

# **Intrepid Journey - A Perspective on the Changing Role of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand**

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2007

This thesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology in  
partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts  
(Communications Studies)

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

This thesis is dedicated to my mother  
Mariana Taleta Taumua Laumatia, who embarked on her own intrepid journey  
and embraced the challenge to accomplish so much.

## Glossary

Aiga	Family
Aotearoa	The Maori name for this country which loosely translates to 'land of the long white cloud'
Browning	The increase of Pacific Islanders into New Zealand
Fa'afetai lava ia te outou uma	Thanks to you all
Fa'alavelaves	Issues or problems that generally require monetary contributions from family members
Fale palagi	European or western style house
Hawaiki	A mythical land which some early Polynesian cultures trace their origins to
Hori	A derogative term or slang for Maori
Kumara	A type of sweet potato
Niu Sila	New Zealand
O le alofa ole Atua ia te oe i aso uma lava	God's love will be with you always
Palagi	White man or European
Peow peow	A reference to ladies breasts
Tagata Pasifika	People of the Pacific
Tangata whenua	People of the land

## Acknowledgements

I set myself a goal to complete my postgraduate degree some time ago. While the goal has been several years in the making, the fact that I can now cross it off my list gives me immense satisfaction. I could not however, have done it without the support of some important people.

I pay tribute to my family - my brother Joe whose entrepreneurialism is an inspiration, my father Tino Sinofoa, for instilling in me a quiet and hard working ethic that has seen me through the years and to my mother whose dedication to my brother and me will always be cherished.

Special thanks to Janet Bedggood, whose Intercultural Communication lectures at an under graduate level fuelled my curiosity around the changing paradigms of Pacific Islanders across a broad range of disciplines. Your genuine interest in my research topics over the years has been invaluable as has been your academic knowledge and advice as my supervisor. My sincere gratitude for your continued commitment and support towards the end particularly as you were going through your own personal grief. O le alofa o le Atua ia te oe i aso uma lava.

To my extended family and friends who provided ongoing words of encouragement and answered many of my text messages seeking answers to random questions and who granted me my much needed procrastination breaks - you rock people.

To my nieces and nephews, may you relish your educational experience and take it as far as you can, to do what you will.

And finally to Suauu, for giving me those constant doses of reality that only you know how and for being there to see me through this.

Fa'afetai lava ia te outou uma

## Abstract

This thesis traces the changing role of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand society from their migration in large numbers in the 1960s through to the current year. It explores the way in which Pacific people have been represented to New Zealanders by certain stakeholders and uses the framing theory to explore the frames created and their subsequent affects on society.

There has been a growing amount of discussion on and interpretation of the media's coverage of ethnic minorities both internationally and within a national context. This thesis will cite examples of the New Zealand media's early depiction of Pacific people, exploring their early reporting practices and show how this has evolved within the country's major media institutions - mainstream newspaper and television.

In recent years New Zealand has undergone a transformation that has seen the Euro-centric identity and values less prominent and a growing celebration of New Zealand's multi-cultural diversity, particularly in the Pacific domain. This thesis explores this 'Pacifinness', arguing this has emerged through a reinvigorated Pacific identity that has evolved as a result of the changing dynamic of New Zealand society.

Finally this thesis discusses the way in which Pacific Islanders are now more visible in two specific domains; sports and arts, and how this visibility has manifested itself into very commercial elements as cited in the two case studies examined.



## Introduction

I am a first generation New Zealand born Samoan and by traditional Pacific Island standards, a rarity, simply because I come from a nuclear family of four.

My mother migrated to Niu Sila in 1963 at the tender age of 22. Like many other Pacific Islanders at that time, she came in search of employment to support her family back in the islands. She also had a goal - to save money to build a fale palagi for her parents back in the Apia village of Mulivai Safata. As it happened, it was also her opportunity to be independent and build a new future.

My mother did not have a job lined up before coming to New Zealand. She did however come with an open mind and an expectation that she would have to work very hard. And she did that, holding down a full time job as a machinist during the day, cleaning part time in the evenings as well as picking up the odd job at a radio parts manufacturing company to help make ends meet.

That fale palagi was four years in the making and in 1967, she had earned the £2000 required to purchase the material and pay for the labour. It was quite simply and quite rightly, one of her proudest moments (and no doubt a defining moment in my grandparents' life), to return to her homeland to begin construction on the fale palagi that her parents and extended family members would call home for many years to come. The rest as they say is history.

My mother's story is typical of many Pacific Islanders who migrated here in that early period. I am proud of my origins and humbled by the efforts my early settling relatives have made to establish themselves and their families in this country which they now call home. To this day I am constantly reminded by my elders on how different life was then, to what it has become today.

So begins the journey of this thesis, inspired by the experiences of my forebears, but fuelled by a desire to explore the changing role of Pacific Islanders in their adopted homeland. This thesis is not a race relations study meant to rationalize the rights of Pacific Islanders or their inequalities as a race. It will critically evaluate the notion that Pacific Islanders have fulfilled different roles over the years and trace their growing influence in certain domains of New Zealand culture. Equally it will examine the influence of the media in transitioning this group into popular culture.

### **Approach and scope of thesis**

I wish to acknowledge Cluny Macpherson's (1996) salient points about the term 'Pacific Islanders' being a collective descriptor for those who ascribe to being of Pacific descent. Whilst it is recognised that for some the term has derogative connotations (Macpherson, 1996) and denotes a single, unified 'community' (when in fact there are several distinct ethnicities involved), its use in this thesis is not intended in a negative manner, nor does it aim to ignore the complexities inherent within the term. It was simply felt the best way to describe the collective group as a whole and is in line with the way in which the term is used by the media and local academics who have written about the group.

Thus in this thesis the term Pacific Islanders is used to describe those who originate from Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Fiji and the Cook Islands. In instances where the reference is to a particular cultural group, this will be highlighted.

The research period for this thesis starts from the 1960s extending through to 2007. It is a narrative study that examines the assimilation of Pacific Islanders into New Zealand and explores how this ethnic group has become a growing influence in the New Zealand way of life.

To make this thesis manageable it focuses primarily on the media coverage Pacific Islanders received in their early settlement and narrates the way in which their representation in the print and television media has evolved. To explain this changing dynamic, this research piece also explores the

importance of the Pacific Island identity, discussing its evolution over the years and its contribution to and influence in the increased visibility of Pacific Islanders.

It concludes with an examination of how this minority ethnic group has grown in status in two highly visible domains in New Zealand culture and their influence on the country's national identity. It uses divergent case studies to demonstrate the way in which Pacific Island identity has become more popularized and commercial in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To navigate the flow of this thesis, a literature review is conducted within each chapter rather than a review of all material provided up front. This was deemed the best way to maintain the general flow of this research piece.

The decision to review mainstream media instead of the minority media was purely because I felt they have been more influential in influencing the way Pacific Islanders have been perceived. For the record, mainstream media covers newspapers and television.

### **Method of enquiry**

Much of the information presented in this thesis was gathered from secondary research sourced both internationally and nationally. There was an abundance of New Zealand literature on a diverse range of topics discussed in this thesis; from the migration of Pacific Islanders to New Zealand, the media's representation of ethnic minorities and the emergence of a distinct Pacific identity. All were extremely valuable in the construction of this thesis.

Similarly, the works of academics such as Husband (1994), hooks (1994) and Wilson & Gutierrez (1995) on the representation of ethnic minorities helped to provide an international perspective, and highlight the appearance of a serious global trend, with regards to the biased media coverage of minorities. The use of non-academic literature such as newspaper articles from a variety of national publications have been immensely useful in documenting the early

media coverage of Pacific Islanders and in demonstrating the shift in coverage afforded to them in recent years. The internet also proved an invaluable resource. In addition, several documentaries were also used as reliable sources to glean information on a range of subjects discussed in this thesis including the history of New Zealand's early relationships with Pacific Island nations, the perspectives of first generation Pacific Islanders, the growing influence of Pacific people in sport and the bro'Town series.

As a first generation New Zealand born Samoan I believe I am a credible source given my own upbringing and have challenged elements of the Pacific identity discussed in chapter three and extended this by providing my own insights.

### **Thesis structure**

Chapter one presents the history of New Zealand's relationship with Pacific Island nations and the events leading up to the migration of Pacific Islanders. The work of several academics is used to narrate the early browning of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand and their settlement experience post migration. The actions and treatment of Pacific Islanders by ensuing governments are discussed with particular focus on the 1975 National election campaign and aspects of Robert Muldoon's leadership. These are analysed to show the level of anti-Pacific Island activities that were implemented under his leadership. The chapter also discusses the way in which Pacific Islanders were represented in the media during those early years and uses framing theory to explore the 'frames' created by the fourth estate and their contribution to the negative perceptions of this ethnic group.

Chapter two begins with a synopsis of the research international academics have made on the portrayal of ethnic minorities in mainstream media and adds to this the studies conducted by New Zealand academics. It then moves into a closer examination of the way in which Pacific Islanders have been depicted in the newspaper and television industries, commenting on some of the limitations experienced and the changing nature of their roles across both mediums. It also presents a rationale for their increased visibility,

particularly within television and argues this is the beginning of the influence Pacific Islanders will have in New Zealand culture.

Chapter three argues the emergence of this Pacific influence is in part due to a reinvigorated Pacific identity and looks at the construction of this identity and its evolution over the years due to the changing dynamics of life in New Zealand for Pacific Islanders. The chapter then moves into examining the way in which this renewed identity has made Pacific Islanders, their culture and their presence more acceptable and the media's influence in making them more marketable.

Chapter four discusses the browning of New Zealand; focusing on the increased visibility of Pacific Islanders in two domains; sports and arts, and their growing commercialism. It discusses the success of Jonah Lomu and *bro'Town*, one from the perspective of a Pacific Island individual who became an international rugby phenomenon but also, and perhaps more notably, a lucrative brand. The other; looking at a programme whose origins are steeped in Pacific Island culture, but which has expanded to become embedded in New Zealand's way of life, aided by its humorous and clever scripting and an innovative marketing strategy.

## Chapter One

### In the beginning - New Zealand the land of opportunity

#### A look at the origins of New Zealand's relationship with Pacific Island nations

It seems only fitting to begin this thesis by briefly tracing the origins of Pacific settlement in this country. The islands of the Pacific were the last parts of the world to be settled by humans. Recent scientific evidence has undermined previous Western histories of Pacific voyaging. It is now widely accepted that migration into the Pacific started in Southeast Asia and the exploration and settlement occurred over 4000 years (see Howe, 2003 for an account of this). Further, the explorations were mostly deliberately planned by seafarers more skilled than their European counterparts. One of the Western 'imaginaries' to be modified is Maori landfall in New Zealand. The idea of the Great Fleet has been superseded by the likelihood of multiple arrivals more recent than thought previously.

Maori travelled from Hawaiki from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. They called their new homeland Aotearoa and became tangata whenua, adapting to their new environment by eating the local plants and sea food, hunting the animal life whilst also cultivating kumara which they had brought with them.

The first European arrived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Dutchman Abel Tasman landed in 1642. Tasman sailed onwards to Tonga after clashing with the Maori, but not before drawing a map of the two islands and calling it 'Staten Landt'. This was later Latinized to Nova Zeelandia deriving from the Dutch Nieuw Zeeland.

Some 125 years later it was anglicized to New Zealand by British captain James Cook and eventually colonized by Britain in 1840 following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. This has been touted as a defining moment in New Zealand's history, however today the Treaty remains a subject of political debate, frequently contested by Maori factions due to the different translation of the document from English to Maori. While this thesis will not

explore the Treaty in any great depth, I acknowledge its' role in defining the way the country is governed both in the nineteenth century and today.

Much has been written about New Zealand's early adaptation to colonisation. For the purpose of this thesis, Boyd's (1990) chapter will be used to narrate New Zealand's transition from an under developed and seemingly insecure British colony to an influential Pacific nation.

Boyd (1990) argues that New Zealand struggled with its identity early on, taking some time to come to terms with the fact it was a Pacific country and "....not a European outpost" (p.295). Its small population and distance from Britain made it feel insecure and vulnerable to attack. So much so that it refused to accept Britain's assurances of protection, instead urging "...Britain to adopt a more proactive policy of annexations, whilst claiming it was the country best fitted to rule Polynesians" (Boyd, 1990, p.296).

It is perhaps these claims which forged the beginning of New Zealand's relationship with independent Pacific Island nations. In 1901 New Zealand assumed authority over the Cook Islands. As a result Cook Islanders were granted citizenship, allowing them the right to emigrate here, unrestricted entry into the country as well as the benefits of the Welfare State. In 1914, its reign extended to Western Samoa when it took over occupancy of the small island nation from Germany. Tokelau was later added to its list of island territories, at the request of Britain in 1925.

Despite its rise in status amongst the Pacific Island countries, New Zealand was not thriving in its role as colonial gate keeper, with local grievances and frustrations increasing under their authority. Boyd (1990) is critical in her summation of New Zealand's performance, claiming they had more short comings than successes in governing Polynesians. She suggests this was to be expected given New Zealand was itself, "...a small, weak, developing country lacking the people, money and markets to develop island territories" (p.298).

Boyd's critique represented the orthodox view. The sentiment was also expressed in a documentary series entitled the *Islanders*<sup>1</sup>, which explored New Zealand's progression to being the colonial power of the Pacific and its relationship with the island countries. It too questioned New Zealand's maturity to rule other countries, using the events leading up to the 'Black Saturday'<sup>2</sup> incident in Samoa to illustrate its point.

The repercussions for New Zealand were significant. The incident made world headlines and they were subjected to negative publicity and criticism from other countries. Meanwhile the incident fuelled Samoa's mistrust of New Zealand and renewed their aspirations for self government. They petitioned the League of Nations for rights to govern themselves with New Zealand as their protector and adviser.

After World War II New Zealand played an important role in developing the new United Nations, helping set up the Trusteeship Council to oversee colonies path to independence. Samoa took advantage of the new situation and in 1962 thirty years after their petition Samoa became the first Pacific nation to regain its independence. Soon after that the Cook Islands followed suit in 1965 and Niue in 1974.

The speed in which subsequent island nations were decolonized was deliberate. As noted by Boyd (1990) New Zealand believed its national interests were better served by fostering friendly relations with its island neighbours. In hindsight, I assert that New Zealand was in fact setting itself up to develop strategic relationships with foreign countries and trade partners that would put it in good stead for the future.

The shift of power (or partial self-governance as the case was for some countries), back to the island nations changed the relationship dynamics between New Zealand and its former territories, from authoritarian to symbiotic. There was general consensus amongst the Pacific Island countries

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1 The documentary aired in a series of Legacy documentaries in the early 1970s on TV One.

2 During a demonstration by the Mau, a non-violent independence movement, New Zealand policemen shot and killed nine Samoans. One of those killed was a high-ranking chief, Tupua Tamasese.



that they did not want to weaken their ties with New Zealand for fear of losing privileges such as trade and financial aid and for the Cook Islands and Niue in particular, free entry as New Zealand citizens. New Zealand on the other hand flourished in its role as 'big brother' and conduit to the international world.

Sinclair (2000) is matter-of-fact about this, suggesting the continual fostering of relationships by the changing New Zealand governments over the years, highlights the manipulation by our parliamentarians for a better footing with the Pacific Islands governments:

In the nineteen sixties and seventies New Zealand also strengthened its connections with the Pacific Island groups, now becoming independent. New Zealand had taken part in the process of decolonization. It helped to promote the independence of Western Samoa (1962) and Nauru (1968) and self government in 1965 in the Cook Islands, whose people remain New Zealand citizens, in 1974. In 1971 New Zealand became a member of the South Pacific Forum, in which heads of Pacific Island governments and other ministers discuss their common problems (Sinclair, 2000, p.320).

That said each served its purpose to the other. Trade played an important part in New Zealand's relationship with the islands. It imported phosphate, sugar, fruits and vegetables, whilst exporting processed foods and manufactured goods to many of them. Attempts were made to get New Zealand companies to invest in island countries and provide private employment in the islands but little came of this and as a result island agriculture and consequently, living standards declined. For many island countries, migration to New Zealand appeared the only option.

### **The early browning of Aotearoa: New Zealand the land of milk and honey**

While Pacific Island migration to New Zealand is not a recent phenomenon, there is some debate around the time frame Pacific Islanders first migrated here. The *Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* website suggests Samoan migration started as early as the 1900s. However Macpherson (1996) says significant Pacific Island migration began in the period immediately after World War II. Macpherson's analysis is corroborated by the 1994 New Zealand

Official Yearbook which shows 988 Pacific Islanders in the country in 1936<sup>3</sup>. By 1945, this number had increased to 2159 (Registrar General), making up 0.1% of the non European immigrants.

It is well documented that New Zealand enjoyed a long period of economic prosperity at the end of World War II through to the mid 1970s. Ongley (1996) describes this as the boom years. This was soon interrupted by shortages in the labour market. Official labour surveys show there was a real need for skilled and unskilled labour in the manufacturing, building and construction industries.

The skilled labour roles that were not filled by New Zealanders were given to British and Dutch immigrants. To fill the void of the semi skilled and unskilled labour the government encouraged Maori from rural parts of the country to come to the cities. This labour search also extended to former territories in the Pacific. They encouraged Pacific Islanders to migrate here under the guise of more job opportunities, higher incomes and better living standards. For many Pacific Islanders the proposal meant greater opportunities and a better education for their children.

As it happened, the major influx of Pacific Islanders occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s. This is when they became highly visible to New Zealanders. While the immigration process differed depending on the individual's country of origin, Pacific Islanders were not put off by the obligatory medical examination or the paper work that needed to be submitted to obtain temporary entry permits. In fact by 1972 there were over 50,000 Pacific Islanders living in New Zealand, up from 3,600 in 1951 (cited on [www.teara.govt.nz](http://www.teara.govt.nz)). They settled in Wellington, Christchurch and Tokoroa, with the majority putting down roots in Auckland, prompting the city to be dubbed the "hub of Polynesia" (quoted in the *Islanders* documentary) and later, the largest Polynesian city in the world.

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<sup>3</sup> The Te Ara of Encyclopaedia website makes reference to Samoan migration whereas Macpherson and the 1994 New Zealand Official Year book reference the Pacific Island population.

Many of the Samoan and Tongan migrants entered on temporary work or visitors' permits (quoted in the *Islanders* documentary). While they found jobs in factories, they soon overstayed their permits. This was overlooked by the government as long as the demand for labour was strong (see Douglas, 1985 and Trlin, 1987). According to Farmer (1979) the number of overstayers was in the vicinity of 12,000.

On the other hand, migrant labour served New Zealand employers well. They provided cheap labour in the sense that their presence removed the need for wage increases or improvements in conditions that would normally be required in order to attract local labour (see Miles, 1987 for an account of international trends that relate to this). In addition, given their illegal status it became normal practice for employers to expect the migrant group to accept working long hours and in poor conditions (Ongley, 1991).

This however, was short lived because by the mid 1970s, demand for Pacific Island labour diminished due to the collapse of the global boom and exacerbated by the oil crisis, fuelling an economic downturn. This recession phase, as termed by Ongley (1996), saw export markets fall and trade decline. The outcome was inflation, mounting debt and rising unemployment. Consequently, the tolerance towards migrant workers on temporary permits from Western Samoa, Tonga and Fiji also came to an end<sup>4</sup>.

### Unravelling the theoretical approach to international immigration

Many academics (such as Bedford, 1984; Miles and Spoonley, 1985; Ongley, 1990; Loomis, 1990; Palat, 1996) have examined the migration of ethnic groups to New Zealand and their impact on society. Ongley (1990) points out there are two ways in which migration has been analysed. Some academics have looked at it from a race relations perspective focusing on migrant discrimination and institutional racism; these writers have included Spoonley (1988) and Loomis (1991).

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<sup>4</sup> I note Ongley's distinction of the individual Pacific nations as opposed to referring to them as a Pacific Island community.

The other approach was to focus on the broader framework, the reason for migration, looking specifically at the influence of the economic and political environment on the decision to migrate and some of the disadvantages they faced on arrival. This perspective was perhaps first highlighted by Farmer in 1985 when he said international migration was the result of economic forces or policy decisions. Miles and Spoonley (1985), Ongley (1990) and Palat (1996) all share Farmer's viewpoint.

The economic crisis coincided with record levels of immigration and the increase of Pacific Island migrants did not go unnoticed, particularly given the limited employment opportunities. They became the scapegoats and were scrutinised, from where they lived in less affluent suburbs, to how they lived with extended family members in small dwellings. It was not long before Pacific Islanders became seen as a 'problem' (Spoonley, 1988) and blamed for unemployment and overloading social services.

In an attempt to bring some order back to society and quite possibly to placate the public, Norman Kirk's Labour government authorised the Immigration Department and police to seek out possible overstayers in their homes before they left for work. The objective was to locate immigrants who were here illegally. This controversial level of search became known as the 'dawn raids' or overstayers campaign<sup>5</sup> of the 1970s where immigrants were deported immediately.

Then in 1974 the Labour government reviewed the immigration policy and made the promise that "future immigration would be regulated in the best interests of the country so as to enrich the multi-cultural social fabric of New Zealand society" (Burke, 1986, p.10). As Colman and Kirk (1974) describes "immigration levels would be matched with New Zealand's capacity to provide employment, housing and community services and immigrants would be admitted in accordance with defined criteria so as to assist in promoting stable growth rates in the economy and in maintaining reasonable increases in living standards" (p.75).

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<sup>5</sup> The objective of the campaign was to deport illegal immigrants but it has been documented that others who were legally entitled to be in the country were also sent back to their native countries.

## The Muldoon years

What's wrong with dawn raids? It's the only way some of them get up early  
Cited in Oscar Kightley's play *Dawn Raids*

Kirk's government had little time to implement the new immigration policy principles because they lost the 1975 general election to Robert Muldoon's National Party. Muldoon's victory was well orchestrated right from his take over as party leader in July 1974 to his appointment of advertising agency Colenso to develop his 1975 election campaign. He was adept in using the news media in helping him secure political power.

But Muldoon generated controversy in much of his publicity. His election campaign featured a series of TV advertisements covering issues such as industrial relations, superannuation, the economy, housing and immigration. Muldoon promised to halve migration numbers (Muldoon, 1977). One advertisement in particular played on the public's insecurities, depicting dancing Cossacks and brown-skinned overstayers which Spoonley (1995) said "portrayed Pacific Islanders as racial threats" (p.13).

Criticism was made of the way the National government manipulated public attitudes for political gain in a lengthy editorial published in the left wing *New Zealand Monthly Review* in 1976:

During the recent election campaign, the National Party went to great pains to make immigration a major issue. In the process it was guilty of the most grave distortions and thoroughly dishonest appeals to latent racism in the New Zealand population.

There is nothing new, of course, in times of economic difficulty, in blaming 'migrants' for shortages of housing, social services, hospital facilities and employment and other breakdowns in the system. There is undoubtedly a good case for saying that in such times at least, further immigration is going to compound such problems. However, what was completely uncalled for in the National Party's campaign was the deliberate attempt to place the blame on Pacific Island migrants (cited in Toft, 1990, p.113).

Muldoon received further criticism for his election campaign tactics in *The Evening Star*:

Mr Muldoon played on the fears and anxieties of the electorate in relation to the future composition of the New Zealand society. There was a concern over the violence in the pubs and streets and much of this was attributed to the Polynesians. In this respect, National's electoral advertising shrewdly exploited white fears...The stirrers needed to be put in their place - white supremacy needed to be asserted. New Zealand needed a strong

man. Just as South Africa had called in Mr Vorster...when Dr. Verwoerd was assassinated in 1966, so New Zealand called on Mr Muldoon in 1975 (M.P.K Sorrenson quoted in the *Evening Star*, 1976).

Tom Scott (1975) demonstrates how calculating the new leader was revealing the National Party market researched the entire nation to uncover every fear and need, real or imagined to address in their National Party policy.

Muldoon kept his election promise, altering the immigration policy by limiting the entry of Pacific Islanders into the country and increasing measures to deport illegal immigrants with a renewed dawn raids campaign that was extended to include random street checks in 1976. Tongan leaders called for an amnesty. This led to the creation of an overstayer register which required Tongans, Samoans and Fijians to record their details for consideration of extended permits or permanent residency. Unfortunately many failed to register and approximately half the applications for permanent residence were rejected (Boyd, 1990).

Sinclair (2000) too was critical of Muldoon's handling of race relations stating this was the area in which the National Government was most insensitive:

In the early nineteen-seventies there was a great increase in immigration, which provided labour but also created problems such as housing shortages. Many of the immigrants were from Polynesia. In 1976 the Government believed that there were up to 10,000 Pacific Island 'over-stayers' living in the country. These were not people from Niue or the Cook Islands, who are New Zealand citizens, but those from Tonga, Samoa or elsewhere who had entered New Zealand on visitors' or short-term work permits and who had stayed on, many of them with families in New Zealand. In 1976 many 'over-stayers' were deported. The police handled the problem very roughly and the dawn raids and random street checks of anyone who looked Polynesian reminded people of the South African police state. This was the worst example of racial tension in recent years (p.331).

Sinclair (2000), Liava'a<sup>6</sup> (1998), Anae, Iuli and Burgoyne (2006) have each commented on Muldoon's treatment of Pacific Islanders as being unfair and unnecessary. Ironically, while academics have focussed on his anti-Pacific Island policies, Muldoon himself makes little mention of this in his biographies<sup>7</sup>. In *Muldoon* he largely avoids the issue conceding only that the 1976 overstayers issue was sensationalised. Notably, while Muldoon played down his government's treatment of Pacific Island immigrants, others such as

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<sup>6</sup> Sharon Alice Liava'a's dissertation took a strong anti-Muldoon stance.

<sup>7</sup> *Muldoon and His way, a biography of Robert Muldoon*.

Liava'a have used it to make some strong allegations against him. In her dissertation Liava'a argues the dawn raids and street checks were a distraction and served to mask the declining economy under Muldoon's leadership. According to Liava'a, Bill Rowling shared a similar perspective and is quoted in her dissertation as saying "...the random checks occurred because Muldoon wanted to distract people's attention from the mess he was making of the economy" (quoted in Liava'a, 1998, p. 45).

Liava'a portrays the National Party's actions as being racially motivated, giving accounts of raids that occurred amongst Pacific Islanders and the emotions felt by Pacific Island policemen who were called upon to conduct the raids. Her research also uncovers information that neither Muldoon nor Gustafson (2001) discuss in their respective biographies. Liava'a highlights Muldoon's denial of the random checks occurring "I doubt this is what they are doing" (quoted in *Auckland Star*, 1973) and then later on "We do not have random checks in this country. It is not Government policy, never was Government policy and will not be Government policy" (quoted in *Auckland Star*, 1973). He makes little mention of the dawn raids and random checks in his biography *Muldoon*, (dedicating only a paragraph to the events which have made him the subject of strong condemnation), summing up the overstayer issue as being "the sensation of 1976" (p.188).

She also highlights the blatant disassociation by police management from their workforce, suggesting the officers who conducted the checks had not followed instructions correctly, something also suggested by Muldoon in his biography, ".....and it really all blew up when certain policemen in Auckland exceeded their instructions" (Liava'a, 1998, p.88).

Liava'a reveals that Muldoon had challenged the public to prove that random checks occurred. While this prompted several individuals to present evidence, the government ignored these, instead blaming the media for their excessive emotional news coverage.

While Liava'a validates the first part of her hypothesis that the raids and street checks were racially charged, one of the limitations of her dissertation

is she does not explore the economic situation at the time to validate why she thought the raids was a cover up for the economic decline.

### **The early influence of the media in the portrayal of Pacific Islanders**

Earlier discussions have shown that Pacific Islanders were the casualties of Muldoon's government. However despite their insensitive actions they are not solely to blame for the way in which this group were perceived. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s New Zealanders were bombarded with subjective 'news' that dramatised the events of the time. This is an important factor as it goes to the crux of this thesis in examining how Pacific Islanders have been represented and how this has shaped New Zealanders' perception of them.

Let us begin by examining the role of the media. Herman and Chomsky (1994) state:

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society (p.1).

One of the professional values of journalism is that communication should be done in an impartial manner. This in itself is problematic. Media professionals are given governance to firstly select and secondly, present information that is of 'perceived' interest. As a consequence the media assumes an authoritative role. While they are not wholly responsible for the manner in which the information is interpreted, they play a pivotal role in influencing the end receiver's<sup>8</sup> perspective.

Over the years there has been a growing global awareness of the media's role in society and its affect on race relations. According to Hartmann and Husband (1974), the media propel certain traits into the spotlight while effacing others, choose and restrict issues that it sees fit for deliberation or recall. Maharey (1990) offers more insight to this saying:

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<sup>8</sup> The receiver in this instance could be a reader, viewer or listener, depending on the medium.



This allows the media to influence attitudes by structuring and selecting information that the public use to make choices. The public's opinions and values are influenced by what the media decides should be public knowledge. Thus, the media is deeply responsible for how society is interpreted by New Zealanders. This power is what makes the media crucial to an understanding of race relations in New Zealand (p.13).

In reviewing the literature available, it is noted that information on this topic is largely available from countries where large populations of ethnic groups reside. In the United States for instance, acclaimed writer hooks (1994) looks at this from an African American perspective while Hartmann and Husband (1974) comment on this from a British viewpoint.

From a New Zealand perspective the issue (and spin offs of it), has received significant coverage. Spoonley and Hirsh (1990) in their book *Between the Lines - Racism and the New Zealand media* express concern over the way the media has exerted a negative influence on race issues through inaccurate or selective reporting. While the book publishes a collection of chapters commenting on a range of social issues (that occurred between the 1970s to the late 1980s), and their representation by the media, all writers agree there is a real need for the media to improve its journalistic standards related to minorities. Spoonley (1988) suggested the media offered an example of institutional racism by reflecting certain values. McGregor and Te Awa (1996) criticised the way mainstream media handled news about Maori, while Abel (1997) looked at the limitations of the Waitangi Day television coverage and the media's shaping of ideas and attitudes.

The common factor amongst this writing is the way authors assume the media disseminates against certain values, irrespective of whether this was formally acknowledged as representative of the media professional or organisation. Spoonley (1998) acknowledges that in writing news the media provide signposts or markers in the way they present information. He takes this further by suggesting the relationship between media and receiver is symbiotic. While the media may sustain or contradict certain ideologies in their selection and presentation of information, the receiver in turn, will select or interpret certain information which supports their existing values.

American Communications Professor Robert Entman (1993) refers to this as framing and says to frame is to:

‘...select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more important in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described’ (pg.52).

Simply put, framing works by highlighting bits of information about an item that is the subject of a communication, making that piece of information more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences. Therefore the more obvious or memorable an element, the more likely the recipient is to decipher that frame and incidentally commit it to memory. Entman (1993) points out a frame can have up to four functions - to define a problem, diagnose a cause, make moral judgements and suggest remedies. While a sentence may perform more than one of these four functions, many sentences in a text may perform none of them. A text in this instance can make a piece of information more noticeable by placement or repetition, or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols. Similarly, the exclusion of information in a text, according to Kahneman and Tversky (1993) offers an equally powerful form of framing<sup>9</sup>.

### Reading between the frames

The final section of this chapter will use Entman’s methodology to examine the key frames that were constructed of Pacific Islanders during two of the three immigration phases identified by Ongley<sup>10</sup>, their origins and subsequent affect on society. It is important to note that while some frames are obvious and may have been discussed by other writers who have also examined this issue, others will be my opinion formed whilst reviewing the comprehensive literature published on the issue of Pacific Island migration. Where this is the case I will provide an explanation as to why I view it as a frame.

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<sup>9</sup> This form of framing was also highlighted by McGregor and Te Awa in their study which investigated the media coverage of Maori news and the absence of Maori as credible sources. They termed this ‘invisibility’.

<sup>10</sup> Only two of the three immigration phases are reviewed in this chapter as this is the timeframe which coincides with the events that have been discussed in this thesis to date.

For the purpose of this exercise it is argued there were three key groups responsible for the way in which Pacific Islanders were depicted at the time. This consisted of the media<sup>11</sup>, the state<sup>12</sup> and Pacific Islanders themselves.

One of the first frames created, in this instance by the Labour government, was the positioning of New Zealand as the 'land of opportunity'. Pamphlets promoting prospects of jobs, higher incomes and living standards, higher education and trade training were circulated throughout the Pacific Islands and New Zealand government officials took frequent trips over in an attempt to foster stronger relationships with the island countries (Boyd, 1990). This combined approach of reinforcing New Zealand as a clean country offering stability by way of steady employment and a general improvement in life, appealed to many Pacific Islanders. This came at a time where several of the island nations were experiencing a decline in island agriculture exports and a growing dissatisfaction with island conditions. Curson (1970) highlights the appeal for Cook Islanders saying the prospect of obtaining more money and a secure job was a major attraction. This motivation was also shared by many other islanders from other Pacific countries.

Boyd (1990) summed this up saying:

Full employment, industrial development and affluence in the 1960s opened the floodgates. Prospects of jobs, higher incomes and living standards, higher education, trade training and 'city lights' combined with population pressures and the decline of island agriculture instigated the pull and push of Pacific Islanders to New Zealand (p.314).

As a result Pacific Islanders came in large numbers and over the years New Zealand residents with Pacific Island origin or descent grew from 2159 to 65,694 during 1945 - 1976 (Boyd, 1990). Yet despite being actively sought out, they were not welcome as noted by National's Minister of Immigration, Frank Gill (1976) who said:

We've got to control our immigration. We can't let a flood of them come here and swamp us and swamp our economy (cited in the *Islanders* documentary).

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<sup>11</sup> The term media in this instance broadly covers newspapers and television. Where there is a need to isolate a particular medium, this will be highlighted in the body of the thesis.

<sup>12</sup> I accept the definition of the state as a set of institutions comprising central and local government. As well as the legislative and executive functions the state includes the judiciary as interpreters of law, the police and armed forces to enforce the law and organizations such as the Immigration Department to administer. Where there is a need to separate out an organization from this category, this will be pointed out.

However, despite this, Pacific Islanders came with great hopes and expectations that their new homeland would be "...a land of milk and honey" (Boyd, 1990, p.318). Sadly this was not the case as noted by an anonymous observer:

Our parents dreams are shattered, promises of a better life broken, hopes unfulfilled  
Anon (cited in Boyd, 1990)

The notion that Pacific Islanders were only 'unskilled or lowly skilled' was another frame created. The term became synonymous with the new migrants and commonly used by employers and the media to describe their aptitude. This notion was based on reality. For example Ongley (1991) notes their disproportionate concentration in the manufacturing industry and their corresponding under-representation in the tertiary industry. This is generally because they also had lower levels of educational attainment compared with skilled migrants from Britain and European countries such as the Netherlands. The reality was they were only brought across to fill the menial roles in New Zealand's employment market requiring minimal proficiencies, so the fact that this is alarming, is a mute point. Nevertheless the frequent association of Pacific Islanders and these factory roles cast negative dispersions on their capabilities in general.

Anae, Iuli and Burgoyne (2006) refer to the National Government's blaming of Pacific peoples for overloading social services and overstaying and portraying Pacific migration as a "brown epidemic" (p.20). This was also a frame as their use of resources such as housing, welfare and education, made them highly visible and targeted in society.

In spite of the frame that Pacific Islanders filled menial roles, many employers viewed them as valuable assets and they were in many instances well regarded by their bosses<sup>13</sup>. Some offered their employees assistance with learning English to help make the transition easier. In return these grateful Pacific Islanders worked hard to support themselves and their families.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix A for a photo showing New Zealand employers getting along with their Pacific Island employees.

Unfortunately, the collapse of the global economy around the time of the 1973 - 1974 oil crises had detrimental repercussions for the country. From this period through to 1985 New Zealand went through a financial downturn, described by Roper (1993) as 'the end of the golden weather' for the New Zealand economy. Export markets dropped, trade declined and the local economy contracted. The result was inflation, mounting debt, declining profitability and rising unemployment (Ongley, 1996).

The recession affected the Pacific Islanders the worst of all of the ethnic groups. Unemployment was highest in the secondary industries and as a result many lost their jobs. This was made worse when their status as unemployed residents was exacerbated with the arrival of record numbers of Pacific Islanders into the country. But perhaps even more significant, was the beginning of a phase whereby Pacific Islanders were blamed for the decline in the economy.

In March 1974 Norman Kirk was reported in *The New Zealand Herald* as saying curbs on immigration might be necessary if economic resources were "strained too severely". This resulted in the first of the dawn raids conducted by the police and Immigration Department to seek out, convict and deport migrants from Tonga, Western Samoa and Fiji who had overstayed their permits (Toft, 1990).

This unorthodox approach was continued under Muldoon's leadership with a heightened focus on framing Pacific Islanders. Muldoon started this from the onset with a television campaign that used carefully selected visual images which reinforced the prejudices of many non Pacific Islanders.

One of the television commercials<sup>14</sup> focussed on the issue of Pacific Islanders taking New Zealand jobs. The animation shows a European employer handing out mallets to a line of workers. Four of the workers are European and wear the same grey uniform. The fifth in line is a Pacific Islander dressed in a yellow uniform (possibly highlighting his non acceptance by society). The

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<sup>14</sup> As cited in a short exert on [www.teara.govt.nz](http://www.teara.govt.nz).

employer runs out of mallets when the Pacific Islander steps up to grab his and the Pacific Island character gets angry and hits his boss. There is a tussle and they are kicked out of a building where they continue to fight outside. To strengthen the message of the animation, the visual is coupled with a voiceover<sup>15</sup> that implies Labour is at fault for causing the unemployment and singles out Pacific Islanders as being most angered by the situation. This shrewdly preyed on the fears of New Zealanders and at the same time inaccurately labelled Pacific Islanders as violent people.

The next few years saw the continuation of this negative stereotyping with a barrage of activities and unbalanced media hype targeting Pacific Islanders. The aggressive dawn raids and random street checks, also referred to as the 'overstayers' campaign<sup>16</sup>, reaffirmed the public's belief that only Islanders were over staying their permits. This was further exacerbated with newspaper headlines such as 'Warrants Out for Islanders' (in *The New Zealand Herald*, 29 March 1974) and 'Tongans Must Go Tomorrow' (in *The New Zealand Herald*, 30 March 1974) appearing on a daily basis. The issue also made comic strip status with several newspaper cartoonists taking the liberty to comment negatively on the issues of the day<sup>17</sup>.

The notion of Pacific Islanders as sole overstayers was undisputed for over a decade until a report by *Auckland Star* journalist David McLoughlan challenged the allegations after an investigation into the Immigration Division records. McLoughlan claimed the department specifically targeted Samoans, Tongans and Fijians as primary deportee candidates and used his position at the newspaper to dispel the notion that Pacific Islanders were the primary culprits. Contrary to media practices of the past, McLoughlan published articles with bold statements such as 'Immigration officers practice racial discrimination in the search for and prosecution of overstayers' (in *Sunday Star*, 1986) to balance the perception.

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<sup>15</sup> The voice over says 'Then one day there weren't enough jobs either. The people became angry and violence broke out especially among those who had come from other places expecting great things'.

<sup>16</sup> By academics including Ongley (1991) and Spoonley (1994).

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix B for a cartoonist's impression of the overstaying problem in 1974. No date was given for this cartoon.

In 1986, the Race Relations Office published a report<sup>18</sup> confirming McLoughlan's findings. While Pacific Island prosecutions constituted a third of the country's overstayers, they represented 86% of prosecutions under the Immigration Act of 1964. This in comparison to visitors from North American and the United Kingdom who represented approximately a third of the overstaying population, but of which only 5% were prosecuted (Race Relations Conciliator, 1986).

In this same report the Department acknowledged their actions:

We submit that the racism involved in stereotyping and targeting Pacific Islander groups during the overstayer campaign has remained an influence in the Department of Immigration (cited in Spoonley, 1988, p.14).

And later:

We noted a pervasive attitude, at all levels of the Department (of Immigration), that Pacific Islanders are more likely to break the law (by overstaying or finding employment while in New Zealand); that they are the majority of overstayers and that they overstay longer than any other groups (cited in Spoonley, 1988, p.14).

The actions of the Immigration Department reinforced a widespread perception that Pacific Islanders were a problem. Insensitive comments made by other officials throughout the 1970s made news headlines, which only exacerbated the situation.

For instance, in January 1976, the *Auckland Star* printed an article focussing on Pacific Islanders' criminal behaviour and their inability to assimilate into the dominant culture. Judge Justice Speight (quoted in *The Auckland Star*, 1976) is recorded as saying:

One must have the gravest anxiety as to the placement of these unsophisticated people in an environment which they are totally unfitted to cope with (cited in Liava'a, 1998, p.56)

In an attempt to curb this criminal offending the National Party increased the ratio of policemen to members of the public from 1:746 to 1:701 (Liava'a, 1998). This according to Allan McCready, Minister of Police at the time, was

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<sup>18</sup> *Allegations of Discrimination in the Application of Immigration Laws in New Zealand*, 1986.

National's way of delivering on their election promise to maintain law and order (Liava'a, 1998).

Then in the early 1980s, the media reported on stories that associated Pacific Island males with sexual offending. Spoonley (1995) notes that rape had become a racial act, aided by comments made by the police and public figures. P Hunt<sup>19</sup>, an MP at the time remarks:

I say that anybody who commits violence or rape, who is an alien, should be sent out of the country (cited in Spoonley, 1995, p.15).

Hunt goes on to say a large proportion of rapes seemed to be committed by Polynesians [Pacific Islanders] in particular, adding:

I believe if you're an Islander alien and you commit that type of crime, there should be no review. You should be sent out, no mitigating circumstances, just on your way (quoted in Spoonley, 1995, p.15).

By late 1976, in what appears to a change in public attitudes, many articles and letters were published suggesting random checks were not helping to shape New Zealand the way New Zealanders wanted it (Liava'a, 1998). Furthermore the treatment of Pacific Islanders in the dawn raids was likened to police tactics employed in Nazi Germany and South Africa and helped to drive public indignation against the raids (Toft, 1990). This drove some concerned members of the public to set up Amnesty Aroha, a cause which looked to raise awareness of the random checks campaign and inform New Zealanders on the issue, whilst challenging government policy on overstayers and immigration (Liava'a, 1998).

Given the media's previously unrelenting attention and focus on the government's negative Pacific Island policies, one could not be faulted for assuming Pacific Islanders were passive and accepting of their persistent harassment. This in fact was not the case. It only appears this way because there have been little or no write ups by the media, of the group established

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<sup>19</sup> Hunt's comment appeared in the *Evening Post* on 16 September 1983 and in the *Auckland Star* on 8 March 1984.



by Pacific Islanders to “...better the well being of Polynesians by changing the way things were so as to liberate them”<sup>20</sup>.

The movement known as the Polynesian Panther Party was established in 1971 by a group of Samoans, Tongans, Cook Islanders and Maori as a result of their dissatisfaction with their current way of life. Anae (2006)<sup>21</sup> explains why the group was formed:

When the dawn raids and overstayers debacle impacted on our own aiga, a few of us Samoans and Tongans (and others) got together and formed the Polynesian Panthers in Ponsonby ...a group which tried to alleviate the subordinate position of Pacific peoples in New Zealand – our parents, our grandparents, our aiga...(p.34).

For Alec Toleafoa, another Panther member, belonging to the group enabled him to actively participate in the solution. This sentiment was echoed by the author of an anonymous article published in *New Zealand Politics - A Reader*, who said if they didn’t do anything to help Polynesians, no one would (p.225).

The party worked hard to rally support for Pacific Islanders against the stigma of racism and discrimination experienced during the 1970s. They ran homework centres from their base in Ponsonby as well as programmes informing Pacific Islanders of their legal rights as New Zealand citizens<sup>22</sup>. Despite the newsworthiness of the Party’s activities and the opportunity to reverse some of the negative Pacific Island stereotypes formed, their efforts were rarely reported on by the media and if they were headlined, it was not to the same extent to which they had received the negative coverage. It was clear to those in the Polynesian Panther Party that the exclusion of their cause and activities from the established news outlets was deliberate, simply because it would have contradicted the state’s objectives.

On the whole, while the book published by Anae, Iuli & Burgoyne (2006) helped to uncover and share the Polynesian perspective, the only

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20 This definition featured in an article on the Polynesian Panther Party published in *New Zealand Politics: A Reader* in 1975. There was no author cited.

21 Melanie Anae was a founding member of the Polynesian Panther Party and a contributing editor of *Polynesian Panthers - The Crucible Years 1971 - 1974*.

22 See Appendix C for some of the recognition the Party received for their work. While some of their work was headlined in the newspapers it was not a central focus for the media.

disappointment is that the Party's work and the feelings of those Pacific Islanders growing up in the 1970s have remained dormant for some thirty odd years.

## Conclusion

This chapter has traced the migration of Pacific Islanders to New Zealand, examining their immersion into society from both a race relations and political economy perspective. By way of a critique the key frames constructed of Pacific Islanders during this period and their origins are presented, from which two observations are made.

The first is that the anti Pacific Island attitude originated from government, specifically under Muldoon's leadership of the National Party. It was fuelled by the media which grossly misrepresented Pacific Islanders and made them outcasts in their adopted country.

The second is that any frames countering the notion of Pacific Islanders as a problem were not disseminated by the media. This resulted in biased indoctrination which ultimately influenced public opinion of this migrant group. This sought to marginalise Pacific Islanders even further.

The next chapter will briefly discuss the findings on the international discourse available on the media's coverage of minorities and contextualise this from a New Zealand perspective. From here we will examine the way in which Pacific Islanders have been depicted in mainstream newspaper and television and the reporting techniques afforded them during the 1980s and 1990s. It will show how Pacific Islanders have actively taken on new roles in both mediums and the motivators behind this.

## Chapter Two

### Beyond the controversial overstayers' campaign: the evolution of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand's mainstream media

We now live in a mass mediated cultural environment in which the mass media play a crucial and often decisive role in the enhancement or deconstruction of images of other people, places, religions and nations of the world (Kamalipour & Carilli, 1998, p.xix).

#### State of the nation

New Zealand promotes itself to an international audience "...as having a unique and dynamic culture, with European, Maori, Pacific and Asian influences...a culture that celebrates the many different lifestyles we live and the stories we have to tell" (cited on [www.newzealand.com](http://www.newzealand.com)). Its multicultural diversity is upheld as one of the many reasons to experience the country. However, beneath the façade, and perhaps ironically, it is that diversity that has also marked the country's turbulent times in the sensitive area of race relations.

British colonisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and subsequent migrations by Pacific Islanders in the twentieth century, as well as the waves of Asians and Europeans in the late twentieth century has shaped an ever diverse and growing New Zealand population. Economic and social policies continually evolved in response to both the changes in the local population and flux in the international market and business trends.

The settlement experience of New Zealand's migrants, irrespective of it being positive or not, has been heavily influenced by the way in which mainstream media has presented these groups to society. According to Browne (1996) "it is obvious that majority culture generally have neglected the place and contributions of indigenous people in and to society...it seems quite clear that the media have contributed to the perception of negative stereotypes about indigenous peoples" (p.5).

While I am aware Pacific Islanders are not indigenous to New Zealand, I believe they are in one sense of the word, 'of this land', as one of the early migrant

groups to settle in this country, and also experiencing a disproportionate share of the negative representation that Browne refers to.

In the case of the Pacific Islanders, there is little doubt the media have played a significant role in packaging them to an otherwise unsuspecting<sup>23</sup> New Zealand public. This follows Wilson and Gutierrez's (1985) depiction of the media acting as an agent in the assimilation of ethnic minorities. Riggins (1992) extends this view arguing that the media play an important position in the process of ethnicity by characterising, maintaining, or subduing ethnic identities.

Over the years, much has been documented about the way in which ethnic minorities are portrayed in mainstream media. Local and international academics (such as McGregor, 1991; hooks, 1994; Husband, 1994; Wilson and Gutierrez, 1995; McGregor and Te Awa, 1996; Abel, 1997; and Cottle, 2000) all agree that news about these groups is more often than not, negative. Morrison and Tremewan (1992) explain this is because news stories on ethnic minorities are either scarce or non-existent and seldom feature ethnic minority opinions. These understandings expand on Hartmann and Husband's (1974) classic early studies whose findings showed that the media builds negative attitudes through its failure to provide background on the coverage of minorities.

In New Zealand poor news media coverage is not exclusive to the Pacific Island community. McGregor and Comrie (1995) studied the balance in broadcast news between 1985 and 1994, taking a sample of 915 news stories<sup>24</sup> aired across TVNZ, TV3, Morning Report and Mana News, conducting a content analysis over the nine year period. Their findings showed Maori were under represented in news. McGregor and Te Awa (1996) selected some high profile stories in the news and came to a similar conclusion. They coined the absence of Maori and Pacific Islanders as news sources, 'invisibility'.

In the next part of this chapter, I will explore the way in which the print and

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23 The word unsuspecting is used because for the most part, New Zealanders had little contact with the Pacific Island migrants in the 1970s and 1980s, and the media's portrayal of them would have (rightly or wrongly), given them their first impressions of this ethnic group.

24 Of the 915 stories sampled, 39% were political stories, 25.8% related to crime and 16% were health stories. Of the 176 Maori stories, 126 were broadcast by Mana News and coded as Maori stories. Only 50 Maori stories were broadcast by the other three broadcasters taken together. Maori stories formed 19.2% of the sample.

television mediums have portrayed Pacific Islanders over the years and the general reporting techniques used. From a television perspective, the visibility of Pacific Islanders within this medium will be examined by genre. Within the analysis, a commentary on whether the role of Pacific Islanders has transformed within each medium is provided as are the motivating factors which may have brought about these changes.

### **Pacific Island representation in newspapers - the good, the bad and the ugly**

We ... accept what the map tells us, that we are a South Pacific nation (David Lange quoted in Boyd, 1990, p.295)

The legacy of the negative stereotypical depictions afforded Pacific Islanders during the 1970s continued into the 1980s. Their presence in the urban centres became a way of explaining social and economic problems (Spoonley, 1994, p.88). They were said to take jobs away from 'New Zealanders' and required close monitoring to ensure it related to demand. An opposition spokesperson on Immigration, B. Townshend opposed the entry of Pacific Islanders in early 1987 "on the grounds that their arrival would put New Zealanders on the dole" (quoted in Spoonley, 1995, p.15). Spoonley (1994) also noted there was a belief that the presence of Pacific Islanders (and Maori) lowered the property values of a residential area.

While David Lange's comment implied a united New Zealand and one accepting of its Pacific immigrants, the reality was that such a notion had yet to be realised by many journalists who continued to indoctrinate the New Zealand public with new stories that depicted Pacific Islanders as unruly citizens.

A case in point was the death of a Tongan man by Samoan youths in Otara<sup>25</sup> in 1987. The story (and stories related to the death) dominated major newspapers up to eight months after the incident<sup>26</sup>. Emotive headlines such as 'Tongan men planning attack', 'Obsessed with revenge', 'Rivalry that got out of hand' and 'Samoans searching for pride' featured in newspapers on a daily basis<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> A suburb in South Auckland.

<sup>26</sup> As noted by Finau Kolo (1990) in 'An incident in Otara - the media and Pacific Island communities'.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix D for samples of the newspaper articles published at the time.

Media commentators Finau (1995) and Kolo (1990) criticised the media's intense focus on 'disorderly' Pacific Island events and their use of ethnic labelling<sup>28</sup>, but sadly, the heightened focus on the event had begun to spin details out of control. The media made untrue claims that the incident was a race war and inferences that Pacific Island youths were gang members. In addition, the repeated association of the ethnicities of the victim and perpetrators served to sustain prejudices that Pacific Islanders were criminals and a danger to society.

It took the efforts of two journalists - a Pacific Island journalism trainee and palangi journalist, Karen Magnall, to co-write an article that helped to dispel some of the myths created by the media. However, the damage had been done as remarked by Finau (1995), who tells the story of overhearing a neighbour say to her father that all Samoans should be sent home.

This biased practice of ethnic labelling still occurs today as noted in a news article about a convicted rapist on the run from the police. The offender is named and described as '...a Pacific Islander, 180cm tall and of solid build' (cited on [www.xtramsn.co.nz](http://www.xtramsn.co.nz)).

As Gary Wilson<sup>29</sup> (2005) remarks:

The Polynesian element is at the core of who we feel we are. And so it's particularly disappointing that the media has had so much trouble coming to terms with that and has yet to find a comfortable, confident way of reflecting our Maori and Pacific words.

### Looking for a resolution

In the introduction of his book *Richer Vision: The development of ethnic minority media in Western democracies*, Husband (1994) argues for the empowerment of ethnic minority communities through their participation in mainstream media, as well as through their autonomous production of distinctive media serving specific ethnic audiences and presenting particular communities' perspectives for transmission to others.

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<sup>28</sup> Ethnic tagging (also referred to as race tagging) is a common journalism practice in news stories where the subjects are not members of the majority culture

<sup>29</sup> In a discussion paper about Maori and Pacific coverage in the New Zealand news media.

In New Zealand's situation, this is exactly what is required to counter the negative representations. The focus would be two-fold; an increase of ethnic journalists to provide balanced news coverage of the issues and in addition, increased coverage of positive Pacific Island events and contributions to New Zealand society.

Unfortunately, the ability to do this has been limited for two primary reasons. Recruitment of Pacific Island journalists is and has been for some time difficult. Lealand's original 1987 survey on New Zealand journalists highlighted a lack of ethnic diversity with less than five percent of journalists of Maori, Pacific Island or 'other' ethnic origin. Then in 1999, Siaw undertook a more limited survey in her Masters thesis. The survey had a low response rate from the news executives she canvassed. The results from a few mainstream metropolitan and provincial newspapers, national or Sunday weeklies, television and radio news organisations showed that while the make up of Maori journalists had increased to 4.5%, Pacific Island representation remained stagnant at 1%.

Lealand has since conducted two more surveys, in 1994 and 2003. Findings from his 1994 survey show an improvement in the area which McGregor and Te Awa had earlier identified as being poor, the visibility of Maori as news sources. Lealand highlights the gradual increase in Maori as news sources outside of mainstream news organisations with the growth of separate broadcast and print news operations such as *Mana News* and newspapers including *Kahungunu* and *Kia Hiwa Ra* (McGregor and Te Awa, 1996). Lealand's 2003 survey received a poor response and of those who reported their ethnicity, only 1% were of Pacific Island descent. The surveying of the journalism profession over an extended period of time, the low proportion of ethnic minorities in news organisations has been consistent and is in line with the thrust of the findings of Lealand's original survey, conducted sixteen years ago.

Secondly, as noted by Spoonley (1995), "the ownership and control of the media, whom they employ and how they function, especially the process of selecting what they publish or broadcast, reflect certain fundamental values...The media is one element in a complex economic and social structure and they, along with other institutions, are owned and directed by powerful

organisations and individuals” (p.27). In other words, media organisations are highly governed by both internal and external influences, which have a strong affect on print media content. Given this was the case in the 1970s through to the 1980s and part of the existing social environment I would argue that overturning the negative Pacific Island stereotypes was not a priority at the time.

Yet despite the seemingly entrenched negative coverage, Pacific Islanders have made breakthroughs in the print media since the 1980s. While the number of Pacific Island journalists has not increased dramatically, we are seeing a more tenured stable of Pacific Island journalists with solid experience. Names including John Utanga, Osone Okesene, Julian Slade, Foster Niumata, Innes Logan<sup>30</sup> and Tapu Misa are just a few who are challenging the stereotypical depictions of Pacific Islanders in the past, simply by working in and writing for large media organisations.

One of the biggest individual accomplishments has been Tapu Misa’s weekly column in *The New Zealand Herald*, which provides a brown perspective on issues topical amongst the Pacific Island community. In an interview with Sebastian van der Zwan (2003), Misa says she got into journalism “to conquer the mainstream media, infect it with her brownness and inform palangi New Zealand about Pacific Island people and issues”. Twenty-two years later, she says Pacific Islanders still have a long way to go to fulfil that goal with the number of Pacific Island journalists in mainstream media still not reflective of the Pacific numbers in society. Like Kolo (1990), Toft (1990), Finau (1995) and others before her, Misa says in order to provide fair, accurate and balanced coverage of Pacific issues, Pacific Islanders need to have a greater voice in mainstream media.

From an international perspective, Husband (1994) believes that in the last three decades there have been significant changes in the representation and employment of ethnic minority populations in mainstream media and those negative stereotypes created over recent years have reduced.

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30 Logan was previously a sports journalist and is now publisher and editor of the monthly *Spasifik* magazine that was nominated as one of *National Business Review*’s top 10 Pacific businesses in April 2006.



While this chapter has highlighted a relatively stagnant Pacific Island journalist recruitment process, it is worth noting that the coverage of Pacific Island events and activities is slowly changing for the better, and in spite of the limited number of Pacific journalists working in mainstream media. A case in point is the media coverage following Beatrice Faumuina's successive international wins in the track and field event of discus. Each time she won a title she was dubbed a New Zealand hero with headlines such as 'Fabulous Faumuina' (in *The Press*, 1999), 'Queen Bea's crowning moment' (in *The Waikato Times*, 2004) and 'Bea primed to conquer' (in *The Press*, 2004) frequently appearing. Coincidentally, her ethnic identity was forgotten, and her affiliation to New Zealand celebrated (unlike the news story of the Pacific Island man who was on the run from the police discussed earlier). Later in the thesis we will look at the increased visibility of Pacific Islanders in the sports domain and briefly touch on the way in which the media covers this.

### **Pacific Island representation on television - the good, the bad and the indifferent**

For the longest time, Pacific Islanders were, to use the phrase coined by McGregor and Te Awa, 'invisible' on New Zealand television screens. That was until Ramona Papali'i started fronting *See Here*, a TVNZ programme targeting ethnic minorities in the early 1980s. While the significance of this milestone has largely gone understated, I believe it to be a triumph for both the Pacific Island community and the Samoan presenter, given the way in which Pacific Islanders were being marginalised in print around the same timeframe, and the notable absence of other Pacific Islanders on television at that particular time. Describing the reaction she received, Papali'i said, "When I joined TV my family was so proud, my mother was beaming. I also got a good response from all Polynesians, suddenly we were all one" (Reweti, 1985, p.12).

When Papali'i's role on *See Here* ended in 1986, it was eventually replaced with *Tagata Pasifika*, a half hour free-to-air programme targeting Pacific Islanders and designed to cover current events from both New Zealand and the Pacific. Samoan producer Stephen Stehlin says the programme enabled Pacific Islanders to tell Pacific Island stories to Pacific Island people whilst also serving to portray

Pacific people in a positive light within their own communities, as well as amongst the wider society (Siaw, 1999).

The show's staff members all come from a variety of Pacific Island heritages. Stehlin says it is important to feature Pacific Islanders because "having PI faces on television also enables the PI audience to identify better with them" (Siaw, 1999, p. 122). Interestingly over the last 5 years the show's reporters have been in the late twenties to mid thirties age group, suggesting this is so they continue to attract the youthful Pacific island community as well as to maintain their programme ratings. The show's latest pairing of presenters is actor Robbie Magasiva and sporting hero Beatrice Faumuina.

Ironically, while the show has stood the test of time, achieving a record 19 years on TV, Stehlin acknowledges the programme has never aired during time prime television, stating this is because commercial interests will always override social objectives, "TVNZ will never risk their position in the ratings game to fulfil their social obligations in a special interest programme" (Siaw, 1999, p.126).

It is noted that in the early years of television, Pacific Islanders enjoyed 'positive' visibility through their own medium. This is largely because ultimately they had control of the content. In a broader sense, programmes such as *See Here* and *Tagata Pasifika* serve to operate as 'ethnic media' aired on mainstream television.

In many regards, mainstream television has facilitated the successful careers of several individual Pacific Islanders in a variety of programme niches and roles from as early as the 1980s. Catherine McPherson and Ole Maiava were presenters on *What Now* and *Spot On* in the early 1980s respectively. Today *What Now* is the largest and longest running children's show, and has seen other Pacific Islanders take on presenter roles such as Anthony Samuels and Jason Fa'afoi.

Following a successful career representing New Zealand in netball, Samoan April Ieremia made the transition to television in 1990 and made her mark when she

joined Television New Zealand's Network News as a sports presenter. Since then she has gone on to host her own show *April's Angels*, a community oriented programme completing projects for charity and the community and appeared in episodes of shows including *Celebrity Treasure Island* and *Top of the Class*. More recently Oscar Kightley, a Samoan who has an extensive media background having previously been a journalist and now working in television, has co-hosted several programmes including *Sportzah* and *Snatch our booty*.

### The bad and the indifferent

However, in direct contrast to this, *Crimewatch*, a weekly police programme that first aired in 1988, and lauded as a 'TV community service' used the reporting technique of ethnic labelling to describe its offenders. In its day, it was amongst the most popular of programmes on New Zealand television<sup>31</sup>. Its format was distinctive using a variety of televisual techniques including reconstructions, security videos of criminals, and mug shots throughout the programme and the audience was invited to assist the police in whatever way they could with relevant information on the crimes being depicted.

Although in my teens when the show first aired, I recall the programme because of its blatant use of photographs or mug shots of criminals constantly flashing on the screen. More importantly, I also vividly recall the programme's use of ethnic labelling in its description of offenders to the public. From this I make the observation that ethnic labelling has generally been used in newspaper reporting but in this instance, is an element which the *Crimewatch* producers chose to use for the programme. Bassett (1994) briefly mentions a much higher incidence of criminal offending amongst Maori people to illustrate the point that politics and crime are not so easily distinguishable. He hints at the forces that underlie the representation of criminal offending in the programme.

In researching information on *Crimewatch* to validate my recollections of the programme's format and the manner in which Maori and Pacific Islanders were

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31 Graeme Bassett, author of the article 'Interpreting Crimewatch: Crime as popular television' says the programme was watched by 650,000 viewers or 60% of the audience share.

depicted, I found a lack of local discourse on both the programme<sup>32</sup> and any corresponding analysis on its controversial use of ethnic labelling.

### The 'commercial' Pacific Islander

In 1990, Mark Scott<sup>33</sup> reported an absence of Pacific Islanders in television commercials in an up-front expose that showed the advertising industry's prejudices towards featuring Maori and Pacific Islanders.

Bob Harvey<sup>34</sup> of MacHarman Ayer summed up the situation:

In a country that likes to think it's multicultural, there are more dogs shown on commercials than there are Maoris and Polynesians. It is deliberate ... the view is they have no image appeal - except in association with fast food. There is a whole class of clients who would be horrified if you showed a Maori or a Polynesian in their showroom (quoted in Scott, 1990, p. 84).

Harvey's comment was an honest summation of New Zealand's television reality at the time. This was a reality that Lealand (1998) described as being influenced by the British, American and Australian television syndicates, whom in their own way, were also guilty of perpetuating racial stereotypes.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the notion of a Pacific Islander appearing in a television advertisement was inconceivable. Scott (1990) describes how advertising executives and the majority of corporate companies at the time, had insecurities about featuring ethnic minorities alongside their products and services for fear of being ostracized by their target audience, tending to operate on an exclusionary basis. Bob Harvey commented on the exclusion of ethnic minorities in television commercials:

...If you want to pretend only Pakehas live in this country, then you should fuck off to Brisbane. New Zealand is not for you. The most constant cultural image of New Zealand we get on television is from advertisements. It doesn't matter what you're watching...right through Dallas there are these little grabs, images of us. That it is an all-white image is bloody unforgivable - is that what we want to tell our young? (quoted in Scott, 1990, p.88).

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32 Other than news articles commenting on the show's tenure, funding situation and presenters.

33 Scott's article 'Whitewash: the acceptable image in television advertising' first appeared in the *New Zealand Listener* in 1988 and was reproduced in *Between the Lines - racism and the media* in 1990.

34 At the time Bob Harvey was Managing Director of MacHarman Ayer, an advertising agency that worked on the Labour Party's election campaigns in 1969, 1972, 1974 and 1984. Bob Harvey is presiding Mayor of Waitakere City.

Fortunately, this practice was not supported by the majority in the advertising world. The director of a casting agency interviewed by Scott provided an ethical perspective saying, "People should be chosen on their merits and not on the basis of their colour and, dammit, that is not happening" (p.84). Another set up a casting agency to specialise in providing 'ethnics'<sup>35</sup> but was unsuccessful in getting it off the ground because production companies were adamant they would lose their clients if they provided ethnic talent.

Ironically, if the need arose, advertising executives were not above representing Maori and Pacific Islanders, but only if it suited their 'commercial' image. On occasions where obvious Maori representation was required for instance, the choice was to go for someone who did not contradict the 'hori' stereotype that the public held of Maoris. A similar logic applied for Pacific Islanders. In areas where it was obvious Pacific Islanders were large consumers of a product, they were used in the commercial, but only within the confines of what was believed to be status quo. Scott uses a fast food example to illustrate the point. The advertisement featured the Pacific Islander waiting in the queue of a drive thru, interspersed with several frames of a white family enjoying a meal at home. Was the interchange of images between Pacific Islander and the European family required? Possibly not, but such was the nature in which Pacific Islanders first appeared on television commercials.

Sometime after this, Samasoni (1990) predicted the number of Pacific Islanders featured on television would remain static until the private sector was convinced of their commercial value and once the industry itself was ready to embrace them.

Hardware retailers Mitre 10 were the first to see beyond the non ethnic tinted glasses and took a chance using Samoan talent Jay Laga'aia as their front man. Since then, Pacific Islanders, have and are being featured in television commercials more frequently. Robbie Magasiva is the front man for the supermarket brand Pams and his brother Pua, has recently appeared on television as the lead talent fronting The Warehouse Stationery advertisements.

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<sup>35</sup> The industry term for non whites.

This growing trend of Pacific Islanders appearing on commercials validates Samasoni's earlier prediction, but more importantly, signals a change in the visibility of Pacific Islanders on mainstream television.

And while Mitre 10 led the original charge, more companies<sup>36</sup> have since jumped on the Pacific commercial bandwagon, including Lotteries Commission, Sky Television, Toyota New Zealand, The Warehouse Limited, Air New Zealand, McDonalds, Vodafone, Coca Cola, Hillary Commission and Telecom to name but a few.

Macpherson and Spoonley (2004) state the move from advertisers to incorporate ethnics into these advertisements was to reflect the growing ethnic diversity in the general population, whilst also signalling their awareness of the commercial value of these minority groups (thereby fulfilling Samasoni's earlier prediction). In acknowledgement of the country's diversity, media and advertising agencies in conjunction with the government created a series of television advertisements called 'We're all New Zealanders', which sought to challenge some common ethnic stereotypes and to promote ethnic awareness and tolerance (Macpherson and Spoonley, 2004).

This is a significant leap and one that has taken effect relatively quickly, given that up until the early 1990s the notion of Pacific Islanders (and Maori talent for that matter) featuring in television commercials was unheard of. In many regards, one could argue the so-called browning of TV advertising has heralded the early commercialisation of Pacific Islanders in popular culture. And it is not hard to see why. Sports stars or local music groups with sponsorship packages or affiliations are appearing in company advertisements either as branding or promotional devices to sell or reinforce specific products.

Jonah Lomu in his hey day featured in a McDonalds advertisement promoting the Mega Feast burger and in more recent years, the All Blacks have appeared in

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36 Information sourced from Nielsen Media Research shows companies including New Zealand Woman's Day, Children Young Persons and their Family agency, Statistics New Zealand, Sport Recreation and New Zealand and TVNZ's TV2 had commercials featuring Pacific Islanders which aired between 1997 - 2006.

Ford advertisements while franchise Super 12 rugby players have appeared in promotional advertisements for Air New Zealand.

However, Pacific broadcaster Sefita Hao'uli has a different perspective, saying as recently as 2002, that if the government did not allocate portions of advertising campaigns such as for ACC, to target Pacific people, the all-important media buyers and advertising agencies would not involve themselves at all. In affect Hao'uli suggests that state sector advertising has led the browning trend.

Hao'uli (2002) remarks:

Sure, the brown faces are there but also there is the sense that some corporates know that the brown market is significant for them but will not go out of their way to visually identify with this sector because it may weaken the brand overall. They fear there might be a mainstream attitude that the 'browning' of a product may not enhance its appeal in other markets (cited in Wong, 2002, p.5).

I reserve comment on this as I am unable to validate if this is actually the case. To back up its questionability I note there is no evidence of this in the discourse reviewed.

Earl (2005), in her discussion paper, argues the opposite to this (and I would agree based on my own research of secondary sources conducted thus far). Earl notes the commodification of Polynesian youth identity in television advertising by powerful brands such as Coca Cola, G-Force and Vodafone, but contends it is merely a ruse, to tap into a popular ideological shift towards multiculturalism, without disrupting the dominant ideology of white, middle-class from which advertising is derived.

She states:

Advertising's multicultural ethnic is particularly popular in the broadcasting environment because it functions as an agreeable, catchall marketing solution for a nation that seems fatigued by the ongoing political tensions between Maori and Pakeha.

## The quantum leap into prime time television

I contend that the launching pad for Pacific Islanders into prime time television came in 1988 when the Labour government deregulated the broadcasting industry. This saw the creation of New Zealand on Air (NZOA), whose mandate was to distribute funds to both public service sector and private agencies whose programmes reflected and developed local culture and identity. Horrocks (2004, p. 31) said one of NZOA's advantages was that it "...was New Zealand's first single-minded advocate for local content".

Following the change in government in 1999, the new Labour-led government attempted to revitalise public service broadcasting, making some sweeping changes. In 2001 it changed the status of TVNZ from a State Owned Enterprise (SOE) to a Crown Owned Company (CROC). For TVNZ this meant that while they were expected to pursue advertising revenue and make a profit, this was to be balanced with service to the community. In addition, the government also announced a Charter which the broadcaster was requested to operate in accordance with. This included the intent to provide quality television that educated, informed and entertained through local home grown programming.

For Pacific Islanders, it provided more opportunities to not only appear in local programmes but also have their culture interwoven into story lines. Production companies were challenged to take a hard look at their programming content to ensure it reflected New Zealand, and take note of the emerging Pacific Island talent.

Take the example of one of the deregulated industry's first local productions, *Shortland Street*. Described by Moran (1996) as a 'public service soap opera', the programme was said to represent a 'Pacific' New Zealand covering a range of topical social issues and featuring real characters from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Jason Daniel, a writer for the programme in its early days highlights the focus spent on getting the cultural diversity of New Zealand society right from the start:



We had to learn very quickly about the position of the Maoris and the Polynesian problems, the different Polynesians. How the Samoans and the Tongans related to each other and those kinds of things in order to produce the kind of drama that we wanted....Some of our scripts had passages translated into Samoan. And we would have Samoan characters say them (Moran, 1996, p.177).

Rene Naufahu was one of *Shortland Street*'s Pacific Island pioneers but over the programme's impressive 14-year history, others have followed suit including Elizabeth Skeen and Pua Magasiva. Today, *Shortland Street* is a television institution.

From then on in, brown faces on television soon became the norm with several other local drama series' following suit. *Street Legal* which aired in 1998 was a crowning moment for Pacific Island acting, as New Zealand's first ever drama series that featured a Pacific Islander as the lead character. Jay Laga'aia played the character David Silesi for five years, and received plaudits from the industry with a Best Actor nomination in 2002 and winning the Best Actor award in 2003. Not long after, *The Strip* appeared on our television screens featuring Samoan actors Robbie Magasiva who played a stripper and comedian David Fane as a barman. Another series entitled *The Market* has also made it to the screens, and unlike its predecessors, was written by, starred in and directed by Pacific Islanders. The latest production which featured a new and younger breed of Pacific Island actors is *Kareoke High*, which has recently aired on TV2.

Pacific Island humour has also featured on television. Comedies including *Milburn Place* and *Skitz* which have largely Pacific casts use a Samoan family as a vehicle to satirise a range of common cultural experiences. Since then this type of satirical humour has been expanded on with the popular animated comedy *bro' Town*<sup>37</sup> which will be discussed in depth in chapter four of this thesis.

## Conclusion

Since the 1970s we have seen a gradual shift in the representation and visibility of Pacific Islanders in both mainstream print and television. While this is in part

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<sup>37</sup> There is variation in the way bro'Town is spelt in the literature reviewed on this series. For the sake of consistency, the spelling used in this thesis has been taken from the DVD cover of the series'.

due to individuals taking on more positive roles, this has been driven by several external factors which have facilitated wider opportunities for Pacific Islanders to be more active participants in New Zealand society.

From a print perspective, Pacific progress in terms of infiltrating the news room has not advanced as much as its television counterpart. Pacific journalists are still disproportionately underrepresented, given our growing numbers in society and there are still calls from Pacific Island ministerial representatives and journalists themselves, for improved balance and context in recording on Pacific Island issues and news. As noted by one Fijian journalist “Pacific Islanders are only in the news when they have scored a try or robbed a diary” (cited in McGhee, 2005).

It’s a valid point because ironically, despite the limited number of Pacific Island journalists in mainstream media, there has been a marked increase in the reporting of the success of Pacific Islanders in a diverse range of disciplines. The comment made by the Fijian journalist also highlights another element; the common way in which some journalists have reported on Pacific Islanders - pigeon holing them into two extremes - a successful sportsman or a criminal.

Without a doubt, New Zealand is enjoying the greatest diversity ever represented on television. We have seen the television industry drive far greater changes in its representation of Pacific Islanders than print, and traced the manner in which Pacific Islanders have gone from, for the most part being invisible, or ethnically labelled to being more positive and visible across several television genres.

It was only sixteen years ago when advertisers had little interest in featuring Pacific Islanders alongside their products, this has since changed with an extensive list of companies, using talented high-profile Pacific people to market their goods. In amongst this we have seen the emergence of a more marketable Pacific Islander, case studies that will be discussed in more detail within a sporting and arts context in chapter four of this thesis.

Similarly, New Zealand television post deregulation has been the key factor for a burgeoning Pacific Island identity. As a result, we have witnessed an emerging presence of Polynesian productions pumping out new series programmes for local networks.

In discussions to date there has been an undercurrent of a Pacific identity that has driven Pacific Islanders to achieve in both mediums. In the next chapter, identity as a theory will be discussed as well as its impact on society and its significance in driving the emergence of Pacific Islanders becoming more commercialised.

## Chapter Three

### Unbundling the Pacific identity to reveal the seeds of commercialisation

I'm a New Zealander with Samoan parents. I think that's how I'd like to be known. I'll never forget my culture, or my parents' background, and I am proud of all of that. I'll never forget the Samoan part of me, but I was born in New Zealand, and I'm a New Zealander first and foremost (Tana Umaga quoted in Ward and En-Yi Lin, 2005, p.159).

The influence of Pacific peoples has grown in significance in the 1990s, and is now obvious in certain areas of public domain, and painfully absent in others (Macpherson 2001). While later in the thesis, we look at two of the domains in which Pacific Islanders have accelerated in, this chapter will discuss the construction of a reinvigorated Pacific identity and its effects on the influence Pacific people now exercise in today's society. Within the course of this, this chapter will also show how this re-engineered identity has become the 'seeds of commercialisation' for Pacific Islanders. In addition, we will also explore the media's embrace of 'Pacifinness' and its role in projecting Pacific Islanders into what is today's popular culture.

It is important to reinforce again that the media in this context, is mainstream media, as opposed to Pacific Island ethnic mediums such as *Pasefika*<sup>38</sup> and *Samoana*. It is acknowledged that ethnic media have and will continue to embrace Pacifinness and celebrate their people's achievements. It is mainstream media who in the last decade, have started to do this on a more regular and extensive basis, and is the focus of this thesis.

#### An academic perspective

I am a Samoan – but not a Samoan  
To my aiga in Samoa, I am a Palagi<sup>39</sup>  
I am a New Zealander – but not a New Zealander  
To New Zealanders, I am a bloody coconut, at worst,

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38 This Pacific Island pride is witnessed in the first editorial of *Pasefika*, a monthly Pacific Island magazine: "When the Pacific Island people have rejoiced, they have celebrated without a media presence, when they are sad it has been at the centre of the public eye. The New Zealand news media is a beast the Pacific Island people cannot relate to, cannot understand and, most of all, cannot trust. It is for these reasons that we as Pacific Island people living in New Zealand must create our own media. We must bask in the glories of our children's achievements, we must celebrate the success of our brothers and sisters, and we must come together in times of sadness and be united".

39 In this context palagi refers to a Samoan born outside of Samoa e.g. New Zealand born Samoan for instance.

A Pacific Islander, at best,  
To my Samoan parents, I am their child

(Anae, 1998)<sup>40</sup>

Anthropologist Melani Anae<sup>41</sup> (2001) asserts 'ethnic identity' is a journey that individuals make during their lifetime to which they often identify as many things. Of this, she says:

At some point in the journey, the 'travellers' acquire a distinctive 'secured identity' which differs both from that of their parents and from those of their hosts. The identity journey ends for some not with a loss of Pacific identity, but with a new form of Pacific identity based on the 'island' identities of their parents (p.99).

From this, she makes the valid observation that many of those who have succeeded (to which I add within New Zealand's popular culture) have not done so at the cost of their affiliation and commitment to the Pacific communities into which they were born.

This goes to the crux of this thesis and I contend this deep-rooted affinity is what is now appealing to New Zealanders, and to a degree, is what has become the vogue. This is evident in the successes of Pacific events such as the Pasifika Festival and Westfield's Style Pasifika Fashion Show that will be touched on in this chapter and bro'Town, discussed later in this thesis.

In reviewing the literature on identity, there are common themes inherent in the discourse. The first is the consensus that Pacific identity is a polarised topic of discussion. In contrast to Anae (2001), Bedford and Didham (2001) argue "the issue of ethnic identification of populations in New Zealand is complicated by the fact that ethnicity for any individual is a product of self-identification which may be independent of ancestry or nationality" (p.22). They continue this line of thought stating "ethnicity is not fixed throughout a person's life - it can change at any time and an individual may identify equally, or to differing degrees, with several ethnicities" (p.22).

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40 Tiatia (1998) also highlighted the identity confusion some New Zealand born Pacific Islanders felt in her Masters thesis *Caught Between Cultures: A New Zealand born Pacific Island perspective*.

41 I have deliberately stated Anae's profession because when she was quoted in Chapter one, the context then, was as a founding member of the Polynesian Panther Party.

I accept the perspective that significant ethnic identity is socially ascribed and I find it foreign that the construct of one's identity may be formed in isolation of their ancestry or nationality. Certainly, in my situation my heritage plays a fundamental role in my life, and is from which I draw a deep sense of pride.

Macpherson (1996) on the other hand offers a differing perspective claiming the notion of a united Pacific identity is a misnomer. This is largely driven by the fact that no common language or culture exists within the wider Pacific community. This according to Macpherson is a result of Pacific Islanders themselves feeling no natural allegiance to a larger Pacific Island entity and more than a little resentment at the combining of their individual national identities and interests. Macpherson (1996) discusses the term Pacific Islander:

... For many 'Pacific Islander' became a somewhat derogatory term foisted on them by non-Pacific Islanders which collapsed their histories and cultures and which had to be accepted reluctantly from time to time as a necessary step to accessing government resources (p.129).

Another common element agreed by all is the fact that one's identity is an evolutionary journey that will change over time. In addition, there is acknowledgement of a series of factors that either make up an identity or may stimulate change. Academics including Macpherson (1996), Bedford and Didham (2001), Anae (2001) and journalist Gilbert Wong<sup>42</sup> (2002) delineate that such factors have an important role. While the factors they outline differ amongst them, there is collective agreement these have contributed to the burgeoning identity inherent in the attitude and 'craft'<sup>43</sup> of today's Pacific Islanders.

According to Macpherson (1996), the sharing of experiences such as cultural beliefs and values, religion and extended kinship contribute to an identity. I agree these are significant elements in Pacific identity. Recent events experienced by Pacific people in their adopted homeland, such as their

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<sup>42</sup> Gilbert Wong is a columnist for *Metro* and his article 'Pride of the Pacific' looked at the Pacific community in New Zealand, their estimated population and ethnic identity issues.

<sup>43</sup> In this context craft describes one's profession.

subjection to dawn raids, and resistance to such unfair treatment through participation in the Polynesian Panther Party and Amnesty Aroha movements all play a part in shaping a New Zealand Pacific identity. Thus depending on the timeframe within which one is born, the sharing of these experiences will evolve. For example, the second and third generation's experience of Westernised education may contribute to their identity, as might, returning to their parents or grandparents' homelands for the first time.

Bedford, Macpherson and Spoonley (1999) discuss this in their paper, 'Pacific Communities in the Information Age' stating:

For the generation born here change is tempered by influence of their parents and their parents' commitment to a worldview and lifestyle forged in the islands...In the second generation born here this influence will be less pronounced because it will be associated with their grandparents. The third generation...may grow up without contacts with people who were born and raised in the islands who were committed to and familiar with the island worldview and lifestyle...Following this line of argument, it is clear that what it means to be an islander...will continue to change in the next millennium. The sorts of things that they will want and expect may shift in some important respects. This shift is neither good nor bad but rather is inevitable. Cultures have always changed and always will. All that is happening is that the process may accelerate as a consequence of living in a cosmopolitan society in which change occurs rapidly (p.9).

Macpherson (1996) and Anae (2001) and more recently Macpherson (2004) contend there are other factors which might accelerate change in one's identity. The increase in New Zealand born Pacific Islanders is one. As a result a large number of young Pacific Islanders are being educated and raised here, giving them access to far more options and personal networks than their parents' or grandparents ever had.

Intermarriage between Pacific Islanders and other ethnic groups is another. Anae suggests ethnic intermarriages will increase however I suspect this will occur more so in the future generations of New Zealand born Pacific Islanders<sup>44</sup>. Its significance lies in the fact that marriage outside of one's ethnic culture ultimately blurs ethnic group boundaries, sometimes requiring individuals to make a conscious decision on which ethnic identity (if any or both) they will adopt.

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<sup>44</sup> My observation is based on the ethnic make up of my own extended family.

Loss of language due to weak affiliations to parents' homelands is another factor which Bedford, Macpherson and Spoonley (1999) say can result in individuals opting out of cultural rituals. I suggest the term ritual is a vague one and requires further definition given its loose context and room for interpretation. To illustrate the point, one person's cultural rituals could involve opting out of going to church or refraining from contributing money to family fa'alavelaves.

The last factor is the upward social mobility of Pacific Islanders (to which one would ask has this been at the expense of their ethnicity?). I believe this is an interesting dynamic, particularly for New Zealand born Pacific Islanders, who at some point in their life must distinguish how their identity can assist them in achieving their aspirations, and if this identity must be compromised in order to succeed. In the same token, I feel this is not a negative element. A casual observation of Pacific Islanders who have succeeded in New Zealand, suggests the dispensing of their culture and or cultural values to move up the professional ranks has not been an issue for them.

Take the example of Samoan Keven Mealamu, All Black hooker and Auckland Blues player. Despite his elevated status as a professional rugby player, he retains a strong sense of duty and service, (two traits deemed to be common Pacific Island values) as a volunteer speaker for the Help Stop Violence at Home programme (see Perrott, 2006).

Gilbert Wong (2002) says this upward mobility is occurring across all fields and ultimately pushing the Pacific community into the ranks of middle class. This is also highlighted on the *Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand website*, "...the community forged by the migrant settlers has evolved into a Pacific Island middle class that has brought a unique Pacific influence to New Zealand culture".

In an interview with Wong, Samoan-Scottish playwright Victor Rodger called these achievers the "brownie bourgeoisie; pacific people with skills, money and increasing clout" (cited in Wong, 2002, p.5).



Wong (2002) sums up the visible output of this Pacific identity in the achievements of Pacific Islanders':

Heritage, identity - and class. All that first-generational migrant drive for children to make the most of education has resulted in the police officers, nurses, teachers, bank managers, lawyers and doctors...Some have attained the higher reaches of society....but there's enough of a critical mass that professional associations have sprung up...Pacific people forming a new identity a few hours by 747 from their home islands. New Zealand is close enough to the springs of Pacific culture for those living here to be refreshed and constantly renewed whatever they choose to call themselves. And, wherever in terms of class, they end up.

Interestingly in the eight years since the publication of Macpherson's (1996) essay 'Pacific Islands identity and community', his perspective has changed and now meets my reservations of his earlier work. His recent discussions on Pacific identity outline the factors which he once concluded prevented the emergence of a unified Pacific Islands community. These are the changing status of language and culture, the emergence of internal social class structures and the shifting patterns of religious affiliation. He speculates these will in fact play a significant role in the future shaping of collective and individual identity within the Pacific community (Macpherson, 2004). Macpherson's revised position demonstrates the highly changing nature of the identity paradigm but also acknowledges his scholarly aptitude to alter his academic opinion.

Given the resurgence of Pacific identity in recent years, it begs the question - would this Pacificness have been embraced had it occurred earlier? I believe the answer to this is no, and that the nation had to go through its race relation issues of the 1970s and 1980s in order to embrace and make the most of its Pacificness today.

### **The seeds of commercialisation**

So what is it about this identity that has mass appeal? Firstly, its foundation is derived from life (changing) experiences and over recent years, its appeal has been in its urbanisation and fit across a broad audience spectrum (the diverse audiences that attend the Pasifika Festival and Westfield Style Fashion show are testament to this). It is also acknowledged that the construction of

identity at an individual level make it an accessible entity for all, including non Pacific Islanders. Furthermore, its fluidity means it can evolve for each new generation. This in many regards gives it its street credibility and holds significant commercial appeal.

Nathaniel Lees, a pioneer Samoan actor, sees Pacificness as undergoing a deconstruction, "...the old beliefs and structures are being taken apart and put together again. The younger ones know they can express themselves", (quoted in Wong, 2006, p.3).

Husband (1994) describes how ethnicity can be a commercial commodity yet retain its authenticity:

Ethnic creativity is highly saleable in contained, economically colonized, cultural markets. Realistically these crossover points of cultural production with majority/minority audiences must be occupied by ethnic minority artists, some proportion of whom will retain a capacity to protect their own personal and ethnic integrity through their work, as indeed, many do (p.15).

This commoditisation is noted in the music of many Polynesian rap and hip-hop artists whose Pacific identities form an integral part of their image, ideology and lyrics. Artists including Dei Hamo, King Kapisi, Scribe and Che Fu all pride themselves on being from a variety of Polynesian backgrounds and representing an urban Pasifika flavour with their raps embracing politically charged messages about 'keeping your culture', nuclear testing and immigration issues (Zemke-White, 2001). All have enjoyed Australasian chart successes and been able to make a name and living in what is a difficult industry.

In the case of King Kapisi<sup>45</sup>, he can now add fashion designer to his list of credits, having diversified his portfolio in 2002 to start his own clothing label, Overstayer Clothing. His label is now available in Farmers Trading Stores nationwide and is the first local urban street label to have done so.

Pacific Islanders are also succeeding in other industries. Recently we have seen what Wong has coined as 'the rise of Pollywood' in New Zealand cinema.

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<sup>45</sup> Whose real name is Bill Urale.

It is a hat trick in every sense of the word, with recent film releases *Whale Rider*, *No. 2* and *Sione's Wedding* featuring almost entirely brown casts. The last two films were also set in urban Auckland and steeped in island culture familiar to Pacific communities, yet also appealing to non Pacific people through its comedy and visual display of cultural life. It is essentially Pacific Islanders telling their own story rather than it being told for them and as Wong suggests, a defining cultural moment.

Lee (who has the rare distinction of appearing in both *No. 2* and *Sione's Wedding*) believes this has been a long time coming, "I believe this is long overdue. It feels like we have reached a point where we are confident. The writers are coming through and the funding bodies are aware enough of what's going on to make films about the colour of who we are" (quoted in Wong, 2006, p.2).

This renewed identity has also manifested itself in other ways. Macpherson (1996) notes its celebration in events such as the annual Pasifika Festival<sup>46</sup> and Westfield Style Pasifika Fashion Show. I believe its infiltration into mainstream has commoditised these events, offering a level of commercialism that has spread into several sub areas.

Take the cultural celebration that is the Pasifika Festival. Each year villages representing the Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Niuean, Cook Island, Tokelaun, Kiribatian, Tuvaluan and Tahitian cultures are set up and filled to the brim with entrepreneurial Pacific Islanders selling arts & crafts, Island wares and food. For them it is a one-day money making venture to capitalise on the massive crowds recorded to be in excess of 200,000<sup>47</sup>. For Auckland City Council, one of the main organising and funding bodies, it represents the opportunity to establish long-term relationships with corporate companies willing to sponsor several prime event commercial properties such as festival and stage naming rights, resting areas and the like. For the corporate sponsor, it provides a mixture of opportunities - fulfilment of corporate social

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<sup>46</sup> An annual festival that promotes the celebration of Auckland's Pacific cultures held at Western Springs.

<sup>47</sup> This figure was quoted on the Auckland City Council website as being the number of attendees at the festival.

responsibilities, brand and product awareness and immeasurable exposure in front of a target audience with affiliations to their brand.

Samasoni earlier predicted that in the end it would come down to a numbers game, that once the Pacific Island population expanded, a change in commercial targeting would also take affect. The population has indeed grown. The 2006 census revealed those identifying themselves as being Pacific had the second largest increase from the 2001 census, up 14.7% to 265, 974 (cited on [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)). More so, Pacific islanders are city dwellers, with 67% living in Auckland, 13% in Wellington and 4% in Waikato and Christchurch respectively.

Earl's (2005) paper on the commodification of Polynesian youth identity in television advertising bears this out, noting Maori and Pacific island youth are the 'it kids' in the endorsement of brand identity. According to Earl, brands such as Coca Cola, G Force and Vodafone (to name just a few) use Polynesian youth to extend the market appeal of their brand. However, she argues these companies have cashed in on the mainstream appeal of Polynesians to tap into popular ideologies and promote a (superficial) sense of multiculturalism in New Zealand.

Earl contends the high profile success of various Pacific music artists, top level sports people and the overwhelmingly positive discourse that has emerged from the media following this was deliberate to counter the widespread criticism given the media during the 1980s and 1990s for their focus on the overrepresentation of Polynesian youth in crime statistics and as welfare recipients.

In her analysis of Coca Cola's use of hip hop group Nesian Mystik in their television branding campaign, Earl mentions that the group's cross cultural appeal was a key attraction to the Coca Cola executives. She goes on to say that the representation of Polynesian youth identity in the commercial offers a one-sided perspective about the ethnic relations in New Zealand and notes how this corporate company is happy to put this to one side so as not to blemish the brand's appeal to a mainstream audience.

## The influence of the media

...Back then, people thought Maori and Pacific Islanders were the same. Nor did the Pacific Island community have the confidence, but today they are confident and visible. The most familiar example is sport. Show me a Super 14 team that doesn't have the Polynesian stars. Now we have reached the stage where people don't say, 'Oh, there's the Polynesian boys', now they say, our boys', (John Barnett quoted in Wong, 2006, p.4)

When we deconstruct this comment made by John Barnett, head of South Pacific Pictures, I suggest to you that there are several elements which highlight the involvement and influence of the media.

Firstly, let's look at the notion that Maori and Pacific Islanders are the same. Earlier discussions have shown this to be a symptom of the way the media report on these ethnic groups over the last thirty years, let alone the last ten as mentioned by Barnett. The lack of confidence mentioned can also be linked back to the representation of this group by the media. Given the negative news coverage of the early years, it is not difficult to see how this would have affected confidence levels. In Barnett's last sentence, he notes the transition in the use of 'Polynesian' to our 'boys'. As noted in chapter two the news coverage of Pacific Islanders has evolved to the extent where successful Pacific people are generally embraced as New Zealanders, a frequent reporting style that has become synonymous in the coverage of Pacific Island sports people. While of Samoan descent, Beatrice Faumuina, in the eyes of and as reported by mainstream media is a 'New Zealander' and as noted in Barnett's statement, the use of the ethnic identifier 'Polynesian' is dropped and replaced with 'our'.

Has the media played a role in the induction of this new Pacific identity into society? Today's media coverage of Pacific events and successes suggest this to be the case and that they do so by popularising both the subject and the existence of this identity.

Grant Smithies (2006) writing on the music group Nesian Mystiks in the *Sunday Star Times* illustrates this point. Appearing in the entertainment section of the newspaper, his article is given prominence (within a newspaper context)

placed on the right hand side page and taking up three quarters of it. This includes a photograph of the group.

Smithies talks about the group's second album and their intention to take their music internationally, whilst providing readers with personal insights into the group. The language used throughout is descriptive and colourful and hints at the Pacificness. This begins as early as the second paragraph stating:

I walk inside and into a kitchen that seems full of off-duty bro'Town characters. Around the table sit two Maoris, a Tongan, a Samoan and two Cook Islanders, all in their early 20s. I am the sole pale Palagi, adrift in a sea of chocolate brown.

Then later he mentions the growing influence of Polynesian music and the success it is achieving:

Listen to this band's 2002 debut album, *Polyunsaturated*, and its easy to see why it sold by the truckload. It's pop music with soul, hip-hop with a heart, with universal lyrics - family, friends, [and] good times - and a sound as warm and weightless as a summer dip in the Pacific.

It's a sound that captivated New Zealand back then, but 2002/2003 was a great time for Maori and Polynesian music in general. Bic Runga, Che Fu, Scribe and Trinity Roots all featured alongside Nesian Mystik at the 2003 NZ Music Awards (the Tuis), fuelling speculation that the next great leap forward for New Zealand music might be triggered by urban Polynesian music. The theory was that our Polynesian acts had something fresh and distinctive to offer an international audience while our more generic rock bands did not.

Gilroy (1996) remarks that identity is managed and administered in the mass communicated culture industries (for example television, the print media and popular music) transforming the individuals within it. It is a relevant point given the example just highlighted and the manner with which we have seen Pacific Islanders assimilated into New Zealand society through the media.

## Conclusion

Without doubt, the profile of Pacific Islanders has undergone a radical transformation in today's society. This has by and large been driven by two core factors - the emergence of a Pacific identity and the adoption of this identity by the media and its influence on popularising Pacific culture.

While the construct of this identity is complex (and variable depending on the individual's circumstances), it has in recent years become much more celebrated and in line with this has evolved into something quite commercial, given activities such as the Pasifika Festival and the increase of music groups (and individuals) with Pacific origins espousing their identity within their lyrics and making a name for themselves both locally and internationally.

While contention<sup>48</sup> around the media's efforts to report on Pacific events and issues still exists, we are seeing a softening in the harsh representation of Pacific Islanders from the past which has moved into the media and society as witnessed by the embracing of Pacific achievements and contributions as wins for the country. The repercussions of this are a more blended perspective of New Zealand's cultural make up.

In chapter four we will explore the increased visibility of Pacific Islanders in the New Zealand way of life, with specific focus on two domains. The first will examine the success of Jonah Lomu as a case study for sports and the factors behind him becoming a highly marketable product. The second will look at the success of *bro'Town* in the arts domain, discussing how its unique programme formula and innovative marketing strategy have made it a successful commercial venture.

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48 Most recently, Mark Goshe was quoted in the September issue of *Te Waha Nui* as saying "a major shake-up of New Zealand media content was needed if it was to remain relevant". In her opening address at the Pacific Island Media Association (PIMA) conference in September 2006, Associate Minister of Pacific Island Affairs Luamanuvao Winnie Label said "today some media do not present a balanced mix of headlines, news and in-depth coverage of events".

## Chapter Four

### The business of being brown

We are doing well, we're not shouting about it. There are successful [Pacific Island] faces in New Zealand, faces white New Zealand won't always be able to ignore. These are the faces that will silence the generations, and yes, the racism (quoted in Samasoni, 1990, p.134).

Pacific Islanders are becoming more visible, more celebrated and increasingly popularised in today's society. Teaiwa and Mallon (2005) describe this as "an efflorescence of things Pacific in the social and cultural life of New Zealand" (p. 210). Anae (2004) aptly refers to it as the 'browning' of this nation. I suggest this efflorescence or browning signals a general acceptance of Pacific Islanders by the majority of New Zealanders.

This browning however, has highlighted a discrepancy. Anae (2001) and Teaiwa and Mallon (2005) note that the reporting of Pacific success is generally confined to specific domains, more often than not, sports, the arts and entertainment with other sectors such as business, education and telecommunications going largely unnoticed. This is in line with Spoonley's observation discussed earlier, stating the absence of Pacific Islanders in some domains.

Teaiwa and Mallon (2005) offer a simple explanation; the celebration is confined to these areas because this is where New Zealand celebrates its success. I contend this is also where notions of strong national identity and pride exist, hence the heightened focus by the media.

While Pacific Islanders have and are succeeding in New Zealand, this chapter will argue their increased visibility is the result of several factors. While the media play a role, I believe other factors, which vary depending on the individual and/or situation, also come in to affect thereby contributing to a more positive image of Pacific Islanders being presented. The spin offs of this are a more commoditised Pacific group.



This chapter will examine the case studies of two Pacific Island successes; one in the domain of sport, the other in arts to validate my observation<sup>49</sup>. Each case study will begin with a brief introduction of the field in discussion, conduct a literature review (if applicable) to show the significance of that domain within a New Zealand context and proceed to show how the fields in which these Pacific Islanders have excelled in have become more commercialised.

### **New Zealanders and their affinity to sport - a brief overview**

Kiwis are sports mad. Whether they're actively involved in a sport, individual or team based, or avid spectators, of local or national teams, it is and has become an entrenched part of New Zealand's culture and is attributed to playing an important part in shaping New Zealand's identity.

Statistics from Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC)<sup>50</sup> show almost all New Zealand adults (98% or around 2.67 million) enjoy some sport and active leisure over the year and that participation rates over a year in sport and active leisure are equally high for all New Zealanders including Maori, European, Pacific Islanders and people from other ethnic groups. Similarly, almost all young people<sup>51</sup> (92% or 669,000) take part in some sport and active leisure over the year.

The importance of sport to the nation is also reflected in the time and space devoted to it by the mass media (Te'evale, 2001), and in the last decade or so this has been added to with an increasing amount of discourse now available; ranging from the impact of sports on national identities, analysis on sports as a social phenomenon, sports biographies and autobiographies, tributes to sports people, the theories attributed to the success of athletes, souvenir signings and photographic histories of past New Zealand 'greats'<sup>52</sup>, sports as an avenue of social mobility for Pacific Islanders and the growing Pacific

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49 These case studies were chosen because they reflected the way in which Pacific Islanders have become commercialized but from differing angles.

50 The statistics were sourced from the SPARC website, [www.sparc.org.nz](http://www.sparc.org.nz) and based on the findings of their 1997 - 2001 New Zealand Sport and Physical Activity survey.

51 Those aged between 5-17 years.

52 In a wide range of sporting disciplines including the All Blacks, The Commonwealth Medallists et al.

influence and presence in New Zealand sport (which will be explored later in this chapter). To reinforce how serious the nation takes sport, you need only look at the broad range of sporting bodies<sup>53</sup> set up to govern and support athletes in their respective fields.

### The browning of New Zealand sport

Pacific Island representation in New Zealand's sporting culture and performance has grown in prominence over the years. In a documentary (called *Brown Factor*) that looks at the browning of New Zealand's professional codes, presenter Tuipoloa Evan Charlton identifies sport as having the power to influence race relations and create a sense of nationhood.

An interview with former All Black turned academic Chris Laidlaw reinforces his point, with Laidlaw stating "the browning of New Zealand sport has generated, deepened and broadened relationships and promoted a better understanding of the other guy" (quoted in the *Brown Factor* documentary, 2004). Lawyer and author<sup>54</sup> Kahungunu Barron-Afeaki backs this up, suggesting sport, particularly professional sport, has single handedly broken down racial barriers (quoted in the *Brown Factor* documentary).

The first recorded Pacific Islanders to play for the All Blacks were Frank and Dave Solomon in the 1930s (Teaiwa and Mallon, 2005). While there was a lull for several decades, Pacific sportspersons soon began appearing in New Zealand's national teams in short succession starting with Bryan Williams' selection into the All Blacks in the 1970s and Margharet Matenga and Rita Fatialofa's selection into the Silver Ferns in the 1980s.

Since then the Pacific Island contribution and visibility in New Zealand's sport has surged. There has been a steady flow of Pacific Island All Blacks over the

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53 Hundreds of organisations exist throughout New Zealand that operate at a regional and national level including SPARC, Athletics New Zealand, Counties Manukau Sport, Sports Foundation, New Zealand Netball Association, New Zealand Rugby Football Union, New Zealand Cricket Association et al.

54 In his book *Extreme Sport Race - The Polynesian*, Barron-Afeaki argues Polynesians are physically gifted and primed for professional sport due to their physical characteristics as claimed by former Professor Philip Houghton.

years including Joe Stanley, Michael Jones, Va'aiga Tuigamala, Olo Brown, Frank Bunce, Jonah Lomu, Pita Alatini, Keven Mealamu, Jerry Collins and Rodney So'oialo to name a few.

Not to be outdone there has also been a constant representation of Pacific Island women in the Silver Ferns, with players including Ana No'ovao, Bernice Mene, Linda Vagana, Vilimena Davu, Sheryl Clark and newest addition Maria Tutaia gracing the courts. There have also been representatives in the rugby league code from Fred Ah Kuoi, Kevin Iro, Duane Mann, Se'e Solomona to Joe and Nigel Vagana, Ali Lauitiitii and Reuben Wiki. As well the achievers in other sporting codes include David Tua who has fought at an international boxing level and Black Caps' Murphy Su'a and Ross Taylor. While this is by no means an exhaustive list it shows the extent to which Pacific Islanders have made themselves known in New Zealand sport.

Individual Pacific people have also achieved some major sporting coups in their careers. In 1997 Beatrice Faumuina won the discus world champion title, in 2000 David Tua was a contender for the heavyweight world boxing title, in 2004 Tana Umaga became the first Samoan All Black captain<sup>55</sup> and last year Valerie Vili won the shot put world champion title.

Interestingly<sup>56</sup>, on achieving national representation for their country, I note several Pacific athletes' highlight the dual loyalties and identities<sup>57</sup> they experience. Spoonley (2001) references this also in describing Jonah Lomu's status. Former Silver Fern Rita Fatiafola summarises this saying:

You play for New Zealand but you're not exactly a Kiwi because you're Samoan, and you're not entirely Samoan because you're born here. So I say, I'm a New Zealander, but I am also very proud to be Samoan (quoted in Hyde, 1993, p.67).

In the *Brown Factor* Bryan Williams shares a similar but slightly different sentiment noting how he tried to be a kiwi rather than a Rarotongan or Samoan which was his background.

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<sup>55</sup> His appointment was hailed by the Human Rights Commission as an achievement in New Zealand race relations as cited in the *Brown Factor* documentary.

<sup>56</sup> While this finding is a by-product of this thesis discussion, I mention it because it is a sentiment expressed by Tana Umaga and one that I have observed has become a dilemma for some Pacific Island athletes in the literature reviewed to date.

<sup>57</sup> As embodied in Tana Umaga's quotation in chapter three.

While I believe the Pacific Island flair for sport and their subsequent successes have helped ease their transition into New Zealand society, Te'evale (2004) is more cynical suggesting their sporting success is perhaps the only domain where Pacific Islanders can find success in a European dominated society. I do not believe this is the case, as will be examined in the second case study.

### Jonah Lomu Incorporated

Remember rugby is a team game. All 14 of you make sure you pass it straight to Jonah (a fax sent to the All Blacks from a young fan in preparation for the 1995 World Cup test match against South Africa, quoted in Childs, 2002, p.35).

The 1990s brought in a new age of professionalism for rugby. With it came fame, money and glamour for Pacific Island sportsmen playing for New Zealand. One of these was Jonah Tali Lomu who was named an All Black in 1994<sup>58</sup> and went on to take the rugby world by storm.

Lomu's is a remarkable story in that he came to fame from humble origins, being of Tongan descent and raised in Mangere, a working class suburb in South Auckland. In *Blood & Thunder - the unofficial biography of Jonah Lomu*, Lomu talks avidly of his Tongan heritage:

Tonga, its history and culture, its soul and spirit, runs deep in me, like still waters'...I could never be happy pretending otherwise. You can't escape your roots. It's like a calling. I'll never forget my early life in Tonga. It shaped who I am (p.54).

Then later he goes on to say:

I love my family. My heritage is very important to me and my success has not changed the way I feel about where I came from or who I am. I have got a lifestyle that I never dreamed I'd have. My goal was to have my own roof over my head by my early twenties. I achieved that goal much earlier. I would be a liar if I said my success has not changed my life. It has because I am now rich and money buys freedom, creates opportunity that would otherwise be denied. The success has changed the way I live, but inside I am still the same Jonah Lomu (p.56).

Lomu was often described by sports commentators as an extraordinary player. He proved this by notching up successive achievements in his short career<sup>59</sup>,

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<sup>58</sup> He remains the youngest ever player to be named in an All Black squad, aged 19 years and 45 days at the time.

<sup>59</sup> These included but not withstanding, ranking eighth on the list of the most prolific try scorers in rugby history, the highest try-scorer in World Cup history, the youngest player to score 10 Test tries, the first All Black in 90 years to score four tries in a test match against England, the first and the youngest to score 12 Test tries in a calendar year (Childs, 2002).

but perhaps even more phenomenal is the fact he arguably became the first New Zealand sportsman to become a multimillionaire while remaining based in this (his) country<sup>60</sup>. In addition to this, his rugby status is said to have become bigger internationally than in his country of origin<sup>61</sup>. One British newspaper hailed him as Overseas Sportsman of the Year and the BBC named him Television Sportsman of the Year. He was the British and European Rugby Writers' Player of the Year, New Zealand Sports Personality of the Year and picked in rugby writers' Greatest Ever World Rugby Team for the year.

Perhaps it was the appointment of Phil Kingsley Jones as his manager that might have signalled what was to come. This partnership, while rooted in friendship, pushed Lomu into a new type of business – sports commercialisation.

Kingsley Jones formed Number 11<sup>62</sup> Management, handling Jonah's sponsorship deals, appearances and other businesses from which grew Lomu's profile. Lomu's name and brand logo (Number 11) are trademarked and he is the only sportsperson in New Zealand who has a copyright on his name and image, which cannot be used without Kingsley Jones' permission.

Kingsley Jones is open in his management of and vision for Lomu:

As well as Jonah Lomu the person and rugby player, we've made Jonah Lomu the industry...We sell Jonah Lomu the human being as an image, as a market brand. My dream is that everybody's got a Jonah Lomu calendar, pen, aftershave – that the name Jonah Lomu is out there (quoted in *The New Zealand Herald*, 2001).

And then later, "I know what he's worth. He's image is worth a fortune" (quoted in *The New Zealand Herald*, 2001).

Lomu was paid \$300,000 a year to play for the All Blacks but the bulk of his wealth came from lucrative sponsorships and endorsements set up under Kingsley Jones' management. Jonah promoted McDonald's Mega Feast

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<sup>60</sup> Many sportspeople including Ray Sefo and David Tua, have based themselves overseas to earn their living.

<sup>61</sup> The comment has been made by several people in news articles written about Lomu. Graham Seatter, sponsorship manager for Lion Breweries said it, as has an unnamed senior official from Adidas.

<sup>62</sup> Number 11 being Lomu's All Black shirt number.

burger<sup>63</sup>, and had sponsorship deals with Reebok, Mazda, PowerAde, well as Enza<sup>64</sup>, Fusion car stereos, Sony Playstation, BMG record company<sup>65</sup>. In addition he also signed a contract with Adidas rumoured to be worth NZ\$10 million over two years.

Lomu's status as a rugby superstar saw him attract a large number of spectators to the games he played in. Corporate sponsors like McDonalds and Adidas knew that while Lomu continued to play in high profile international matches, his image would enhance their brand significantly. The opportunity to do so was one they were keen to exploit.

While Lomu's list of sponsorship deals is lengthy, there could have been more, had Kingsley Jones allowed it. As he points out in a *New Zealand Herald* article<sup>66</sup>, he has been selective of the products that Lomu is associated with, to ensure they fit with the Jonah Lomu brand. Deals with TAB, Steinlager in Britain and a whisky brand in Japan were all turned down for this very reason. While unwavering in his quest for Lomu to be a super brand, Kingsley Jones explains he would never compromise Lomu's image to make a quick buck, "his image is...far more important than money because he'll always get money if his image is good...." (quoted in *The New Zealand Herald*, 2001).

In spite of his superstar status, Lomu is credited for giving back to the sport, what he himself has received millions for and in some regards making rugby a professional sport. Stephen Jones, a prominent rugby columnist makes the point:

Jonah's profile, from his staggering efforts in the 1995 World Cup and since, have put millions into rugby from gate receipts, television contracts and sponsorship. He is the most planet-famous rugby player in history and no one else even comes close (quoted in *The Daily News*, 1999).

Lomu's 10-year business partner relationship with Kingsley Jones has since ended given Lomu's change in focus to regain his health and Lomu now keeps

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63 Roger Warrick, a writer for *The Evening Post* said Lomu was New Zealand's best known hamburger sales man (quoted in *The Evening Post*, 1997).

64 A fruit brand formed under the New Zealand Apple and Pear Marketing Board that export fruit to many overseas countries.

65 He produced a CD with his all time greatest R'nB hits.

66 Published on 25 August 2001.

in touch with his fans on his official website [www.jonahlomu.com](http://www.jonahlomu.com). While the marketing deals have also since dried up, an online shop on his site enables his fans to purchase a raft of memorabilia including his autobiography, water bottles and DVDs amongst other things.

One question remains. Would Jonah have received the media coverage he did if he did not have a strong brand image? An analysis of the newspaper articles randomly collected<sup>67</sup> for this chapter provide an insight into the answer. 75% of the articles focussed on his net worth and speculated about his lucrative sponsorship deals<sup>68</sup>, whilst only 25% commented on his rugby performance.

In the height of his career, Lomu was a powerful brand. The careful management of his image made him a commercial asset throughout most of his professional career. He became a corporate employee for his sponsors as well as an All Black representative. Given his international profile and appeal it was not surprising corporate sponsors were tripping over themselves to have him endorse their products. Since the diagnosis of his illness which forced him to alter his sporting commitments, his success has been unparalleled by any other Pacific Islander, or New Zealander for that matter.

### ***bro'Town* - the New Zealand idols of satire**

We're not trying to speak for all Samoan people growing up in New Zealand. It's just the story of *bro'Town*. This isn't about all Islanders. It's about these boys (Mario Gaoa cited in Barry, 2004).

In chapter two we examined the gradual browning of mainstream television with Pacific Islanders moving into positive roles in news, local drama productions and commercial work. In this case study we look at the success of *bro'Town* and examine the areas in which the show has become more commercialised and its impact on popularising Pacific Island culture.

*bro'Town* has achieved a number of 'firsts' in the three years since it first showed on New Zealand television screens in 2004. The series has broken new

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<sup>67</sup> The newspaper articles were published between 1994 - 2005.

<sup>68</sup> These articles appeared in an array of newspapers including *The Evening Post*, *The Sunday Star Times*, *The New Zealand Herald* to *The Press* from 1995 - 2004, running with headlines including 'Lomu - bigger than the game', 'Jonah Inc.', and '\$700,000 price tag on Lomu'.

ground in the area of programming as the first ever locally produced animated series. It has also succeeded in the difficult genre of local television comedy winning the best comedy and best comedy script awards at the 2005 NZ Screen Awards.

Smith and Lustyik (2005) believe part of the programme's success in comedy is the fact it provides a vehicle for promoting humour around a number of sensitive issues but also capitalises on the opportunity to promote multiculturalism in a country often lost in search of its national identity.

One of the appeals for New Zealand on Air <sup>69</sup> (NZOA) is that it promotes a more multi-cultural impression of New Zealand not usually apparent on local television, and gives New Zealanders the ability to laugh at themselves (NZOA, 2000:28).

While *bro'Town* offers a unique storyline following the dysfunctional lives of five Polynesian<sup>70</sup> friends growing up in a fictional suburb called Morningside, its cartoon elements have allowed the programme to address social issues such as racism, bullying, peer pressure and violence in a non-confrontational manner.

The show's unique formula has attracted loyal viewers and rated consistently well. The first series of *bro'Town* attracted an average of 13 per cent of viewers aged 18 – 49 and 33 percent cent of the viewing audience during its 8-8:30pm time slot (quoted in *The New Zealand Herald*, 2005). The second series attracted an average of 10 per cent of viewers (quoted in *Onfilm*, 2005)<sup>71</sup>. One of its appeals has been its use of Pacific Island humour encompassing satire, mockery and chauvinism.

This satirical humour of *bro'Town* has its origins in the work of the *Naked Samoans*, (the voices behind the *bro'Town* characters) who have performed in theatres across the country and internationally.

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<sup>69</sup> Its main funding provider.

<sup>70</sup> Four Samoans and a Maori boy.

<sup>71</sup> Ratings of the third series were not available.



## The commoditisation of *bro'Town*

Founder and producer of *bro'Town*, Elizabeth Mitchell acknowledges the show's marketability with the remarks, "...being a cartoon it lends itself to everything. We knew it would work..." (quoted in *The New Zealand Herald*, 2005). As one of the more expensive shows to be made in New Zealand its funding model has included some innovative approaches and expansion into several capital ventures.

Product placement, the advertising technique that enables companies to pay to have their products strategically placed within programmes, has featured across each of the show's series. In the first 13 episodes alone, product placement provided *bro'Town* with \$530,000 (quoted in *The National Business Review*, 2004) and is believed to have been the biggest ever product placement into a drama or comedy show. Brands including Vodafone, Puma shoes, Masterfoods and L&P have all featured alongside the animated characters. In what is said to be a rarity for television production, the show also secured \$1million from a private investor (quoted in *The National Business Review*, 2004) and achieved funding coup with NZOA providing in excess of \$5.1million for the three series aired to date (quoted in *Onfilm*, 2005).

The launch of their website [www.brotown.co.nz](http://www.brotown.co.nz) has also extended its reach, selling a broad range of merchandise<sup>72</sup> from t-shirts, DVDs<sup>73</sup>, and hoodies to boxer shorts, beanies, posters and stationery items. They have also diversified into specialised merchandise available in targeted retail stores; Nice and Natural bro'bars are sold in supermarkets nationwide, car seat covers are available from Repco, Briscoes sell their manchester and towels, stationery goods are available from Whitcoulls and Farmers sells *bro'Town* sleepwear.

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<sup>72</sup> See Appendix E for a range of some of the merchandise available.

<sup>73</sup> Series 1, 2 & 3 are all available on DVD from a number of retailers.

In addition, snippets of the show can be downloaded from both Telecom and Vodafone mobiles, for a small fee. A recent *New Zealand Herald* article<sup>74</sup> said *bro'Town* has been one of the few success stories for video downloading.

### *bro'Town's vernacular and academic appeal*

It wouldn't be real if we gave the characters perfectly rounded vowels just because we want to teach young people to speak better (Oscar Kightley cited in Kapa, 2006, p.6)

A large part of the show's success and what has now become popularised vernacular is its creation of unique colloquial phrases. 'Peow peow', 'not even ow', 'I'm going to the pub I might be some time' and 'Morningside 4 life' are extensions of the show's appeal to New Zealanders. Its sayings offer a sense of frivolity that can be shared across a diverse range of New Zealanders across all age groups.

The show is said to be the most popular TV programme amongst 5-12 year olds (quoted in Kapa, 2006), many of whom use the phrases when speaking to each other in playgrounds and classes across the country. This has some schools concerned with two schools based in South Auckland banning the use of the *bro'Town* phrases due to its vulgarity. As they say in *bro'Town*, 'poos and wees'! However, despite the severity taken by some educational institutions, such actions show the degree to which *bro'Town* culture has filtered into our everyday way of life.

The show has also inspired the Institute of Culture, Discourse & Communication within Auckland University of Technology (AUT) to study how the programme constructs themes of identity and multiculturalism through linguistic and visual means.

AUT researchers Philippa Smith and Andy Gibson have looked at the constructs of the language used in the programme and identified certain characters use key speech characteristics which distinguish Pasifika youth from the older generation of migrants. The vernacular of the two brothers Vale and Valea

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<sup>74</sup> The article appeared in The New Zealand Herald on 16 November 2006.

for instance is associated with a hip-hop influenced Polynesian youth sub-culture, whereas the father Pepelo's speech is more heavily accented from the influence of the Samoan language. Their analysis also reviewed the programme's positioning in New Zealand's history. They believe the programme has raised the visibility of Pacific Island people on prime time television while looking to raise awareness about its multiculturalism.

Smith has also presented another paper with Katalin Lustyik<sup>75</sup> that looks at the adoption of American animated situation comedy into New Zealand, arguing the influence of programmes such as *The Simpsons* and *South Park* have influenced and paved the way for *bro'Town* and its national appeal (Smith and Lustyik, 2005).

### Expansion into global markets

Given the show's success locally, producers of the programme are promoting the screening of *bro'Town* to international markets. It is already showing in Fiji, Australia and Canada and is soon to debut in Latin America, a market which has chosen to keep all the Maori words in Maori.

The show's success has also contributed to the producers receiving funding from the New Zealand Film Commission to develop a script for a *bro'Town* movie. It is anticipated to screen later this year, which Mitchell says is likely to have an international focus (quoted in *Onfilm*, 2005).

### Conclusion

New Zealand is browning across a diverse range of industries but unfortunately some areas are receiving more prominence than others. Domains such as sport and arts frequently receive media coverage and are thus at the fore of public consciousness. Others, such as telecommunications, business and education have gone largely unnoticed. An explanation of this

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<sup>75</sup> Quoted earlier in the body of this chapter.

may lie in the fact that the latter areas are thought to be less appealing to both the media and ultimately to the nation to warrant visibility.

Pacific Islanders have dominated the New Zealand sports scene in certain sports, competing in a diverse range of sports at both regional and national level. For those New Zealand born Pacific Islanders who reach national representation status there are often feelings of dual loyalties and identities to their cultural origins and birthplace (see Fatialofa's comments in the body of this chapter and Umaga's comment in chapter three).

The hypothesis posed at the beginning of the chapter was that there were additional factors (other than the media) which influenced the positive image of Pacific Islanders and contributed to their becoming commercialised in New Zealand culture. I believe this has been validated in the case studies examined.

In reviewing the influence of Pacific Islanders it is evident that Pacific people have achieved prominence in both sports and arts however there are obvious contrasts in the case studies discussed. There appears to be a strong undercurrent of one domain being more dominant than the other. Sport, perhaps because of its considered importance in shaping New Zealand identity and international appeal appears to offer individuals a greater level of financial gain as evidenced in the Jonah Lomu case study.

However, Lomu's success can be attributed to a multitude of factors. The first of these is his appointment of a business manager whose primary role was to deal with all business arrangements. His creation of and adherence to a Jonah Lomu brand that broadly encompassed the brand attributes that many corporate sponsors at the time were looking for was a clever strategy. Similarly Lomu's humble origins and superior rugby game also added to the attraction.

Conversely, while *bro'Town* has become a national phenomenon, their search for funds to produce their consecutive series' has been much more difficult. Strategies including a multi-faceted funding model, strategic alliances with

several major companies and a hilariously funny programme format have all worked in their favour and firmly entrenched them in New Zealand's popular culture.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

This thesis traces an aspect of New Zealand's increasingly diverse ethnic landscape. At the 2006 census, seven core ethnic groups made up the approximately 4.1million people who now reside in the land of the long white cloud. Of this, Pacific Islanders were the fourth largest group, making up 6.9% of the total population (cited on [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)). This is in direct contrast to the 1966 census where they made up only 1% of the total population (Palat, 1996).

The 1960s saw Pacific Islanders migrating to New Zealand in large numbers. They came as a consequence of the Fourth National government who had actively lured Pacific workers to New Zealand under the guise of better employment and education opportunities and a general improvement in their standard of living. This was well received by the first generation Pacific Island migrants and many travelled to New Zealand filling the labour shortages experienced during the 1960s and up to the mid 1970s. They entered on temporary work or visitors' permits and on arrival found work in factories primarily in the urban centres, in particular Auckland.

Their presence and strong work ethic in the secondary industries was welcomed. While some stayed beyond the timeframe of their permits, this was for the most part overlooked (and tolerated) given their importance to the economy. Unfortunately this reality was short lived and the demand for Pacific Island labour diminished due to the collapse of the global economy which was further exacerbated by the 1970s oil crisis. This brought on a recession which saw a rapid decline in the government's hospitality towards Pacific Islanders and is the point of departure for this thesis.

This research piece set out to explore the way in which Pacific Islanders have been portrayed to New Zealanders over the forty odd years since their first migration here. It also set out to understand the factors that lay beneath the

way they were represented and sought to determine their growing presence and influence in New Zealand society.

The decline in the economy brought about the anti-Pacific activities by both Kirk and Muldoon governments. These generated ill will and negativity towards Pacific Islanders. Muldoon's use of scapegoat tactics to mobilise public opinion for electoral advantage show the way in which Pacific Islanders were marginalised in those early years. Later the dawn raids and random street checks became synonymous with an overstayers campaign. These tactics thrust Pacific Islanders into the limelight and put them in a position which they were both unfamiliar with and had little control over.

What became apparent as a result of these actions was the fact that social awareness and understanding of Pacific people in New Zealand in those early years was for the most part largely gleaned from the images and representation projected to them via the government and the mass media. This is significant because at the time many New Zealanders had little or no contact with this migrant group which meant they became heavily reliant and influenced by the way in which these institutions presented Pacific Islanders to them.

In hindsight the government and the media had a symbiotic relationship. While it was the actions of the governments which the media were reporting on, the media<sup>76</sup> fuelled speculation and mistrust of this ethnic group with their biased and often inaccurate reporting of events. The neutrality of their role was not apparent in those early years and in affect they perpetuated frames that had a profound effect on the way groups come to see and understand each other, thereby acting as an enabler and contributing to the negative stereotypes.

Lobby groups such as the Polynesian Panther Party emerged to support Pacific Islanders. The group ran community initiatives such as homework centres and programmes informing Pacific Islanders of their legal rights. Their efforts

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<sup>76</sup> With the exception of David McLoughlan's efforts and those few Pacific Islanders who were training to become journalists at the time.

made headlines in some newspapers but unfortunately coverage of the positive work they were doing in the community was not widely publicised and in affect did little to counteract the negative media coverage they were receiving.

On a global scale the consistent manner with which ethnic minorities are portrayed in mainstream media as negative is an issue and one that requires international journalism ethics to be established in order to mitigate the biased minority coverage. In the case of New Zealand, the negative representation of minority migrants is a reoccurring theme clearly demonstrating that as a nation we have yet to fully understand and embrace past transgressions to be able to do things differently for future migrant populations.

Equal employment opportunities for Pacific Islanders in mainstream media have paved a change in the way this minority group is being perceived largely as a result of their own efforts. Their transition into positive roles within the newspaper and television media presents a profile that is in direct contrast to the stereotypes of the past. And while numbers working as journalists in the newspaper industry remain stagnant, the journalism industry is showing signs of gradual improvement with minorities more frequently being used as news sources and several daily newspapers appointing Maori and/or Pacific Island affairs reporters.

The visibility of Pacific Islanders in television has also changed for the better but at a more fragmented pace across the different genres and as a result of varying factors. The role of the state in expediting this through the deregulation of the broadcasting industry has been significant as has their governance to TVNZ to launch a charter outlining the broadcaster's responsibilities and intent to provide quality television that educates, informs and entertains through local home grown programming and the best of international programming (cited on [www.tvnz.co.nz](http://www.tvnz.co.nz)). This it would suggest seems driven by the government's acceptance of this nation's cultural diversity, fuelling the desire to present a more inclusive society to New Zealanders. In amongst this, this thesis has also made mention of the



changing perception of Pacific Islanders as valuable commodities in strengthening a brand's profile. While the origins of this started with the early television advertising which featured Pacific Islanders, it has been exploited at a far greater level across a range of disciplines.

According to Fleras and Spoonley (1999) in the last 50 years, the Pacific descent population has gone from being a relatively small, new settler population, to a well-established; a socially, demographically and economically significant component of the New Zealand population.

In recent years, negativity towards Pacific people over the years has eroded, especially over the last decade or so. This is due to several factors. Their interaction with both Palagi and other ethnicities has enabled these groups to form their own opinions about Pacific Islanders and to some extent, has enabled them to contextualise (and challenge) the media coverage portrayed about this group. By the same token Pacific Islanders have visibly worked hard to further themselves in this country. While for the first generation migrants assimilation was difficult, for first, second and third generation New Zealand born Pacific Islanders, the assimilation process has been much easier and natural. This has in many ways given birth to a new identity that has evolved as a result of Pacific Islanders acclimatising to and helping shape the changing dynamics of New Zealand culture.

The growing numbers of Pacific people born, educated and raised in this country has added an interesting dynamic to New Zealand's cultural diversity. This new social mobility amongst New Zealand born Pacific Islanders has made them increasingly visible in an expanding range of roles within our society, largely facilitated by their familiarity with and understanding of how things are done and their increased confidence to step into new ventures.

This pan Pacific identity has not only been willingly embraced by New Zealanders, it has according to Anae (2001) also mobilised Pacific Islanders. She suggests their general acceptance (and appeal) offers an identification "that is broader and less specific to a Pacific ethnic group thereby making it easily adopted by those less fluent in the Pacific languages" (2001, p.111).

This is an identity that has become popularised on dual fronts. Some Pacific Island artists (in the music and arts industries for instance) use it as a means of expressing themselves as seen in the works of Che Fu, King Kapisi and Michael Tuffery or the dance group Black Grace. The other side of the coin is that this reinvigorated identity has also converged with commercial influences and hence we are increasingly seeing the development of productions or initiatives with strong Pacific roots and predominantly brown talent or stakeholders being showcased on the big screen, on television, in festivals or in theatre halls.

Seemingly as this occurs, New Zealanders are becoming increasingly exposed to a new frame of Pacific Islanders than to that which they were initially shown some forty odd years ago. It is fair to say Pacific Islanders have now become one of the most visible minority groups in New Zealand not just because of their increasing population but also largely due to their talent and skills and the progress they are making in this country. These successes are receiving more exposure. Their visibility in certain domains such as sports and arts for instance, has made their assimilation into New Zealand's national identity much easier. So much so, that their success is crowned as the nation's success.

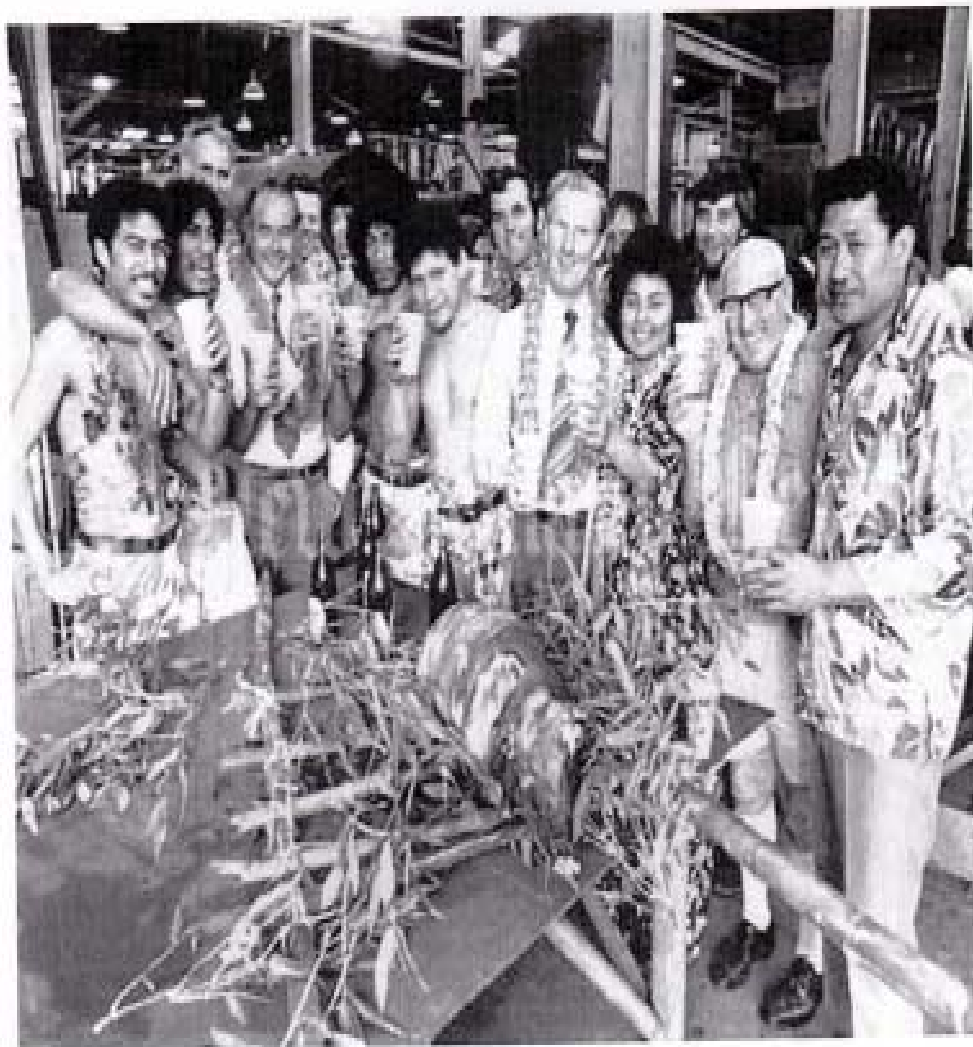
For some (as in the case of Jonah Lomu) this has translated into lucrative business deals which have in turn made them commercial entities. For others (as in the case of the *Naked Samoans* with *bro'Town*), their success has enabled them to continue to do what they enjoy doing the most, infecting New Zealanders with their sense of humour.

This thesis set out to explore the way in which Pacific Islanders were represented to New Zealanders and their gradual evolution in roles over the years. While achieving this, it also highlighted the difficulties experienced by a minority ethnic group in assimilating into majority culture and how elements such as a renewed Pacific identity and media hype surrounding this, in addition to their natural talent and flair, have helped their transition into a variety of domains which have ultimately made them more commercialised.

Perhaps the greatest irony highlighted in this thesis has been the belief that an increase of Pacific Islanders working within journalism would change the biased coverage of Pacific activity. The reality is that despite the small Pacific Island numbers in journalism, we have seen the media change the way in which they represent Pacific Islanders, both with regards to the frequency of their coverage and the type of coverage. This has in turn popularised Pacific Islanders and contributes to their increased commercialisation.

## Appendix A:

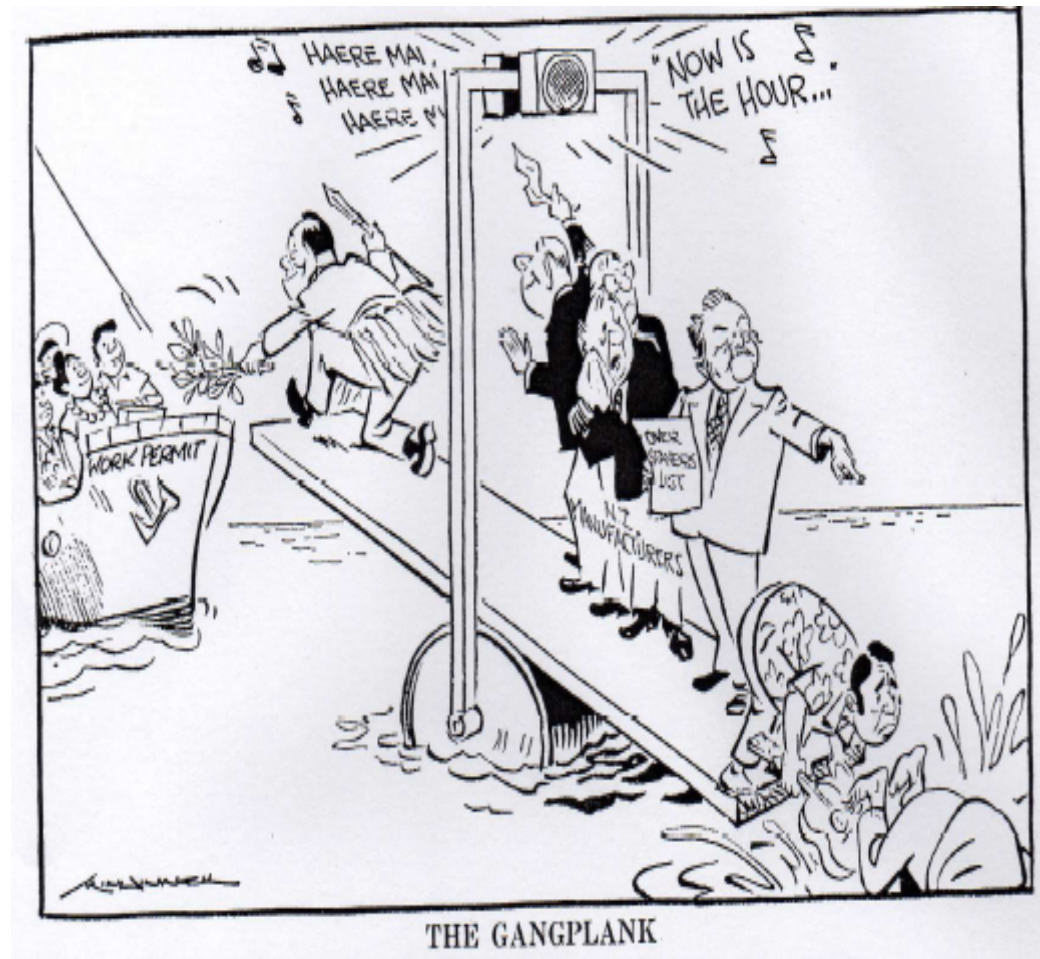
Happy times - Pacific Island employees and their employers



Source: [www.teara.govt.nz](http://www.teara.govt.nz)

## Appendix B:

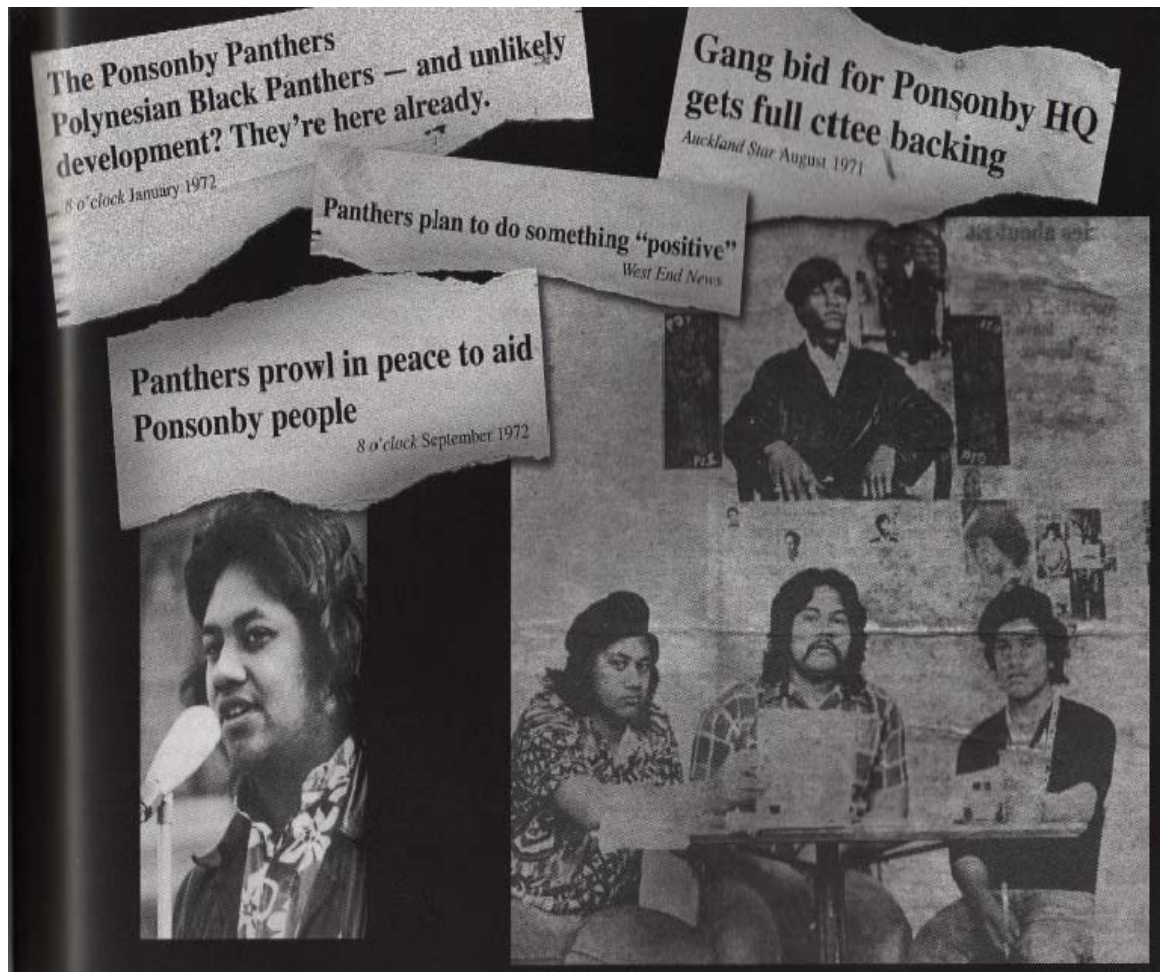
A cartoonist's impression of the overstaying problem in 1974. *New Zealand Herald*. The date is not referenced.



Source: (*New Zealand Herald*, 1974)

## Appendix C:

Positive Polynesian Panther Party news headlines in the media.



Source: (Anae, Iuli and Burgoyne, 2006)

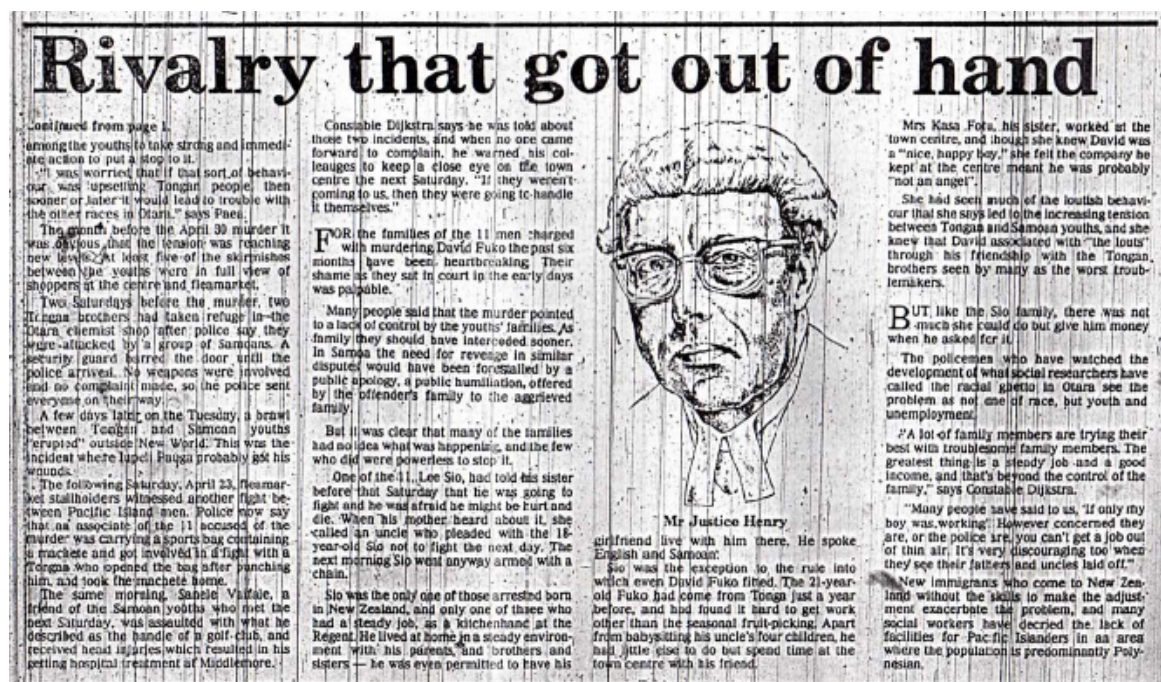


## Appendix D:

Newspaper coverage of the 1987 attack in Otara.

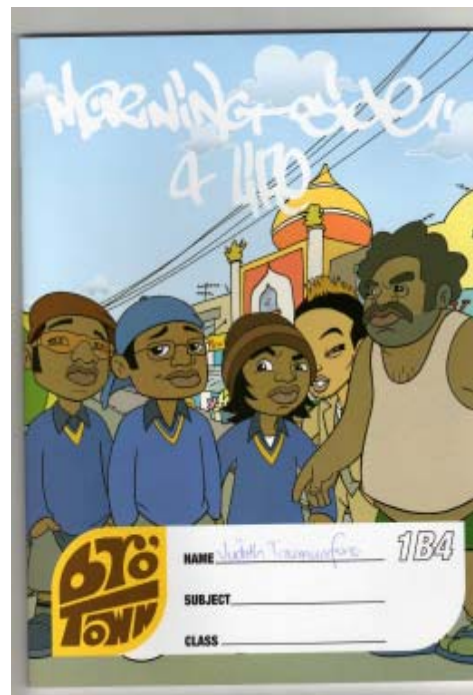
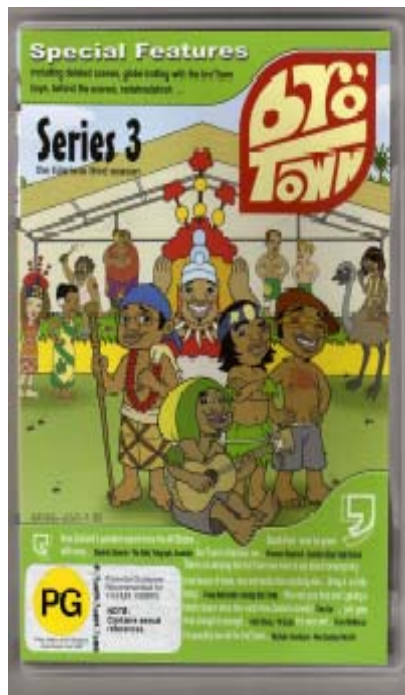


Source: *The New Zealand Herald*, 5 November 1988



Source: *The New Zealand Herald*, 5 November 1988

A range of the bro'Town merchandise





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