

Lu sipi, a Marker of Tongan Distinction

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2020

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A dissertation submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Gastronomy

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Abstract

National dishes and other food items play a crucial role in sustaining cultural norms as well as affirming an individual's sense of place and identity. In Tonga, *lu sipi* is such a dish. In Tonga and for Tongans living outside their homeland, the processes of preparing and eating *lu sipi* embody distinctive characteristics reflecting Tongan culture, identity, and history. Within those characteristics, *lu sipi* for Tongans in Tonga connotes and denotes daily routines and a way of life that holds significance, particularly on Sundays. For Tongans abroad, *lu sipi* promotes island memories and nostalgic feelings of island life and belonging. Considering those themes, this dissertation explores *lu sipi* as a marker of Tongan distinction. In order to understand *lu sipi* and its place as a distinguishing feature of being and becoming, my research used qualitative description, *talanoa* and thematic analysis with three comprehensive participant interviews. My research participants included two self-identifying Tongans and an academic expert on South Pacific island culture. Their views, expertise and experiences have provided a platform to understand *lu sipi* within Tongan culture in Tonga and in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Their narratives included *lu sipi*'s symbolic and actant properties that elevate *lu sipi* beyond mere nutritional need. In these ways, my dissertation not only reveals my participant narratives, but in doing so shows the changing nature of *lu sipi* consequent to migration and the globalised forces that have impacted *lu sipi*'s authenticity

Acknowledgements

As a young Tongan-Kiwi mother, this dissertation marks the highest achievement of my academic journey. I am the first child and grandchild in my family to achieve a Master's degree. I have spent my undergraduate and postgraduate study time at Auckland University of Technology. There, I have met supportive lecturers and lifelong friends. In completing my dissertation, I would like to acknowledge the following people who have helped me throughout my undergraduate and postgraduate journey.

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to God for his unconditional love and support throughout my life. Thank you for blessing and guiding me through my academic journey.

I would like to express my greatest gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Lindsay Neill. Dr Neill walked me through every step of my dissertation. Thank you for your patience, understanding, support and, of course, your professional knowledge. You not only supported me academically, but you have helped me gain the mental strength needed to complete this dissertation.

To my father 'Amanaki Toloke and mother Silivia Ulufonua Toloke, thank you for inspiring me and the people around us to aim high and not settle for less. Thank you for embedding the value of education in my life. The teachings and advice you have instilled throughout my childhood has pulled me out of my doubt and my dark places. Thank you for the countless sacrifices you have made to ensure that your children are always a step ahead. There are not enough words that can express my appreciation for your love. *Ofa lahi atu.*

To my husband Pio Sasa and daughter Kiara-Valasi Sasa. Kiara-Valasi, thank you for giving me a new lens to view the world. Thank you for being my motivation in ensuring that I provide a foundation for us and our growing family. Pio, thank you for being my safe-haven and being someone that I can express my many feelings and emotions to.

Thank you for always cheering me up when I am down and pushing me to do and be the best version of myself.

To my siblings, Melevea, Solomone and Heamasi, thank you for your love and support. Thank you for reminding me to take breaks! Thank you for letting me have fun and always helping out with motherly tasks.

To my lifelong friends Talahiva Fonua, Alisa Siaosi and Kasanita Kini. Thank you for boosting my confidence and never being afraid to give me a reality check when I needed one. Thank you for your loyal friendship.

Finally, I would like to give thanks to my three participants. Associate Professor Tracy Berno, Soane Pasi and 'Amanaki Tolohe. Thank you for sharing your stories, experiences, knowledge, and expertise. I appreciate the time and effort you all have given to provide the data that I needed to complete my dissertation.

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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.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by several loops and a final flourish.

Date: 21 December 2020

Chapter 1. Contextual Information

1.1. Introducing *Lu Sipi* and its Location

Outside of South Pacific Island culture, many people may not be familiar with a dish that is one of Tonga's favourites: *lu sipi*. *Lu* (taro leaves) and *sipi* (lamb) have become a traditional and significant Tongan dish. *Lu sipi* comprises *lu* leaves that are wrapped around pieces of *sipi*, that has been combined with chopped onions and drenched in coconut cream (Capozza, 2003). For many Tongans, *lu sipi* signifies more than a nutritional meal because they associate *lu sipi* with ways of being and becoming Tongan. Additionally, for Tongans living in Aotearoa New Zealand, *lu sipi* is a 'taste of home'. However, within that taste of home are issues of authenticity and an overlay reflecting the influence of globalisation and commercialisation within the Tongan nation. For Tongans in Tonga, *lu sipi* has come to represent the hierarchy of Tongan culture, the shared nature of being Tongan, a potent memory and nostalgic marker of distinction. Consequently, and considering the most often used quote from Brillat-Savarin (1825/2003), "tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are" (p. 22), *lu sipi* provides an ideal portal to explore the nature of being Tongan, through food. Within my exploration of *lu sipi*, I interviewed three research participants. Two of my participants were Tongan. My third participant is an academic expert on Pacific Island food culture. While my research was limited to those participants, my work provides a valuable insight into the importance of the dish within Tongan culture and, for me, as a Tongan living in Aotearoa New Zealand, researching *lu sipi* stimulated my interest in my Tongan heritage, its customs, rituals, and particularly its food culture.

1.2. Research Questions

Lu sipi is a seminal dish in the Tongan culinary repertoire. Like most food items, *lu sipi*'s symbolic and actant (Woodward, 2007) meaning transcends its nutritional value. To understand *lu sipi*'s value, outside of its nutritional dimensions, I asked the following primary research question:

- What factors influence the ways in which *lu sipi* signifies Tongan identity in Auckland, New Zealand?

My secondary questions asked:

- In what ways do *terroir* and being a Tongan living in New Zealand influence perceptions of *lu sipi*?
- How do considerations of invented tradition impact an understanding of *lu sipi*?

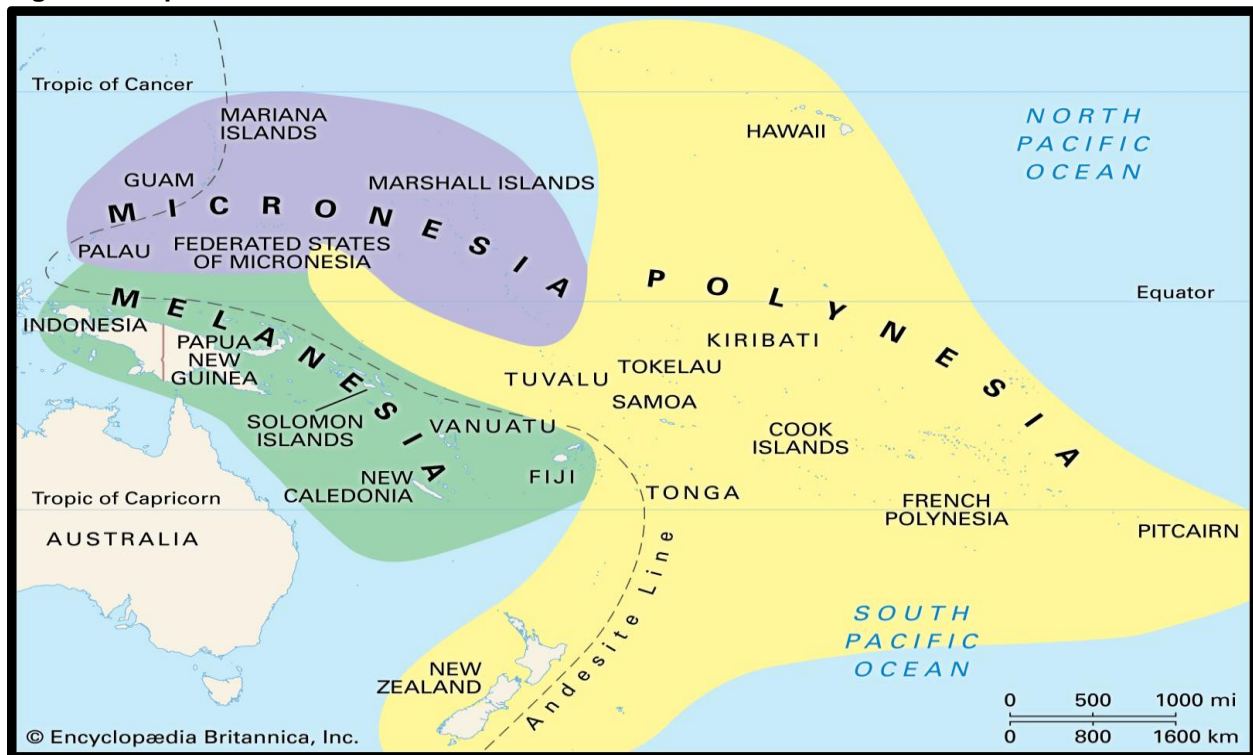
My three research questions were important not only because they facilitated my participants' responses and therefore my research findings, but also because they provided insight into my participants' worldviews, ontologies (Lavery, 2003), and epistemologies (Gray, 2018). For me, my research questions were empowering. Until I undertook this research, I was unaware that *talanoa* (Vaiolleti, 2006) could be applied within a research context. Because I am Tongan, *talanoa* is almost an automatic mind-set for me. Being able to use *talanoa* in my research not only brought me closer to my participants, but also brought me closer to being myself. In these ways, undertaking my research dissertation has been an empowering and culturally positive experience that has reinforced my identity as a Tongan-Kiwi.¹

1.3. Locating Tonga

As the name suggests, the South Pacific region is in the Southward portion of the Pacific Ocean (Foster, 2020). According to Haden (2009), more than 12,000 islands dot this region within three zones, Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. Micronesia includes the Marshall Islands and Kiribati. To the south of Micronesia lies Melanesia. Melanesia includes Vanuatu, The Solomon Islands, Fiji, and New Caledonia. To the east of Micronesia and Melanesia is Polynesia. Polynesia includes the Tokelaus, Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue, New Zealand, and Tonga (Foster, 2020). Of those zones, only people from Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands have automatic entry rights into Aotearoa New Zealand. Other Pacific island nations including Fiji, Samoa and Tonga need visas to gain entry to New Zealand (Immigration New Zealand, 2020).

¹ The word Kiwi is often a term that is used referring to the people of Aotearoa New Zealand, or the name of a New Zealand indigenous flightless bird (Neill, 2018).

Figure 1: Map of South Pacific Ocean



Source: Foster (2020).

1.4. Tongan Migration to New Zealand

In recent times, and in search of a better life (Neill, 2018; Unicef, 2017) many Tongans, have migrated to various countries including Australia, America, and New Zealand. Of these destinations, New Zealand has the largest population of Tongan migrants (Tu'inukuafe, 2019). In 1945, there were fewer than 2,200 Pacific people living in New Zealand. By 1976 there were 65,700 Pacific people living in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010). For Tu'inukuafe (2019) and Neill (2018) the migration of Tongans to New Zealand was prompted by their desire for a better lifestyle, education, and employment opportunities. Additionally, as Lee (2007) observed, Tongans residing in New Zealand also provided financial and material assistance to their families back in Tonga. Yet, as Lee (2007) noted, while migration to New Zealand offered opportunities for many Tongans, it was “a complex yet difficult process” (p. 159). Within New Zealand, Auckland boasts the largest Tongan population (Simati-Kumar, 2016). According to the Auckland Council (2019), Auckland’s population

comprises 33.4%, (1,571,718 people) (Statistics New Zealand, 2019) of New Zealand's total population. Of that percentage, 16% (251,474 people) (Auckland Council, 2019) come from the Pacific Islands. Many Pacific Islanders in Auckland live in South Auckland. There, suburbs with high Pacific Island populations include Ōtāhuhu, Māngere, Ōtara, Papatoetoe and Manurewa (Simati-Kumar, 2016). At present, there are 62,403 Tongans living in Auckland (Auckland Council, 2019).

New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2020) noted that Tonga and New Zealand have enjoyed a long history of joint trade. Tonga exports many root vegetables and fruits to New Zealand (The Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program, 2015). Conversely, New Zealand exports tinned and other preserved foods, tobacco (de Bres & Campbell, 1975), as well as meat and dairy products including lamb flaps (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020) to Tonga. In many Pacific Island nations, meat is perceived to be a luxury item. There, even the cheapest cuts of meat are considered to be of high status (Gewertz & Errington, 2010). Exemplifying that, for Gewertz and Errington (2010), are lamb flaps. Lamb flaps are a low quality, secondary meat cut in New Zealand. They are not popular eating in New Zealand nor in Australia. Pollock (2011) suggested that nations like New Zealand and Australia are profiting from less developed Pacific nations by exporting inferior food items, like lamb flaps. According to Cumming (2010), New Zealand exported almost 40,000 tons of lamb flaps to the Pacific in 2007. Despite the negative impacts of lamb flaps within Pacific diets, trade exchanges, including lamb flaps, not only help each nation economically, but also add to the diversity of choice consumers enjoy in both Tonga and New Zealand (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020). However, and despite a healthy trade relationship, Tonga and New Zealand have not always enjoyed a harmonious relationship. During the 1970s and 1980s, when New Zealand experienced economic difficulties, tensions mounted between Tongan workers in New Zealand and New Zealand's Immigration Department and Police. Those tensions prompted the Dawn Raids (Carlyon & Morrow, 2013).

1.5. Dawn Raid and Polynesian Panthers

During the 1960s and early 1970s, when New Zealand's economy was in its growth phase, migration from the Islands, including Tonga, was encouraged. Then, Island migrants filled the gap of cheap labour necessary to run many Kiwi businesses and enterprises (Beaglehole, 2005). Compounding the need for cheap labour was the inconsistency in the application of New Zealand's immigration laws. It was not until the economic downturn of the 1970s and 1980s that cheap labour (from the Islands) and inconsistent immigration policy became problematic (Winkelmann, 2001).

Then, reflecting an emergent Pacific Island 'voice' in Aotearoa New Zealand, in 1971 a group of young Pacific Islanders, including Will 'Ilolahia (founder), Fred Schmidt (co-founder), Nooroa Teavae, Vaughan Sanft and Eddie Williams (Masters, 2006), established the Polynesian Panthers (Carlyon & Morrow, 2013). The Polynesian Panthers were inspired by the American Black Panthers group (Husband, 2016). As an activist organisation, The Polynesian Panthers represented the rights and values of Pacific people living in New Zealand (NZ on Screen, 2005). The group resisted the racism and white supremacy they believed to be prevalent in Aotearoa New Zealand's socio-culture (Shilliam, 2012). As well as activism, the Polynesian Panthers also fostered a sense of community for many Pacific Islanders. Reflecting that, they provided food to many Pacific families in need, encouraged and promoted the use of indigenous Island languages and provided homework centres to assist young Pacific Islanders who struggled within New Zealand's education system (Shilliam, 2012). Consequently, as Clarke-Mamanu (2016) observed, the Polynesian Panthers impacted Tongans and other Pacific Islanders living in New Zealand by increasing their awareness of the opportunities New Zealand offered. Additionally, the Panthers increased the awareness of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand of their everyday rights as New Zealand residents to attend school, and to participate in everyday life without experiencing violence and racism, particularly from government institutions and the nation's police force.

During the mid-1970s, when many unskilled jobs were lost, racial tensions aimed particularly at Polynesians (mainly Samoans and Tongans) emerged (Cobley, 2013)

and another layer was added to Lee's (2007) "complex yet difficult process" (p. 159): the Dawn Raids (Carlyon & Morrow, 2013). The Dawn Raids (Carlyon & Morrow, 2013) refer to a time in New Zealand's history when Pacific Islanders were targeted in a campaign of raid, arrest, and deportation (P. V. Smith, 2018). Carlyon and Morrow (2013) noted that the first Dawn Raid took place in March 1974. The Dawn Raids were aimed at Auckland's Tongan community.

In recognising employment opportunities in New Zealand that might promote 'a better life,' many Pacific Islanders entered New Zealand on a one-way ticket with a three to six-month work permit. However, an increasing migrant population increased the cost of rental housing. Consequently, it was difficult for many temporary Island workers to save enough money for their flight ticket home. That hardship resulted in many Pacific Island people overstaying their permits. Exemplifying that was a Samoan worker who was the subject of a short documentary about the Dawn Raids (NZ on Screen, 2005). He stated that he received \$140 a week (\$1.50 per hour). With flight tickets back to the Pacific ranging from \$200 to \$300, and considering New Zealand's cost of living, saving for a ticket home, within three to six months was almost impossible. That situation, and many others like it, compounded Lee's (2007) "complex yet difficult process" (p. 159) with the notion that Pacific Island people were accepted in New Zealand when it was convenient for New Zealand but were unfairly manipulated by the economic and migration system of New Zealand (de Bres & Campbell, 1975; NZ on Screen, 2005). Supporting that suggestion, Aussie Malcolm, the Minister of Migration (1977–1979) remarked that Pacific people were welcomed by employers without resident permits when it suited New Zealand. However, this took a turn for the worse when the economy soured and Pacific Islanders were in the position of being 'unwanted' (NZ on Screen, 2005). That situation worsened when Pacific homes and churches were raided, and Pacific Islanders were stopped by police. Immediate arrest and/or deportation became normalised, particularly when primary identification was not provided. In an interview on Radio NZ (Hill, 2018), Oscar Kightley, a New Zealand Pacific actor living in New Zealand during the Dawn Raids, claimed that police actions then created a negative relationship between brown people and the nation's police force. He also shared his

experience as a young boy in primary school when police officers visited the students. Then, unlike their Pākehā² counterparts, the Pacific Island children wondered ‘oh no, what did I do wrong?’ Their experience reflected the distrust that had built up between Pacific Islanders and the Police, to the point where Pasifika children were suspicious of the police (Fridkin, Winterseick, Courey & Thompson 2017). As Allen and Bruce (2017) noted, Pacific Islanders were two times more likely to be stopped by New Zealand’s police than Pākehā.

1.6. Showcasing the Pacific Islands in Auckland

Today, Pacific Island culture is a key component of Auckland’s cityscape. While Auckland city is renowned as ‘little Polynesia’ (NZ on Screen, 2005), Pacific Islanders are still a minority group in Auckland. Nonetheless, Pacific Island culture is recognised and celebrated within popular events and festivals, including the Māngere market and Polyfest.

1.7. Auckland’s Māngere Markets

Situated in Māngere Town Centre, Auckland’s Māngere Markets showcase a rainbow of cultures (Mangere Market Trust, 2018) that mirror Auckland’s multiculturalism. Reflecting the market’s dynamic nature is the diverse range of goods and services that it provides. Complementing that, the market subtly provides a platform to showcase multiple cuisines and cultures. That diversity and combination places the market in a unique position. Not only is the market a diverse commercial space, but it also serves as an informal site of education, through shared experience. That characteristic is particularly important for visitors to the market who may be unfamiliar with Pacific cuisines and cultures. With sales at the market come conversations. Simple food-related questions promote interaction. Simply asking a seller ‘how is taro best cooked?’ opens up the sharing of knowledge and cultural norms both within and outside of Pasifika communities. For Pacific Island peoples and many Māngere locals, the Māngere Markets are often a weekly ‘must visit’ venue (Shrimpton, 2020).

² Māori given name to white colonists who came to Aotearoa, New Zealand (Neill, 2018).

Figure 2: Mangere Markets.



Source: Author (2020).

Figure 3: Lu for Sale at Mangere Markets.



Source: Author (2020).

Figure 4: Mangere Markets.



Source: Author (2020).

1.8. Polyfest

Another event that subtly educates its attendees through displays of Pacific culture is Polyfest. Polyfest, is an annual festival hosted in the South Auckland suburb of Manukau. During Polyfest, South Pacific Island nations and cultural groups, including Tongans, are given a platform to showcase their culture and food. That showcase includes food like *lu sipi*, *otai*, and other Pacific foods (Mackley-Crump, 2015). Consequently, Polyfest provides an opportunity for its visitors to enjoy food and entertainment that they might not otherwise experience. In that way, and considering the popularity of Pacific Island food at events like Polyfest, a challenge is made to

Haden's (2009) suggestion that Pacific cuisine is often viewed as 'not good enough' to be served in commercial environments.

That noted, considerations of the commercial acceptance of Pacific cuisines has become a contested topic between academics. Reflecting that debate, Haden (2009) and Oliver Berno and Ram (2010) have agreed to disagree. Contrasting Haden's (2009) notions, Oliver et al., (2010) proposed that Pacific cuisine, including Tongan cuisine, was just as colourful, and vibrant as other cuisines including Asian, Mexican, Indian, and Italian cuisines. Notwithstanding that, it needs to be noted that there is only one fine dining restaurant in Auckland serving Pacific cuisine, *Kai Pasifika*, located in Central Auckland (The Coconet TV, 2020).

Figure 5: Polyfest, Tongan Stage.



Source: Massey University (2016).

Searching Google and Zomato using 'Tongan Food' as a keyword search term reveals 5,050,00 results in 0.78 seconds. However, within those results there were no Tongan cuisine restaurant suggestions. Contrasting that, using the same engines, but with 'Italian food' as the keyword search term, reveals 1,130,000,000 'hits' in 0.98 seconds. Within those results are eight listings for multiple Italian cuisine restaurants on the very first page. However, when searching 'Tongan food', only photos and descriptions of

Tongan food were found. That finding simultaneously supports Haden's (2009) position and Oliver et al.'s (2010) suggestion that there is a lack of confidence from the general public that Pacific cuisine is 'good enough' to be realised in restaurant settings.

1.9. Why is Researching *Lu Sipi* Important?

According to Fehoko (2014), Tongans born in New Zealand can learn much from their Tongan elders. Fehoko (2014) proposed that interaction was key to that learning. Fehoko's (2014) suggestions resonate with me. As a first-generation Tongan New Zealander, whose parents migrated from Tonga in the late 1990s, I have experienced Fehoko's (2014) statement first-hand. My father, 'Amanaki Tolohe, is a hardworking, family-oriented man. He is also the main cook in our household. Through my father's cooking of Tongan food, I have not only come to like Tongan food, but also to understand and appreciate Tongan culture. On special occasions, often during summer, my father will gather and prepare the ingredients to make *lu sipi*. *Lu* is grown in our backyard. However, other ingredients (onions and lamb) are purchased from the supermarket. From a young age, I have enjoyed every aspect of cooking. *Lu sipi* is my firm favourite. Often, I have helped my father to gather ingredients, and prepare and cook *lu sipi* as well as the other dishes that he chooses to make. During these activities, my father reminisces about his upbringing and childhood in Tonga. As we collected *lu* from our backyard, he would talk about gathering *lu* in Tonga. Similarly, as we selected coconut cream from the shelves of Pak'nSave, my father would compare that to the process of gathering coconuts and squeezing out fresh coconut milk in Tonga. Through those stories and the passion that I saw and heard in my father's eyes and voice, I caught a glimpse of the importance of preparing *lu sipi* in Tonga, and the multiple meanings that *lu sipi* holds.

Within our *talanoa*³ (Vaiotele, 2006), I found empowerment. That empowerment was compounded by the experiences of preparing and eating *lu sipi*. I came to connect *lu sipi* with Tongan cultural identity and ritual. Consequently, I came to realise the

³ "*Talanoa* [is] a dynamic interaction and communication tool of story-telling, debating, reflecting, gossiping, joking, sharing, family connections, food and other necessities" (Fehoko, 2014, p. 47)

importance of exploring *lu sipi* as a marker of Tongan distinction. In choosing *lu sipi*, as my dissertation topic, I feel able to explore not only the dish and its multiple meanings but, in doing so, discover and develop my own sense of being a Tongan-Kiwi. In these ways, my dissertation not only reflects the culmination of my study and qualification, through my *lu sipi* research, but also an exploration of myself as a Tongan New Zealander.

1.10. What is *Lu Sipi*?

According to Capozza (2003), *lu* (taro leaves) *sipi* (lamb) is a traditional and significant Tongan dish. *Lu sipi* comprises *lu* leaves that are wrapped around pieces of *sipi*, with added onions and sometimes tomatoes that are drenched and steamed/stewed in coconut cream (refer Figures 6-9, below).

Figure 6: Ingredients for *Lu Sipi*.



Source: Author's Own (2020).

Figure 7: Portions of *Lu Sipi*.



Source: Author's Own (2020).

Figure 8: *Lu Sipi* with Coconut Cream.



Source: Author (2020).

Figure 9: *Lu* Wrapped *Sipi*, in Foil.



Source: Author (2020).

Capozza et al. (2003) and Oliver et al. (2010) noted that *lu sipi* is predominantly known as a Tongan dish, despite its prevalence in other Pacific Island regions.⁴ Thus, for many Tongans living in New Zealand, *lu sipi* is a family favourite. For Tongans, *lu sipi* is also actant materiality (Woodward, 2007), reflecting and incorporating aspects of culture and Tongan identity. Consequently, *lu sipi* holds sentimental and nostalgic value for Tongans living in Tonga, as well as Tongans living in Aotearoa New Zealand. That suggestion reflects Kittler and Sucher's (2000) notion that cultural identity is often affirmed and reaffirmed through food. Further, and as Fekete (2014) claimed, there is a significant connection of meaning and emotion between individuals and groups within the constructs that explain how traditional foods come to represent who they are. Consequently, within Tongan culture, *lu sipi* has come to represent more than 'just food.' It is a material item reflecting identity and the ways of being and becoming Tongan.

⁴ Samoa and Fiji have similar concepts of *lu sipi*. Samoa - *luau*; Fiji – *palusami*.

Figure 10: Cooked/Ready to Eat *Lu Sipi*.



Source: Author (2020).

1.11. Dissertation Overview: A Guide to Content

To best explain my topic and provide readers with an in-depth understanding of my research on *lu sipi*, my dissertation is structured in the following way. The present chapter, Chapter 1, has provided an introduction to my topic and its contextual overview. That context and overview help my readers to better understand the chapters that follow on from Chapter 1. Chapter 2 provides my theoretical and conceptual information. There I present my ontology and epistemology (Laverty, 2003), and the theories of the social construction of reality thesis (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), and material culture and actancy (Woodward, 2007). Considering these theories is important because I adapt them within my conceptual framework to best understand my topic, *lu sipi*. Chapter 3 presents my literature review. Hart (1998) proposed that a literature review is important because “without it you will not acquire an understanding of your topic” (p. 1).

Following on from my literature review, Chapter 4 presents my research methodology and research method. I differentiate methodology from method by proposing the methodology is about the theoretical considerations that, later, my method operationalises. Key to that chapter is my reliance on qualitative description

(Sandelowski, 2000), *talanoa* (Vaiioleti, 2006), and thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Next, Chapter 5 presents my research findings. My findings were distilled from what my participants told me, via *talanoa* (Vaiioleti, 2006), and my use of thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012). Rounding out my research dissertation is Chapter 6. That chapter combines my discussion and conclusion sections. In my discussion section I compare and contrast my Findings (refer Chapter 5) with the information in my literature review (refer Chapter 3). Following on from that, my conclusion section presents my contribution to research, my research limitations, and my recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

To explore *lu sipi*, this chapter presents my underpinning academic meta-theories. To understand the essence of any research, researchers need to make clear some basic constructs reflecting how they ‘see’ the world and what constitutes reality and knowledge. Often, within everyday life, these notions are taken for granted. Similarly, material items like *lu sipi* and considerations of the link between identity and food, often go unquestioned. Consequently, within my exploration of *lu sipi*, I need to make clear to my readers how I ‘see’ the world, and through what lenses and theories I reflect that understanding. With that in mind, this section of writing presents my understanding of ontology and epistemology, the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), the actant nature of materiality (Woodward, 2007), and invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Within my discussion of those domains, I differentiate them within two constructs: theoretical framework and conceptual framework. For me, a theoretical framework explains a theoretical position, whereas a conceptual framework details how I, as a researcher, used and adapted that theory to best suit the process of answering my research questions.

2.1. Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology is recognised as the oldest philosophical discipline and is often generically referred to as denoting bodies of knowledge (Tolk, 2013). For Lavery (2003), ontology is the study of being, the nature of existence and our concepts of reality. In that way, ontology incorporates concepts of understanding what is knowledge, what is truth, what exists and what is real. Within that view, Lavery (2003) emphasised the link between knowledge and reality. Moreover, Gray (2018) stated that ontology is realised in two forms: realist and relativist ontologies. Within realism, Gray (2018) observed that objects in our world exist independently to ‘us’ and, as social scientists, we explore the causal links between ‘them’ and ‘us’. On the other hand, relativism reflects that our understandings of knowledge and reality are grounded in our subjective experiences.

Martin (2010) proposed that epistemology reflects how we come to know the world around us. Similarly, Gray (2004) implied that epistemology tries to conceptualise what it means to know knowledge. Gray (2004) further explained that epistemology provides a philosophical background for deciding what kinds of knowledge are legitimate, what is known and how that knowledge is understood. Consequently, ontology and epistemology are interwoven constructs reflecting their symbiotic relationship (Neill, 2018).

2.1.1. Conceptualising Ontology and Epistemology

For me, ontology and epistemology are conceptualised within several research and communication practices. Undertaking this research and reading related literature has provided a grounding in both concepts of knowledge and reality. Additionally, I question that knowledge and reality within a comparison to my own lived experiences as a Tongan-Kiwi, living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Additionally, I consider those ideas and constructs within my writing and, more importantly, within my interactions with my participants. My participants, like my research reading, have challenged and ‘tested’ my own considerations of what is real and how I know what I know. Consequently, undertaking my research dissertation has been simultaneously a challenging and rewarding experience. As I approach the end of that journey, I need to add another two important ideas, rewarding and a growth experience. Undertaking this dissertation has changed my realities and my knowledge base. I thank my participants and supporting academics for that change. Additionally, I have realised the importance of *talanoa* (Vaiolleti, 2006) and how that has not only facilitated my research, but also positively influenced my own world view in significant and meaningful ways.

2.2. The Social Construction of Reality

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the social construction of reality thesis refers to the “interaction with others in everyday life” (p. 56). That suggestion aligns the social construction of reality thesis to Mead’s (1934) symbolic interactionism because both positions emphasise interaction. For Berger and Luckmann (1966), that interaction

is realised within their notion of “habitualization” (p. 119). They described “habitualization” as any action that is repeated or performed frequently.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) also emphasised the importance of language and its promotion of interactivity. That position aligns to Sapir’s earlier (1929) observations. Sapir (1929) posited that the language available to us reflected how we come to know and can by consequence describe the world around us. Accordingly, Berger and Luckmann (1966) recognised that our identity and its ‘place’ within wider socio-culture is constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through our interactions with others.

2.2.1. Conceptualising the Social Construction of Reality

Food, within Tongan culture, holds symbolic value (‘Ahio, 2011). For Tu’inukuafe (2019) food including *talo* (taro), *puaka* (pig), *ufi* (yam) and *lu sipi* are common yet prestigious Tongan foods. Considering those foods, particularly *lu sipi*, within Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) social construction of reality thesis, making and consuming *lu sipi* can be realised as an interactive activity. Reflecting the interaction, it is often the men who gather the ingredients and the women who prepare the dish. Within those activities, conversations about the task at hand and everyday life occur. In that way, *lu sipi* reinforces ways of being and becoming within interactions based around *lu sipi*. Within Tongan culture that interaction is often mediated by gender. As Tu’inukuafe (2019) observed, in traditional Tongan culture sisters rank higher than brothers. That hierarchy imposes a power dynamic that Bott (1981) suggested forbade certain activities between brothers and sisters. Those activities, according to Bott (1981) and Bleakley (2002), included watching television in the same room, or a brother entering their sisters’ room, particularly when she is going through or has already passed puberty. However, throughout the gathering and preparation of *lu sipi*, men and women are able to converse freely without consideration of those restrictions. Adding to that, the communal consumption of *lu sipi* promotes further interaction and conversation (Bott, 1981). However, other hierarchal factors mediate Tongan life and *lu sipi*-based interactions. For example, it is usually the head of the family (the father), the elders and younger

children who are served first. It is the daughters, mothers and sons who interact by serving this group. However, sometimes *lu sipi* is served 'all-at-once'.

Consequently, within the gathering, preparation, distribution, and consumption of *lu sipi* traditional Tongan social status and hierarchies are created, maintained, and reinforced.

2.3. Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interaction considers the flow of social action between an individual and their socio-cultural environment. Consequently, Mead (1934) referred to symbolic interactionism's importance to identity inasmuch as "we are not born with an already-made self. Rather, the self emerges out of and in turn influences, the practical conduct of social interaction" (p. 258). In that way, Mead's (1934) position aligns with the notions and importance of interaction within Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction of reality thesis.

Key to understanding symbolic interactionism within everyday life are Blumer's (1969) observations that symbolic interactionism reflects how,

(1) individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them, (2) interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects (persons), as well as situations, must be defined or categorized based on individual meanings, (3) meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society, and (4) meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction with others. (Blumer, 1969, p. 932)

Considering symbolic interactionism's (Mead, 1934) importance to my research reinforces my understanding that humankind has created our world in order to understand it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). That creation is reinforced through interaction. Positively reinforced interactions are often repeated and constitute what

Bourdieu (1984) called habitus.⁵ In that way, I now understand how cultures are created and the importance of something often taken for granted: interaction.

2.3.1. Conceptualising Symbolic Interactionism

In applying my understanding of symbolic interactionism to my research on *lu sipi*, I am reminded of Blumer's (1969) observation that individuals act according to the meanings that objects hold for them. The Peace Corps (2012) suggested that, in Tonga, Sunday is the day when families come together and eat after church. Sunday is also the day that is typically set aside for consuming special meals, including *lu sipi*. That day, and those actions, place *lu sipi* as a vector promoting interaction. Consequently, *lu sipi* could be seen to symbolise family, togetherness, sharing, and commensality. Reflecting the negotiation of those interactions, Tongans must ensure that there is an abundance of food. Within Tongan culture, food symbolises wealth, and wellbeing ('Ahio, 2011). Consequently, my recognition and use of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theoretical positioning and the blend of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969), ideally focus my research lens on my topic, *lu sipi*.

2.4. Material Culture Theory and Actancy

Material culture, for Woodward (2007), reflected how "inanimate things within the environment act on people, and are acted upon people, for the purpose of carrying out social functions, regulating social relations and giving symbolic meaning to human activity" (p. 3). Key to Woodward's (2007) position is the construct of actancy. For Woodward (2007), actancy emphasised the relationship between humans and material objects that often engage the stories, emotions, memories, and cultural meanings associated with an object. In that way, as Woodward (2007) and Appadurai (1986) suggested, objects hold biographies that their owners and others have bestowed upon them. Consequently, objects become inherently interactive above and beyond their simple use or monetary value. As a result, a clear link exists between the interactivity inherent to the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966), symbolic

⁵ Habitus is used to serve "the purpose of ontologically grounding the analysis of cognitive structures, so that the interaction between culture and the individual will not become excessively constructionist" (Ignatow & Robinson, 2017, p. 962).

interactionism (Mead, 1934) and the interaction inherent to the actant nature of material items. My understanding is reinforced by Blumer (1969). Blumer (1969) claimed that meanings are created and recreated through interaction. For me, interaction is created and recreated through social interactions that imbue objects with stories, emotions, memories, and cultural meanings.

2.4.1. Conceptualising Material Culture Theory

For non-Tongans, *lu sipi* may simply be considered to be a nutritious meal that satisfies hunger. However, this is not the case for many Tongans. According to Whistler (2009), traditional Tongan foods symbolically represent our ancestors and the stories associated with them. In those ways, *lu sipi* can be considered within Woodward (2007) concept of material culture, particularly the notion of actancy. Reflecting that, Papiloa Bloomfield, a former Tongan politician, mentioned in an interview (The Coconet TV, 2014) that *lu sipi* was a favourite dish amongst Tongans. Bloomfield realised that *lu sipi* incorporated constructs of ancestry and history through the stories and recipes that were passed down within the dish over generations of its production and consumption. In those ways, and over time, *lu sipi* has come to represent more than 'just food'. Within *lu sipi*'s actancy are embedded emotions and stories that reflect its production and consumption. Over time those considerations have created memories and nostalgic considerations associated with *lu sipi* and its production and consumption. Consequently, *lu sipi* symbolically represents more than just food, it has become a marker of Tongan distinction.

2.5. Invented Tradition

Culture is a multifaceted concept (Budin, 2009), bound within constructs of change, evolution and knowledge, and within considerations of Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) invented tradition. Considering those various elements of culture, the social construction of reality thesis (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) posits that humankind creates their world in order to understand it. That understanding is manifest within the habits, rituals, and ways of being and becoming within considerations of culture. The blend of those understandings and their realities could be argued to be invented traditions. Hobsbawm

and Ranger (1983) defined an invented tradition as a cultural activity that has become “constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and datable period” (p. 1). However, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) made the point that tradition is distinguished from customs through the consideration of authenticity. Yet, within invented tradition Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) recognised that cultural changes are inevitable as long as those changes reflect tradition, rather than the convenience of invention.

Reflecting cultural change, and the invention of new traditions, are the meats used in *lu sipi*. Prior to European contact, and as Haden (2009) noted, pork and fish were the protein elements in *lu puaka* and *lu ika*. Introduced meats in Tonga, including lamb, chicken and beef, are viewed as luxury ingredients. That status has seen introduced meats saved and only eaten once a week (Oliver et al., 2010). Today, the blend of traditional meats, and introduced meats is supplemented by common Tongan carbohydrates. Those carbohydrates include taro, *manioke* (cassava) and *ufi* (yam), and fresh tropical fruits (Haden, 2009). Consequently, new proteins have created new ‘*lu*’ style dishes. Those dishes include *lu moa* (chicken), *lu pulu* (beef) and *lu sipi* (lamb).

2.6. Summarising Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

In considering these academic positions, I have come to realise that *lu sipi* is a constructed material item and reality for many Tongans. In short, the production and consumption of *lu sipi* helps people make sense of their world. Making sense of one's world is compounded through interaction and communication (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934; Sapir, 1929). Additionally, repetition and the memories distilled within the production and consumption of *lu sipi* combine to reflect how my choice of dissertation topic, *lu sipi*, complements and enhances my understanding of the application of methodological theory I have chosen for my dissertation. That choice also considers invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). As my Discussion and Conclusion Chapter reveals (refer Chapter 6), invented tradition is an important consideration, given the influence of globalisation and meat availability in Tonga.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

As Hart (1998) observed, a “literature [review] is important because without it you will not acquire an understanding of your topic” (p. 1). Consequently, for me, a literature review distills in meaningful ways what is currently known about a topic and how that knowledge may be realised in practical ways with a dissertation. Within that process, researchers and readers can be informed about any gaps in knowledge and or contradictions within theories impacting a topic. In these ways, a literature review encapsulates themes by building upon existing knowledge or by presenting a topic critique. With these positions in mind, my literature review explores Pacific food culture by concentrating upon the symbolic, material and actant role of food, particularly *lu sipi*.

Pacific cultures and cuisines are distinct yet interrelated constructs. Therefore, exploration of these domains not only clarifies those distinctions, but also informs our knowledge of them. As Haden (2009) observed, “there have been very few Pacific themes[d] cookbooks of any authentic quality published [thus far]” (p. xv). Clarifying that remark, Haden (2009) posited that many Pacific-themed cookbooks failed to capture authentic Pacific food because they featured cocktails and beach parties. Those themes, he proposed, reflected the tourist imagination, rather than the essence of Pacific food itself. Additionally, Haden (2009) claimed that the cuisines of the Pacific were ignored because of the overpowering influence of Western food culture within Pacific nations. In reflecting Western influence, Oliver et al. (2010) observed that many Tongan traditions and customs were slowly dying out. Their decline, they suggested, reflected how Western foods like cabin crackers, noodles, imported meats (including mutton flaps and turkey tails) and junk food have resulted in a health crisis in many Pacific Island nations. It is not difficult to suggest that the Pacific Islands have become a dumping ground for foods that are regarded as seconds or off-cuts that are not commonly used in New Zealand and Australia but have become popular in the Pacific. For Oliver et al. (2010) corned beef provides an excellent example of a nutritionally ‘poor’ food that is popular and exported to the Islands. Notwithstanding considerations of ‘food-dumping’, Haden (2009) and Oliver et al.’s (2010) positions suggest that a

lacuna exists within literature informing Tongan and Pacific cuisines within wider communities and cultures. Cognisant of that gap, my research contributes a valuable insight into a Tongan national dish and identifier: *lu sipi*.

While the relationship between food and nutrition is well known, food's wider influence within socio-culture needs more consideration and exploration. Kittler, Sucher and Nahikian-Nelms (2017) claimed that food culture and food habits were synonymous since they referred to the ways in which food was 'used' by humans. Every aspect of food, how it is selected, prepared, cooked, served, and eaten, not only denotes culinary but socio-cultural uniqueness. Within that consideration, cultural food differences are valuable ways to explore cultures. In that way, food, like language, can be considered a cultural identifier (Corvo, 2016). For Corvo (2016), food represents humankind's holistic relationship with the earth and with nature. Building on that relationship, Chevalier (2018) observed that while food practices were an important way in which people defined themselves, food's provenance, consumption, and preparation also reflected social status and a sense of belonging. However, that position is not new. Bourdieu (1984) explored the relationship between food and class in France. There, he noted how food consumption reflected class differences and taste. More recently, Kittler et al. (2017), Corvo (2016) and Chevalier (2018) agreed that there is more meaning to food than simply its nutritional value. These authors posit that food differentiates cultural groups as well as reflecting individual and group social status and tastes.

Food is a potent identifier. Many socio-cultures locate part of their national identity through food. In that way, food sits within Billig's (1995) construct of banal nationalism. Within that notion, Billig (1995) proposed that national identity is overtly and covertly supported by the concept of banal nationalism. In regard to food, food items embrace national identity; however, that embrace is often taken for granted. Exemplifying that is the almost unconscious association of food with a nation or national identity. Although the origin of the hamburger is disputed (A. F. Smith, 2008), in the United States of America (USA), hamburgers are a popular and classic meal enjoyed by people of all ages. Hamburgers are recognised as an American national dish ("Top 10 National

Dishes,” 2011). The American hamburger was standardised by McDonalds in 1948 (Kincheloe, 2002). Since then, it has become a beacon of globalised Western consumptive aspiration. Sometimes that aspiration has been ‘glocalised’ (M. Smith, 2007), as New Zealand’s kiwiburger⁶ attests. Similarly, in Hungary, a filling stew made with beef, vegetables and spices including Hungarian paprika has become their national dish. Hungarian goulash is for Hungary, what the hamburger is for the United States of America (“Top 10 National dishes,” 2011) and the kiwiburger is for New Zealanders (M. Smith, 2007). Similarly, in Vietnam at New Year, the Vietnamese enjoy a special cake called *banh tet* (New Year rice cakes, sticky-rice loaves with green beans and fatty pork, wrapped in bamboo leaves and boiled overnight) (Avieli, 2005). According to Avieli (2005), *banh tet* is iconic because “the cakes are models of cosmic order” (p. 167). Consequently, *banh tet* has come to reflect Vietnamese culture, rice growing and national identity (Avieli, 2005) in holistic ways. While the USA and Hungary readily identify food with their national identity, other nations lack that link because of their new-world status. Setting aside the kiwiburger, Aotearoa New Zealand provides an exemplar.

Yamamoto (2017) claimed that New Zealand’s cuisine belonged to its migrants. That cuisine began with Māori. As Pollock (2017) realised, migrating Maori brought their food crops and other staple items with them from Polynesia. In that way, and consequent to their arrival and adaptations to New Zealand’s flora and fauna, Māori cuisine includes seafoods (kai moana), pipi, eels, a wide range of fungus, berries, and nuts (Morris, 2010). Traditional Māori cuisine continued until it was influenced by a range of new ingredients brought to New Zealand by whalers and the country’s early settlers (Whistler, 2009). Best exemplifying how Maori food changed under the influence of settler colonists, and newly introduced ingredients, is the way in which Māori adapted a dietary staple, bread (Royal & Scott, 2013).

⁶ McDonalds defines the ‘kiwiburger’ as “The iconic Kiwi burger” with an 100% NZ beef patty with other New Zealand favourite ingredients (McDonalds Restaurants (NZ) Limited, 2020).

Within those considerations, the notion of a New Zealand national cuisine holds two points of blended origin: Māori and Pākehā. Yet, that view is a simplistic one. Contributing to the discussion of a lack of an identifiable New Zealand or Kiwi cuisine, and drawing on the work of Hage (1998), Harbottle (2000) and Heldke (2003), Morris (2010) observed, that the acceptance of the food of any minority group, within a dominant culture, represents the metaphoric acceptance of the minority themselves. For Morris (2010), Māori food was not acceptable because Māori, consequent to their political activism, had a “spoilt identity” (p. 24) for many Pākehā. Consequent to that spoiling, Māori food was not acceptable with the dominant Pākehā socio-culture. In these ways, Morris (2010) realised that the political symbolism inherent in all food and the politics of food, in the case of Māori, defers Māori acceptability within wider socio-culture, thus limiting the development of a bicultural New Zealand cuisine.

Mediating that consideration, Morris (2010) proposed that Māori food was repackaged within a wrapping of New Zealandness, not Māoriness. Consequently, in considering food and identity, and cognisant of Morris (2010), it is unsurprising that the identification of a Kiwi/New Zealand cuisine remains a work in progress that is somewhat problematic. That problematic work in progress not only impacts food but serves as a mirror reflecting the state of race relations in Aotearoa New Zealand (Morris, 2010). While food remains a work in progress within concepts of New Zealandness, for many Tongans identity is signified, not only within food, but also other items. Reflecting that is the *ta’ovala*.

As Prescott (2009) acknowledged, Tongan history, before European contact, “is sketchy” (p. 8). That sketchiness reflects the consideration that Tongan history was communicated orally. However, the attribution of sketchiness to Tongan history could also reflect an academic Eurocentric bias favoring written histories over oral histories. Key to that bias is the consideration that written histories are more reliable than oral histories, a point reinforced by Grele’s (2015) comment that “oral history is not a respected practice of history” (p. 39). As Yow (2005) proposed, the accuracy of any history should be questioned and inaccuracies, in dates for example, might well provide

researchers with fertile ground on which to expand upon current knowledge. In these ways Yow (2005) perceived history as being dynamic and oral histories a portal for further exploration.

In Tonga, traditions and stories were communicated orally within *talanoa* (Fehoko, 2014). Part of those narratives and communication included the material items that Tongans bestowed meaning. That attribution created an actant materiality (Woodward, 2007) within Tongan art, beliefs, and architecture. Best exemplifying how a material item facilitates actancy within Tongan culture is the *ta'ovala* (Prescott, 2009). The *ta'ovala* is a fine mat, woven by female family members. The *ta'ovala* is made from the inner bark fibers of the Tongan hibiscus plant (Tapu, 2020). A *ta'ovala* and is worn around the waist. As Teilhet-Fisk (1992) observed, the *ta'ovala* is exclusively Tongan. There, as Teilhet-Fisk (1992) realised, the *ta'ovala* in Tongan culture is a material item denoting themes of respect and social rank, and personal and national identity. Tapu (2020) related the genesis of the *ta'ovala* by noting that early Tongan sailors wrapped their bodies in the sail matting of their boat (*vaka*) to not only cover their bodies, but also as a sign of respect in meeting the Tongan King.

Today, for celebrations including weddings, birthdays and graduations, Tongans wear their finest *ta'ovala* as a sign of social status and respect. However, the opposite applies to funerals. Then, Tongans wear tattered or old *ta'ovala*'s as signifiers of respect. In those ways, as Tapu (2020) noted, wearing the *ta'ovala* is like wearing and being enveloped by a bit of Tonga. Consequently, the *ta'ovala* is part of many Tongan's actant materiality, signifying not only Tongan craft but also social status and meaning. Food adds to considerations of Tongan material actancy (Woodward, 2007).

As Haden (2009) observed, Tongan cuisine typically consists of fresh fruits, vegetables, *taro*, *ufi*, *taro* leaves, fish, and coconuts, commonly cooked in an underground oven called an *umu*. Historically, in Tonga, fish was eaten more often than red meat. As Oliver et al., (2010) observed, meat was rarely eaten during the week, but rather saved for a Sunday feast. Oliver et al. (2010) cited two reasons for

this. The first reason reflected meat's scarcity; the second, its cost. Yet, as Haden (2009) and Oliver et al. (2010) realised, food in Tonga is linked to more than just nutrition. Tongan food is an actant materiality.

Consequently, as Haden (2009) suggested, food in Tonga reflects socio-cultural norms, respect, wealth, social status, and hospitality. For Oliver et al. (2010), the actancy of Tongan food incorporates the relationship between the Tongan people and their agricultural dependence on and relationship to their land. Haden (2009) observed that, as a nation, Tonga depends on its land for basic resources and food. Reflecting that holism, Tongan food is not a random selection of ingredients but rather a metaphor of Tongan culture. Similarly, land in Tonga could be considered to be a luxury resource, because it provides for all the needs of the Tongan people.

In that way, Tongan food symbolises the past by connecting Tongans to their ancestors within the preparation, consumption and sharing of food with one another (Fekete, 2014). According to Pollock (1992) and Tu'inukuafe (2019), food is the centerpiece of communal Tongan celebrations, such that Tongan food brings Tongan communities together. In Tongan culture, constructs of family and social hierarchy are evidenced through food and, according to Bott (1981) and Fehoko (2014), denote hierarchies of being and becoming Tongan. Exemplifying that being and becoming, within a household hierarchy, the father ranks highest. Food is usually served to him and elderly people first (Bott, 1981). However, at a celebration such as a birthday, the aunty of the person celebrating the birthday holds the highest status (*fahu*: the Father's eldest sister). The *fahu* is usually seated at the front table and is presented with cakes, gifts, and money. According to Bott (1981), the *fahu* has "ritual mystical powers" (p. 18) over her brother's children. Consequently, in both informal and formal social situations, the *fahu* acts as matriarch. Therefore, she is recognised, respected and honoured at celebrations such as birthdays, weddings, and funerals. The *fahu* is often gifted with the finest mats, money, and food (Bleakley, 2002). While Tonga is often considered to be a patriarchal society, The Ministry of Internal Affairs, Women's Affairs Division Government of the Kingdom of Tonga (2019) noted that Tongan

women hold high social status because of the “*fahu* system” (p. 4). Although a father holds the highest rank within his household, in the presence of his sister, regardless of her age, ranks her higher than her brothers. The children of the *fahu* and the *mehikitanga* (*mehikitanga*: a male’s other sisters) also rank higher than the brother’s children (Kaeppler, 1971).

These hierarchies of being reflect a wider Tongan socio-cultural pyramid that has the Tongan Royal family at its apex. For ‘Ahio (2011), traditional Tongan food holds royal associations. Historically, royal foods were prestigious meals and products that non-royal Tongans were forbidden to consume. However, non-royal Tongans were permitted to grow those products for the monarch (Oliver et al., 2010). According to Tu’inukuafe (2019), royal foods included *tunu puaka* (roasted pig), *ufi* (yam) and some sea foods. These foods were considered to be prestigious meals that only the royals could consume. The royal food hierarchy system lasted until 1875. Then, King George Tupou I eliminated the class system. That change allowed the people of Tonga to grow and consume ‘royal food’. Consequently, royal food such as *ufi* and *tunu puaka* came to represent wealth and prestige. *Puaka* sits at the apex of the Tongan protein hierarchy and is the ultimate symbol of wealth in Tongan feasts and rituals (Treagus, 2010). As Gifford (1929) explained, ancestral Tongans sacrificed *puaka* to please the Gods. Additionally, Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938/1971) proposed that pigs are a key part of the Tongan indigenous economy. Furthermore, Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938/1971) observed that preparing and cooking a *tunu puaka* is a male dominated activity symbolising and showcasing masculinity and the ability of male Tongans to provide for others. Following Gifford (1929), Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1938/1971) and Treagus (2010), Tu’inukuafe (2019) reiterated the importance of pigs within Tongan food culture, particularly as a prestigious meat for Tongan royals. That association has reinforced the importance and ‘value’ of pork and pigs within vernacular Tongan culture. In that way the extraordinary high-value royal food, has become ‘ordinary’. Today, while considered prestigious, *puaka* is a commonly consumed part of contemporary Tongan food culture (Tu’inukuafe, 2019).

In concluding my literature review, I note that several themes have emerged. Key to understanding Tongan socio-culture is an awareness of its history, the remembering of ancestors, the importance of the Royal Family, and how a hierarchy of being and becoming Tongan is evidenced in everyday Tongan life. Consequently, exploring *lu sipi* not only considers those domains but also provides rich research data illuminating the material importance of food within Tongan socio-culture, both in Tonga and in Auckland, New Zealand.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction to Methodology

Qualitative research is a social science process used by researchers to describe, explain, and understand various known and unknown phenomena from within their natural settings (Cropley, 2015). In these ways, qualitative research supports human beings in multi-functional ways by introducing new ideas, and by expanding upon existing concepts, ideas, ‘facts’ and theories. As a result, research often improves and sometimes contradicts existing knowledge. Sahu (2013) proposed that research was a voyage of discovery. That notion is inherent to the word research. ‘Re’ denotes ‘again’ (Sahu, 2013) and ‘search’ implies a voyage which, in the case of research, reflects the quest for knowledge. With that quest in mind, this chapter discusses three methodological constructs underpinning my research: qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2010), *talanoa* (Vaiolleti, 2016) and thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012). However, and before exploring those constructs, I want to consider ‘methodology’ and ‘method’ in order to clarify the differences between them. Sahu (2013) defined methodology as a structure or a “process of solving a research problem” (p. 3). Additionally, Sahu (2013) observed that method, within methodology, can best be described as the techniques and the ways that researchers collected their data. Supporting that, Andiappan and Wan (2020) proposed that methodology describes a strategic plan to solve research problems, whereas method describes how methodology is operationalised within research.

My research used qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2010), *talanoa* (Vaiolleti, 2006) and thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012) within my exploration of *lu sipi*. Qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2010) suited my research because I could report, describe, and understand what my participants told me about *lu sipi*, in their words and within their understandings. In that way, my use of qualitative description literally gives voice to my participants. That voice mediates my temptation to over-interpret what my participants told me within their data. Additionally, my use of qualitative description is important because it gives what many people consider to be a minority group

(Tongans in New Zealand) their own authentic voice. That voice is realised not only within my participant data, but within the enthusiasm of my participants to engage in my research. For me, my use of qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2010), *talanoa* (Vaioloti, 2006) and thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012) has given me greater insight into my own culture because, as researcher I have had to stop and think about my research and my own 'Tongan self'.

4.2. Qualitative Research: An Overview

Qualitative research is embedded within a wider worldview positing that meaning is constructed through interaction (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In that way, qualitative inquiry aligns with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction of reality thesis and Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism (refer Chapter 2, Theoretical and Conceptual Framework) because of that interaction, and also because qualitative research emphasises a participant's subjective experience. Reflecting that, Merriam and Grenier (2019) explained that qualitative research aims to understand a participant's worldview, topic knowledge and experiences by reflecting how the social construction of individuals or social groups impacted participant experiences and knowledge. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) claimed that qualitative research focuses on multiple researcher understandings that include interaction and interpretation conducted within a naturalistic research approach. A qualitative paradigm was best suited to my research because I was able to explore the subjective experiences of my participants and what meaning *lu sipi* holds for them.

4.3. Introducing Qualitative Description

Sandelowski (2000) proposed that qualitative description is especially amenable to embracing straightforward descriptions of a phenomenon within research conducted within a naturalistic setting. Qualitative description suits researchers aiming to understand the 'who, what and where' of events from the participants' perspective (Sandelowski, 2000) Supporting Sandelowski (2000), Patton (2002) proposed that qualitative description allowed researchers to analyse their data from the participants' unique experience. Expanding upon that, Rahman (2016) stated that although the

results obtained from qualitative description may differ between participants, those differences provide more in-depth detailed information about each individual's feelings, opinions, and experiences. In that way, the nature of qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000) aligns with considerations of constructionism in that both domains emphasise that, in understanding human behaviours, humans make sense of their world.

However, qualitative description has limitations. Sandelowski (2000) recognised that qualitative description was often viewed to be at the lower end of qualitative inquiry. Yet, within the hierarchy of research methodologies, Sandelowski (2000) explained that quantitative inquiry was perceived to be the 'best' design compared to any other. While that paradox reflects a hierarchy of methodologies, what is important to consider in choosing any methodology is the question of what is most useful and beneficial to illuminate the research topic, not the methodology's academic reputation. Supporting that position, Kim, Sefcik and Bradway (2017) and Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove (2016) proposed that qualitative description provides an in-depth description discovering events and experiences through the participants' own perspectives. Consequently, as Sandelowski (2000) suggested, qualitative description provides "descriptive validity" (p. 336). Bianmu (2019) offered the reassurance that, for small research studies, qualitative description provides effective and useful data.

4.4. *Talanoa*

Complementing my use of qualitative description is *talanoa* (Vaiotei, 2006). According to Halapua (2002) "*talanoa* comes from two words *tala*, 'to tell' and *noa*, 'zero or without concealment' (p. 1). The construct of *talanoa* is shared within South Pacific Island nations (Vaka, Brannelly & Huntington, 2016). Vaiotei (2006) suggested that *talanoa* means to talk or to have a conversation. *Talanoa* is a communication and conversational tool used within Pacific Island conversations, storytelling and/or gossiping (Fehoko, 2014). For Prescott (2008), *talanoa* is an appropriate construct for researchers to use within studies in or about Pacific Island cultures and ways of being and becoming. Using *talanoa* creates familiarity and engages in building a relationship

between participants and researchers (Fehoko, 2014). Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) indicated that *talanoa* relies on generalised conversations that eventually focus upon the main topics through combinations of formal and informal conversations. As Neill (2018) observed, “*talanoa* is part of [the] Pasifika worldview” (p. 68). Additionally, Vaioleti (2006) highlighted that *talanoa* sits within the phenomenological research approach. Creswell (2013) proposed that the aim of phenomenology is to focus on the commonality of an event or an experience within a particular group.

As a Kiwi-born Tongan researching a Pacific Island-based topic, my use of *talanoa* is appropriate. *Talanoa* is appropriate because it is second nature not only to my Tongan participants but also for me as a Tongan-Kiwi. As a Tongan-Kiwi, I understand that *talanoa* is a construct within communication that forms a sense of comfort and familiarity within conversation (Fehoko, 2014). Consequently, as a Tongan-Kiwi, *talanoa* is part of my everyday life. *Talanoa* gives my participants as well as myself an opportunity to experience being and becoming within a language space with which we are familiar. As a Tongan-Kiwi, being able to engage in an appropriate culturally based research approach helps me, as a researcher, understand my participants, research, and culture.

However, *talanoa* has limitations. For Vaioleti (2006), *talanoa*’s effectiveness in research was perceived to be compromised by issues of data validity. However, Vaioleti (2006) also observed that data validity denotes the socio-temporal positioning of participants. Consequently, data validity needs to be considered consequent to time, place, and space within all methodologies, including *talanoa*. Although issues of validity may be a limitation, qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000) supports the concept of understanding a participant’s unique experiences from their points of view and, in doing so, gives minority groups a research voice.

4.5. Thematic Analysis

Guest et al. (2012) recognised that thematic analysis requires involvement and interpretation from the researcher and that it relates to qualitative description.

Supporting that view, Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas (2013) proposed that thematic analysis and qualitative description have a commonality, a position supported by Neill's (2018) proposition that "both domains share similar philosophical backgrounds" (p. 110). Consequently, using thematic analysis and maximising the themes gleaned from *talanoa* provided my research with a unique insight into my participants' subjective experiences of *lu sipi*.

For Guest et al. (2012), thematic analysis focuses on "identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data" (p. 9). These ideas, for Braun and Clarke (2006), are used to analyse data. To analyse the research data, Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed a back-and-forth process for researchers, moving between the collected and the emergence of codes and research themes. Those six processes, as Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015) noted, include familiarisation, coding, searching, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing a report. These steps are noted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Processes of Thematic Analysis

<u>PHASE</u>	<u>PROCESS</u>	<u>DETAILS</u>
1	Familiarisation	Becoming familiar with my data collected by creating a transcript from my interviews and notes on points of interest.
2	Coding	Identifying and recognising the data collected and the relevance to my research question. Coding this is the first step in identifying any patterns.
3	Searching	Searching for other themes and understanding what these themes are, as well as participants' meanings.
4	Reviewing themes	Reviewing the themes, making refinements, and ensuring that there is nothing missing.
5	Defining and naming themes	Defining and re-defining themes.
6	Writing a report	Bringing all phases of the process together in an analytic narrative with compelling data extracts related to the research and existing literature.

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006).

Guest, et al. (2012) argued that thematic analysis is the most useful method in capturing meaning within data. Exploring Vaismoradi et al. (2013) and Guest et al. (2012) has helped me describe how I intended to use thematic analysis. Although thematic analysis poses a concern in regard to the reliability of the research data, Guest, et al. (2012) also reassured me that, regardless of this limitation, thematic analysis is an effective way to define, interpret, and capture data from my participants.

4.6. Impacting my Method: Coronavirus

According to New Zealand's Ministry of Health (2020a) COVID-19 (coronavirus) is a new infectious virus that compromises the human respiratory system. Coronavirus derives from a diverse family of viruses that cause illnesses in both animals and human beings. While related to other viruses, specifically the SARS-CoV-2 (Costantini, Sleeman, Peruselli & Higginson, 2020), coronavirus was unknown until its outbreak in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (World Health Organization, 2020). At the time of writing, some nations including Russia have announced a possible vaccine, there are no known vaccines that are effective in treating the disease.⁷ With quick spread and interconnections enabled by globalised jet travel, the COVID-19 outbreak has caused a global pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020).

Aotearoa New Zealand's first COVID-19 case occurred on February 26, 2020. Then, a man in his 60s who traveled to Auckland from Iran became ill with COVID-19 (Ministry of Health, 2020b). Between February 28 and March 22, 2020, New Zealand had 66 cases ("COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline," 2020) of COVID-19. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced an immediate and national Level 4 lockdown effective from 11:59pm, March 25, 2020. Then, New Zealand's COVID-19 total surpassed 100 cases. Alert Level 4's lockdown was put in place for public safety and to help control if not eliminate the virus's spread (New Zealand Government, 2020a).

⁷ The UK is the first country in the world to use the vaccine for COVID-19 ("Covid-19 Vaccine: First Person Receives Pfizer Jab in UK," 2020).

Under Alert Level 4, the majority of New Zealanders self-isolated in their homes or 'bubbles'. This meant, only going out for essential reasons (for example food or medical reasons). Table 2 below provides a timeline of COVID-19 levels implemented by the government. The information below provided by New Zealand's Official COVID-19 website shows a timeline throughout the different levels.

Table 2: COVID Timeline and Levels

Date	Alert level
Wednesday March 25, 2020 - 11:59PM	NZ COVID-19 Alert Level 4
Monday April 27, 2020 - 11:59PM	NZ COVID-19 Alert Level 3
Wednesday May 13, 2020 - 11:59PM	NZ COVID-19 Alert Level 2
Monday June 8, 2020 - 11:59PM	NZ COVID-19 Alert Level 1
Wednesday August 12, 2020 - 12NOON	Auckland COVID-19 Alert Level 3

Source: Unite against COVID-19 (New Zealand Government, 2020b).

Each COVID-19 related level noted in Table 2 required different actions. Those actions can be explored by accessing the following url:

<https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/tables/COVID-19-alert-levels-summary.pdf>

At all alert levels, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted my dissertation. That impact has been realised in multiple ways. Specifically, COVID-19 has impacted my physical and mental wellbeing and my day-to-day activities that extend well beyond my dissertation. As a mother of a young, outgoing, curious, and adventurous three-year-old, trying to juggle family commitments and responsibilities, as well as my dissertation, became difficult during the pandemic. It was exceedingly difficult for me to manage my time, especially in consideration of the extra stress that the pandemic created. Before restrictions were put in place, my daughter was attending daycare, Monday to Friday. Then, I was able to manage my time effectively and concentrate for long periods of time on my dissertation. With COVID-19 and lockdown, managing my time between family responsibilities and my dissertation became a major challenge.

Additionally, I encountered technical issues that negatively impacted my dissertation progress. I live in Pakuranga, East Auckland. There, major road works are under way with the construction of a new Eastern busway. That construction meant that power (and, consequently, internet) services were constantly being disrupted. That significantly added to my stress levels. Not only was my daughter at home, but when I found time to work on my dissertation, often, the power was disconnected! Compounding that, when my internet had power, it was slow and often 'dropped' from the server.

Consequently, I made use of AUT's offer of an updated modem and laptop. After completing the necessary paperwork to receive these items, I waited, and waited. Finally, my supervisor intervened. There was a mix-up between AUT and Spark. That mix up meant that AUT believed I had received my modem and computer but, in reality, Spark had not delivered them. The lack of effective home technology added to my frustration and delayed my dissertation's progress. The strain of these challenges pushed me mentally and emotionally. I became distressed at the lack of progress I was making with my dissertation and the factors that impacted my lack of progress. I discussed my situation with my supervisor. We agreed that it would be best that I devoted my time to my three-year-old daughter.

Additionally, in Pacific Island culture, girls, in particular, must contribute to the maintenance of the household in practical and meaningful ways. As my parents' only daughter, I had wider family responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning for a household of eight people. Those tasks were on top of motherhood duties to my own daughter and, of course, my research dissertation. While other family members made active contributions to our daily household activities, they did not have a dissertation to complete!

However, New Zealand soon experienced around 100 COVID-19 free days. Then, life returned to a new form of 'normal'. I began to catch up with my dissertation. That made me feel both relieved and positive. However, it was not long before COVID-19 reappeared in New Zealand. Within COVID-19's second wave, I was more prepared

because I had been through it before. With no technical issues in the second wave, I focused on my dissertation without disruption.

4.7. Method: Application and Operationalisation of my Methodology.

In reflecting upon my application of methodology within this section of writing, I am conscious of actively avoiding having separate headings for qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2010), *talanoa* (Vaiolleti, 2006) and thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012). Rather, my reflections on my application of methodology (my method) have become holistic. Now, within my consideration of method are links to theories and constructs that I would have previously thought impossible. Consequently, as I now perceive and discuss my method, I reflect and incorporate within it constructs of ontology, epistemology, the social construct of reality, (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) material culture and actancy considerations (Woodward, 2007) and invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983).

As I came to know, appreciate, and understand qualitative research (Merriam & Grenier, 2019), particularly within my application of Sandelowski's (2000) qualitative description, I realised that, within my participants *lu sipi*-related narratives, my participants were sharing with me their ontologies, and epistemologies. For them, relating narratives about *lu sipi* created a shorthand version for their understanding and negotiation of the world around them. In revealing their *lu sipi* stories, my participants not only interacted with me, but in retelling their stories they interacted with others in recalling stories and associated memories that were important to them. Consequently, because of my research activity, I now realise the link between methodology, method, and ontology and epistemology (Laverty, 2003), the social construction of reality, (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), theories of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) and material culture and actancy (Woodward, 2007), and how invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) may be associated with contemporary socio-cultural change.

Additionally, and in these ways, my methodology – Sandelowski's (2000) qualitative description – merged into wider constructs and considerations. Integral to that, for me,

was my realisation of the connections between method (doing research), and how that 'doing' revealed my participants' realities and knowledge within conversation. Integral to that process was *talanoa*. As a Tongan, I was excited that a Pacific Island construct could be incorporated within my research work. Including *talanoa*, not only as theory but also within my interaction with my participants, brought me closer to my research, and I believe added greater depth to my interview process. *Talanoa* made me part of my own research in ways that reflected my own Tongan-ness. Evidencing that was not only my deep and meaningful relationship with my participants, but also the realisation that, in using *talanoa*, my research generated something truly meaningful. That 'something else' was that my research gave voice to a minority group, via *talanoa*, ontology, epistemology, the social construction of reality thesis (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), and theories of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), material culture/actancy (Woodward, 2007), and invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). In that way I feel that I have extended a key dimension within Sandelowski's (2000) notions of qualitative description by using and maximising the direct quotes from my participants without undue interpretation. Consequently, I have literally given my participants a voice. That realisation, as I have come to understand it, bestowed "descriptive validity" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336) on my participants' unique experiences and my research. Yet, within those understandings, I also came to realise that, in my application of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach (refer Table 1) to thematic analysis, that I negated step number two, coding. I set this step aside because I realised that my themes were congruent with my research questions. Consequently, coding became an unnecessary step.

Notwithstanding that, my combined and adapted considerations of qualitative description (Sandelowski, 2000), *talanoa* (Vaiolleti, 2006) and thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012), integrated within considerations of ontology and epistemology (Laverty, 2003), the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), material culture/actancy (Woodward, 2007) and invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), combine in meaningful ways to create the base for the information that generates my dissertation's final two chapters, my findings

chapter, Chapter 5, and my discussion and conclusion chapter, Chapter 6. These realisations and combinations have facilitated my research understanding of *lu sipi* in deep and meaningful ways.

Chapter 5. Research Findings

5.1. Overview of Findings

This chapter presents my research findings. To best understand my findings, I have divided my participant data into three primary themes. These themes were distilled from 12 sub-themes gleaned through my use of thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012). Consequently, my three primary themes reflect the interconnections that relate to *lu sipi*, as realised by my participants.

Table 3: Twelve Sub-themes and Three Primary Theme Findings

Sub-Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family values• Memories• Way of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History• Tradition• Social ranking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commensality• Delicacy• Contemporary Cuisine
Distilled Primary Theme	Identity	Metaphor for being Tongan	Tongan food culture

However, before presenting my three primary themes as findings, to begin this chapter I present an overview of my three research participants.

5.2. Introducing my Participants

I interviewed three unique research participants. Their perspectives on Tongan culture and *lu sipi* have combined to add depth to my research because they approached my topic from different perspectives. Table 4 identifies my participant group.

Table 4: My Research Participants and their Areas of Expertise

Participant Name	Area of Expertise	Approximate Age	Gender
Soane Pasi	Chef, culinarian, and Tongan	44	Male

Associate Professor Tracy Berno	Pasifika specialist academic, (self-identified as non-Tongan)	57	Female
Amanaki Toloke	Tongan, cook, my father and mentor	54	Male

Soane Pasi and ‘Amanaki Toloke are my two self-identifying Tongan participants. They offered my research their unique Tongan lived experiences and perspectives of *lu sipi*. Complementing and contrasting that was Associate Professor Tracy Berno, a non-Tongan South Pacific academic cultural expert. For me, the combination of my participants' perspectives was important because two of my participants explored their own culture ‘from the inside’ whereas Associate Professor Berno, as a Canadian, perceived Tongan culture from the ‘outside’. Consequently, my research presents both an “emic” and “etic” (Jary & Jary, 2000, p. 182) perspective. That combination adds unique insights and depth to my exploration of *lu sipi*.

Notwithstanding that, choosing my participants was congruent with Sandelowski’s (2000) notion that qualitative description within a small-scale study reflected “descriptive validity” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). That validity was reinforced by Bianmu’s (2019) affirmation that a small research study can provide a depth of data and value gleaned from a small participant cohort. In these ways, considering my “emic” and “etic” (Jary & Jary, 2000, p. 182) participant perspectives, my combination of participants and method within my research provides a unique insight, appreciation, and understanding of *lu sipi*.

5.3. Identity, Memories, Family Values and Way of Life

My participants agreed that *lu sipi* denotes and connotes constructs of Tongan identity. Within that connection, three themes were important to my participants. They included family values, memories, and way of life (refer to Table 3). Extending these themes, for my participants, were feelings of belonging and togetherness. Mediating those associations, within the consumption of *lu sipi*, was the distinction and contribution of

family and friends. These themes and their combinations were important markers of distinction for my participants. As Associate Professor Tracy Berno remarked:

so palusami and the whole umu/lovo thing reminds me of those days with the gang. It is nostalgic, happy memories with friends, and community. It is sort of, people outside of the Pacific think of it just Pls they don't realise that there is a lot of different blood in the Pacific and it reminds me of that the intermingling of the cultures, and everyone is into it. So, it has a lot of good memories for me.

For Associate Prof. Tracy, *palusami* reminded her of happy and cheerful memories shared with her friends, particularly her Fijian friends. Consequently, Associate Prof. Tracy realised *lu sipi* within a wider context than Tonga. Additionally, Associate Prof. Tracy commented that when making a *lovo* or an *umu*, sharing and togetherness extended beyond the food itself. In her experience, *lovo* and *umu* preparation involved about 20 people. In these ways, Associate Prof. Tracy illuminated how *lu sipi* was a shared experience that brought people together. Those experiences were shared by 'Amanaki and Soane. As Soane remembered:

In Tonga, lu sipi is a family deal, everyone is into it.

Reflecting similar themes, but recalling his childhood in Tonga, 'Amanaki added:

When you're a kid the best memories are with lu sipi. Not only is it about the taste but I remember all the good times and who my friends were at the time.

Soane held similar views. However, his connections with *lu sipi* reflected direct connections to family and his antecedents. He remarked:

Lu sipi doesn't just bring togetherness but connects you with others that crave and love lu sipi. In Tonga it is more of a family deal, everyone is into it. Let's face it, in Tonga we are still in some way making food like how our ancestors did in the olden days.

My participants unanimously agreed that *lu sipi*'s preparation and consumption was characterised by ideas of sharing, and togetherness that reflected the 'now' and the

past. Over time, that combination created wonderful memories of the dish and the circumstances in which it was prepared, shared, and consumed. Extending those experiences, Associate Prof. Tracy related that:

We used to have these absolutely incredible parties at one of their houses and he was Chinese and his mum would do all the cooking and she would cook something from every single one of our cultures and she made the best palusami.

Additionally, and like Soane's connection of *lu sipi* with ancestry, 'Amanaki associated *lu sipi* with his father, my grandfather Solomone Toloke. As my father related:

The specific person that I associate with lu sipi is the memory of my dad. The way my dad cooks the lu sipi. When we start the fire in the umu then he would BBQ the sipi on the umu so he BBQ the sipi and then he cuts it then puts it in the lu.

Those memories reflect how my participants created memories via *lu sipi*. Consequently, *lu sipi* promoted links that resonated and represented family values and the Tongan way of life for my participants. As Soane reminisced, he recalled his memories of *lu sipi*, his grandmother and Sunday afternoons in Tonga:

My grandma craved for lu sipi at a very old age. We would take food to her wherever she was. It is common to all Tongans to make lu sipi on Sunday afternoons.

For Soane, *lu sipi* was a way in which he remembered his grandmother, and the importance of his family within his lived experiences in Tonga. Building upon those memories and nostalgia, 'Amanaki shared his memories of boarding school and *lu sipi*. He recounted thoughts of family values as families visited their children at boarding school, on Sundays. He commented:

At boarding school in Tonga, Sunday is the best day for all students at the school. Why? Because on Sundays they allow our parents to bring food. Most parents bring lu sipi.

Reflecting the association between Sundays and *lu sipi*, 'Amanaki added that:

Every household in Tonga, after church on Sunday they have lu sipi for their meal.

Not only did 'Amanaki and Soane emphasise the importance of *lu sipi*'s connection with Sundays and family, 'Amanaki related to *lu sipi* in holistic Tongan-centric ways. He commented that:

Lu sipi in Tonga is a way of life. Lu sipi connects with Tonga. So, to me lu sipi is a way of living. It ties up to family values and culture. For example, I can read something about cheese in Italy and that in some way view their culture. So, to me, lu sipi is a way of life or a style that ties up with the family and generation. My grandparents, but as far as I remember, my grandparents prepared lu sipi the same.

In these ways, *lu sipi* conveyed family feelings of sharing and care that, on Sundays transcended the distance that boarding school promoted. Those emotions were bound up with wider considerations of family history and generational themes of caring and sharing. Consequently, as 'Amanaki and Soane illuminated, *lu sipi* can be viewed as a metaphorical lens that focuses notions of knowledge and history reflecting the Tongan way of life, particularly considerations of family values and culture that reflect cultural characteristics of caring and sharing. My Tongan participants reflected considerations that validated family values through *lu sipi* by the acts that incorporated more than just providing for their households. As Soane exemplified, his family would travel to take food to his grandmother wherever she was. Similarly, 'Amanaki mentioned that, at boarding school, the students' families and parents would travel from their villages and homes to bring them food. These experiences reflect love and basic family values of caring, sharing and communicating within *lu sipi*'s commensality and inherent interactivity. These factors resonated for Soane. As Soane related:

Lu sipi just helps me understand Tongan's way of life especially when gathering foods and also the making of it like when we do an umu.

While Soane realised the meaning of *lu sipi* in Tonga 'Amanaki commented on *lu sipi* in New Zealand. He recounted:

In Tonga, there are so many things you need to do and gather to make lu. The only thing you buy is the sipi. Also, in Tonga we cook underground, so the weather plays a part in making lu. In New Zealand, when using an [electric] oven, it is the same from January to December there is no change. All ingredients are bought from the shop and you use a commercial oven.

For ‘Amanaki and Soane, *lu sipi* was part of the Tongan way of life through the activities of gathering and preparing *lu sipi*. For them, those experienced changed by location. In New Zealand, things like tin foil and electric ovens were conveniences that made the preparation time and cooking of *lu sipi* shorter and less labour intensive. That contrasted the time it took to prepare and cook *lu sipi* in Tonga. New Zealand’s comparatively unpredictable weather was another differentiating factor that ‘Amanaki highlighted was mitigated by electric ovens indoors. Contrasting that, an *umu* required a sunny day and many physical steps to prepare. Consequently, preparing and cooking *lu sipi* the traditional Tongan way reinforced participants’ roles and allowed time for conversation and bonding. In turn, these themes reinforced participants’ understandings of being and becoming Tongan in deeper ways than a New Zealand *lu sipi* experience might. As Associate Prof. Tracy claimed, making an *umu* or *palusami* takes about 20 people. This suggests that *lu sipi* has become an integral factor reinforcing constructs of family, family values and collective themes of Tongan identity that, in turn, supports memories and ideas about Tongan culinary history.

In these ways, *lu sipi* created clear points of distinction for my participants. These connections and distinctions were realised within constructs of memory, family, and the collective nature inherent to the Tongan way of life. In considering what my participants told me, I have come to realise that *lu sipi* represents something else: *lu sipi* is ‘a language’. As a language, *lu sipi*’s shared preparation and commensal consumption reflect an interactive expression of hospitality. That connection is communicated in almost unthinking and sometimes non-verbal ways. The collectivity of *lu sipi* in Tonga was contrasted by ‘Amanaki’s New Zealand *lu sipi* experiences, where the weather and commercialisation impacted notions and understandings of the togetherness *lu sipi* promoted in Tonga. Within those considerations, it is of little surprise that *lu sipi* within Tongan or Fijian cultures provides an ideal platform for people to make connections,

build memories, and glean feelings of togetherness. In that way, *lu sipi* could be seen as a ‘food souvenir’, a tangible link to the past peppered with memory and nostalgia as well as notions of whakapapa. Yet, in noting *lu sipi*’s souvenir status, I am at pains to stress that *lu sipi* is not a plastic takeaway imitation of Tongan culture, but a profound and meaningful part of Tongan identity.

5.4. *Lu Sipi*: A Metaphor for Being Tongan: History, Tradition and Social Ranking

For my participants, *lu sipi* was a metaphor of Tongan-ness. For me, that realisation was evidenced in the narratives reflecting being and becoming Tongan, history, tradition, and social rank that my participants discussed. I identified those domains as part of my process of developing themes (refer Table 1). In my interactions with my participants, I noticed that when they were given time to think about *lu sipi*, their responses tended to gravitate toward those themes. For me that link realised, in meaningful ways, Woodward’s (2007) ideas about material culture theory and actancy, particularly how inanimate objects like *lu sipi* “giv[e] symbolic meaning to human activity” (p. 3). Within my research and questioning, and in creating themes, it became obvious to me that my participants realised that *lu sipi* was a symbolic metaphor that denoted and connoted the essence of Tongan culture and identity. Within my research the following questions and responses established those links and findings. While my participants held divergent experiences of *lu sipi*, they all enthusiastically embraced this question, with full answers that provided my research with a deeper understanding of *lu sipi*’s symbolic and actant importance. Reflecting that, I asked my participants the same question, that I believed required them to consider *lu sipi* in deeper ways than a less open-ended question might. That question was: “*In what ways does lu sipi help you to understand Tongan culture?*” In response, ‘Amanaki began to explore *lu sipi*’s connection to Tonga’s elite, the Tongan Royal Family. He stated that:

I believe that the royals were the one who ate lu sipi first. I believe that because they were the only ones who had access to overseas ingredients [like lamb and other meats].

Within that consideration 'Amanaki identified a top-down model of taste and consumption that promoted a hierarchy of consumption with the Tongan Royal Family at its apex. Expanding on that he continued:

In Tongan culture there are ranks, there are the commoners or the people, the nobles, and the King.

Like other cultural hierarchies, the commoners in Tongan culture are represented by the everyday people. Their position contrasts the elevated position of the King who is positioned at the apex of Tongan socio-culture. That difference is evidenced not only within social position but also within constructs of language and its use. As 'Amanaki explained, referencing the Tongan verb 'to eat'⁸:

In Tongan culture there are different words for many verbs including 'eat'. A different word is used by the commoners, the nobles and for the king/royal monarch. They all interpret the same meaning, 'put food in your mouth' or eat. In Tongan language kai is the word for commoners, for nobles it is ilo and for the King or royalty is taumafa. However, they all mean the same thing.

Adding to that understanding and how ordinary people support the Tongan Royal Family, 'Amanaki used Auckland and its suburbs as an exemplar. As he related:

For example, in Auckland, right? Auckland has four main parts: Manukau, Auckland city, the North Shore, and the West. Transferring that to Tonga, we would all have a responsibility to the King. For example, let us say that the people living in Manukau would provide the Royals' seafood. Auckland City residents would have a different responsibility to the King, perhaps supplying yam. West Aucklanders might provide the King's kava. In those ways, the commoners support the monarchy often with food common to their regions.

'Amanaki's commentary not only revealed a top-down model of taste but also a 'bottom-up' class system that unites Tongan's commoners in their support and loyalty to the nation's royal family. Pasi and Associate Prof. Tracy supported 'Amanaki's position. Respectively they realised that *lu sipi* helped Tongans understand the nature of being

⁸ In Tongan culture, verbs particularly, change depended on hierarchy. As other verbs besides eat reveal (Bott, 1981).

Tongan and Tongan socio-culture, particularly their connections with traditions and ancestors. Soane contributed that *lu sipi*:

Connects us to our ancestors, they have always cooked with what they have on hand.

Agreeing with that, Associate Prof. Tracy described *lu sipi* as food that symbolically connected Tongan people and Pacific culture with notions of ancestors, traditions, and history.

Lu sipi is steeped in history, tradition, and culture. It changes from family to family, village to village and country to country but it is that common thread across the countries that is literally grounded in the ingredients because the ingredients come from the soil, sunshine, water and air. So that is where I'd see that the connection to history, tradition, and lu sipi occurs.

Soane continued that theme contributing that:

Even though sipi isn't a food that is truly Tongan, lu and niu⁹ are the two that connects us with our ancestors because we use it today and it is something that they used back then.

Soane acknowledged that *sipi* is an imported product in Tonga. However, he realised and acknowledged that *lu* and *niu* are authentic Tongan ingredients that are used today and have been used throughout Tongan culinary and socio-cultural history. Encapsulating those notions, Associate Prof. Tracy added that:

Food is a gateway to culture.

My participants reflected Associate Prof Tracy's observation in truly meaningful ways. These ways moved *lu sipi* away from mere nutrition toward a metaphor representing 'something else'. That something else was expressed within notions of *lu sipi*'s symbolic meanings. Those constructs were evidenced within participant commentaries about social hierarchy, Tongan royalty, history, language use, and the ancestral associations *lu sipi* created for my participants. Like other nations, the Tongan social hierarchy of the

⁹ Niu: Tongan for coconut (Haden, 2009).

King, nobles and commoners reflects the constructs of upper-, middle- and lower-class groupings. In those ways, my participants realised *lu sipi* as a marker of Tongan distinction within socio-temporal constructs of the past, present and, within 'Amanaki's Auckland comparison, the future.

5.5. Tongan Food Culture: Commensality, Luxury and Contemporary Cuisine

All of my participants expressed and discussed forms of commensality, ritual, and delicacy in relation to *lu sipi*. Throughout my interviews, my participants incorporated those notions within what I themed, in wider terms, Tongan food culture (refer to Table 3). Even though not all participants were Tongan, they all contributed narratives that conveyed those themes. My own experiences as a Tongan quickly recognised those associations. One important aspect of Tongan food culture is the construct of commensality. As a Tongan, I learnt to share from an early age. Sharing is a seminal theme in Tongan culture. For my participants, however, sharing, particularly items like *lu sipi*, was a key part of relaxation. For 'Amanaki, *lu sipi*, commensality, and relaxation were synonymous activities that he linked to the Sabbath, Sunday, the day of rest. 'Amanaki explained the connection that *lu sipi* has with sharing and Sundays, proposing that:

Every household in Tonga, culture wise especially, on Sunday's lu sipi along with other foods are cooked and often shared with neighbours.

That sharing and eating held connotations and taste differences between Tongan life in Tonga, and Tongan life in Auckland, New Zealand. He continued stating:

We use the banana leaves to wrap it and there is a different taste and the moist of the lu when you make it using more natural resources. Here in New Zealand, we use aluminum foil. Then, there is a difference in taste.

For 'Amanaki, the authenticity of *lu sipi*'s taste was linked to nature and the use of natural products. That, in turn, was linked to location and therefore *terroir*. Nonetheless, whether *lu sipi* was served in Tonga or Auckland, sharing was key to the enjoyment of

the dish. Natural ingredients, commensality and authenticity were important for Soane too. He suggested that these constructs reflect part of Tonga's food history that is still practiced today. As Soane revealed, in linking history to the present day:

In Tonga lu sipi is more of a family deal, everyone is into it. Let's face it, in Tonga we are still in some way making food like how our ancestors did in the olden days.

As 'Amanaki and Soane previously noted, the commensal nature of enjoying and making *lu sipi*, was:

often shared with neighbours [and] is more of a family deal, everyone is into it.

However, both Soane and 'Amanaki realised that *lu sipi*'s authenticity was compromised, by location and the products, particularly *sipi*, that were used to make *lu sipi* today. *Sipi* and other meat products could be considered to be introduced foods and therefore not considered to be authentically Tongan. Notwithstanding that *sipi* has elevated *lu sipi* as a Tongan luxury. As Associate Prof. Tracy proposed:

The meat part of lu sipi to me is more of a contemporary part of Pacific cuisine. For me, that could be said for most meats within the context of most Pacific cuisines. The use of most meats is something that has evolved over time, within Pacific cuisines, as more ingredients have become available.

Soane was more direct. He observed:

We all know that sipi was brought into Tonga.

Additionally, 'Amanaki observed that,

Sipi was an imported food to Tonga.

While *sipi* is an introduced product that has become synonymous with *lu sipi*, that association has, for 'Amanaki, become something of an invented tradition. As 'Amanaki recounted:

In my generation sipi was there but I don't know about the generations before me.

However, Soane illuminated the importance of *sipi*'s introduction to Tonga. He recounted:

This new meat had become a luxury but in my generation sipi was the cheapest meat available in Tonga. Even though it was cheap it tasted good. However, I was surprised when I went back to Tonga and found that the price of sipi was more expensive than chicken meat. I guess that's because everybody is raving about it so therefore it becomes more expensive, supply and demand.

Later, 'Amanaki contributed a similar narrative observing that:

In my time, sipi was not really classified as cheap or expensive. Today it is expensive in Tonga. I see that chicken is now the main and cheaper meat option. When it comes to the affordability of sipi, I believe that is how it will fade away. I do believe that the King and the nobles were the first people to eat lu sipi in Tonga and like the same way in, it will be the same way out.

While Soane and 'Amanaki referred to *sipi* as a luxurious ingredient of Tongan food, Prof. Tracy perceived *sipi* as contemporary Tongan cuisine. Considering cost and Tonga's hierarchical socio-culture, within the narratives of 'Amanaki and Soane, *sipi* may be endangered as *lu sipi*'s most popular meat. That possibility reflects food mobility and the influences of global trade and how those factors impact the dish's authenticity. In similar ways, cooking *lu sipi* using aluminum foil could also be seen to reflect how globalised products and forces compromise *lu sipi*'s authenticity. These points notwithstanding, my participants also informed my research that constructs of sharing, relaxation, Sunday as the Sabbath and the commensal nature of enjoying *lu sipi*'s production and consumption are the cornerstones of the importance of *lu sipi*, both in Tonga, and in Auckland, New Zealand.

5.6. Summary of Findings

To summarise my Findings Chapter, I re-introduce Table 3. Initially, Table 3 introduced my twelve sub-themes and my three distilled primary themes. However, with its reintroduction here, I update those themes by noting my supporting research findings, distilled from my participant quotes. Consequently, Table 5 now provides the summary of research findings that I carry forward to my next chapter, the Discussion and Conclusion Chapter (refer Chapter 6).

Table 5: Twelve Sub-themes, Three Primary Themes and Supporting Research Findings

Sub Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family values • Memories • Way of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History • Tradition • Social ranking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commensality • Delicacy • Contemporary Cuisine
Primary Theme	Identity	Metaphor for being Tongan	Tongan food culture
Supporting Participant Quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It is nostalgic, happy memories with friends, and community. It is sort of, people outside of the Pacific think of it just PIs they don’t realise that there is a lot of different blood in the Pacific”</i> • <i>“When you’re a kid the best memories are with lu sipi”</i> • <i>“Lu sipi doesn’t just bring togetherness but connects you with others that crave and love lu sipi. In Tonga it</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I believe that the royals were the one who ate lu sipi first. I believe that because they were the only ones who had access to overseas ingredients [like lamb and other meats].”</i> • <i>“Connects us to our ancestors, they have always cooked with what they have on hand.”</i> • <i>“Lu sipi is steep in history, tradition, and culture.”</i> • <i>“Food is a gateway to</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Every household in Tonga, culture wise especially, on Sunday’s lu sipi along with other foods are cooked and often shared with neighbours.”</i> • <i>“We use the banana leaves to wrap it and there is a different taste and the moist of the lu when you make it using more natural resources. Here in New Zealand we use aluminum foil. Then, there is a difference in</i>

	<p><i>is more of a family deal, everyone is into it”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Every household in Tonga, after church on Sunday they have lu sipi for their meal.”</i> • <i>“Lu sipi in Tonga is a way of life. Lu sipi connects with Tonga. So, to me lu sipi is a way of living. It ties up to family values and culture.”</i> 	<p><i>culture.”</i></p>	<p><i>taste.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“This new meat had become a luxury and delicacy.”</i> • <i>“The meat part of lu sipi to me is more of a contemporary part of Pacific cuisine.”</i>
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Chapter 6. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter concludes my research dissertation. I have chosen to combine my Discussion and Conclusion chapter to avoid the unnecessary repetition of information. In presenting my discussion, I compare and contrast what my participants told me with existing literature and knowledge. I begin that process by systematically working through my research themes, as noted in Table 6, below.

Table 6: Twelve Sub-themes and Three Primary Themes

Sub-Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family values• Memories• Way of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History• Tradition• Social ranking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commensality• Delicacy• Contemporary Cuisine
Primary Theme	Identity	Metaphor for being Tongan	Tongan Food Culture

However, before beginning that process, it would be timely to remind my readers of my research questions. The primary research question was:

- What factors influence the ways in which *lu sipi* signifies Tongan identity in Auckland, New Zealand?

My secondary questions asked:

- In what ways do *terroir* and being a Tongan living in New Zealand influence perceptions of *lu sipi*?
- How do considerations of invented tradition impact an understanding of *lu sipi*?

In researching those questions, my participants told me that:

- Tongan identity in Auckland, New Zealand, was maintained through *lu sipi*'s production and consumption.

- However, *lu sipi*'s authenticity in Aotearoa New Zealand was compromised through taste, product use, the quest for convenience and cooking technology.
- My participants lived experiences of *lu sipi* combined to create narratives of change, memory, and nostalgia, contributing to support for the concept that *lu sipi* is a key marker of Tongan distinction, both in Tonga and for Tongans living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

As I became familiar with my research data, and even with my interview processes, it became clear to me that within my participants narratives lay combinations of stories peppered by their ontologies (Laverty, 2003) and epistemologies (Gray, 2004). Their knowledge and experiences confirmed how they came to know and acknowledge Tongan culture and the significance that *lu sipi* holds within Tongan identity and history. Thus, *lu sipi* became an actant material item (Woodward, 2007) that was key to my participants' vernacular experience. These experiences were often taken for granted as an expression of 'what Tongans do'. Signifying that, and as I noted in my reflections on method (refer Chapter 4), I came to realise that ontology (Laverty, 2003) and epistemology (Gray, 2004) were integral to my participants' narratives. This suggested that, for my participants, *lu sipi* is an expression of actant materiality (Woodward, 2007) because my participants suggested that the dish symbolically represented our ancestors and the stories that they associated with them. Consequently, and cognisant of my reflections on my method (refer Chapter 4), I have come to realise that theory informs our everyday lives, and that often we are unaware that what we 'do' has a fancy name and is part of an academic theory. That realisation has, for me, clarified that theory is applicable to everyday life. Consequently, considering food as a lens through which I could understand Tongan culture brought together the social construction of reality thesis (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), and symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) through *lu sipi*'s interactive and communicative attributes. Key to that understanding was my realisation of how Woodward's (2007) actant materiality added to not only my understanding of *lu sipi*, but the understandings of my participants. In those ways, my

research into *lu sipi* extended the language of food beyond the limitations of language itself (Sapir, 1929) into less tangible domains of actancy and meaningfulness.

6.2. Practical Implications

The practical implications of my research not only provide a platform for knowledge to showcase how culture, history and identity can be linked through the preparation and consumption of a national dish, but also give insights into the Tongan way of life. Part of that insight is the realisation that our everyday lives, actions, routines, and rituals are often taken for granted. The practical implications of my research reflect how my participants' experiences and memories of *lu sipi* help them to make sense of and understand the world around them. For example, and for my participants, *lu sipi*:

- Reinforced, in practical ways, Tongan identity for Tongans living in Tonga and in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Helped my participants to create future memories and distil past memories that were reinforced by the preparation and consumption of *lu sipi*.
- Underpinned commensality and the communal nature of the dish's preparation, cooking and consumption.
- Revealed that, through change, particularly migration to Aotearoa New Zealand, *lu sipi* also underwent change that included considerations of consumerism, quest for convenience, and cooking technologies.
- Revealed that, within those changes, memories, narratives, material meanings and rituals were not lost but adapted.

6.3. Identity: Family Values, Memories, Way of Life

All my participants recalled that *lu sipi* was clearly identified as a Tongan dish. For them, *lu sipi* held memories reflecting family values and ways of life. *Lu sipi* symbolised Tongan identity. That identity was reflected in and shared through my participants' experiences. On this basis, my participants agreed that it was through *lu sipi* that they were reminded about their Tongan way of life. Only through their personal memories and experiences were they able to express their perspectives about Tongan culture.

In terms of relevant literature, but within the language of the academy, my participants acknowledged that *lu sipi* created a lens to understand Tongan identity. Their understandings were explored through nostalgic memories, the love and togetherness of family values and the hard way of life of the resourceful Tongan people. As my participants acknowledged that *lu sipi* is a Tongan dish, they emphasised and reinforced Billig's (1995) construct of banal nationalism. Billig (1995) proposed that national identity is overtly and covertly supported by the concept of banal nationalism. That support includes how everyday items (like *lu sipi*) reinforce notions of national identity and ways of being and becoming that identity. In these ways, *lu sipi* embraced Tongan culture and identity; however, that embrace was often taken for granted by my participants.

In the same ways that *lu sipi* reflects national identity (Billig, 1995), *lu sipi* also reflects notions of cultural identification (Corvo, 2015). For Corvo (2015) and Chevalier (2018), food and food practices reflect humankind's holistic relationships with nature. That relationship includes the preparation of cultural foods as a way in which people define themselves. Within that consideration, the collective nature of Tongan life was recognised and reinforced within the collective and inclusive narratives of my participants and their relationship with *lu sipi*.

6.4. Metaphor for Being Tongan: History, Tradition, Social Ranking

Throughout my interviews, their transcription and subsequent analysis, I came to realise that for all my participants *lu sipi* linked Tongan food as an actant materiality (Woodward, 2007). That link reflected my participants' realities and knowledge of Tongan history, traditions, and social ranking. For my participants, *lu sipi* provided retrospection, encouraging them to consider Tongan history. In these ways, my participants realised the actant nature of *lu sipi*, and for me those realisations confirmed the importance of Woodward's (2007) considerations of material culture and actancy (refer Chapter 4).

I asked my participants *In what ways does lu sipi help you to understand Tongan culture?* Their responses incorporated aspects of a cultural history that held its genesis

in my participants' consideration of their ancestors, and more recent family narratives that incorporated *lu sipi*. In doing so, my participants touched upon their realisations of how past activity in preparing and enjoying *lu sipi* were recreated and enjoyed today. While that recreation was not an intentional act, it nonetheless reinforced time-honoured practices around *lu sipi* that realised how *lu sipi* created my participants' realities, understandings, and knowledge about their world. In these ways, my participants' considerations echo Haden's (2009) assertion that food in Tonga plays an active role reflecting socio-cultural norms, respect, wealth, hospitality, and social status. Those realisations were equally potent for Tongans living in both Tonga, and in Auckland, New Zealand. The differences between those potencies were demonstrated by New Zealand Tongans, who often relied on electric ovens and the conveniences of supermarket shopping and convenience products in their production and cooking of *lu sipi*. Consequently, while *lu sipi* can be realised as a marker of Tongan distinction, that distinction, like Tongan identity, is impacted through mobility and how change affects both *lu sipi*, and notions of being and becoming Tongan. In some ways, this reflects Tapu's (2020) claim that, over time, traditions may change because of issues of accessibility, availability, and globalisation. Simply put, as globalised influences impact *lu sipi*, those same forces impact Tongan identity. Consequently, being and becoming Tongan is dynamically situated. Within that dynamism is hosted historical considerations of tradition and social ranking that, over time, as a result of globalised influences, will generate new ways of viewing Tongan identity, its ways of being and becoming, and the materiality, like *lu sipi*, that underpins those constructs. Those considerations mirror Fekete (2014) and Haden's (2009) claims that Tongan food is not just a random selection of ingredients, but rather authentic ingredients connecting land with people and a metaphor for wider considerations of Tongan socio-culture.

Part of Tongan socio-culture is the hierarchical class system that has, at its apex, the Tongan Royal Family. Their association with *lu sipi* has generated a 'top-down' model of taste and aspirant taste congruent with Bourdieu's (1984) analysis. The hierarchical link of *lu sipi* to the Royal Family was noted by participants who realised that, as Royals, the family historically had a greater connection to overseas produce. The consumption

patterns of the Royal Family created aspirant taste for non-Royals. In turn, that reinforced the Tongan class system and eating hierarchies. Reflecting that, as the dish became more popular, the middle and lower classes began to consume *lu sipi*. Consequently, while *lu sipi* is enjoyed across the contemporary Tongan class system, within its history it nonetheless provides a potent reminder of that system, and how it has changed over time. Reflecting that, 'Ahio (2011) proposed that in Tonga, royal foods such as *tunu puaka* (roasted pig), *ufi* (yam) and some sea food items were prestigious meals and products that non-royal Tongans were forbidden to consume. However, as discussed in my Literature Review (refer Chapter 3), that changed in 1875 when King George Tupou I eliminated the class system, which allowed any class group in Tonga to grow and consume items previously considered to be 'royal food' (Tu'inukuafe, 2019). In these ways, *lu sipi* represents a food of distinction. Like the Tongan class system and the attitudes of Tonga's ruling elite, access to and consumption of *lu sipi* has changed and become more democratised over time.

6.5. Tongan Food Culture: Commensality, Luxury, Contemporary Cuisine

Despite class and hierarchical differences in contemporary Tongan life, my participants recognised that sharing and being hospitable were indispensable components of Tongan socio-culture. As my Findings Chapter (refer Chapter 5) revealed, the gathering and preparation of the ingredients for *lu sipi* encouraged people to come together. In that way, making *lu sipi* reinforced family bonds and roles, reinforcing the rituals involved in the dish's preparation, cooking, and consumption. Consequently, *lu sipi* was viewed by my participants as something that was communally focused, not individually created and consumed. In these ways, *lu sipi* reinforced Tongan ideas of family and togetherness, and the notion that food, particularly *lu sipi*, was the centerpiece of commensality that often had an association with the day of rest, the Sabbath. Those realisations reinforce Tu'inukuafe's (2019) observation that Tongan food brings Tongan communities together.

Reinforcing togetherness was the construct of luxury. Luxury was realised not within considerations of luxurious brands like Louis Vuitton, but how the land provided the

luxury of production and, to use a consumer metaphor, a one-stop resource 'shop'. The land provided everything necessary to make *lu sipi*. This emphasises Oliver et al.'s (2010) claim that meat was rarely eaten during the week but reserved for special occasions and Sundays. That emphasis was particularly important for Tongans living in Tonga because, through *lu sipi*, those people had a direct connection to the land. For my participants, the taste and production of *lu sipi* was linked to nature and to the use of natural products. These connections were reinforced by the *umu*, *lu*, *niu* onions, and locally grown tomatoes. Contrasting that connection to the land was the experience of Tongans in Auckland, New Zealand. They relied on the conveniences of consumerism. Nonetheless, both Tongan communities reflected Chevalier's (2018) observation that food and food practices are important ways for people to define themselves as well as create a sense of belonging. For my participants eating *lu sipi* in Auckland, New Zealand, that point is reinforced as they seek the familiarity of the taste of home in their new migrant location. Yet within considerations of *sipi* (lamb) and its centrality within *lu sipi*, it must be noted that *sipi* is an introduced Tongan delicacy. Prior to European influence and trade, lamb was not indigenous to Tonga. That, in concluding my dissertation, raises some interesting possibilities.

6.6. Conclusion and Contribution

Food can be viewed as a marker of cultural distinction, and group and individual identity. In my experience as a Tongan, *lu sipi* embodies actant (Woodward, 2007) meanings that elevate *lu sipi* above a dish consumed only for its nutritional benefits. However, these meanings are grounded in 'something else'. *Lu sipi* holds its genesis in *lu puaka* and *lu ika*. *Sipi* (lamb) is an introduced, not an indigenous Tongan meat. Consequently, and while my participants referenced *lu sipi*, their narratives were grounded in the memory of and reference to ancestral ways of being and becoming that reflect the traditions of Tongan oral history. Within these realisations, *lu sipi* can be viewed, and reviewed, in multiple ways. The two most obvious views suggest that *lu sipi* is an invented tradition reflecting Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) position. The second suggests that *lu sipi* reflects the dynamic nature of a traditional and authentic cuisine style's development, influenced by the globalised marketplace, to which contemporary

Tonga belongs. The remaining possibility is that *lu sipi* signifies a synthesis of both positions. Nonetheless, the development of *lu sipi* is congruent with the development and the expansion of factors reflecting contemporary Tongan identity. In this way, a dynamic Tongan identity sits contemporaneously beside a dynamic Tongan cuisine exemplified by *lu sipi*. Consequently, *lu sipi* continues the tradition that Tongans enjoy: the production, preparation, cooking and consumption of cooked meat, vegetables and coconut cream wrapped in *lu*, or tin foil. Within those considerations, *lu sipi* incorporates the Tongan love of food that incorporates considerations of love, family and sharing. These domains uphold previous considerations of other *lu*-based Tongan dishes because memories are created and passed through families, in much the same ways as previous Tongan oral histories have been generated and passed down through generations of Tongans. In these ways, *lu sipi* reflects and incorporates past actancy and history (Woodward, 2007), contemporary culture and potential 'blue-sky' futures.

6.7. Research Limitations

While my research explored *lu sipi* within the narratives of my participants and the literature, my research has limitations. Those limitations include:

- My research reflected the voices of only three participants. A larger participant group may have contributed other perspectives. Consequently, I note this possibility in my Suggestions for Future Research (below).
- Time constraints and word limitations for a dissertation were also limiting factors. I managed that with my choice of only three research participants.
- COVID-19 negatively impacted my research. At times, particularly during lockdown, my access to the library and to face-to-face meetings with my supervisor were restricted. Those limitations had an upside: I became more self-reliant.
- My observation is that there is a lack of Tongan academics and academic resources reflecting Tongan culture and food. Again, this lack represents a

research opportunity (refer Suggestions for Future Research, below).

- My emphasis on *lu sipi* was another limitation. I may have been better placed to ask more open-ended questions about *lu*-based dishes, rather than *lu sipi* specifically. Again, that realisation represents another research opportunity (refer Suggestions for Future Research, below).
- My obligations as a mother and wife within an extended Tongan family living in Auckland also limited the amount of time I could devote to my studies. As a student attending university, my academic obligations and my family commitments and obligations were sometimes in conflict.
- During my study and research for my dissertation, I experienced periods of ill-health. Those times meant that my ability to complete my work was compromised.

6.8. Suggestions for Future Research

Despite those limitations, my dissertation and my research contribution have also raised some future research possibilities. Consequently, I identify the following opportunities:

- That more academics engage in the study and research of Tongan (and other Pacific Island) cultures, particularly in considerations of food.
- That a similar study be conducted within a wider participant group. That research might support my own research, and/or offer alternative perspectives.
- That research explores the history of *lu*-based Tongan dishes to establish a referenceable corpus of knowledge and written history.
- That wider research be undertaken within the Pacific Islands exploring the similarities and differences between cuisine styles, rituals, and meanings.

- That research within Tongan migrant communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, and other countries, explores how dishes such as *lu sipi* are adapted within new migrant environments.
- That research explores the impact of consumerism and globalisation on Tongan foods authenticity.
- That research explores the lack of commercial Tongan and Pacific Island restaurants in Auckland, New Zealand.

6.9. Closing Comments

In completing my dissertation, I understood the commitment and passion needed to complete a master's degree. That realisation was compounded by the impact of COVID-19. Despite that, through my research, I met amazing people who have contributed to my research journey. For me, that journey was extended by my re-discovery of my Tongan identity. That discovery was compounded by my use of *talanoa* (Vaiolleti, 2006). In using *talanoa*, I experienced a closeness with my participants that made my research simultaneously engaging and fun. Additionally, my realisation of the benefits of *talanoa* brought to life the stories that my father told me, not only within this research, but also within the wider 'stories of Tonga' that he has shared with me.

Talanoa also made me think about 'European' theory in new ways. Consequently, I was refreshed by how notions of ontology and epistemology 'worked' in the 'real world'. Similarly, I realised that those theoretical positions and the social construct of reality thesis (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), and actant materiality (Woodward, 2007) were parts of our everyday life, albeit that they had fancy academic names. As I reflect upon the completion of my work, I remind myself of the progress, knowledge and understandings that I have gained in its completion. At times, completing my dissertation has been difficult. However, in writing these closing comments, I realise how research can not only find out information but, within doing

that, it can allow the researcher to find themselves.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

10 December 2019

Lindsay Neill
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Lindsay

Re Ethics Application: **19/467 Lu Sipi, a Tongan marker of distinction**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 10 December 2022.

Standard Conditions of Approval

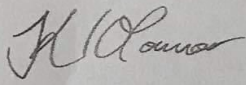
1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>


Yours sincerely,



Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: elizabethtoloke.ma2020@gmail.com

Appendix B: Participation Consent Form



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: *Lu sipi*, A Tongan marker of distinction

Project Supervisor: *Dr Lindsay Neill*

Researcher: *Elizabeth Toloke*

☒ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 22nd November 2019.

☒ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☒ I understand a digitally audio recorded (and possibly video recording) of my interview will be a key part of my interview, with researcher, process.

☒ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

☒ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is mine either removed from the research or at my decision, still included in it.

☒ I agree to take part in this research.

☒ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☒ No ☐

☒ I agree that my interview can be filmed: Yes ☒ No ☐

☒ I understand that my filmed content will be presented within my dissertation as either a CDRom or as an active embedded link within the text of my dissertation. Yes ☒ No ☐

☒ I wish to receive a CDRom of my filmed interview: Yes ☒ No ☐

☐ I wish to be identified in nthis research: Yes ☒ No ☐


Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (for transcript and summary of findings) :

April 2018 page 1 of 3 This version was last edited in April 2018

Appendix C: Participation Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:
03 December 2019

Project Title
Lu sipi, a Tongan marker of distinction.
An Invitation

Malo e lelei, my name is Elizabeth Na'asipa Toloke and I am a young Tongan student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) completing my Masters of Gastronomy. I am researching factors that influence the ways in which *lu Sipi* signifies Tongan identity in Auckland, New Zealand. This research is to complete my research dissertation. As a Tongan and a student with a culinary background I recognise that this is your area of expertise. As a result, I am honoured to warmly invite you to participate in my research.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?
I am inviting you to my research because your expertise and knowledge of Tongan food, identity and culture will assist my research in deep and meaningful ways.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
I ask that you respond within 2 weeks. If I have not heard from you, I will contact you to solicit your interest in participating..

To contact me to agree to participate in this research, you are more than welcomed to email me on:
elizabethtoloke.ma2020@gmail.com

What will happen in this research?
Proceeding with my research, we will arrange a convenient time to set up an interview. A consent form will be signed, this recognises your consent to partake in my research. This research, will be digitally audio (and possibly video). This interview will include questions about your world view of *lu sipi* and Tongan identity.

What are the discomforts and risks?
You will be identified in this research. However, there are minimal discomfort and risk for participating in my research. You will not be pressured to answer any questions that cause you discomfort.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?
Participants may make amendments to the information you have provided. In that way anything you say in your interview that may, on reflection be of risk or discomfort to you can be deleted.

What are the benefits?

I consider that my research is beneficial for three groups:

For my Participants: My research provides my participants an opportunity to voice and share their experiences about their identity and its connection to Tonga through food.

For the Researcher: My research will benefit me because within my exploration of my own Tongan identity. My supervisor's suggestion of using *talanoa* was a key motivator for me to undertake this research in a way that reflects my cultural background.

For the Wider Community: My completed work adds to the Tongan voice in Aotearoa New Zealand and in that way makes a significant contribution to Pacifica knowledge.

How will my privacy be protected?

I approach my research in respectful and empathetic ways. Supplying my participants with an interview transcript I invite them to amend that transcript in order to not only add to its accuracy, but also to protect them.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

As a participant, 30 to 60 minutes of your time will be required. There is no financial cost to you.

What opportunities do I have to consider this invitation?

Deciding to withdraw from the study, you will have the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes, you will receive a transcript of interview and a summary of research findings.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. Any other concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Lindsay Neill, lindsay.neill@aut.ac.nz

Researcher Contact Details:

Name: Elizabeth Tolohe
Email: elizabethtoloke.ma2020@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Name: Lindsay Neill
Email: lindsay.neill@aut.ac.nz
Workplace: Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on Tuesday 10th December, AUTC Reference number 19/476