Cook Islands group performing *ura pa'u*, 2013
Figure 14, p. 125: Mangere College Samoan group *sasa* on festival day, 2012
Figure 15, p. 126: Mangere College Samoan group *taualuga* on festival day, 2012
Figure 16, p. 126: Mangere College Tongan group joking for the camera before performing *ma'ulu'ulu* on Festival Day, 2012
Figure 17, p. 127: Mangere College Tongan group student gets help from mother before performing ma’ulu’ulu on festival day, 2012

Figure 18, p. 127: Mangere College Tongan group boys at final moment of taufakaniua on festival day, 2012
Glossary

Throughout this thesis, words in Cook Islands Māori, Niuean, Samoan and Tongan are italicised. As Te Reo Māori is not a foreign language in New Zealand, these words are not.

In interviews with participants, some pluralized words in Pacific languages using the English language convention of adding s, e.g. “matuas,” (p. 151); “punakes” (p. 191).

ASB: Auckland Savings Bank, the naming sponsor of Polyfest since 1984. “ASB Polyfest” distinguishes the festival discussed in this thesis from other festivals called Polyfest in New Zealand and Australia.

NCEA: National Certificate of Educational Achievement, awarded for meeting New Zealand secondary school qualifications.

Māori Terms

iwi (Māori): Tribe, tribal affiliation.

kapa haka: Form of Māori performing arts including group chant, song, synchronized dance and implements; originating from integration of Māori and European music conventions into 1800s.

mana whenua (Māori): At Polyfest, peoples with affiliation to land and place who lend spiritual guidance and advice on protocols and procedures during the festival and its planning period.

marae: Māori meeting grounds with contemporaneous functions as community gathering places for meetings, celebrations, funerals and other significant occasions

pākehā: New Zealander of European descent; non-Māori New Zealander, fair-skinned person.

Cook Islands Terms


'imene tuki: Hymn sung with elements of the pe‘e (chant), characterised by a unison “grunting” by the men (McLean, 1999, p. 80; see also ‘Ama et al., 2003).

**pareu**: A cloth tied around the lower body and rolled to around the waist to make a short skirt; worn by women and girls when practicing dance.

**peu tupuna**: Lit. “ancestral customs;” the portrayal of old stories and legends (Ama et al., 2003). At Polyfest, translated as “legend.”

**titi**: A costume piece of fibers tied around the hips to emphasise women’s hip movements.

**'ukurere**: A strummed, stringed instrument with the same tuning as the Hawaiian 'ukulele; a solid body gives it its characteristic sound.

**ura pa’u**: A dance of Tahitian origin accompanied by a full ensemble of drums. Performed at a faster tempo than the *kapa rima*, characterised by the hip-shaking movements by the women, and rapid opening and closing of the knees by the men. At Polyfest, translated as “drum dance.”

**ute**: According to 'Ama et al. (2003), the *ute* is a “joyous song chant dance” (p. 25), where the singers sit close together making spontaneous gestures, and may stand up to dance alone in front of the group. In recent times, the *ute* has acquired elements of the *‘imene tuki*, such as the men’s grunting. At Polyfest, translated as “traditional song.”

### Niuean Terms

**fakaotiaga**: Exit.

**kamataaga**: Entrance.

**koli mo e lologo vaha tuai**: Traditional song and dance.

**koli mo e lologo vaha foou**: Contemporary song and dance.

**lologo tapu: vaha tuai**: Traditional sacred song.

**lologo tapu: vaha foou**: Contemporary sacred song.

**matua** (also Māori): Respected elder.

**meke**: Moyle (1985) describes as a standing dance performed by men characterised by leaps and spins and accompanied by a distinct rhythm on the *nafa* (wooden slit-gong). At Polyfest, *meke* are thematic dances portraying common activities in Niue, performed by boys and girls, characterised by a kicking step called *hopo* and accompanied by percussion.

**tame**: McLean (1999) cites Loeb’s (1926) description of the *tame* as “a form of dancing done in the daytime on the occasion of feasts” and also cites Moyle (1995) who describes it as “a dance with synchronised actions performed by men or women who may stand or sit” (McLean, 1999, p. 213). The contemporaneous function of *tame* is
performance at weddings and other special occasions. At Polyfest, girls generally perform seated and boys standing, keeping the beat with an energetic swaying step.

*takalo*: Lit. “to evade blows” (Moyle, 1985). Moyle characterises the dance as a formal challenge by members of an armed party to those of an opposing party. At Polyfest, it is usually described as a “war dance.”

*tala tuai*: legend

*Vagahau Niue*: Niuean language.

**Samoan Terms**


*fa'aluma*: performer(s) who contrast the elegance or precision of a dance with “clowning” (see Hereniko, 1999), characterised by exaggerated gestures, spontaneous calls or shouts, and physical comedy (Shore, 1982). In Polyfest, one or two students are assigned the role of fa'aluma during the sasa, and again during the taualuga (the latter may be improvised if the students are confident enough).

*fa'ataupati*: described by Linkels as a “slapping dance” (Linkels, 1995). According to Vini Punialava’a (pers. comm.), it originated in the 1970s in Samoa by dance groups touring overseas. The dance is performed standing by men and boys, with fast-paced lateral jumping steps, turns, kicks and body percussion; accompanied by the pate and/or biscuit tin drum.

*fiafia*: lit., joy, delight; describes an event of enjoyment and entertainment (Moyle, 1988, p. 258). In Auckland schools, a Fiafia night is a showcase performance of Polyfest cultural groups before the festival. The Samoan/Niuean spelling is generally used, regardless of which groups are performing.

*fiepalagi*: Acting in the manner of a foreigner, being inauthentic to your cultural roots.

*fuataimi*: Conductor of a choir (Linkels, 1995). At Polyfest, the student is assigned the role and must make a short speech greeting the judges and audience and lead the group in singing the pese o le aso. The performance is characterised by exaggerated gestures and sometimes physical comedy. The role is required under the stage rules.

*‘ie faittaga*: a skirt made of suit material worn with a collared shirt as formal wear for Samoan men

*‘ie lavalava*: A cloth tied around the waist worn by both men and women as informal wear. In New Zealand, tying ‘ie lavalava over western clothes is a symbolic marker of participating in a Samoan cultural activity.
**kilikiti:** Team sport similar to cricket.

**ma'ulu'ulu:** an action song with logogenic movements, with emphasis on the hands, arms, and feet, with a straight torso. Vini Punialava’a (pers. comm.) attributes its origins to Samoan girls’ institution Paupata College, in 1839. At Polyfest, all co-ed and girls’ schools perform a ma'ulu'ulu; boys’ schools do not.

**palagi** (Samoan): Foreigner, usually refers to people of European descent.

**pate:** a small hand-held slit drum, originally from Rarotonga (see Moyle, 1998).

**pese:** to sing; the generic term for a song

**pese o le aso:** lit. “song of the day,” a topical song describing the event at which it is performed. It begins with the *viiga*, a song of praise, acknowledging God (L. Toevai, pers. comm.).

**puletasi:** A long, short-sleeved form-fitting dress or tunic and skirt worn by women as formal wear.

**sasa:** a seated group dance accompanied by *pate* and often biscuit tin drum.
Characterised by percussive coordinated movements and representation of everyday activities in Samoa.

**siva:** dance in general, as in *siva* Samoa (Samoan dance). Moyle (1998) describes as “distinguishing features of the siva include standing performance by, in most cases, one or more girls, non-coordinated movements, and a sung accompaniment provided by a separate group of people” (p. 232). In New Zealand, *siva* generally describes a solo female dancer, performed at social occasions and accompanied by group singing or recorded music.

**taualuga:** Lit., “roof,” the final of a series of dances. The *taupou*, the title of village maiden and the leader of the village *aualuma* (the association of a village's girls and unmarried women), performs alongside *matai* (chiefs) of high rank. At Polyfest, the student representing the *taupou* or *manaia* (the son of a *matai* and leader of village's youths and unmarried men) enters carrying the *nifo oti* (ceremonial knife) and dances alone, supported by *fa'aluma* and a seated choir. The *taupou* or *manaia* is dressed in an *'ie toga* (woven fine mat) and a *tuiga* (headdress traditionally made of bleached human hair and may be decorated with mirrors and shells).

**taupou:** In Samoa, At Polyfest, the taupou performs with the *nifo oti* during the *taualuga*.

The role is required under the stage rules.
Tongan Terms


**kailao**: a men’s dance portraying a battle, originating from ‘Uvea (McLean, 1999). At Polyfest, the students hold carved wooden spears and wear conical hats, and the dance usually accompanied by a biscuit tin drum or snare.

**lakalaka**: Kaepler (1993) describes as “a standing dance for men and women which adds the movement dimensions to sung poetic speeches” (p. 6).

**mako**: McLean (1999) describes the mako as a mixed standing dance accompanied by a seated choir. At Polyfest, the mako is performed by boys only, accompanied by a choir of family and other supporters. The dance features synchronised steps with emphasis on the arms, shoulders, hands and head.

**ma'ulu'ulu**: a seated dance, with synchronised, logogenic movements of the hands, arms and head. It is believed to have been imported from Samoa towards the end of the nineteenth century. At Polyfest, the students are seated in rows on the stage, with the back row in chairs for better visibility for the audience and judges. The dance begins accompanied by percussion (often on bass drum) then with multiple verses of sung poetry and concluding with another percussion section.

**me'etupaki**: A men's standing dance in which dance-paddles are part of the synchronised movements. At Polyfest, the me'etupaki is less commonly performed.

**'otuhaka**: Lit., a row of arm movements. Kaepler (1993) describes as the sitting component of a dance performed by girls and women called fa'ahiula, accompanied by a slit-gong and sung poetry. At Polyfest, the ‘otuhaka is less commonly performed.

**punake**: a composer of poetry, music and choreography.

**soke**: a standing stick dance, introduced to Tonga from ‘Uvea (Kaepler, 1993).

**ta'anga**: sung speech (Kaepler, 1993); poetry (Linkels, 1992).

**tangata** (Samoan, Niuean tagata): people

**taufakaniua**: At Polyfest, the taufakaniua is performed by boys only, and portrays a battle with guns, using plastic poles as props which are moved in unison.
Introduction

Like many curious music lovers privileged with the freedom and funds to travel, I have been attracted to the multisensory experiences of festivals as a way to interact with new music-cultures in a stimulating social environment. When I was teaching music at an international school in my twenties, I was introduced to festivals through the ‘world music’ themed events that were staged in Prague, a crossroads for music groups from Europe, the Balkans, North Africa, and Central Asia, joining the energetic crowds of spectators, trying diverse food delicacies and admiring craft stalls. As an earnest teacher and enthusiastic traveler that came from a relatively monocultural upbringing, the festival environment, however superficial in its transmission of cultural knowledge, contributed to the broadening of my musical tastes and supplemented the musical experiences I sought out during the frequent travels that my teaching job allowed.

I was introduced to Oceanic musics and dance by a chance encounter with Te Maeva Nui, the Constitution Celebration festival in Rarotonga, on a stopover between Los Angeles and Sydney. The experience of the festival’s choir, drumming and dance competitions was a catalyst that changed the course of my career. I chose to relocate myself to the Pacific, and two years later, I moved from Prague to Honolulu, where I earned my Master’s degree at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, and where I enthusiastically, if not expertly, performed with Hawaiian, Samoan and Māori student ensembles. When I subsequently emigrated to New Zealand in 2010, I timed my arrival with the ASB Polyfest, one of the country’s longest-running festivals. I was intrigued by the featured Pacific music-cultures, but equally so by the youth focus of the event.¹

During my first ASB Polyfest, riding multiple buses early in the morning each day from my base in west Auckland to the southern suburbs, I was joyfully exhausted at the end of each day by the usual enjoyment of festival spectacles like specialty foods, entertainment and people-watching; but my teacher’s critical eye was impressed with the extremely high caliber of performances. Having been a participant in youth choirs and theatre all throughout my childhood, and subsequently teaching music and directing the large-scale productions that the private schools I worked in expected, I was conscious of the long hours of rehearsal that would have gone into the performances at the ASB Polyfest. I remembered how childhood choir practices and

¹ The ASB Polyfest is a performance competition for Auckland secondary school students.
play rehearsals were where our bonds and friendships within our ensemble were created, as well as our rules, rituals, inside jokes, and rewards. Rehearsals were where, as I teacher, I became familiar with my students’ strengths and weaknesses, watched their confidence develop, dealt with our collective frustrations, and adjust my own teaching style and strategies to change course when something wasn’t working. I recalled that was a disciplined taskmaster for much of the time, but the night of performance I told them to let go and experience joy, as the real transformative work had already been done in rehearsal.

My earnest efforts at introducing a wide variety of music-cultures to my schools’ ethnically and nationally diverse student bodies was typical of the ethos of my contemporaries in music education, but unlike the vast majority of my students, the majority of youth in the ASB Polyfest were learning and performing their own cultural heritage, a particular experience of identity and representation. I was interested in who was teaching them, and their motivation to do so. How did these teachers work with students to teach not only performance, but other culturally-specific knowledge – within the parameters of a competition, where winning performances also had to be constructed? I also considered the reasons young transnational Pacific students chose Polyfest over the multiple co-curricular and extra-curricular pastimes I knew were available to them, and what the experience of learning traditional Pacific musics and dance forms with their peers meant to them during the formative period of adolescence.

**Research Questions and Significance**

I arrived at three central research questions: How does music and dance transmission within the ASB Polyfest construct identities for teachers and learners? How does competition shape the processes of transmission? Overall, what is the significance of these processes for transnational Pacific peoples in Auckland’s urban, multicultural environment?

Although the ASB Polyfest is the longest continuously running Pacific festival in New Zealand, there is only a very limited body of work about the event itself. The significance of the festival in New Zealand and in the transnational Pacific sphere is clear, but with the exception of recent historic research on Pacific festivals in New Zealand by Jared Mackley-Crump (2015), the ASB Polyfest has been overlooked by ethnomusicologists. Additionally, there been little attention paid to music and dance transmission processes, and the overall contributions of youth to Pacific performing
arts in New Zealand.

This research also contributes to the growing body of ethnographic research of music transmission in transnational communities. Additionally, my preliminary research revealed that literature on music competitions rarely focused on the transmission processes that led to them, and that there are few longitudinal ethnographies of rehearsals as tools to analyze group and individual identity construction. This thesis aims to address these gaps, and to strengthen these areas in ethnomusicology research.

The Fieldwork Sites

My most important task when establishing my fieldwork sites was to find a school that would allow me to join them as a supporter, the term used within Polyfest communities to refer to friends and family who attended cultural practices (rehearsals). There I would address my research questions through observant-participation and conducting focus groups with students. I was interested in Mangere College, as it fit my desired criteria of being one of the four schools competing in the first Polyfest in 1976, and consistently involved in the festival since. I contacted principal John Heyes, who at the time was a member of the Polyfest Board of Trustees. Mr Heyes was pleased with my research aims and agreed that the field study could take place at the school. Mrs Mele Ah Sam, vice-principal at the college, was the coordinator for the Samoan stage. I worked closely with geography teacher 'Alisi Tatafu, who joined the Tongan Stage Committee in the later stages of my fieldwork. 'Alisi exemplified one of the extremely well-connected participants I was fortunate to meet, and many of the Tongan participants were introduced to me through her family and extensive leadership in Tongan communities in Auckland. School counselor Kathryn Barclay was instrumental in advising me with my interactions with the students, and her knowledge of the pupils at the school was encyclopaedic.

My membership in the Auckland University Pacific Islands Students Association (AUPISA) forged relationships with young adults who had been members of Polyfest cultural groups in their secondary school days. These individuals were close enough to their Polyfest experience to remember it well but also had enough distance to be reflective about the festival's role in their identities, an important contribution to the overall project that bridged the secondary school students and the older generation of adults I interviewed that held other roles in the festival. In order to reach other stage coordinators, teachers of cultural groups (called tutors), and judges, I
initially contacted Sefa Enari, the director of Pacific Dance New Zealand, a non-profit advocacy and educational organisation. Sefa introduced me to the ASB Polyfest director, Tania Karauria. Tania introduced me to Fane Ketu’u, the Tongan Stage Coordinator and member of the Komiti Whakahaere (Organisational Committee). With Fane’s support I was able to secure ethics approval to interview other members of the Komiti, judges, and cultural group tutors, whom I met through introductions from Fane, tutors at Mangere College, and connections through the University of Auckland made in the Pacific Studies department.

Situating Pacific Peoples in New Zealand: Populations and Pan-Ethnic Labeling

Pacific peoples in New Zealand have migrated, or are descendants of migrants, from Pacific island nations. At the 2013 Census (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2018) Pacific peoples numbered nearly 300,000, comprising 7.4% of New Zealand’s total population. Fourteen percent of Auckland residents identify as Pacific (Auckland Council, 2015), making it one of the world’s largest Pacific city populations (Fraenkel, 2012). Over 60% of Pacific peoples are New Zealand-born. (Stats NZ, 2014). The Pacific population is also much younger in comparison to New Zealand European and Asian groups, with an average age of 22.

The 2013 New Zealand census allowed respondents to choose more than one ethnic category (Auckland Council, 2015), but did not report multi-ethnic Pacific responses, e.g., Tongan-Niuean, which is relevant to a number of participants in this thesis. However, it does report that 31% of Pacific peoples also identified with a non-Pacific ethnicity. It is estimated that “intermarriage between ethnic groups will become more likely as Pacific people continue to grow and acculturate within an increasingly multicultural NZ society” (Manuela & Sibley, 2014, p. 333).

2 Although New Zealand is a nation comprised of islands in the Pacific ocean, the term ‘Pacific peoples,’ utilized by the New Zealand government, differentiates Pacific migrants and their descendants from indigenous Māori.
Samoan  144,138
Tongan  60,336
Cook Islands  61,077
Niuean  23,883
Fijian  14,445
Tokelauan  7176
Tuvaluan  3537
i-Kiribati  2115
Tahitian  1407

Table 1  NZ Pacific Population by groups, New Zealand Census 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pacific/European</th>
<th>38,562</th>
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<tr>
<td>Māori/Pacific/European</td>
<td>23,523</td>
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<tr>
<td>Māori/Pacific</td>
<td>22,884</td>
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Table 2  Multi-ethnic Pacific/non-Pacific peoples,\(^3\) New Zealand Census 2013

A conundrum in research with Pacific peoples in New Zealand is the problematic nature of the ‘Pacific’ label itself to describe a diverse cohort of research participants who have been historically “situated in the power of classificatory actions of others” (Anae, 1997, p. 130). Anae (1997) argues that although pan-Pacific labels have practical applications in academia and government, they erroneously imply a homogenous, unified population and obscure individual differences. Anae et al. (2001) argue that research with Pacific peoples must reflect that “there is no generic Pacific community, rather Pacific peoples who align themselves variously, and at different times, along ethnic geographic, church, family, school, age/gender, island-born/NZ-born, occupational lines or a mix of these” (p. 7) as well as “immigrants and recent arrivals...and children of mixed heritages” (Airini et al., 2010, p. 2).

The widely applied pan-ethnic label Pasifika - from tagata/tangata Pasifika (people of the Pacific) - was introduced by educationist Tanya Wendt Samu (2015), who argues that the term is not merely a translation of “Pacific” but is evident of Pacific peoples’ self-defining “power to name” (Samu, 1998, p. 209; cf. Samu, 2015). As a pan-ethnic label, Pasifika is commonly used in education, health and social research, but also contested and debated in Pacific scholarship (Ferguson et al., 2008; Kepa & Manu’atu, 2008; Manu’atu, 2000).

Two other considerations about pan-ethnic Pacific labeling pertain to my thesis

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\(^3\) Unfortunately, the 2013 New Zealand Census did not report Pacific/Asian mixed ethnicity, which obscures the history of Chinese migration and intermarriage in Samoa (Tom, 2015). A number of my Samoan participants claim Chinese heritage, and some have Chinese surnames.
research. One is that rather than indicating “people living throughout the whole of Oceania” (Anae, 1997, p. 130), the use of ‘Pacific’ in New Zealand is subjective, generally understood to be the large populations with cultural heritage from countries where New Zealand has had long-term colonial and/or economic ties. In the ASB Polyfest, the ‘Pacific’ component of the festival showcases only the four most populous Pacific groups; although any Pacific group not represented by its own stage can perform on the Diversity stage, arguably this participation is often obscured.


**Negotiating Identities as Pacific Peoples**

The ways in which individual Pacific people identify themselves are personal and subjective. Historically, Pacific migrants to New Zealand from the early 1900s were much more likely to associate with village, island group or family identities—not national ones, and not as ‘Pacific’ (Macpherson, 1996). More recently, Manuela and Sibley (2014) assert that, “Pacific peoples do not generally identify their selves as ‘Pacific’ in most social contexts, but rather along specific Pacific ethnic lines” (p. 321). Teaiwa and Mallon (2005) argue that Pacific peoples in New Zealand experience ‘ambivalent kinships’ with one another due to shared ancestral commonalities, colonial history and geographic similarities. Mok (2002) argues that ethnic-specific identities do not have to be mutually exclusive to pan-ethnic identification, as the latter serve practical and strategic purposes. For young Pacific peoples, ethnic
identities can be fluid and changeable amongst singular ethnic, multi-ethnic (e.g., Tongan-Cook Islands) and claimed and reclaimed pan-ethnic labels (Islander, PI, Brown⁴) throughout an “identity journey” (Anae, 2001; see also Agee & Culbertson, 2013).

The experiences of multi-ethnicity are an important component of this thesis research. Airini et al. (2010) identify multi-ethnic Pacific peoples as a “growing but largely hidden or ignored” Pacific population in New Zealand (p. 15); and therefore, I dedicate a section of this introduction to contextualizing the findings of my project. Multi-ethnic identities are associated with fluidity and changeability. Carter et al. (2009) found that Pacific peoples were most likely of any broad group to have changed their ethnicity to affiliate with multiple ethnicities. Family also plays an important role for multi-ethnic Pacific peoples, whose relationships influence either positive or negative association with their individual heritages, and their desire to identify with them (Agee & Culbertson, 2013).

The limited body of ethnographic research on multi-ethnic Pacific people in New Zealand has mainly concerned mono- or multi-ethnic Pacific/Europeans, finding that, for young people, mixed ethnicity can make them vulnerable to tensions with elders, extended family and peers (Agee & Culbertson, 2013; Berking et al, 2007; Culbertson & Agee, 2007; Keddle, 2006). The psychology research of Manuela and Sibley (2014) found that people with Pacific and non-Pacific ethnicities in New Zealand were vulnerable to lower self-esteem and poorer familial connections than multi-ethnic Pacific and mono-ethnic Pacific people. The problematic yet common term used in many Pacific communities to describe people with both Pacific and European ethnicities is ‘afakasi,’ (Samoan; Tongan hafekasi, Niuean hafakasi, Cook Islands Māori ‘apataki [Palalagi, 2003]) a transliteration of ‘half-caste.’ For many multi-ethnic Pacific people, the context of ‘afakasi is pejorative, and suggests impure blood and outsider status (Culbertson & Agee, 2007). The meaning of ‘afakasi is also ambiguous; in some cases, suggesting an unspecified blood quantum (Berking et al., 2007) or a cultural indicator rather than a racial one (Palalagi, 2003). Berking et al describe the experiences of ‘afakasi as “cloaked in silence” and an identity issue in Pacific communities “that evoke[s] discomfort or ambivalence, or attract[s] social

⁴ Pacific Islander,’ the New Zealand Government’s pan-ethnic label employed in the 1960s and 1970s, took on a pejorative connotation during social tensions around immigration and economic downturn. Many of my young adult participants referred to themselves as ‘Islanders,’ suggesting that the term has lost the stigma that it once had. Fresno-Calleja (2016) discusses how other pejorative terms have been re-appropriated by Pacific artists in multiple genres. ‘PI’ is shorthand for ‘Pacific Islander’ (Anae, 2001).
censure” (2007, p. 50). However, some young Pacific people assert that “it is cool to be ‘afakasi,” (Berking et al., 2007, p. 62) and celebrities who acknowledge their multi-ethnic heritage, like hip-hop artist David Dallas (Momoisea, 2017) and spoken word performer Grace Taylor (Taylor, 2011) indicate this identity is being claimed and redefined by transnational Pacific youth in New Zealand.

‘Ambivalent kinships’ also include Māori (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the historical departure point for this thesis, Māori relocated from rural to urban locations and shared experiences as labour migrants with Pacific peoples (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2004). Pacific peoples were aligned with Māori in some social spaces, such as cultural clubs in schools, as Māori and Pacific students sought familiarity within New Zealand’s Eurocentric schooling system (Anae, 1997). It was from these ‘Polynesian Clubs’ that the ASB Polyfest emerged. More recently, Māori and Pacific youth have found commonalities through popular music (Zemke-White, 2005; Borell, 2005; McIntosh, 2001). Mackley-Crump (2012) found that cultural festivals in New Zealand are sites where Māori, pan-Pacific, and individual Pacific national identities exist simultaneously, and where the historical relationships amongst Māori and Pacific peoples are acknowledged.

In summary, the Pacific people in this research are not siloed into individual Pacific nationalities or ethnicities, nor combined in a monolithic ‘Pacific’ category. Inasmuch as possible, I avoid generalisation (Ferguson et al., 2008) and present my participants’ individual stories through “ethnographies of the particular” (Abu-Lughod, 1996, p. 473) allowing their voices to speak for themselves, and contributing to research of transnational Pacific peoples’ diverse identities and experiences.

**Situating ‘Culture’**

Pacific people may ask one another “What’s your culture?” as a way of inquiring about each other’s ethnic heritage. Polyfest performing groups are called cultural groups, and Pacific festivals are described as celebrations of Pacific cultures (Mackley-Crump, 2012). A key inquiry of this research is how students and their teachers in the ASB Polyfest construct meanings of culture. Clearly *culture* in research with Pacific peoples is a ubiquitous term imbued with significance, but is also ambiguous, and can be conflated with ‘ethnicity,’ ‘identity’ (Mila-Schaaf 2010), and, in my own findings, with ‘tradition’ (discussed further in Chapter Two).

Mila-Schaaf argues that, although it is difficult to articulate the experiences of Pacific peoples in New Zealand without it, she describes ‘culture’ as

*[e]xhausted...it means too little and it means too much. It is invoked in ways
that are too open and in ways that are too limiting, making conceptual clarity challenging. Yet it is hard to do away with culture. There is too much vested in what it might mean (2010, p. 95).

Acknowledging this challenge, I look to Anae's (2009) interpretations of ‘culture’ as pertaining to her research with New Zealand-born Pacific peoples:

Culture is sometimes regarded as a specific ethnic emblem, but is also viewed as a more general characteristic embracing other ethnic markers such as tradition, core values, language and religion. In the latter sense, culture is the store of knowledge, practices and experiences possessed by an ethnic group which serves as a powerful symbol of its identity (p. 63).

The “knowledge [and] practices” (p. 63) that Anae (2009) describes are sometimes also conceived of as protocols, customs, practices imbued with culturally-specific identifiers such as performing and visual arts, or ‘the way’ of Samoans (fa’asamoa), Tongans (anga fakatonga), Cook Islanders (akono’anga), or Niueans (aga fakaniue), (Anae 1998; Morton, 1998, Ama et al., 2003; Smith, 2014). In transnational Pacific communities, these cultural codes of thinking and acting take on new contemporary and situational meanings and contestations (Anae, 1998; Morton, 1998). Anae (2009) asserts that in doing so, Pacific peoples do not forswear either fixed or constructed notions of culture, but that both co-exist, and apply them and applied contextually and selectively (see also Mallon, 2010).

Situating Pacific Languages in New Zealand

Samoan linguist Galumalemana Hunkin-Tuiletufuga argues that “Each [Pacific] language embodies values, knowledge and understandings that give meaning, structure and purpose to the social life of its users” (2001, p. 197-198). However, the role of language for Pacific peoples in New Zealand in the construction of identity is complex and highlights differences amongst Pacific ethnic groups. Situating language in its present social, political, and educational contexts in this introduction will give needed context to the experiences of the participants in this research.

All Pacific languages in New Zealand have experienced shifts to English, for reasons including: the legacy of colonial English-only education and internalizations of colonial attitudes about the superiority of English, a dearth of support for bilingual education in New Zealand schools, and the lack of value New Zealand institutions place on the use of Pacific languages in the public domain (McCaffrey & McFall-McCaffrey, 2010).

In very general terms, Samoan and Tongan are spoken by a much larger
percentage in their communities than Cook Islands Māori and Niuean (McCaffery & McFall-McCaffery, 2010; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005; Starks et al., 2005; Starks, 2005, 2006). A longer colonial relationship, status as New Zealand protectorates, a majority population shift to New Zealand, and the privileging of English in island schools has led to Cook Islands Māori and Niuean to be placed on the UN's list of seriously endangered languages (McCaffery & McFall-McCaffery, 2010). Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) postulate that without intensive early childhood bilingual education, these languages will cease to have a new generation of speakers. The Cook Islands' multiple dialects further complicate language preservation (McCaffery & McFall-McCaffery, 2010).

Family language use is important for its transmission (Webber, 2011) but for some Pacific families, intergenerational transmission of language has been disrupted by dominant attitudes both in New Zealand, and in the islands, about the value of learning English. The Pasifika Languages of Manukau Project (Starks et al., 2005) found that Cook Islands families had little “talk” about language, indicating that language is becoming less of a marker of identity (p. 2192). Starks (2005) found that nine out of ten New Zealand-born Niueans felt speaking Niuean was not necessary to be Niuean, and that the usefulness of English to attain education and career success overshadowed concern about language shift. It is a strong probability that for many Cook Islands and Niuean students, learning Polyfest competition items (songs, chants, spoken lines in the legend, the speech contest and possibly a prayer to open and close cultural group practice) may be their only significant practice of language.

In contrast, though Tongan and Samoan language are also experiencing significant shifts, researchers have found that Tongan communities in New Zealand attribute speaking Tongan as an important part of a Tongan identity. There have been similar findings in Samoan communities. Tongan and Samoan communities also have higher island-born populations and are more likely to attend churches where their languages are spoken (Starks, et al., 2005; Taufe'ulungaki, 2003). Students in these cultural groups at Polyfest are much more likely than their Cook Islands and Niuean counterparts to hear their tutors use their Pacific language as the medium of instruction during cultural practice.

Opportunities for youth to learn Pacific languages outside of family and church, for example in school bilingual units, are available in some areas, but they are limited and often left to individual schools to implement, fund and staff (Radio NZ, 2014). McCaffery and McFall-McCaffery (2010) criticise the Ministry of Education's
Pasifika Education Plan for its limited conception of, and lack of strategic planning on, teaching Pasifika languages. Additionally, its lack of investment in bilingual education - particularly at the early childhood level - meaning the onus of language transmission is left to families and communities. A small number of secondary schools offer Samoan, Tongan, and Cook Islands Māori at the senior level, and only 3% of Pasifika students were enrolled in 2011 (Milne 2013). Only one school at the time of research offered Niue language at the senior level (M. Ikiua, pers. comm.)

Anae acknowledges that to some, these issues of language shift indicate cultural loss (2009). Although acknowledging the role of language as a marker of identity for New Zealand-born Pacific people, she proposes that it should not be the “sole identifier;” (p. 58) and that language, like other expressions of culture, is fluid, changing and contextual:

Pacific language shifts in New Zealand are but a transformative process in which language, like culture, far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, is merely being subjected to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power (2009, p. 59).

**Thesis Structure**

This thesis begins by situating the origins of the ASB Polyfest in the social and educational contexts of the early 1970s. After a brief history of Pacific migrations to New Zealand, I discuss the ways that educational leadership and community involvement in Otara, then a newly built south Auckland suburb, led to the creation of the first festival in 1976. I summarise the growth of the festival over the subsequent decades and outline the present organisational structure and key personnel, along with an ethnographic account of a day at the festival.

In Chapter Two, I outline the literature consulted for this research in four areas. I begin with a review of ethnographic studies of music transmission, then narrow my focus to research most relevant to the themes later explored in the ASB Polyfest concerning learners, teachers and contexts of transmission; particularly in indigenous and/or minority communities. I then move to how national or local identities and music performances are constructed within competitions. I follow with a discussion of common themes throughout the earlier sections of the chapter – the subjective and problematic nature of ‘tradition’ and ‘authenticity’ in transmission, performance and competition. I finish with a review of research about Cook Islands, Niuean, Samoan and Tongan performance in the islands and in New Zealand.
The discussion of theory in Chapter Three frames Pacific peoples in New Zealand as transnational, and the significance of the arts in transnational identity construction. I introduce the application of Etienne Wenger’s Communities of Practice framework as a useful tool to examine music transmission, and a concept that theorises Pacific peoples’ success in multiple social and professional contexts, polycultural capital (Mila-Schaaf, 2010). I then outline methods. I situate myself as a non-Pacific researcher and the issues concerning outsider research with Pacific communities, then describe methodological recommendations considered from Pacific scholarship and ethnomusicology, and pertaining to research with youth in school contexts.

The results of the fieldwork carried out for this research comprise the remainder of the thesis. Overarching themes of identity and cultural construction are discussed throughout these chapters, and are contextualised by the role the research participants played in the festival. Chapter Four is an ethnographic account of cultural group practices at Mangere College, one of the original schools competing in the first Polyfest in 1976. I discuss how students, teachers in charge and cultural group tutors co-create the structures and rituals of Polyfest rehearsals, and how authority, leadership, and identity experiences are contextualised in teaching and learning processes. In Chapter Five, young adults who recently performed in Polyfest discuss the ways in which Polyfest cultural groups were sources of identity exploration, but also experiences of resistance from families and peers.

The following two chapters are dedicated to cultural group tutors. Chapter Six discusses the experiences and viewpoints of Polyfest tutors as learners and creative practitioners. I address their own experiences of music learning, and the ways in which they negotiate concepts of their own expertise and authority. Chapter Seven examines tutors’ strategies, processes, and practices as they relate to their work with youth in Polyfest cultural groups. Chapter Eight discusses the ways in which stage committees and judges approach competition rules, and confront sometimes conflicting ideals of traditional representation of performance.

I conclude the thesis with a summary of findings, weaving together theory with observations and interviews from my fieldwork. I identify Polyfest cultural groups as communities of practice where transnational Pacific peoples construct meanings of cultural identity within intersections of local, national and global influences. Collaborations of school teachers, tutors, students and families co-create Polyfest cultural group practices as socio-temporal spaces that function as transnational Pacific ‘villages’; where students have authority over their own
meaningful exploration of personal cultural heritage, as well as the heritages of their peers. Emerging from these ‘villages’ are unique transnational Pacific performances, and as they are constructed and evaluated, ideas about culture, tradition and authority are also not uniform or fixed, but contested and negotiated.

The polycultural capital utilized by cultural group tutors, stage committees and students is essential to the success of the ASB Polyfest community of practice as they mediate educational, social and cultural worlds, and the challenges of cultural transmission, in an urban, multicultural environment. The participants within the ASB Polyfest co-create a unique culture of transmission and performance where ideas of cultural identity and meaning are constructed and contested - a reflection of the dynamic and fluid nature of transnational Pacific communities in New Zealand.

**Limitations**

The ASB Polyfest has vast potential for research in a variety of areas, and as a result a number of potentially significant research topics lie outside the scope of this thesis. Although I examine the history of the ASB Polyfest in more detail than any other previous research, it is still a very cursory one, and a comprehensive chronology of the festival through its growth over four decades is a needed contribution. This thesis also does not investigate the Māori stage, leaving the specific issues related to Māori performance in this arena, and the relationships with Pacific stages, to another project. The Diversity Stage, whose presence has grown significantly since it started in 1991 (Tennant-Brown, 2012) and is representational of Auckland's increasing ethnic diversity, is also a timely topic for research. Additionally, choreography and song form, the methods and functions of original compositions, and stylistic developments over Polyfest's history are potentially rich areas of research. Gender is also a focal point of discussion that is outside the scope of this thesis – for example, the gendered role of Stage Coordinators, who are all women, and their committees, who are predominantly so.

The site for school fieldwork, Mangere College, is historically affiliated with the ASB Polyfest and is situated in the Otahuhu-Mangere district, which has one of the largest Pacific populations in Auckland. However, competing schools are located in all geographical and socio-economic areas of Auckland, have widely varying percentages of Pacific students, and include single-sex and/or religious schools as well. The experiences of Pacific students who are a minority group in their school, or attend a single-sex and/or religious institution could be markedly different than the students at Mangere College. My fieldwork at Mangere College is one particular story, and there
are many others in the ASB Polyfest that are yet to be told.
Chapter One
Overview of the ASB Polyfest

This chapter introduces the origins and development of the ASB Polyfest, in order to adequately situate the findings of the research presented later in this thesis. I provide an overview of the social, political and educational climate of the 1970s in Auckland, and the series of events that led to the formation of the community of practice who produced the first festival in 1976. Though a comprehensive history of the festival is beyond the scope of this research, I summarize the growth and structural changes of the festival from its inaugural year to the current production model; identify key personnel, and describe the festival experience. In the final section, I situate the festival in current Pacific performance scenes, concluding that the festival’s popularity with youth has endured as choices for music participation have diversified.

Pacific Migrations to New Zealand


Although the migrations of Pacific peoples to New Zealand originated over 1,000 years ago when settled by voyagers from the Eastern Pacific, for many Aucklanders the story of Pacific peoples’ presence in the city originates from the recent migrations of the 1950s through the 1970s and their descendants. Macpherson asserts that because of the sheer numbers of Pacific people living in Auckland, the growing Pacific middle class, inter-ethnic marriage and popular culture, the “Pacific migrant

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5 According to the 1976 Mangere College Magazine, the first festival was called The Auckland Secondary Schools Polynesian Festival. In more recent years, the festival has also been titled The Auckland Secondary Schools Māori and Pacific Island Cultural Festival.
story” (2010, p. 10) of the past 60 years has become a part of Auckland’s social narrative. Though the broad nature of relationships between Pacific peoples and New Zealand was established well before World War II (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999) it was the post-war Pacific migrations that established sizeable Pacific communities in Auckland (Macpherson, 2010, p. 17).

It was not until after 1945 that Pacific people migrated in large numbers, when the post-war boom in the world economy, and New Zealand government policies that promoted industrialisation and full employment combined to create labour shortages (Ongley, 1991). The government looked to both overseas and internal sources, first to Europe for skilled labour, and sponsored British and later Dutch migration (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012; Fleras & Spoonley, 1999). The disruption of indigenous economic systems and declining demand for agricultural labour led to Māori relocating from rural areas, sometimes with government assistance (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999; Ongley, 1991).

The South Pacific, including New Zealand’s territories the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau, as well as former territory Samoa; were viewed as a source of “able-bodied, inexperienced but compliant labour,” (Macpherson, 1997, p. 86) and population pressure combined with the rising economic demands and lack of employment opportunity that arose from unsustainable introduced capitalist systems, encouraged these island nations to agree to and later promote emigration (Ongley, 1991). Personal histories of Pacific migration describe the desire for better work and educational opportunities as reasons for moving to New Zealand (see Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003). However, the realities of the labour economy meant Pacific and Māori workers were concentrated into unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in secondary industries, accompanied by low wages, less job security, less opportunity for advancement and poorer conditions (Ongley, 1991). Many employers were open about their exclusionary attitudes toward Pacific workers and regarded them as a “last resort” to fill labour shortages (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999, p. 196). When the economic prosperity in New Zealand took a downturn in 1973, rising unemployment, urban decay, and crime became racialised, as they were increasingly associated in politics and the media with growing Pacific communities (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012; Liava’a, 1998; Ongley, 1991).

It was a period of “explicit and populist racism” toward Pacific people (Spoonley & Bedford 2012, p. 136). Pākehā New Zealand was uneasy with increasing Māori political self-determination and the noticeable presence of Pacific communities. The National Party capitalized on these fears during the
1975 election, which was run on platforms of immigration reform and law and order, (Liava’a, 1998) both of which identified Pacific people as “socially distinct and ‘not part’ of an imagined New Zealand” and suggested the country’s decline in quality of life was, in part, their fault (Spoonerley & Bedford 2012, p. 134). Although the general laissez-faire policy toward migration during prosperous times meant the government turned a blind eye to the practice of ‘overstaying’ work permits in 1974, a review of immigration policy meant restrictions would be enforced and overstayers were at risk of prosecution and deportation (de Bres, 1975; Spoonerley & Bedford, 2012). Though the majority of overstayers were from the United Kingdom, as were the majority of recent migrants in general (Ongley, 1991), the term became synonymous with Pacific people. It was they, and Māori, who resembled them; that were the target of the immigration division’s campaign. This agenda was notoriously manifested in the Dawn Raids: police, under orders from the immigration division, carried out raids of the homes of suspected overstayers in the middle of the night. Police methods were often violent and sometimes the targeted homes belonged to legal residents who were arrested if not able to provide their passports (Fepulea‘i, 2009; Liava’a, 1998).

The Dawn Raids established the nature of relationships of Pacific people with other communities and the state, which was slow to change (Fleras & Spoonerley, 1999). The lingering stereotype of Pacific people as ‘overstayers’ and their association with economic and social problems meant “[i]t took a long time for the myths about these new Zealanders to be dispelled and for there to be an acceptance of their very positive contributions to the development of NZ’s society, economy and cultural identity as a ‘Pacific’ nation” (Spoonerley & Bedford, 2012, p. 136).

Otara and the Beginnings of the ASB Polyfest

Preceding and subsequently concurrent to these politically and socially tumultuous events in Auckland, a renaissance of educational reform and Māori and Pacific self-determination was unfolding in Otara, a planned public housing estate built on 1200 acres of farmland in South Auckland. After its construction in the late 1950s, the population grew quickly as Māori traveled mainly from Northland areas for job opportunities and to join family members already in the area. There was an even more rapid increase in Pacific residents, as the availability of manufacturing jobs, motorway construction in inner-city Auckland and housing discrimination against Pacific people pushed more residents out to southern suburbs (Friesen, 2009).

The number of Māori and Pacific residents totalled 33% compared to 17% in the rest of the newly incorporated Manukau City (Seidel, 1971), then a separate local
government entity to Auckland. Otara quickly became associated with overcrowding, adult and youth crime, and single-parent homes. A 1967 magazine article described Otara, and other housing estates like it, as a “new kind of slum,” “truly bleak, isolated and barren of interest or involvement for the people who live in them” and physically unattractive (Blewden, 1967, cf. Seidel, 1971, p. 61).

Many of the efforts in creating a more liveable community in Otara can be credited to the leadership of James Garfield Johnson, the inaugural principal of Otara’s first secondary school. Johnson, who would later lend his (sometimes controversial) progressive views as chair of the Committee on Health and Social Education, was influenced by the educational philosophies of John Dewey and the work of Māori scholar Ranginui Walker (Bowler, 2005). Johnson embraced philosophies of bicultural education in ways that few of his Pākehā contemporaries had, in what Bowler (2005) describes as a Freirean style of leadership. Johnson called for bicultural education from early childhood, asserting that secondary school was too late. He argued, “Māori children need to know that the system is theirs, not just decorated with things Māori” (Johnson, 1979, p. 7).

The social problems associated with Otara motivated Johnson to rename the school after Sir Edmund Hillary, citing the symbolism of Hillary and Tenzing Norgay’s summit of Everest: “Two people of different races working together embodied the kind of spirit we wanted in the school” (Bowler, 2005, p. 155). Guidance counsellor Jill Amos, in a 1998 interview, said, “We were the only school of its type in the country. Every other school had a Pakeha majority, and was contentedly monocultural” (Braunias, 1998, p. 76).

To the extent of their abilities, Johnson and his colleagues recognised their responsibilities to respond to the needs of Otara’s multicultural communities. English teacher Bernard Gadd argued,

Schools are placing heavy demands upon young Polynesians, expecting them to be culturally adaptable and flexible and able to fit neatly into a monocultural school… My thesis is that the endorsement of multicultural education means that while cultural common ground is important, each individual has the right, in addition, to cultural identity at variance with that of the majority. (Gadd, 1976, p. 52)

Gadd asserted that in addition to the teaching of Māori and Pacific languages,

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6 ‘Polynesian’ was used at Hillary to describe all students of Māori and Pacific origin.
arts, crafts, and customs that “Polynesian heritages should have a natural place in every school course,” (p. 52) and relevant topics of study should be integrated into humanities and sciences. It was suggested that parents could enter the classroom as teacher aides or arts and craft tutors. Conscious of the need for relevant materials for its students, the school published a number of its own texts in-house, with many titles authored by Gadd (Johnson, 1973a).

Teacher Ian Mitchell, who was influenced by the philosophies of progressive New Zealand educator Sylvia Ashton-Warner, later implemented his ideas about bicultural and holistic education through the Whanau Unit at Hillary. The Whanau Unit was characterised by open timetabling, common areas, self-directed learning, and community outreach projects (Munro & Mitchell, 1977). In 1973, in a display of self-determination and community solidarity that would challenge even the hardest of cynics, a group of students rushed into Mitchell’s classroom, frustrated with media coverage of the Department of Social Welfare’s report on juvenile crime in New Zealand, which pointed squarely at Māori and Pacific youth. The students decided to seek their own solution to Otara’s lack of community services and with the guidance of their teachers, they approached government officials about the construction of a community centre – Te Puke O Tara - which they helped to design, raise funds for and later manage (Bowler, 2005; Johnson; 1979; Reid, 1974). After Ian Mitchell’s death in 1998 (Braunias, 1998), an editorial argued that many of Mitchell’s ideas were “revolutionary” in the 1970s. Mitchell “understood some of the answers to meeting the needs of South Auckland children well before any of us had worked out any of the questions” (Middleton, 1988, p. 8).

In my conversation with former Hillary College student Boaz Raela, he recalled:

We had the strong leaders, we had amazing teachers, young and old…and then we had just this crop of young people at this period of time, just had a sense that they just wanted to achieve. They wanted to be somebody, wanted to be somewhere.

It was in this environment the Polynesian Club was formed with the help of Ian Mitchell in 1967. From the start, “Poly Club” was a part of Hillary’s ethos of community inclusiveness and involved students, parents and local organisations (Johnson, 1979). Ian Mitchell acknowledged the significance of the Polynesian Club for his pupils:
I'm convinced you can't learn certain things, pride and confidence, and, in fact, perhaps a deeper knowledge of the wellspring of one's own conscience without activities like the Poly Club...I'm sure that kids that were starting to get restless and pretty hopeless, are invigorated by this (Munro & Mitchell, 1977).

In my interview with former Hillary College student Ron Lau'ese, he recalled that the group included scholarship students from Samoa, the Cook Islands and Niue and their New Zealand-born counterparts, and many of the students in the school’s 1st XV rugby squad. Pākehā students took part as well. Lau'ese recalled how the club encouraged relationships across cultural lines:

...Our Poly club was very unique. The other schools also were along similar lines in that we had a deeper appreciation of the [other] ethnicities because we learned the Cook Island stuff, and we learnt the Niuean culture, and we learnt the Māori culture. I remember Bill [Wiremu] Tawhai, who was one of our main, our very good teachers – he also coached the 1st XV [rugby], most of the guys in the Poly club were in the 1st XV. Wherever we went, the Poly club went. When we went to play 1st XV the Poly club was there, and no school could match us when it came to the formal functions after the game, the singing, the dances we presented. But why I say there was a real richness because we learned the various cultures...We didn’t have the racial problems other areas were having, because we knew of each other’s cultures. And we had better awareness and appreciation of other ethnicities. And that’s what made it absolutely fantastic.

Lau’ese confirmed that home life and school life converged through the Polynesian Club:

The Poly stuff was in school, it came into our social life, and it continued from there. So we didn’t have any fights!...The whole thing was interwoven with the social life, but it came out of school. And this is the thing we realize now, the impact that [Johnson and Mitchell] had, we had no idea.

In 1976, Māori student Michael Rollo⁷, who taught kapa haka to the other students in the club, proposed the school hold a cultural festival. Former student Su’a William Sio, a Member of Parliament for the Labour party at the time of research, recalled:

Michael was a senior student, and he had the opportunity to travel to China,

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⁷Michael Rollo was also known as Michelle Rollo. Former students recall her tutoring a kapa haka group after leaving Hillary, but unfortunately, none of the research participants knew where she presently lives or how to contact her. My own efforts were unsuccessful.
and when he came back he reported to the full assembly. He talked about how China, all year round, celebrated different events. And he couldn’t understand why in New Zealand, who had just as much cultural aspect to our way of life, that we shouldn’t be doing the same on a day-to-day basis. So he presented the school with this idea, and many of the students [agreed]. There were some teachers who came on board, particularly the Māori teachers, and some of the Pākehā ones.

The three additional schools that joined Hillary College to stage the first festival- Aorere College, Seddon College, and Mangere College- were each negotiating the needs of their community and multicultural student body. Aorere College in Papatoetoe was one of several Auckland schools that pioneered a full community school model and embraced the concept of schooling being available to people of all ages. Adult learners equaled the number of youth and joined the school in both evening and day classes. The community “were engaged in a growing range of activities in the recreational, cultural, culture sharing, craft and design and personal development areas” including a “Polynesian culture sharing group” whose meeting time overlapped with the young students’ Polynesian club (Herbert, 1973, p. 329).

Mangere College was the most recently built school to join the festival, having opened five years earlier in 1971 and asserted the importance of its role in Auckland as a multicultural school (Mangere College Magazine, 1971). At the time Mangere was a young state housing suburb not far from Otara. The College had a strong Polynesian Club from the school’s opening, numbering about 60 students, which had even earned praise from the Governor-General (South Auckland Courier Central Edition, 1971). The school had separate Māori and Samoan culture groups by 1976, and the Māori Club teachers, Hone and Hine Green, assisted with putting the festival together (Tennant-Brown, 2013).

The competition was held in the school hall at Hillary College on October 20 (Auckland Council Libraries, 2013). Although there were only four participating schools, the festival was popular, with a sizable audience and an introduction by the Mayor of Manukau City, Lloyd Elsmore. The Parent-Teacher Association, headed by Nan Terewi, organised food stalls. Mangere College took first place (Tennant-Brown 2013). Boaz Raela recalled,

It was fantastic. It was a fantastic day. We, just as performers and as students in the group, we just enjoyed the fact that we had this opportunity to perform.
And it was in a place where there was expectations to do your best. It was that sort of expectation. But also to enjoy.

Ron Lau’ese had left school, but came back to help tutor the students for their Samoan performance:

We had no idea, we didn’t realize how big this thing was gonna be. For us, it was just a competition. It wasn’t like how the students look at the competition [now] and think, this is the be-all and end-all of competitions. And because we were performing in all the different groups, we weren’t as nervous as the other groups. We had this wonderful bond between us, and we felt like, yes it was a competition, but we felt like we were going out there just to show off what we already knew. Show off what we were doing year in and year out. Showing off and presenting the Poly Club, what we were doing since we first started at Hillary College. And yes, we were a bit nervous, but we had such a high expectation of ourselves, that it wasn’t such a huge thing. This is the level that we attain each year, it doesn’t matter which students go out and which students come in.

In a letter to Garfield Johnson, Māori scholar and activist Ranginui Walker described Johnson’s time at Hillary as “halcyon days when we believed anything was possible and we set out to make it happen” (Bowler 2005). In our interview, Boaz Raela echoed this sentiment: “It was the best six years of my life. Because it was the only place where I could be. I could be known, be successful, all those sort of things. I loved it.”

The Growth of the Festival

Polyfest’s growth started immediately after the initial year, with eleven schools participating in 1977 at Mangere College, and twenty in 1978 at St. Stephens Māori Boys’ School. When Hillary hosted the competition again in 1981, twenty-six schools took part, and ten years later when the event returned to Hillary there were thirty-eight schools and four separate Pacific stages alongside the Māori stage. The Diversity Stage was also added to provide opportunities for students from Auckland's growing Asian community, and presently insures the festival is inclusive of other Pacific and non-Pacific groups (Tennant-Brown 2012).

The festival continued to be staged annually, and the number of participating schools and groups steadily increased. The relationship between schools and communities that supported Polyfest drove the festival for a number of years. Boaz
Raela explained,

I think one of the things that's really helped that festival survive for the first 20 years, was that the schools actually picked it up, and they were responsible for running it – I mean, schools. And so there was no knowing if they were going to lose money, or make money or if they were going to break even. So even those pressures didn't stop the schools from continuing to run them….You think about that, if schools did not do that, it would not be where it is now. There was a lot of buy-in from schools. Granted that buy-in was from South Auckland schools, because the majority of hosting was from South Auckland schools.

The rapidly growing popularity of Polyfest in the 1990s meant that the individual schools could no longer manage running the festival. Mrs. Toesulu Brown, who co-managed the Samoan stage for over 20 years while a teacher and guidance counsellor at Auckland Girls Grammar School, spoke to me about the growth of the festival and how the organisers proceeded when it became too large for a single school to host on their grounds:

We hosted on our own, of course our staff was about 100 and everybody had a job to do and it was really, really hard work for everybody. And I was supposed to be the coordinator for everything and it was really hectic, and the following year when Hato Petera [College] took it on, they felt it was really too much for one school. So teachers met, and everyone who was involved, we all agreed. And so we decided to have a committee. And the Māori people didn’t really agree that it should be taken out of the schools’ hands altogether and put into a group or an events director like we have now. They stuck it out for a couple of years, if it was Hato Petera [College] then the Māori staff of Hato Petera would be in charge of the Māori side. But the Pacific Island groups, we all decided that we should form a committee that do the small planning, and then disseminate the information to all of the schools. So that’s how the planning committee, what we call the Komiti Whakahaere, was born. It was really to make things easier for us.

Tania Karauria, festival director from 2009-2014 explained, “It dragged teaching staff from their core business, and also, that financial responsibility and commitment to running a festival. And there were a couple of times when they hit rock bottom and were in a deficit.” The Auckland Secondary Schools Principals Association (ASSPA) established the Auckland Secondary School Heads Association (ASSHA, presently operating as ASB Sport) in 1989 as a charitable foundation that could apply for
funding to cover operational costs of sporting, music and other events. ASSHA contracted SMC Productions, an Auckland-based event management company, to run the festival. Continued growth led ASSPA to work with SMC to set up a charitable trust, established in 2011. The hosting model was also changed, with a main hosting school (Matua Kura) supported by individual hosting schools for each stage (Mana Kura). Host schools represent all participating schools, act as caretakers and provide volunteers. (T. Karauria, pers. comm.)

The Matua Kura also has creative license over the festival's theme and graphic design. Many schools incorporate the theme, presented in both English and Te Reo Māori, into their group's original compositions, costuming or dressing the stage. Themes have expressed universal sentiments of cultural inclusivity (2009’s “Many cultures, one world” and 2011’s “Diversity is the Magic, Unity is the Joy,”) protecting the environment (2014’s “Care for our seas and our lands, so that the safety of our homes, both present and past endures forever”) aspirational messages (2016’s “Enlightenment through education”) or in the case of 2010's theme, multiple associations of national and local identity by Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate, who invoked their namesake with his well known quote, “It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Host School</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Host School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Hillary College</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Hillary College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Mangere College</td>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>Nga Tupuwae College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>St Stephens School</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Mt Albert Grammar School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Rutherford College</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Mt Roskill Grammar School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Nga Tupuwae College</td>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>Hato Petera College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Hillary College</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Queen Victoria and St Stephens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Henderson High School</td>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>Mangere College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Otahuhu College</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Hillary College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Birkdale College</td>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>Tangaroa College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>James Cook High School</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Otahuhu College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>Nga Tupuwae College</td>
<td>2005-07</td>
<td>James Cook High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Hato Patera College</td>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>Wesley College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Auckland Girls Grammar Sch.</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Rutherford High School</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3  ASB Polyfest Hosting Schools, 1976-2011 (ASB Polyfest Festival Programme, 2014)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Matua Kura</th>
<th>Mana Kura</th>
<th>Niue Stage</th>
<th>Samoan Stage</th>
<th>Cook Island Stage</th>
<th>Tongan Stage</th>
<th>Diversity Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Kia Aroha College</td>
<td>Alfriston College</td>
<td>Alfriston College</td>
<td>Manurewa High School</td>
<td>Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate</td>
<td>James Cook High School</td>
<td>Papatoetoe High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>James Cook High School</td>
<td>Alfriston College</td>
<td>Manurewa High School</td>
<td>Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate</td>
<td>James Cook High School</td>
<td>Papatoetoe High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Western Springs College</td>
<td>Avondale College</td>
<td>Aorere College</td>
<td>Northcote College</td>
<td>St Dominic’s Catholic College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 ASB Polyfest Hosting Schools, 2012-2014 (ASB Polyfest Festival Programme, 2014)

**Current Staging of the Festival**

The festival is staged over four days, from Wednesday to Saturday, usually during the third week of March. The Māori stage has the highest numbers of participation, and requires three and half days to accommodate all of the competing groups, beginning mid-morning on Wednesday after the pōwhiri (welcome ceremony). The Diversity Stage performances are held on Wednesday and Thursday, as are the speech competitions. The competition has been sponsored by various government entities like the Bureau of Statistics and the Health Promotion Agency.
and past speech topics have been related to the national census, the economic situation of Pacific people in New Zealand, and the prevention of rheumatic fever. They are valued as platforms for students to practice speaking in their mother tongues, and individual students’ speeches are marked against assessment criteria to allow them to earn credits leading to school qualifications (P. Vaione, pers. comm). Rules for speech entry ensure the number of entries per school keep the competition running within the two-day schedule, and keep speeches within the sponsors’ chosen topics, of a sufficient length, and delivered without reliance on written notes.

**Personnel and Organisation**

The festival has clearly defined roles in order to keep its operations running smoothly and effectively on such a large scale, as well as keeping major educational and cultural decision-making the domain of teachers and school principals. At individual schools, each performance group, generally called ‘cultural groups’ or ‘culture groups,’ and its tutors are organised by a Teacher In Charge. The TIC oversees entry forms, organizes rehearsal space and attends rehearsals, collects uniform fees, deals with disciplinary issues and is the go-between for the school community and the school itself for fundraising, the production of uniforms, and hiring transportation to the performance venue, among other responsibilities. Teachers in Charge report to their respective Stage Coordinator and their committee, who manage each school’s paperwork, establish and modify the rules of competition, secure judges, and produce the competition on the festival days. The operation of the festival and the school performances are liaised through the Komiti Whakahaere, consisting of all stage coordinators, representatives of the host school, and representatives of SMC. Two members of the Komiti Whakahaere serve on the Board of Trustees, with five school principals, a member of the local iwi, Tainui; and a Pacific community representative. The Patron of the festival at the time of research was the former mayor of Manukau City and Auckland City, Len Brown.
Stage Rules

The stage committees determine their own rules, which are reviewed at twice-yearly stage meetings. Rules concern the number and order of performance items, time limits, maximum number of students, and requirements and limitations on adults as musical supporters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Required Items</th>
<th>Time Limits</th>
<th>Number of Performers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cook Islands: competitive section | 'Imene Tuki  
Ute  
Kapa Rima  
Pea Tupuna  
Ura Pa’u | 30 minutes | Minimum of 10, maximum of 50 dancers |
| | Four of five items must be performed, including either 'imene tuki or ute (amended November 2014). | | Maximum of 8 band members |
| Cook Islands: non-competitive section | Kamataaga, Fakaotiaga, the compulsory item chosen for that year, and any two items from:  
Koli mo e lologo vaha tuai  
Koli mo e lologo vaha foou  
Lologo tapu: vaha tuai  
Lologo tapu: vaha foou  
Meke  
Takalo  
Tala Tuai  
Tame | 20 minutes, or 30 minutes if a Tala Tuai or Lologo Tapu is performed | Small group category: up to 35 performers and 6 supporters (musicians).  
Large group category: minimum of 36 performers and a maximum of 68 performers and 6 supporters |
| Niue | Co-ed Schools: Uluvale Pese o le Aso/Fuataimi  
Sāsā/Faʻaluma Māʻuluʻulu  
Taualuga/Taupou/Mamaia Ulufo  
Boys’ schools substitute a faʻataupati for the maʻuluʻulu. Togiga is also judged. | 20 minutes | A maximum of 64 including 4 adult supporters. |
| Samoa | Schools must perform two items. All co-ed schools with groups between 80 to 120 perform a lakalaka and a second item of their choosing. All single-sex schools as well as any co-ed group less than 80 must perform a maʻuluʻulu and a second item of their own choosing. | 20 minutes for both items | Only 120 are allowed on stage for each performing group, including both performers and supporters.  
For those schools performing the Kailao, Taufakaniua and the Soke, only 60 performers with an additional 10 supporters are allowed on stage.  
Groups with more than these numbers will perform on the ground in front of the stage first thing in the morning on either Friday or Saturday morning. |

*Table 6, ASB Polyfest Stage Rules (ASB Polyfest, 2017)*
The Festival Space

The present venue is the Manukau Sports Bowl and Velodrome, a sprawling complex of mainly grass fields where events like greyhound and cycling races take place at other times of the year. In contrast with Pasifika Festival, located in central Auckland and attended by non-Pacific audiences and tourists, the Manukau Velodrome is well off of Auckland's tourist routes and not easily reached by public transportation. Audiences are largely family members of performers, and outsiders, like myself, are rare. The stage areas are spaced around the complex, with the largest area dedicated to the Māori stage. The Pacific stages are allocated space accordingly to the size of their audience, with larger areas for the Samoan and Tongan stages, and the smaller for the Cook Islands and Niuean stages.

The clubhouse behind the greyhound track serves as the hub for VIP guests, like sponsors, politicians and committee members, and provides much needed shade. Situated within and between stage areas are rows of portable toilets, vendors selling food, crafts, clothing, and souvenirs, and for public services and community organisations such as the NZ Fire Service and Auckland Museum, who offer activities and free promotional merchandise. Tertiary institutions, which are also naming sponsors for individual stages, have information stalls promoting their study programmes and support for Māori and Pacific students. Local radio stations are also represented, providing entertainment from their programme hosts, live performances from rising Māori and Pacific musicians and competitions for prizes. Stage emcees tell jokes, hold dance contests to give away t-shirts or other donated prizes, announce lost children and keep the event running smoothly over the day of competition. One of the measures of a successful Polyfest stage manager is to keep the event running according to schedule, but achieving this in practice is usually difficult.

The food for sale contributes to the festival atmosphere. Māori hangi (meat and starchy vegetables cooked in an underground oven) and Pacific foods such as Samoan sapasui (chop suey), Tongan otai (watermelon and coconut drink) and Cook Islands poke (baked fruit pudding made with pumpkin or bananas), usually sold by churches and youth groups to raise funds for their organisations, are sold alongside fast food fare like chips, doughnuts, sausages, smoothies and ice cream by commercial operators. ASB runs the carnival-like ASB Village, with games of chance and prizes bearing the ASB brand.

Students rise very early on their assigned competition day. The first slot is at 8 am on some stages, which means meeting at school and packing into buses that take
them to the Velodrome in time to check in with the stage volunteers, unpack their costumes in the changing tent ‘backstage’ (a set-up of tents and marquees to the side of the physical stage and minded by a volunteer who restricts access to schools at their assigned time) dress, add face paint and other finishing touches, say a unifying prayer to bless the performance and take the stage under the judges’ watchful eyes, tempered with the exuberance of their friends and family in the audience. Afterwards the process is in reverse – they decamp backstage, change back into their school uniform (if on a Friday) or street clothes (on Saturday) and are free to roam the festival.

Spending a day as a spectator at the ASB Polyfest is marked by distinctive sensory experiences. The festival takes place in late summer, and the cool and damp mornings give way to the relentless Auckland sun; which is especially powerful due to New Zealand’s very thin ozone layer in summer. A water truck and free sunscreen provide some relief. There is no seating, so parents, grandparents and siblings stake out good viewing positions on synthetic mats on the grass; older relatives unapologetically sit in camping chairs that block the view of anyone sitting on the ground behind them. Shade is at a premium; most stages put up a marquee but request that only older patrons use it. Some watch performances peeking out from underneath umbrellas or ‘ie lavalava draped over their heads. Heat rises off the tarmac; the grass is sunbaked, inevitably dry and scratchy to the touch and dotted with dusty patches from the thousands of feet carving paths amongst the stages, the food vendors and souvenir stalls. The occasional cloudbursts are torrential, scattering the crowds to find some kind of shelter until the weather passes.

People are constantly on the move. Students circulate amongst the stage areas and shuffle through bottlenecks to see their own schools, their friends or cousins; queuing for food, moving from stall to stall to look at souvenirs, gathering around the booth set up by Auckland radio stations with live performers, and anywhere else giving away prizes or gift bags. And perhaps the most distinctive sound at Polyfest is the exuberant screaming of classmates that begins once schools take the stage. No amount of pleading from the adult stage manager - so that judges can hear the opening song lyrics - can abate it.

For students– when their competition performance is out of the way, or they are merely there to be a wildly enthusiastic supporter for their classmates- a day at the festival means freedom from the confines of school and the supervision of their teachers as they move freely about the grounds; meeting friends from other schools, flirting with potential love interests, indulging in festival foods and coming away with ‘swag’ (prizes) from the ASB Village and the other sponsors’ stalls. It is the only time
of year when the whole community of practice can gather in one place; where hours of practice, planning, meetings, arguments, negotiations and resolutions are reified into the events within the festival. Tutors witness who their students have become through what they have learned. Performers glean ideas from other performances. Old members initiate the new members in the rituals and protocols of their roles. Young children who watch their older siblings from the audience may set their intention to take the stage one day; a parent may feel motivated to volunteer their time the following year. When the prizes have been given and the festival finishes late Saturday afternoon, the ASB Polyfest community of practice continues its activities, with another year added to its history and its practices further developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Pōwhiri and Opening Ceremony</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Māori Stage performances begin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity Stage performances begin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ASB Village opens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Pacific stages speech competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity Stage closes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Pacific stage competitions begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Māori and Pacific stages close</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Prizegiving</td>
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</table>

*Table 5*  ASB Polyfest Festival Schedule (ASB Polyfest Programme, 2014)

**Situating Polyfest in Pacific Performance and Popular Culture in New Zealand**

More than 40 years after its debut, the ASB Polyfest is a featured event within Auckland's diverse Pacific arts scenes and mediascapes. These include other festivals, Pacific dance and theatre companies, and television, film, radio and online content. The Pacific Music Awards recognizes Pacific talent across popular music genres. As the identity experiences of Pacific peoples in New Zealand have continuously changed and diversified, so has the artistic output and content of Pacific performers and events. There are more domestically and internationally successful Pacific musicians in New Zealand than ever before. Samoan hip-hop artist Savage was recognised for the highest selling single in NZ in 2015, which also charted in 11 other countries; and Samoan classical singing trio Sol3 Mio had the highest album sales in New Zealand for three consecutive years (Vodafone NZ Music Awards, 2016). The popularity and vibrancy of these scenes have been built on the foundation laid by the musicians,
playwrights and actors of the “Pacific renaissance” in New Zealand during the 1990s (Spoonley, 2001). Mackley-Crump (2012) posits that this renaissance was in part due to a “coming-of-age” of many New Zealand-born Pacific peoples and the establishment of key agencies whose purpose was Pacific self-determination in business, arts and health (p. 100-101).

Twenty years later, Pacific arts scenes enjoy higher profiles, more financial and institutional support, and are increasingly varied in their performance forms and artistic content. This has fostered two conditions that I argue are key for situating the ASB Polyfest: Pacific youth have more avenues than ever before to pursue as performers and/or audiences, and Pacific creatives are demonstrating greater expression of personal and in some cases marginalised identities. I describe two performance scenes in particular that have significant participation from present and past Polyfest performers: urban music and dance competitions popular with Pacific youth, and contemporary Pacific dance theatre, which has grown in popularity since the late 2000s due to training opportunities and institutional support.

Urban Dance and Music

The ASB Polyfest shares the school year calendar with a number of other competitions for students popular with - and in some cases created for - Pacific youth. The exponential popularity of the dance crew, a form of group hip-hop dance, can be attributed in part to the heavily Pacific world champion ‘megacrew’ The Royal Family from South Auckland and their Samoan lead choreographer Parris Goebel's collaborations with international pop superstars Jennifer Lopez and Justin Bieber. Shortly after Polyfest concludes in mid-March, students in Auckland begin preparing for the dance crew competitions Bring it On and Megaschools. Through my fieldwork, I saw considerable overlap in the students who joined cultural groups and dance crews.

Students in bands can enter Smokefree Tangata Beats, supported in part by the New Zealand government's Health Promotion Agency to encourage Māori and Pacific youth participation in healthy (“smoke free”) activities. In judging there is a “cultural criteria”, a modest requirement for a cultural element, such as utilising at least 25% of Māori or a Pacific language, or including cultural dance or instruments. It is noteworthy that performing ska, reggae or hip-hop can fulfill this requirement through as “a style or flavour that reflects Māori and Pacific cultures” (Smokefree Tangata Beats, 2016). The Auckland Council student competition Stand Up Stand Out welcomes multiple categories of performance and Pacific students feature heavily.
amongst the winners (Auckland Council, 2017).

**Dance Theatre**

The influence of the ASB Polyfest's lengthy history in Auckland is seen in the development of contemporary Pacific dance theatre scenes beginning in the late 2000s, assisted by new training opportunities and institutional support. A key role was played by the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA) founded in 2007 as a diploma programme as part of a larger institution, BEST Pacific Institute of Education (S. Coyle, pers. comm.). PIPA created a Bachelor of Performing Arts degree in Pacific performance, with a curriculum that includes Pacific cultural studies as well as practical training in a selection of dance forms originating from varied Pacific styles, hip-hop, contact improvisation and Pilates. Head of School Sean Coyle acknowledged that several key faculty members at PIPA who had university qualifications in dance and theatre were schoolmates and competed together in the same Polyfest group:

[They] always still dine out on that they won various categories at Polyfest back a few years ago...[Without Polyfest] we wouldn’t exist, because of the majority of students come from a Polyfest background, and it’s just a part of – often it’s the one thing at school that they really achieve in and give all to, and those students do really well at PIPA, because that’s their focus and that’s what they love (pers. comm.).

According to Coyle, the intention behind PIPA was to create more qualified Pacific dance and theatre practitioners, but has resulted in a new Pacific performance industry, helped along by the opening of a new performing arts centre in the largely Pacific suburb of Mangere, where potential audiences for their work were waiting. Many PIPA graduates returned to the ASB Polyfest as tutors, as will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

Coyle asserted that the solo choreography work of PIPA students, many using a style described by Coyle as “fusion of the contemporary with the traditional,” provided a platform for students to incorporate themes of personal identity, in many cases autobiographical. Coyle asserted that exploring personal identities was welcomed and supported by the institution, in particular for transgender students:

I’d hate for it to become a cliché, but it really is, that self-journey is so important – understanding of self and identity – in a safe learning

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8 In the final stages of writing this thesis, BEST abruptly closed due to financial difficulties, and PIPA’s future at that point was unknown (Radio New Zealand, 2017).
environment... it’s what we facilitate through curriculum, through production, through nurturing. We will always have fa’aafine and fakaleiti students, we are a very safe institution for that, for those students to truly be themselves, and that is part of that identity thing as well.

PIPA served as one example of a community of practice that supports marginalised identities that don't find belonging in historically Christian and conservative Pacific social environments; others including spoken word performance groups, LGBTQ collectives theatre companies and a community talk show have formed where creatives can publicly explore themes like ethnicity, gender and sexuality, intergenerational tensions, suicide (which disproportionately effects Pacific communities in New Zealand) and romantic relationships through performance.

Amongst these newer scenes, the ASB Polyfest has remained steadfastly popular with young people, indicating that for many students they co-exist and overlap without being in opposition to one another. This supports Mackley-Crump's argument that within Pacific performance spaces, “New songs and dances in traditional styles, sometimes created especially, exist alongside those written in other times, and mix with performances of hip hop dancing, rap, reggae, and other contemporary styles, to create the totality of Pacific cultural expression”, and this diversity of performance “is part of the reality of twenty-first century Pacific communities in New Zealand” (2012, p. 190-191).

Membership in the ASB Polyfest may be followed by or concurrent with belonging to one of many other performing arts communities of practice as performers and/or audiences. The ASB Polyfest does not allow for explicit expressions of personal or marginalised identities in the same way as dance theatre, spoken word or popular music. However, this research will show that these identities are explored and negotiated in less public ways through their membership in the Polyfest community of practice (discussed in Chapters Five and Six).

Conclusion

This chapter has situated the origins of the ASB Polyfest in the socio-economic and educational developments of the late 1960s and 1970s. The creation of communities south of Auckland city with high Māori and Pacific populations were due to the significant increase in migrations of Pacific peoples to Auckland to fulfil labour shortages in a rapidly industrialised economy, Māori relocation from rural areas, motorway construction in central Auckland, which reduced affordable housing options; and the construction of planned housing estates in Otara and Mangere.
The lack of social and leisure infrastructure in the Otara housing development, and its association with criminal activity and slum-like conditions were improved in part by the leadership of educator James Garfield Johnson, the first principal of Otara College (re-named Hillary College as a symbol of multicultural cooperation). Johnson and his colleagues embraced bicultural and multicultural educational philosophies and created curricular and pedagogical models with these philosophies at their core. The school's steadfast support of the Polynesian Club, and similar efforts at Aorere College, Papatoetoe High School, and Seddon College led to a collaboration to stage the first festival in 1976.

The festival's success and subsequent growth meant it became too large and costly for schools to manage, leading to the addition of a professional events company, relocation off of school sites to the Manukau Velodrome, and the formation of a trust board. However, the educational focus of the festival has endured, with the festival's authority and key decisions headed by teachers and school principals, and sponsorship by tertiary institutions, which have a strong presence at the festival. The festival's focus continues to be on Māori and Pacific performance, but other Pacific groups outside of the four main stages and non-Pacific groups are included in the Diversity Stage; and the addition of the Pacific speech contests promote the use of Pacific languages.

Since the 'Pacific renaissance' of the 1990s, Pacific performing arts in New Zealand are higher in profile and increasingly diverse. As Pacific performance has developed, the ASB Polyfest is one of multiple Pacific communities of practice that youth can belong to, as performers or as audiences. When it comes to the expression and negotiation of identities through performance, some Pacific communities of practice do so more explicitly than others. However, the ASB Polyfest allows for multiple expressions and negotiations of Pacific identities differently and not necessarily in opposition to experiences in other Pacific performance and social spaces.

With this overview of the festival completed, the next chapter reviews the key literature consulted for this thesis, followed by the theory and methodology used to carry out my fieldwork and frame my analysis.
Chapter Two
Review of Literature

In this chapter, I review the literature consulted for this thesis in four areas. I begin with an overview of ethnographic research in music teaching and learning. Following this, my focus narrows to particular studies of teaching and learning and music competitions most relevant to my study of the ASB Polyfest. Although this thesis is concerned with transnational communities, studies of music transmission of indigenous students within their homelands, and music subcultures taught within multicultural and global musicscapes are useful for examining common issues of identity and structures of authority experienced in these contexts. I address the problematic yet ubiquitous concepts of ‘tradition’ and ‘authenticity,’ particularly as they have been applied in the Pacific, to preclude further discussions of these concepts in the theoretical argument and the fieldwork data. Finally, I further contextualise my research with a review of both island-based and New Zealand literature about the origins of the musics and dances performed on the Pacific stages at the ASB Polyfest, and the scholarship about how ‘traditional,’ contemporary and popular music and dance performances are manifested in transnational Pacific communities in New Zealand.

Overview of Ethnographic Research in Music Teaching and Learning

I briefly discuss the background of ethnographic research in music teaching and learning within ethnomusicology and music education. These two disciplines can be described as historically independent, but more recently converging in research interests and methods. Although this research is situated in ethnomusicology, much of the relevant literature consulted has been performed by scholars of music education.

Since the 1980s, research of teaching and learning in ethnomusicology has increased, partly influenced by Bourdieu’s research on learning and cultural capital, and women’s studies, which fostered interest in women’s musical roles, including those as teachers (Szego, 2002). Ethnography in music education research began to emerge in the 1980s and has continued to develop (Krueger, 2014), with the inclusion of methods like thick description (Jorgensen, 2009), critical ethnography and narrative

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9 When compared to ethnomusicology research, ethnography in music education is likely be more hypothesis and question-driven, with the aim of evaluating teaching practices (Szego 2002). Stock (2003) asserts that music education research places more importance on institutional contexts toward the same end.
(Silverman, 2015), and interest in issues of identity (Salvador, 2015; Green, 2011). Music education has a much longer history of ‘insider research’ in researchers’ own institutions and communities, a method that is newer to ethnomusicology (Stock & Chenier, 2008), and conversely, ethnomusicologists have begun to take interest in Western art music and institutions (Nooshin, 2011; Szego, 2002).

Scholars who have critically assessed the status of teaching and learning in ethnomusicology research conclude that, in general, teaching and learning is a topic of significant interest from researchers, but that attention to it has been inconsistent (Rice, 2003; Szego, 2002). Rice (2003) comments on the omission of teaching and learning from overviews of the field by Mantle Hood and Bruno Nettl, and minimal structures within the Society for Ethnomusicology to promote the topic and related theoretical concepts, like socialisation and enculturation (see also Smith, 1987). He notes, “at the theoretical level, [teaching and learning] does not seem to be a pervasive and recognized theme in ethnomusicologists' self-understanding of their work” (2003, p. 66). Szego (2002) argues that ethnomusicology research studies that include transmission processes often do so within larger studies of socio-musical phenomena, and therefore are not solely focused on them. Stock (2003) elaborates on this point, suggesting that “transmission is also one link in chains of associated terms that suggest pathways through the literature of ethnomusicology as a whole,” for example, acculturation, diffusion, or modernisation (p. 139).

In a comprehensive review of ethnographic research of music teaching and learning, Szego (2002) takes a chronological as well as regional and theoretical approach to the ethnomusicology literature, beginning with Alan Merriam's structural-functionalist perspective which incorporated transmission in studies of music-cultures as a whole. In profiling student-teacher relationships, Szego (2002) reviews studies of transmission in classical Asian music-cultures in the 1980s and 1990s, which depart from functionalist interpretations of shared musical competence, and also highlight how industrialisation and modernisation in those societies changed transmission processes. Another major theme of Szego's review is researchers' interest in cross-cultural learning, including their own musical study with their research participants, or in developing frameworks to compare transmission methods across diverse music-cultures (2002).

Cited as emerging directions in ethnomusicological research in teaching and learning, Szego (2002) reviews two areas related by themes of power and authority in music making and learning. Aligning with emergent trends in the social sciences,
ethnomusicologists have a greater interest in the role of gender in access to the learning of music, as well as power relations in institutional educational settings, where colonialism and nationalism may dominate diverse local musics and expressions of indigeneity.

Two scholars have attempted to categorise the contexts in which transmission practices take place. Timothy Rice is one of the most prominent contemporary ethnomusicologists with research interests in teaching and learning, having published his experience of the ‘learned but not taught’ transmission of Bulgarian instrumental music, and collaborated with music educationist David Elliot (Rice, 2003, 1994). Rice asserts that research in music teaching and learning informs the researcher about the role transmission plays in the “creation and maintenance of the cultural, social, political and economic systems in which these activities are embedded” (2003, p. 65). Rice authored the Oxford Music Online - Grove Online Dictionary of Music and Musicians entry for “Transmission”: the technical (methods in which the sound and technique of music making is transmitted) the social (in particular, societal parameters for the access to music teaching and learning; whether by talent, ability, family and/or gender) the cognitive (in which Rice reviews his own work and that of Benjamin Brinner) and the institutional (‘formal’ and ‘informal’ contexts of transmission) (Rice, 2001).

Schippers (2009) utilises Rice's framework as a basis to inform music education practices based on cross-cultural analyses of music transmission. He identifies commonalities of music transmission systems as “technical skills, repertoire and performance practice, explicit or implicit theories, creativity and expression, and underlying values” (p. 65), with varied emphases on these domains shaped by the form and content of musics themselves and also by the external social factors that Rice has previously identified (2003). Schippers goes further than his predecessors in his analysis of formal/informal distinctions for both technical and institutional aspects of transmission. Szego previously recommended a rethinking of ‘formal’ and ‘informal,’ arguing that transmission and learning experiences do not usually fit into these “neat compartments,” and have intrinsic ethnocentrism with the point of departure being educational institutions in industrialised societies (2002, p. 723).10 Schippers instead suggests a series of continuua where transmission methods and contexts can be placed,

10 Szego also recommended further cross-cultural research in order to compare ethnographic studies, noting that studies are rarely replicated, or proposed theories disputed, and described the current state of transmission and learning as “fragmented” (2002, p. 722).
with aspects of more structured and didactic instruction on one end and more holistic on the other. He discusses, in particular, the shifting cultural, governmental and educational interests that may introduce musics transmitted in community settings (see also Veblen & Olsson, 2002) into institutional contexts, both in their homelands and elsewhere. He posits that holistic (‘informal’) teaching and learning processes are aligned with modernist, positivist views of education; ultimately concluding that methods and contexts on both ends of the continua can inform each other, with an end to benefiting music teaching practice across the board. This is relevant to my research, as the Polyfest competition itself is officially situated within the school system, and has ‘formal’ structures. However, my research will show that transmission within Polyfest cultural groups shares characteristics with community-based groups, and depends heavily on the expertise and support of individuals outside the school system.

Identity, a central topic in ethnomusicology, is addressed within the context of teaching and learning within a collection of studies situated in a wide variety of geographical locations and social contexts, including schools, workplaces, and community-based performing groups, edited by music educationist Lucy Green (2011). These studies discuss how musical identities are constructed through their participants' totality of transmission experiences, including those through family, schooling, social life, migration, national and/or global influences. The comparisons of ‘formal/informal’ transmission contexts and how children construct musical identities amongst them is a significant theme in the volume, and is further discussed in the following section.

The Musical Cultures of Children and Youth

Surveys of ethnomusicological literature on children and youth reveal a small body of research (Campbell & Wiggins 2012, Rice 2003). Szego argues that historically, anthropologists have viewed children as “passive receptors” of adult instruction, and cites Caputo's argument (1995 cf. Szego 2002, p. 710) that in general, research about youth and education has been devalued by researchers due to the connotation with schools as a feminine domain. More recently, Jeff Todd Titon stated that music education was not of much interest to ethnomusicologists as they “see themselves as scholars” and asserts that Alan Merriam was dismissive of the field (2008, p. 29).

In the introduction to The Oxford Handbook of Children's Musical Cultures, which is inclusive of adolescents, Campbell and Wiggins criticise anthropology for viewing children as “imperfect and unimportant because they are only in the gradual process
of becoming culturally competent adults,” and fail to recognise children's agency in modifying adult culture for their own purposes (2012, p. 2). Several researchers in the volume assert childrens’ agency in their musical practices and identities, in particular Andrea Emberly’s work with Venda children in South Africa (2012) and Elizabeth Mackinlay’s study of Aboriginal children and youth in Australia (2012), demonstrating how children are “active agents in choosing the music they will take time to listen and respond to, to make, and to choose to preserve, reinvent, or discard” (Campbell & Wiggins, 2012, p. 1). Children construct their musical worlds from a number of sources, including school music education, local and national musics, and popular musics, as well as the extramusical factors contributing to a child’s development and identity (Emberly, 2012; see also Pitzer, 2012; Pieridou-Skoutella, 2011; and McIntosh, 2006).

Youth also develop skills as teachers through mentoring less-experienced students in classrooms (Pitzer, 2012; Hebert, 2011) and at summer camps, discussed in more detail later in this section (Devarajan, 2010; Cohen, 2012; Semmes, 2002; Zelensky, 2014).

**Teacher Identity, Authority, and Values**

One of the primary topics in this thesis is the role of teachers in transnational communities. The literature on teaching in diasporic groups reviewed here highlights issues in teaching in the diaspora that will be reflected in my own research: the meanings of teacher expertise, and the challenges of replicating conditions that allow for legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) - the ‘informal’ ways of learning that can more easily take place in the home country. This includes culturally-specific behaviours of the body and speech that contain “underlying values” (Schippers, 2009, p. 65).

Teaching in the diaspora can necessitate negotiation of authority and power relations, as Nuttall (1997) and Devarajan (2010) describe in the changes to guru-student relationships, and how teaching and learning lineages from the home country affect how teachers’ expertise is regarded by their music-communities (see also Robertson, 2011). Semmes (2002) comments on the roles of visiting bandura teachers from Ukraine, who added legitimacy to a music-community of Ukrainian-Americans in New York. These studies also talk about the adjustments and negotiations that teachers must make in their pedagogies to teach effectively in that context, particularly for younger students.

Ram (2000), Robertson (2011), Nuttall (1998), and Devarajan (2010) have
employed Bourdieu’s theory of habitus (1985) to discuss how teachers approach the embodied practices of performance, asserting that such practices are far more easily obtained in the home country and presented in the studies as challenges when teaching in the diaspora. In Kalpana Ram’s discussion of classical Indian dance transmission in Australia, she describes _kuchipudi_ choreography, which represents the movements of women’s morning routines of grooming and dressing, as “the constellation of social practices that have entered into one’s embodiment” which are key aspects in the “sphere of representations” found in performance (2000, p. 270). From this example, Ram situates her argument that transmission of these movements in the diaspora must therefore be consciously undertaken” (2000, p. 262).

My research also discusses the learning histories and identities of teachers in Polyfest communities of practice. Few existing studies focus solely on the musical identities of teachers and how their personal musical histories and present social lives shape their motivations and values, a gap in the literature that this thesis aims to address. A collection of research on music teaching, learning and identity (Green, 2011) includes studies with Swedish classroom music teachers (Georgii-Hemming, 2011) and Scottish and Irish ‘trad’ musicians (Byrne, 2011; O’Flynn, 2011). Other studies of musical transmission have been inclusive of teachers’ own ideals of the personal values they want to transmit to young students. Teachers discuss concepts of ‘passing down’ knowledge but also emphasize the importance of their students’ personal development and individual expression. (Downing, 2012; Dunbar-Hall, 2011; Pitzer, 2012).

Kalpana Ram identifies an important aspect of teacher identity and experience for this thesis, which she describes as the “burden” placed on teachers in the diaspora of transmitting culture as well as music and dance (2005, p. 124). Ram argues that for teachers, the expectations of transmitting a specific notion of culture to the children of migrants becomes “an anxiety-driven project” (2000, p. 262):

There must be ‘schools’ to teach the ingredients of culture to the next generation; formal classes take over many of the functions of informal learning. Inevitably, this version of culture as explicit instruction is one which is more rigid, because it is more sharply defined and with more at stake in ‘getting it right’ (Ram, 2005, p. 124). This exemplifies the expectations of teachers in providing cultural transmission in transnational communities that my participants discuss in Chapters 6 and 7.
**Contexts of Transmission**

Several recent studies have argued for the importance of the classroom and classroom ensembles as sites for ethnographic study, in contrast to the quantitative approach common to music education research (Szego, 2002). Morrison (2001) asserts that the school-based ensemble is a culture of its own, worthy of investigation, and Hebert (2011) offers insight into the structures, rituals, and hierarchies within rehearsals and competitions.

The classroom is also a contested site where local and indigenous musics vie for space and validity in colonial education systems (Campbell & Wiggins, 2012; Diettrich, 2016; Whitinui, 2007). National musics and identities can obscure the presence of regional and local ones (Leong & Leung 2013; Ho, 2011), and when ‘folk’ musics are taught, institutions may codify which are taught and valued (Sturman, 2012). For ‘mainstream’ schools with indigenous students, individual teachers are the gatekeepers to support indigenous musics, as is discussed in two studies of Aboriginal musics in Australian schools (Dillon, 2007; Marsh, 2002).

As my research will show, Polyfest cultural group practices sometimes resemble the social atmosphere of summer camps. Although supported by adults, summer camps are a space of transmission where young people make music with a degree of autonomy in varying settings and times of day (Seeger & Seeger, 2006). Four studies of summer camps in the United States describe how unique spaces of transmission are constructed, through music-making and dancing combined with non-musical socialisation and outdoor activities and/or religious practices. At these camps, students mentor younger or less experienced campers, developing additional layers of musical identity (Zelensky, 2014; Cohen, 2012; Devarajan, 2010; Semmes, 2002).

**Diasporic Community Music Groups**

Although it is situated in schools, the ASB Polyfest shares many characteristics with diasporic community music groups. Veblen and Olsson (2002) describe how music-making may be one of several functions of community music groups, and may be concurrent with “cultural events, folkways and other arts. The music may reflect the cultural life of a geographical community, re-created community, or imagined community” (p. 130). Studies of groups in diaspora communities reveal how they function as sources of cultural transmission. Parents have found these groups as cultural and social “one stop shopping” (Semmes, 2002; p. 141) where their children could learn language, mythology, folklore, geography and history in addition to music.
and dance (Devarajan, 2010; Glowacka-Musial 2010; Kaimikaua, 2010).

As discussed in this thesis, the ASB Polyfest encompasses multiple Pacific as well as indigenous Māori cultures, other minority student groups in Auckland, the educational institutions that sponsor the events, and the national New Zealand school system. These various alignments, inclusions, and hierarchies are common for diasporic community groups, who may engage with other groups that share ethnic, regional, national or religious commonalities, as well as locating themselves within ‘multicultural’ festivals or communities. Diverse audiences, which may be composed of members of the same ethnicity or nationality, other diasporic groups, and individuals from the host country, are considered as performing groups determine how to present and include themselves into their community landscape (Devarajan, 2010; Glowacka-Musial 2010; Robertson, 2011).

**Music and Dance Competitions**

The ASB Polyfest is a competitive festival. Although music and dance competitions are culminations of teaching and learning processes, none of the ethnomusicological studies I consulted have focused exclusively on these aspects, reflecting a gap in the literature. Several briefly discuss the role of teachers or coaches (Goertzen, 2008; Williams, 2003; Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2003) and the ways that music is transmitted, through ‘jamming’ and other less structured group rehearsal (Goertzen, 2008; Turino, 1993) or through listening to recordings (Williams, 2003). Three significant themes of interest of researchers are: government interest in competitions as part of efforts to strengthen nationalist or ethnic identities, how the structures and rules of competition affect performers and performance practices, and competitions as sites of intra-community negotiation.

**Music Competitions and Nationalism**

Studies of music competitions highlight how the performing arts can be a component of post-colonial nation-building, and the economic role of music competitions in the tourist economy. Turino describes these processes within the greater context of “modernist-reformism”:

based on the idea that a ‘new culture’ and the ‘best’ or ‘most valuable’ aspects of a local, ‘traditional’ culture and the ‘best’ of foreign, ‘modern’ lifeways...what typically happens is that distinctive local arts and lifeways are ‘reformed,’ or ‘developed’ in light of cosmopolitan ethics, aesthetics and
worldview because of the cultural position of the reformers. (2000, p. 16)

Three studies situated in the Pacific describe how the ‘invention’ (Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983; cf. Stevenson, 1990) or ‘systemisation’ (Zemke-White & Kaiwai, 2004) of performance traditions is part of greater nationalist discourses that attempt to define an ethnic or ‘national’ culture. In her study of the Tahitian heiva, Stevenson (1990) describes how the government incorporates the long colonial history of the festival as a celebration of the French Bastille Day, but with more recently introduced ‘traditional’ spectacles (tattooing, firewalking and marae visits) and the ‘rebirth’ of ‘traditional’ dance – constructing a definitive Tahitian identity that can serve economic ends, such as through tourism. According to Sissons (1993), dance competitions within national festivals in New Zealand and Tahiti have both been influential in the Cook Islands. In his documentation of dance as a government project of nation-building, he argues that Cook Islands traditions, including music and dance performance, were an essential component of economic development based on tourism (1999), and through competitions at the annual Constitution Celebrations, codified a ‘national’ music and dance style as a component of a ‘national’ culture (1999, see also Alexeyeff, 2009).

Zemke-White and Kaiwai (2004) build upon Sissons’ (1993) analysis of the ‘systemisation’ and ‘politicisation’ of Māori tradition in the 1980s. They discuss how the local and national government support of The National Kapa Haka Festival (now Te Matitini) fosters nationalist and economic interests of Māori cultural performance for tourism and to bolster New Zealand’s image of biculturalism (p. 156). Although these studies are not directly related to my research, they discuss important elements in music competitions such as power, the definition of tradition and culture, and the role competitions may play in constructing identities.

Community-based music movements that garner state support and become symbolic of national or regional identities can give these movements significant authority over performance practices, as Fleming (2004) found in her study of the Irish state-supported national organisation Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (Association of Musicians of Ireland) which stages competitions around the country. Williams (2003) found that Sundanese music competitions, supported in the past by the aristocracy, and more recently by corporate sponsors, had increasing government support. Government interests were served in that the competitions would foster national pride and celebrate diversity, and general, audiences learning about Indonesian arts was good for the country.
Educational arms of government have also taken interest in music competitions to support their ends. In East Africa, Gunderson and Barz (2000) and Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2003) found that competitions in schools, supported by government ministries, leveraged long-standing folk cultures of competition to communicate educational and health-related messages while encouraging student achievement and creativity. Other competitions supported by churches, guilds, and tribal councils to maintain interest in musical subcultures may be distanced from nationalist influences, but their structures still exercise authority over performers and performances (Alexeyeff, 2009; Scales, 2007; Goertzen, 1997, 2008; Dudley, 2003).

**Competitions and Changes to Performances and Performance Practice**

One of the most significant themes in the relevant literature and a topic of interest in this thesis (see Chapters 6-8) is the control which festival structures have over aspects of performance, and the subsequent changes to performance practices, which can have far-reaching effects. For instance, competitions can transform participatory music forms into presentational performances\(^{11}\) (Turino, 2000; Fleming, 2004; Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2003). Competition rules and structures dictate that performances have time limits, entries can be codified by the age of the performer, and musical devices like instrumental solos may be extracted from their complete forms to be judged. In general, performances are constructed in such a way that removes them from socio-cultural contexts such as folklore, language and social practices (Goertzen, 1997, 2008; Scales, 2007; Fleming, 2004; Dudley, 2003).

As my participants discuss in Chapter Six, standardisation is another form of change that may be engendered by competitions. Entrance categories can require or favour certain styles or regions, meaning other, more obscure forms are potentially threatened. Performances themselves can become predictable and less engaging. A participant in Fleming’s study of Irish music competitions described the “Comhaltas style: It's bland, mechanical - because they all come out of the same machine as a result of competition.” The Comhaltas organisation in Ireland is a mainstay of music education, so the fixed and standardised styles of performance are transmitted and perpetuated (2004, p. 14). In a study of African-American step competitions, Fine (1991) found when formalized standards for judging were introduced; performances

\(^{11}\) Arguably these studies demonstrate how competitors create their own opportunities for music socialisation off the stage, such as “jamming” (Goertzen, 2008) improvisational composition (Turino, 2000) and an overall “carnival-like atmosphere” (Fleming, 2004, p. 234) where new musical collaborations and relationships can be formed.
had less “cracking” (spontaneous insults aimed at competing teams) and therefore more “boring” (p. 59).

Judges can also be biased toward certain styles or regions, which may be through local or family connections, and performers who become aware of these biases may respond by changing their performances to gain the judges’ favour (Goertzen, 1997, 2008; Scales, 2008; Fleming, 2004; Dudley, 2003; Stillman, 1996). Williams (2003) found that in Sudanese competitions, performances had to be replicated from previous entries or recordings to be judged favourably, which discouraged innovation.

In some competitions, the opposite is true, and innovation (within structured parameters) is welcomed. In Nannyonga-Tamusuza’s study of baakisimba school competitions in Uganda, which is a compulsory part of the national music curriculum, participants prided themselves on the innovative nature of the choreography in the competition. One teacher enthused, “it is as if we are in a revolution... The new ideas kill the authenticity, but they foster competition” (2003, p. 97). However, authenticity was part of the judging rubric, which was open to interpretation by the various trainers and adjudicators. The author found the judges’ definition of folk music was rooted in their own educational experiences: “handed down to people by tradition, by parents and grandparents over generations, dance of the ‘country people’...” These apparent contradictions were summarised by a trainer: “Changes [in baakisimba] are inevitable, because innovation is at the center of tradition” (2003, p. 103). For the participants in this competition, its foundations were in the re-invention of baakisimba, and ideas of authenticity and innovation were not mutually exclusive.

Stillman’s research on Hawaiian hula competitions (1996) downplays their function as strict bastions of authenticity, but sees them instead as a venue for creativity and opportunity for hula practitioners. Though the competition parameters dictate certain conventions and constraints that favor specific elements of “traditionality,” “Performers are expected to uphold standards of traditionality, but what is traditional? Judges are the final arbiter and the performers want to cater to their tastes.” Stillman maintains “Hula festivals do not represent a multigenerational continuity of practice...they are created and maintained to provide venues for performance...the fact that much of the material has been revived is secondary” (1996, pp. 385-386).
Competitions as Sites of Negotiation

In the studies reviewed, competitions are sites of negotiation; whether in the content of performances or mitigating competition with the values or qualities idealised in music-communities. Coplan (1991) argues, “performance traditions are reified forms of identity that are rarely unitary, and their status is often a matter of who claims them, under which conditions, and for what purposes within the dynamics of internal and external relations of social power” (p. 36).

Competitions can be praised for involving youth when older members of a community are worried about music practices continuing to the younger generation (Scales, 2007; Williams, 2003; Fleming, 2004). They can also be seen as creating opportunities for music-making, learning and community building not available otherwise (Goertzen, 2008; Dudley, 2003; Turino, 2000; Barz, 2000) and/or encourage new compositions (Goertzen, 2008; Nanyonga-Tamusuza, 2003; Turino, 2000). Some competitions have economic rewards, in the form of prize money (Scales, 2007), or a winning reputation that aids a future career (Williams, 2003). Nanyonga-Tamusuza describes how a “gender role-reversal” opens the male domain of drumming to female students, and vice versa for dancing (2003, p. 104).

Key criticisms of competitions, as discussed earlier, are the changes made to performance contexts and risks of standardization. Other criticisms in the literature included that competitions reliant on sponsorship can become too commercial (Dudley, 2003) motivate performers for financial reasons rather than cultural ones (Scales, 2007) or create too much of a ‘star system’ rather than an objective evaluation of talent (Williams, 2003).

As I will discuss in Chapter 8 of this thesis, some studies have taken the broader view that negotiations within competitions are part of a more significant cultural negotiation within music-communities, and an indication of music’s importance within that community. Concerning Irish folk music competitions, Fleming (2004) writes,

This type of negotiation process occurs in folk music revivals, as people work out how to interpret old material in new ways that are relevant to their current situations. These tensions exist because people care about the music and are perhaps where the vitality, and so authenticity, of folk music is found. (p. 251) Fleming (2004) found that these disagreements about the value of competition could lead to the construction of alternate performance opportunities, as critics of Comhaltas competitions created an alternative, non-competitive festival.
As my research will show, competition is a method of self-identification for music subcultures. Asserting and defining performance as ‘folk’ or ‘traditional’ identifies it in opposition to something that may be seen as a threat to, or disassociated with, community values in some way, such as colonial or global influences (Stevenson, 1990; Williams, 2003). Scales (2007) suggests that one of the “shared, cultural functions of competition is to mediate local discourses of tradition and modernity” (2007, p. 25). In his study of the construction of contemporary competitive Plains Native American powwows as separate from “traditional” non-competitive events, these mediations occurred in a “deeply felt working out” that in turn facilitated the aims of inter-tribal community building (2007, p. 24).

Competitions also allow for post-colonial nations to negotiate meaning and ownership of the musics appropriated from their colonial past. Barz (Gunderson & Barz 2000) referred to the “multiple histories” performed in kwaya competitions in Tanzania, where ensembles performed “inherited musical traditions from European missions [such as hymns] as a complement to the new musics that bridge seemingly dissimilar and seemingly conflicting social systems” (p. 382).

Tradition and Authenticity in Transmission and Performance

This section concerns the complex and often ambiguous terms tradition and authenticity, which are interwoven throughout the literature reviewed here. As my research will show, these concepts underpin the viewpoints of many ASB Polyfest tutors and judges. Researchers have discussed how ‘traditional’ musics fit into young peoples’ musical worlds along with contemporary and global music influences (Campbell & Wiggins, 2012; Pieridou-Skoutella, 2011; McIntosh, 2006), teachers’ and festival judges’ interest in innovative performance, rather than strict preservation (Downing, 2012; Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2003; Stillman, 1996), the construction and systemisation of tradition for nationalist purposes (Zemke-White & Kaiwai, 2004, Sissons, 1993, Stevenson, 1990), community negotiations within notions of ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ (Scales, 2007), and the contextual reconstruction of ‘traditional’ performance in diasporic community groups (Glowacka-Musial, 2010; Robertson, 2011; Devarajan, 2010). Discussions of ‘authenticity’ are often integrated into these discussions, which like ‘tradition’ is slippery, problematic and often ambiguous. However, these terms are somewhat unavoidable in discussing change (Urry, 1979, p. 15), especially in New Zealand (Wendt, 1983 cf. Mallon, 2010).

The problematisation of ‘tradition’ and the ways in which culture is ‘invented,’ ‘constructed’ and/or ‘articulated’ has an extensive history amongst scholars working
in the Pacific (Johnson, 2008; Handler, 2002; Clifford, 2001; Jolly & Thomas, 1992; Linnekin 1991, 1992; Handler & Linnekin, 1984; Hanson, 1989; Keesing, 1989). Writing in the context of museum studies in New Zealand and building upon an argument presented by Samoan writer Albert Wendt, Mallon (2010) argues that ‘tradition’ is problematic because it indicates a linear timeline from past to present, but also refers to a “non-time-specific” way of life (p. 364). Researchers tend to write about ‘traditional’ societies as pure, untouched and timeless. Mallon demonstrates how ‘traditions’ exist in practice: he offers the concept of fa’asamoa (the Samoan way) as an example of Samoan tradition, but maintains it is “regularly contested and reformulated to suit the needs of those who practice it” (p. 365). He maintains that some contemporary Pacific people see tradition as something to recover or preserve, while others draw inspiration from it as an authentic groundwork to support creativity and innovation. “Ultimately, tradition becomes a reality when people to act on it. While this reality may be connected to actual past ideas or practices, it connects to them in a highly selective way” (p. 365). Anae asserts “the perception that culture is static and/or constructed coexist in the experiences of Pacific peoples today” and that both views are maintained and expressed in different contexts, and are both components in the formation of cultural identities (2009, p. 64).

Mackley-Crump (2016) highlights this in performances in Pacific New Zealand festivals. The dichotomy ‘traditional/contemporary’ is employed by Pacific music-communities to differentiate non-commercial musics originating in island cultures that serve community-based functions from global popular music styles with commercial aims, usually performed in English. However, the nature of Pacific musics in New Zealand reveals the limitations of these categories, as festival performances include new ‘traditional’ compositions and ‘contemporary’ performances inclusive of ‘traditional’ characteristics. Mackley-Crump argues against the notion of ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCanell, 1973) in New Zealand Pacific festivals, finding that ‘traditional’ musics are:

- contemporaneous displays of Pacific cultures, and not re-creations and representations of traditions that are static, fixed or bound. Festival performances viewed from the outside as such, as music rooted in a linear past and brought back to life for public consumption, represent a preconceived misunderstanding. They can be performances rooted in other times, indeed, but they are routed through the contemporary day New Zealand to provide new meaning, new understandings of Pacific cultures, new passing of knowledge (2012, p. 191).
'Tradition' and 'authenticity' are also critically assessed in discussions of transmission. Older, Orientalist concepts of 'traditional' cultures viewed their transmission as “passively passed down” (Linnekin, 1992, p. 250-251) and unchanging. Ethnomusicologist Ramon Santos states, “[authenticity] is founded on the idea of cultural stasis, a belief that has been refuted by modern scholarship and the very dynamic nature of living traditions” (Schippers, 2009, p. 51). McDonald (1996) frames transmission of ‘tradition’ in the concept of social relationships and the agency of people in them. In his work with Aboriginal Australian musicians, he proposed that tradition, particularly in the context of music and dance, is based on a personal relationship network. A spiritual and/or emotional power, activated in the relationships through an intentional collaboration within a shared, repeatable activity, creates the conscious desire for the relationship network to continue into the future as it has done in the past. Tradition is a “human potential” (p. 119) and does not exist permanently in the context of objective culture; rather, it is a personal choice.

Schippers (2009) assesses ‘authenticity’ in transmission from a different perspective, as his audience is mainly Western-trained music teachers with interest in teaching musics of other cultures. However, he makes cogent points about the problematic nature of ‘authenticity’ and ‘context’ in music transmission. Authenticity has too much association with decline, and is conditional on non-disruption that does not correspond to “musical realities” (p. 51). He argues that “almost all music is transmitted out of context” (p. 59) and that authenticity's association with “goodness” in schools (p. 53) matters far less than knowledgeable and effective teaching in both content and method.

Pacific Music and Dance

In this section, I review literature pertaining to the song and dance forms of the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tonga relevant to the performances on the Pacific stages at the ASB Polyfest. These resources also provide most definitions for the Glossary. Analysis of style, choreography, or comparisons of performances at Polyfest with island-based performances are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a review of these resources provides necessary context for the viewpoints of the research participants in future chapters as they discuss transmission and concepts of tradition in transnational contexts. This review is also important in that it reveals significant gaps in the literature on music and dance in the Pacific, and highlights areas for future research. The majority of island-based research has been conducted in the 1970s-1990s,
and by non-Pacific scholars. There is also minimal island-based research on transmission processes. Other gaps include an updated study of the Constitution Celebrations in Rarotonga (presently named Te Maeva Nui), studies of Samoa’s national Teuila Festival, of which a music and dance competition is a major event; and the Heilala Festival in Tonga, where solo dance features prominently in the Miss Heilala beauty pageant.12

The island-based literature reviewed here falls into two broad categories – studies of socio-cultural concepts, of which music and dance are a part, by indigenous scholars; and fieldwork-based ethnomusicological research by foreign researchers. A significant part of the latter was carried out between the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s in the form of musicological surveys and snapshots of musics and dances as part of the social life of island societies. I follow with a review of New Zealand-based literature, which concerns Pacific music and dance in community settings and festivals, schools, and popular music.

Tongan Scholarship

Fortunately for scholars who lack fluency in Tongan language, a number of Tongan scholars have published writings in English on Tongan performance. The etic concept of ‘dance’ is an inadequate translation of the Tongan concept faiva, described by ‘Okusitino Māhina as a “Tongan composite performance art” (2005, p. 17) and by Ka’ili as “a performance of the body, whether in a dance, drama, game, or task” (2008, p. 44; see also Ferris-Leary, 2013.) The literature on Tongan faiva encompasses poetry and poetic imagery, aesthetics, socio-spatial relationships, and social hierarchies. Philosopher and educationist ‘I. Futa Helu’s essays on poetry (Helu & Janman, 2012) contextualise how “Tongan poetry was, and is, inextricably connected with music and dance” (Helu 2012, p. 50). Māhina’s essay on the poetry of Queen Salote (2005) is a valuable resource for terminology and philosophical contexts related to ta’anga (poetic text) and its composition. Situated in Tongan communities in Hawaii, Ka’ili’s doctoral dissertation situates performance in Tongan socio-spatial relations (tauhi vā) and how dance plays a role in the enhancement of transnational community relationships (2008).

12 Presently there is no dance performance competition at the bi-annual Niue Cultural Festival, which debuted in 2013.
Studies of Tongan and Samoan Music-Cultures by Foreign Researchers

American anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler’s studies, based in fieldwork from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s, make up the most comprehensive body of literature on Tongan performance by an individual foreign researcher, and many of the sources by Tongan scholars reviewed above cite her work. The volume *Poetry in Motion – the Aesthetics of Tongan Dance* (1993), a collection of eight essays, includes discussions of the importance of poetry and poetic devices like *heliaki*, the origins of dance forms and the social and ritualistic contexts when dance is performed, and the ways in which performance represents social life and also social hierarchies. Included in the volume is a thorough study of the choreological aspects of Tongan performance, with an analysis using Laban notation.

New Zealand ethnomusicologists Richard Moyle and Mervyn McLean shared research approaches and methods. Their work focused on musical ethnography, musical transcriptions, organology, and field recordings, and subsequently comparative musicological analysis amongst the Pacific musics they studied. Their methods and interests were frequently at odds with Kaeppler's more anthropological approach, and have been well-documented in reviews of each other’s work and letters to the editor in the journal *Ethnomusicology* (see for example Kaeppler, 1994; Moyle, 1990). Moyle's publications, and McLean's encyclopedia-style and “unashamedly ethnographic” (Moyle 2001, p. 173) *Weavers of Song* (1999) follow similar organisation: historical information referencing earlier writings of sailors, missionaries, and anthropologists. They includez descriptions of musical instruments with Hornbostel-Sachs classification, song types and their characteristics, descriptions of dance forms and contexts in which they were performed, and shorter entries on composition, learning, and ownership. *Weavers of Song* (1999) heavily references Moyle’s body of research.

McLean, who argued that there was a lack of attention to learning in ethnomusicology literature, also published a compendium of references to dance and music learning across the Pacific (1990) with Alan Merriam's theories of universal competence and specialised competence as a point of analysis. Though the data are mainly minor components of larger-scale studies, the article is valuable in its descriptions of rehearsals, contests, and festivals as contexts of transmission.

Moyle's survey in Samoa, based on his PhD fieldwork from 1966-1969 (Moyle, 1988), focuses mainly on song forms and function and musical instruments, but has a short section on dance. Moyle situates the dances historically, drawing on
observations by Mead, Krämer, Pratt, and Shore, and is particularly useful for the context of the chiefly roles and relationships portrayed in the *taualuga*. Moyle follows a similar organisation in his publication *Tongan Music*, based on fieldwork between 1973 and 1976 (Moyle, 1987). In this volume he dedicates more writing to dance - referencing the integration with poetry and aesthetics, but focused on constructing histories of dance forms and the structure of accompanying sung texts.

Dutch music and dance educators Ad and Lucia Linkels’ fieldwork nearly 20 years after Richard Moyle’s provided a snapshot of Samoa in 1982, cited as a time of transition by the authors. Indicated by the book’s title, *From the Conch Shell to the Disco*, the Linkels aimed to document the practices of ‘traditional’ music and dance as well as comment on the younger generation’s interest in overseas influences. Well-documented with photographs, the authors describe dance forms and performances in more detail than Moyle; including dance forms with implements which are not performed in New Zealand, providing an important point of comparison. Other performance ensembles like brass bands, string bands, and professional dance groups as well as contexts for playing and listening to popular music are included in the study.

The Linkels traveled to Tonga in 1986 with similar aims as their Samoan fieldwork (Linkels, 1992). Though the information on song forms, poetry, composition, and dances is similar to Moyle or Kaeppler in content, the text is more descriptive and less analytical, and written for a wider audience. The Linkels also show more interest in situating performance in the social context of, as described in their Samoan study, a nation in transition, with more attention paid to imported instruments, brass bands, and pop music.

**Cook Islands and Niue**

Moyle authored two pilot surveys of the Northern Cook Islands and Niue in 1985 and 1984 respectively, in cooperation with local governments and interlocutors under the Territorial Survey of Oceanic Music programme. The reports follow a similar format to his studies in Samoa and Tonga, with an organology complete with photographs, musical transcriptions and description of song forms, including songs for occasions, games, hymns, chants and children’s songs; and songs that accompany dance. Dance is not a primary the focus of either survey, but terminology and descriptions of dance forms (both those in use and those no longer performed) and contexts are provided. The Northern Cook Islands study provides singing terminology
and characteristics of vocal production, and importantly, regional musical, movement and dialectical variations from the islands surveyed (Manihiki, Tongareva, and Rakahanga) that are not part of later, Rarotongan-based studies. In Niue, Moyle briefly describes how organised rehearsals are a part of music learning, and also draws from his previous fieldwork to comment on Samoan influences on hymn singing and the musical activities of the small Tongan community.

Other studies in the Cook Islands focus on Rarotonga. Jeffrey Sissons examined Cook Islands dance in its economic and political context from 1965 to the early 1990s, within the greater narrative of nation-building, processes of formulation of a nationalised Cook Islands identity, and government influence on the construction of a ‘national’ culture in the premise of building a tourist industry (1999). His study also identifies the origins of the national dance competition in 1968, where competition rules were a start to the codification of dance performances, and highlighted the stylistic differences amongst island groups. He discusses the negotiations of what was ‘authentic’ Cook Islands style and, influenced by competition in Tahiti, the grooming of the event for tourist consumption. He follows with a discussion of the ‘nationalised’ tradition that characterised the representation of the Cook Islands at the Pacific Festivals of the Arts, which both “globalised and localised its context” in the Pacific (p. 57).

Government institutional involvement in dance is also reflected in the volume Cook Islands Culture (Akono'anga Maori) (‘Ama et al., 2003). The chapter on Performing Arts was authored by then-secretary of the Cook Islands Ministry of Cultural Development Sonny Williams and curator of the Cook Islands Museum, Jean Tekura’imoana Mason. Following a similar format to the publications by Ad and Lucia Linkels, the text is a snapshot of Cook Islands performance content and context in the early 2000s, inclusive of ‘traditional’ dance and song/chant forms (importantly, the chapter highlights some stylistic differences amongst island groups), drumming, church music, string bands, popular music recording artists, and the use of electronic instruments. The authors also describe how the Cook Islands National Arts Theatre, a government initiative, constructed and represented dance to the nation and overseas.

More recently, in a study of contemporary issues in traditional dance in the Cook Islands, Alexeyeff (2009) discusses conflicts between generational ideas of tradition and modernity, and how globalization, tourism, and gender ideals play a part in dance performance and its position in society. In particular, Alexeyeff breaks new ground in her examination of feminine codes of behaviour and gender play
amongst cisgendered females and gender-liminal laelae.

Pacific Music and Dance in New Zealand

The literature on Pacific music and dance in New Zealand reveals its multi-layered and multi-faceted positioning in private and public, local and national spheres. In scholarly writings about Pacific communities, the performing and media arts projects of the moment are often cited as examples of how these communities are asserting and constructing transnational identities (Borell, 2005; Teaiwa & Mallon 2005; Macpherson, 1999, 2001, 2010; McIntosh, 2001). The small body of literature specifically on music and dance can be categorised into community and festivals, schools, and popular music.

Community and Festivals

Richard Moyle outlines the variety of contexts in which Pacific music and dance is performed in New Zealand, surveying intra-community contexts like churches and celebrations, and inter-community representations at national festivals (2002). Importantly, he identifies a number of ways that transnational Pacific communities organise and re-organise themselves to enable the production of music and dance performance, for example, in the creation of community trusts eligible for public arts funding. He also highlights the significance of school cultural groups, and how they function “as a point of social contact with students’ families, local communities, and other schools” (p. 103).

Jared Mackley-Crump (2012) has carried out the most significant ethnomusicological research about Pacific festivals in New Zealand. Focusing primarily on the Pasifika Festival in Auckland (see also Talo, 2008) and the Positively Pasifika Festival in Wellington, he concludes that Pacific festivals are a public manifestation of the kinship networks theorised in Hau'ofa's ‘Sea of Islands’ (1994); a demonstration of how New Zealand Pacific peoples present and negotiate ideas of place, culture and identity. The study also entails a detailed and comprehensive overview of Pacific festivals in New Zealand from the 1970s. Mackley-Crump identifies the ASB Polyfest as one of the most important moments of Pacific festivalisation in New Zealand, and outlines how ‘Polyfests’ (school-based Pacific festivals and competitions) have emerged in other cities and regions around the country.
Schools

Some research about Pacific music and dance in New Zealand is situated in general educational discourses, where school cultural groups are representational of broader notions of the place of culture in schools and its role in educational achievement. This research is part of an extensive body of literature which problematises the New Zealand school system's engagement with Māori and Pacific students, and the cultural, educational and achievement disparities of a colonised system of education (see also Milne, 2013; Webber, 2011; Ferguson et al., 2008; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Nakhid, 2003; Coxon, et al., 2002; Jones, 1991). Manu'atu (2000), Kepa and Manu'atu (2008) and Waters and Crocket (2013) discuss ways that school cultural groups participating in the ASB Polyfest have been leveraged to negotiate connections between national educational structures and Pacific students and their families.

Two other studies focus on the construction of positive identities through performance instruction and participation. Mackley-Crump's ethnography of Pacific secondary school students' participation in the musical ‘Malaga: The Journey’ supports conclusions that Pacific-themed content in school curriculum contributes to positive identity construction and overall more positive affiliations with schooling (2011). In a volume of Oceanic perspectives on dance education, Samoan New Zealander Olivia Taouma describes her cross-cultural approach to dance pedagogy while teaching Pacific students in New Zealand secondary and tertiary institutions, fostering Pacific values of family and community alongside Western ideals of individuality and competition (2016).

In an essay discussing the current landscape of Pacific dance in New Zealand, Lisa Taouma (2002) highlights the internal negotiations within the ASB Polyfest amongst stage coordinators, tutors and students about the delineations of ‘traditional’ performance with contemporary influences, arguing that dance groups in the Island homelands are embracing hybridity with other forms of dance. Two other studies concerning the ASB Polyfest both have similar shortcomings in their methodology and conclusions. Kornelly (2008) and Gershon and Collins (2007) make the broad generalisation that Polyfest cultural groups are representational of national political discourses. Their case studies of one school each over relatively brief fieldwork periods pay perfunctory or no heed to the experiences of students in those groups; ignoring of the complexities of their identities as transnational Pacific peoples and their role in the construction of a unique Polyfest culture within their schools.
Gershon and Collins’ (2007) ethnography of Māori and Samoan performing groups attempts to determine how the students “perform their relationship to the New Zealand nation” (p. 1797). Despite the fact that the students were not interviewed, the authors conclude the Samoan group members were “out of place” (p. 1797) in New Zealand from a brief period of rehearsals and interviews with ten teachers; citing the “nostalgia” (p. 1813) expressed in their chosen repertoire and the hierarchies displayed in rehearsals. As the students themselves are not engaged about their relationship to the performance repertoire or the processes of learning it, the complexities of their experience are ignored.

Kornelly’s study, a PhD dissertation, has further problematic conclusions. The author attempts to assess contemporary Pacific New Zealand cultural production within the ASB Polyfest, and apply Anae's discussion of pan-ethnic Pacific labels (1997); in which Anae discusses the interplay of Pacific youths’ self-identification with contemporary pan-Pacific labels and their manifestation in popular culture, as well the reinforcement provided by institutional spaces (of which the ASB Polyfest is one).

Kornelly takes up Anae’s argument (1997) that the nationalised celebratory aspects of pan-Pacific cultural production in New Zealand has obscured the socio-economic disparities experienced by Pacific peoples; however, this discussion is not fully developed as it relates to Kornelly’s research participants. She concludes that students in the festival present, and are presented with, symbols of a pan-Pacific identity– an experience that is reflective of most festival participants (2008, p. iv). Pacific festivals have been found to create an experience of “unity and diversity” through recognition of similarities amongst Pacific peoples, but also an appreciation for national and localised differences (Mackley-Crump 2012, p. 230), and Kornelly fails to explore the meanings of the latter. The identity construction experienced as part of ASB Polyfest's individual Pacific stages, and the subtleties of how individual or multi-ethnic Pacific/non-Pacific identities interplay with notions of pan-ethnic unity are also not considered. In sum, Kornelly considers her Pacific participants with the very homogeneity that Anae (1997) warns against.

Kornelly also commits to an argument concerning if student experiences are truly “cultural” (2007, p. 205) citing ‘Okusitino Māhina’s comments on the performative nature of the ASB Polyfest (Manu’atu, 2001). Kornelly states:

Māori and Pacific Island youth from Auckland live in a culturally and socially heterogeneous space where they learn about the world around them from many different cultural and social perspectives, most of which have no direct connection to the ways of life depicted in traditional performances (2007, p.
However, the utility of this argument is unclear for two reasons: it ignores the processes as to how culture is constructed and meaning is created within school cultural groups, and reinforces the problematic notion that “culture” in the Pacific is something passed down intact and passively received, rather than actively constructed in new contexts (Linnekin, 1992).

**Popular Music**

Popular music played an important role in the Pacific arts renaissance of the 1990s when New Zealand-born Pacific people were “coming of age” and asserting more influence in their communities (Mackley-Crump, 2012, p. 100). Today, contemporary and popular music and dance forms, as discussed in Chapter One, exist alongside the ASB Polyfest as areas of interest and sources of identity for young Pacific people. Mackley-Crump (2012) found that at Pacific festivals, festival organisers viewed popular music performances as a means to appeal to and to involve young, New Zealand-born festival participants, and these performances were a component of the celebration of the diverse creative endeavours of Pacific peoples. However, the place of popular music at Pacific festivals was also contested in terms of its authenticity as ‘real’ Pacific music, particularly in the context of loss of “traditional” forms both in New Zealand and the Pacific (p. 195). Talo (2008) argues that the presence of hip-hop artists at the Pasifika Festival in Auckland firmly establishes hip-hop as part of the spectrum of Pacific musics, creative expression, and identities. Performances at Pacific festivals and other community events allow Pacific and Māori focused record companies to build audiences and market their artists (Zemke-White & Televave, 2007).

Scholarship about Pacific popular music artists outlines the ways in which Pacific musicians have identified with African-American and Afro-Caribbean music forms, and their interpretations of these forms to construct unique local identities and connect within and across Pacific communities both in New Zealand (Cattermole, 2013; Televave & Zemke, 2011; Zemke-White & Televave 2007; Zemke-White 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005); and throughout the Pacific diaspora (Henderson, 2007). The popularity of hip-hop and roots reggae with Pacific artists and audiences is explained by their identification with these musics’ themes of struggle, colonialism, and resistance (Zemke-White, 2001, 2002). Though less political in nature, r’n’b “can also express narratives, alignments and ethnic pride” (Zemke-White, 2005, p. 95) and connect Pacific artists and listeners to their Christian identities through its origins in soul and gospel (Televave & Zemke, 2010). In sum, “listening to Pacific artists in any
musical genre has meaning for Pacific people” (Zemke-White, 2002, p. 120).

**Conclusion**

This chapter is a review of the literature relevant to this thesis. I surveyed the topic of ethnographic research in music teaching and learning, situating its place in ethnomusicology and its growing commonalities with music education research interests and methods. Particular studies of youth and transmission contexts of music subcultures in both schools and communities highlight issues that will be discussed in my own research findings. The literature on competitions highlights how performance practices can be influenced by competition rules and structures, and identifies them as sites for the negotiation of local, national and global influences. I then discussed tradition and authenticity, which were underlying themes in the previous sections. This foregrounds future discussion of these topics in the thesis fieldwork data. Finally, I reviewed the literature on Pacific performance relevant to the ASB Polyfest, beginning with island-based studies, then moving into the contexts in which performance has been researched within New Zealand, including popular music. The next chapter builds upon the concepts presented here, outlining the theoretical framework and the methods used in my fieldwork.
Chapter Three
Theory and Method

In this chapter, I build upon the literature review and introduce the theoretical concepts used as a basis for this research. I begin with a useful framework to analyse music transmission, cultural construction, and change within music-making: Etienne Wenger’s Communities of Practice (1998). I then move to frame Pacific peoples in New Zealand as transnational communities, and the concept of transnationalism as cultural production, specifically as it pertains to the expressive arts and their role in identity construction. The final theoretical concept introduced is polycultural capital, (Mila-Schaaf, 2010) developed to identify the strengths of Pacific peoples in New Zealand who successfully operate within a variety of social and professional contexts. The second half of this chapter introduces the fieldwork performed for this research. Utilising recommendations from ethnomusicology and Pacific studies scholarship, I outline methods and methodologies pertinent to ethnographic research with Pacific peoples in New Zealand. I also discuss the particular needs and limitations of research with youth in schools. I conclude this section with reflections on the fieldwork process and my positioning as a researcher.

Communities of Practice

Wenger defines communities of practice as “formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor” (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). They are places where theories and understandings of the world are developed, negotiated and shared. The result of this collective negotiation is the pursuit of a joint enterprise, which is “defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it” (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). Over time, a community creates a shared repertoire of resources for negotiating meaning, such as vocabulary, specific concepts, routines, symbols, actions or stories. This shared repertoire not only reflects the history of engagement, but it is also applicable for future development of practice. Through practice, communities determine the competence (or lack of competence) that allows individuals to be members (or outsiders).

The Communities of Practice (CoP) framework builds upon Wenger’s work with anthropologist Jean Lave. In their publication Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation (1991) Lave and Wenger aimed to theorise, beyond the binary relationship of master/student, how apprenticeships helped people to learn through the observation of experts, and gradually increased participation in the practice.
Learning is defined as social participation, where it is inseparable from context and lived experience. Given that learning happens through social participation in the world, Wenger posits that within those processes, individuals find and continually negotiate meaning. Through participation (the action of taking part in a community and constructing identities in relation to that community) and reification (the act of giving form to their experience and providing a point of focus for the negotiation of meaning) members shape and are shaped by their experiences.

Wenger’s conception of practice differs from other usage as a dichotomy between theory and practice. Practice is social action: doing within the social and historical contexts that provide the structure and meaning for a community’s actions and is inclusive of both explicit and tacit knowledge. It is these frameworks that enable communities to sustain mutual engagement. Wenger also describes practice as “not a stable or fixed object, but an emergent structure subject to constant reinvention” (Wenger, 1998, p. 102).

Identity is at the core of CoP. Fundamental to Wenger’s thesis is that learning is a universally human experience and reflective of the social nature of human beings; and as individuals participate in and contribute to the practices of their communities, learning can be transformative for their identities. Wenger argues, Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming...We accumulate skills and information, not in the abstract as ends in themselves, but in the service of an identity. It is in that formation of an identity that learning can become a source of meaningfulness and personal and social energy (1998, p. 215).

Individuals negotiate their own identities and the identities of others through practice, and in the context of membership in that particular community as well as reconciling with identities formed across other practices. The formation of identity is an ongoing process and negotiated in broader, global systems and contexts as well as local ones.

The concept of trajectory is important to the negotiation of meaning and formation of identity through communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 153). Development of practice requires enough time for the community to engage with one another to share a significant amount of learning, what Wenger describes as “a shared history of learning” (p. 93). Identity formation is also placed in this temporal context as members are simultaneously dealing with specific situations, participating in the histories of
certain practices, and involved in becoming certain persons. As trajectories, our identities incorporate the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present (Wenger, 1998, p. 154).

Trajectory also contextualises the interaction of old and new members, and how these relationships embody the history of practice. As the roles of ‘old’ and ‘new’ shift as new generations of members join, so do perspectives – and identities.

CoP has a great deal of utility in examining music transmission. It encompasses the totality of experiences of groups of people making music and their unique practices, including the construction of rehearsals, notions of expertise, conditions of membership, and in the case of music and dance competitions, rules of entry and methods of evaluation. In the foreword to a volume of case studies of communities of musical practice in Ireland, (Kenny, 2016) Wenger summarises:

Music lends itself to a social learning perspective: how communities for around musical practice, how one becomes a practitioner and takes on the identity of a musician, and how the practice evolves out of the dynamics of the community and its members (p. viii).

CoP does not rely on dichotomies of formal/informal learning, or institutional/community contexts. It includes the learning and meaning-making from practices of all its members, including teachers and students, but is not limited to them. It also acknowledges that individual identities are constructed through membership in multiple communities of practice, not only musical ones, described as “multimembership” (Wenger, 1998, p. 150). A key aspect of identity formation, argues Wenger, is through the negotiation of “conflicting forms of individuality and competence as defined in different communities” (p. 160). Communities that are well-established have developed boundaries, and conflicts amongst these boundaries must be mediated through “reconciliation” (p. 161). This concept is applied in this thesis to aspects of identity like religion, ethnicity and family relationships mediated with membership in Polyfest communities of practice.

Identity is a significant topic in ethnomusicological research (Rice, 2007, 2010) and CoP places learning and change as foci around which to explore identity. CoP is also useful in discussing change, and how music-cultures are continually constructed and articulated. The concept of trajectory is a lens to examine how practices, repertoires, and identities change over time, and how these shifts occur in communities as new members join. This aligns with notions of the dynamism of
transnational communities, discussed further in this chapter, and refutes fixed notions of tradition and authenticity.

**Theorising Transnational Communities**

Discourses on transnationalism, and its “awkward dance partner,” diaspora (Faist, 2010), provide lenses in which to examine the lives of individuals and communities whose movements and ties exist across political borders, particularly in recent decades due to changes in transport and technology (Faist, 2000, 2004, 2010; Ben Rafael & Yitzhak, 2009; Gilroy, 2003; Vertovec, 1997, 1999, 2001; Anthias, 1998; Appadurai 1996, Clifford, 1994, 2001; Safran, 1991; Hall, 1990, 1993). In academic discourse, both transnationalism and diaspora have been critiqued for being applied too broadly in research (Faist, 2010; Vertovec, 1999) and resulting in “an often confusing array of perspectives” (Vertovec, 1999, p. 448; see also Slobin, 2012). Some scholars have addressed this by organising groups of people and their economic and social activities into typologies of transnationalism and diaspora. For this research with Pacific peoples in New Zealand, I look to Faist’s (2004) concept of transnational social space, which “denotes the cultural, economic and political practices of individual and collective actors within territories or places,” which are unhindered by geographical distance (2004, p. 4). Faist identifies transnational communities as a type of transnational social space, which are “dense and continuous sets of social and symbolic ties, characterised by a high degree of intimacy, emotional depth, moral obligation and sometimes even social cohesion” (2004, p. 9).

Situating music-making in transnational communities adds another layer to the production of culture and the construction of identities that interest ethnomusicologists (Rice, 2007; Turino, 2004). Vertovec argues that transnationalism and identity “inherently call for juxtaposition” and the perception of a shared identity is the grounding for many peoples’ transnational networks (2001, p. 573). In his discussion of transnationalism as cultural production, Vertovec describes the “world-wide flow of cultural objects, images and meanings resulting in variegated processes of creolisation, back-and-forth transferences, mutual influences, new contestations,

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13 Faist (2010) asserts that transnationalism and diaspora are terms whose meanings and applications “intersect, jostle and converse” (2010, p. 16) but that “diaspora has been often used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland, whereas *transnationalism* is often used both more narrowly – to refer to migrants' durable ties across countries – and more widely, to capture not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organisations” (2010, p. 9).
negotiations and constant transformations” (1999, p. 451). He asserts that the arts and creative industries are where the construction of transnational identities is most visible, and where tensions amongst local and global influences are mediated. The arts are especially cogent for transnational youth whose “socialization has taken place with the cross-currents of differing cultural fields” (1999, p. 451).

Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino argues that music and other expressive arts are central to the understanding of diasporic identities and in fact key to the “very existence” (2004, p. 2) of diasporic groups. He describes the cycle in which forms of creative expression are publicly produced and received, and then, in turn, continue to influence the construction of identities:

Artistic practices have a special place in the realization and presentation of identity because they are usually framed as heightened forms of representation for public perception, practice, and effects. Once externalized through public artistic forms, the meanings subjectively produced become part of the environment that dialectically shape the emergent models of the self (2004, p.10)

From the 1990s, scholarship in New Zealand about Pacific identities has cited the theatre productions, creative writers and popular musics of the day as signs of transnational Pacific identity construction. As examples, Macpherson (2004a) discusses how novels, comedy theatre, television, and film have been contexts where Samoan New Zealanders were able to critique aspects of Samoan society openly, and Zemke-White (2005) demonstrates how the appropriation of hip-hop and r’n’b represents social and historical rapport amongst Pacific and Māori peoples, and content that expresses local themes and identities (see also Borell, 2005; Teaiwa & Mallon 2005; Macpherson, 1999, 2001, 2010; McIntosh, 2001; Zemke-White, 2000, 2002).

Transnational Pacific Peoples and Polycultural Capital

A number of researchers have identified the ability to successfully negotiate multiple cultural, educational, professional and social contexts as a particular strength of Pacific peoples in New Zealand (Faa'ea-Semeatu, 2011, 2015; Webber, 2011; Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Tupuola, 2004). In school research, the longitudinal research of Kay Hawk and Jan Hill in south Auckland schools identified the multiple worlds of most Pacific students: family, culture, church, school, part-time paid employment, and the world of their peers – and that students developed strategies “in order to cope with the conflicting values, expectations, and pressures of the different worlds”
Faa'ea-Semeatu describes gifted Pacific students as “transformers,” who, like the shapeshifting alien robots, are able to “flow fluidly between worlds, transforming rapidly with ease” (2015, p. 35). Anne-Marie Tupuola (2004) appropriates the term “edgewalkers” to describe New Zealand- and United States-born Pacific youth, who affiliate with multiple local and global identities and demonstrate cultural resilience. Mila-Schaaf expands upon this concept, asserting that “second gen[eration]” Pacific people in New Zealand have multiple forms of, or “’poly’cultural” capital, giving them agency to choose which cultural contexts in which to operate and how to go about doing so (2010, p. 27). Mila-Schaaf adapts Bourdieu’s concepts of social space and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985) and proposes that the ability to speak Pacific languages, secure identity as a Pacific person, acceptance by the Pacific community and practicing Pacific values are forms of Pacific cultural capital with their own forms of status and power. In addition to inter- and intra-generational relational spaces within Pacific communities and those with Māori, second-generation Pacific peoples must negotiate mainstream New Zealand contexts in social, professional and educational environments.

Polycultural capital refers to an accumulation of distinctive cultural resources: intertextual skills (a sense of how these cultural texts relate to another), the power to negotiate between them and the ability to deploy these symbolic resources strategically in different contexts (2010, p. 297). “Poly” (from the Greek polys, many) implies multiple interrelationships where individuals have the agency and ability to choose selectively among a variety of knowledge traditions, according to their context and purpose (see also Milne, 2013). Mackley-Crump (2011) cited edgewalking and polycultural capital as crucial to the success of staging Pacific festivals in New Zealand. Festival organisers were able to interface successfully with the government and educational institutions that many of them that worked for, whilst leveraging their community networks to ensure the participation and skills needed for their festivals to thrive.

**Methods and Methodologies**

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) argues that, historically, academic authority in the Pacific has been asserted by outsiders, privileging this outsider knowledge over Pacific indigenous knowledge systems. She describes the problematic relationship between Pacific people and research:

For Pacific peoples and other indigenous communities, research is embedded
in our history as natives under the gaze of western science and colonialism. Research is a site of contestation not simply at the level of epistemology or methodology but in its broadest sense as an organized scholarly activity that is deeply connected to power. (p. 5)

There has been a demonstrated need for methodologies that will improve the efficacy of research with Pacific peoples in New Zealand, as well as greater reciprocity with and ownership by research participants.

Vaioleti argues that, in New Zealand, “Pacific peoples have endured years of disempowering research, with little social or economic improvement in their health and education” (2003, p. 14). Anae (2001) and McIntosh (2001) refer to Pacific residents of south Auckland who have become embittered by the amount of research in criminology, health, housing and education which subsequently is not shared with the participants; seemingly to be only to the researchers’ advantage and further marginalising the area. However, the involvement of indigenous and minority scholars in developing methodologies and determining the parameters of research within their communities is increasing (Smith, 2005, p. 5). Both Pacific and non-Pacific researchers should “examine her/his own lenses to articulate her/his current understanding of voice in this particular community, and to make a sincere effort to either or both suspend and/or unlearn colonizing perspectives” (Benham, 2006, p. 35).

A number of Pacific research approaches, methodologies and frameworks, most of which have been conceived for research in health and education, have been developed by institutions and individual researchers in order to conduct research with Pacific communities in ways that are culturally appropriate and relevant (Airini, et al., 2010; Ministry of Health 1995; Thaman, 2016; Vaioleti, 2003). Anae (2007) acknowledges that developments in Pacific research have provided tools for non-Pacific researchers and institutions, and New Zealand-born Pacific researchers, to construct effective research relationships. However, she asserts that existing Pacific research models can be problematic in two ways. Firstly, many are situated in island-based concepts (see also Tunufa’i, 2016), which are not an accurate reflection of a New Zealand Pacific population that is predominantly New Zealand-born. Secondly, much of the extant research “has glossed over and ignored the cultural complexities of not only the multi-ethnic nature of Pacific communities, but also the intra-ethnic nuances of the diverse groupings and identities of Pacific peoples in New Zealand” (see also Manuela & Sibley, 2014) such as New Zealand-born/recent migrants, multi-ethnic individuals, and generational differences (2007, p. 1-2). She recommends that researchers utilise both Pacific and Western methodologies, choosing whatever best
suits the interaction between cultural complexities, research questions, and methods; suggesting that some Western methodologies, for example, life-story interviews, “are very ‘Pacific’” (p. 16).

Following this recommendation of applying both Pacific and Western approaches (and cognisant of the limitations of both) I discuss which Pacific research frameworks informed my fieldwork, alongside and/or overlapping with recommendations from ethnomusicology (Barz & Cooley, 2008) and their shared emphases on relationships, collaboration, and reciprocity.

**Relationships in Fieldwork Research**

Relationships have specific characteristics in a Pacific context and Fijian, Samoan and Tongan cultures view relationships in the context of *va* (Vaioleti, 2003). Wendt (1996) defines *va* as “the space between...not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates...the space giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change.” Tamasese et al. (2005) assert that the Samoan sense of self is a relational one, with the self “having meaning only in relationships with other people, not as an individual” (p. 303). The self is sacred in nature and is not separable from the *va* or “relational space” between an individual and their family and community (Tamasese et al., 2005). As relationships between people change depending on context, the *va* should be nurtured to accommodate this fluidity (Taufe’ulungaki, 2004). Mila-Schaaf (2010) suggests that *va* is congruous with harmonious, balanced relationships.

Airini et al. (2010) argue that, in the research process, individual agendas should be transformed into relational contexts between people, things and environment in the nurturing and protection of mutually respectful relationships, for the good of what is at stake...This means that working together involves attaining balance and harmony in all human interconnections and relationships — in expectations, behaviours, and communication (p. 39).

Anae (2007) constructs her recommendations for best practice in Pacific research based upon the Samoan philosophical reference point *teu le va*, which translates approximately as “take care of the relationship” (p. 18)

The “new fieldwork” in ethnomusicology is one that is rooted in relationships and shared experiences (Barz & Cooley 2008; Kisliuk, 2008; Rice, 2008; Beaudry, 2008).
According to Titon,

fieldwork is no longer viewed principally as observing and collecting…but as experiencing and understanding music. The new fieldwork leads us to ask what it is like for a person (ourselves included) to make and to know music as lived experience. (2008, p. 25)

Barz and Cooley (2008) use the metaphor of shadows to suggest how the ethnographer’s own histories cross those belonging to research participants and to the field itself.

According to Titon, fieldwork is “intersubjective and personally transformative” (2008, p.18) and “what we can know arises out of our relations with others” (p. 38). Titon describes how the affiliation between participant and researcher in ethnomusicology can be one of an implied but unspoken reciprocal agreement, a hierarchal relationship of master and apprentice, or a “combination of friendship and tacit contract” (p. 33). The positioning of researcher and participants in ethnographic research often operates along a continuum of various forms of friendship. Researchers have written about the role of friendship in ethnographic fieldwork and both the rewards and complexities it can bring to the research process (Devarajan, 2010; Barz & Cooley 2008). Devarajan (2010) argues,

Friendship provides something of a revolving door in and out of a glass-walled world of practitioners. The ethnographer can experience this world from the inside, entering the glass-walled world as a fellow practitioner and friend, but also exiting through the same revolving door to present these experiences to the outside. (p. 78)

However, the subsequent responsibilities to participants who become friends become, as Devarajan explains, “more than just reciprocity” (2010, p. 74) as researchers have to temper their guardianship of participants’ mores and beliefs with providing an account of their views and experiences. In order to remain within the parameters of friendship, the researcher may have to self-censure; however, Devarajan maintains that the ethnographic process and the connection between academia and local communities are strengthened by the experience of friendship in fieldwork (2010).

An increasingly significant variable in ethnographic research is the nature of friendship and social media, which has established new parameters and characteristics of both offline and online relationships (Bryant & Marmo 2012; Lee 2013; Lemieux 2011). Friendships sustained by social networking sites, such as Facebook, do not require consistent offline contact that defines traditional friendship. Facebook interactions are also governed by specific rules, particularly casual friends and
acquaintances, with whom interaction may take place primarily through the site (Bryant & Marmo 2012).

Arguably researchers can easily fall into one of these categories, particularly when fieldwork is completed. Facebook users also willingly compromise privacy in exchange for being connected (Lee 2013), and many young users are willing to be friends with someone they do not know well (Lemieux 2011). Facebook friendships are also dependent on the ‘frictionless sharing’ of the News Feed, where life events are publicly shared by users and viewed passively by their friends (Lee, 2013).

Collaboration and Reciprocity

Tongan scholar Konai Helu Thaman developed the Kakala (garland) framework, based on both Pacific and Western epistemologies (Thaman, 2016). Kakala reflects the three stages of research (data collection, data analysis and dissemination of results) as components of weaving a flower garland. Toli is the collection of flowers and leaves, informed by experience and knowledge to select and rank the appropriate materials at the correct time and place. Tui is the knowledgeable construction of the kakala, to prepare it for luva, the giving away of the kakala, representing 'ofa (compassion) and faka’apa’apa (respect). Kakala is useful for its emphasis on reciprocity with Pacific communities (Tunufa’i, 2016) and “ensures cultural inclusivity and ownership” (Thaman, 2006, p. 182). It is also well suited to ethnomusicology because of the personal nature of musical knowledge and traditions and the growing interest toward applied outcomes that reciprocate research participants (Titon 2008; Seeger 2008). As Titon (2008) posits, fieldwork should be “ongoing dialogue” which “continually reworks my ‘work’ as ‘our’ work” (p.32).

Talanoa, an existing practice of oratory in multiple Pacific cultures, (Fa’avae, Jones & Manu’atu 2016) has been developed as a research approach primarily by Tongan scholar Timote Vaioleti (2003) and since its publication, has been applied frequently by both Pacific and non-Pacific researchers (Tunufa’i, 2016). According to Vaioleti (2003), Talanoa is a departure from Western institutional methods based in objectivity and hypotheses, and in contrast, is “subjective, mostly oral and collaborative, and is resistant to rigid institutional hegemonic control” (p. 16). During the type of talanoa that most resembles an interview, talanoa faka’eke’eke (Vaioleti, 2014)

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14 Tunufa’i (2016) criticises Vaioleti’s (2003) and others’ (McFall-McCaffrey 2010) conception of Talanoa as a pan-Pacific approach, and a true methodology in general, arguing that in practice it has been applied as a research method or tool, and that “it brings nothing new into doing research that has not been provided by other [social science] methods” (p. 236). Tunufa’i asserts that the “ethnic and cultural qualification and sensitivities of the researcher rather than in the method – talanoa – itself” (p. 237).
the researcher does not approach the conversation with a set list of questions. Therefore, participants are granted greater agency to define the issues discussed and divulge information in a chosen time and context. Vaioleti posits, “Talanoa removes the distance between researcher and participant, and provides the participants with a human face they can relate to” (2003, p. 18). During Talanoa,

an open technique is employed, where the precise nature of questions has not been determined in advance but will depend on the way in which the talanoa develops (similar to snowballing). It is a respectful reciprocating interaction. Talanoa is a good conversation; one listens to the other. When to speak, and what one says, depends on what the other has to say (Vaioleti, 2003, p.18).

Researchers should be observant, show appreciation of the participant’s contributions, help the participant if there is a need, and not dominate the conversation or flaunt their knowledge. Vaioleti (2003) posits that the process of Talanoa makes researcher and participant more accountable to one another and more invested in the research.

Talanoa shares similarities with what Titon (2008) calls “visiting” (p. 38) in ethnomusicology fieldwork. There are foundations of a relationship established before the participant is expected to aid with research, and participants are treated with a “special kind of courtesy.” He explains, “Visiting means treating others with respect, care, modesty, courtesy, exchange, and reciprocity. It means establishing a sound and hopeful relationship before ‘getting down to purpose,’ if there is any purpose to get down to” (p. 38).

**Narratives and Identity Stories**

As discussed earlier, the concept of researching ‘Pacific’ people as a group has problematic aspects. Much ‘Pacific’ research in New Zealand has lacked identification of specific population cohorts in favor of generic pan-Pacific/Polynesian groups (Anae, 2007). Anae identifies the “need to expose and understand the nuances of self-perceived ethnic identity” through qualitative and ethnographic methods (2007, p. 17). The individuality of identity stories, according to Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi (2003), “provide insight into the complex process of identity formation in a country where [Pacific] identity has until recently been defined by others (p. 11)…Despite the commonalities, each is an individual journey” (p. 12). Mila-Schaaf’s use of identity stories in her study of second-gen[eration] Pacific peoples added complexity and at times refuted “the accepted canon of public narrative about Pasifika or New Zealand identities” (2010, p. 59).

Individual stories, as “ethnographies of the particular,” work against
essentialised notions of culture (Abu-Lughod, 1996, p. 473). Writing about the actions and experiences of individuals “show[s] that although the terms of their discourses may be set (and, as in any society, include several sometimes contradictory and often historically changing discourses), within these limits, people contest interpretations of what is happening, strategize, feel pain, and live their lives” (Abu-Lughod, 1996, p. 474). In Pacific research, researchers should work to “ensure that diverse Pacific peoples’ own narratives gain traction become the dominant discourse, because in turn this determines possibilities for Pacific ‘ownership’” of applied research outcomes (Airini et al. 2010, p. 14).

The Research Participants

The participants for this research can be organised into four general categories. Firstly, the people involved in the production and structure of Polyfest, including stage committees and judges. Secondly, cultural group instructors, called tutors. Thirdly, former performers between the ages of 19 and 24, whom I will further refer to as young adults. And finally, secondary school students at Mangere College, who will be discussed in the section about my fieldwork at the school.

I aimed for equal representation amongst the four stages but took advantage of any opportunities to interview interested participants. Some participants had taken on multiple roles over the years of their involvement in Polyfest and were able to offer a variety of perspectives. From the Samoan stage I interviewed stage coordinators Mele Ah Sam and Toesulu Brown, judges Vini Punilava’a and Vavao Fetu’i, and teacher in charge Henry Fesulu’a'i, and tutors Keneti Muaiava, Leki Jackson-Bourke, Joe Kolio-Moeno, and Fa’apoi Tofa. From the Niuean stage, stage coordinators/tutors Meleua Ikiua and Johnny Rex, stage committee member Tamm Kingi-Falakoa, judge Fili Rex, and tutors Mal Lakatani and Maree Webster. From the Cook Island stage, stage committee member Natalie Faitala, judge John Kiria, and tutors Maki Karati, Jacob Samson, Tuteru Samson, and Tere Marengavau. From the Tongan stage, stage coordinator Fane Ketu’u, stage committee member ‘Alisi Tatafu, and judges/tutors Sesilia Pusiaki and Vaivai Kailahi. I also interviewed Sean Coyle, the director of The Pacific Institute of the Performing Arts (PIPA). For historical information about Polyfest, I spoke to former Hillary College teacher Gail Tennant-Brown and two performers at the first Polyfest in 1976, Minister for Pacific Peoples Su’a William Sio and the Reverend Ron Lau’ese. I also contacted several other former teachers and students from Hillary College and Mangere College who were involved in Polyfest's formative years that elected not to participate.
I met most of the young adult participants through membership in the Auckland University Pacific Islands Students Association (AUPISA) or, previous to the start of my research, through my coursework in Pacific Studies. I interviewed eighteen individuals, aiming for a balance of those who identified as Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands, and Niuean. It should be noted that overall, this group is a specific kind of former Polyfest participant, with all of the young adults being university students, and the vast majority of them still actively pursuing performance opportunities. Most of the younger cultural group tutors were also former performers and contributed to this part of the data.

**Applying Research Recommendations: Interviewing Participants**

I met participants in their homes, their workplaces, meeting rooms at the university (in particular Cultural Space, a lounge designated for Pacific students) or in cafes. I always brought a gift of homemade baked goods, and at cafes paid for food and drinks (see Vaioleti, 2003 for guidelines about gifts of food). Some participants insisted on paying and were only dissuaded when I told them that I had access to a research fund and was not paying with my personal money. I presented the young adult participants students a $10 fast food restaurant voucher, which is common practice at the university to encourage students to take part in research projects.

I was limited in utilising *Talanoa* in its true methodological sense, for example, having multiple conversations with participants (see Fa'avae, Manu'atu & Jones 2016). I was also unable to establish personal relationships, give time or assistance, or even acquaint myself with some participants before the *talanoa* took place (although I did so whenever possible). However, the ethos and characteristics of *Talanoa* were my guide during the interviews. In practice, most of the conversations started with a ‘catch up’ about the participants’ recent professional activities, studies, and family over food and drink before an open-ended discussion. I aimed to base the conversation on the participants’ interests, clarifying and asking follow-up questions and introducing new topics when one came to a natural end.

Those involved in Polyfest were overwhelmingly very busy people. The majority of cultural group tutors were not paid for their work in Polyfest, usually held one or more paid jobs, and had extensive family and community obligations. Others were schoolteachers with the coaching duties, parent meetings, and other demands of the profession. Vaioleti (2003) cautions that participants will often have to disrupt *talanoa* because of *fatongia* (family, church, and other societal duties, see also Tofuaipangai & Camilleri 2016). It was not unusual for some participants to have to
cancel our plans to meet several times due to fatongia; one, in particular, had to attend to her father in the hospital, and on another occasion left abruptly for a funeral in Sydney. These obligations in addition to her teaching and coaching schedule meant we were not able to meet for six months after I initially approached her. Though most participants were willing and generous with the little amount of time they did have, their participation in my research could hardly be prioritised over their other duties, and I had to be both patient and persistent. In some cases, participants were initially agreeable, but it became apparent that they felt obligated to family members who had encouraged me to contact them and were not motivated to be a part of the research. One participant arranged a meeting place and time on several occasions and subsequently did not appear, and I reluctantly had to try elsewhere.

I sought to apply the principles of Kakala during the interviews. While analysing and writing up data I was able to contact participants by phone, email, or social media as well as making use of chance in-person meetings to ask questions, clarify meanings and follow up on any ideas or insights the participants had had in the meantime. As I progressed in the research process, the interviews themselves became more multi-directional, as I was able to share themes from the data I had gathered so far. I was challenged with presenting my findings in a formal and celebratory way that, through attendance at numerous Pacific events in Auckland, I knew would be most culturally appropriate and incorporate the sense of collaboration, reciprocity, and respect outlined in Kakala. In the last stages of writing my thesis, I relocated overseas for an extended period, and had no choice other than to delay a formal event, which I planned to hold at Mrs Ah Sam's church, where I had been introduced to the congregation during my fieldwork at Mangere College. In the meantime, I provided participants with a summary of the findings, including photographs, and apologised for the delay in coming together to celebrate our work together producing the research.

School Case Study: Mangere College

My fieldwork at Mangere College was an essential component of establishing myself as a researcher applying the principles of Kakala. The extensive time I spent at the College gave me an identity in the world of Polyfest as that of a supporter of a specific school, rather than a detached and distant researcher. By demonstrating my commitment to the success of the festival through giving time and assistance, I was able to teu le va (Anae, 2007) with potential research participants.

Leonard (2007) argues that within school research, “…access is an ongoing
aspect of the research process rather than a one-off event. It is not just a matter of getting past the initial gatekeeper but a process of continuous negotiating and building up trust and rapport with individuals at a number of different levels” (p. 136). My social location as a researcher in a school was the most complex of the research project, and changed several times in each visit with adolescent students, teachers, and cultural group tutors, all of which required varied positionalities of authority, respect, friendship, empathy, and cooperation. I used my professional experience as a teacher in establishing good relations with teachers and administrative staff at the College; crucial considering my research project was potentially disruptive and adding to demanding workloads. Learning the procedures and overall culture of the school, as well as warming me to the teaching staff, was made significantly easier by Mr Heyes, who introduced me along with new members of staff at the annual pōwhiri that marked the beginning of the school year.

Throughout the field study, I often ate lunch in the staff tearoom and attended meetings, professional development and social events at school along with teachers. Belonging in that context was relatively straightforward. With cultural group tutors, I often placed myself in the role of student; dressing like one when groups changed out of uniform for practice, imitating students' physical postures and placement, e.g., sitting on the floor, and following tutors’ instructions. In fact, the Cook Island group tutors, Jacob Samson and his sons Tautape and Tuteru had been my teachers in a university class, and I was simply able to continue our student/teacher relationship.

The way in which I presented myself to students took the most nuanced consideration. In school research, presentation to students is important because adult authority can lead to “awkward and power-laden” interactions with youth (Raby, 2007, p. 211). Fine and Glasner (1979) comment that children are astute at perceiving which researchers will make good friends, and those that are presenting an inauthentic persona. Some researchers have taken a “least-adult” role (Mandell 1988) when a researcher attempts to eliminate all characteristics of adult behavior. An example is Jones’ (1991) ethnography of Pacific Island and Pākehā girls in an Auckland secondary school, where Jones participated alongside students in their classes and their social lives. Leonard (2007) suggests a quasi-adult/quasi-child role, where the researcher is not perceived fully as either a teacher or a student. Everhart (1977) described his shifting relationship with youth during school research - where degrees of familiarity, trust, and disclosure were constructed mutually amongst himself and students - as “balanced instability” (p. 5-6).

Qualitative research with youth has particular considerations. Biklen (2007)
argues that research should be approached with the attitude that “youth are knowledgeable about their lives and understand social meanings” (p. 259). She posits although ethnography is meant to position the researcher as learning from the informant, the inequalities between youth and adult are often not taken into account. There are dangers in the interpretation of the youth’s contributions – that if youth is perceived as an “incomplete” period in a person’s life, that the responses will the represented that way also, as well as generally underestimating their authority. Biklen utilises Appadurai’s application of “native” to describe how youth are “confined” in their position by maturity, institutions (school) and development (p. 260).

Raby (2007) cautions that researchers must have an established philosophical approach that leaves us open to see teenage lives for what they are, not where we think they should be cognitively or emotionally- and to avoid pre-conceived notions about youth by rejecting terms like “at risk” or attributing their experiences to the power of hormones (p. 54). Youth are also effective gatekeepers, as they can be very selective about what they reveal to you as a researcher.

All researchers having been youth themselves may erroneously perceive themselves as having, at least in some way, “been there.” That is, they have been youth; however, as youth experiences are shaped by gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, nation, location, religion, and a multitude of other factors, the youth of the researcher may have varying levels of commonality with the lives of the youth being studied. The position that we have “been there” sometimes surfaces in researchers’ claims about what youth should be doing or in thinly veiled “adults know best” sentiments (Taft, 2007, p. 206). Spyrou (2011) argues that reflexivity on the part of the researcher is paramount, and the acceptance that young people’s stories entail “messiness, ambiguity, polyvocality, non-factuality and multi-layered nature of meaning” (p. 162).

In the following section, I describe the main components of my field study- rehearsal ethnographies and focus groups- and the ways my presentation to students changed situationally.

‘Supporting’ at Mangere College

In 2012 I attended rehearsals with the Samoan and Tongan groups, and in 2013, the Cook Islands and Niuean groups, which met after school for two to three hours and for longer rehearsals most Saturdays, from the second week of February until the third week of March. As groups usually met at the same time, I attended cultural practices for each group on alternate days. Taking a least-adult role for the entire field study was impractical, as to do so completely would have meant performing alongside
students in Polyfest, which was impossible. However, practicing with students removed me from the passive observer or researcher role that may have been expected. Powell (2006), in her ethnography of a Japanese taiko group, described her student role as “lessening this distance [between researcher and participant] by engaging in the mutual construction of learning” (p. 37). Most of the students seemed to have never seen someone like me perform ‘their’ music and dance, and this novelty surprised and pleased many of them. As a passable dancer but a trained singer I was able to pick up vocal lines quite easily; in the first week of Samoan group practice, a student seemed incredulous: “Wow Miss, I didn't know you could sing Samoan songs!” Though I was simply reading the text phonetically, I gave the impression of competence— but far more importantly, the sense that I valued the performance material and the process of learning it with them. This basic competence was tempered with Hadley’s (2007) suggestion that an effective means of removing oneself from an authoritative position with young participants is to demonstrate “cultural incompetence” (p. 162, emphasis added; see also McIntosh, 2006) whereupon the display of struggle with language and other cultural knowledge diminishes adult power and control, and places expertise in the hands of the students. Calling upon other students to review choreography with me or translate tutors’ instructions from Samoan or Tongan were ways in which I could demonstrate this.

I learned the songs and dances with students until the tutors began to work on formations and staging when my participation would be counterproductive to their efforts. Though I continued to join students for dance warm-ups and to sing, I was fortunately saved from a passive role as I was able to shift into the role of a supporter, which was what the parents, siblings, friends and other community members who attended rehearsals were called at Mangere College. With the tutors’ permission, I filmed some of the practices. Filmed material’s usefulness as an ethnographic tool has to be tempered with its potential intrusiveness and technological limitations, and, particularly for young people, it can make participants self-conscious (Devarajan, 2010). During the first year, I filmed practices almost daily so that I could participate in practice with the youth and later use the recording as a resource to review practice and enhance my field notes. However, its efficacy was limited, as only one group practiced in a classroom, where it was easy to capture the entire group on film and assure good sound quality. Others practiced outdoors, which compromised both. It was impossible to document everything happening during practice. Practice included tutors’ private asides with students, and groups split to rehearse simultaneously in different areas around the school, or out of school. For example, at the first Polyfest competition day I
attended supporting Mangere College, the boys in the Tongan group had added an exciting exit to their taufakaniua, which I had never seen before. When I asked when they had put it together, they told me it was at one of the boys’ houses late at night; obviously a practice I would not be invited to. In the Cook Islands group, which always had a large group of spectators, the tutors prohibited filming. The group was highly competitive and the tutors very protective of their choreography. Rather than ask for permission to film and compromise supporting the tutors, I changed to audio recording, which helped support my field observations more discreetly.

Polyfest is one of the largest youth-oriented events in the world (T. Kauraria, pers. comm.). Wulff (1995) argues that within globalisation and transnationalism, youth cultures “are at the forefront of theoretical interest” (p. 10) yet young people’s cultural agency has often been undermined. In addition to my observations and informal exchanges with students during practice, I conducted focus groups with a select number of students. Researchers have found that participatory research in youth focus groups supports a shift in perspective of children and youth from receptors of adult dominance to “a view of the child as an active agent capable of contributing to the construction of his or her own subjectivity” and that they can be considered as “co-participants in research – not as mere objects to be observed and categorized” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. xii; see also Mallan, Singh & Giardina, 2010; Zeitlyn & Mand, 2012).

With youth and participatory models come a number of challenges. Approval of research designs is normally made long before the beginning of fieldwork; meaning youth participants cannot be fully involved in its construction (Alderson, 2000). School research and research with youth in general often entails “the problem of time” (Spyrou, 2011, p. 156), which is especially true for Polyfest, which is a brief and intense event during the school year. A review of focus group research by Daley (2013) identified various concerns within focus group discussions; namely, whether participants could contribute equally, a “collective voice” censuring diverse opinions and the role of social pressure affecting disclosure (p. 1053). In addition to these issues, I argue that Pacific youth in New Zealand also contend with specific dynamics within school and in relationships to adults. In educational research, Pacific students have been found to be reluctant to take risks and draw attention to themselves in class (Spiller, 2012; Siope 2011; Fletcher et al., 2009) and have a history of marginalisation in the classroom (Jones, 1991; Hawk & Hill, 1998; Alton-Lee, 2003; Nakhid, 2003). Ethnographies of Pacific students and adults in New Zealand have revealed accounts of childhoods where youth are expected not to question adult authority or to be vocal
about their own opinions (Spiller, 2012; Siope, 2011; Anae, 2001; Tiatia, 1998). Students may be conditioned by their parents to conflate good behavior with a means to academic success (Spiller, 2012). Therefore, the freedom of the Talanoa model of discussion, used with my adult participants, seemed potentially problematic. This had to be taken into consideration when designing the focus group.

Mangere College staff were familiar with external researchers. The school was part of the ALMHI project (Achievement in Multicultural High Schools), a group of nine urban secondary schools where a large proportion of the schools’ student population comes from Māori and Pacific backgrounds; and a University of Auckland initiative called StarPath. There were also organisations that held focus groups and mentoring groups at the school. Counselor Kathryn Barclay supported the idea of focus groups to spend time in discussion with students, informing me that a number of students had already taken part in them and that they had a designated space at the school within the student services wing called the Family Room that could be used for these gatherings.

Students identified positively with the Family Room, which was adjacent to the counselor, nurse, and social worker’s offices, and group meetings did not have the connotations of disciplinary action as might an individual meeting with an adult. The Family Room had its own kitchen and a projector, and it suited our purposes well. Kathryn advised me to create friendship groups; approaching a core group of students who could then recruit friends to take part with them (Liamputtong, 2011). Group interviews can also be more effective as individual interviews can appear to youth more as an “interrogation,” and have been preferable to teens as they are in the supportive company of peers (Punch, 2002).

Several parameters affected the design of the focus groups. Researchers have found varied activities to be effective with youth, particularly in arts-based settings, including reflective writing (Banks, 2007), creating artwork (Zeitlyn & Mand, 2012), photovoice, filmmaking, collage (MacDonald et al., 2011) and a graffiti board (Trayes, Harre & Overall, 2012). However, I did not want to establish any activities that would disrupt the flow of practices, and therefore not be supportive of the cultural group tutors, and also did not want to add any obligation outside the meeting time of the focus group. Polyfest was a very busy time of year for students, with practice taking a minimum of twelve additional hours each week. Pacific youth in New Zealand usually have time-consuming church and community obligations after school and on weekends, in addition to household chores, babysitting, and often part-time jobs (Hawk & Hill 1998; K. Barclay, personal communication). Students were often very
fatigued and, according to some of their teachers, not completing their homework. I avoided any project work that would need to be done outside the focus group out of support for the wellbeing of already over-extended young people. Spyrou (2011) describes such considerations as “socially sanctioned adult responsibilities toward children that inevitably shape the encounters [in fieldwork]” (p. 161).

The focus groups could be held on the condition that students would not be taken out of class, and Kathryn Barclay advised me that in order to ensure regular attendance, I should not hold the groups after school. Although keeping the time and place of the group convenient for the students meant they were more likely to attend (Daley, 2013) and did not compromise instructional time, that left a 50-minute period combing lunch and ‘form time,’ when students returned to their homeroom or form classes for attendance and announcements. Holding the groups during lunch also meant that I would need to provide the meal, which proved to be an incentive when recruiting participants. The student services administrator, Anna Kasipale, provided passes to excuse students out of form time and update the attendance record. Kathryn and Anna’s assistance made these organisational essentials significantly easier.

During the first few weeks of practice, as students became familiar with me, I made note of students I thought would be active participants in a focus group and also asked teachers for their input. In particular, the school’s prefects, called student leaders at Mangere College, were recommended to me and responded positively when I encouraged them to take part (the role of student leaders in Polyfest is further discussed in Chapter Four). Per Kathryn Barclay’s recommendations, I asked the student leaders to speak to other students on my behalf as well as making general announcements to students during practice. Participation was limited to students 16 and older, as ethics requirements at the University of Auckland for school research maintained that students over 16 did not need parental consent to take part.

The location of the focus group on school grounds, during the school day, and the structural and temporal limitations of the focus group meant it made sense to me to make the group sessions structured as well. Anticipating that the open-ended nature of the Talanoa model would not be effective in this case, I created semi-structured activities which were as verbal as possible and flexible enough to change direction with the students’ ideas, making sure to avoid any dichotomous questions (Kreuger & Casey 2009; cf. Daley, 2013). Brief writing activities were limited to brainstorming key words and phrases, which were used as a basis for discussion and using brightly colored paper and colored pens differentiated the writing from school
assignments done in ruled notebooks. Punch (2002) recommends a variety of techniques to account for students’ preferred ways of communicating and the use of stimulus material:

Young people tend not to be as likely as adults to give long answers to open-ended questions, so stimulus material and prompts can enable them to expand their responses. The challenge is to strike a balance between not patronizing young people and recognizing their competencies but maintaining their interest and keeping the research familiar and relevant to them. (p. 54)

In this case, I used photos and film I had recorded at practice and dress rehearsals as well as the previous years’ performances, which I was able to source from the Māori and Pacific Music Archive at the University of Auckland. Seeing themselves in these images helped students to transition from their regular school day to the discussion. The group also included ceremonial aspects of sharing food that I knew would be familiar to Pacific students, having attended many Pacific events where a prayer is said to bless the meal before eating.

During the first year of the field study, I ran a series of pilot groups (Daley, 2013) using same-sex friendship groups of 10-12 students, one each of boys and girls from each cultural group, and one of both male and female student leaders. I found that whole-group brainstorming meant discussions were indeed falling too much to “group consensus” (Carroll et al., 2007 cf Daley, 2013, p. 1049). Pair work for these initial activities meant students could still work together, but afforded more diversity of opinion. I also found a minimum of culturally-specific differences amongst the cultural groups’ discussions (with the major exception of language use, see Chapter Four). For the second year, I chose to run a group with three student leaders from each group for five consecutive weeks, beginning the second week of practice and concluding the week after Polyfest. Week number four had to be rescheduled because dress rehearsals needed to be held during our regular meeting time.

Building upon brainstorming in pairs and group discussions, the focus group’s activities culminated with the co-construction of interview questions and students interviewing each other without my moderation. Although I guided and lent support, this approach gave ownership of the data’s final outcomes to students, and the journalistic role-play meant students could be autonomous during this part of the project. The lack of monitoring had its pitfalls for the data, however, as I could not intervene if students decided not to answer some questions or give very brief answers. I gave each pair of students a recording device and directed them to a place outside the Family Room where they could conduct their interviews. During the final group
session, I brought a homemade cake in addition to lunch, and each student was thanked for their participation and presented with a certificate, in line with student prizegiving that happened at the end of each school year.

Outside of practice in the focus group, my positioning was closer to that of a teacher. Students knew I had been a teacher and responded well to the structure of the group. With limited contact time and the necessity of making sure they were fed and left for class in a timely way, I had to organise them, keep them involved, and look after their well-being, and I had to be the focal point of direction in order to do so. Many students fell back on calling me “Miss” in the focus group, as female teachers in New Zealand are addressed, though I encouraged them to use my first name if they wished. In this teacher-like positioning, I aimed to be a friendly and relaxed teacher figure that was interested in their lives, opinions, and experiences. According to Spiller (2012),

> For Pasifika people, being the authority is a respected position and needs continual effort. Pasifika students and their parents respect the teacher for their subject expertise and teaching strategies…And teachers engage Pasifika students more when they allow their Pasifika students dignity in their learning. Pasifika students say teachers do this when they treat every student as an individual, with different personalities and needs…when the teacher shows them respect as a person, speaks quietly to them, listens attentively to them when they have something they want to say, and responds with respect to their ideas and questions (p. 65).

The focus groups were a “balanced instability” (Everhart, 1977) between authority and friendliness. I demonstrated reciprocity for the students’ time and efforts through food, verbal praise, and recognition. My shifting roles at Mangere College amongst colleague, student, supporter and friendly teacher enabled rapport with the school’s various gatekeepers and research participants.

**Reflections on Fieldwork and Situating the Self in Research**

Stock and Chenier (2008) assert the Malinowskian model of fieldwork for a year is giving way to more fieldwork at home:

> [O]ngoing migrations within and across borders, increased travel generally, and patterns of international media distribution leave the early disciplinary focus on ‘authentic’ traditions bounded by place and nationality even more outmoded (p. 110).

Because of the researcher's ongoing presence, fieldwork at home can result in longer-
lasting relationships and more involvement with applied outcomes, as well as becoming more closely entwined with a researcher’s everyday life. Doing fieldwork at home affects a researcher’s position within the communities they research and may at first glance, privilege an ‘insider’ status; however, scholars have found that binaries like ‘insider/outsider’ and ‘emic/etic’ have outlived their usefulness as researchers have “shifting and multiple identities during fieldwork” (Stock & Chenier, 2008, p. 113).

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue that there are very few cases in which someone can be characterised as a complete insider or a complete outsider, and that most researchers fall into “the space between” where a researcher’s positioning is relative to their own identity and cultural background (p. 60), and the self-understanding of this positioning and how it will affect research process and results is the responsibility of the researcher (Serrant-Green 2002). Researchers can look to age, life experience, race, gender, professional background, and residence, amongst other aspects of identity, to find commonalities with their research participants (Kerstetter, 2012).

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) and Wendt (1999) both utilise the phrase “the space between”: the former to characterize the multiple and contextual identities of the researcher, and the latter to describe va, the relational space between individuals which also changes according to context. During fieldwork, I experienced “the space between” both in the changing positioning with my participants and taking care of the relational space – teu le va – as I related to participants as a dancer, student, mentee, teacher figure, and friend; often enacting several of these roles simultaneously.

I am an American woman of European descent, aged 36 at the start of my fieldwork. These characteristics designated me as an outsider to most of my participants, but other commonalities eased our differences. Because of the wide reach of transnational Pacific communities, many of my participants had family in the continental United States, and also in Hawaii, where I lived for several years. Living in Hawaii had exposed me to some Pacific social practices and protocols before I came to New Zealand. I was no longer a practicing Christian but had grown up in the American version of the Anglican church, which has many similarities to the Catholic church and endeared me to my Catholic participants. I was not in New Zealand temporarily for the purposes of my studies, but a migrant determined to make it my permanent home, as were some of my participants and many of their parents. Though my past experiences did not interface with those of my participants, the potentially lasting effects of my research in my adopted home were likely to. Participating in communities of practice focused around dance, “…where nearly all relationships are
characterized by some degree of friendship, fictive kinship, or interpersonal connection.” Devarajan (2010) helped transcend ethnicity and age.

At that time, the popularity of American television, movies, and music in New Zealand gave me social and cultural capital, particularly with the youth participants, who enthusiastically named American pop artists as amongst their favourites. Some adult participants expressed surprise that someone would come “all the way from America” to study their cultures. Clearly, I was a curiosity to participants in other respects. I had migrated to New Zealand alone and had no extended family there, which set me apart from communities that prioritised family connections and responsibilities. The fact that I was also single and childfree put me in contrast with the adults in my younger participants’ world, who never hesitated to ask about it! I was received warmly by some participants and politely ignored by others.

Some participants noted that my outsider status as an academic gave me certain advantages. For example, a participant commented that I was free from family and community pressures to maintain a particular viewpoint or assign authority to a select number of individual opinions. When he expressed strong opinions about aspects of Polyfest, he urged me to include them in the thesis, saying, “You’re a white girl, they’ll listen to you!” Another side of my academic positioning was that I was erroneously attributed expertise and qualifications, often publicly, as I was asked to stand up in front of congregations and audiences, or in one case, a radio program, without any prior notice. To my great embarrassment, the University of Auckland Samoan Students Association voted me “Best non-Pacific Member” at the end of one university year. With the exception of the occasional community service project, my contributions did not extend far beyond the required practices and financial obligations for dues and uniforms; in contrast to the long hours that the executive committee dedicated to the organisation. I was embarrassed by these events but knew that my interest in my participants’ lives and work was appreciated by some who felt validated and respected by it.

I also developed relationships with participants through performance. The experience of performing with research participants is an essential part of ethnography for many ethnomusicologists (Kisliuk, 2008; Titon, 2008; Wong, 2008; Powell, 2006). I had a novice level of experience with Pacific dance traditions represented in Polyfest, with the exception of Niue, from participating in Māori and Samoan dance classes at the University of Hawai‘i and from the University of Auckland’s Pacific Dance courses, which were a survey of Samoan, Cook Island, and Tongan dance forms. For obvious reasons I could not participate as a competitor in
Polyfest, however, I was able to take part in the closest possible alternative in New Zealand through national tertiary cultural competitions that are part of yearly conferences for Pacific students. During my intensive year of fieldwork, the University of Auckland hosted both the So’otaga, for Samoan tertiary students, and the Amatakiloa, for Tongan students. Unfortunately, the Takotaionga for Cook Island students was not held that year, and the following year other university commitments kept me from taking part. (At the time, there was no dedicated conference for Niuean students.)

During my fieldwork, it was unusual for non-Pacific students to be members of the Pacific student associations. However, I was welcomed into the groups and was able to experience intense periods of rehearsals, fundraising, the rise and fall of morale, and the culture of competition that also characterises Polyfest.

During the conferences, which lasted a week, I worked alongside students to host delegates from other universities in New Zealand on one of the local marae. Over many hours of rehearsal, and cooking and cleaning during the conferences to provide for the visiting delegates, relationships were deepened, as was my understanding of young Pacific people’s experiences negotiating the demands of their home lives, church and study. Power dynamics were different than at Mangere College. I had no real or indicated status of authority, and though the age gap between myself and my fellow university students was still significant in most cases, hierarchies of age were altered and at many times subverted, as I demurred to younger student officers and dance tutors. My performance skills were less than exceptional; however, the novelty of a non-Pacific person from overseas performing in the competitions was helpful in establishing my sincerity as a researcher.

After I had completed my official period of fieldwork, though the frequency of contact with my participants lessened somewhat, our relationships continued. We maintained contact by email, social media and text messages and met face-to-face spontaneously while going about our lives in Auckland. Supporting at rehearsals, attending performances, patronising fundraisers, and visiting church services were some of the ways I took care of the relationships with the participants. Participants were publicly acknowledged for their role in my acceptance at international conferences, for example, and copies of conference papers were made available. I was available to AUPISA members for academic help during the Association’s study groups. Although the Polyfest season was a short segment of the school year at Mangere College, it was intense and emotional. I spent time with the students during weekend rehearsals, late night practices, a trip to the local water park, and met their families at the dress rehearsals. I had the pleasure of meeting the students again at
their prizegiving at the end of the school year and met with many of the student leaders spontaneously around the University of Auckland campus.

The nature of “Facebook friendship” and “frictionless sharing” (Lee, 2013, p. 26) via the News Feed played an important role in my continued contact with participants. I came to know a great deal more about their lives once our Facebook friendships were established, reading about and viewing photos of important family occasions, work and study milestones, and their love lives, which was multidirectional as I was an active Facebook user who disclosed the same information. The simple act of clicking “Like” was one of showing interest and support without requiring much time or face-to-face interaction. Indeed, after they finished their studies, there were a number of participants I no longer saw regularly in person, but as a Facebook friend, I was able to stay informed of key events in their life (as well as many mundane ones) and they of mine.

Conclusion

This chapter established the theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches utilised in this research. I outlined Wenger’s Communities of Practice (1998) and its utility in discussing transmission, identity, and change in groups of people making music. I followed by situating these groups within transnational social space, and how artistic practices play a vital role in the construction of transnational identities. I introduced polycultural capital as an important aspect of transnational Pacific identity, to contextualise how members of the Polyfest communities of practice successfully construct and execute the festival.

I then detailed the methodological considerations for performing research with Pacific peoples and for Pacific youth within schools. I discussed the Pacific research approaches Kakala and Talanoa, including how they were aligned with recommendations from ethnomusicology scholarship. After outlining the research process and introducing my research participants, I concluded with reflections on fieldwork process, and how my own identity situated myself within it.

The next chapter focuses on the fieldwork at Mangere College and discusses in detail how Polyfest cultural groups function as communities of practice throughout preparation for the competition. It also includes analyses of Mangere College student interviews focus groups as described in this chapter.
Chapter Four
Constructing Communities of Practice at Mangere College

The next five chapters focus on the results of the ethnographic fieldwork carried out for this research, organised by the roles within ASB Polyfest communities of practice. This chapter highlights students, through a case study of the preparation of school cultural groups for the ASB Polyfest at Mangere College in 2012 and 2013. The fieldwork took place over approximately nine weeks during each festival rehearsal period, from the week before students began the school year in early February, to two weeks after the end of the festival in late March.

This chapter has two main purposes. Firstly, to account for how Teachers in Charge, tutors and students co-create Polyfest cultural groups as communities of practice at Mangere College, and in doing so, construct unique socio-temporal Pacific spaces. Secondly, to highlight the experiences of Mangere College students in cultural groups, and how these students negotiate meaning and construct identities through those experiences.

Two points should be emphasised – firstly, that this is indeed a case study. There were considerable ethnic and economic diversity and levels of participation amongst the over 60 schools which entered Polyfest at the time of this research. As will be explained in detail in this chapter, Mangere College is a school with a Pacific student majority, a long history of participation in the festival, and management who are in key decision-making roles in the Polyfest organisation. Secondly, I reiterate that the student participants are individuals with complex identities based on ethnic background, social experience, religion, and family experiences. Although Mila-Schaaf’s research with second-generation Pacific peoples (2010) and Anae’s research with NZ-born Samoans (2001) are referenced in this chapter, some of the students had recently migrated to New Zealand at the time of this research, and it is not my intention to treat them as a homogenous group.

I begin the chapter by introducing Mangere College, and its role in the ASB Polyfest both past and present. I chronicle the processes of organising and preparing cultural groups for the festival over the Polyfest rehearsal periods in February and March of 2012 and 2013. Through analysis of field notes, and ethnographic vignettes, I discuss how cultural group practices construct unique socio-temporal Pacific spaces at Mangere College. I then turn to the results of the interviews and focus groups, and argue that students derive meaning from cultural groups in relation to ethnicity, peers, leadership, and constructing meanings of culture. I also
conclude that polycultural capital—both brought to cultural groups and developed through participation—enables students to integrate some of their multiple worlds (Hawk & Hill, 1998) of school, culture, family, and peers.

**Mangere College and the ASB Polyfest**

Mangere College was one of the four schools that participated in the original festival in 1976. Its Polynesian Club was active from the year the College opened in 1971 with 50 to 60 members, the majority of whom were Māori and Pacific students. Activities during that inaugural year included a trip to Rotorua—a town on the central North Island and a stronghold of Māori tourism—where they performed at a local high school for the undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, and at the opening of a new local marae (Mangere College Magazine, 1971).

The school magazine describes 1976, the year of the first festival, as “the most active, most strenuous and trying, most demanding and yet most satisfying and rewarding year in the history of the cultural activities of the club” (Mangere College Magazine, 1976, p. 8). Students practiced 3-6 hours a week, and had regular performances in venues including Auckland Airport and a North Island tour where the club visited five different marae. Mangere College were the first-place winners at the festival.

Mangere College hosted the festival in 1977, and again in 1999 and 2000. Unfortunately, though the 1977 school magazine included photos of the Polynesian Club, there was no text about the hosting of the festival. Pre-dating the current model where hosting responsibilities are shared amongst multiple schools, the 1999 school magazine reported that the event was very student-driven, with students in charge of forming committees with parents and teachers, creating a logo, designing programmes, posters, and t-shirts; directing parking, collecting tickets and selling souvenirs and refreshments. Though tiring and time consuming, the students involved were proud of the accomplishment: “It was our opportunity to show the public that Mangere College could successfully organise this three-day event” (Mangere College Magazine, 1999). Though the size and competitiveness of its cultural groups ebbed and flowed, the College's participation in Polyfest has been consistent throughout the years following its debut in 1976.

**Mangere: The Suburb and the College**

Mangere is located on the northeast side of the Manukau Harbour, about 15 minutes south via motorway from Auckland’s city centre and a short drive to Auckland International Airport. In the 2013 New Zealand census, Mangere and its
neighbouring suburb Otahuhu’s population of Pacific peoples was about 55% of the total population (Stats NZ Tāutaranga Aotearoa, 2018). Like Otara, the suburb where the ASB Polyfest originated, a planned community was constructed in Mangere to house a growing South Auckland population employed in the manufacturing industry. Mangere is on the lower end of the income scale area compared to other Auckland suburbs, indicated by Mangere College’s socio-economic Decile 1 rating. The Ministry of Education calculates this rating based on five socio-economic factors, including household income, parents’ occupation, and the occurrence of household crowding. Schools’ decile ratings, with 1 the lowest and 10 the highest, are the basis for supplemental government funding (Ministry of Education, 2018). At the time of my research, the increased cost of housing for families in Mangere was exacerbated by Auckland’s rapidly heating housing market. The suburb was an increasingly desirable place for housing investors with its leafy, pleasant streets and proximity to the motorway and airport, which was driving up the price of rent.

The neighbourhood’s shopping hub is Mangere Town Centre, where students frequently spent time after school. The covered shopping plaza is a mixture of small local businesses and national chains—discount shops, fast food, a fishmonger, a fruit and vegetable shop, and purveyors of Pacific clothing designs and fabric prints, which are sources for church and formal wear. Two supermarkets flank the Centre, which also serves the area’s health, leisure and entertainment needs with a family health clinic and pharmacy, the Mangere Arts Centre, the Auckland Council Leisure Centre, and Mangere Library. The Mangere Saturday market is a very popular event that fills the parking area to capacity, where Pacific, Chinese and Indian stallholders sell fresh produce, specialty meals and snacks, clothing and household items. Catholic, Protestant, Mormon and Seventh-Day Adventist churches cater to the residents’ spiritual needs and four marae support the local Māori iwi.

Mangere College is situated on a residential street a few minutes’ drive from Town Centre. It was the first in New Zealand built according to a design common to many secondary schools built between 1971 and 1979, known as S68 (Mangere College Magazine, 1971; McNulty & McClurg, 2013) with classrooms and facilities housed in separate, single-story buildings around a number of open-air common areas. During my fieldwork, most of the buildings were original and gradually undergoing renovation, but a Pacific languages unit consisting of three prefabricated classrooms was one of the newest additions to the campus.

The school grounds are green and pleasant and fringed by old growth trees.
The courtyard at the entrance features a pou (pole) with Māori carvings created by a former student (J. Heyes, pers. comm.). Students' artwork has been printed on weatherproof material and hung on the outside of buildings around the courtyard, and flowering hibiscus bushes dot the walkways. Amongst the classroom buildings are a swimming pool, gymnasium, small auditorium, and a sports field. Each cultural group claimed an area for their daily practices. The Tongan group gathered in the 'hot spot,' an inner paved courtyard which was home to the school canteen; the Samoan group used the Samoan language classroom, the Niue group met on a grassy area between classroom blocks, and the Cook Islands group made use of the auditorium, and later the gymnasium when the volleyball season was over.

At the time of my fieldwork, Mangere College was relatively small for an Auckland secondary school, with fewer than 700 pupils. About 80% identified as Pasifika and 15% as Māori (Education Review Office, 2012); with small numbers of European, Middle Eastern, Asian and African students. The school's proximity to the national refugee resettlement centre meant that a number of students from Myanmar and Sudan attended the school. There was no data explicitly provided about multi-ethnic students.

Mangere College is known for its pride as a multi-cultural school, stating this in the promotional material on their website (Mangere College, 2018). This was also noted in the 2012 Education Review Office (ERO) report, which praised the Pacific languages unit and the option to study Te Reo Māori, and the promotion of activities that fostered a sense of whanau, or family/community (Education Review Office, 2012). I sensed that students were well provided for, and that it was a warm and supportive environment for students of all ethnicities. The students had access to a counsellor, social worker, nurse and community liaison officer at the Student Services Centre. The school's motto, “Seek the Heights,” was displayed visually around the school and often invoked by staff to encourage students, as well as portraits of former students who had enjoyed professional success. Teachers knew their students well, and a number of teachers had been working at the school for over 20 years. The school's diversity was also evident in the staff, about half of whom were Māori, Pacific, Indo-Fijian, or Asian.

Principal John Heyes was wholly supportive of the festival, demonstrated by his membership on the Polyfest Trust Board. Mr Heyes first became familiar with the festival in the 1980s as an English teacher in Mangere's neighbouring suburb, Otahuhu, in the late 1980s, which historically has one of the highest Pacific populations in Auckland (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2018). There, he learned
about his students’ church and home lives, and working in Otahuhu and Mangere over the subsequent years, the ways in which participation in the festival affected students became deeply ingrained:

You walk into any of our schools on an afternoon leading up to Polyfest, and you will hear drums, you will hear singing, you will hear group [student] leaders, it is part and parcel of the environment of the school. So for more than twenty-five years as a teacher, I have been in environments where, because of the nature of the school I was working in, and the fact that as professionals we’ve chosen to work in them, you also very, very consciously recognise what the experience of Polyfest offered those young people (pers. comm.).

Mrs Mele Ah Sam, the assistant principal, was the Samoan Stage coordinator, and geography teacher 'Alisi Tatafu, who worked tirelessly on behalf of a number of Tongan community organisations, joined the Tongan stage committee in 2013. Overall, the school was very involved with the festival at a high organisational level.

Organising Cultural Groups and Practices at Mangere College

Teachers in Charge are essential for bringing Polyfest cultural groups to the festival. They liaise amongst their school’s group, the school management, and the Stage Committee, and are responsible for many of the day-to-day operations of the students’ preparation for Polyfest. As tutors teach the content of the performance items, Teachers in Charge manage most of the other practicalities, usually spending an equal amount of time at cultural practices as the tutors. At Mangere College, there were enough committed teachers that the responsibilities of supervising and running the groups could be allocated amongst several people. Samoan language teacher Henry, who was also a tutor for the students’ vocal items, was assisted by technology teacher Tina and learning support teacher Chanel. 'Alisi was Teacher in Charge for the Tongan group, with the support of English and Tongan language teacher Toa; Toa’s brother, maths teacher Tevita; and English teacher Huni. PE teacher Ta'i took on most of the responsibilities of the Cook Islands group herself, with part-time Cook Islands language teacher Mama (an honorific for mature Cook Islands women) Marsters attending cultural practices the days she was at school.

The Niue group was the only exception. There were no Niue teachers at Mangere College, but the responsibility for the group was passed down from design technology teacher Brian, whose wife was Niuean, to his colleagues Fred and Wynne. Their involvement was mainly around taking care of the entry paperwork for the
group and attending the stage meetings so that they could report back to the students and tutors. They did not usually attend practice and deferred most of the decision-making about the group to the tutors, who were parents at the school.

The school year in New Zealand starts in February, and the scheduling of Polyfest in March harnesses the energy and momentum of the first term of school and avoids conflicts with school exams later in the year. During late summer in the southern hemisphere, warm, fair weather could usually be counted on for outdoor practices, which was necessary with limited space indoors for large groups of students, and the fresh air was welcomed after a day in classrooms. With the time pressure of the festival being seven weeks from the first day of school, Teachers in Charge at Mangere College wasted no time. The first step in organising a group was the interest meeting, scheduled during the 20-minute midmorning break built into the school schedule, or at lunch.

Interest meetings were exciting and with an element of tension. The groups were open to all students, and there were no auditions unless numbers exceeded 60, which was the maximum number that could fit on the stage at the Manukau Sports Bowl. However, a less than satisfactory number of students at the first meeting meant students were entreated to recruit their friends. The Teacher in Charge circulated a sign-up sheet, provided the rehearsal times and talked about important dates and costume requirements. Rules and expectations were laid down which the groups were expected to maintain. If available, the tutor(s) would make an appearance. The identity of the tutors was big news and could elicit an excited buzz or disappointment from students. A tutor who was dynamic and well liked was always welcomed back, while one was that was strict and ‘boring’ was dreaded.

The excitement around the Cook Islands group in 2013 was that the Samson family were back to tutor the group after a year’s hiatus. Jacob Samson was well known in Auckland’s Cook Islands community as the director of the professional performing group Drums of the Pacific, and had earned accolades at the Te Maeva Nui festival in Rarotonga as director of a group representing the family’s ancestral island, Rakahanga. The Samson family were long-time residents of Mangere, and all of their children had attended Mangere College. Jacob’s adult sons, Tuteru and Tautape, had led the group to dominate the Cook Islands stage, placing first three years in a row before the family took a hiatus from tutoring due to the birth of Tuteru’s second child. Tuteru told me that he was frustrated by the loss of the title and it was important for him to bring it back again.

Other families helped the group as tutors. Along with the Samson family,
student Meleane’s mother took on the Tongan group the second year, and student Ailini’s cousin, Nese, led the Samoan group. Parent Tony took the Niuean group took the group the first year, and Mr and Mrs Mokole, students Brandon and Nancy’s parents, the second. Two other tutors were recruited through other community networks: ’Alisi secured scholar Vaivai Kailahi for the first year, and Henry had approached Samoan tutor Fa’apoi Tofa after seeing one of his other schools perform at Polyfest the previous year.

Each cultural group had student leaders, who were nominated by teachers in charge or tutors to take on extra responsibilities within the group and to assist them with teaching, disciplining and motivating their peers. Student leaders were essential personnel for the success of cultural groups and were recognised with their own award category on most of the Polyfest stages. Teachers in Charge or tutors chose some students as leaders because they had several years of experience in the group, or were amongst the most skilled performers and could assist the tutors with helping newcomers. Family ties to the tutor meant those students were expected to undertake more responsibility, and Meleane, Brandon and Nancy, and Ailini were all named as leaders. The Samsons chose Paulina, who was a member of their group Drums of the Pacific and therefore amongst the most experienced dancers. Being assigned responsibilities as a cultural group leader was sometimes a given because the students were already prefects at the school and were recognised by their peers as role models and authority figures. Other students were chosen for their recognised potential by teachers. One student, who demonstrated much potential as a performer, and commitment to the group, was unpopular with other students and sometimes bullied. He was named a leader to reward him for his efforts, and hopefully, help to change other students’ perceptions of him. For some, it was their first experience of leadership at school. Cook Islands group leader Aka said,

I think I was chosen as a leader because they could see what I couldn’t see in myself, which was leadership potential... they chose me because even though they could see it would be a challenge for me to maintain a group, they knew I could handle it.

**Vignette: Learning the Samoan Ma’ulu’ulu**

*After the final bell has rung at 3:00, the first students begin to trickle into the Samoan language classroom. The walls display students’ work from the previous year, with posters illustrating vocabulary and beginning language concepts, and images of the Samoan islands and the Samoan flag. The fluorescent overhead lights are off and the intense afternoon sun is at*
an angle, which keeps the classroom mercifully dim and cool. Having changed out of their school uniforms into 'ie lavalava and t-shirts, the first students to arrive start to move the desks against the walls and stack the chairs to leave as much of the carpeted floor as possible bare for them to practice, though the wooden walkway outside the prefabricated classroom will likely be used as well when boys and girls divide up to learn their separate dance movements. Tina, who is Teacher in Charge today, takes a seat at Henry’s desk, while students arrange themselves in neat rows on the floor. After an opening prayer, it is Ailini’s task to review the pese that accompanies the ma'ulu'ulu, as the students will accompany the dance with their own singing and it is essential to memorise the song quickly. After twenty minutes of drilling the words and melody, Nese arrives to relieve Ailini and introduce the choreography - what the tutors refer to colloquially as “actions.” The students are arranged in standing rows, the girls in front and the boys in the rear.

Nese addresses the group, speaking a fluid combination of English and Samoan, which she will later tell me is a habit she picked up while attending private school in Samoa. “Okay, this is the beginning. Boys you wait, I will teach you your moves after. Girls, it goes - hold on I will turn to face you.”

Nese demonstrates the first eight beat phrase, singing to accompany herself: she steps forward on her right foot while crossing her left elbow above her right arm, which extends towards her feet as if grasping something in her hand. In a fluid motion, she pulls her right hand up, as if holding onto a rope, her left hand mirroring her right as both fists come to rest on her hips. On beat four she leans ever so slightly to the left, her eyes glancing to the right, then her hands sweep to form an arc to represent lagi (the sky), her fingers pointed; as her feet glide to the left in the smooth shuffle of heel and toe called se’e.

“Is that okay?” She asks the group. “I’m going to show you again. “ She demonstrates the same sequence. “…and se’e with your feet. So try it?” Nese’s request is met with coughs and nervous laughter. She thinks better of it and demonstrates the first four beats again. “Go down and then pull it up, and then do it like this on the side.” She whistles to shush a few students. “OK. What you have to remember in Samoan dance, don’t do your hands like this after you do this action,” she explains, hunching her shoulders and pinning her elbows to the sides of her body. She moves her hands abruptly without the soft fluidity she has just modelled in her demonstration. “[Don’t] throw your hand out, ok? Don’t stick your arms into your body, they should go out like this - look at your hands. Move, don’t be stiff... Your eyes should follow [your] hands…” Clearly, Nese doesn’t think she would have to explain this – it is a basic characteristic of the ma’ulu’ulu. “…as I discovered yesterday! But that’s ok. As we go through the [performance], we have a lot of songs - you have to remember, you have to mean what
you're doing. If you leave it like this, there's no meaning to that action ok? You do the action like this...” She moves stiffly, her eyes staring straight ahead. “But there is meaning. Lagi is the sky. Do we all understand Samoan? You have to almost put a little bit more effort into it, so it means something, or else it's just another action. Ok? So it goes...” She demonstrates again.

“Now you guys follow what I'm doing.” Ailini clapped a syncopated rhythm, singing the opening phrase and counting them in. Most of the girls managed the first four beats, but they forgot the se'e and the sweeping lagi motion and stood sheepishly with their hands on their hips. Nese smiles good-naturedly and shows them the motion again. She demonstrates how some of the students are performing their first action with stiff arms and none of the fluidity and flourish in the hands that she initially showed them. “Look at this action, some of you are just doing this, it doesn't mean anything. It goes down, up, there,” she explains, executing the movement smoothly. “Okay so can you all do this together? It goes, one...” she stops abruptly and raises both hands with her back to the students. Both your hands here, this hand goes in. Do you all see that? It goes like that.” She turns to face them and demonstrates again. “So... you pull it down... Your left [arm] is on top. Go down... and then when you pull, you pull up. Okay so it goes one -” she demonstrates the arms -“ and then at the same time [step] towards the front [with your] right foot. Okay? So it goes one, two, three...”

By this time the boys are getting restless, and Tina has to reprimand them to settle down. “Just keep singing and keep repeating,” Ailini implores. “Sing the first verse, and then do it until you get it yeah? And then you can do the next verse.” The girls repeat the first four beats again and again. Nese patiently models the sequence in front of the class each time, correcting and explaining with each repetition. The “pulling up” motion still lacks the tension that Nese is looking for, so she tries an analogy: “Does anyone here mow the lawn?” A few students nod. “When they do it, they pull it up,” she imitates the pulling of the cord.

“Just keep going until you get it. It's the first action of many.”
Learning and Belonging at Cultural Practices

Having six to eight weeks to teach the students their performance items, tutors were methodical in sequencing their instruction. As students accompanied their dances with their own singing, songs were taught first, so any harmonies, rhythms, pronunciations or vocal styles could be established, and the lyrics memorised, before adding choreography. Students were helped to learn lyrics with printed handouts, overhead projectors, on or in case of an outdoor rehearsal, on poster board. When the students were ready to add movement, the choreography for individual items would be demonstrated - usually in 4 to 8 beat phrases - imitated, observed and corrected, then drilled until students reached a sufficient level of competence to move on to the next phrase. If there were two tutors to split the boys and girls to teach them their respective parts, they would work on them simultaneously. Those that lagged behind would come to extra practices at lunchtimes, which the leaders organised, or were paired with a more experienced student who could take them through the movement sequences slowly during breaks in practice. When an entire item was learned and could be drilled with a minimum of stopping for correction, the transitions between items were practiced.

Smooth transitions were essential to a well-received performance, as students could change postures from sitting, standing or kneeling in formation, and the tutors choreographed 16 to 32 beats to move to be the correct position for the next item. Items and transitions were gradually stitched together until the entire set could be
performed in its entirety.

Concurrently, tutors worked out instrumental parts. The Cook Islands group stage rules required all of the musicians to be students, so Tuteru, and student leader Paulina’s father, Tere, would work with the drummers and 'ukurere player while Tautape and the leaders helped the dancers. Adults could accompany other groups, so these guitar and drum parts were quickly worked out between the tutor and the instrumentalist(s).

Student leaders were expected to be role models for younger students, a role that they took seriously. Amongst their responsibilities were to assist tutors with reviewing and drilling choreography and to learn melodies and lyrics quickly so they could carry the other students. Younger students in years 9 and 10 (ages 14-15) were especially important newcomers, and student leaders were reminded of their responsibilities towards them. Samoan group leader DJ said, “It's important so you can take the leadership role and help out the new ones, the young ones, be an example for those that are in the group.” When lining up to dance, junior students were usually automatically placed in the rear so they could follow older students. Student leaders could help younger students explicitly with choreography or singing, but also through modeling other skills and behaviours that could be observed and imitated over many practices; from how to tie a pareu or lavalava so it didn't slip off, how to curl the fingers perfectly in the ma'ulu'ulu, how to behave during opening or closing prayer, to how to make it through a long practice without snack and water breaks.
According to Wenger, “Communities of practice reproduce their membership in the same way they come about in the first place. They share their competence with a new generation through a version of the same process by which they develop” (Wenger 1998, p. 250). In Wenger’s framework, student leaders are the ‘old-timers’ in Polyfest cultural groups and help tutors and teachers to bring newcomers from the periphery of the community of practice to full membership. If the old-timers are successful in their role, then younger students will gradually become old-timers themselves and help the newcomers coming through after them – which is especially important in Polyfest, as older students continually finished school and younger students came to take their place.

Practices were physically and mentally strenuous. Keeping up group morale was important in cultural practice – over the six to eight week rehearsal period, the group needed to stay motivated and united in its purpose, and any conflict between members had to be kept to a minimum. The physical toll on students from practicing was observable as well. Dancing and singing were physically taxing, as was the mental focus needed to commit words and movements to memory and replicate them correctly. Students could constantly be in motion for two hours at a time, and formal breaks were infrequent, even for the toilet. One of my field notes after a particularly grueling Cook Islands practice stated: “there was [figuratively] blood on the
floor.” Student leader Paulina commented on the challenges of long practices:

Not only do you spend six hours at school, then you have two or three more
hours of practice, and it can make you cranky, it makes you angry. Sometimes
at practice you don’t want to be there, but you have to because you made a
commitment to the group. That would be the hardest thing for me.

Polyfest season was correlated with undone homework. At a Samoan group practice,
Tina reminded the students to keep up with their homework when they went home,
and with the palpable exhaustion in the room, the students listened obediently but
were clearly unmoved.

There were instances where tutors’ frustrations boiled over, and students did spend an amount of time sitting on the floor, legs crossed, heads bowed, chastised during tirades about the students’ apparent lack of focus or commitment. But the students took it in their stride that discipline was an important part of being in the group. Tongan group student leader Tau said, “that’s what you learn the most, to discipline yourself. Mentally, just being committed and that. I learned you can muck around a bit, but at the most important times, you have to dig deep. That’s what it taught me here.”

Figure 4 Mangere College Tongan group learning words for the ma’ulu’ulu in the “hotspot”
All of the tutors recognised that space to laugh at each others’ mistakes, relax, play and eat were essential for boosting morale and the strengthening bonds between members. Tuteru Samson from the Cook Islands group was nothing short of masterful at sensing when his students needed to be sat down for a pep talk, a reprimanding, a huddle with the student leaders so they could hear from fellow students about their progress, or even a day off from practice when the students had made significant headway. At one Samoan group practice when Fa'apoi was going through the sasa, in nearly every 4 beat phrase, the students collectively made a mistake and collapsed in laughter. Rather than reprimand the students, he bemusedly gave in, and the sequence was eventually drilled correctly, with students in a jovial mood that sustained them for the rest of the afternoon. During a vocal rehearsal in the Samoan group, Henry, who was normally very stern, surprised everyone by ordering them to turn to the right and give the person in front of them a quick backrub, something I had done regularly teaching my own choral groups. The students, so unused to this moment of levity from Henry and not used to the physical interaction were in peals of laughter throughout the exercise.

Figure 5  Mangere College Samoan group Saturday practice practicing fa’aluma role, 2012
Though Mangere College did not do the ‘live-ins,’ or overnight camps common at some other schools, practices on Saturday were much longer, spanning from morning to afternoon, and more chaotic, as most of the ‘stitching together’ of the different items in the set needed time for trial and error. Students were still expected to work hard on Saturdays, but the schedule was relaxed. Without bells, school business and school uniforms to think about, students arrived from home in their street clothes more rested than during the week. The day was always broken up with a shared meal, often provided and paid for by the tutors, and their gifts of barbecued sausages, pizzas or burgers from the shops at the Mangere Town Centre tacitly reminded the students that though they would frequently be ‘growled’ (reprimanded) they would also be fed. The sharing of meals was an opportunity to introduce, or reinforce, culturally-specific protocols around the body and speech; for example in the Samoan group, blessing the food, showing deference to adults by serving them first and saying *tulou* (excuse me) when passing in front of them, as well as other bodily behaviours like sitting cross-legged or with the legs tucked under the body, rather than pointing one’s feet at another person.

Students would be given some leisure time with their fellow group members as well. Though the Cook Islands group consistently practiced indoors in the gym, the fair, sunny March weather allowed the other groups to practice outdoors as much as possible. Teacher in charge Ta’i would open up the pool for students to swim, and Brandon, a fan of American or ‘gridiron’ football, always had a ball with him to practice passes with his friends in the Niue group. There was plenty of gossiping and joking. All helped to balance the physical and mental labour of practicing and creating the memories with friends for which the festival is known.

Cultural practice was a place for family too, and coming to the school to support was welcomed. The tutors’ families sometimes attended to lend a hand with teaching. Nese's brother and sister came to Saturday practices to help her teach choreography, as did Brandon and Nancy’s aunts. The Samson family – the senior Mr and Mrs Samson, their children, grandchildren, and cousins - were there as a whole almost every day. Tuteru explained to me that they worked as a team: although Tuteru acted as the lead tutor, choreography was created by himself, brother Tautape and their sister Rosa, with father Jacob on hand with advice and in most cases “the final say” (Tuteru Samson, pers. comm.). At Tongan group practices, there were there were parents and grandparents consistently present to sing to accompany the *ma’ulu’ulu*, with many of the mothers’ and grandmothers’ hands busy folding the endless number of ribbon rosettes that made up an essential detail of the students’ costumes.
For other family members, support was simply through the act of turning up and being there. Around the gymnasium at Cook Islands practice mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, cousins, and siblings sat on the floor chatting, snacking and minding the children who played away from the practice area. I asked the grandmother of one of the students, with two young grandchildren playing nearby, why she liked coming to practice. She replied, “If it’s something to do with our culture, we like to be there.”

The noisy enthusiasm of children at practice – especially Tuteru’s older daughter Kiara, who was at practice every day - was the reason it was so difficult to transcribe my audio recordings of the Cook Islands group! However, as the group's youngest “newcomer” at age two, she was already imitating the girls’ technique and would go on to start competing at age three. In sum, cultural practice was a welcoming place, inclusive of family and the wider school community.

Figure 6  Girls from Mangere College Cook Islands group demonstrating ura pa’u, 2013

Cultural Groups and the Construction of Pacific Spaces at Mangere College

Over days and weeks, the observation of daily rehearsals reveals incremental changes: the embodiment of new knowledge, the development of routines and rituals, the spontaneous creation of inside jokes, the development of relationships, the peaks and valleys of group morale; in sum the “shared repertoire” that Wenger describes as a definitive characteristic of communities of practice. It is during these hundreds of hours of social learning that identity-forming experiences are played out and a place of
belonging is created, constructing socio-temporal space where the work of cultural construction takes place. In the case of cultural groups at Mangere College, and over a hundred more at different schools throughout Auckland, these transnational Pacific socio-temporal spaces are constructed each year, particular to their own set of members and school environment.

The transformation of space through sound was a significant aspect of the construction of Pacific spaces at Mangere College. Sound itself territorialises, allowing music groups to make a claim of physical space (Duffy, 2005; Mackley-Crump, 2012) present in the school only during the Polyfest season: the Cook Islands tokere (slit log) and the Samoan ‘biscuit tin’ (metal box container) drums; the bright, high-pitched and percussive strums of the Cook Islands 'ukurere, the slaps and claps of body percussion of the Samoan fa'ataupati, the masculine growls in the Niue takalo, the vocal imitations of gunfire in the Tongan taufakaniua. “Sing like your granny!” was Tautape's instruction to his female students of how to create the forward placed, bright and slightly nasal vocal timbre (Tautape also described this vocal style as “flat,” a descriptor of timbre rather than pitch), characteristic of Cook Islands hymn singing.

The sounds of Pacific languages were present in a number of ways, sometimes as the only language used for instruction, but if not, always present in the instruction of pronunciation of song texts, ‘counting off’ when drilling, and in the sung texts themselves. These culturally-specific sounds, iconic of other Pacific spaces in Auckland and Pacific homelands (whether real or imagined), combined with the environmental sounds of buzzing cicadas, planes flying overhead to nearby Auckland Airport, and the clattering, echoing cacophony of drumming in the hard-surfaced gymnasium; creating a unique Mangere College Polyfest soundscape (Harris & Pease, 2015). Over the College's grounds after school and on Saturdays, sounds from the four groups competed and overlapped, announcing individual Cook Islands, Niuean, Samoan and Tongan spaces as well as an “aural signature” (Duffy, 2005) of the school's diversity within its Pacific representation at Polyfest.
At Mangere College, there were no dedicated physical spaces for cultural group practice. Classrooms, the gymnasium, and outdoor spaces were adapted; the requirements being enough room to move, and a minimum of hassle with locks and keys (negated by practicing outdoors). Robertson (2011) describes appropriated rehearsal spaces, like the gymnasium and sports fields at Mangere College as “transformed by the intentional gathering” (p. 92) of diasporic cultural groups in an environment in which cultural transmission cannot be taken for granted. This was seen at Mangere College in the teachers who added hours to their workday chaperoning cultural practice, the tutors who re-arranged their work and family schedules, students foregoing playing sport and hanging out at Town Centre with their friends, inviting physical exhaustion and perhaps repercussions for unfinished homework. With participation not limited to the roles of teacher and learner and the processes of instruction; family presence and time spent eating, socialising and relaxing helped to construct a space of Pacific community and belonging.
Rehearsal space is also transformed by the changes to the bodily hexis—“the ways of standing, speaking and walking, and therefore thinking and feeling” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 70) which, in transnational communities of practice, takes on additional intention, responsibility and imagination if these embodied habits are not easily acquired from their environment (Ram, 2000). In dance where choreography imitates activities of daily life, this presents particular challenges. Robertson describes a dance rehearsal with Tibetan youth in Toronto where the storyline includes kicking a disobedient yak, milking a dri, a female yak; and churning the milk into butter:

The actors, never having never gotten angry at a yak, milked a dri or churned butter, must be taught by those who have had the experience (or those who were taught by those who had the experience, for I do not know if any of the teachers themselves had ever milked a dri either). (2011, p. 130)

In the Mangere College Samoan group, for example, students performing the sasa needed to portray activities in Samoa like preparing 'ava (kava), climbing palm trees, weaving sennit and casting fishing nets, as well as more abstract logogenic movements in dances accompanied by songs. Earlier in this chapter, Nese struggled to motivate the students to move with intention and meaning; and to communicate elements of the bodily habitus she acquired growing up in Samoa, in essence, to make
their movement more Samoan. For students with more embodied knowledge (even if only more experienced in their group’s dance forms and have better ability to mimic their tutors) these changes were instantaneous as they enter the practice space, for less experienced students, they happened over time as the body learned culturally-specific ways of moving and vocalising. As students acquired competence, the cohesiveness of the cultural group as a community of practice increased.

Between students’ daily incremental progress at cultural practice and their performance at the festival, an important milestone is the fiafia. A combination of dress rehearsal, fundraiser, and social event for families and other supporters, the fiafia events at Mangere College are a particular kind of Pacific space- a “heightened form” (Turino, 2004, p. 4) representing the culmination of the many hours of participation and the reifications that have emerged from practice, as well as the tutors’ expertise and patience, students’ embodied knowledge, and their families’ commitment to the success of the group. In particular, these ethnographic vignettes highlight costumes and fundraising, two significant and highly symbolic reifications of the practice (Wenger, 1998) of cultural groups.

**Vignette: The Tongan Group Fiefie**

The Tongan fiefie is scheduled for the Saturday afternoon before the festival in the gymnasium. When I arrive, rows of chairs for the families have been set up, as well as a speaker system. Tongan pop music is playing at top volume, and some of the women, wearing festive, shiny kofu (blouses) and feather tekiteki (headpiece), get up to dance. The atmosphere is relaxed as family members trickle in and chat with one another. Around the perimeter of the gym, and in the courtyard outside, mothers are helping their children with their teunga (dance costumes). Both boys and girls are wearing white tupenu (wrap skirts), the girls’ made of shiny white satin and the boys from cotton blend, and the girls have paired them with kofu trimmed with blue ribbon, and the boys are in white sote (collared shirts). Blue and white are the school colours and were chosen for the teunga at a parents’ meeting.

Over the tupenu, finely woven mats of pandanus leaf fibers, ta’ovola, are folded, wrapped around the waist and tied with a kafa (braided rope). Ta’ovola are valuable items, handmade in Tonga and sometimes family heirlooms, and essential for formal occasions. Over this, the fakaha’apai, a wide fabric belt decorated with dozens of blue and white ribbon rosettes, which the mothers meticulously folded over hours at cultural group practices, trimmed with long, concertinaed ribbons. The feather tekiteki, vesa nima (wristbands) and vesa va’e (anklets) of the same ribbon rosettes emphasise the movements of the head, hands, and feet, and
Help wrapping a ta’ovola at Mangere College Tongan group Fiefie

the whole ensemble is completed by a kahoa (garland) of the ribbon rosettes. Girls also are wearing a kahoa pule’oto (cowrie shell choker).15

Viliami, one of the more boisterous boys whom I have never seen still or quiet, leans over deferentially as his mother, frowning with concentration, adjusts, tightens and tucks. I also see her looking after Tau, a Cook Islands student, to fold and wrap a borrowed ta'ovola. All around the gymnasium, I see the same cheeky boys who always answered my questions with well-crafted jokes and goofed off at practices doing one-armed pushups and pretending to shoot each other with their taufakaniua props, silent and deferent as their mothers carefully and expertly fit their ta'ovola and straighten their collars and tekiteki.

As their punake (director), Vaivai, gathers the students outside the gym entrance so that they can process inside as a group, the students are quiet with anticipation, but the underlying sense of excitement is palpable. The external transformation into their teunga has shifted something internal as well. Practice is over, and it is finally time to perform.

Costumes

The debut of costumes at the fiefie is a powerful reification for students and their families. For students, the receiving of costumes represents their progress as performers in the cultural group- a reward for their commitment to the cultural group and acknowledgement of their newly acquired competence, after hours of repetitive drilling, memorising and perfecting of performance items that must be completed in

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15 Tongan costume translations are from http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz.
order to be worthy of performing at the festival. The careful fitting of the teunga in the socio-temporal space of the fiefie is a brief, but highly symbolic exchange between parents and their children – and a sharing of embodied knowledge that marks the final transformation from cultural practice to performance.

The receiving of costumes is also a reification of the commitment of families and tutors over weeks of cultural practice. Like the Tongan group parents’ hours of meticulous folding and knotting of ribbon to create the accessories for the teunga, and the sourcing of materials and sewing of tupenu and kofu; all of the groups directed significant time and energy toward costume design and production. Not only were points awarded for costumes at the festival, but group and school pride were at stake as well. Creating the full set of Cook Islands costumes was particularly onerous, as a minimum of two costume changes was expected, as well as distinct costumes for the legend and the boy and girl leaders. Many schools had three costume changes– Mangere College could not shake the annual criticism that they did not wear a third, more modest costume for the ‘imene tuki, as many other schools did. The Samsons’ home in Mangere had a makeshift factory for costume making under a large marquee erected in their back garden. One of Tautape’s specialties was as a costume designer, and friends and family worked tirelessly to make the elaborate head-to-toe outfits and accessories with fibers, shells, and feathers that were specially ordered from the Cook Islands and Samoa.

One of the most important aspects of membership in a Polyfest cultural group was working together as a team to raise funds, partly to offset the potentially significant cost of costumes. Students made a small financial contribution for their costumes, but fundraisers were needed to subsidise them. Cake stalls and barbecues were held throughout the Polyfest season, making the most of donated items from within family and community circles, but the ceremony of culturally-specific ways of presenting cash gifts is a defining characteristic of fiefie/fiafia as a constructed Pacific space. This is described in the following vignette.

Vignette: The Samoan Group Fiafia

I arrive at the auditorium at 7 pm on the night of the Samoan fiafia. It is Wednesday, three days before the students are scheduled to compete at the festival. The raised stage area is too small for the group without it being cramped, so the floor space has been cleared of chairs with the parents seated in the ‘stadium style’ area at the rear. One of the Year 9 students, Christian, is stationed at the door to collect a ‘gold coin donation’ ($1-$2), a common New Zealand fundraising custom. Henry and Mrs Ah Sam collect more substantial cash donations
at a row of tables set up next to the entrance, logging each one in a notebook. Families trickle in, and elders take their seats early on, waiting patiently, and there is a soft murmur in the room as the adults visit with each other and younger siblings play in the aisles. When it is time to begin, the students, in their own formal wear (puletasi, a form-fitting long dress with short sleeves for the girls, and ‘ie faitanga, a skirt falling below the knees, with white collared shirts for the boys), take seats in neat rows on the floor— the costume “reveal” will be later in the evening. Henry takes the microphone and welcomes the families in Samoan and English (but the latter is likely only for my benefit). After a prayer is invoked to bless the evening, he introduces the group as a whole, then passes the microphone onto student leader Mose, with instructions to say their name and their family’s ancestral village(s) in Samoa. Regardless of their fluency, which I knew varies widely amongst the students, each student is able to do this confidently.

After each student speaks, it is time for the students to siva for donations. A female student is called up to dance, sometimes paired with a boy to dance with her as an aiuli, their families’ cue to come down to the floor with their cash gifts. The other students sing, sway and clap to accompany the dancers. Mothers tuck notes down the front of the girls’ puletasi, or in the boys’ shirt pocket. Male relatives place the donation in a hastily organised torn soda can box on the floor in front of the dancers. Other donations are more presentational— an uncle scatters $20 notes in the air (a practice called lafo in Samoan); a father walks down the stairs holding an ula (garland) of bills taped together, which he drapes around his daughter’s neck. After nine or ten students have performed, Ailini is chosen. She looks stately and elegant in a champagne coloured puletasi with a cowl neck, as she bows to the audience before she begins her siva. Her grandmother makes her way down to the floor to join her, and watching the two generations dance together— smiling and occasionally locking eyes, is truly magical. The two generations of women performing together is one of the most memorable moments of the evening.

About twelve siva in total are performed, and at their conclusion, Henry reads out the amount donated for each one, a practice found in some Samoan churches (Auckland Council 2015a), to enthusiastic applause. A portion is presented in envelopes to Fa’apoi and Nese— this is their payment for tutoring. The students file out of the auditorium to change into their costumes for their first official performance, but an equally important event for the evening has just successfully concluded.
The Significance of Fundraising at the Fiefie/Fiafia

Fundraising also contributes to the construction of a particular kind of Pacific space. Families financially support cultural groups throughout the season - providing, for example, paper goods for selling food items, and offering free services, like sewing. However, raising funds at the fiefie/fiafia provides family members the chance to participate in highly meaningful, culturally-specific displays of financial support, which are done so similarly at other occasions in Pacific communities in New Zealand and are a component of complex community and social relations. For example, in Tongan communities in New Zealand, cash is viewed as a suitable gift for nearly all social transactions, particularly to mark life milestones (Addo, 2009). Describing an example of a Tongan birthday celebration in Maui, Ka’ili (2008) explains that to fakapale (place donations on the dancer’s body) during the tau’olunga allows diasporic Tongans to express mafana (warmth) practice tauhi vā (the nurturing of sociospatial ties) and fulfil fatongia (community obligations). Giving cash gifts at events like the fiefie allow adults to model the values of mutual help, respect and empathy (fe’onga’iaki) to young people (Addo, 2009). Cash gifts presented as part of dance performances are a reification of the families’ commitment to the community of practice but also legitimatises Polyfest cultural groups as part of their greater cultural world.

Fiefie/fiafia at Mangere College intensify the Pacific spaces constructed by
cultural groups over their weeks of rehearsal. They are heightened “intentional gathering[s]” (Robertson, 2010, p. 92) of students, teachers, tutors, and parents, transforming the school halls into “special landscape[s], marked by symbolism, practice, ritual and function” (Devarajan, 2010, p. 217). The sounds territorialising the space are more ordered than at cultural practice, in the form of formal speeches and well-rehearsed songs. Bodies perform dance movements finally perfected, wearing lovingly created costumes, and family support is embodied in dancing and the rituals of gift giving. At Mangere College, in the socio-temporal space of the fieie/fiafia, references to and concerns about schooling were absent, and only Tongan and Samoan teaching staff managed their respective events. However, the intentions, sounds, and bodies of the community of practice constructed spaces that claimed a unique Mangere College identity, and compared to the large-scale relative chaos at the festival, were intimate occasions of celebration specific to this community of practice.

**Student Experiences of Polyfest Cultural Groups – Participation, Learning, and Identity**

*At 17, half Māori and half Samoan, I was proud of who I was, and who I had become. Through discipline and under great guidance, I learnt about leadership, being humble and understood what my own culture is about.*

*Theresa Howard, ASB Polyfest Event Director, in 2013 Welcoming Address*

Theresa Howard’s statement, describing her experience as a student in the Samoan cultural group at Baradene College, foregrounds a number of emergent themes from the student focus groups and partner interviews. As Theresa described, cultural groups are a site where students negotiate their choice of group based on multi-ethnic heritages, develop personal values, and construct ideas about the meanings of leadership and its relationship to cultural identity. In this section of the chapter, I also discuss these themes and expand upon the students' choices of group membership, as well as their conceptualisations of the meanings of culture. Additionally, I focus on students' views on language in the context of cultural group membership. As discussed in Chapter Two, language ability is contested as a fundamental component of Pacific cultural identity (Milne, 2013, Faa’ea-Semeatu, 2011; Anae, 2009). I conclude that students utilised polycultural capital to navigate and strategically integrate the “worlds” of culture, school, and family (Hawk & Hill, 1998) and identified ways that membership could benefit their lives outside the cultural
In doing so, students constructed new aspects of identity through their membership in the community of practice.

**Joining Cultural Groups**

With many choices of school clubs and activities to choose from, the motivation to join a cultural group, and which of the groups to join, was a significant theme in the focus groups. The importance of culture and the desire to learn more through their participation in cultural groups was a motivation for a number of students at Mangere College. Comments like Aka’s were common amongst the students: “I joined again this year because obviously, that's how much I loved my culture and how much I wanted to learn about it.” Students at Mangere College expressed that learning about culture was important in their lives. Some students had little to no opportunity to spend time in environments where the material aspects of culture, language, protocols, and celebrations - church and family events, youth groups, island visits - was available to them. For them, joining a cultural group was an initial foray into learning about their family’s island roots, and for others, an experience to share well-established commonalities with their peers and tutors.

Students expressed that learning about culture was important in their lives. Some students identified culture as an essential component of their identity. Rawiri stressed, “Culture is a big thing. It's all about your roots; it takes you back, that's why it's important...it’s so important that nothing else even matters when you're out there doing it. Nothing else even matters except your culture.” DJ told his interview partner, “It's really important to know your roots, and it's important to know where you come from and understand the basics.” Angel stated, simply, “I wouldn't be who I am if I wasn't Samoan.”

Students spoke freely about their conceptualisations of culture and its significance to their experience of Polyfest cultural groups. The students’ identification with culture as synonymous with Polyfest is understandable. Concepts around culture were embedded in the language used within Polyfest. ‘Culture’ has always featured prominently in the lexicon of Polyfest as a ‘Cultural Festival,’ and festival themes like “Developing Leadership Through Culture” and “My Culture Defines Me” reinforce the relationship amongst broad notions of culture and participation in Polyfest groups. The identifier ‘cultural practice’ for daily Polyfest rehearsals and social activities set it apart from other music, sport or leadership groups they joined while at school. The students’ conceptualisation of culture was similar to Mackley-Crump’s findings from
the Pasifika Festival in Auckland, where culture was associated with “the definable, describable, and material aspects of what they perceive to be Pacific cultures, such as music, beliefs and morals, food” (2012, p. 245). As young people with their life experiences concentrated at home and school, Mangere College students’ views were mainly contextual to those situations. Although, like Mackley-Crump’s Pasifika Festival participants, the students thought of culture as being “contained in performances” that were a representation of their group’s distinctive characteristics (2012, p. 184), they also associated culture closely with Wenger’s concept of practice – the ‘doing’ within their cultural groups that encompassed their experiences of participation, and how through participation they could be worthy of full membership (Wenger, 1998, p. 47). This conceptualization of ‘doing culture’ was expressed by some of my adult participants as well when describing their roles in teaching, directing and performing. For Mangere College students, both learning and ‘doing’ in cultural groups included protocols and routines during cultural group practices, and the values and personal attributes that contribute to making the cultural group successful.

Part of the value students placed on taking part in Polyfest was that the opportunity to experience anything like it was limited. After leaving school, there were opportunities for highly skilled performers to carry on in professional and semi-professional dance groups, studying at PIPA or participating in cultural competitions at tertiary school conferences, but the welcoming of beginners and sheer excitement of the festival day were unique to Polyfest. And of course, the many hours creating memories with school friends could never be replicated.

Paulina commented on the limited window for being in a Polyfest group, describing it as “a once in a lifetime kind of experience. Once you leave college, you’ll never get the chance to perform at Polyfest ever again. You can always go back and watch, but it’s not the same as performing on the stage. And we’re kids; we love it.” Brandon joined “Cause it’s my last year, no more Polyfest for me, cause I finish school this year...so had to come for the last year to make good memories, to look back [and say] ‘I remember those days.’”

Students also had choices of which cultural group to join, including outside their own ethnic affiliation(s). When Faith’s interview partner asked if, hypothetically, she would join a different cultural group, Faith, who is Niuean, said, “I couldn’t join Samoan group. There’s nothing wrong with that group, but they’re not my culture.” But, others didn’t find the idea unusual. Leonard said, “You know, [it’s a] fun experience, just to learn something new. You don’t have to be a part of that culture, that island, you know, just join.”
Friendship connections were vital in some students joining ‘other’ groups – it was a guarantee that friends could spend many hours together at practice and enjoy the experience together. Brandon, a leader in the Niuean group, recruited several non-Niuean friends and took a great deal of pride in introducing them to Niuean performance. With effort and commitment the measure of a valuable group member over previous experience, teachers in charge and tutors were welcoming of students trying an ‘other’ cultural group. English teacher Huni explained,

Kids do join other groups...I think it's great for them. They learn how to work together. They're very open about it here. The students kind of rally around ‘the others’ and help them out. The parent might make the costume for their kid’s friend. It will help them in the real world when they go out to work and have to work with different people.

Being part of a different group did not impede being a soloist or having a leadership role. These students were sometimes - to their embarrassment - held up as examples to the others that as non-Tongans or non-Cook Islanders they were learning more quickly or more focused at practice than their classmates, who were supposed to know better. Mama Marsters never seemed to tire of the fast learning and skilled dancing of one of the new Cook Islands group members, indicated by her astonished stage whisper when he was especially deft, “It's the TONGAN!”

Tau, who is Cook Islands, became one of the leaders of the Tongan group inspired by his older brother, who had a large group of Tongan friends and eventually became the vāhenga- in Tonga, a role given to the highest ranking individual in the village (Kaeppler, 1993) and at Mangere College, to the leader. It was the first time a non-Tongan had taken that role. Though Tau attended a Cook Islands church and had a good foundation in the language, he described himself as “loyal” to the Tongan group due to his “passion for learning other stuff.” Another leader who joined a different group was Māori-Samoan prefect Cyrus, who had been appointed by Mrs Ah Sam the previous year to help the struggling Niuean group. Cyrus said, “The Niuean group was really good back in the days. But they just lacked the leadership and that. And they just wanted someone who could really push them.” He joked that his long hair led some students to believe he was Niuean, but after his true identity was revealed, he found he was far from alone with “quite a few” non-Niuean students in the group. He said, “that’s the thing I think they were trying to encourage, is that it’s good to explore other cultures as well.” Cyrus had also been a member of the Māori and Samoan groups, and this experience of Polyfest was not unusual at Mangere

16 For information on Niuean haircutting ceremonies in New Zealand, see Jowitt & Lay, 2002.
College. John Heyes explained,

We have young people with a plurality of familial contexts that explore that plurality over their years in school. And you will see in them in two if not sometimes three cultural groups. And that to me is absolutely delightful. And you'll ask the kid, I thought you were [a certain ethnicity], and they'll say I am, but my grandmother is [a different one], and she really wanted me to experience some of that before I would leave school. And all power to that.

In Chapter One, I argued against Kornelly's (2007) conclusion that a pan-Pacific identity “represents the experiences of most festival participants” (p. v). In Pacific festivals in New Zealand, including the ASB Polyfest, the notion of “unity from diversity” (Mackley-Crump, 2011, p. 230) is implicated, or in the case of the ASB Polyfest theme in 2011 (“Unity is the Magic, Diversity is the Joy”), publicly claimed. However, this is not equivalent to a pan-ethnic identity. As demonstrated by Mangere College students like Cyrus, joining multiple cultural groups is a means of connecting to their multi-ethnic heritage, and for others who cross over to join other groups, a result of feeling a close affiliation with other Pacific cultures strengthened by peer relationships, or the value of helping groups succeed through leadership. Individual groups at Mangere College and the students who joined them held distinct identities, with notions of “unity” based on common goals for success at the festival.

**Learning About Leadership in Cultural Groups**

Leaders were an interface between tutors and other students, which meant they had to defer to tutors and carry out their instructions without question, and also discipline their peers. It added an additional layer of pressure on top of the need to learn the performance items quickly and correctly while staying on top of schoolwork. Paulina told her interview partner,

Some of the challenges would have to be leading the group, like, keeping them under control, making sure they go to practices on time, they have the right gears [uniform] for practice. It’s really stressful too, not only did you get the pressure from the tutors to keep the group under control, you get pressure from the teachers in charge of the group, the supporters, the parents, all wanting to push you to become a better leader. It was hard, really stressful. For me, being a leader wasn't easy, I have to admit. There was a lot of tears, a lot of yelling and screaming and growling at the students. But in the end, it turned out ok.
In one of the focus groups, a student offered the statement, “[cultural groups] help us learn our values.” In discussions of what that meant to the students, examples were sometimes expressed as concepts broadly associated with culturally specific codes of behaviour, such as aga fakaniue (Smith, 2014); and sometimes as personal attributes. In a focus group with the cultural group leaders, we discussed how the qualities needed to be a leader in school and a cultural leader overlapped. Students identified that being an effective leader required being respectful, humble, fair, encouraging, committed, confident, and disciplined. Although knowledge of “traditions, customs, and protocols” was desirable, students also agreed that one could be an effective cultural group leader even if they were “not always the smartest person in the group” - supporting the tutors’ approach that work ethic and commitment were the primary qualities needed for being a student leader, and other knowledge could be acquired later. Leaders agreed that it was a learning experience that helped them to grow and develop. Tau said,

When I first joined it, I had no idea of anything. But now when they look at me they say, this guy knows what he’s doing. So I got a lot of respect, when I tell them look, we need to get into practice now, they say OK, and they really get into it.

The bullied student mentioned earlier explained that being a leader allowed students “to build on the basics of how you were then to how you are now,” and that for him “a lot changed” over the Polyfest season.

**Pacific Languages and Cultural Group Membership**

As discussed in Chapter Two, Anae (2009) argues that the relationship between Pacific languages and cultural identity in Aotearoa is more complex than the conflation of language shifts to cultural loss and that the identities that young Pacific people construct in relation to situational language use (or not) are worth investigating. As cultural groups are an ideal setting in which to do so, the students in the focus groups co-constructed interview questions about the role of language in cultural groups, leading to further discussions of their conceptualisations of the role of language, and their strategies around its use and comprehension.

The promotion of Te Reo Māori and Pacific languages is an important component of the ASB Polyfest. The speech competitions are an incentive for students to dedicate study time to their heritage language, and they also to align Pacific languages to structures within the New Zealand education system by fulfilling student
requirements for NCEA assessments. Pacific languages are also fundamental to performances - with the exception of emcees who need to be understood for giving instructions and maintaining safety procedures for a multilingual audience, English is never sung or spoken on stage. However, at cultural practice, language use was a reflection of the diverse abilities of tutors and students. The Cook Islands and Niue group tutors used English exclusively; Vaivai consistently spoke in Tongan. Other tutors like Henry and Nese strategically spoke a combination of Samoan and English to expose students to the language and also ensure understanding of the material. For less fluent or monolingual tutors, use of Pacific languages included greetings, commands, prayers or jokes. Mangere College students’ command of Pacific languages varied from total fluency, to passive fluency, (Leap, 1988) to a few words or commonly used phrases.

Māori-Samoan Cyrus described his ability to understand, but not speak, his two heritage languages:

I understand [Samoan] and everything. Can’t speak it. It’s the same with my Māori side. My grandparents, fluent– my grandfather, fluent Samoan, my grandmother, fluent Māori– and then my parents, no, they don’t speak the language. Which is a shame. I don’t see how they could have lost the language! I would have loved to have been in that era where they spoke it at home and really picked up that sort of language. I would love to speak fluent - both languages.

Students acknowledged that language was important. DJ said, “sometimes, some students don’t speak Samoan very well, but it’s important for them to learn to speak it.” Moana agreed, saying, “...everyone’s losing their own culture and wants to speak English, which is like the number one language in this country. But everyone should learn how to speak their own language.” Language was strongly affiliated with culture for these students. However, many spoke about how language was not a barrier to participation in cultural groups - whether or not they were joining a group that spoke their heritage language - and about the strategies students could use to understand the tutor. Meleane, in the Tongan group, said, “I speak and understand my language, but you don't need to know or speak the language, you can understand it by other kids telling you, or hand gestures or anything.” Aka told her interview partner,

Definitely…no. They don’t have to speak it but getting someone to explain it to them, the students who don’t know how to speak it. Yeah, it would be a bonus,
an advantage, to speak it, but not totally based around having to speak it to be in the Polyfest.

Rawiri’s even-handed response was,

   Partially yes, but majority, nah. You don’t really have to know cause if there’s a tutor who can speak both Cook Islands [Māori] and English, you should be sweet. It would be good if you could understand and speak though. But you don’t have to.

Language ability was also not an impediment to performing well or deriving meaning. Faith answered, “Not really...when they’re learning the item they don’t have to know the language. They can learn the language through the item that they’re doing.”

Further evidence of the students’ lack of intimidation by language were the individuals who chose groups different to their own heritage. Paulina acknowledged that students from other cultures could challenge themselves learning some of the language in the cultural group they joined:

   …with the Cook Island group, we did have some non-Cook Islanders, and it would have been harder to pick up the language, but I guess they see it as more of a challenge and wanting to learn another culture than their own, so in a sense, you don’t need to.

   Rather than mastery, the accessibility to language, and the actions of engaging with language through learning correct pronunciation, singing, chanting, speaking lines when acting in the legend, listening to instructions and/or saying prayers was seen by students as an important component of cultural groups, but not the most important one. This indicates that similar to Anae’s findings (2009), language was recognised as having importance, but its value was embedded in broader notions of culture. Though some students, like Ailini, Mose and Meleane were fluent, for students who lacked fluency, language ability was never an impediment to full membership in the Polyfest community of practice.

Constructing Identities Through Cultural Group Participation

One, [Polyfest is] the best experience ever. Two, you learn a lot about your culture. Three, there’s more to your culture than you know. By that I mean you learn how your culture performs, what they’re like, what they go through during the practices and stuff, and everything you do is for your own good and also everybody else’s. You just learn a lot of things about your culture.

Aka’s answer to “If you were on the international TV news right now, and could say three things about Polyfest, what would you say?”
Wenger’s social theory of learning posits that learning changes individuals, but that identities constructed through learning are done so in the context of their communities - an investment both in the self and in relationships with others (1998, p. 5). Through the data from the focus groups and interviews, it is evident that Mangere College students identified that through their participation, they were simultaneously learning new knowledge and contributing to the practices of their cultural groups (Wenger 1998, p. 5), and how that constructed identities in a number of ways. For Aka, a leader in the Cook Islands group, “the best experience ever” was the sum total of learning new ways of performing, negotiating the processes of leading her peers, and the personal development that led to collective success at the festival. Nancy stated, “It taught me a lot about my culture, performances I didn’t know that you could do. It taught me how to understand some Niuean words. It taught me a lot about myself and my culture.” Polyfest was the first foray into Cook Islands culture for Rawiri and the slip of the tongue in his answer revealed a newly emerging identity as a result of his participation:

While I didn't know about my culture, I learned a lot, like myths and legends, and the way they sing their songs. I learned how to dance, how to do the actual cultural dance, how to pronounce their words and how they say it. Or I should say WE, how we say it.

The students also engaged in the process of constructing meanings of culture and its place in their lives. As a part of their learning trajectories, participation allowed students to construct identities incorporating their notions of culture. Teamwork, discipline, and leadership – necessary qualities for a successful performance at the festival – became associated with the values important to a cultural group, along with aspects of more culturally-specific concepts like fa’asamoa andanga fakatonga, such as respect, humility and religious faith (Anae, 1998; Lee, 1996). Therefore, in constructing these associations, students were active agents in creating meanings of culture that were relevant to them as young transnational Pacific people.

Cultural groups are also a milieu where polycultural capital is both developed and utilised. With the support of their teachers and tutors, students integrated components of their different “worlds” of school, culture, and family (Hawk & Hill, 1998; Faa’ea-Semeatu, 2011, see also Anae, 2009). Tau’s comment is an example of how they perceived how membership in a cultural group benefited the other areas of their lives:

It’s given us a cultural perspective on life. When we get through school, the
only effect we see is an education, getting a career and all that. When we join Polyfest, it’s more like, we get into the culture, and we see that people, we can help them [do the same].

Cyrus, who like Tau was headed for university the following year, agreed:

They give us lifelong skills, skills that we’ll require in life. Whether it’s education, our personal lives. The culture groups give us discipline, and being able to listen to the tutor or whatever, commitment, committed to the practices, like you need to be committed to your education and all that. Leadership skills which we’ve developed, in which you need to take ownership and lead this vast amount of groups. It’s given us a lot of opportunities to learn different skills. Not only for school but for our own life and our future.

Cyrus and Tau’s analyses recognize the importance of learning more about their Pacific heritage and the values like commitment and discipline that will serve them in the worlds of New Zealand education and the workforce. Principal John Heyes explained to me that cultural groups were significant for developing qualities that could be applied to responsibilities in other areas of the school and beyond:

It really forces young people to time manage which for a teenager is such an important skill. And even the issues we face in terms of lateness and attendance, the bottom line comes down to time management. [Student leaders like the] Paulinas and Leonards of this world are prime examples of that. These are students that have so many balls in the air, and they are having to juggle and manage their way through that. But, it does mean that they are developing skills to take into adulthood. Because it is so rare that you can single-mindedly work on one thing, there are too many other pressures in adulthood they have to learn to manage.

DJ suggested that cultural groups helped students to “fill in the gaps” of their cultural knowledge – but participation also developed the ability to work around these gaps. The students were able to decide amongst the opportunities that were made available to them – making initial forays into their (sometimes dual or multiple) cultural heritage(s), going across cultures to learn in other groups, investing in peer relationships, or taking up the challenges of leadership. The students identified what they didn’t know and learned what they could in the context of their cultural group, and focused on strengthening what was important and useful to them. The students expressed satisfaction with their engagement with culturally-specific knowledge, and their experience gave them confidence that they had the ability to learn more. They drew ideas about culture presented by teachers, tutors, and parents but ultimately,
chose to connect to them in a “highly selective way” (Mallon, 2010, p. 365) as they constructed ideas about culture in ways that made sense in their lives and allowed them to be successful in multiple contexts.

Vignette: The Cook Islands Stage Prizegiving

Mrs Samson and other family members have staked out an area for Mangere College with plastic mats, easily visible by the red t-shirts that were custom-made for the students to wear at the festival. I hunker down next to them as the emcee, George, fills the waiting time with recorded Cook Islands pop music and a few prize giveaways. The timetable is running slightly behind, making the anticipation even sharper. It has been a long day already. We started the day at dawn, meeting at school to take a chartered bus together to the festival grounds, to check in the students in the early autumn morning chill and wet grass. It all feels like a blur now. As the students dispersed to enjoy the festival, I lost track of them and knew they would have made their way to the changing tent at their designated time. Tautape would be fussing over the girls to fit their skirts and titis, and one of the mamas would be helping the boys to fit their belts, elaborate headdresses, arm bands, and anklets. I could imagine the students in a circle, holding hands and heads bowed in prayer as we had done together in the final rehearsal on Friday afternoon. It had all come down to this.

The performance, in sum, is brilliant. The voices are bright, the group adjusts to the size of the stage well, they nail the transitions, the placing of the lightweight but awkwardly bulky styrofoam statue of Tangaroa, god of the sea, is placed in perfect timing in the transition between the kapa rima and the legend. The vocal duet in the kapa rima is right on the money—the tune borrowed from “We are the World,” and the surging key change is a hit with the audience. The students ham it up with wild abandon during the legend, playing opposing tribes in battle. There is a nail-biting pause during one of the key trouble spots—would Jackson remember every word of his speech as the rangatira (chief), and would the students be able to change into their complete full second costume for the ura pa’u, the climax of the set? He does, and the costume change is smooth. Very importantly, only one or two costume accessories fall off during the entire performance— which would mean deducted points, but very few.

I know every note and every word of each item by this point. My heart is in my throat, and I feel like I have been holding my breath for the entire 25-minute set. Relief floods my body on the final drumbeat. The students’ hard work has paid off a hundred fold.

There is one more school left to perform and the lengthy wait for the results. The students, flushed and happy and decked out in their red t-shirts pick their way through the crowd and fill up the rest of the mats. While we wait for the judges to tally up the scores, the
emcees keep us all entertained with songs, jokes, and dance-offs, and it is a much needed time for the students to relax, have some belly laughs, and get up spontaneously and perform when the drumming moves them. Finally, the formal start to the prizegiving begins. The trophies and wooden plaques are set out at a long table and after a series of remarks by the major sponsors, the third, second and first place prizes for the individual items, leaders and costumes are read out in radio host Bernard Tairea’s smooth voice. Every prize announcement is met with exuberant cheering and 16 beats from the drummers, so the leaders from the winning schools can dance across the stage, once even punctuated by the splits(!). Mangere College is accumulating quite a few prizes— including first place for the ute, kapa rima and ura pa’u, and for the drummers. However, taking the overall first place has been Tuteru’s aim from the start— to “take the trophy home again” as he told us. Even though they have performed brilliantly and we couldn’t really have asked more of the students, coming second would be crushing.

After what seemed like an eternity, it is time to announce the overall winners. “In third place...Tangaroa College.”

“In second place...Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate.”

This is the moment we all know we are first. The elation washes over our faces as we grin maniacally at each other. In an unfortunate anti-climax, Bernard delays the announcement for the lowering of the Cook Islands flag and the singing of the national anthem.

“And the first place overall for the Cook Islands stage 2013 is...Mangere College...” the end of the announcement is drowned out by our screams as a sea of red shirts go airborne, fists punching the sky, jumping up and down, whooping and cheering and hugging each other as the drummers play their final 16 victory beats. As the band sings a closing prayer and the crowd disperses, the students embrace their friends and family, take photos, and relish in a moment that for many of them will be a highlight of their school years.

![Figure 11 Mangere College Cook Islands group girls performing kapa rima on festival day, 2013](image-url)
Figure 12 Mangere College Cook Islands group student as rangatira on festival day, 2013

Figure 13 Mangere College Cook Islands group girls performing ura pa’u, 2013
Polyfest at Mangere College and Histories of Learning

“...since both participation and reification are inherently limited in scope, they inevitably create discontinuities in the evolution of practices. Participants move on to new positions, change direction, find new opportunities, become uninterested, start new lives” (Wenger, 1998, p. 90).

The cycle of a Polyfest cultural group begins in the first week of school—introducing discontinuities from the previous year as new members join, the absence of former leaders is noticed, and new tutors are warily assessed. The end of the festival was also the conclusion of the formally organised cultural group’s activities for the year at Mangere College, after eight weeks of learning in practice (Wenger, 1998)- and the formation of new relationships, additions to the repertoire, and overall, a “renegotiation of the enterprise” (Wenger, 1998, p. 97). After the victorious day at the festival, I joined the groups’ individual “break-up” gatherings of shared food, thank yous and speeches, and a morning tea to honour the teachers in charge and other staff that supported at cultural practices. Henry organised for the Samoan group to take an excursion to Parakai Springs, a local water park, where we spent an afternoon and evening enjoying waterslides and playing volleyball. School returned to a normal routine and the students’ interests turned to sport and other after-school activities.

After my fieldwork concluded I moved on to writing up my research and a full-time job, and Mangere College’s cultural groups continued, of course, without me. After a few years, all of the students I had worked with had left school and gone on to university and work. My job in the music industry started to call me away to the WOMAD Festival in New Plymouth, the same weekend as Polyfest and a five-hour drive away. The Samson’s work and family obligations meant they were unable to return as tutors the following year, and the Cook Islands group was unable to keep their momentum. They slipped in placings to second, and then fourth. Conversely, the Samoan and Tongan groups progressed significantly to more members and stronger performances. Mrs Ah Sam and ‘Alisi continued in their stage committee roles. Principal John Heyes retired and was named a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit during the Queen’s Birthday Honours for services to education.

I was elated to find out that at the 40th Anniversary Festival in 2015, both the Samoan and Tongan groups took first place. As the winners of the first festival in 1976, the symbolism was powerful. For a small school like MC, I can imagine the burst of pride that would have sustained the school throughout the year – indeed it did, as both groups repeated those victories in 2016. Even the Cook Islands group made a comeback– in 2017, they placed first again, without the Samsons. To my surprise, they
had gone to work with a rival school, in order to support a family member teaching there.

In the cycle of the ASB Polyfest, as students progressed through their schooling, newcomers were now very much old-timers, and one cultural group’s rules, rituals, inside jokes, victories, and disappointments were never identical to those of another. Perhaps in coming years, the students I met in my fieldwork would have children who performed in the festival. Or some would go on to become teachers in secondary school, and volunteer to be Teachers in Charge of the cultural group, telling their students their favourite stories about competing as Mangere College students. Maybe I would see Tuteru or Tautape Samson behind the judging table when they had more years of experience and deemed qualified by the elders in the stage committee. Elders would pass on, and there could be significant changes to the festival as younger members of the community of practice took charge. As participation in the festival continued, Mangere College’s cultural groups would continue to renegotiate their practice anew.

*Figure 14* Mangere College Samoan group sasa on festival day, 2012
Figure 15 Mangere College Samoan group *taualuga* on festival day, 2012

Figure 16 Mangere College Tongan group joking for the camera before performing *ma’ulu’ulu* on Festival Day, 2012
Conclusion

This chapter was the first of the discussions related to the ethnographic fieldwork in this research. Its focus was on the cultural groups at Mangere College, and two main themes of the participant experience of cultural groups- the construction of Pacific spaces, and a focus on students and their construction of identities through their participation. A background of the school's involvement in the
festival, both in performance and in high level decision-making, was followed by the present-day description of the school’s characteristics, in order to situate the nature of the school and contextualise the observations. After I provided an account of cultural groups’ progress over the festival rehearsal period, I argued that the combination of social interaction, sound, and bodily behaviours within cultural practices created unique Pacific spaces at Mangere College, heightened in the pre-festival culminating *fiafia* events.

I then shifted focus to the views and experiences of students. I argued against Kornelly’s conclusion that students’ experience of Polyfest was a ‘Pasifika’ (pan-Pacific) experience (2007), concluding that students’ close affiliation to other cultural groups was through multi-ethnic heritage, peer relationships, and/or applying the values of leadership. Students constructed conceptualisations of culture through their participation, and utilised polycultural capital to integrate school, home and culture to create meaningful and individualised learning experiences. I finished the chapter drawing on Wenger’s framework of practice as shared histories of learning, which develop over time with the introduction of new members and the formation of new relationships, and the refinement of shared enterprise and repertoire.

I continue the fieldwork results in the following chapter, with a tight focus on individual identity stories from the young adult participants described in Chapter Three. Some of the issues addressed in this chapter, such as multi-ethnic heritage and ideas about the meaning of culture, are explored further, and the discussion is expanded to other issues around contemporary Pacific identities.
This chapter is focused on themes of identity construction through membership in Polyfest cultural groups. Some of these themes were addressed by Mangere College students in Chapter Four, such as the experiences of learning new cultural competencies, and finding affinity with multiple Pacific cultures. The title of this chapter reflects how identity experiences will be more deeply explored with the young adult participants, in which family and peers played significant roles. Webber (2011) identifies parents as primary sources for the development of adolescents’ racial-ethnic identity, and vital for fostering connectedness with their racial-ethnic group. Family also plays an important role for multi-ethnic Pacific peoples, whose relationships with both immediate and extended family influence their either positive or negative association with their individual heritages and their desire to identify with them (Agee & Culbertson, 2013).

Webber (2011) argues that cultural socialisation within families is particularly meaningful as it emphasises language use, exposure to cultural events, sharing positive aspects of history and heritage, and instilling a sense of pride; however, its effect depends on parents’ attitudes, beliefs, and previous experiences. The influence of friends can be even more significant:

…friends from the same racial-ethnic group may engage in similar behaviour as parents do with regards to racial-ethnic socialisation (i.e., promoting pride, cultural knowledge, and cultural traditions, promoting awareness of discrimination and helping their friends cope with it), but may have more of an impact on the adolescent than parents, since adolescents spend most of their time with friends. (2011, p. 57)

Mila-Schaaf (2010) found that for her second-generation Pacific participants, certain cultural competencies, behaviours, and values were “privileged as Pasifika” (p. 148) and lack of compliance meant “misrecognition” (p. 60) or “penalized as being inauthentic” (p. 153). Some of my participants, seeking learning opportunities in Polyfest cultural groups, were confronted with differences, resistance and/or a lack of acceptance by their families and peers, demonstrating how communities “can be places of marginality where separation is maintained in spite of some mutual engagement” (Wenger, 1998, p. 254). Others were met with acceptance that supported
their learning trajectories and compensated for the gaps in cultural transmission within their families. Throughout their learning experiences in Polyfest cultural groups, the participants had to reconcile across the boundaries of their membership in multiple communities of practice; the multiple ‘worlds’ of family, school, church and peers (Hawk & Hill, 1998). As “learning resource[s] in their own right” (Wenger, 1998, p. 254) their experiences of negotiating boundaries encouraged students to persevere in future cultural learning and participation.

Individual identity stories and longer narratives are key to exploring the themes in this chapter. As Wenger asserts, “The work of reconciliation can easily remain invisible because it may not be perceived as part of the enterprise of any community of practice” (1998, p. 161). Mila-Schaaf argues for the importance of considering “competing narratives” of Pacific people (2010, p. 2). The stories in this chapter from individual participants allow for discussions of their experiences that may be hidden in public discourses of Polyfest of unity, teamwork, and festivity (“ASB Polyfest Proves Extremely Successful,” 2013).

The participants discussed in this chapter were university students aged 19-24. Most were members of the Auckland University Pacific Islands Student Association, with the exception of Leki Jackson-Bourke, whose experiences as a tutor are discussed in Chapter Four. When possible, I obtained a video recording of their Polyfest performance from the University of Auckland’s Archive of and Pacific Music before the interview, which we watched together. Some declined to watch their video if they had watched it recently or too frequently and didn’t want to view again, but most were very pleased to see their performances, which also helped to prompt memories of the experience.

Family and Cultural Transmission

The chapter begins with a discussion of participants who had to navigate family relationships and attitudes towards cultural transmission. For some of these participants, their parents were either highly selective about the cultural competencies they saw as important for their children (Anae, 2003) or did not make cultural transmission a significant priority. In some Pacific families, Polyfest was not valued as part of a New Zealand education in the context of the family’s sacrifices and their status as new migrants (C. Macpherson, pers. comm)- like this experience shared by Tim, aged 24. When I asked Tim if his parents wanted him to join a Samoan Polyfest group, he replied:

No, I think because my parents, like going back to the environment we grew
up in, they didn’t see any kind of merit or value in doing it, because why would you, because the Ministry [of Education] tells you the best way for people to succeed academically is to learn English, and everything is, you know, geared towards living that kind of lifestyle. So they didn’t force anything on us, probably to our detriment, because now I just think ‘oh my gosh, there are so many things I could have learnt differently if my parents had maybe supported it a bit better or just thought differently.

Gershon (2012) found that amongst Samoans living in the United States and New Zealand, parents’ lack of explicit teaching of codes of cultural behavior was a result of the widely held belief that this knowledge was inherited; in essence, “being Samoan implies one knows how to act as a Samoan” (2012, p. 143). This was referenced in a conversation I had with Leki, a 23 year-old of mixed Samoan, Tongan, Niuean and European heritage, about the expectations of Island parents:

…a typical Island thing is that you're expected to know what to do, you should know…who's educating you, if you don't know what to do? That's what real stubborn island parents are like– you should know this, you should know that. [They're not really teaching you] but they expect you to know it.

The following longer story from Tiria, 21, centers on his desire to learn more about Cook Islands culture than was being provided within his family. In looking to his school’s Cook Islands cultural group, he was met with indifference and at times resistance from his parents:

My parents didn't raise us in total Cook Islands culture. We joined Polyfest, we did speech and debates, but it was stuff that we wanted to do, not that our parents wanted us to do. My mother's family are like, real Kiwi. There are aspects of Cook Islands culture that we still uphold, like what we do at funerals, and birthdays and hair-cutting ceremonies and stuff, but whatever we learned in our Cook Islands culture is what our parents gave us, which wasn't much.

I really wish I could speak [Cook Islands] Māori. My parents just felt– they thought it wasn’t a need. All my elders speak Māori fluently. My parents never thought it as a bonus; they just thought “Well where are you going to use it?” But they didn’t anticipate me and my siblings joining any culture group. They didn't think we would be interested in Cook Islands culture. When we joined Polyfest, our parents didn't like it. They were frustrated; they didn't want us to
be committed to it. “See now you have to make costumes! You bring the costume stuff to the house; we don't want you to bring it here, why don't you make it at school?” And then that's how we got mixed messages. We thought, we're getting involved in our culture, isn't that what every parent wants for their kid, to know our culture? “Yeah, but it makes a mess!” Then how are we meant to learn our culture? This is one way we can learn it...if we can't make up the songs, and we can't drum, then we can dance, and we can make costumes.

But our parents never liked it. They didn't want us to join Polyfest. They only let us do it if it was of no cost to them, had nothing to do with them. They came on the [festival] day, and they were like, [sarcastically] “That was nice.” And then they would also jokingly do it, they would put us down- “You don't know how to dance.” “Well, obviously I'm not going to be good at it because you didn't teach me!”… So my siblings and I, my whole family actually, we get mixed messages from our parents about our culture. We don't know if we're doing it right, or doing it wrong, or if we should do it or if we shouldn't do it. We had that experience when doing Polyfest.

I forced my siblings to join Polyfest. I told them “Where else are you going to learn our culture?” They won't learn it at uni; I'm the only one who comes to uni. And obviously, you're not going to learn it at work, because there's nothing cultural for you to get involved in. I made them join Polyfest all the way up to their seventh-form year [age 18]. I've definitely pushed my kid brother to join every Cook Islands thing in high school. He's in the Cook Islands Māori class, he joined the Polyfest group, he’s in a barbershop quartet where they only sing Island songs.

Tiria identified Polyfest as a way of practicing Cook Islands culture that was both independent of his parents’ attitudes toward cultural transmission within their family, and achievable within the limitations of his previous cultural knowledge. Joining the school cultural group was possible without speaking Cook Islands Māori or having previous experience with highly specialised performance skills, in this case drumming and choreography. Like Leki, he negotiated “mixed messages” from his parents about their expectations of his knowledge of their cultural behavior. His resilience against his parents’ discouragement enabled him to take a parental role in
‘forcing’ his siblings to take part in Cook Islands culture and therefore compensating for the disruption in cultural socialisation within their family.

Reconciling across the boundaries of religion and other forms of cultural learning is the focus of the following two stories, from Mia (Tongan) and Joe S. (Samoan). Christian churches of varied denominations have an historical role in New Zealand as a support system for transnational Pacific communities that replicated the social constructs of villages (Macpherson, 1999, 2004). Researchers have found that Christianity and Pacific cultures are deeply entwined (Manuela & Sibley, 2013) and that church membership is associated with wellbeing for young people and adults (Manuela & Sibley, 2013; Mila-Schaaf, et al., 2008).

Twenty-one year-old Mia’s cultural socialisation from her Tongan parents was disrupted partly because of her parents’ interfaith marriage; her father converted to Islam, and the family did not attend church, that other Tongan participants described as key for their socialisation into language, music, and dance. Mia could not speak Tongan, and as an experienced Cook Islands dancer, she was initially more interested in joining the Cook Islands group. However, as a high achiever, she was pressured by her teachers to join the Tongan group, similar to how cultural group leaders were chosen at Mangere College. She explained,

I think they tried to use where I was in the school, to try and lift the Tongan group up…I didn’t want others thinking in high school that I wasn’t Tongan, wanting to judge me about what I was interested in.

At school, Mia was self-conscious about what others thought about the lack of Tongan language in her home and the fact that her family weren’t churchgoers. She spoke of the “courage” she needed to join the Tongan group:

My parents, they’re both from Tonga and stuff – they always speak English at home, and I always encourage them to speak Tongan to us, you know, so we can be surrounded by the language, as well as picking up the cultural stuff…But they never did, and I didn't understand why. And so when I got to high school and finally got the courage to join the Tongan group there, I thought that might be cool because my Tongan language is very poor…yeah, I thought it might be cool to just know more about being Tongan.

I also picked up that…because we also didn’t go to church. I think, the other Pacific Islanders In the Tongan group, at school, like at AGGS [Auckland Girls
Grammar School], they used to judge me on us not going to church, because every Pacific Islander goes to church, it’s what they do, and what they’re brought up on, but we never did.

I found that this big chunk was missing, and I thought that I could find it. So I went and joined the Tongan group to try and pick up on the language, and I don’t know, fulfil that part that I thought was missing, the culture and stuff. I enjoyed it…a lot of the girls who did go to church were awesome, like very fluent in Tongan, and I thought that was a bit…like oh man, I missed out on a whole lotta years.

[Polyfest] was important, just because if there are other people out there younger than us, that have gone through the same things that I’ve gone through, like, feeling like I’ve missed out on knowing my culture because I didn’t get it at home or at church, the way that most Pacific Islanders do. That thing, you know, that missing thing. And it just made sense to me. It was even better that it was through dance because that was something that I was interested in.

Mia was initially apprehensive about coming to Polyfest because of the lack of Tongan cultural socialisation from her parents but had a strong intention of finding what was ‘missing’ in her home life. Like Tiria, Mia was aware that ‘other Pacific Islanders’ were participating in ways her family did not. Mia experienced how “membership in a community of practice translates into an identity as a form of competence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153) as her newly acquired knowledge of dance and language gave her more confidence in her Tongan identity.

Joe’s story differs from Mia and Tiria, in that his community would likely consider him to have been socialized into Samoan culture. As the son of a pastor in the Samoan Assembly of God church, Joe spoke Samoan and spent a significant amount of time with his father’s church community. However, Joe was dissatisfied with his father’s view that a Samoan identity could be constructed through devotion to church. Joe considers religion and tradition to be disparate, and counter to his family’s rules about dancing; he joined Polyfest:

All I know is I’ve been told not to participate in any of those [performance] events, but being the rebel that I was back then - probably still am - I said stuff it, I’m going to put some [coconut] oil on and go dance. Because I would never
know what it was like to be Samoan if I didn’t go do that. I mean, speaking the
game. I didn’t tell [my parents] ‘til the very day. They just thought I was
language was one thing, actually living it and doing it is a whole different ball
playing sport. So on the very day, I came home, with the oil all over and
lipstick, just came home from Poly like that.

Joe’s act of rebellion and assertion of ownership of what he considered “living
and doing” his Samoan identity exemplify the various, and sometimes conflicting
ideas around what practices constitute doing culture and which are “privileged as
being Pasifika” (Mila-Schaaf, 2010, p. 149). When I asked Joe if he was worried about
keeping secrets from his parents – particularly because I knew Joe had been subject to
harsh physical punishment when growing up (see Anae, 2001), he replied:

I had a feeling they were going to find out eventually. I think it was probably
too late to stop me anyway. And even if they did say no, I would have still
done it. They just told me not to do it again. And the next year, I did it again.
[laughs]

The process of joining his school’s Samoan cultural group, engaging with a
new set of peers, rehearsing, and performing in front of hundreds of people at
Polyfest, was an identity-forming experience that Joe described as “liberating”:

I felt that sense of liberation. Culturally, here you can walk and talk and say I’m
Samoan this or that, but...there’s no sense if these are the clothes I’m wearing,
I’m wearing English clothing, I’m dancing like a black American...so for me,
after my first year of that, it felt liberating. That’s the best way to describe it.

Like many of the participants discussed in this chapter, Joe found significant
meaning in the “heightened form” (Turino, 2004, p. 10) of cultural expression by
performing with a Polyfest group, something that was public and visible to his peers
and their families who were not affiliated with his church. The rebellious nature of
Joe’s act of defying his parents’ rules and the codes of behaviour in his home and
church were his way of asserting a personal meaning of cultural identity separate from
that of his parents. Joe’s actions align with Webber’s findings that for adolescents in
multi-racial urban high schools in New Zealand, developing a sense of racial-ethnic
pride and belonging can occur simultaneously with defiance of community prescribed

17 On the Samoan stage, coconut oil is commonly applied to the dancers’ skin and lipstick
used for marking the students’ faces.
and socially ascribed racial-ethnic identities (2011).

For Tiria, Mia, and Joe, looking for ‘missing’ culture, or a representation of culture that was meaningful to them, involved countering their parents’ views, and in the case of Joe, concealing their participation. As adolescents, they exercised considerable agency in going outside and around family structures and norms to find greater individual understanding of cultural identity and to align themselves with what they perceived to be ‘doing culture,’ or, in Wenger’s terms, engaging in the practice of their community.

**Acceptance and Belonging for Participants with Mixed Ethnicity**

Several participants discussed how their mixed Pacific and European ethnicity affected their experiences of learning and membership in Polyfest cultural groups. For Sam, who is Cook Islands-European, his experience with Polyfest was a positive initial encounter with learning Cook Islands culture:

I was in fifth form (age 17), and I saw them practicing in one of the common rooms, and I had just finished volleyball practice, and my friend and I were just watching them. People said, come join! I thought I’m Cook Island, I should be able to do this! [laughs] So I just joined them. It was the first time I did Cook Island stuff. Cook Island dance is just so hard out. It was cool; it was a good experience for me because I’d never done Cook Island stuff before, even though I am Cook Island [laughs].

I mainly grew up with my mum. She’s *palagi,* so I didn’t know my Cook Islands side. I guess looking back, it was part of me exploring my identity, even though I didn’t know it at the time. I remember I was so proud to be a part of the Cook Islands group because I’m Cook Island and I’m actually taking part in my culture now.

It was just like hanging out with friends, and we were just all hanging out in this group. I felt – not patriotic – just really proud to be Cook Island. I knew I was Cook Island when I was growing up - I didn't really feel it until I joined

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18 In conversation Sam used ‘Cook Island’ to describe his ethnicity; this truncating of the accurate ‘Cook Islands’ was common in my fieldwork.

19 The Cook Islands Māori word for white person is *papa’a,* Sam chose the Samoan/Tongan word *palagi/palangi,* which makes sense considering his peer group and much larger numbers of Samoan and Tongan speakers in Auckland.
the Cook Island group. I didn't really know for me what it meant to be a Cook Islander; I just knew I was Cook Island. Joining the Cook Island group – I moved from ascribing myself as Cook Island to feeling myself as Cook Island. I was singing, and I didn't know what it meant, but I could feel it. I could feel it in my heart. I knew it was something of importance. Even though I didn't understand the lyrics, I could feel the message that was there – almost putting my own message into it, my own feelings.

Polyfest was Sam’s first experience of moving from an intellectual knowledge of his Cook Islands identity to an emotional and embodied one that he was able to engage in with others. Singing in Cook Islands Māori, without any fluency in the language, became “a particularly affective and direct way of knowing” for Sam and his emerging sense of being a Cook Islander (Turino 1999, p. 21). In the performance itself, Sam experienced what Turino describes as “sameness” of not only musical elements but “of thought and action, of spirit, of common goals, as well as our direct interaction” (2008, p. 18).

Sam’s experience was affirming of his Cook Islands identity, but for other participants, joining a cultural group meant confronting their differences from their peers. These stories are from participants, who, like Sam, also have mixed Pacific/European ethnicity. Many Pacific cultures have ambivalence toward the appearance of mixed Pacific/European individuals. Fair skin is associated historically with people of high rank in Samoa and Tonga, for example, yet research has found that in New Zealand their uncharacteristic appearance may not legitimise them as Pacific to others (Palalagi, 2003). Several of my participants spoke self-consciously about their fair skin, sometimes jokingly. Jordyn, who is Tongan-European, laughed when she recalled that her Polyfest tutor “didn’t even know I was Tongan!” and upon seeing herself in a photo that I had taken at the previous year’s festival, pointed herself out as “the only white girl” on stage (pers. comm.). For another participant, Leki, as a second generation mixed-ethnic Pacific person, he was confronted by the assumptions others made about his appearance:

All my Island family is half – my Samoan family’s Samoan-Chinese, my Niuean family’s Niue-English. My Tongan family’s Tongan-Irish. That’s why I’m like, white though. [People notice] you’re like, ‘afa’aki, you’re expected to be plastic because you’re not the same colour as them. I used to get mocked…like, you’re

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20 “Plastic” is a pejorative term used by Pacific people in New Zealand to describe other Pacific people judged to be inauthentic or fake, though its meaning and context vary and are highly ambiguous (S. Manuela, pers. comm.).
just lost in your cultural identity.

Claiming three Pacific cultures that are represented at Polyfest, Leki had multiple possibilities for acceptance within a school cultural group. Family relationships played a part in his choice as he already had siblings in the group, and he felt a sense of urgency to learn more of his maternal grandfather’s culture, who was Tongan:

I never ever used to represent my Tongan side, because I hated Tongans and stuff. When my grandpa died, I felt useless, because I tried to speak to him on his deathbed in Tongan and stuff, and he just didn't like it. I was like, why am I trying to do it now, I should have done it for a long time. On his deathbed, it was easier for him to just call out for things in Tongan or Niuean, instead of English. So he'd be like [in Tongan] “come and massage my arm,” and I didn't know what that meant, and I would just stand there like an idiot. And he'd have to do this [demonstrates] like use body language. And then I felt really useless. So I took a challenge upon myself to try and learn. And I started hanging around more Tongans at school, and then when the [Tongan] princess [got married] all the Tongans at school, they got to wear their mats (ta’ovola) to school, I wanted to be a part of that, because it's part of the culture.

[I joined the] Tongan group because my grandfather was alive, and I wanted to learn Tongan stuff when he was alive, he raised me. And I didn’t know much Tongan, so I took a risk. And my brothers were in the same group. So I went to the Tongan group, and I got mocked, hard out.

All the Tongans were fluent in Tongan. I was like, the only little fat white boy. Now I’m better, cause I know my cultural identity and stuff. But back then, I used to get mocked. And I didn't know how to dance properly. You know how they are seated in the rows [for the ma’ulu’ulu]? No one wanted to sit next to me…they pushed me to the side.

Though Leki’s fair skin, and inability to speak Tongan and to “dance properly” led to derision and exclusion from his Tongan peers, he was satisfied that he had “done enough” after performing in one festival with the Tongan group. Leki’s initial experience with the Tongan group was not optimal, but he persisted with looking for culture through Polyfest:

The Tongan group was getting boring, cause everyone was still being mean to me and stuff. And then I saw the Samoan group practicing, and it looked fun
as. And the Samoans were like, why don’t you come join us? [I thought] I’ve done enough for my grandpa, I learned the Tongan faivas so I wanna do Samoan next year for my Samoan grandma.

The nature of Leki’s heritage gave him choices in how to find participating in cultural learning through Polyfest. In his case, it was a more supportive peer group that made an easy transition to performing in tribute to his Samoan heritage. After performing for several years with the Samoan group, Samoan became the most secure of Leki’s Pacific identities (Anae, 2001).

Another participant, ‘Danny’ (who requested to be referred to with a pseudonym), also has several generations of mixed ethnicity in his family, and when he took part in the Niuean group, experienced ambivalence toward his appearance when his Niuean identity was questioned by some and his fair complexion admired by others:

I was removed [from other Pacific people], and when you would try to come back, you’d get rejected. It’s not like an in-your-face rejection; it’s like those really little subtle things. Like, oh, you’re not actually full Niuean are you, because you’re fair, those little little little things. I never really found it came from Niuean people, Niuean people generally, if you know your family name, your family name carries a lot of weight, so if they knew where you came from, that was ok, they understood. You’d say, I’m a______, ok, I get it, I know where you’re from, I know who your family is. But for those who didn’t know Niue, even Niueans who didn’t know Niue very well – it wasn’t like they would say it in a bad way, they’d say it in an admirable way, like, you’re fair, and I want to be fair.

I kind of felt like a half-caste, which is ironic because I’m not. I’m as full Niue as you can get. I’m full Niuean, but if it's technical, no one's a full Niuean. Only one of my grandparents is full Niuean, so it's natural that the colour of our people changes. Niueans have been in New Zealand for a long time, and a lot of Niueans have assimilated into New Zealand culture, there's a lot of intermarriage, and a lot of Niueans are not full Niuean at all, and a lot are European looking, so they have a very Western kind of appearance. So when you say you're Niuean, it's like you're an Islander, but you're that Islander.

Some multi-ethnic Pacific/European people assert a mixed or identity (Keddell, 2006), but Danny’s argument - “I’m as full Niue as you can get” - reveals his
awareness of the negative connotations of being identified as hafekasi, as well as his frustration with how his appearance represented him to others. Danny found that amongst his peers, “certain symbols and identities were privileged as most ‘true’ or most ‘authentic’ whereas other representations were penalized for lack of compliance” (Mila-Schaaf, 2010, p. 37). When he spoke of being “removed from other islanders,” he elaborated on some of his characteristics that distanced him socially from his peers. Throughout the interview, Danny referred to “Islanders,” as if he was excluding himself from that group membership:

I was in Polyfest a little bit begrudgingly. I’m not really into the whole performing stuff. For me I found it challenging; I’m not very coordinated, naturally – I don’t have that natural Pacific rhythm. I just don’t have it. I can move, but it doesn’t come easy for me. So I think that’s a little bit of it, at the school they streamed you [by ability] so you were only with certain classes throughout the whole of high school, and a lot of my friends weren’t Pacific, they were Asian and European. I guess you went through a kind of identity crisis- you’re in this big Island school, but Islanders don’t really accept you. I think the only time I really had exposure to Pacific and Māori students was my cousin, we’re the same age, and we went to the same schools, so we’d hang out together. That would be the only time I’d get to really interact. It’s kind of like I felt I never really belonged. It sounds kind of weird.

I think also part of my problem is being homosexual as well. That was one of the reasons I didn’t want to join because Island boys have a lot of bravado, and I was out back then to my friends, but not to everyone, and think that was kind of a barrier that I had to joining the group.

All of those little attributes…and I don’t speak like a typical Islander. And that’s because my parents were very strict and that goes back to my grandparents. But people don’t see that I have that experience, they don’t understand that. When they look at those three things, they think, *fiepalagi*, [trying to act like a white person/European], not authentic Niuean.

Danny’s own ideas of what was privileged as Niuean – his parents’ and grandparents’ emphasis on education, what he described as a “typical Island family” upbringing, with family members traveling from Niue and staying for extended periods; and the

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21 For a discussion of Pasifika New Zealand English see Gibson & Bell, 2010
fact that Niuean was spoken in his home—weren’t sufficient to authenticate him to other Pacific students. Having a fair complexion and speaking New Zealand English without a south Auckland accent or slang were traits that contributed to this. He invoked the derisive term *fiepalagi*, believing he was perceived as inauthentic for other attributes that were important components to his identity, like his academic success and sexuality. Danny also presupposed that performing ability was “natural” for Pacific people; therefore his challenges with dance in the Niuean group contributed to his feelings of otherness. For him, the Niuean group was more an experience of “marginality” (Wenger, 1998, p. 254) than belonging.

**Learning From Other Pacific Cultures**

Several participants had meaningful experiences when they joined other Polyfest cultural groups, based not on multi-ethnicity, but on relationships with peers. In the case of two of the Cook Islands participants discussed earlier, Tiria and Sam, they were not limited in their choice of group by their parents’ influence or authority. Afforded the freedom to move amongst cultural groups, they were encouraged through peer relationships to join Tongan groups at their respective schools. Rather than confusing or compromising their burgeoning Cook Islands identities, their experiences performing in Tongan groups strengthened them.

Tiria was a head prefect at Southern Cross Campus, which had a large number of Tongan students, and most of those in his close peer group were also Tongan. He attributed his dedication to learning more about Cook Islands language and culture while at university to the cultural confidence he recognised in Tongan students:

I think it was; I built the connection to the culture. When I joined the Tongan group, I learned that nearly every Tongan student already knew their culture. Even if they said they were joining the Tongan group for the first time. They already had the dancing experience; they already had the cultural experience. With the Cook Islands culture, a lot of them didn't know anything, and it was really sad. They didn't even have the basic, elementary skills of Cook Islands culture.

This story about Tiria’s experience of the Tongan group as a non-Tongan describes how through rehearsals, he experienced a Tongan-specific community of practice. Tiria recalled,

The other three prefects were Tongan, and I thought, maybe I should join the Tongan group, and they said, you should, you should! We called our school “Little Tongan High;” the campus had a majority of Tongan students, and most
of my best friends were Tongan. The *punake* told me I had this real manly grace for the *lakalaka*, so he said. Come sit in the front. And I said no, I’m not Tongan, I’m going to sit in the back! We had this thing at our school that the year 13s sit in the front, and then the underclassmen will go behind, so it’s in order. But me and my best mate, we said we’d go behind, cause it was our first year doing Tongan group, in the last year of high school. That was fun; it was really hard though because everything was in Tongan. Whereas in the Cook Islands group everything was in English.

When I was in the Tongan group, the *punake* always made me do the boys’ actions properly – the stance of the boys in the *lakalaka*...you had to hold yourself really low, and I already knew that from Cook Islands dancing, it was natural. So when he said “Lalo” and everyone had to go down, the boys couldn't hold their weight. I was one of the biggest boys in the group, but I said, this is what we have to do in Cook Islands dancing anyway, so I’m just going to do it. Every time he would stop, and he knew I was the only Cook Islander in the group, and he would ask me to come to the front and say, ok do that segment. I would do it, and the students would say, he’s not even Tongan, he's not even Tongan! And the parents – I don't know if they were praising me or growling me or whatever. You never ever talk back to the *punake*, everyone knows that. So when he told me to come to the front – the leaders of the group are in the middle, and the ones next to them, the second and third in the line, they are the best dancers. Our *punake* told me to come in as number three, and I said no because I’m not Tongan. And the boys would tell me, don't say that, just do what he says! And then he wanted me to stand behind them, but one of our other prefect Tongan boys was behind the leader, so I said I’m going to go to the back. He was really frustrated, but he understood because he knew I respected their culture. I told him, I’m just learning for the first time, so I’ll be all goods [fine], where I was at the back.

Though rehearsals were in Tongan and Tiria wasn't able to understand the nuances of what took place, the experience exposed him to immersion in a Pacific language, which he wasn't able to do in the Cook Islands group. Though Tiria was self-conscious about being a non-Tongan, he found that his Cook Islands performance technique made him a model member of the group. Tongan students showed him what could be possible if his Cook Islands peers had had the same cultural
competency, and this encouraged him to continue seeking out opportunities to participate in Cook Islands culture.

Two years after joining the Cook Islands group at his school, Sam joined the Tongan group, encouraged by Tongan friends:

There were very few Cook Islands students in my year...all of my friends were Tongan. It was just a lot of fun. I had never done anything like that before, and I was treated so well because I wasn't Tongan. And I thought, this is really fun, and I never expected to be so welcomed into the group. [Taking part in the Tongan group] reaffirmed my identity, because they accepted me even though I wasn't Tongan, but they also knew I was Cook Islands. They knew I was something different!

During a later conversation, Sam elaborated,

I thought, well, if I'm learning Tongan culture and I don't know what's going on, and it's all right, it's probably OK to not know what's going on when I'm doing Cook Islands culture. It's like the experience with one enhanced the other.

I think Polyfest for me was exploring myself, and finding out who I am in the Cook Island group. And in the Tongan group [I thought] “I know who I am now, and I'm just going to have fun with it.”

Sam's reflection about his time in the Tongan group demonstrates that his apprehension about knowing little about his Cook Islands heritage was eased by the experience of learning about Tongan culture, with support from his peers. After his initial experience in the Cook Islands group, Sam had a more secure Cook Islands identity which allowed him to “have fun” learning with his Tongan classmates.

Both Sam and Tiria were afforded the ability to learn with Tongan friends, uninhibited by parental expectations, and welcomed by the “old-timers” (Wenger 1998, p. 99) in the Tongan group. Their emerging Cook Islands identities were supported by their sense of kinship with Tongan students and their practice (Wenger 1998) as members of the Tongan group, where students demonstrated a greater cultural competence.

Cultural Learning and New Communities of Practice after Polyfest

All the participants continued to pursue ways to participate in culture after Polyfest, and with the exception of Leki, who went to performing arts school, they did
so through Pacific student associations at university. Tiria, as he explained, was influenced by the cultural confidence of his Tongan peers, which motivated him to become an officer in the Cook Islands student association at university and study Cook Islands Māori. Leki directed his interest in Samoan performance into a diploma in performing arts and continues to tutor at his former school and other schools, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven. In spite of his misgivings about performing, Danny joined the Niue students’ association at university. Sam, now a postgraduate student, finds support in both the Cook Islands and Tongan student associations at university, taking comfort in that they are “always going to be there” (pers. comm.). Mia pursued her interest in Cook Islands dance and culture at university and started attending a Tongan church, without her parents:

I just found a church to join in the past six months. It’s funny, like, with my Dad, he believes in the Muslim faith, and it’s so different. That’s just what he believes. And my mum, she’s very grounded in her Christian belief, in God and Jesus Christ and stuff, and so to have both of them feeding us different beliefs, it’s so weird! So I think, trying to find what was missing, culturally, that [religion] played a big part in why I went to go look for what was missing. And when I went to the Tongan group, and then coming to TAUA [Tongan students’ association] and then CISA [Cook Islands students’ association] I felt those are things that can explain to me what culture is, what Tongan culture is.

Joe’s story illustrates the role that membership in a Polyfest community of practice can play in an individual’s learning trajectory as their identity develops and their interests change. At the heart of Joe’s desire to continue learning about Samoan culture was the urge to contribute to his family’s position in Samoa. When he found out his brother was going to be the first son in the family to be conferred with a matai (chiefly) title (see Anae, 2001, p. 13) he felt a sense of urgency in learning the oratorical language he would need to learn to take part in the ceremony. Joe found an introduction to this in the university Samoan students’ association, in particular at the annual national conference for Samoan students in New Zealand tertiary education, the So’otaga. In addition to dancing in the conference’s cultural competition, Joe was given a speaking role in the opening lavalava ceremony, which was his first experience with oratory:

I think the biggest lesson I learned this year from going to my first So’o[ota] is that you know there’s more to one side than just dance. The dance I really enjoyed, but my main goal was I wanted something to help me - I did things in
the So'o that I would never do ever… Just learning the formal Samoan language, that was by far the biggest highlight. I thought, better to learn it at 24 than at 50 and it's too late. Just probably my only regret is that my brothers and my sisters could have been taught that earlier. Other than that it's better making the most of it now, but I'm keen to continue.

I feel like if I hadn’t done the Polyfest performances, I would probably be back at square one. I would have been super shy to perform in front of people. But now I’m more mature, and I can tell my mum and dad, and they’ll support me.

Joe's experience with performance in Polyfest established his membership within the community of practice as a critical part of his learning trajectory. The confidence he developed, and defying his parents and their religion, were important events in developing meaning and finding relevance with Samoan culture. Through reconciling across boundaries of church, family, and his Polyfest community of practice, Joe developed a cultural identity that differed from his parents, ultimately gaining their acceptance, while practicing aspects of culture he found would contribute to his extended family’s future in Samoa.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the identity stories of young adults who chose the Polyfest community of practice as a way to learn culturally-specific knowledge. Stories were shared by participants who joined a Polyfest cultural group because of disruption in cultural transmission within their families, to learn about their multi-ethnic Pacific backgrounds, and/or to explore the music and dance of other cultural groups outside of their own ethnic heritage. Relationships with family and peers were significant in both enabling and complicating the participants’ learning trajectories. Some participants’ efforts were met with “misrecognition” (Mila-Schaaf 2010, p. 60) by parents who did not prioritise cultural transmission, or found performance at odds with what they privileged as authentically Pacific.

Some defied the expectations of their peers, who were not always supportive of their attempts to learn, or of the variance of their ethnic and/or sexual identities. Several participants shared stories about joining other cultural groups than the ones representing their own heritage. In their cases, supportive peer relationships were key in their decisions to join, and to their success in these groups. The lack of parental interference with their choices had a positive effect, as the confidence gained from
their experiences with those groups strengthened their own ethnic identity.

The discussions with these participants identify the processes of reconciliation across boundaries (Wenger, 1998) of family, church, school and Polyfest cultural groups as a significant event in the construction of their identities as transnational Pacific people. Polyfest encouraged the participants to continue their cultural learning and participation after secondary school in various contexts, including leadership positions in Pacific organisations, church membership and strengthening family relationships. Though some, like Mia, continued to focus on performance, for others, performance in Polyfest was an aspect of ‘doing culture’ that provided a basis from which to explore their Pacific identity in other social, spiritual and personal contexts.

In the next chapter, the ethnographic focus turns to Polyfest tutors and the significance of their learning experiences on their identities as teachers.
Chapter Six
Polyfest Tutors: Negotiating Learning and Identity

This chapter, and the one following, focus on the experiences and perspectives of Polyfest cultural group tutors in constructing communities of practice within Polyfest. Using the Talanoa method when I interviewed participants about their roles as tutors meant that our conversations were not limited to a set of prepared questions. However, they followed similar patterns. When discussing their trajectories as transnational Pacific teachers and learners, the majority preferred to start with their learning experiences as children to provide context for their current practice as tutors and creative professionals. This led to their involvement with Polyfest, and their perspectives of and challenges with teaching young people. Thus, I divided the discussion into two chapters according to those two broad themes.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: after an introduction to the participants, the first section discusses tutors’ childhood experiences of learning music and dance through family and local performance cultures, including those whose families were Polyfest tutors themselves. The themes of family connections and links to island origins continue through the remainder of the chapter; specifically, in negotiating the loss of elders as sources of cultural knowledge, and the construction of meanings of cultural expertise and authority. In the final section, participants discuss the integration of family and place-based knowledge with local and contemporary influences in their creative work. This chapter serves to highlight the complexities of the participants’ identities as transnational Pacific people engaged in the work of cultural transmission.

The Participants

The individuals discussed in this chapter demonstrate that Polyfest’s teaching and learning culture is not the domain of any one age group, migration experience or upbringing. Of the five youngest tutors, in their early twenties, two were born and raised in New Zealand and attended the Pacific Institute of Performing Arts (PIPA). Tuteru Samson, who tutored at Mangere College, had studied recording technology at the Music and Audio Institute of New Zealand (MAINZ), and his brother Tautape was well-known for Cook Islands costume design as well as competitive solo performance. The other two were born and attended high school at least partially in Samoa, and were attending undergraduate and post-graduate programs at universities in Auckland. Four of these tutors had been in Polyfest groups as students. Several tutors in their 30s had been born and raised in New Zealand or had migrated to New
Zealand at a very young age and worked in various professions—social work, media, and teaching; one was a full-time dance tutor and choreographer who contracted to schools year-round, and most of them had performed in Polyfest. Two tutors aged over 40 had moved between New Zealand and the islands throughout their lives, and had established strong reputations as dance tutors and choreographers in both locations; three others were teachers, and one was finishing a master’s degree in education. Two of these tutors were in a Polyfest group as a teenager. Some have family connections to elite cultural or political figures—for example, one of the tutors is the grandchild of the former premier of Niue; another was bestowed a special title by the King of Tonga—or had positions of leadership in Pacific community organisations in Auckland. Overall, four identified as Samoan, four as Niuean, two as Cook Islands, three as Tongan, and Leki Jackson-Bourke, who was featured in the previous chapter, as Samoan, Niuean and Tongan.

**Reflections on Learning**

When recalling their own learning histories, all of the tutors—whether they were raised primarily in the islands or in New Zealand—identified church, school, membership in village and/or professional performing groups, instruction by relatives, and varied local and global musical influences as sources for learning music and dance. Nese, the tutor for the Samoan group at Mangere College, is a tutor in her twenties who migrated to New Zealand for the final two years of her secondary education and was pursuing a postgraduate degree at the time of the interview. She described how learning *siva* Samoa was contextualised by close proximity to family members who had assessed her to as ready to learn from them, and how these experiences led to deeper understanding of cultural meanings and protocols. The key figure in music and dance learning in her family was her uncle, a skilled dancer and composer who taught his daughters and nieces, who subsequently taught Nese. She talked about the importance of this family lineage and what she learned:

In 2006, 2007, my aunties started teaching me and my sister, because of out of all their nieces, we are the eldest. So I think they came to that realisation that we are no longer juniors and we can get promoted, in their words, because we’re keen students. We were always keen to learn! And these four are always dancing. And so even now, just the way they move to the left or the right, it's not an accident, that they do that, it's not by chance. It's the way they were taught, that if you do that kind of action, you do those kinds of expressions and things like that. Which is something that I never actually got the benefit of that,
learning directly from him... So from there, they started teaching us, and they're very strict. I always used to think that siva Samoa was just - you could do any kind of action, as long as you were comfortable with it. But according to them, it's not so much the case. It's almost like learning from the very beginning, how you stand... And you have to do things a certain way, and that was all foreign to me up to that point. So ever since then, they’ve been teaching me how to dance, and where to dance and where not to dance... Just all those little things add up to you being a Samoan woman, and what it means to be a lady in siva Samoa. So there’s a lot more to it than just the actions.

As one of the younger participants, Nese did not have the same amount of life experience and years of expertise as some of the other tutors I interviewed, however she easily identified what she found as the most significant aspects of Samoan performance: the understanding of meaning embedded in the choreography, identifying the correct circumstances for dancing, and dancing as a component of gendered behaviour. She also referenced her legitimacy, determined by her aunties (aunts and mother’s cousins) as a new member of her family’s community of practice. The following stories also describe the ways that place, family and community enabled the transmission of music and dance.

For Fili Richmond-Rex and her son Johnny (Nisi), both teachers at Delasalle College where Johnny is the Niuean group tutor, their lives as transnational Niueans were distinctive as Johnny’s grandfather, Sir Robert Rex, was the premier of Niue for 18 years. Fili was educated in Auckland from age 12 and worked and raised her children both in Auckland and Niue. Johnny would later be educated in Timaru on the South Island of New Zealand and then in Australia before returning to Niue to teach school. When recalling their experiences with music and dance, their stories were contextualised by positive memories of living in Niue, which Johnny admitted he looked at through “rose-tinted glasses.” Fili recalled how after bringing her children with her to live in Auckland, after just over a year she decided to return to Niue:

For me the turning point was, we were all walking on K’ Road; 22 in those days it was where Polynesians gathered. And this old bag lady was wheeling a shopping trolley, and she ran into a group of Island kids, and really they abused the hell out of her. And I thought, I don’t want my kids growing up in this kind of environment. They were beginning to lose the language – they

22 Karangahape Road, in central Auckland.
could understand, but they couldn’t respond, and I thought, I needed the wider support network...Niue is a much safer and a much nicer environment to bring your kids up in. I never had to worry about them. If it was dark I knew they were at somebody’s house, and they would wash them, they would feed them, you never had to worry about them. It was a great place for children to grow up.

Johnny’s experiences performing as a child included dancing with his siblings and cousins for visiting heads of state, in addition to church and annual village competitions. Fili talked about the ubiquitous presence of music and dance in her family’s life in Niue: “… a lot of [performances] were by no means professional; maybe a couple of nights a week we would practice for a wedding on Saturday. But it surrounded you.” Johnny talked about the proximity to events, people and resources for performance that were unique to his life in Niue:

I think it’s an inherent part of our culture. When someone gets married everyone gets together and does a tame; the guys and the girls get together and do at least three musical items with a dance attached. Someone has a 21st [birthday], a haircutting, an ear-piercing ceremony, you get up and perform. It’s not detached as a part of your culture; it’s attached to you in an everyday form. Village-based, school performances, churches, so it’s part of your everyday life in that you do it several times a year. From memory, probably about three, four years old, it sounds funny, but they would make us get up and dance and perform as little kids.

Johnny and Fili’s stories are situated in the awareness that to have music and dance “attached to you in everyday form” was unique to conditions on Niue that have not only been compromised by their location, but also the passing of time. Johnny said, “I look at it now and probably a part of me is quite sad because I know what it’s like to lose that on Niue itself. We’re so Westernised now; it’s quite sad.” Though Johnny admits he recalls his memories of Niue through “rose-tinted glasses,” his idealisation of his formative experiences there foregrounds his awareness of how his students live in a vastly different environment, particularly considering the tenuousness of Niue language use and the smaller Niue population. As a tutor, he is presented with the task of transmitting his cultural knowledge under these

23 Haircutting for boys and ear piercing for girls are coming of age ceremonies in Niue communities (see Jowitt & Lay, 2002).
circumstances.

Losing Sources of Knowledge

Two participants discussed the significance of learning from late family members who were also expert composers, and of the meaning of the compositions in their lives after their elders’ deaths. The songs and chants that they were able to remind tutors not only of the loss of their family members but of their ability to learn from them further, and the “modality of anxiety” (Ram 2000, p. 262) that can accompany teaching their inherited knowledge to their students in Polyfest.

Niuean tutor Meleua Ikiua, who was raised primarily in New Zealand and is a Niuean language teacher, TIC, and tutor at Alfriston College; was trusted with her grandfather's compositions as she was the most highly educated grandchild in her family:

When gadgets [recording devices] started to come in, matuas started to pass away. And now I record all my matuas when I listen, or I'll just go to church and record. They've started to pass away or are already gone, so we've missed out there. We're a bit too late there. And anything we've got now is either going back home [to Niue] for family resources– I’m quite fortunate, because my grandfather left all the family resources to me because I'm the only grandchild who graduated, and is teaching. He was the ex-high school principal of Niue High [School], so he left those resources to me. I’m only allowed to use it when I’m in Niue...I’m not allowed to photocopy or bring it. I’m only allowed to read it when I go back home, make use of it and take my notes. It’s quite a lot. I just wish he’d said I was allowed to bring it to New Zealand...because it would make teaching Vagahau Niue [easier], and his compositions, he had so many songs and so many chants, that I would love to bring.

In addition to the pressure for Niue tutors discussed previously, Meleua is also aware of her increasing responsibility as her family and community elders pass away. Though she has the privilege of access to her grandfather's compositions, out of respect for his wishes, she can only access them in restricted ways. The following story also concerns the tenuousness of access to compositions and regrets about their preservation.

Several research participants described Melesuipi Latu as one of the most respected Tongan tutors in Auckland, as well as a former school principal in Tonga, a
faifekau (minister) and language teacher at Tamaki College in Glen Innes, east Auckland. Melesuipi gained notoriety as a *punake* in Tonga when she was invited by Princess Royal Salote Mafie'o Pilolevu Tuita to choreograph a *lakalaka* in celebration of King Tupou IV’s 50th birthday. Here when speaking about her father’s and grandfather’s compositions, she describes her father’s interest in training her to be a *punake*, but that because of her other educational and spiritual interests she did not take full advantage of the opportunity.

[My father] even asked me to get a big [notebook] so I can write all the lyrics that my grandfather did. And I never did, which is one of the biggest regrets I have...And from my observation of what he’s done, I never really had a chance [to watch] that mighty father of mine and learn, and I must say I regret it a great deal...If I had only had the time and the maturity at the time, I would have picked up a lot more from my dad, and preserved some of what my grandfather did. There’s a piece that I always use in my *lakalaka*, and that’s a piece from my grandfather that I learned just by hearing and observing. I found out later it was composed in 1945, I think. By my great-grandfather. That in itself, and the melodies, they’re a very personal part of my heritage. And I’m still fighting quite a lot to get out and create new tunes of mine. Because it’s like, it has this beautiful tuning in my ear when I do something of my grandfather’s, my fathers. My brother knows a little bit more because he used to be with my father more. But I’ve been doing it for a number of years now, so getting better with it. My creativity is coming out more. But I could have learned a lot more if I wasn’t of that perspective, childish.

Although Melesuipi and Meleua are capable of creating new material for their students, their comments indicate two aspects that contribute to teaching transnational Pacific students as an “anxiety-driven project” (Ram, 2000, p. 262): they have lost important sources of learning, as well as the cultural and linguistic environment that facilitates legitimate peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998) for themselves and their students. This in part makes up the ‘burden’ of teaching in the diaspora that Ram describes, where teachers must be responsible for the formal instruction that has superseded informal learning.

**Growing Up in Polyfest Communities of Practice**

The Samson family, the Cook Islands tutors at Mangere College I discussed in Chapter Four, exemplifies how Polyfest communities of practice can facilitate cultural
transmission within families to create another generation of tutors. Several other participants had similar experiences with significant processes of teaching and learning closely associated with Polyfest practice. Their parents were first-generation migrants who were invited to tutor at a school in their community and involved their children in their teaching processes well before they reached secondary school. Niuean tutor Mal Lakatani’s music and dance acquisition in Glen Innes, a suburb in east Auckland, was associated with Polyfest, church and his father’s reputation in the community as a culturalist as well as frontman in a popular string band. Mal asserted, “My upbringing [was] still the same [as in Niue]...be respectful, go to church, follow your parents around, do as they say - we were under their eye, their protection. Because it was as foreign to them as it was to us.” For Mal and others, being a young child in a Polyfest tutoring family ensured close proximity to performers and membership in a dance community, sometimes from a very young – as Mal recalled, “I was dancing with all these teenagers, but I was just three or four.” The children took on leadership roles in their parents’ cultural group and upon finishing school became tutors themselves, either still teaching collaboratively with their families or independently.

Maree Webster, a Niuean tutor in her early thirties, talked about how her extended family were established as tutors at Kelston Girls’ College in west Auckland throughout her childhood:

My auntie and uncle, at first it was just them, they were the tutors for Kelston, and they asked [another] uncle and I if we could go help out, which we did, and we stayed there. Then my auntie and uncle left, and another uncle came in. So, I would be the one teaching the dances; my uncle would be teaching the songs.

We’ve lived in Kelston all my life. I have nine sisters, and we all went through Kelston. There was always a Webster every year. And then the kids continued after us. So as my nieces and nephews went through, and there was a lot of them – we just stayed and stayed.

Maree’s story illustrates how the Polyfest community of practice and the transmission of music and dance within families work together and are supported by each other. For transnational families in New Zealand, the Polyfest community of practice ensures that the structures for legitimate peripheral participation are already
in place, so that family members can be introduced to practice in spite of the challenges of doing so in urban, multicultural Auckland. The following section also discusses the role of family in tutors’ learning and teaching, with particular focus on compositions by late family members.

**Constructing Meanings of Expertise and Authority**

When sharing stories of musical origins, all tutors, regardless of where they spent their childhoods, identified a similar range of sources for learning music and dance: legitimate peripheral participation in communities through family connections and their proximity to other performers, and membership in community performing groups, festivals, and competitions. Although this is not true by any means of all Polyfest tutors, as mentioned previously, some have family connections to prestigious cultural figures who are well known as composers or choreographers. Several tutors raised primarily in New Zealand discussed why these relationships and experiences were related to their expertise as tutors and how they, and others, regarded their authority to be cultural practitioners. Participants discussed the relevance of age and gender, family connections, and language ability when articulating assertions or insecurities about their expertise, such as the following story from Meleua.

When we discussed her background, Meleua distinguished herself as a fluent Niuean speaker, which was a rarity amongst other Niueans her age raised in New Zealand and was due to considerable effort on her part – learning through listening at church, studying the Bible and writing letters to her relatives in Niue. Although Meleua’s senior role in Polyfest as the manager of the Niue stage identifies her to the Polyfest community and her school as one of the key individuals who willingly engages in the “consciously undertaken project” to “keep the culture alive” (Ram 2000, p. 262), she described how gender and her upbringing in New Zealand nuance her positioning within her wider Niuean community. Comparing herself to a male friend and fellow Niuean tutor, she said:

> When it comes to culture, I think he has a sweet ride. And I’m not jealous of him because he’s been really supportive of me, but sometimes that’s just how people are. He’s a male, and he was born in Niue. Whereas [as] a female, born in New Zealand. I still have to prove myself... Sometimes against the men, it goes against me...

> We have a long line of leaders who set up a great foundation for us, for me, I
think I’m an offspring of my ancestors. [People say] ‘don’t attack her because she is the granddaughter of so-and-so.’ [laughs] That’s right, don’t attack me!

Meleua’s story articulates the complexities of conceptualising expertise within the various contexts that Polyfest tutors are situated, here specifically within Auckland schools but also as members of communities of practice along ethnocultural lines. As a Niuean woman raised in New Zealand, her acceptance by some members of her Niuean community depends on her ties to the cultural expertise of past Niueans to whom she can be directly linked. The expertise that makes Meleua established in her professional role at Alfriston College, including her university degree, is less important in this context than the profile of her ancestors and how that factors into her role as someone transmitting culture to young people.

Keneti Muaiava also discussed the importance of family links when discussing his own authority to teach Samoan dance. Keneti characterised his parents as keeping their lives in New Zealand as close as they could be to their island origins:

You know that saying, you’re more Greek when you’re out of Greece. When my dad came [to New Zealand] his whole generation, they had nothing to hold on to but their culture, so they became really strong. When I was growing up, I lived in Samoa. I’d go to school in New Zealand, but I’d come home to Samoa. I wasn’t allowed to walk around in front of mom and dad without one of these [gestures to lavalava]. I was never allowed to speak English. Just everything was Samoan. But then I’d leave in the morning and go to a whole other world, school...my teacher would tell me to raise my hand and ask questions. I’d go home, and my dad would say, that's disrespectful, do not ask questions.

Keneti elaborated upon how, in his view, this distinguished him from other Samoan tutors in New Zealand.

When my dad taught me, he didn't teach me from New Zealand. Now still when he teaches me, he teaches me from there. He can’t switch. His whole upbringing is from Samoa. People couldn’t believe how well I speak Samoan. When dad came he was a master of tradition...he was like an encyclopaedia. He never learned anything ‘new.’

I was very fortunate to grow up in an environment that I thought everyone grew up in, but they didn’t. I was exposed to dance from a young age, so I was able to inherit a dance vocabulary that not many other people have. So when I
I know what to do. It’s something you inherit...I am the only practitioner with a traditional foundation who is a Kiwi, all the others they learnt from Samoa and came here, and they still teach from Samoa. I’m the only Samoan who’s won the Teuila Festival in 20 years who’s not from Samoa. And I believe that means I’ve got it right. They say if you want to really want to get acknowledgement from Samoan dance you have to go back to the motherland. You have to earn the respect of your people.

Keneti’s story reveals the complexities of defining and asserting expertise in Pacific transnational communities. Keneti attributes his advantages as a tutor from his father’s strict traditionalism, whose materials, choreography, language, and home life were as unmediated as possible by New Zealand’s influence. He speaks about learning “directly” from Samoa through his father, asserting that despite conditions in Auckland that may have disrupted cultural transmission for others, his was able to remain intact. Being a “Kiwi” with a “traditional foundation” is something Keneti proudly affirms; something that was endorsed by competing in Samoa.

Tongan tutor Sesilia Pusiaki raised issues about the relationship of expertise to gender, age, and experience. I became familiar with her work with Pacific Dance New Zealand as an artist-in-residence, and a contemporary dance-drama she had choreographed with the Lima Dance theatre, affiliated with PIPA where she had earned a diploma. As most of the Tongan tutors I became acquainted with in Auckland were in their 40s and 50s, primarily male and raised in Tonga, Sesilia was distinctive as under 30, female, raised in New Zealand, and acclaimed for both her work with traditional faiva and contemporary dance. During my research, 'Alisi Tatafu from the Tongan stage committee invited Sesilia to be a judge. Sesilia’s great-grandfather, Vili Pusiaki, was a personal punake to Queen Salote (Pacific Dance New Zealand, 2011). Sesilia learned Tongan faiva with her father and siblings, and with her grandfather when he moved to Auckland from Tonga in 2000, alongside lessons in ballet, tap and jazz dance. Knowing that as a New Zealand-born woman in her 20s, Sesilia was a minority in a field that was dominated by older men, and I asked her how that affected her experience as a tutor:

Because I’ve got really good influence from my grandfather and my father – my father’s still pretty much my mentor when it comes to my Tongan performances, in regards to Tongan history, events– I always fall back on him before I stage it, before I put it out somewhere. We talk a lot, even if it’s me researching a song, or a concept. But when it comes to teaching traditional
I will only teach what I’ve been taught, what’s been passed down to me. I’ve been approached by people to do a taufakaniua or a kailao, and I tell them I don’t teach kailao because it’s not from my village. I only teach the ancient stuff, the me’etapaki, the otuhaka, ma’ulu’ulu, lakalakas...but I would never teach a taufakaniua because it’s not from my village. I’m very strict about that...I never teach anything that hasn’t been processed through me.

Sesilia intimated an awareness of how her age and experience would affect others’ assessment of her authority to teach Tongan faiva:

I think I was lucky because I grew up with it in the background. If I was just someone who wasn’t brought up in Tongan dance, I think it would be much harder. But because I have the background that I have—oh, no wonder, her grandfather was a punake; her father was a punake. If I didn’t have that background, then I wouldn't be as confident as I am to do what I do. And if I hadn’t learned the things that I’ve learnt through my family, and stuff about dancing, then I wouldn't be confident in being able to teach that kind of dance. But I think that contributes to it, the confidence that I have. And speaking about faiva, and what I know, and what’s been handed down to me.

I asked Sesilia if she was aware of what other people thought of her. She replied,

I used to be very insecure – well actually I still am. Right at the back, there's still that voice that's like, oh I wonder what they're going to think. But I’ve accepted the fact that I can’t please everyone. I think the most important thing is if I get the tick from my dad. It’s OK for me and he kind of gives me the reassurance. Some things I have to go through with him and I can be very stubborn. To a point where he’ll say just do it! [laughs] But at the same time, I don't just do whatever I want. I spend a lot of time thinking about if it's appropriate.

Sesilia’s negotiations with her self-concept of expertise and the insecurities she disclosed about Tongan communities’ perceptions are an interesting contrast to the public endorsement of her work in New Zealand. At the time of this research, information about Sesilia’s accolades for both her traditional and contemporary dance productions including a fellowship, a government grant, and multiple television appearances, was easily accessible online. However, Sesilia had constructed parameters for her own sense of legitimacy as a tutor of traditional faiva, within the
knowledge she had inherited directly from her father and grandfather and practiced through the mimesis of the dances associated with her ancestral village. For Sesilia, her identity as a tutor is contextualised in the teaching of dances that have been “processed through me”; directly linked to the two individuals, her father and grandfather, who were the source of her knowledge of faiva, and in the case of her father, are actively involved in her teaching processes. Additionally, though Sesilia was raised in Auckland, not Tonga, the refusal to teach a kailao because it does not originate from her ancestral village demonstrates the importance of place in what she feels authorised to teach.

These stories reveal that Polyfest tutors are conscious of their responsibility to represent and as much as they are able to, work toward replicating the knowledge that they have inherited from important individuals and places from their past. However, as discussed in Chapter One, Polyfest co-exists alongside contemporary Pacific performance arts scenes, and a number of performers and choreographers active in these contemporary genres are also Polyfest tutors. I inquired how they negotiated these different kinds of creative work.

**Negotiating and Integrating Past, Present, and Future**

I asked Sesilia Pusiaki about her contemporary dance-drama *Sei’o Fafine: A Woman’s Worth* which she directed as part of Lima Productions, a non-profit organisation in Auckland that supports emerging Pacific performing artists. She adapted the title *Sei’o Fafine* from a song composed by Queen Salote, the reigning monarch of Tonga from 1918-1965 (Mallon, 2012).

The title was about a young girl who realises that she’s becoming a woman, and people start courting her and everything like that. I took *sei* [hair ornament] not as something you put on but who you are. Girls put a *sei* on and they’re prettier, it’s like an accessory. But for me, the *sei’o fafine* was about me as a woman without the accessories. The baggage that I carry with my family, my work, school, my daughter, the choices that I made in the past, even the mistakes that I made to get to where I am today. It was about me; I’m the *sei*, not the flower. I should carry me, every day, not an accessory or makeup. I didn’t get to explain that fully to people, but I tried to use the dialogue and the story to say that this is what *Se’o Fafine* was for me. It wasn’t about a woman, but everything that makes me a woman is my *sei*.

I had attended several music and dance productions in Auckland by Pacific
artists similar to Sesilia’s in their reflection of themes about personal identity and social issues; amongst them, suicide, masculinity, domestic violence, and transgender identities. After talking with Sesilia about her commitment to teaching traditional faiva and continuing the work of her father and grandfather, I asked how this was reconciled with her contemporary choreography:

Samoans [in New Zealand] have been doing contemporary work for a while now; Tongans are just starting to come out with it. For me, we still have to keep the two worlds separate. It’s something that’s really new, and I’m still trying to discover things with it. All I know is that when it comes to the Tongan contemporary stuff I do, I feel like all I can do is explore a theme, or aspects of Tongan culture, and be more free about how I explain it, how I share it, tell the story of it.

But with the Tongan traditional stuff, it’s still almost foreign to me. The movement comes from like dance moves that I’ve learnt, specific motifs that I’ve kind of just contemporised, mako movements that I learnt, just trying to contemporise it. I didn’t want it to be all contemporary dance, like all jumps and lifts. I still wanted to keep it strong, and I didn’t want the girls to be too girly and too gentle, but both soft and hard. Because Tongan women have all of those qualities. You’re not just a graceful, beautiful girl. We’re hard in emotion and passion, and it’s not just Tongan women, it’s women in general. We have a soft side; we have a hard side, we’re gentle, we have anger! [laughs] It was all about that, it was showcasing things for me as a woman, and my discovery, my journey, my acceptance of things that happened along the way, and trying to be like...at the end all the stuff happened, and I’m still here, and that’s what counts.

The various forms of Sesilia’s work express her personal identity, and represent her strong commitment to creative and cultural practice but in discrete ways. When teaching traditional faiva, she represents herself as a recipient of inherited knowledge and an individual maintaining work that is linked directly with her father and grandfather’s experiences in Tonga; her contemporary choreography communicates other aspects of her personal and cultural identity as a young Tongan woman in New Zealand. However, Sesilia explains that at this point in her career, she wants to “keep the two worlds separate;” perhaps to avoid any compromise of the faiva passed down to her, and also to have artistic license to express themes that cannot be done so
through the mimesis of her elders’ work.

Keneti is another tutor who creates contemporary work, and my discussions with him further clarified his views on the significance of the formative background of tutors in New Zealand and how this determines the legitimacy of their expertise. During my fieldwork, Keneti staged one of his first public contemporary performances as the recipient of a grant from Pacific Dance New Zealand, based on the repertoire of Samoan dance forms—*sasa, ma’ulu’ulu* and *fa’atupati*. Keneti described how he learned about contemporary dance forms when teaching at the University of Auckland’s National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries.

Being raised in New Zealand, I was exposed to contemporary dance; when I taught at [The University of Auckland], I learned a lot—dance vocabulary, weight placement, that kind of thing. And it helped me. I learned about Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Laban. I learnt a lot of techniques. I can’t mix contemporary if I don’t know anything about contemporary.

Keneti criticised another choreographer of Samoan descent for the stylistic references of Samoan dance in his work. He elaborated on how he took issue with the artist’s lack of similar background in traditional *siva* Samoa, arguing, “[I]f he went to do a diploma in contemporary dance, where was his diploma in Samoan dance? I see him quote *fa’ataupati* and *sasa*, and these are dances I grew up with, that I really had to learn from my elders.” By arguing what expertise is *not*, in addition to what it *is*, Keneti solidifies his values around his own authority to not only teach traditional dance but to contemporise it. Keneti asserts that the ability to create contemporary work based on *siva* Samoa comes from a background of the choreographer, and that parameters have to be observed:

The line of authenticity is the creator, is the choreographer. For me, I talked to one of my mentors, he’s one of the songwriters in Samoa, if you want to maintain one thing about Samoan dance, it’s *mamalu*—and that’s dignity. I never want my girls to look like they’re dancing on a pole. You’ll never see the shaking of the hips, the sensual the slow [hip movements]. I tell all my dancers, we will never show too much skin, maybe that’s me being conservative, but as a Samoan choreographer that’s a line I can’t cross. But I can push the boundaries…but it’s sort of the integrity I have as a choreographer, for me that line of authenticity is knowing the dance vocabulary of what I did growing up. None of that stuff would be there if I didn't have that background.
Through the process of creating contemporary work, Keneti made conscious decisions about the boundaries of his experimentation, and which elements and values to retain and which could be adapted or changed. His foundation in Samoan dance gives him the confidence needed to maintain a sense of integrity about his contemporary choreography.

These conversations with Keneti and Sesilia about their contemporary dance work illustrate how, as transnational Pacific peoples raised in New Zealand, they acknowledge the boundaries around their inherited knowledge and other, local and global influences on their creative practices. Negotiating this multimembership requires “the work of reconciliation,” allowing for “identities to dynamically encompass multiple perspectives in the negotiation of new meanings” (Wenger 1998, p. 160).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, the importance of family and relationship networks in the participants’ learning experience is a persistent theme. In Chapter Two, I cited McDonald’s concept of music and dance traditions as based on personal relationship network (1996); a “human potential” (p. 119) situated in the desire for these relationships to continue into the future. For these participants, whether in island homelands or in New Zealand as part of the Polyfest community of practice, family has played a key role in their present identities as tutors in multiple ways. Past experiences, compositions, and relationships with people who have since passed away influence tutors’ decisions about the value of specific compositions, the forms of dance that they feel qualified to teach, and elements of music and dance that should not be altered by global influences. These relationships also influence ways that tutors believe others perceive their expertise, with their connections lending authority to their present teaching and creative practices.

The participants discussed the past learning experiences that have helped form their identities as teachers, culturalists and creative practitioners with an investment in the future of their students’ cultural participation. These stories exemplify Wenger’s concept of identity as a trajectory. Wenger theorises identity as “a constant becoming” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153-154) that forms trajectories “as we go through a succession of forms of participation…both within and across communities of practice” (p. 154). As individuals key to the transmission of culture within the Polyfest communities of practice, tutors are “living examples of possible trajectories” for their students (p. 156).

The discussions in this chapter foreground how the responsibilities of teaching
music, dance, and culture in a transnational community of practice are “consciously undertaken” (Ram, 2000, p, 268). Polyfest tutors must negotiate personal ideals of tradition and representation while providing for their students in a multicultural environment, and within the parameters of the festival’s structures and rules. The following chapter explores these themes, with a focus on tutors’ work with students in Polyfest cultural groups.
Chapter Seven  
Teaching Students in Polyfest Cultural Groups

This chapter continues the discussion of the experiences of tutors; moving from individual histories and personal creative work to teaching in Polyfest cultural groups. In my ethnography of Polyfest cultural groups at Mangere College in Chapter Four, I concluded that unique Pacific spaces were co-created through combinations of social interaction, sound, and bodily behaviours. I also argued that some students experienced close affiliation with other cultural groups through their multi-ethnic heritage, peer relationships, and/or their investment in a leadership role. Through the practice (Wenger, 1998) of membership in a cultural group, students constructed meanings of culture associated with values like teamwork, discipline, and leadership. In this chapter, I discuss these topics with tutors as the focal point.

Tutors take a primary role in creating the unique Pacific spaces within cultural group practices as they strategise how to engage students and create relatable and meaningful cultural experiences. In this chapter, I discuss how tutors accomplish this through the incorporation of popular culture and elements of school identity. I outline how tutors provide for students of ‘other’ cultural backgrounds or with no previous culturally-specific instruction, and how they incorporate values that are relative to both their students’ cultural and educational development.

Two additional topics are discussed. Tutors must work within structures set for them by the school and the stage committee, and I highlight how the participants undertook the often challenging task of constructing performances to adhere to Polyfest stage rules. I address how fatongia (social obligation) motivates tutors to participate in the Polyfest community of practice in spite of the personal and financial sacrifices it often requires, and to ensure a future generation of tutors through the mentoring of younger people. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the strategies of tutors are key in the construction of unique Pacific performances on the Polyfest stage.

Incorporating Popular Culture

Auckland's Pacific youth population is largely born in New Zealand, speaks English as a first language, and is increasingly multi-ethnic Pacific and/or non-Pacific (Manuela & Sibley, 2013). Tutors’ polycultural capital enables them, when drawing upon their previous knowledge of Pacific music, dance, language, and culture, to make the culture of Polyfest practice and the competition repertoire relevant to the multiple worlds of Pacific youth in Auckland (Hawk & Hill, 1998). Teaching Polyfest
cultural groups requires tutors to negotiate their inherited knowledge with engaging their young students, and to teach material that will have a positive reception in the competition.

For many of the tutors I interviewed, creating relevance for their students included incorporating youth culture, pop culture, and school culture. On festival days, popular culture and youth culture is omnipresent at Polyfest; the radio stations broadcasting live and giving away prizes, and the stalls selling snack food and souvenirs. ‘Fresh TV,’ a variety show for Pacific youth, is seen filming performances and its young, trendy presenters interviewing students. At the time of this research the dance crew was a very popular form of performance, with New Zealand teams made up largely of Māori and Pacific performers winning multiple international awards, and dance crew teams make up some of the entertainment during breaks in the competition. Popular culture is also visible in the performances, in the form of musical or dance references, which never dominate the performance but are subtly worked in, often during transitions or exits or as a tagline to an item as it comes to a finish. A former performer explained, “Five years ago, [___] College came out with the moves that were popular at the time, like hip-hop, contemporary stuff...Five years later, they’ll go with something completely different, like what’s hip now.”

A few anecdotal examples from the four festivals I attended from 2010-2014 were references to Michael Jackson, whose music was still riding a surge of popularity after his death in 2009; the Dougie, a hip-hop dance; the Harlem Shake, an online phenomenon that went viral the summer of 2013, and a short excerpt of “Slice of Heaven,” by Dave Dobbyn, a Pākehā artist who collaborated with the Māori and Pacific reggae band Herbs – revered as a classic New Zealand hit from the 1980s. These brief glimpses reflect the national and global cultures in which youth in Polyfest have found meaning; and resemble the dance crew format of musical accompaniment, made up of a series of short excerpts of songs, lines of film or TV dialogue and sound effects.

From my conversations with tutors, these pop culture touches were largely student-driven, but the need to be current in order to keep student interest was an issue verbalised by a number of tutors, particularly younger ones in their 20s. For example, when watching a performance video with Leki Jackson-Bourke, I heard a familiar tune by pop artist Rihanna – when I questioned why he included it, he laughed and explained, “They’re a bunch of crazy teenage girls, I had to give them something.” Maree Webster summarised this concern: “My thing is, if a school decides to stay traditional, and those kids don’t like it, then they’ll leave.” While tutors were
not overly concerned about the impact of these pop culture references as detracting from the quality and/or authenticity of the performance, several of them were cautious about maintaining a balance between student engagement and the integrity of music and dance forms. Joe Moeono-Kolio, a tutor in his 20s who moved to Auckland for postgraduate study, explained how he and the tutors he collaborated with mediated these concerns:

I wouldn’t say we’ve sussed (figured) out what Polyfest is, because there’s a unique style that Polyfest has, a certain flavour. So we try to take the crowd and the judges [into account]. We bring in all our own experiences; I try to bring in what I consider to be authentic dance moves and all that. But we try to present it in a way that people here will understand it, and entertaining as well.

I asked Joe to clarify what he meant by “in a way that people here will understand it”:

Well, first of all, it has to be entertaining. And it has to have some traditional meaning to it; otherwise, it’s not a traditional dance. Because a lot of people here don’t know what life is like in Samoa, we choose moves perhaps in a way that makes people think, where did that come from, what does that mean. We try to make it more interesting or emphasise certain moves. We might do something more repetitively, or present something that local Samoans here would have grown up with and are used to. In a sasa, you would usually depict moves from everyday life in Samoa. But a lot of local Samoans have not experienced that. So we will just incorporate moves that Kiwi Samoans can identify with. We try not to [re-present] too much; otherwise, it becomes overly contemporary. Overly non-traditional. So we draw the line on a lot of things because we want to present really old-school but in an interesting way.

Here, Joe identifies another challenge of creating relevance for students – the bodily hexis within Samoan dance. As discussed in Chapter Two, recreating bodily movements and attitudes in dance can challenge teachers in diasporic and migrant communities (Robertson, 2011; Devarajan, 2010; Ram 2000, 2005). It is more likely than not that the movements that can be found in the sasa – making and serving 'ava (kava), weaving, casting fishing nets - would be outside of Joe’s students’ experience. Tutors may try their best to replicate these experiences. Sociologist Cluny Macpherson, who was a Polyfest tutor in with his wife La’avasa at Epsom Girls Grammar School in the 1990s, brought students from Epsom Girls Grammar School to the Auckland Domain, a large
city park, in order to experience the feeling of climbing coconut palms, as they weren’t able to perform the movement in the dance correctly (pers. comm.).

Joe’s experience as a Polyfest tutor has taught him that the competition has a unique culture of its own, requiring a balance of “old-school” Samoan performance that will maintain the integrity of the dance form and win favor with the judges, but also be entertaining for the audience and engaging for the students. Joe applies his background as an island-born tutor but also relies on the guidance of his New Zealand-born collaborators to choose the choreography that will fulfill these objectives.

Tuteru Samson, one of the younger members of the family that tutored the Cook Islands group at Mangere College, also talked about mediating his creativity with his elders’ advice:

I like to stretch the boundaries; I always like to modernise things, not just stick to the basic traditional ways of doing culture. [My family] always talk about that.

Sometimes my dad doesn’t like it when we go too fancy, and I don’t like it when we go too traditional, I find it a bit boring. But somehow we find a good balance. And I need that, I need my dad to have his suggestions, and say, hey, don’t go too far — just kind of bend it back in. The balance is working at the moment.

When I asked Tuteru what it meant to “go too far,” he replied, “I don’t know, I guess I’m still trying to figure it out. At the moment if it starts sounding or not feeling like our culture, then you’ve stretched it too far. I’ve had that moment once or twice in my career. You can tell you gotta come back.”

The views expressed by these young tutors demonstrate how they negotiate their own creativity, their inherited knowledge, and the tastes of students and Polyfest audiences; listening to knowledgeable elders and practicing restraint when needed. Joe Moeono-Kolio summarised,

I do think there is room for us to have creative freedom with it, express it in another way. But there’s a limit to what we can do. If we over-modernize, which is what I see from a lot of schools, then we’ve stopped knowing what we’re really doing with our cultural practice. We’ve stopped doing a fa’ataupati, and we’re moving into ‘Stomp the Yard’24 so to speak, which is what I’ve seen a lot. So there’s room for compromise, but I don’t think we should overdo it,

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24 A theatrical dance production based on contemporary dance and percussion.
because we dilute the richness of the dance, and of the culture and the tradition.

Tuteru and Joe’s negotiations in creating choreography that is original and with a contemporary flavour, but not overly modernized, are similar to the considerations that Sesilia and Keneti discussed in Chapter Five. Tuteru relies on the counsel of his father Jacob and his many years of experience directing performing groups in the Cook Islands, but not every tutor is in such a position. Joe’s comments indicate that though there is an element of subjectivity in what is “overly non-traditional” - which I discuss further in Chapter Eight – tutors maintain an awareness of the importance of their creative choices and how they affect the overall presentation of their work as cultural dance.

Creating a ‘Village’: Incorporating School Culture and Identity

School identity is also unmistakable at the festival, as performers may integrate their school name into songs and chants, perform in school colours, and spend their time offstage in school uniform or custom-made t-shirts. Throughout my research many young adult research participants referenced their positive associations with their secondary schools – my Facebook Newsfeed frequently showed photos of participants celebrating occasions with former classmates, paying visits to their schools for special events and other expressions of school pride. Some of the tutors I interviewed who experienced Polyfest as students were compelled to return to their schools as tutors, as Tuteru Samson explained:

Mangere College did a lot for me, and being in the situation I’m in now, like I’ve done all the dancing and I’m able to tutor, I think to myself why not go back...and [give] back to the school that taught me everything. I don’t know what it is, but everyone takes a lot of pride, especially around my time, they took a lot of pride in their school. It’s almost like when you leave, you miss it the most when you’re older, you don’t look at the bad stuff all the time, you just know that ah yeah, it’s kind of like a home when you go there, you build that home, and like, ah yeah that’s my school. That’s the kind of feeling I get all the time.

Tuteru’s recognition of, and loyalty to Mangere College is particularly significant, considering the strong cultural upbringing he had as part of the Samson family and his success as a competitive Cook Islands dancer, which he attained outside of school. As was demonstrated in Chapter Four, tutors, parents, and staff can create a ‘village’
feeling at Polyfest cultural practices. Describing the school as “like a home” indicates it has played an important role in his sense of belonging and identity.

The sense of identity and belonging these tutors affiliated with their school as Polyfest performers has become incorporated into their teaching, as demonstrated by Leki Jackson-Bourke, who returned to tutor at Marcellin College as a proud former student and also tutored at Mount Roskill Grammar school. While watching a video of the Mount Roskill group, Leki talked me through the features of the performance and pointed out that he had designed the group’s costume to incorporate colors and patterns from their school uniform and school crest. When I asked him if he thought school identity was important to incorporate into cultural group performance, he said, Yeah, because it’s unique to them. I like it when it’s unique to the school. The Mount Roskill [Grammar School] songs we wrote, they were always about Mount Roskill,25 it’s a reflection of where they’re coming from. It’s the equivalent of Samoans being from villages. Instead of different villages, they have different schools.

Leki’s work with this Polyfest group provided them with markers of a ‘village’ identity that allowed them to identify with a place of origin, and differentiated them from other schools while at the festival. Throughout the examples he showed me, there were visual and aural markers of his students’ experiences as young Pacific people in Auckland – the school colours combined with a frangipani flower, a dance formation in the shape of a train, rather than a vaka (voyaging canoe) – and a sasa that represented the history of Chinese migrants in New Zealand. Leki’s desire to create work that was relevant to his students’ environment was informed by his own upbringing as a New Zealand-born, multi-ethnic Pacific person, whose student identity was enhanced by his Polyfest experience.

Johnny Rex, who teaches at a Lasallian Catholic school for boys, also commented upon the connection between school pride and cultural identity.

I think for Polynesians, just inherent in their nature, it’s pride. They’re a proud people...pride and loyalty are very big things for Polynesians. What a lot of island kids have done, as urban Polynesians, is they’ve taken what they have from the islands with their parents, and they’ve put their own spin on it as urban Polynesians in New Zealand. And so, really, school is like a village substitute. I mean a lot of boys, they get the school name tattooed on their

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25 An extinct volcano and local historical landmark.
bodies, the Lasallians do. It’s like something that they’re proud of to the nth degree; it’s crazy...they’re fanatical, really.

Johnny’s students’ commitment to their school, which has a 97% Pacific student body and a reputation as fierce competitors in Polyfest, is a strong example of how school identity can strengthen cultural identity, which tutors can use to their advantage.

Meleua Ikiua took a different strategy by giving her students a sense of ‘village’ membership. She grew up in Auckland closely affiliated with Hakupu Atua, an association for overseas Niueans from Hakupu, for which her father was the chairman. Having had the benefits of strong village ties even while being raised in Auckland, Meleua offers her students the same village affiliation, giving them a connection to Niue through her that they can relate to:

I do give them a village... We do our song that my son taught me because my son is based up in Niue... And I say, I’m sorry I’m being biased, but these are the ones you’re learning because I’m from that village. And the kids go “fair enough.” And then it’s like, “what village are you from Miss?” “Hakupu. What village are you guys from?” “We’re from Hakupu Miss.” There you go!

Meleua’s act of offering her village affiliation to youth who may not have had the strong ties to Niue that Meleua had, gives them a meaningful opportunity to assert a Niuean identity.

**Working With Students of Diverse Backgrounds**

When Polynesian Clubs were established in Auckland schools in the 1960s and 1970s for Māori and Pacific students, students commonly learned various Māori and Pacific music and dance forms according to the ethnocultural makeup of the group and the availability of community members who could teach them (R. Lau'ese, pers. comm.). However, as Polyfest grew and individual Polyfest cultural groups were established at schools, students had to choose and dedicate themselves to one group. As discussed in Chapter Four, youth who join Polyfest cultural groups are motivated by a number of reasons, including deepening their understanding of their own cultural heritage, taking up a student leadership role, spending time with friends, and curiosity about a particular dance form. Tutors have difficulties and subsequent strategies when students join Polyfest with no previous knowledge of language or choreography.

Through my discussions with tutors of Niuean cultural groups, I learned that smaller numbers of Niuean students compared to their Samoan and Tongan counterparts didn’t preclude Niuean groups from being very popular at many schools.
Often, Niuean students were a minority in these groups. One of the ways that Johnny Rex had to adapt to this situation at Delasalle College was to alter repertoire to more closely resemble Samoan composition. During a conversation with Johnny and his mother Fili, she recalled that Johnny had asked her to send him the lyrics to a song composed by his great-grandfather so that he could teach it to his Polyfest group:

I sent him the words; he knew [the melody] because you just sung it in church and learned it that way. Well, I went to the festival and truly, I did not recognise the song. Because the way that kids learn a tune [in New Zealand] it’s [duple meter], and Niuean hymns are not like that. The [meter] changes, the pitch changes.

Johnny added,

The thing is, it’s probably 80-85% of the kids in my group would have been from a Samoan background. And the thing I’ve noticed about their singing, it’s regular beats, like four beats or eight beats, whereas Niue [songs] are irregular, you’d have five on one line, seven on the other, ten on the next line, it’s that irregularity. Samoan kids found it really hard to pick up. And after about two weeks of butting heads, I finally had to relent and go OK, cause they weren’t getting it at all. So I said ok, this is how we’re going to do it, and we basically did it as 8 beats per line. And then it finally clicked, it clicked straightaway. In that case, it was a case of trying to have that compromise. The fact is you’ve got five and a half, six weeks to learn five items. If you’re doing one item per week and you’re under a lot of pressure, you’re teaching a full load, and you’re coaching a kilikiti team, a junior touch [rugby] team, there’s only so many hours in the day. It got to stage where I just had to let it go; it just wasn’t working. And against my better judgement, I said OK, this is what we’re gonna do. It was like the horses for courses approach because obviously, the time factor was crucial. So there have been times, whether I liked it or not, I had to go against my better judgement.

Considering Meleua’s discussion about the scarcity of historical Niue compositions in Chapter Four, Johnny’s adaptation of his grandfather's song with his Polyfest group was necessary, but in doing so, he had to compromise his goal: the transmission of his inherited knowledge in the form it was learned. Though his Samoan students were willing, he lacked the time and resources to teach them the song the way he intended.

The home and community experiences of Pacific youth in Auckland can vary according to the region as well, adding particular challenges. Mal Lakatani described
how his Niuean group in Avondale, a west Auckland suburb, had a combination of cultural and regional differences to be accounted for:

Over half the group are Niue, and the rest are a real mix. We’ve got some Indians in the group, some Asians, one or two palagis, which is always nice because it always splits it all up. The kids out west Auckland are different than the kids out south Auckland. I don’t know if it's fair to say, but they’re not as hungry as the kids out south Auckland, [who] live and breathe the stuff...Their cultural background is evident in school; it’s celebrated lots, and all the kids are involved with church, with Sunday school, with rehearsals. So they’re used to that thing of getting up in front of a crowd and singing and dancing. The Niue [students], it’s hard. A lot of kids are pulling away from the traditional Niue church and lifestyle. There’s less of the singing, less of the dance that’s happening. It’s harder finding and encouraging Niue kids who can dance and sing and lead the Niueans. We tend to go toward Samoan kids or Tongan kids because they’re used to it, they do it every Sunday.

Mal and Johnny’s stories highlight an important point: that the experiences, needs, and concerns of Pacific communities are not uniform, and constructing a Niue culture in Polyfest is not straightforward. In addition to the endangered status of Vagahau Niue, as discussed in Chapter Three, Niue youth are less likely to be involved in culturally-based youth groups, which for many young Pacific people are an important environment for learning language, music, dance, and protocols (M. Ikiua, pers. comm.). Both of these Niue group leaders find themselves making necessary compromises to prepare their students for competing– from altering repertoire to choosing student leaders of different heritage who have the necessary confidence and performance experience. Mal also refers to south Auckland students as having an advantage over his own, with a higher concentration of Pacific people and more contact with Pacific cultures outside of school.

For tutors like Johnny and Mal, who are invested in transmitting their inherited knowledge about Niue, but have to consider a diverse group of students and the parameters of the Polyfest competition; they strategize to instill a sense of specifically Niue identity, with school identity supporting the unity of the group. Mal described his students having “the Niue heart”:

If they give their heart, they give their best, they give their everything, and it's with the Niue heart, it's the ultimate. They feel it for themselves, and they start
to find their feet as a *tama* or *tamafine Niue*. They find their feet in the world. That’s me, that’s me. I do buzz out that they find that for themselves.

Johnny Rex encourages his students to perform “as a Niuean,” including the pride associated with a Niuean identity:

It’s quite weird in that I teach them, even if they’re non-Niuean they have to be proud of Niuean culture. But also take a different tack—like when you go on that stage you’re not Tongan, you’re not Fijian, you’re not part Māori, you’re actually Niuean. For 20, 25 minutes you’re performing as Niuean, singing as a Niuean. So carry that pride with you. And there’s also just the school point of view. Lasallian boys by nature are perversely proud of their school, to a point where they’d probably walk over broken glass for their school, literally. And so for me, that’s a good tool. You’re representing your college on stage, so one part of it is you have to take off your Tongan hat, Samoan hat, whatever—put on your Niuean hat for 20 minutes. You also have to wear your school hat on stage at the same time. It’s like a double whammy in a positive sort of way. Johnny and Mal welcome non-Niuean students in their Polyfest groups, and in doing so at times have to negotiate their methods and repertoire, as Johnny had to do with altering the meter of his grandfather’s song. However, regardless of background, they aim to cultivate a sense of Niuean pride and identity in their students while they represent their school in the competition.

**Teaching Values in Polyfest Cultural Groups**

Polyfest provides a narrow window during the school year for tutors to “teach culture,” which, as outlined in the introductory chapter, indicates not only music, dance, and language, but values and codes of behaviour. Joe Moeono-Kolio described how he and his collaborators focused on certain elements of *fa‘asamoa*, incorporating the Christian nature of the school and meanings of Samoan culture that he deemed appropriate:

It’s very difficult to teach *fa‘asamoa* in two months to Samoans, let alone a group of predominantly non-Samoans. We keep it simple. Obviously, we give them a good routine that they can be proud of. During the weeks of practices, we instill in them a sense of discipline, which is an important value in Samoa. And also because it’s a boys’ school, we make our performances seem as macho and masculine as possible. Part of what it is to be a Samoan man is to assert

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26 Niuean man or woman
your masculinity. But also because it's a Catholic school, there's a strong Christian element to it, which is also part of fa'asamoa. We assert our masculinity, but we also know for us there's a limit to our own strength, and that's when we tap into the source of our strength, [God]. Those are the sort of things we try to teach them.

Also, the sense of community is a big thing in Samoa, 'aiga and family, and the boys really become like a family during that time; they look out for each other. And their families become part of the effort, so their families come in, and we begin to build a community and a togetherness kind of ethos. So those are the things they take away from being in the Samoa group. Obviously, we can't teach them the nuts and bolts of the fa'asamoa, but those are some of the precepts they learn as a member of the Samoan group.

Joe's strategy with his collaborators to maximise their impact on their students within the parameters of the Polyfest cultural group by “keep[ing] it simple” extracts the components of culturally-specific values, in this case, fa'asamoa, that fit within the context of the school’s values, the situational aspects of the competition, and the gender of his students. They are also inclusive of the group’s membership that includes non-Samoans. This not only demonstrates how tutors use polycultural capital in constructing a value system with in their Polyfest community of practice but also how they help students to develop polycultural capital in addressing the needs of their social, spiritual and cultural worlds.

Meleua talked about how she leverages the close relationships she establishes with her students through Polyfest to teach values that will benefit them in school:

[I teach] respect– when I get my naughties in [unruly students] I say it's no good to respect me, and then you go to your other teachers, and you disrespect them, it's not right. Not good that you turn up to my class and wag [skip] their class.

And I said, you want culture, education wants you, it's like a circle, you need both of them, you can have both of them. Don't just put your culture up there, and your education drops, they both walk hand in hand. You need to realize that you can have the best of both.

I come in class or a function, not culturally related, and the kids will go out and serve me [food] first, or make sure they're praying [before eating], it's like, they
don’t have to because it’s a school event. I just sit there, and my colleagues are like, “you’re the queen!” To them I am! I’m the *matua*.

Joe and Meleua’s examples show how tutors strategically “connect to tradition in a highly selective way” (Mallon 2010, p. 365) both within the time restrictions of Polyfest and in the ways that most effectively benefit the students. Through Polyfest, tutors are invested in teaching culturally-specific values; however, they do so strategically, choosing values that can be useful to their students in other areas of their lives. For example, Joe appropriates *fa’asamoa* by identifying which values fit the context of his students’ experiences at a boys’ Catholic school- *lotu* (church) and *’aiga* (family). Meleua encourages her students to apply the respect and discipline learned in cultural groups to their schooling.

**Creating Student Performances Within Competition Rules**

Although preparing any Polyfest group for competition requires a great deal of time, energy, finances and expertise, Cook Islands tutors who enter the competitive category arguably have the most challenging task in producing a performance programme that adheres to the stage committee rules. As described in Chapter Four, the requirements include six items and up to three costume changes; and all instrumental music must be live and performed by students, including the complex polyrhythmic drumming which accompanies the *ura pa’u*, entrance/exit, and all transitions.

According to Tuteru Samson,

At first, I was a bit 50/50 about [the drumming requirements] because when that came along I did challenge that rule before...and I just thought kids didn’t have enough time to actually learn the art of drumming. I mean if they had it in schools and everywhere around, like we learn how to drum, drum kit and everything and guitar kit, but with Cook Island drumming you don’t have that often to, just have all students. But I was quite surprised; we’re one of the lucky schools to have some kids that are brought up with it, with their families, churches, and groups. At first, we started off with our drummers; there was only one guy who knew how to play. And we had like, those four weeks to teach the others. And that’s just playing one piece, just teaching them. We had all girls,\(^27\) and they did fine, they did the job, but the next year you had to figure out, because a lot of them were seventh formers, [Year 13] so we had to figure

\(^{27}\) Drumming in the Cook Islands is overwhelmingly done by men, thus why Tuteru found it noteworthy.
out how to train them. You have to try and learn throughout the year, so hopefully, when it comes to next year, they'll pick up their skills. But yeah, I know how hard it is for other schools, it would be, especially if they’ve never had it before, or heard how it’s done. And once a year you get it coming around.

Maki Karati, who performed at Hillary College in the second year of Polyfest in 1977, said,

I’ve come across some people who think it’s possible to teach kids how to drum in a few hours. Couple of weeks, three weeks. Hey – drumming, you learn from a young age, you get better with age. You can’t just pick someone up off the street or from your group at school and say, OK, you’re drumming. Cook Islands drumming is different; it’s so difficult. It’s not something you can just pick up. You’ve learnt and improved with age, or you’ve just got the talent. And it’s the same thing with dancing. To be a good dancer you’ve got to do it for a few years. You don’t do it for a few weeks and expect to be good at it. You always see– the front line kids are always the ones that are involved in other groups. And of course, the kids that know how to dance always rub off on the ones who are learning how to dance. If you have a group of kids who are good at it, the others will learn from it. You’ve got nobody who’s a leader in the team, and nobody to model themselves on, it’s always going to be difficult to teach. And I think a lot of schools are going through that problem.

But it's not easy. A lot of them just join because their friends join, and they know nothing about the culture. They might dance a little bit because it’s sort of a Cook Island thing that most boys and girls know how to do the Cook Island dance at functions and family gatherings. But to actually dance in the dance group is a completely different thing because you learn the routines, and to keep dancing, it’s hard.

These stories indicate that a successful performance for a Cook Islands group on the competitive stage relies not only on general community support as described in Chapter Four, but also access to legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that gives students an advantage before joining a Polyfest group. As Tuteru Samson indicates, Cook Islands drumming is highly specialised, and lessons aren't readily offered commercially but generally acquired through legitimate peripheral
participation. Even though Mangere College is “lucky” to have drum experts in its community, it is still difficult to prepare students to meet the competition criteria. Tutors are responsible for managing these negotiations amongst the stage committees, who want to maintain traditional standards; schools, who can offer limited support, and the expertise that is available in their wider communities.

**Tutoring as Fatongia**

As discussed in Chapter Four, most of the tutors I interviewed had proximity to music and dance and other culturally-specific knowledge as children through immediate family, community, or at school, and acquired a level of expertise through legitimate peripheral participation in these communities of practice. Many of their students do not have access to this knowledge outside of Polyfest. Filoi Vaialau, who teaches formal siva Samoa dance classes for children through the organisation Pacific Dance New Zealand, identified the impediments of transmission she has observed in Auckland:

...they just don't have the resources. They’re not as fortunate as the parents in Samoa who are surrounded by it; they don’t have to bother teaching their kid. They pick it up at school, or in the village...Here you’ve got parents who are NZ born; they’re not fluent in the language, they’re separated from their parents, they’re separated from their elders, who might be able to teach their kids. They’re busy!

Although *fatongia* are social obligations that are freely given (Tofuaipangai & Camilleri, 2016) part of tutors’ “consciously undertaken” (Ram, 2000, p. 268) task of working with Polyfest cultural groups are their personal sacrifices of time, energy and finances. Most of the tutors I interviewed had full-time jobs, in addition to school teachers who also took on the roles of tutor and Teacher in Charge– or worked as much as possible in the dance industry with a full roster of teaching, directing and performing. Though I interviewed one tutor who was paid a set fee by the school, most tutors are presented with a donation collected from the students and community, as Mangere College’s Samoan and Cook Islands groups did. Tutors also indicated that support from their respective schools varied considerably, in terms of money available for uniforms and transport, as well as rehearsal space.

Johnny Rex explained how, in his early 40s, his energy for tutoring was flagging:

I know I’ve only got a year or two left in me. Every year I say, aw I don't want to go through this again– it’s got its positives, and the positives outweigh the
negatives. From a personal point of view, it can be soul-destroying as well. You spend so much time, your own money, and so much effort into it, to a point where other things start lacking. Your teaching goes downhill for 6 or 7 weeks, your family life goes on the back burner, because of just one thing. What I keep coming back to is that if I don’t put my hand up, no one else is going to do it. And really, I think a lot of tutors feel the same way, if they’re not going to be there for the kids, be there for Niuean culture at the end of the day, no one else is going to do it. So that’s a biggie. One thing that really ticks me off is that a lot of teachers at our school don’t realize the sacrifices that a lot of our tutors have to make.

Johnny acknowledges his fear that if he doesn't act as a tutor, the youth will go without. He suggests it is not only individuals, or his particular students that he will let down, but Niue culture itself.

Maki Karati was forthright in explaining the sometimes frustrating and thankless job of being a tutor. In this story, he explained how he agreed to tutor at a school where several dancers in his community group attended, only because “they didn't have anyone”:

This Cook Island group, I give up so much of my time, because I give from half-past two to six o’clock, it's a long time, the weekends, Saturdays too... So, I told the school it would be my last year because it’s just too much. Taking up a large part of my time. Huge commitment.

[The students] were so undisciplined. School would finish at 10 to 3...and by half-past three they were still coming, and I’d see a few of them just hanging around, sitting around with their girlfriends, and I would be sitting and waiting for them...

I try not to be involved in it, but when I hear the sounds, it just draws me to help someone that wants help. My wife hates it; my family hates it. Especially my wife because she knows that I’m committed to these things, and sometimes you wonder if people really appreciate the help that you are giving them. They think it just comes from nowhere, you come and teach them. For me, it comes from the heart.

“Malia,” raised in Samoa and working on a post-graduate degree, and who did not want to be identified because of the criticisms she made about her
Polyfest group, explained:

I think back in Samoa, the fact that there will be a mutual understanding between the teacher and the student, regardless of your age or where you come from. Because fa’alo’alo [respect] is a main component of being Samoan. So if you were to go into a class to learn the dance, once there's a teacher there, you give them your full attention regardless of what you know, what you don't know, your status, or whatnot. It represents that relationship between the parents and the child...It’s almost like the pride of that family as well, the kid knows they represent their parents, they represent that family, and they would never do anything to tarnish that. And during breaks you see them practicing whatever they got wrong during the rehearsal. So it's not like going to a professional dance thing, but they treat it like that. They have pride in what they participate in. That was not the case at _School. You almost had to bribe them, and keep calm and don't scare them away because they need the numbers. But I put my foot down the last week. I said if you don't want to be here then get out... So it's almost like the commitment wasn't there from them, they only wanted to go there because they didn't want to be somewhere else.

Tutors like Johnny, Maki, and Malia acknowledge a sense of responsibility toward their culture, their communities of practice that overlap with Polyfest, and also individuals. For Maki, it was the dancers in his community group, and Malia explained that her niece had asked her to be a tutor, and she couldn't refuse a family member who needed her help. Although tutors’ motivation and commitment can create meaningful experiences for their students with long-lasting positive consequences, they cannot create “villages” without the support of parents, community members, and school staff. Though tutors like Johnny, who are also school teachers, have opportunities to establish their group’s behavioural norms and rapport with students through their authority in school, for a new tutor like Malia who takes on a group that lacks cohesion and leadership from years past, it can tax their personal resources even further.

When I asked Tuteru Samson, who had a full-time job and two young children, how he maintained some kind of life balance during Polyfest, he explained:

When it comes to tutoring, out of everything that is the biggest challenge of all. With Mangere College, there’s nothing that we can get out of it really. We spend a lot of time and effort and money, and all of that when it comes to Polyfest. But I guess it depends how much you have a passion for it, and I have
a lot of passion for it, and for my school and that... I asked my partner if she could support me, and without that support, I guess it’s difficult for tutors to carry on. I guess my family, in that we all actually talk about it; before we get into it we have a family meeting, can we take this on...I guess if my siblings weren’t with me, or my partner couldn’t, then we wouldn’t do it. That was the case that happened last year; I was having a baby, as soon as one is out, you have to take all of us or none of us. So yeah, just balancing it out we can pull through. Otherwise, if it was just a job and we got paid for it, it would be a different situation, but at the moment that’s what it’s like, for culture.

Tuteru comments that the Samson family and the close friends that support them at cultural practices have to take a unified approach to their decision to be Polyfest tutors and that multiple factors have to be considered. The “passion” for Cook Islands culture in Auckland has to be mediated with the realities of living in an expensive city, doing paid work and raising a family.

Some tutors also feel responsible for how their inherited knowledge will be passed on to others who will develop enough expertise to become tutors themselves—and there are a variety of ways that transmission from tutor to future tutor takes place within the Polyfest communities of practice.

The Samson family at Mangere College is an example of how culturally-specific knowledge is transmitted within families to enable younger family members to become tutors, as are Mal and Maree’s stories in Chapter Four. However, Polyfest dance communities establish and strengthen kin-like relationships, which can also become a vehicle for transmission. As preparing for Polyfest in the allotted six week period is a demanding task, group teaching is very common, with different tutors taking on the teaching of an individual dance item or teaching only the boys or girls, and/or composing songs or drumming rhythms. Teaching groups are often former classmates and friends who have performed in Polyfest together during their school days, and make effective “teaching families” based on these relationships. For younger tutors, PIPA is also a place where teaching families are formed, as classmates collaborate and assist one another at their respective Polyfest schools.

Sometimes these collaborations become mentorships. In the case of Samoan tutor Fa’apo’i “Poi” Tofa, two students from the boys’ Catholic school where he tutored expressed interest in learning more after Polyfest, and at the time of my fieldwork he had mentored them for the past seven years, with the intention that they will carry on after he ‘retires’ from Polyfest.

At Samoan cultural practice at Mangere College, Poi was usually accompanied
to practice by his ‘boys,’ Alan and Tavale. He explained how this relationship was formed and how the three of them worked together:

Tavale and Alan used to go to St Peter's College, so I met them through what I did. And the way they’re with me now is a lot of years in the making. They wanted to know about a lot of different things, and I said, I can’t tell you, but I can show you. Just turn up to practice, that’s the only way I can teach you. So they’ve been [my] boys for seven years now. So they come along everywhere I go. It’s basically we’re like a computer. I’m the USB, Tavale’s the south and Alan the north bridge, and Daniel, he’s the graphics card. And together we make a beautiful picture. We’re like a motherboard [laughs]

It’s also having an open mind. Tavale could put out an idea, and I visualize what he's doing. And I can say, I like this, I like that, I think we'll do that. I think the other day we were learning the exit. And you were sitting there and so was I. And he came up and said, “Uce, do you have a move?” So I came on, and I said do it again...so what he was doing was he was watching me, and I was watching him. “So what are we gonna do now to complete this?” He was thinking what I was thinking; he just didn’t know how to put it into actions. It's just one of many examples; it's just bouncing ideas off each other.

Like the Samson family at Mangere College, the three tutors collaborate – not necessarily along age lines – and rely on each other’s support with the time demands of tutoring for Polyfest. Poi explained that his work with his younger collaborators has the sense that he is not only instilling values and cultural knowledge into the students, he is reassured that there will be people who will carry on his work who have been under his instruction: “It’s very important to me that once I’m out of the picture, someone can carry on what I love doing, so that I know when I'm a 70 year old I can sit down and enjoy the performance.”

Tutors like Poi, who may not find youth interested in carrying on his work in family, church or community circles, make use of the Polyfest community of practice to identify potential new tutors and mentor them by integrating them into their school groups; training a future generation of tutors while having support in the tasks of preparing groups for competition.

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28 *Uso* (Samoan) – same-sex sibling, used colloquially in New Zealand amongst male friends
Conclusion

While negotiating challenges of teaching Pacific musics and dance within the structures and parameters of Polyfest - and to adolescents with highly variable culturally-specific knowledge - tutors utilised their polycultural capital (Mila-Schaaf 2010), drawing from their own experiences in acquiring inherited knowledge, and for several tutors, their own experiences of Polyfest. Their use of polycultural capital to leverage the experiences of transnational Pacific youth is key in constructing both the performance culture of a Polyfest group and the content of a Polyfest performance. These processes, in part, create the performances that make Polyfest unique as a Pacific festival.

Tutors take varied approaches to incorporate popular culture, youth culture, and affiliation with school and place to create relevance for their students. The strategies and methods chosen by tutors are evident in performances in multiple ways. Some are unique in the sound and visual aspects of performance. Leki Jackson-Bourke’s choreography using a train instead of a vaka reflects the realities of life in urban Auckland. The school colours chosen for the Tongan group costumes at Mangere College connect them to the sense of pride they have as MC students. Current pop tunes or Internet trends bring performances into the present moment and immediately relevant to students’ lives. The incorporation of the festival theme into an originally composed song makes Polyfest, as well as an individual stage or a school, the community of practice to which students feel they belong. The feelings students experience while performing in Polyfest can be highly influenced by tutors’ teaching of culturally-specific values and concepts. For example, a non-Niuean student performs with a strong sense of fakaniue inspired by their tutor while simultaneously feeling immense pride in their school identity. A student in the Tongan group, having learned about the concept of mafana, a feeling of inner warmth, experiences this joy as they see the audience respond to their performance.

Tutors are also agile in their construction of performances in order to comply with stage rules. For example, the rangatira (chief’s) speech on the Cook Islands stage needs to be delivered with appropriate pronunciation and expression, but also has to be exactly long enough for the students to change their costumes backstage without leaving the audience waiting or exceeding the required time limit. These examples strongly support the argument that constructing Polyfest performances is not about replicating performances with their origins in island locales and years past, or even from Polyfests past. Joe’s comment “we don't really know what Polyfest is yet” is
indicative of the continually changing nature of Polyfest performance culture and Polyfest performances themselves. Ideas about tradition and modernization are also fluid, with tutors negotiating their own conceptions along with input from elder experts.

This chapter has continued the discussion of the trajectory of Polyfest tutors into their work with students. The tutors’ use of polycultural capital is fundamental to their success in the Polyfest community of practice. Drawing from their own experiences of acquiring inherited knowledge - and for several tutors, their own experiences of Polyfest - polycultural capital allows them to create effective and relevant learning contexts for youth, work with students of varied cultural and performing backgrounds, and strategize to teach culturally-specific values that benefit students in social and educational contexts.

Polycultural capital also supports tutors’ negotiation of fatongia, wherein tutors mediate personal and financial sacrifices with their cultural obligations to the Polyfest community of practice. The urgency of these obligations reflects the “consciously undertaken” and “anxiety-driven project” (Ram 2000, p. 268) of cultural transmission through the festival. Through fatongia, tutors also plan for Polyfest’s future by creating opportunities to collaborate with other tutors within the Polyfest community of practice, and to transmit specialist knowledge to students who can eventually become tutors themselves.

Tutors demonstrated how concepts of tradition were negotiated, through connecting to culturally-specific values “in a highly selective way,” (Mallon, 2010, p. 365) and in their exploration of the boundaries between original choreography that engaged students and audiences and the dangers of overly modernizing performances. Tutors also chose which meanings of ‘tradition’ - in the form of culturally-specific values - to teach within multicultural student groups.

In Chapter Eight, the final chapter concerning the ethnographic research, examines the work of stage coordinators and judges, and the ways that culture is constructed and articulated at the higher organisational levels of Polyfest.
Chapter Eight
Establishing Parameters and Negotiating Change: Stage Committees and Judges

In the previous chapter, I discussed the teaching strategies and methods tutors construct to provide for their students’ needs as transnational Pacific youth; and how these learning experiences are key in the construction of unique Polyfest performances. In this chapter, I discuss how stage committees construct parameters of the competition, and how judges evaluate them. Stage committee members and judges share some similar traits and experiences with tutors. They are individuals committed to the transmission of culturally-specific knowledge and negotiate *fatongia* with other aspects of their personal and professional lives. Their success depends upon their use of polycultural capital as they negotiate the needs of Polyfest with Pacific communities and the educational contexts in which Polyfest is staged. They also define meanings of expertise: in choosing judges, stage committees assert who is appropriately qualified to assess performance, and judges appraise students against the influence of their own learning experiences and ideals of competence.

Establishing these frameworks of evaluation within a Polyfest stage, and enacting any changes to them, requires committee members to consider both the cultural and educational needs of students, and to potentially withstand criticism and dissent from other members of their cultural communities. These conflicts, however, can be reflective of the depth of mutual engagement within a community of practice, which inevitably has “its fair share of tension and conflicts” (Wenger 1998, p. 77). Wenger argues, “a community of practice is neither a haven of togetherness nor an island of intimacy insulated from political and social relations. Disagreement, challenges, and competition can all be forms of participation” (1998, pp. 76-77). The events detailed in this chapter, including the differing opinions, conflicts and power struggles amongst some judges and committee members, demonstrate that the Polyfest community of practice is dynamic, complex and responsive to the social and educational environment in which the festival takes place.

This chapter is divided into two halves. In the first, I discuss the roles and responsibilities of stage coordinators. I then examine the viewpoints of judges on the value of competition and applying the judging criteria set forth by the stage committees. In the second half, I describe how the stage committee and people in Niuean communities in New Zealand and abroad negotiated a series of changes for
The Niuean stage in 2013.

The Role and Responsibilities of Stage Coordinators

The highest authority on a Polyfest stage is the Stage Coordinator, and during my research, all but one of these positions were all held by female teachers or female principals, some of them for more than twenty years. Through speaking to Stage Coordinators and other members of the Stage Committees that worked with them, I deduced that they were characterised by staunchness, authority, and an unwavering dedication to maintaining and promoting their culture in New Zealand. Two had received Queen's Honours for their service on various councils and boards of trustees for health, education and other local and national organisations. More than once, I heard the phrase “rules with an iron fist” to describe the leadership style of Stage Coordinators. One stage committee member told me,

I think _________’s been there for so long because she’s such a strong lady. It doesn’t matter what anyone says to her; it’s her way or the highway. I know a lot of people get frustrated with her, but in her own way, it’s her management style, and it works. Everybody that coordinates the stage has a real passion about passing the culture to the next generation. Life itself almost, they can’t separate their life from their culture. It’s paramount in your life. You have to have respect for those ladies.

It is high stakes, and so much is invested in it. People put so much heart and soul into it; you have to make it a valid event. It’s all for the students. For [her] it’s all about the students participating in culture. Not just participation for participation’s sake, but to learn the dance and song, the way to do it properly, she doesn’t want people to play around, but to learn the authentic culture, not just a plastic version of it.

An effective Stage Coordinator needs a strong personality and commitment to the role. They are often mediators of conflict and targets of complaints, including from Teachers in Charge, tutors, parents and other members of the community. A common theme in interviews with participants was that judging results always resulted in complaints, if not outright accusations of favouritism and overall unfairness. Stage Coordinators spoke freely about the challenges that came with the

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29 Awards granted to individuals in some Commonwealth countries on the Queen of England’s birthday holiday and at the New Year.
position. Fane Ketu'u was the Stage Coordinator for the Tongan stage, and also the Pasifika representative on the Polyfest Board of Trustees. Although the situation had significantly improved at the time of our interview, she described her experience of her role as “to hell and back,” as she endured controversy about judging results and accusations of manipulating scores. At one point, teachers even wrote letters of complaint trying to have her removed, alleging she was making money from the festival:

It was always the [judging] results. And they were always blaming me! Saying that it's my fault. Because my school, we have a record of us winning the [tau’olunga]. And they are saying it's because I'm the coordinator and I can manipulate the judges, and I have the last say, Tonga is a very small country. You're related to every Dick, Tom, and Harry [sic]! You can't pick a judge that doesn't have any relative that's teaching a school or performing. It's impossible. So that was the basis for complaint most of the time.

So it's not an easy job. Frankly speaking, I can say that. It is not the glory I am working for. I love doing this, and it's my passion. And I love seeing our youngsters in the Tongan community learn their culture. But it's not easy.

Like Ms. Ketu'u, other stage coordinators spoke about the challenges that came with their responsibilities but identified their commitment to culture, and the satisfaction from the students engaging with it, as their motivation.

One of the Stage Coordinators' responsibilities is choosing which individuals to approach about judging the competition. On a given stage, linguistic expertise might be represented by professors and teachers of Pacific languages, and knowledge specific to song and dance forms by composers, choreographers, and church musical directors. An overall sense of respect from their cultural communities, and a history of leadership in some area; whether a career or other contributions to community-specific causes or concerns was implied, if not directly stated. Judges with academic backgrounds seemed to be particularly valued. Mele Ah Sam explained,

I look for the experience, their profession, and what they have been involved in. And I go to the universities now, because if they are offering either Pacific studies or Samoan, obviously that has a place in our community. It’s also to say to our community; these are our people that are up there. Rather than dancers and all those people, I’d rather they look at the academic side of all our performances.
As an assistant principal, Mrs Ah Sam was invested in finding judges who could be academic role models, as well as fulfilling the essential role of evaluating performances in historical and linguistic contexts that “dancers and all those people” may not be able to. I also heard the opposing view from tutors who thought individuals with high status in Samoan communities without expertise specifically in music and dance should not, in fact, be judges. One expressed their annoyance at a minister judging their group’s performance. These conflicting interests demonstrate how members of Polyfest communities of practice can privilege different ideals of culturally-specific knowledge (Anae, 2003).

The judges I interviewed were diverse in age, gender, and their family’s migration experience, as well in their specific areas of expertise. When asked why they were chosen, they described various reasons such as significant life and work experience in the islands, family affiliations, experience working with youth and in educational policy, and membership in prestigious performing groups and/or institutions. All exemplified polycultural capital, with individual combinations of expertise and experience in multiple cultural and professional contexts, for example, training in Western classical music as well as a background in traditional Samoan performance.

To be a judge meant to hold high status. A judge that had also been a Polyfest performer in her school days described the experience of judging as “a real honour”:

There’s not that many people who would get asked to do that. If you’re asked to judge aspects of your own culture’s performing arts, especially if you’ve grown up in that environment and you never expected to get to that stage. Not even in my wildest dreams did I think I would be a judge for the Samoan stage.

**Perspectives on Judging and Competition**

The Pacific stages at Polyfest engage three or four judges each and have their own set of protocols to keep the judging process accurate and within the time limit allotted for each school. Stages are harshly criticized for running over time, and so the process must be quick and efficient. Each stage has a scrutineer who distributes the prepared scoring sheets, and the sheets are collected very shortly after the performing group makes their exit. A judge explained that though it left very little time for written comments, the judges did not have time to talk amongst themselves, which in her opinion made the process fairer:

Until I judged it, I didn't really appreciate the process until I did it. I used to
think, aw, [it's] rigged! When you see how it comes out – oh they were way better than the other group. Having gone through the process, I think, man that's pretty fair. We don't get a chance to talk, we just score it, and it's taken away. It’s out of our hands.

Opinions on the value of the competitive aspects of Polyfest varied. The positive aspects of competition most often cited by participants were that it raised the performance standard, was attractive to students and motivated them to invest as much effort as possible. A judge from the Tongan stage remarked,

I think [competition] is very important. I think that that they are not competitive enough. That’s what gives the whole ceremony- the best performances will come out of that. You should go into a competition wanting to be first. Not just going in for the sake of performing.

Other judges were candid about their dislike of competition. A Cook Islands judge remarked that he became a judge reluctantly- and as his own expertise was limited to his own island, Aitutaki, other judges were also unlikely to have the breadth of knowledge to judge all Cook Islands performances:

I really don’t favour competition. To me, competing is just- who’s going to judge us?...We get people who have no idea of our knowledge come in and- why? You don’t know the richness of it. And that’s why I prefer to have a celebration like what we have at Pasifika.³⁰ [To] come and showcase, showcase what we’ve learnt, everybody enjoys it. Applaud, instead of compete. That’s my perspective on it.

A judge from the Tongan stage said that competition should not be the motivation for participation:

My perspective of Polyfest was that it should never be judged. But then people say if we don't judge it then schools won't participate. That's no reason for schools not to participate if they want to learn about their culture...It should all be about learning, about wanting to know about your culture, that’s it. Perform as a group, represent your school, your culture, your family.

³⁰ The Pasifika Festival, held annually in Auckland during the second weekend of March, stages non-competitive performances.
Attitudes Toward Evaluation Criteria

With the exception of the Niue stage in 2013, discussed later in this chapter, judging was based on a points system – usually, points from 1-10 were allocated for each performance item along with points for costume. Prizes were also given for best student leaders, so they were awarded points as well. For the Tongan stage, where students only performed one item at a time, points were awarded for individual attributes like composition and folohaka (choreography).

One judge was not concerned with the specifics of the judging criteria, because she sympathised with the stage committee and their efforts to establish criteria that would be acceptable to everyone involved:

I’m OK with [the criteria]- the school [representatives] and teachers make them. The marking criteria are more to please every school. This is what the schools want; I will mark to what they want...I do bring up stuff during [the stage meetings], yet I know the Komiti always try to please all the people, the school teachers, and the parents and the reps. [It’s] not an easy job.

Two younger, New Zealand-born judges were critical of the judging criteria. A judge from the Tongan stage thought the judging criteria and procedures could be improved:

I think it’s outdated...Just the amount of points you give for certain things. Costuming would probably be the same [number of points] that you’d give for folohaka, but costuming’s a minor and actions are like a major. The rationing of the points, the template, need to be updated. Things like mālie weren’t even part of the criteria, that’s really important.

A judge with a background in educational policy called for consistent criteria amongst all of the stages, using the NCEA standards as a model:

When you think about the [NCEA] dance standards, it’s all got achievement criteria, and it’s got a real rigorous, robust assessment schedule, then all you have to do is put in, this is what it looks like...That would help you get that consistency across the board, because how would you know that the Māori standards are as same as the Tongan standards are same as the Cook Islands standards.

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31 Mālie is culturally-specific characteristic of Tongan performance which can be translated as “beautiful;” a mālie performance or dancer may be beautiful or not beautiful, but it does have the potential of emotional impact, and to inspire a feeling of inner warmth in the viewer called mafina (Kaeppler, 1993).
Another judge described the criteria as “loose,” giving this example:

There’s even this thing where everyone’s smiling, out of a mark of five! How do you do that? If everyone in the group is smiling is that a full five out of five, if half the group is smiling is it a three? We’re not trained to do that; it’s based on your own judgment level on that. It’s not really talked about.

Evaluating Performances

When talking with judges, it was apparent that they evaluated Polyfest as an event, and the individual student performances themselves, in varied and sometimes contrasting ways. Polyfest judges were supportive of the festival by their participation, which is voluntary. But their overall assessment about student performances within Polyfest were highly individual, complex and sometimes contradictory. After an emphatic criticism of rules or performances, a judge might praise the festival for its ability to engage students or bring community together. Judges evaluated performances publicly with the point values and written comments on their scoring sheet, but simultaneously, they held performances to another standard, that of the one that was subject to their own learning trajectories and culturally-specific knowledge of performance conventions.

In one festival, judges may watch up to 25 performance programmes on the Samoan, Cook Islands, or Niue stages and 65 individual items on the Tongan stage. Having seen so many performances over a number of years, judges can assess stylistic and aesthetic nuances, and compare what is happening onstage against their own ideals about traditional performance. Some judges’ comments were observant of the inevitable changes in performances over a number of years: the greatly increased tempo, complexity and athleticism of the sasa; the influence of Māori kapa haka in how groups exited the stage, and the influence of ‘beats’ (rhythmic patterns performed with drums or body percussion) from other Pacific stages. A judge echoed the observations of tutors that students incorporated elements of popular culture into their performances:

So whatever’s hot, that’s what comes out. And the way that the kids are using that to express themselves- they still use the language, but the way that the language is conveyed is the direction of what the kids are moving towards.

For some judges, it seemed that it was not modernization, but a disconnect from a performance tradition rooted in what they knew— and that, in turn, affected the aesthetic, and their experience, of the performance. When judges commented further
on student performances, some comments took on a tone of criticism or frustration; but on further analysis, judges seemed to be negotiating the differences in students’ relationship with the performance material and the knowledge that they held from their own backgrounds and experiences. To these judges, their fundamental values about the aesthetic and ‘feeling’ of performances were challenged by what they saw as gaps in students’ and tutors’ understanding of cultural contexts - naming examples including carelessness with costumes or the deeply rooted significance of a song form that students tended to find ‘boring.’ One judge remarked,

To be honest, as a judge, none of [the performance items] was a ‘wow’ for me. I would sit there and look at them and think, what are they trying to say, what are they trying to prove. I see how Polyfest is done now; it's just something just to do it. But to be creative, to be aware of our values, and our beliefs, and our feelings, and any meanings, none. It's just done because it's Polyfest. As long as it's all uniform, as long as everyone is active – but that's what I've been looking for, meaning, feeling! What do I do when I do the Samoan dance, the siva – I do it with meaning, with feelings. Because what I'm doing, is I am providing the audience with my story. This is me. This is my story. This is where I come from. That's it.

In a later conversation, the same judge remarked that she was very supportive of the festival and that the large number of participating students was a source of pride - but in the performances themselves, she found that choreography and language were not enough to communicate cultural ‘meaning’ and ‘feeling.’

The standardization of performances was particularly noticed by a tutor I had interviewed in 2012, who became a judge for the Tongan stage the following year. When I asked about her general impression of the performances for that year, she found many of them “average,” with too many similarities:

I think they all just came across as average, it was really hard to mark something that was really [good] you know, they were all musically – most lakalakas sounded the same. And there was another thing where punakes were teaching two, three, schools at a time. And they have their own template when it comes to composition, so their fakatapu [exposition] was pretty much the same. It was the same as the other schools, but that's the template that's they use as a punake, that's been handed down through the generations. But then that's why no punake should be teaching more than one school, cause four schools come on stage with the same composition or the same tune, or the same actions that you see all the time.
She went on to explain the lack of “spark” in the students’ performances; raising how the tradition of placing older children in the front and centre of the stage formation obscured one the of most important characteristics of Tongan performance; màlie. 

Some schools are just...they look very machine-like. And they're robots, very robotic. There was no spark; there was no off beat. One school, did a ma’ulu’ulu, a very small school, I think it was a girl’s school. And it only takes one or two people to turn a performance around, and that’s what it was. Because you're looking at all these dancers, and all of a sudden you're like, oh my God- she looks amazing. Because it’s Polyfest, all the older kids are at the front, and all the younger ones are at the back, yet it’s all the younger ones that are màlie, and I say, you shouldn't be on the back or the sides, you should come to the front!

They say it’s because they’re young, they'll have their time, but it shouldn't be about that. It should be about performance level, standard, quality. If you're màlie, it doesn't matter if you're in third form [Year 9], if you’re amazing, you need to be [in the front]...The dancer that moves you is the person you’re watching. When you don't find that, it’s like, why am I watching?...That's what it’s all about, and you look for those things. It shouldn't be if everyone is doing this at the same time, not if everyone claps like this, you're looking for that “wow.”

This story exemplifies how different culturally-specific aspects of performance can be prioritised in Polyfest, depending on who is evaluating them. Though it had been explained to me by a tutor that placing students in Tongan performances at Polyfest is meant to emulate the hierarchal placement of dancers in Tonga, for this judge, a màlie performance was more important and placing these younger students at the back of the formation compromised the affective quality of the performance. Some judges also associated ‘meaning and feeling’ with the correct function of performance items. Aspects of performance in the incorrect context could affect the judges’ experience. Vini Punialava'a, a judge from the Samoan stage, gave several examples of how Polyfest performances conflicted with her knowledge of siva Samoa and the historical contexts of certain characteristics. One was the significance of the nifo ’oti, the knife carried by the principal solo dancer in the taualuga, the final item in the Samoan performance bracket.

Vini explained that the nifo ’oti is used during ta’alolo, ceremonial presentations
made to a distinguished visitor, on a special village occasion such as the opening of a church; and that in Polyfest, the taupou (female) or manaia (male) who represents the child of the village chief, uses it inappropriately:

Most of the singing and most of their five minutes for the taualuga allocated in our marking sheets is spent on just running with this thing. And then by the time they put it down and start dancing, you see the timer holding up the yellow flag [to give a five-minute warning]. And I'm sitting there like, come on, put it down and dance! That thing was used for war, why are you gently, carefully carrying it?

People just need to understand, why, what is the significance of this. What is the purpose of a nifo 'oti? If they have sort of borrowed or made use of it when dancing, why are they taking it so long to come up [to the front of the stage]? It's the dancing we're looking for, not how you carry it.

When I asked Vini if she communicated any of her observations tutors and students, she gave some examples:

One of my comments is, the song is not for dancing....There are songs you can do the traditional Samoan dancing to. But there are songs that it is not right to...Such love songs- it's inappropriate to dance to them. My understanding of dancing, it's a story. But now with the Samoan dancing, that's not so. You hear this song about- it's a love song, it's with all these endearments and lovingful words. Where's the gracefulness, where's the story, where's the meaning, where's the feeling? So that's what I put down in my comments.

Discussions with judges revealed that their views on competition, rules, and criteria, and components of performances within Polyfest are not unified, and subject to their individual experiences and knowledge. When these judges observed differences in “feeling,” function and knowledge of context in student performances, they were compelled to express frustration about the gaps between students’ and tutors’ knowledge and their own ideals of traditional performance. However, these criticisms exist in tension with the support of the festival and the students, demonstrated by the judges’ voluntary participation. Some judges were emphatic about the importance of the festival’s presence in Auckland. A judge from the Samoan stage closed our interview by describing why taking part in the festival was meaningful for her:

The gathering itself, the Polyfest. I'm always emotional. I sit up there on that
big podium as a judge, and I look down at the people, I see the young people perform, it brings tears to my eyes. You feel like you’re in Samoa. That’s the place we all belong. And we’re here in Manukau, in this foreign setting. We’re in New Zealand, but we feel this atmosphere of Samoa, at the Polyfest. And that’s why I love being there. You see the people; you hear the singing, you see the performances. For me, those four days, I so look forward to, it’s like going to Samoa. During the drive [to the Manukau Sports Bowl] I think, yeah, going to Samoa.

This judge’s experience at Polyfest clearly shows the affective qualities of the music and dance, which represents Samoa, if not replicates the music and dance that as a judge, she would prefer; overrides her criticisms of students’ style of performance. Instead, it fosters a strong feeling of pride and belonging with the Polyfest community of practice. Overall, discussions with the judges revealed that while they supported students through their participation on the judging panel, they had complex responses to Polyfest performances; indicative of the tensions of having extensive culturally-specific knowledge in transnational communities where their meanings and applications are subject to changes and multiple influences.

**Negotiating Change in Stage Rules and Judging: The Case of the Niue Stage**

The second half of this chapter is a case study of the negotiation of changes in stage rules and judging criteria. From my discussions with stage committee members and judges, it became apparent that change in Polyfest is rarely straightforward, and has to be negotiated with varied groups of stakeholders. Sometimes change is so strongly resisted that a stage becomes in part defined by that resistance. In 2013, the Niue stage went through a series of significant changes. There was a complete change of personnel on the stage committee, an overhaul of judging criteria, and a major rule change about the takalo, a performance item commonly described in English as a war dance (Moyle, 1985). It was a rare opportunity as a researcher to see how these negotiations unfolded.

The change in personnel for the Niue stage was a controversial and sensitive issue within the Polyfest community of practice. Since 1996, the stage had been managed by an accomplished educational advisor who was awarded a Queen’s Service Medal in 2009 for her contributions to education, mental health, and youth development. A trust made up of their family, and other members of their community acted as the stage committee. A group of Niuean teachers felt excluded from the stage’s decision-making and were concerned about its educational content. The
situation came to a head in 2012 when they expressed their grievances, conflict escalated, and mediation failed to produce a resolution. Subsequently, the trust stepped down from leadership and a committee of Niue teachers, headed by Meleua Ikiua and Johnny Rex, was put in place (J. Heyes, pers. comm.).

In 2013, the Niue stage decided to bring its judging criteria through a complete overhaul by modelling the rating system on NCEA achievement standards – those that can be used as credits to advance towards official school qualifications. No other stage had attempted this before, but as an entirely new stage committee who were all teachers, it was logical to choose an educational model that was already in use in other areas of the school.

NCEA assessments evaluate students’ work on a scale of 0-3 (Not Achieved, Achieved, Achieved with Merit, Achieved with Excellence) against a list of required criteria (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2016). After meeting Meleua Ikiua and other stage committee members at the initial stage meeting of the year, I was invited to a judges’ workshop. There, other members of the stage committee, tutors and Teachers in Charge would meet and review a draft of the new judging criteria and do a practice run by watching several performance videos, so the group could agree on how the criteria should be applied. I would also represent Mangere College and report the information back to our Teachers in Charge, Fred and Wynne; and our dance teacher, Catherine, who could use the criteria to help her evaluate students for their credits.

The judges’ meeting was on a Saturday morning in Meleua’s classroom at Alfriston High School. I was introduced to Pennie Vaione, an English teacher at Papatoetoe High School who authored the drafts, Rosa (Lose) Kalauni, also from Papatoetoe, who was the national moderator for Niue language exams; and Fili Rex who would be judging. Tutors and Teachers in Charge came in at various points throughout the day as their schedules allowed. Pennie gave us each four drafted criteria, each for evaluating the dances, the songs, costumes, and the group’s student leaders.

Pennie explained the former stage criteria: “The old ones were 1 to 10, no descriptors, and it just had originality, presentation, maybe that’s it. And we just gave 1-10 to every single item. And there was nothing to– it wasn’t a very clear or fair marking schedule, which is why we’re trying to do something a little bit different.” Pennie’s goal was to tailor the Polyfest performance items’ criteria using existing NCEA dance, music and drama standards as a guide. The speech competition criteria would also be modelled after an existing NCEA framework.

The speech contest, which takes place on Friday before the performance
competition, advocates for Niuean language in several ways. In 2013, Niue language was only offered as a class in two schools in Auckland, and by entering the contest, students would learn some of the language by writing their speech. The committee aimed to assess each student for NCEA credits. Lose expressed concern that the NCEA achievement standards for Niue language would be eliminated if they weren't more frequently used. She explained, “This is the only vehicle they can use for it...They’re being judged as a speech competitor anyway, and we want to run an assessment around it as well.”

In the judges’ workshop, the committee painstakingly went through each point of the standards, discussing wording, combining some points and creating new ones. One of the most challenging tasks throughout the process was how to enumerate the criteria for the cultural component of performances– which weren't a part of the pre-existing NCEA models for music and dance, and needed to be created anew for the Niue stage. The committee members discussed how the criteria would describe a cultural component:

Pennie: So the cultural element for the meke, does it represent a meke dance.
Fili: Is the performance typical of a meke...
Pennie: This is where your background and your cultural knowledge – what does a meke look like...
Fili: If it looks like a tame...[and not] ‘Stomp the Yard’ or anything.
Pennie: That was difficult for me as well, I didn't know how to word it – if you can think of some things that might be a little more appropriate- to change it...
Fili: Like, does it present as that particular form of dance. That's what you're after, right?
Pennie: Well the cultural word has to be in, somehow. It just has to- if it's a tame, it looks and sounds like a tame. The takalo - it looks and sounds like a takalo. So that there's no real confusion – not just looks and sounds but it has the proper components, it's like you say, if it looks like ‘Stomp the Yard’...It's not overboard modern kind of thing. So as long as the cultural picture is there...

As the committee worked through the process of articulating Niuean concepts of performance through the NCEA framework - which was not imposed upon them, but of their own initiative - they were in the process of negotiating the multiple worlds in which Polyfest operates. Utilizing their polycultural capital as educators and their expertise in Niue performance and language, they modified the evaluation process for Polyfest that would strengthen both areas for the students; capitalising on the
strengths of the NCEA system, which is familiar to students in New Zealand and is also used in Niue.

The Niue stage committee’s decisions had more weight than a similar decision would on one of the other Pacific stages at Polyfest. Polyfest was, at the time of research, the largest performance venue for Niue music and dance anywhere in the world. Samoa, Tonga, and the Cook Islands all had well-established national annual cultural festivals that had been staged for decades, whereas Niue held its first in 2013. Tongan and Samoan transnational communities were plentiful in Australia and the United States, but significant Niue communities were limited to Auckland and Brisbane. And in New Zealand, outside of Polyfest, Samoan, Tongan and Cook Islands dance was performed by a number of professional and semi-professional entertainment groups as well as other Pacific school festivals around the country. The committee was highly aware of their responsibilities. As the discussion at the judges’ workshop progressed, Lose remarked how the judges’ decisions would have a significant impact on Niue performance, which should be taken into consideration when judging part of cultural elements:

We know on the Niuean stage we have a lot of influence on the Niue culture. If we allow it to happen, it will continue to change the Niue culture without us knowing. We shouldn't take it for granted that this is the place that we learn Vagahau Niue but we need to remember but what we're passing on is appropriate and actually Niuean. It really comes through with the koli foki, the comment I got from Niue last year when I went was we don't hopo that way here. So it's coming through, and the Samoan rocking– we don't have that rocking. Or the tame... they're rocking back and forth. That's the feedback from Niue that's coming through...if we want to hold onto a Niue thing, we must insist that the rocking must not happen. So maybe there's something tricky to keep your eye on.

At the time of the meeting, I had not yet travelled to Niue; but when I attended performances at the Niue Cultural Festival in April of 2013, I understood the stylistic differences that Lose was referring to. The hopo is a kicking step which is unique to the Niue stage in Polyfest, and in many Polyfest performances I observed, the step was athletic, with both boys and girls performing the kick nearly parallel to the ground at times, using the step to travel around the stage and create formations. At the

32 Movements within a dance performance.
performances I saw in Niue, the step was more subtle, with the feet kept close to the ground, and there was no traveling or formations. Some Niuean groups were imitating the “Samoan rocking,” which refers to the seated performers’ movement of the upper body to the beat very common during the pese o le aso. Though influences from other cultures were mentioned during interviews with other stages, none seemed to be as concerned as the Niue stage committee that they could be detrimental to a performance, protecting the vulnerabilities of the Niue performance items. The committee was aware of how their decisions would be far-reaching, and the comments from Niueans living on Niue validated their position.

After Polyfest that year, Fili Rex told me that she was pleased after using the judging criteria, and that modelling them after NCEA was sensible as students were familiar with it from their school assessments. As a teacher, they were user-friendly for her, and the bullet points were more descriptive than the points system previously used.

The new judging criteria were well-received and uncontroversial change on the stage, but the issue about the takalo was more complex, personal and in need of a public debate. The rule change about the takalo was raised at the first Niue stage meeting. These initial meetings are held by all of the stages so that the committee can meet the Teachers in Charge, tutors and student leaders from each school, make organisational decisions, clarify rules and answer questions. I joined our Teacher in Charge, Fred Helms, at the Niue stage meeting at Alfriston College after school.

We were welcomed by the Alfriston College principal, and then by Theresa Howard, the festival director. After an opening prayer and introductions, we went through the stage rules with Meleua, and decided on the order that schools would perform on the festival day, known in Polyfest as ‘the draw.’ After making a group decision on how many entries were to be allocated to each school for the speech competition, a tutor asked if girls would be allowed to do the takalo, and at that point, the room fell silent.

The takalo is described as a call, challenge or greeting (J. Rex, pers. comm.). At Polyfest, it is closest in function and performance convention to the Māori haka. Some participants mentioned their concern that in Polyfest, the aggression of the takalo has erroneously come to represent the essence of all Niue performance. I found in my fieldwork that the takalo is a favourite of students on the Niue stage; and from watching live performances and videos, students make the most of the opportunity with intense theatrics, painting their faces with black makeup, and even chewing stage
blood capsules in order to mimic the red mouths and tongues reported by James Cook when he sighted Niue in 1774, which, from the dye of red bananas, Cook mistook for blood. Cook named Niue Savage Island (Loeb, 1926), a trope proudly appropriated by many young Niueans through t-shirt designs and online images. The takalo was not required, but many schools performed it, and some schools included girls as well; the decision to do so was left to the tutors.

In response to the question at the stage meeting, a committee representative stood up and explained how the issue about the takalo had been raised before:

In 1997 we spent a whole night discussing it. It was argued that there was [sic] several women who stayed and looked after their villages while the men were out at war, and they gave examples from chants and a specific female warrior was one of them. So from there- I think- it's different from different villages and different areas of Niue I am sure. We left it up to the groups at the time to decide what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. So that was the decision at that time from that forum, but you may want to change that.

After she spoke, the room became much more animated. The Teacher in Charge from Auckland Girls Grammar School, who first explained that she was not Niuean, defended the previous decision that Pennie had described. As an all-girls school, performing the takalo had become a part of their tradition. Using Māori terminology, she insisted, “It’s part of our mana wahine33 and we do look graceful while we do it.”

This prompted a Niuean teacher to stand up and reply,

We have never seen women perform a takalo in Niue. If you take a group of Niuean girls to [perform a takalo in] Niue at this time, they’re going to rubbish you. Because it is who we are, as a Niuean, the boys actually grew up, and they were trained to do the takalo. You see them holding the [spear], the girls are not allowed to touch that...We are trying to hold our culture, the only we can do that is to hold our culture from Niue. Not make up new things over here in New Zealand. That’s what I really believe. I know you girls can do the takalo, I’ve seen it. But when I was onstage in my time, there were no girls. Just respect our culture, the boys doing the takalo, that’s what makes a Niuean boy unique from any other island in the Pacific.

Another tutor reported that while spending time in Niue, elders had expressed their disapproval of girls performing the takalo, arguing that the beauty and grace of Niue women were compromised by performing an item that made them look “very ugly

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33Translates from Te Reo Māori as “power of women” (see Simmonds, 2011).
and manly.” The tutor then posed the question—“You’re the committee, can you clarify as a committee if it’s yes or no?” At this point Johnny stepped in and said that he wanted to make it clear that the committee wasn’t being indecisive, but that with rehearsals having already begun for Polyfest that the issue would have to be tabled for this year’s festival, but would be taken up again later in the year—and that tutors and teachers in charge should take part in the discussion and not leave the decision solely with the committee.

I kept in touch with Meleua and Johnny after Polyfest that year, and they organised a meeting in July with as many of the stage committee members, Niue teachers, and tutors that could attend, as well as inviting feedback from Niueans in Niue and in Australia.

Meleua explained why she made such a big effort to be inclusive in the discussion:

[A]fter the first meeting we were swaying towards, yeah, girls can do it, but we didn’t all agree. I said, I don’t want to attend divided, we’re a new team, and we need to be united in what we decide. [Johnny and I] decided, this is too big to call…the others were like, just call it, who cares. But we care. So I said, let’s open it up to the community.

The meeting was called at short notice, and though one of my part-time jobs kept me from attending from the beginning, I went to the venue as soon as I was able. I arrived just as Johnny and Meleua were cleaning up, and asked them their thoughts on the proceedings. Fortunately for me, Johnny decided to submit his comments on the issue in writing, so I was able to get a record of his input.

Johnny was particularly invested in the outcome of this meeting. In an earlier interview, he had told me that some Niuean performance in New Zealand had been transmitted in a way that had “become so watered down and diluted, that you can’t even visibly identify it as a Niuean song and dance...It’s a really dangerous thing; I find it embarrassing.” In his written remarks about the takalo, Johnny stated his opposition to girls’ participation: “We are breaking protocol by allowing the girls to do this, in fact, we have been breaking cultural practices for a long time, and the issue needs to be redressed.” He referenced a recent controversy about the roles of men and women in the Māori pōwhiri (Marae Investigates, 2011):

I believe we have allowed the very Palagi/European notion of ‘equality’ to influence our way of thinking. Please do not confuse the two separate issues of sexism/equality and cultural traditions, as they are two totally separate entities.
The recent stink kicked up by female Pākehā politicians in regards to the kawa or Māori protocol of the pōwhiri (whereby the females sit behind the males for the “whaiorkoro” or talking part of the ceremony) has highlighted this issue. If it is good enough for the Tangata Whenua of this nation that we live in, to maintain and hold steadfast to their customs, even after a hundred plus years of white mainstream rule, then surely it is good enough for us as Niueans to safeguard ours?

Johnny also compared the situation to the male-only and female-only dances on other Polyfest stages, arguing that those stages did not compromise on the rules.

I strongly feel that as a proud Niuean that if we make the wrong call here tonight, then it will have huge negative ramifications for our future generations. We owe it to them, rather than ourselves, to make the right call, and not only think with our hearts, but more with our heads.

When Meleua and I had a chance to talk about the decision a few weeks later, I asked her about the input of the matuas- the elder members of Niue communities whose opinions were, to Meleua and Johnny, essential to an inclusive discussion that would lead to the right outcome. Opinions about the rule change also came from Niue and Australia, as Meleua had hoped.

They had different reasons, but they all agreed to why girls couldn’t do it and how they tried to cater for the girls. They discussed, what is the takalo. It’s a war dance laid down by men only, boys only.

She explained there was a discussion about historical precedent:

When we go back 100 years, the [records] say women and men did do a form of takalo, but for the women, it was more of a support. They would tell the men, “The enemy’s coming.” Or, “be strong, be strong, fight” - from the back. They didn’t indicate to say they did it as a challenge. And I hear some people say, the women did everything, and I’m thinking there’s a difference between truth and opinion, and speculation. And I think our people are saying, show me where you heard it from. And what goes against that argument is that there’s no written backup.

It was really insightful listening to the matuas; it's what we needed to hear...We already sort of knew what we were going to do, and had decided, but it really made it clear, it wasn't opinionated, and they backed it up with things that
happened in the past, happened with culture in terms of maintaining it... So, decision made, and they were good with it.

It wasn’t until late in the interview that Meleua explained that it was her own idea to include the girls in the takalo while she was a student at Auckland Girls Grammar School in 1989. She convinced her father, who was their tutor, to allow the unconventional performance to go ahead: “Back then it was like...why should we miss out because we’re girls? [I asked him] not to suit culture, but because I wanted it done.” This information further clarified Meleua's motivation in the decision-making process about the takalo. Though other community members must have known the same story she told me, she did not use it as leverage for deciding in her favour. As she mentioned earlier, even though many were willing to let the committee make the decision, she was invested in a dialogue that was inclusive of multiple Niuean transnational communities; with particular consideration of elders’ opinions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the complexities of the construction and articulation of culture in Polyfest communities of practice were examined at the level of the stage committee, who are responsible for establishing the festival’s performance and evaluation parameters.

Judges are chosen by stage committees based on their ideals about who should represent the authority to evaluate Polyfest performances officially. As the judges interviewed here navigate the festival's multiple contexts, tensions arise amongst the support of students’ participation and the subjectivity of individuals’ backgrounds and views on traditional performance, and even on the value of competition itself. Overall, the benefit of student participation and the continued practice of Pacific music and dance in New Zealand – even if not to the ideal specifications of the judges- outweighed any criticisms about the performances themselves.

I then discussed the changes within the Niue stage in 2013. In creating new judging criteria, the stage committee aligned them with the New Zealand educational assessment system, NCEA. They aimed to create a more descriptive and effective evaluation tool for judges, that would in turn benefit students by aligning with the system already utilised in schools. Additionally, they worked to promote Niue language by streamlining the evaluation for NCEA credits during the speech competition. When considering the rule change for the takalo, the committee considered historical precedent and made extensive effort to include the opinions of Niue elders living in Niue and Australia. The stage committee members demonstrated
how within the Polyfest communities of practice, individuals employ polycultural
capital to negotiate ideals of “tradition” and competence within Pacific cultural
contexts with the educational and social needs of students.
Conclusions

The origins of the ASB Polyfest were situated in a confluence of economic, geopolitical, social and educational change in New Zealand. The need for worker accommodation, the reduction of affordable housing due to the construction of the inner-city motorway, and racial discrimination by landlords were key reasons for large numbers of Pacific peoples moving to Manukau City, south of Auckland. The planned urban housing estate of Otara, which was constructed without social and leisure facilities, soon became known as “a new kind of slum” (Blewden, 1967, cf. Seidel, 1971, p. 61). The self-determination of Otara residents to improve the social conditions in their suburb was facilitated in part by the leadership of James Garfield Johnson, the first principal of Otara College. After changing the school’s name to Hillary College as a symbolic reference to the cooperation of Tenzing Norgay and New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary to summit Mt Everest, Johnson and his colleagues worked to create a bicultural curriculum and resources. Amongst these programmes was the establishment of the Polynesian Club in 1967, a student and parent organisation that fostered the transmission of Māori and Pacific performance, language and culture. Initiated by senior student Michael Rollo, it was out of the activities of the ‘Poly Clubs’ at Hillary College and three other schools: Aorere College in Papatoetoe, Mangere College, and Seddon College in Western Springs, that a collaboration emerged to produce the first festival at Hillary College in 1976.

With increased student participation, the festival continued to grow steadily and was run exclusively by schools until the 1990s, when its size grew beyond what schools and volunteers could manage. The establishment of a charitable trust and partnership with event management company SMC Events led to the operational model used at the time of this research. The addition of the Diversity Stage in 1991, at the time to accommodate Auckland’s growing Asian communities (Tennant-Brown, 2012), has continued to expand its presence at the festival for other Pacific and non-Pacific performances. In 2012 and 2013 when this research was carried out, approximately 68 schools and 10,000 students participated. An equal number of spectators also attended the festival, which presently takes place over four days. The model of the ASB Polyfest has been replicated throughout New Zealand (Mackley-Crump, 2012) and in 2018, Australia (Aholelei, 2017) and the festival space at Manukau Sports Bowl is a sprawling sensory experience of sights, sounds, and tastes. Like other Pacific festivals in New Zealand (Mackley-Crump, 2012) ‘traditional’ performances are juxtaposed with contemporary music and dance, entertainment, and the presence of...
sponsors and community organisations.

This research was situated in ethnomusicology, in particular, drawing from the significance of performing arts in transnational communities, and the ways that music and culture are articulated in transmission, and subsequently in competitions. I also utilised theoretical frameworks from sociology; communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and polycultural capital (Mila-Schaaf, 2011), as well as drawing from human geography and Pacific cultural studies. As a non-Pacific researcher, I placed particular importance on Pacific methodologies and identified commonalities with recommendations from the ‘new fieldwork’ in ethnomusicology (Barz & Cooley, 2008). I also applied methods from child and youth research in order to encourage students’ participation and contributions to the fieldwork data.

This exploration into the ASB Polyfest community of practice attempted to answer three questions: How does music and dance transmission within the ASB Polyfest construct identities for teachers and learners? How does competition shape the processes of transmission? Overall, what is the significance of these processes for transnational Pacific peoples in Auckland’s urban, multicultural environment?

**Teacher and Learner Identity Within the ASB Polyfest**

My research has shown how teachers and learners within ASB Polyfest communities of practice construct identities through learning within these communities, and the formation of relationships during these processes (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). Cultural group tutors discussed personal histories of their learning trajectories in music and dance, recalling the proximity and influence of family and community either in New Zealand or island homelands. Some expressed regret about the loss of knowledgeable elders and their compositions, acknowledging their own limitations in continuing what they had been taught. Their “consciously undertaken” (Ram, 2000, p. 262) task of preparing students for Polyfest meant teaching behaviours of body and speech that were, for them, more easily acquired. These stories illustrated the concept of teaching culture in transnational communities as “an anxiety-driven project,” as they undertook the responsibilities of cultural transmission to a younger generation (Ram, 2000, p. 262). Others described the confidence that their family relationships gave them, and credibility to teach what they had learned.

For students, membership in a Polyfest cultural group can be an initial foray into experiencing and expressing a cultural identity, or a space to strengthen one. I found that learning in Polyfest cultural groups helped students at Mangere College to construct their own ideas about the meanings of culture, which they partly aligned with values
like teamwork, discipline, and leadership. The students acknowledged that culture was important in their lives and the lives of their peers, and some students expressed that membership in cultural groups developed attributes that would benefit them educationally and in the working world.

The students identified that engaging with language was an important component of cultural groups, and overall, of Pacific cultures— but not the most important one. A lack of language ability did not impede students from full membership in their community of practice, and overall, student leaders identified work ethic and commitment as more important qualities to good leadership than previous culturally-specific knowledge. The student participants showed that transnational Pacific identities are not fixed, nor imposed by adults in authority. Polyfest cultural groups are places to explore, strengthen and/or negotiate multiple experiences of cultural identity and belonging; and as the young adult participants discussed, possibly the beginning of long-term participation in cultural activities.

I found that for my multi-ethnic Pacific participants, membership in more than one Polyfest cultural group allowed them to explore identities, connect with family history and honour cherished elders. Some shared the affective experience of performance, and the feelings of “sameness” (Turino, 2008, p. 18) with others through singing in Pacific languages and moving in dance, which contributed to their experience of belonging.

This research demonstrates that in transnational communities where ethnicities are different yet closely related, commonalities found across ethnic lines can dictate interest in membership and also meanings of cultural identity. Students who joined cultural groups outside their own ethnic heritage were motivated by a variety of reasons, such as friendships, curiosity for ‘other’ cultures, and encouragement by their teachers to accept leadership positions. Some young adult participants discussed how these experiences in ‘other’ cultures made them more confident in exploring their own, as in the case of the two Cook Islands participants who joined Tongan cultural groups.

For some participants, their identity construction within the ASB Polyfest included experiences of boundaries and reconciliation (Wenger, 1998). The young adult participants discussed religious affiliations, inconsistent family interest in cultural transmission, and challenging peers’ notions of ethnicity, and how for some, their efforts were met with “misrecognition” (Mila-Schaaf, 2011) by parents or peers. These stories supported Wenger’s notion of boundaries as sources of learning (1998). For these participants, despite their initial challenges, the processes of reconciliation in their
Polyfest experiences led to further cultural participation and learning after leaving school.

**Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation Within Competition**

The structures of the ASB Polyfest as not only a cultural festival, but also a competition, had significant effects on transmission and the construction of Polyfest cultural groups. The timing of the ASB Polyfest near the beginning of the school year establishes a short rehearsal period of six to eight weeks and rules delineating which music and dance forms must be presented, with prescribed student numbers and time restrictions. These limitations required cultural group tutors to create teaching strategies to prepare their students for success in the festival within these parameters. Cultural group tutors employed skillful teaching, a balance of intense instruction with levity and socialising, and encouraged the involvement of families and the school community.

Tutors sought support in multiple ways, from knowledgeable elders who could advise them, or the resources they had left behind, family members or friends who could attend cultural practices to teach instrumental parts or gender-specific choreography, and from younger mentees, who could subsequently move into the primary tutor’s role in the future. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the fast pace and high pressure of Polyfest cultural practices is the establishment of student leaders. As I discussed in Chapter Four, the responsibilities granted to students as leaders in cultural groups can create transformative experiences and are significant in the construction of cultural identities. Student leadership also contributes to the unique shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) in Polyfest communities of practice, but also to the nature of Polyfest performances themselves.

The judging of costumes means that tutors must leverage the school community for assistance with purchasing materials and creating costume items. As described in Chapter Four, this creates opportunities for culturally-specific methods of fundraising, further involving the wider community and introducing customs and protocols to students.

Polyfest judges had varying opinions about the judging process, such as criteria, the quality of performances, and the value of competition itself. Some observed the standardisation of performances, as a strategy to meet the judges’ approval. However, criticisms were mitigated by the value of the festival and its investment in transmission of culture to Pacific youth. I argued Wenger’s point that disagreement within
communities of practice as a reflection of participation (1998) and that these conflicts demonstrate the dynamism and complexity of the festival and its personnel.

**Constructing Culture in the ASB Polyfest Community of Practice**

The third research question, “what is the significance of these processes for transnational Pacific peoples in Auckland’s urban, multicultural environment?” revealed themes that are not only characteristic of the ASB Polyfest community of practice but also present valuable indications for research into other transnational, indigenous and minority music-cultures.

**(Re)constructing Place, Kin, and Community**

The creation of cultural space at Mangere College through cultural group practices, and “heightened forms of representation” (Turino, 2004 p. 10) like fiafia events, illustrate how transnational communities can transform physical and social environments through the development of a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) of routines, rituals, language, and sound – the construction of transnational Pacific ‘villages.’ The opportunities for identity construction and belonging in these ‘villages’ are particularly important to individuals who lack a strong affiliation with actual or imagined island origins. By providing a physical space for the gathering of the extended school community, and integrating symbols of school identity and the value of educational achievement, Polyfest cultural groups exemplified how the pride of island or village origin can be strengthened by the pride of school affiliation. These uniquely constructed spaces are the learning environments from which distinctive Polyfest performances emerge.

In Chapter Seven, cultural group tutors discussed the gifting (or lending) of affiliation with place. Meleua Ikiua offered students her village identity, Mal Lakatani created the concept of “the Niue heart,” and Johnny Rex encouraged non-Niuean students to perform with an imagined Niuean identity. Although these affiliations may have been temporary, they are characteristic of a unique transnational construction of kin and community and strengthen students’ sense of belonging while competing in Polyfest.

This research has shown that imagined and reconstructed senses of place are significant in the ASB Polyfest community of practice. However, within Pacific transnational communities, geographical place does not lose its significance as a powerful symbol of authority, as cultural group tutors discussed in Chapter Six when
justifying the legitimacy of their expertise, or the consultation of elders in Niue when considering the rules for performing the *takalo*.

**Negotiating Meanings of Tradition and Contemporary Influences**

Although notions of tradition are contested within Polyfest performances, it is generally accepted that Pacific performance forms that comprise the ASB Polyfest are rooted in island origins and represent histories of Pacific peoples that connect to the lives of the performers in the present day. Cultural group tutors, students, stage committees and judges demonstrated the tensions amongst ideals and values around cultural traditions and local and global contemporary influences.

For tutors with professional careers in performance, forays into globally-influenced creative work seemed to highlight the importance and significance of ‘traditional’ knowledge. A grounding in forms of performance described as having island origins and learned through proximity to family and community members was necessary to do contemporary work with authority. These contemporary works articulated the complex personal identities of transnational Pacific people, but their creators maintained a balance of respecting their origins while expressing their creativity for a wider audience.

The Niue stage committee’s re-working of judging criteria demonstrated how competition rules play a role in defining aspects of traditional performance, where abstract concepts such as the ‘look’ and ‘feel’ of traditional performance must be evaluated. The committee members were aware of global influences on performance, such as popular music and hip-hop dance, but also influences from the proximity to Māori and other Pacific cultures at Polyfest. The controversy over gender roles in the *takalo*, and the lengthy consultation with Niue communities that followed, exemplified the “deeply felt working-out” (Scales, 2007, p. 24) within music-communities that can result from contested ideas about tradition.

For students, The ASB Polyfest is part of a landscape of opportunities that also include hip-hop, dance crew and live music competitions, and a well-established contemporary Pacific dance theatre scene. These more recently emerging genres of Pacific performance have not diminished the ASB Polyfest’s popularity. The festival continues to thrive alongside them, and membership in Polyfest communities of practice have a strong contemporary relevance in students’ lives. Polyfest performances are not replications of island-based performances or experiences, but the telling of transnational
stories, continuously changing and unique to their school and family community contexts.

**Utilising and Acquiring Polycultural Capital**

The utilisation and acquisition of polycultural capital underpins the identity experiences and construction of culture within the ASB Polyfest community of practice and was demonstrated throughout this research by cultural group tutors, stage committees, and students.

Cultural group tutors’ negotiation of the teaching of repertoire rooted in tradition that is performed in accordance with Polyfest stage rules, but also meaningful for their young transnational students, is a significant utilisation of polycultural capital. Preparing students for competition and collaborating with community and educational institutions requires tutors and stage committees to draw upon multiple areas of expertise. Tutors drew upon their own cultural knowledge – identifying others to consult if needed - and also school and youth culture to construct relevant learning experiences for their students. Tutors also discussed the tailoring of culturally-specific values. Discipline, religious faith, family and community, and respect are some of the values tutors imbued into their transmission processes, connecting membership in the group with culturally-specific concepts that applied to their personal and educational aspirations. In order to provide for students of other ethnicities, tutors skillfully fostered inclusive group identity. Tutors crafted the external look and sound of performances, but also the internal, felt experiences of students as belonging to a transnational community of practice.

The example of the Niue stage committee showed how polycultural capital enabled the committee members to navigate the creation of new judging criteria successfully. The committee members were invested in several aspects of the representation of Niue culture in New Zealand. One was to define characteristics for performances to be recognised as definitively Niuean, differentiating traditional and contemporary performances. Another was to align judging criteria with the school grading rubric, asserting a place for Niuean culture within the New Zealand education system. In making a decision about the *takalo*, the committee opened discussions about opposing ideas of gender in traditional performance. This led to transnational negotiations amongst Niueans in Niue, New Zealand, and Australia. As the stage committee demonstrated, they had to mediate widely varying contexts in order to make changes that would satisfy the needs of students, schools and Niuean communities.
Polycultural capital is also developed in students through participation, who must integrate various social, educational and cultural worlds. This research has shown that negotiation of these worlds is instrumental in the construction of transnational Pacific identities. Students have to negotiate the demands of cultural group membership with other school, home, and church-based responsibilities, and though tutors provide structure and guidance, students themselves must make sense of how cultural performance fits into their lives. The challenges of boundary and reconciliation, the exploration of multi-ethnic heritage, and the tests of student leadership are some of the experiences that both utilise and strengthen polycultural capital for young Pacific people.

**Directions for Future Research**

The previous discussion addressed themes that could be explored in other studies of transnational music-communities, as well as indigenous and minority music-communities in multicultural and urban environments. In this section, I suggest directions for future research about the ASB Polyfest and other Polyfest-style competitions in New Zealand and Australia.

This research, as a snapshot of a network of complex and ever-changing communities of practice, has provided a basis for future research in multiple subject areas and disciplines. Studies focused on a single stage as a more in-depth investigation into transmission and performance is recommended, including the Māori and Diversity stages, which were not included in this thesis. A section of this thesis was dedicated to methodologies and limitations of myself as an outside researcher. Insider researchers have great potential to research Pacific school festivals in New Zealand, including autoethnography of their own teaching and learning experiences, as well as participants in their own cultural, linguistic or family-based communities. A choreological study of Polyfest performances, especially a longitudinal one through a study of recordings from previous festivals, would be a valuable insight into past and emerging trends; as would comparison with island-based competitions such as the Te Maeva Nui in the Cook Islands. Costuming, song selection, and newly created compositions are also aspects of performance worthy of investigation. Although the ASB Polyfest is the largest Pacific school festival in New Zealand, it is one of many staged around the country (Mackley-Crump 2012), and very recently, Australia (Aholelei, 2017). How do these experiences compare, especially in towns and cities without Auckland’s long history of Pacific communities? Island schools have traveled to Auckland to perform as special guests at
the ASB Polyfest (Seven Sharp, 2018); how do these experiences influence them and their New Zealand-based hosts?

Multi-ethnic identities within cultural performance groups also have great potential for further research, such as experiences of multi-ethnic Pacific and 'afakasi participants that were discussed in Chapters Four and Six. Additionally, there are a number of students of non-Pacific ethnicities that perform on Pacific stages in Polyfest—what motivates them to participate, and what kinds of new relationships and understandings of Pacific culture do they acquire through their membership?

Ideas about gender and sexuality were only briefly discussed by one of my participants, but my fieldwork revealed an important tension within the ASB Polyfest about gender liminality (see Pearson, 2016 for discussions of gender liminality in the Pacific). I met two Cook Islands akavaine who were supported by their school through choosing their uniform, use of pronouns and counselling; however, even as skilled dancers they were only allowed to rehearse— not compete— with the Cook Islands cultural group. There is no official rule on the Cook Islands stage against transgender students, but when a Cook Islands teacher told me in a stage whisper "It's not allowed!", I learned that this ‘unspoken’ rule was common knowledge. The school’s management acknowledged the conflict with the girls’ equal opportunity, but they deferred in the spirit of respecting the wishes of the stage committee. Lacking ethics approval to discuss the situation with the students, I was unable to investigate further, although I heard from others that the girls demurred to the ‘rule’ against them as not to offend relatives that were involved with the stage committee. Considering that gender-liminal individuals are well-known in contemporary Pacific dance theatre in New Zealand (S. Coyle, pers. comm), these tensions are a potentially rich area of research.

Tutors also referred to concepts of gendered performance. How do delineated gender roles in ‘traditional’ performances, as in the Niuean takalo, and the translation of gendered performance to gender identity, such as Joe Moeno-Kolio’s interpretation of Samoan masculinity, function within contemporary societal shifts and disruptions of fixed meanings of gender?

**Final Conclusions**

In Chapter Four, Joe Moeno-Kolio commented: “we don’t really know what Polyfest is yet.” This research cannot offer a comprehensive definition, but has made inroads into one. This thesis offers a snapshot of how Polyfest cultural practices are co-created by tutors, students, teachers, and family and community support at Mangere
College, a small school with a majority-Pacific student population and long-standing history with the festival. As this research has demonstrated, participation in the festival has strengthened Pacific identities, engendered contemporary genres of Pacific dance and theatre, and continues to serve Pacific youth as a space for cultural transmission.

Etienne Wenger wrote of the power of a community of practice as:

a force to be reckoned with, for better or for worse. As a locus of engagement in action, interpersonal relations, shared knowledge, and negotiation of enterprises, such communities hold the key to real transformation – the kind that has real effects on peoples’ lives. (1998, p. 85)

This research is a selective representation of the 42 years that the ASB Polyfest has constructed unique cultures of music and dance transmission and performance within Auckland’s transnational Pacific communities. The festival continues to be transformative for Auckland students, and influential to cultural transmission in Pacific communities around New Zealand and the Pacific region. It is an ideal representation of how transnational Pacific communities in New Zealand are dynamic, responsive and continuously developing communities of practice.
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