Echoes of my Homeland

Celebrating Pacific Culture Through Auckland's Festivals

LE'AUTULĪ'ILAGĪ PALASI KOLETTA SU'A – TE'O

A research component submitted to

Auckland University of Technology

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of International Tourism Management (MITM)

Under the supervision of

Dr Rerekura Teaurere

School of Hospitality, Tourism and Events

2025

ABSTRACT

This dissertation embarks on an exploration of the complex intersections between migration, cultural identity, and economic development in Auckland's Pacific diaspora. As the largest Polynesian city in the world, Auckland is home to diverse Pacific communities whose cultural presence continues to shape the urban landscape. Through an autoethnographic lens, this study investigates how cultural festivals—particularly the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest—are dynamic platforms for identity expression, community cohesion, and entrepreneurial opportunity.

Drawing on secondary data from literature, policy reports, and cultural narratives, the research is guided by three core questions: what socio-cultural influences shape Pacific identities in Auckland, how do cultural festivals contribute to the maintenance of heritage, and what entrepreneurial opportunities arise within these communities through festival participation? The findings reveal that these festivals enhance cultural visibility, pride, and also catalyse economic engagement and innovation among Pacific peoples.

This study highlights the transformative potential of cultural practices in preserving identity, strengthening intergenerational ties, and empowering communities through culturally embedded entrepreneurship. It also underscores the importance of culturally responsive policies that support Pacific led initiatives in the spheres of arts, education, and economic development. Ultimately, this research contributes to broader understandings of Pacific transnationalism, diaspora identity, and the enduring significance of cultural celebration in contemporary Aotearoa.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 2

LIST OF FIGURES 6

LIST OF TABLES 6

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP 7

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 8

UPU TOMUA 9

PROLOGUE 11

Chapter 1: Introduction 13

1.1 Personal narrative and positionality 13

1.2 Background of the Study 13

1.3 Research Questions 14

1.4 Objectives of the Study 15

1.5 Significance of the Study 15

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation 16

Chapter 2: Literature Review 18

2.1 Introduction 18

2.1.1 Auckland's Demographic Landscape 19

2.2 Migration, Transnationalism, and Identity 21

2.3 Cultural Identity, Festivals, and Community Cohesion 23

2.4 Entrepreneurship, Economic Impacts, and Sustainability 25

2.5 Benefits and Barriers of Cultural Festivals in Tourism 26

2.6 Conclusion 28

Chapter 3: Methodology 30

3.1 Introduction 30

3.2 Positionality and Reflexive Framework 30

3.3 Research Design: Autoethnography and Pacific Methodologies 31

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis 31

3.4 Thematic analysis 32

3.5 Case Study Approach 35

3.6 Ethical Considerations 36

3.7 Personal Reflection 36
Chapter 4: Case Studies 38
4.1 Introduction to Case Studies: Contextualising Pasifika Narratives 38
4.2 Case Study: ASB Polyfest—Celebrating Cultural Identity, Resilience, and Transnationalism 39
4.2.1 Origins: From Community Initiative to Cultural Landmark 39
4.2.3 Expansion and Cultural Significance 42
4.2.4 Benefits of ASB Polyfest 43
4.2.5 Challenges and Barriers 46
4.2.6 Government and Community Support 47
4.2.7 Polyfest as Cultural Legacy and Transnational Space 49
4.2.8 Future Directions and Opportunities 49
4.2.9 Research Gaps and Future Potential 51
4.3 Case Study: Pasifika Festival – A Celebration of Culture, Community, and Economic Empowerment 52
4.3.1 A Pacific Cultural Force in Aotearoa 52
4.3.2 Historical Origins and Growth 52
4.3.3 Cultural Significance and Community Identity 53
4.3.4 Audience Engagement and Cultural Participation 54
4.3.5 Entrepreneurship and Economic Impact 54
4.3.6 Strategic Alignment and Future Opportunities 56
4.3.7 Festival Resilience and Growth 56
4.3.8 Political Engagement and Community Unity 57
4.3.9 Conclusion 59
Chapter 5: Findings and discussion 60
Affirming Identity and Cultural Belonging 60
Feathers of Legacy: Intergenerational Identity and Cultural Pride 60
Intergenerational Transmission and Cultural Continuity 62
Poetic reflection 63
Culturally Grounded Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment 66
Beyond the Applause: Seeing My Culture Through a Tourist's Lens 66
Lived Experience, Legacy, and the Power of Narrative 68
Positioning Within Existing Literature 68
Reflections on the Methodology 68

Practical Implications 69
Chapter 6: Conclusion 70
6.1 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions 70
6.3 Recommendations for Future Research 71
6.4 Implications for Policy and Practice 72
6.5 Limitations of the Study 72
6.7 Final Reflections: Tautua as Research 73
References 74

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Growth of Pacific Peoples 20
Figure 2 Projected Pacific Ethnic Group Populations 21
Figure 3 Nga Tapuwae College Cook Island Group - Early 80s 40
Figure 4 Māori Kapa Haka Group, Tamaki College Polyfest - Early 80s 41
Figure 5 Judges and Audience at Polyfest at Tamaki College - Early 80s 42
Figure 6 One Tree Hill College Samoan Group, ASB Polyfest 2015 44
Figure 7 Westlake Girls Māori Kapa Haka Group, ASB Polyfest 2022 45
Figure 8 Beautiful Young Fijian Group - Pasifika 2022 53
Figure 9 Cook Island Stall-holder - Pasifika Festival 55
Figure 10 Taupou of Otahuhu College – 1998 61
Figure 11 Intergenerational pride. 64
Figure 12 Three generations of pride. 65

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Thematic Analysis 33

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that this dissertation is the result of my own independent work and research. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where proper acknowledgment is made. Furthermore, it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or institution of higher learning.

Name: Palasi Koletta Su'a Te'o

Date: 28th March 2025

Signature: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ia viia le suafa o le Ali'i, e afua mai i le mea e alu a'e ai le lā, e o'o atu ile mea e goto ai.

From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

– Psalm 113:3

All glory, honour, and praise to God. You have been my anchor in uncertainty, my calm in chaos, and my strength when the path was unclear. Your grace upheld me when I felt weary. Your Spirit lit the way when I lost sight of the finish line. You are my rock and salvation.

To my backbone and incredible husband, Junior Te'o, and our beautiful children—Kahlita, Neida, Alex, Jena, Phoenix, and Taylor—you are the beating heart of this dissertation. When my anxiety was overwhelming and my moods dipped beyond explanation, you held space for me to breathe, to break, and to begin again. Your unconditional love allowed me to rest, to cry, to reset—without judgment. Your presence wrapped around me like a warm reminder of why this journey matters. Thank you for allowing me the time to heal while never letting me forget that I was capable of finishing this work.

To my siblings, *fa'afetai tele lava mai le ta'ele o lo'u agaga*, for being the comic relief and the reality check I did not know I needed. You knew exactly when to hype me up, when to humble me, and when to hit me with a *"have you even written anything today?"* or *"did you just wake up?"* Especially when procrastination had me in a chokehold—you were the voice yelling, "Palasi e, please work on your dissertation!" I love you endlessly for it.

Finally, to my supervisor, the beautiful **Dr Rerekura Teaurere**—fa'afetai tele lava for your guidance, patience, and belief in this research. Your support and understanding helped shape this work into something meaningful and grounded in both scholarship and culture.

UPU TOMUA

Sa ou vaaia pea le galulue punoua'i o o'u mātua. Po'o le ā le mamafa o galuega, e ese le galuega ile ao, ese galuega ile pō, faapea ma aso To'ana'i atoa ma aso Sā. Po'o le ā fo'i le faatauvaa ma le maualalo o galuega sa galulue ai lā'ua, e le'i faafiti pe faavaivai ai lava. O pa'u foi o lā lima ua talatala, mai galuega na pūnonou ai lāua, ae na sili ona mamafa i o'u mātua, le faamalieina o suiga fou o lenei atunu'u, e aunoa ma se tala. Ole tautua ma galuega lelei uma sa ofoina e o'u matua, auā le nonofo ai i lenei atunu'u, ua avea ma pine fa'amau o le lā valevale alofa, o lā'ua tofi, ae maise le fatu aiga.

Sa tele faafitāuli na feagai ma nai o'u matua a'o tau atia'e si o matou aiga. Maualalo totogi, faailoga lanu, ona o le lē lava o a'oa'oga, lē lava le gagana fa'aperetania, le faatauvaa o galuega sā galulue ai, auā e lē o ni tagatanu'u. Ae ui i lea, na saili pea i lalo, ma lō lā malosi atoa, ia tau lau o le lā fa'amoemoe, ia maua i matou le fanau se lumana'i fiafia ma le manuia.

A'o aumau i totonu o lenei atunu'u, e le'i mafai ona fa'agalo si o lā atunu'u pele o Samoa. E vā i vasa e tele, ae sā ou vaaia pea lo lā fesoasoani ma le lima foa'i i nai o matou aiga i Samoa. Pe utiuti le seleni, sa taumafai lava ia lafo se tupe i Samoa auā le fausiaina, po'o le faaleleia o fale Samoa, fale tapua'i, ae maise fa'alavelave i totonu o aiga ma nuu ma le ekalesia. E nonofo i Aotearoa nei, ae sā galulue ma ola pei lava o i Samoa.

E le'i muta le olaga faasamoa ae maise tū ma aga e pei ona masani ai, ae sa faaolaola pea, ile faaaogaina pea o le gagana, faia o talosaga, o mea taumafa, o pese, o siva, fa'aaloalo i so'o se tagata, ae maise le ola tautua.

O tausaga na ou itiiti ai, sa ou lē malamalama ile mafua'aga o le tele le foa'i o o'u matua, i le atunuu ua tu'ua e i lā'ua. A'o lenei ua ou matua, ua ou malamalama. Sa teu fatu ma faatāuaina e o'u matua, le poto ma le galuega a nai tua'ā na mua i malae, o ē na mua'i asaina le gasū ole taeao e ala ile soifua tautua.

TAUTUA NEI, TŌ MANUIA TAEAO

O upu nei ou te talitonu, e tā mau i fatu o tatou tagata Samoa

Ua faamalieina i tatou i vaieli sa latou eliina , ua tatou malu puipuia, i fale na latou fausiaina, o moemitiga sa mo'omo'o iai, ma latou tauaveina, ua fai lea ma faamālosi'au i a'i tatou. O le pologa, ma le ola tauivi, sa lē gata mo i latou, ae mo i tatou uma. O lenei, ua ou tusia ai lenei tusi, e fai ma ala e faafetaia ai nai o tatou tua'ā.

ALOFA’AGA

Mo nai o’u matua peleina

Fepulea'i Ituau Fauega Su'a ma Tagaloa Fiapa’ipa’i Laumanuina Su’a

Timu’ia pe lāina, sā oulua lē faavaivai. Ua ou faatusaina oulua matua, o ni tagata malolosi, e tumu i le alofa ma le loto maualalo. E ofoina atoatoa le soifua, i lā oulua au’aunaga i totonu ole tatou aiga, nu’u ma le ekalesia. Po’o ā faigata ma fa’afitāuli, e taumafai lava, e aunoa ma se fa’amoemoe mo se taui.-Sa oulua a’oa’o mai lo’u gagana muamua, o tala mai anamua, tala’aga ma gafa o lo’u tupu’aga. A’o ou tuputupu a’e, sā ou lē fesiligia pe taumateina, po’o ai lo’u nei tagata. Ona o oulua mātua, sa ou iloa ai ma le mautinoa, lo’u fa’asinomaga. Sa faafaileleina a’u i totonu o le lotu Metotisi Samoa. Ole fa’atuatua, alofa, finafinau, ola tautua, o fatu ia sā oulua totoina. O lenei tusitusiga, o fua ia o lā oulua talosaga, tautua, ae maise lā oulua talitonuga i lo’u valaauina.

For my parents

You are the embodiment of strength, humility, and sacrifice. Through every season of hardship, you gave everything without asking for anything in return. Because of you, I grew up never questioning who I am. You gave me a name, a history, and an unshakable sense of belonging. You raised me with faith, culture, and fierce love, planting within me the seeds of resilience, purpose, and pride. This dissertation is the fruit of your prayers, your service, and your unwavering belief in who I could become.

To my late daughter Christina Su‘a-Mealamu —
your memory is the heartbeat of this journey. Alofa tele, always.

PROLOGUE

I am the child of courageous migrants who left the sunlit shores of Samoa not only in search of a better life, but to carve out a future in a society where their presence was too often misunderstood, undervalued, or ignored. I watched my parents navigate a world not built for them—working multiple jobs, night shifts, and weekends, labouring in factories, and doing whatever was necessary to make ends meet. Their hands were calloused, not just by work, but by the weight of expectation and quiet endurance. They gave everything so I could have choices they never did.

Their sacrifices were not just acts of survival—they were a declaration of love, of responsibility, of *tautua* (service). In a low-wage society that often racialised and marginalised their efforts, my parents faced barriers not only of language and class, but of prejudice. They were judged not by their dreams or dignity, but by their accents, their brown skin, and the jobs they held. Yet they persisted—with humility and strength—rooted in their belief that their children would rise beyond these limits.

Even as they adapted to life in Aotearoa, their spirits remained tethered to Samoa. I saw them send remittances home, contribute to the building of churches and *fale Samoa* (Samoan house), and show up for every community gathering. Service to family, village, and faith was never up for debate. And although they were physically distant from our homeland, they lived as though Samoa was still within arm's reach—kept alive through language, prayer, food, song, and *fa'aaloalo* (respect).

As a child, I did not always understand why they gave so much to a place we no longer lived in. But I understand now. They were honouring the wisdom of our ancestors:

Tautua nei, tō manuia taeao—Serve today for a better tomorrow.

This powerful saying embodies a core Samoan ethos, a guiding principle passed down through generations. It is the intergenerational heartbeat of our people. We are nourished by the wells they dug, sheltered by the homes they built, and inspired by the dreams they carried with courage. Their struggle was never just for themselves—it was for us. And now, it is my turn to honour them.

This dissertation is more than an academic pursuit. It is an offering—an act of *tautua* to my parents, to our ancestors, and to our future generations. It is woven from the echoes of my homeland and grounded in the resilience of Pacific people who refuse to let their stories fade.

Through this work, I hope to illuminate the power of our festivals, our voices, and our entrepreneurial spirit—so that our *taeao manuia* (better tomorrow) is not just imagined, but realised, celebrated, and sustained.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Personal narrative and positionality

This research emerges from my lived experience as a member of the Pacific diaspora in Auckland, where cultural festivals such as the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest have profoundly shaped my identity. These events are more than public celebrations—they are ***vā*** (relational) spaces where Pacific languages, histories, and values are shared, performed, and reimagined across generations (Anae, 2019; Macpherson, 2001). They foster cultural visibility and belonging, especially in contexts where Pacific perspectives are often underrepresented or undervalued (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005).

As the daughter of Samoan migrants, I have long navigated the duality of life in Aotearoa and my ancestral ties to Samoa. This dual identity echoes the experiences of many Pacific peoples shaped by histories of migration, cultural adaptation, and resilience (Macpherson, 2001; Tiatia, 1998). Central to my journey is the Samoan concept of ***tautua***—service to one's family, community, and culture. Every performance, shared story, or cultural duty carried out at these festivals affirms this commitment to service and collective wellbeing.

Like many in the diaspora, I have grappled with the tension between cultural preservation and the pressure to assimilate into dominant Pākehā norms. Anae's (2019) notion of a metaphoric return, where diasporic peoples maintain emotional and spiritual ties to their homelands through memory, ritual, and cultural expression, deeply resonates with me. Through festivals, I return—not physically, but spiritually—through *siva* (dance), *pese* (song), and communal gathering (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009).

This study is, therefore, not merely academic. It is an act of ***fa'aaloalo*** (respect), ***tautua***, and cultural affirmation. It is a tribute to my parents and ancestors who paved the way for my generation, and a contribution to the ongoing story of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. By weaving my personal narrative into this research, I aim to illuminate the lived realities of Pacific communities and to demonstrate how cultural festivals function not just as events, but as sites of identity, entrepreneurship, and resistance.

1.2 Background of the Study

Auckland, home to the largest Polynesian population of any city in the world, stands as a vibrant hub of Pacific cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand (Stats NZ, 2018; Anae et al., 2010). Migrants from across the Pacific—including Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, and Fiji—have significantly shaped the city's cultural, social, and economic fabric (Krieble et al., 2016).

While migration has often been driven by aspirations for education and employment, it has also been about sustaining cultural continuity, language, and ancestral knowledge (Lee, 2003).

Cultural festivals such as the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest serve as powerful expressions of this continuity. These events provide spaces for the performance and transmission of cultural knowledge through dance, music, oratory, and food (Mackley-Crump, 2015; Cudny & Maiava, 2017). They also act as platforms for intergenerational exchange, entrepreneurship, and Pacific visibility in a broader multicultural landscape (Faitala et al., 2022; Buch et al., 2011).

Despite the vibrancy of these celebrations, Pacific communities in Aotearoa face enduring challenges. These include disparities in health, education, income, and language retention, alongside persistent experiences of marginalisation (Ka'ai et al., 2021; Mila-Schaaf, 2010). Pacific youth, in particular, often walk the tightrope between inherited cultural values and the dominant expectations of Western society (Tiatia, 1998). In this context, festivals become important sites for negotiating identity, affirming belonging, and asserting agency (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005).

This study explores the role of cultural festivals in fostering cultural identity, economic participation, and social cohesion among Auckland's Pacific diasporas. By centring my personal reflections alongside secondary sources and case studies, the research offers insight into how such events contribute to the wellbeing and self-determination of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa.

1.3 Research Questions

This dissertation investigates the multifaceted experiences of the Pacific diaspora in Auckland through the lens of cultural festivals, guided by three interconnected research questions:

1. ***How do socio-cultural influences shape the identity of the Pacific diaspora in Auckland?***

   This question explores how cultural values, family dynamics, community networks, and migration histories influence identity formation within diasporic contexts. It considers how Pacific peoples navigate dual cultural spaces and how festivals serve as platforms for expressing and negotiating identity, fostering belonging, and reinforcing intergenerational ties.

2. ***What role do Pacific festivals play in promoting tourism and preserving cultural traditions?***

This question examines the dual function of festivals as both cultural celebrations and vehicles for tourism and cultural sustainability. It investigates how such events attract diverse audiences, stimulate economic activity, and facilitate cultural exchange—while safeguarding traditional knowledge, languages, and practices for future generations.

3. ***What entrepreneurial opportunities exist within Pacific communities through these festivals?***
   This question explores how Pacific peoples engage in entrepreneurial activity within the festival context. It analyses how entrepreneurs leverage cultural capital through food stalls, art, performances, and workshops, while also examining structural barriers such as limited access to funding, digital resources, and market exposure.

Together, these questions provide a holistic framework for understanding the intersections between identity, cultural preservation, tourism, and entrepreneurship in Auckland's Pacific communities. They highlight the broader significance of cultural festivals as catalysts for resilience, innovation, and visibility in a multicultural urban setting.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The overarching aim of this study is to explore how cultural festivals function as vital platforms for identity expression, cultural preservation, and economic empowerment within Auckland's Pacific diaspora. The specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate the socio-cultural dynamics that shape Pacific identity in Auckland, particularly in relation to migration, community networks, and intergenerational practices.
2. Analyse how festivals promote cultural visibility, sustain heritage, and foster social cohesion.
3. Explore the entrepreneurial landscape within Pacific communities, identifying both opportunities and challenges faced by Pacific entrepreneurs involved in these events.
4. Contribute to Pacific-focused scholarship by integrating an autoethnographic and culturally grounded perspective that foregrounds lived experience, storytelling, and Indigenous values.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds both academic and cultural significance. It contributes to growing scholarship on Pacific migration, identity formation, and community resilience by centring the lived

experiences of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa. In particular, it highlights how cultural festivals serve not only as sites of heritage preservation but also as dynamic spaces for reinterpretation and innovation within urban diasporic life.

The research underscores how such events promote social cohesion, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and culturally grounded entrepreneurship. These insights are especially relevant in Auckland—often described as the largest Polynesian city in the world—where Pacific communities continue to assert their creativity and belonging amid shifting social, political, and economic landscapes.

Through an autoethnographic methodology and a Pacific-centred lens, this study contributes to fields such as cultural studies, tourism, and event management. It challenges Western-centric paradigms by privileging Indigenous concepts such as ***tautua*** (service), ***vā*** (relational space), and ***fa'aaloalo*** (respect), offering a culturally responsive framework for understanding the roles and futures of Pacific festivals.

The findings also offer practical implications for policymakers, educators, cultural leaders, and community organisations. By identifying the opportunities and challenges faced by Pacific communities in festival contexts, this study can inform strategies that support cultural sustainability, inclusive economic development, and youth empowerment. In doing so, it advocates for greater recognition and support of Pacific-led cultural initiatives as integral to Aotearoa's social and cultural fabric.

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured across six chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive exploration of how cultural festivals shape identity, promote economic opportunity, and preserve heritage within Auckland's Pacific diaspora:

Chapter 1 introduces the study, outlining personal and cultural motivations, the research context, research questions and objectives, and the overall significance of the research.

Chapter 2 presents a critical literature review, examining scholarship on Pacific identity, transnationalism, cultural festivals, entrepreneurship, and Indigenous methodologies. It identifies key theoretical frameworks and gaps this study seeks to address.

Chapter 3 outlines the research design, with a focus on autoethnography, secondary data analysis, and Pacific research principles such as vā and talanoa. It also discusses ethical considerations, reflexivity, and cultural positioning.

Chapter 4 provides two detailed case studies that examine the roles of cultural festivals in cultural transmission, community cohesion, and economic empowerment.

Chapter 5 discusses and interprets the findings in relation to the literature, focusing on themes of identity, tourism, entrepreneurship, and cultural sustainability. It integrates personal narratives to foreground Pacific voices and considers implications for community development.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarising key insights, reflecting on its contributions and limitations, and offering directions for future scholarship, policy, and practice.

This structure enables a culturally grounded and critically reflexive exploration of Pacific festival life in Auckland, guided by Indigenous knowledge systems and lived experiences. It offers insights that are both meaningful to academic discourse and responsive to the aspirations of Pacific communities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Cultural festivals have increasingly become focal points for academic exploration due to their capacity to generate economic, social, and cultural benefits (Getz & Page, 2016; Stankova & Vassenska, 2015). While their economic contributions such as job creation and tourism revenue are well documented, contemporary research emphasises their deeper socio-cultural functions, particularly for diasporic and Indigenous communities (Buch et al., 2011; Finkel & Platt, 2020). Festivals serve as dynamic cultural spaces where identity is performed, communal bonds are reinforced, and heritage is preserved.

For Auckland's Pacific diaspora, the largest Polynesian population of any city globally, festivals like the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest are more than celebratory events. They are critical platforms for cultural visibility, youth empowerment, and intergenerational learning (Mackley-Crump, 2013; Williams, 2018). These gatherings embody collective expressions of belonging, resilience, and pride, offering Pacific peoples a space to assert their identities within a rapidly changing urban landscape.

This literature review draws on theoretical perspectives such as **transnationalism**, **diaspora identity formation**, and **authenticity within cultural tourism** to explore how cultural festivals contribute to Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. It also incorporates **autoethnographic reflections** as a method for situating the researcher's lived experience within the broader academic discourse. These reflections, as personal narratives, serve to illuminate the emotional and cultural dimensions of festival participation often overlooked in the conventional literature.

The review is structured around key themes that align with the study's research questions:

- Auckland's demographic and cultural landscape.
- Migration, transnationalism, and identity formation.
- The role of cultural festivals in sustaining community cohesion.
- The intersections between culture, entrepreneurship, and sustainability; and
- The benefits and challenges of festival tourism.

Together, these strands offer a foundation for understanding the transformative power of Pacific cultural festivals in preserving heritage, fostering economic development, and amplifying Pacific voices within the multicultural fabric of Auckland.

2.1.1 Auckland's Demographic Landscape

As the largest Polynesian city, Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau is home to the majority of Aotearoa's Pacific population, and a central site for the expression of Pacific identity and cultural life (Raymond & Leo-Anderson, 2021). According to the 2018 New Zealand census, over 63.9% of the country's Pacific peoples resided in Auckland at that time, representing 15.5% of the city's population, a proportion that continues to grow (Raymond & Leo-Anderson, 2021). This growth is not only demographic, but also cultural, reflected in the increasing vibrancy and visibility of Pacific communities across the city.

Recent data from the 2023 census further reinforces Auckland's status as a Pacific hub. The city's population had reached 1.66 million, a 5.4% increase since 2018, with Pacific peoples making up 16.6% of residents, alongside a Māori population of 12.3% (Stats NZ, 2024). Nationally, the Pacific population has risen by 16.0% since 2018 and currently comprises 8.9% of New Zealand's population. The Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2020) projects that this trajectory will continue, with the Pacific population expected to reach between 440,000 and 480,000 by 2025, and up to 650,000 by 2038. Among these, Samoans remain the largest ethnic group, projected to comprise up to 340,000 individuals by 2038.

Figure 1 (Growth of Pacific Peoples in Auckland and New Zealand) illustrates the steady increase in Pacific population over the past decade, both in Auckland and across New Zealand. Auckland continues to host the majority of the national Pacific population, with an estimated 275,000 Pacific residents in 2023. This visual representation of the growth reinforces the city's role as a demographic and cultural epicentre for Pacific peoples (Stats NZ, 2024; Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2020).

Figure 1 Growth of Pacific Peoples

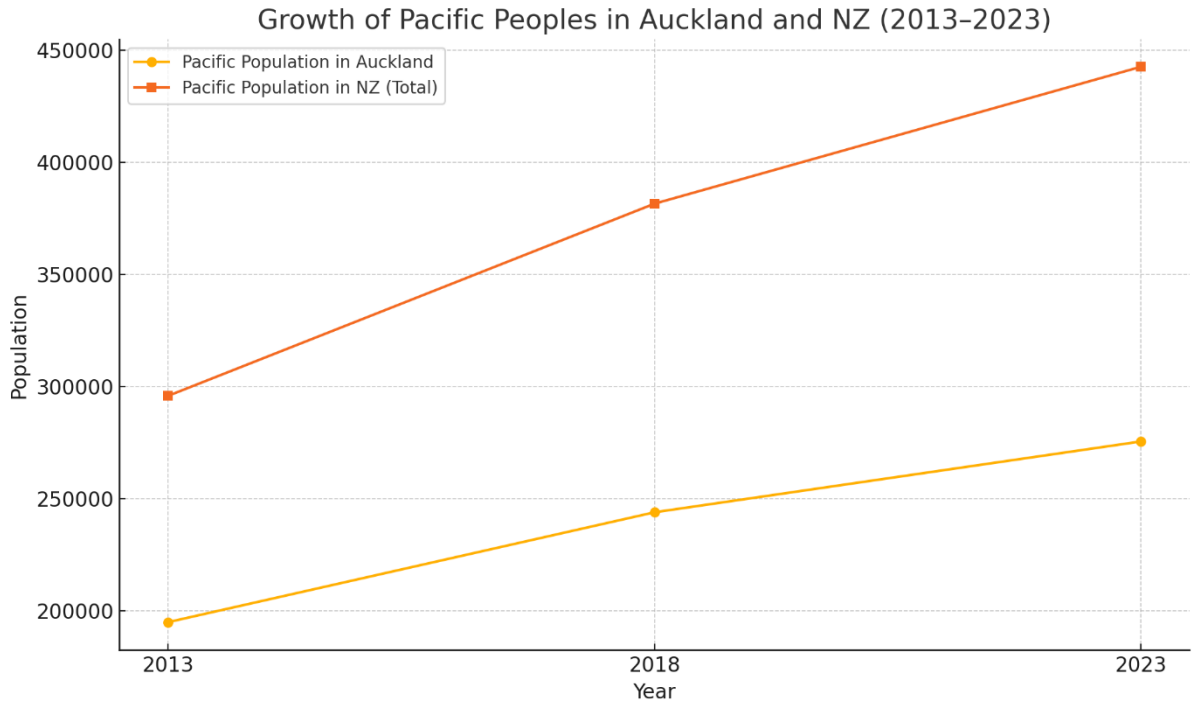

Figure 1: Growth of Pacific Peoples in Auckland and New Zealand (2013–2023). Source: Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2020). Used under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence.

Such demographic shifts are significant. They signal not only the expanding presence of Pacific communities, but also their increasing cultural, economic, and political influence, particularly in Auckland. This city has evolved into a vibrant landscape of cultural expression, where traditional values meet diasporic innovation. While cultural festivals play a key role in this transformation, it is the public spaces that host them which provide vital platforms for identity affirmation, intergenerational knowledge sharing, and civic engagement among Pacific communities.

The chart in Figure 2 presents projections by ethnic group, highlighting the continued dominance of Samoan communities within the Pacific population, followed by Tongan and Cook Islands Māori groups. These projections, drawn from Ministry for Pacific Peoples data (2020), illustrate the growing diversity and scale of Aotearoa's Pacific population, reinforcing the need for culturally inclusive policy, education, and representation, particularly in Auckland, where many of these communities are concentrated.

Figure 2 Projected Pacific Ethnic Group Populations

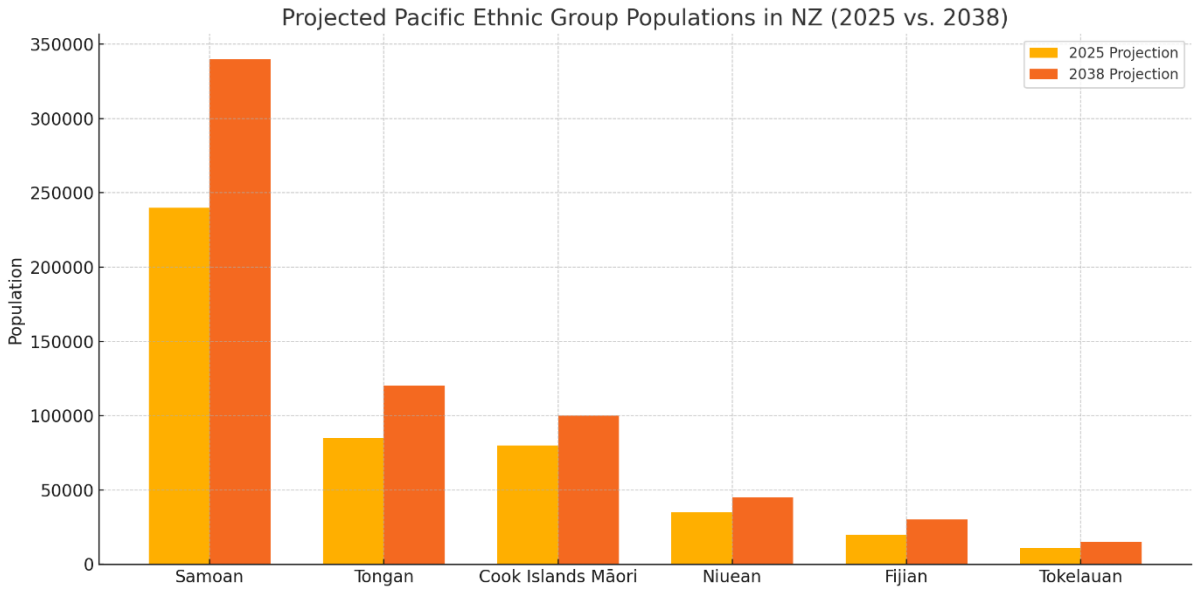

Figure 2: Projected Pacific Ethnic Group Populations in New Zealand (2025 vs. 2038). Source: Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2020). Used under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence.

2.2 Migration, Transnationalism, and Identity

Migration has profoundly shaped the social, cultural, and demographic landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand. For Pacific communities, waves of migration beginning in the mid-twentieth century—particularly from Samoa, Tonga, and the Cook Islands—have led to the establishment of vibrant urban diasporas, especially in Auckland. These movements were often driven by aspirations for education, employment, and improved quality of life, but were also accompanied by challenges related to cultural adaptation, marginalisation, and identity negotiation (Bell, 2013; Gauthier, 2013).

Pacific migrants brought with them rich traditions, languages, and communal values. However, as these communities settled into predominantly Western urban settings, they encountered pressures to conform to individualistic norms, often leading to complex generational identity shifts. Gauthier (2013) highlighted how younger generations—particularly New Zealand-born Pacific Islanders—grapple with dual or multiple identities, shaped by both ancestral heritage and the realities of growing up in Aotearoa. These identity tensions are further complicated by the homogenising label "Pasifika," which, while politically useful, can obscure cultural distinctions between Pacific ethnic groups.

Language retention is one of the clearest markers of these generational shifts. While Samoan and Tongan remain relatively robust, languages such as Cook Islands Māori and Niuean are in decline. The loss of language reflects broader patterns of assimilation and cultural adaptation, raising urgent questions about how identity is preserved across generations (Gauthier, 2013).

Bihari (2023) emphasised that cultural heritage and Indigenous knowledge systems are not only central to community identity. but also provide sustainable responses to contemporary challenges. She highlighted how intergenerational transmission—through stories, rituals, and everyday cultural practices—helps preserve continuity and strengthens social cohesion. These ideas echo existing scholarship on Pacific identity in diaspora, where cultural revitalisation acts as both resistance and affirmation (Faitala et al., 2022; Mackley-Crump, 2015).

For Auckland's Pacific communities, such knowledge is embodied and passed on through festivals, language retention, and creative entrepreneurship. Bihari's (2023) focus on sustainability and resilience through Indigenous wisdom further reinforces the role of cultural events as living repositories of identity and ecological consciousness.

My own experience speaks directly to this linguistic and cultural negotiation. Born in Auckland to Samoan parents who migrated in the late 1970s, my first language was Samoan; English was a foreign tongue to me until I began primary school in 1986. My parents, navigating the uncertainties of migration and adjusting to a new life in Aotearoa, were deeply committed to preserving our cultural identity at home. We were only allowed to speak Samoan within the household—a rule they enforced with love, pride, and a sense of duty to our roots. In hindsight, this insistence was their way of holding on to a homeland they missed dearly. It was a coping mechanism in a world that felt unfamiliar and, at times, isolating. By keeping our language alive, they stayed connected to Samoa and instilled in us a sense of belonging that transcended physical geography.

Transnationalism provides a critical theoretical framework for understanding these dynamics. Rather than viewing migration as a one-way process of settlement, transnationalism acknowledges the ongoing, multi-directional ties that migrants maintain with their homelands—socially, culturally, economically, and emotionally (Tedeschi et al., 2020; Vertovec, 2009). Pacific communities exemplify this paradigm: remittances, cultural exchanges, community fundraising, and festivals, all operate as forms of transnational practice that sustain a sense of belonging across borders (Anae, 2019; Tedeschi et al., 2020).

Cultural festivals such as Pasifika and ASB Polyfest serve as public expressions of these transnational connections. They offer diasporic Pacific peoples an opportunity to enact, perform, and celebrate their heritage in highly visible and communal ways (Hall & Duval, 2004; Mackley-Crump, 2013). These festivals become sites of intergenerational learning, where younger Pacific New Zealanders reconnect with traditional dance, language, and ritual while adapting them to local urban contexts.

As someone raised within a Pacific household in Auckland, the concept of transnationalism resonates deeply. Our lives were always in motion—physically between countries, and emotionally between worlds. Telephone calls to Samoa, ***fa'alavelave*** (family obligations), and cultural events, whether these be through the Church or the wider Samoan community within Otara, were all part of our weekly rhythm. Even when we could not return home (i.e., Samoa) in person, our identity remained tethered through these acts of cultural continuity.

In this sense, transnationalism is not just a framework; it is lived. It helps explain how Pacific peoples in Auckland can feel simultaneously rooted in Aotearoa and yet spiritually and culturally anchored to Samoa, Tonga, or other ancestral homelands. As Anae (2019) explained, these are "metaphoric returns" that maintain the *vā* sacred relational space between people, places, and generations.

E lele le toloa ae ma'au i le vai—The toloa bird may fly far but will always return to the water.

This proverb captures the essence of diasporic identity: no matter how far we journey, we remain drawn to our cultural source. Through language, storytelling, and celebration, we return—repeatedly—to the waters that first shaped us.

2.3 Cultural Identity, Festivals, and Community Cohesion

Cultural festivals play a vital role in reinforcing identity, belonging, and resilience among minority and diasporic communities. For Pacific peoples in Aotearoa, festivals such as Pasifika and ASB Polyfest provide powerful spaces for public celebration, intergenerational learning, and cultural affirmation. They are not only events for entertainment, but also sites where language, heritage, and values are actively sustained within changing social environments (Buch et al., 2011; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013).

Various scholars have described multicultural festivals as important arenas for cultural expression and visibility. Lee et al. (2012) argued that such events allow communities to showcase their identities in ways that foster pride and strengthen intergenerational ties. These

festivals also offer safe and affirming spaces where cultural knowledge is not only performed, but also shared between elders, youth, and wider audiences.

Sanjek (2014) outlined two types of festival rituals: those of inclusion, and those of ethnic celebration. Rituals of inclusion promote cultural harmony and shared diversity across groups, while rituals of ethnic celebration focus on reinforcing identity and solidarity within a specific cultural group. Auckland's Pacific festivals embody both forms. They bring together a diverse city to celebrate cultural richness, while also enabling Pacific communities to honour their unique traditions. Through performance, storytelling, music, and food, these festivals help maintain cultural continuity and foster a sense of belonging for Pacific youth growing up in New Zealand.

Festivals are also sites of identity negotiation. For many in the diaspora, especially younger generations, festivals become spaces where inherited traditions are rediscovered and reinterpreted. Mackley-Crump (2013) and Williams (2018) highlighted the ways festivals allow participants to navigate dual identities by embracing both ancestral heritage and contemporary influences. These performances are not just about preservation, but about creative adaptation and cultural innovation. They are shaped by the voices and contributions of young people, families, schools, and cultural leaders working together to keep heritage alive.

However, this cultural fluidity has sparked debate. Some traditional leaders and scholars worry that adaptations made for performance or audience appeal may dilute sacred meanings embedded in ritual and identity. For instance, MacLeod (2006) critiques the potential for cultural performances to be simplified or staged in ways that cater to mainstream audiences, rather than remaining rooted in community-specific practices. Similarly, Croes & Rivera, (2015) warn that cultural commodification when symbols or rituals are used mainly to attract tourists can distort cultural meanings, especially in diaspora contexts where identity is already under negotiation.

In the context of Auckland’s Pacific diaspora, festivals respond to the tension between maintaining cultural identity and navigating life in a multicultural urban setting. They affirm the right to be seen, heard, and celebrated especially for communities that have historically been marginalised.

More than temporary events, these gatherings are cultural lifelines. They connect generations, strengthen language use, and create shared memories that anchor Pacific peoples to their roots while also preparing them for the future.

2.4 Entrepreneurship, Economic Impacts, and Sustainability

Cultural festivals in Auckland, such as the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest, are not only celebrations of heritage, but also powerful economic spaces. These events open pathways for Pacific entrepreneurs to showcase cultural products, offer services, and build community-led businesses rooted in identity and tradition. They blend cultural authenticity with entrepreneurial innovation, supporting both economic sustainability and social empowerment within Pasifika communities (Buch et al., 2011; Cave, 2009).

For many stall-holders and performers, festivals provide opportunities for income generation, skills development, and brand visibility. Entrepreneurs engage in a range of ventures, from food stalls and handmade crafts to educational workshops and traditional performance-based services. These platforms not only generate immediate financial benefits but also foster longer-term confidence in business practice, especially among those who might otherwise face barriers to mainstream economic participation (Buch et al., 2011; Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013).

In recent years, Pasifika entrepreneurs have expanded beyond the traditional festival circuit, utilising online platforms, pop-up markets, and cultural tourism ventures. A notable example is the 2019 “Pop-Up Pasifika” marketplace, organised by The Pacific Business Hub following the sudden cancellation of the Pasifika Festival. This impromptu event provided 14 vendors from Samoa, Tahiti, Australia, the Cook Islands, and New Zealand, with an opportunity to recover potential revenue losses while showcasing authentic Pacific products. The success of such initiatives highlights how festivals and related events can act as incubators for broader entrepreneurial ecosystems, particularly supporting youth, and women-led enterprises (Pacific Business Hub, 2019).

The unique strength of Pacific festivals lies in their ability to intertwine economic practice with cultural values. Unlike commercial ventures that often primarily prioritise profit, Pacific entrepreneurship is often guided by communal principles such as reciprocity, service, and cultural responsibility. This creates an entrepreneurial model that honours both tradition and innovation. As Dychkovskyy and Ivanov (2020) observed, the demand for authentic cultural experiences within the tourism sector continues to rise, positioning Pasifika festivals as strategic sites for cultural tourism and business development.

Yet scholars have highlighted tensions when cultural entrepreneurship becomes overly influenced by market priorities. Cave (2009) cautions that Pacific entrepreneurs often struggle to balance cultural integrity with economic demands, particularly when external funders or commercial sponsors shape festival programming. MacLeod (2006) similarly notes that cultural

entrepreneurs may be pressured to adapt or simplify content to remain financially viable, potentially limiting the scope of authentic cultural expression.

Sustainability in this context is multifaceted, encompassing not only economic longevity but also cultural resilience and environmental consciousness. Some festival organisers and stall-holders have adopted eco-conscious practices, such as biodegradable packaging and waste minimisation, while others reinvest profits into cultural education programmes, ensuring benefits extend beyond the event itself (Allen & Bruce, 2017).

Participation in these festivals also fosters community capacity-building. Through collaborative preparation and execution, participants gain experience in event logistics, hospitality, leadership, and financial management (Mair, 2015). These transferable skills are valuable not only during festival season but across a range of employment and educational settings. When entire families and communities contribute to planning, organising, and supporting their cultural village or group, a shared sense of ownership is created. This strengthens resilience and collective pride.

However, practical limitations persist. Allen and Bruce (2017) found that many stallholders at Pasifika Festival reported difficulties scaling up their businesses due to short-term opportunities, lack of business training, and irregular access to capital or permanent retail space. These barriers suggest that without structural investment or year-round support, festival-based entrepreneurship may remain largely informal and seasonal.

2.5 Benefits and Barriers of Cultural Festivals in Tourism

Cultural festivals have emerged as one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry, offering unique opportunities to merge economic development with cultural expression. For Pacific communities in Aotearoa, events like the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest are not only vibrant celebrations of identity but also key attractions that draw both local and international visitors. These festivals integrate cultural, social, and economic dimensions to create meaningful experiences that benefit individuals, communities, and cities alike (Dychkovskyy & Ivanov, 2020; Mair, 2015).

From an economic perspective, festivals contribute to local and regional development by supporting small businesses, generating temporary employment, and attracting consumer spending. They enhance city branding and cultural tourism, aligning with broader urban strategies for inclusion and prosperity (Finkel & Platt, 2020; Stankova & Vassenska, 2015). Auckland Council, for example, recognises the Pasifika Festival and Polyfest as cornerstone

events in the city's cultural calendar, contributing to its reputation as a diverse and welcoming city.

Beyond economic imperatives, festivals promote social cohesion and cultural pride. They create spaces for storytelling, intergenerational learning, and community connection. For diasporic communities, these events offer opportunities to perform and affirm identity, challenging marginalisation and enhancing visibility within mainstream society (Lee et al., 2012; Stankova & Vassenska, 2015). They also foster a sense of ownership and empowerment, particularly for youth who may feel disconnected from their heritage in everyday life. Nonetheless, researchers caution that while festivals can momentarily strengthen community identity, they may not address underlying structural inequalities. For example, Derrett (2003) argues that festivals often reflect a community's image rather than its equity concerns, leading to superficial inclusion without addressing systemic issues.

Further barriers include the increasing popularity of cultural festivals which can lead to tensions around authenticity, representation, and control. As festivals grow in size and attract more commercial interest, there is a risk that cultural expressions may be simplified or altered to appeal to wider audiences, potentially diluting their original meaning (Finkel & Platt, 2020). Scholars caution against the commodification of culture, where the need to entertain or generate profit may overshadow the communities' own priorities and values (Caneen, 2014; MacLeod, 2006).

Environmental sustainability is also an emerging concern. Large-scale festivals can result in significant waste, noise, and energy consumption, which may conflict with cultural values of environmental stewardship (Mair, 2015). In response, some organisers have adopted sustainable practices, such as waste minimisation and community clean-up efforts (Allen & Bruce, 2017). While these are positive developments, sustainability requires ongoing commitment and resourcing, especially as festivals continue to grow.

Managing these challenges calls for intentional leadership and community driven decision-making. It is essential that festivals remain grounded in cultural values, with Pacific communities leading conversations about how their identities are presented and preserved. This ensures that economic success does not come at the expense of cultural integrity.

Overall, cultural festivals represent complex and layered spaces. They offer tremendous potential for empowerment, connection, and economic opportunity, but must be carefully managed to avoid reinforcing inequality or misrepresentation. For Pacific peoples, the value of

these festivals lies not only in their external impact, but in the internal affirmation they offer, and the sense of pride, belonging, and possibility they ignite within the community.

2.6 Conclusion

While cultural festivals are often celebrated for fostering pride, belonging, and intercultural dialogue, several scholars highlight the need for more critical examination of their underlying power structures and limitations. Cultural events may serve more as symbolic gestures than systemic interventions, offering visibility without addressing deeper issues of inequality or exclusion. Derrett (2003) suggests that while festivals can reflect a community's identity and aesthetic practices, they do not necessarily address issues of structural inequality or marginalisation. This critique is particularly important in the context of urban festivals where ethnic diversity is often showcased, but deeper socio-economic issues such as resource allocation, decision-making control, or long-term empowerment remain unaddressed. Such critiques call for festival programming and policy frameworks to go beyond surface-level celebration and actively dismantle barriers to inclusion and leadership for Indigenous and minority communities.

This literature review explored the multi-dimensional role of cultural festivals within Auckland's Pacific communities, highlighting their importance in shaping diasporic identity, supporting community cohesion, and fostering economic empowerment. Drawing on key frameworks such as transnationalism, diaspora studies, and cultural tourism, the review situates festivals like Pasifika and ASB Polyfest as central to the lived experiences of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Migration has been shown to influence cultural identity in profound and complex ways. As generations of Pacific peoples settle into urban environments like Auckland, they negotiate dual identities, shaped by the values of their ancestral homelands and the demands of life in a Western context. Transnationalism provides a valuable lens for understanding how cultural practices such as language use, storytelling, and festival participation help maintain these connections across space and time.

Cultural festivals act as anchors in this process. They provide visible, accessible spaces where identity is not only remembered, but actively expressed and reimagined. For many Pacific youth, these events are among the few places where they can see themselves reflected with pride and authenticity. Festivals also serve as platforms for intergenerational knowledge transfer, community engagement, and social empowerment.

Equally important are the economic dimensions of cultural festivals. As explored in this chapter, festivals generate entrepreneurial opportunities that support income generation, skill-building, and cultural leadership. Pacific entrepreneurship within these spaces is often rooted in collective values, aligning business aspirations with cultural preservation. However, these opportunities must be balanced with a commitment to authenticity. As festivals grow in popularity, communities must remain vigilant in terms of protecting the integrity of their cultural expressions and ensuring that representations are community led.

This chapter also acknowledged the barriers and challenges associated with festival tourism, including concerns around commodification, sustainability, and cultural misrepresentation. While festivals hold immense potential, they also require careful planning, adequate resourcing, and inclusive governance, to ensure they continue to serve their communities with integrity and respect.

Ultimately, Pacific cultural festivals in Auckland are more than events. They are evolving spaces of resistance, remembrance, and renewal. As this study moves forward into its thematic analysis and case study findings, the concepts and insights explored in this chapter will provide the foundation for understanding how identity, entrepreneurship, and community engagement continue to shape and define Auckland's Pacific diaspora.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted to explore how cultural festivals influence Pacific identity, transnational belonging, and entrepreneurship. The research draws on an autoethnographic methodology grounded in Indigenous and Pacific ways of knowing, honouring lived experiences as legitimate and central sources of knowledge. My personal narrative as a Samoan researcher, mother, and former Polyfest participant serves not only as a reflexive lens but also as the primary data source. Secondary data from case studies—namely, the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest are used to contextualise, support, and critically enrich the analysis.

Through the adoption of a qualitative research design, this study embraces subjectivity, cultural specificity, and reflexive engagement, aiming to honour Indigenous methodologies while also engaging with Western academic expectations. Key values embedded in this research include ***tautua*** (service), and ***teu le vā*** *(*relational accountability).

3.2 Positionality and Reflexive Framework

Rooted in both Indigenous and Pacific research paradigms, my positionality is central to this study. I am a proud Samoan, shaped by the lived realities of being a mother, a daughter of migrants, a cultural performer, and an academic. This dissertation is not just research—it is tala'aga o lo'u olaga (my life's journey). My reflections are steeped in ancestral knowledge, personal journeys of resilience, and the spiritual guidance that has sustained me.

Autoethnography, as Ellis et al. (2011) assert, allows for the intersection of personal and cultural meaning-making. The inclusion of personal narrative as a valid and essential source of data is further supported by Pacific scholars such as Anae (2020), Vaioleti (2016), and Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014), who affirm that relational ethics, spirituality, and storytelling are legitimate in Pacific research.

Throughout this study, I intentionally centre reflexivity—the process of looking inward to understand outward realities (Etherington, 2004). This includes personal journal entries, cultural reflections, and intergenerational insights shared within my family. These insights are embedded across the dissertation, especially within Chapter 1 (Introduction), Chapter 5 (Discussion), and Chapter 6 (Reflections).

3.3 Research Design: Autoethnography and Pacific Methodologies

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach informed primarily by autoethnography and Pacific methodologies. Autoethnography positions the researcher's lived experience as a site of inquiry and meaning-making, offering emotional, cultural, and political insights into phenomena (Holman Jones, 2005; Spry, 2001).

Autoethnography is the primary method of data generation in this study. My story as a former performer, festival participant, and mother to young Pasifika is interwoven into the analysis of cultural identity, migration, and entrepreneurship. As Anae (2020) explains, ***teu le vā*** reminds us of the importance of relational harmony, and in this research, it is reflected in the relationships between past and present, self and collective, researcher and participants.

The Pacific research paradigm also informs the research ethic and logic. Grounded in values such as ***alofa*** (love), ***fa'aaloalo*** (respect), and ***tautua*** (service), Pacific research approaches centre relationships, humility, and cultural protocols (Vaioleti, 2006; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The research was primarily grounded in an autoethnographic methodology, where my personal narratives and reflections served as the central source of data. Secondary qualitative analysis was used to support, contextualise, and critically enrich this core narrative. Rather than gathering new primary data, the study drew on existing academic literature, statistical reports, visual media, and cultural narratives to explore themes of migration, identity, event tourism, and entrepreneurship within Auckland's Pacific communities. This method aligned with the research's broader autoethnographic and decolonising framework, which values lived experience, relational knowledge, and community voice (Muncey, 2010; Smith, 2016).

Key sources of data were:

Academic literature: Peer reviewed research on Pacific migration, diaspora identity, cultural festivals, entrepreneurship, and qualitative methodologies (Cave, 2009; Mackley-Crump, 2013; Muncey, 2010; Smith, 2016; Williams, 2018) . These texts offered theoretical grounding and interpretive frameworks that were useful for understanding Pasifika experiences in Aotearoa.

Statistical and policy reports: Demographic, economic, and cultural insights were drawn from sources such as the Pacific Cultural Centre Feasibility Study (Krieble et al., 2016), the Pasifika Research Report (Raymond & Leo-Anderson, 2021), and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2020,

2024). These reports highlighted Auckland's growing Pacific population, community aspirations, and the cultural and economic importance of major festivals.

Cultural and media narratives: These narratives were from community-based reflections, youth perspectives, and media representations sourced from festival coverage (e.g. NZ Herald, Radio NZ), school performances (The Coconet TV, 2024), and collaborative reflections (Chubb et al., 2024; Faitala et al., 2022) and provided rich, emic perspectives on the meanings attached to festivals and cultural identity.

Visual and creative materials: In alignment with visual methodologies such as photovoice (Matteucci, 2013; Scarles, 2010), select digital images, performance videos, and festival posters were analysed as cultural texts. These visual data sources were used to explore how Pasifika youth and communities represented themselves and communicate identity, pride, and belonging through creative expression.

As a researcher of Samoan heritage who has participated in Auckland's Pasifika and Polyfest festivals, I brought an insider's lens to the interpretation of these sources. My positionality informed not only what data to prioritise, but also how to interpret it. This relational standpoint supported a culturally grounded, reflexive analysis that recognises the value of ancestral knowledge, lived experience, and community storytelling. Rooted in the Samoan ethos of ***Tautua nei, tō manuia taeao*** (serve now for a better tomorrow), my interpretive process honoured those who came before while envisioning a future that centres Pacific voices.

The inclusion and evaluation of secondary sources were guided by Scott's (2017) criteria of authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning, ensuring that the data used were both trustworthy and contextually relevant. Data were analysed using a thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2017) reflexive and flexible model, to identify patterns across the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of Pasifika festival life. This process was foundational to the themes outlined in Section 3.4 and developed further in the findings and discussion chapters.

3.4 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2017), is a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes in qualitative data. Unlike other qualitative approaches that are often tied to specific theoretical frameworks, thematic analysis is valued for its flexibility. It is considered a method rather than a rigid methodology, allowing

adaptability across research questions, data collection methods, sample sizes, and epistemological positions.

In this study, thematic analysis supported the autoethnographic methodology by organising interpretations of secondary qualitative sources and personal narratives. It was also particularly effective for exploring lived experiences, meaning-making, and socio-cultural practices. To enhance transparency, the key themes, sub-themes, descriptions, and supporting sources are summarised in Table 1 next.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis

THEME	SUB-THEMES	DESCRIPTION	KEY SOURCES
Cultural Identity and Diaspora	*Transnational Identity & Belonging*	How Pasifika people sustain cultural ties while adapting in a diaspora.	Anae (2019); Gauthier (2013); Hall & Duval (2004); Smith (2016); Tedeschi et al. (2020); Visanich (2012); Webber et al. (2013); Williams (2022).
	Intergenerational Knowledge & Storytelling	Transmission of cultural identity through generations via oral traditions and stories.	Bell (2013); Bihari (2023); Khoo & Lin (2023); Kong (2005); Mulipola et al. (2024); Nisa-Waller & Piercy (2024); Sanjek (2014).
Pasifika Festivals and Event Tourism	*Festivalisation of Culture*	Festivals as evolving expressions of identity, culture, and community.	Cudny & Maiava (2017); Jepson & Clarke (2014); Fiavaai (2025); Mackley-Crump (2012, 2013, 2015); The NZ Herald (2022, 2025); Williams (2018, 2022).
	Festivals as Cultural & Economic Assets	Role of festivals in tourism, local economies, and Auckland's strategic goals.	Antchak (2017); Cave et al. (2007); Dychkovskyy & Ivanov (2020); Finkel & Platt (2020); Getz & Page (2016); Krieble et al. (2016); Mihajlović & Vidak (2017); Wade (2023).
	Community Engagement & Representation	How festivals empower communities and promote cultural participation.	Faitala et al. (2022); NZ Herald (2025); One Tree Hill College (2015); Stewart (2017); Tapaleao (2015); The Coconet TV (2024);

			Wood & Homolja (2021).
Entrepreneurship & Economic Impact	*Indigenous & Pasifika Entrepreneurship*	How cultural identity shapes entrepreneurial values and ventures.	Cave (2009); Hēnare et al. (2014); Manganda et al. (2022); Mika et al. (2019); Raymond & Leo-Anderson (2021); de Vries (2007).
	Economic Sustainability of Cultural Events	Business models, funding, and sustainability of festivals.	Allen & Bruce (2017); Buch et al. (2011); Cave (2009); Kinnunen & Haahti (2015); Mair (2015); Perry et al. (2019).
Authenticity, Commodification & Cultural Representation	*Tensions between Authenticity & Commercialisation*	Struggles between genuine cultural representation and commercial demands.	Caneen (2014); Croes et al. (2013); Gilbert (2020); MacLeod (2006); Zhang et al. (2019).
	Cultural Appropriation vs. Cultural Exchange	Representational risks and rewards of showcasing culture to broad audiences.	Cave (2009); Jaeger & Mykletun (2013); Raj & Vignali (2010); Williams (2018).
	Visual & Sensory Research (Photovoice)	Use of images and visual tools to convey lived experiences.	Giglitto et al. (2019); Matteucci (2013); Sarantou et al. (2018); Scarles (2010).
Social & Political Dimensions	*Policy & Government Support for Pasifika Communities*	The influence of governmental strategies on festival development and cultural support.	Johnston (2017); Krieble et al. (2016); Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2020, 2024); Stats NZ (2024).
	Festivals as Acts of Cultural Resistance	Cultural events as platforms for decolonisation, identity assertion, and political advocacy.	Fiavaai (2025); Gilbert (2020); Mair (2015); Perry et al. (2019); Scott (2017); Smith (2016).

Thematic analysis was used to structure and interpret key patterns across secondary data sources and personal narratives. Based on Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2017) flexible and reflexive model, five overarching themes were identified: Cultural Identity and Diaspora; Pasifika Festivals and Event Tourism; Entrepreneurship and Economic Impact; Authenticity, Commodification and Cultural Representation; and Social and Political Dimensions. Each theme includes sub-themes that reflect the nuanced aspects of Pasifika experiences and festival contexts. These thematic categories not only aligned with the research questions but

also served as the analytical foundation for the subsequent discussion of findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

The coding process followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis. I began by immersing myself in the literature, policy documents, media sources, and autoethnographic reflections, noting recurring ideas, language, and concepts. Initial codes were generated manually by highlighting key terms and meanings related to identity, cultural representation, participation, entrepreneurship, and social change. A combination of inductive (emerging from the data) and deductive (guided by theoretical framing) approaches was applied. These codes were then grouped into sub-themes, which were refined through comparison across sources to ensure consistency and conceptual clarity. For instance, codes related to "diaspora," "transnational ties," and "cultural adaptation" were grouped under the sub-theme "Transnational Identity and Belonging." Similarly, material related to economic participation, small business, and sustainability informed the theme "Entrepreneurship and Economic Impact." This iterative and reflexive process allowed for the development of a robust thematic structure that captured both the lived experiences of Pasifika communities and broader socio-cultural and political dynamics.

3.5 Case Study Approach

This research adopted a case study approach, centring on Auckland's Pacific diaspora and its flagship cultural festivals: the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest. The case study method offered a bounded yet flexible framework for examining the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of these events in depth. As a methodological strategy, it enables a holistic exploration of real-world phenomena within their specific context—particularly valuable for research focused on community experiences, identity expression, and socio-political dynamics (Hyett et al., 2014; Yin, 2018).

Auckland provided a distinctive setting for this inquiry due to its demographic composition, historical migration patterns, and vibrant Pasifika cultural presence (Krieble et al., 2016; Stats NZ, 2024). The city's significance as a site of cultural convergence made it ideal for examining how festivals function not only as celebrations, but also as platforms for cultural preservation, entrepreneurship, youth development, and political voice.

As a researcher of Samoan descent who had grown up within Auckland's Pacific community and participated in festivals such as Polyfest, I approached this case study not as an outsider, but as an insider-researcher. My lived experiences, family history, and cultural engagement informed and deepened my understanding of the case. This positionality, aligned with the

autoethnographic methodology underpinning this research, allowed for a reflexive and relational lens that honoured the voices and values of the communities studied (Muncey, 2010; Smith, 2016). I acknowledge the responsibility of serving as both a cultural participant and a storyteller, grounded in the Samoan ethos of ***tautua nei, tō manuia taeao*** (serve now for a better tomorrow), which guided my commitment to intergenerational knowledge and cultural preservation.

Secondary data drawn from sources such as the Pacific Cultural Centre Feasibility Study (Krieble et al., 2016), Pasifika Research Report (Raymond & Leo-Anderson, 2021), and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2020, 2024) provided valuable demographic, cultural, and stakeholder insights. These sources revealed the evolving nature of Auckland's Pasifika population, growing community interest in cultural festivals, and increasing recognition of their social and economic contributions. By focusing on Pasifika Festival and Polyfest as case studies, this research explored the ways these events contributed to identity affirmation, economic opportunity, intergenerational learning, and community resilience within Aotearoa New Zealand's largest urban Pasifika context.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Although this study primarily uses personal narrative and publicly available data, ethical integrity remains vital.

The study is also guided by **Pacific ethical frameworks**, including:

- **Teu le vā**: Respecting relational spaces (Anae, 2020)
- **Aroha ki te tangata**: Love and empathy for people (Smith, 2012)
- **Fa'amaoni**: Honesty and integrity

As a mother and researcher, I was deeply aware of the impact of my words and representations. Therefore, care has been taken to speak respectfully, honour my ancestors, and uphold the dignity of all involved.

3.7 Personal Reflection

Incorporating personal reflections was a key component of this research methodology, enriching the autoethnographic narrative. My reflections drew from personal experiences as part of Auckland's Pacific diaspora, intertwining academic inquiry with deeply personal understandings of migration, cultural heritage, and identity formation. Reflecting on my own family's experiences—particularly my parents' migration story, cultural practices, and their

enduring connections to Samoa—allowed for a nuanced examination of broader cultural and socio-economic issues facing Pacific communities.

The reflection process involved constant engagement with my positionality, acknowledging subjective biases while ensuring the authenticity and cultural sensitivity of interpretations. By integrating autoethnographic reflection with thematic analysis of secondary data, this methodology foregrounded Pacific voices and experiences, contributing to a culturally responsive and critically engaged discourse.

This integrated methodological approach, combining qualitative autoethnographic inquiry with thematic analysis and a focused case study framework, provided a comprehensive and culturally grounded exploration of Pacific identity, entrepreneurship, and community cohesion within Auckland's dynamic cultural landscape.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

4.1 Introduction to Case Studies: Contextualising Pasifika Narratives

As a Pacific researcher navigating diasporic spaces in Aotearoa, the decision to use case studies as a central methodology was both deliberate and deeply personal. My research aimed to explore the socio-cultural influence of Pacific festivals in Auckland, their role in fostering cultural preservation and belonging, and the opportunities they created for entrepreneurship and political engagement within Pasifika communities. These objectives were grounded in three core research questions:

- How do Pasifika festivals contribute to cultural identity and community cohesion?
- In what ways do these festivals engage with cultural tourism and economic empowerment?
- How do they support youth participation and intergenerational resilience in diasporic contexts?

To answer these questions meaningfully, I chose to examine two landmark events: the **Pasifika Festival** and **ASB Polyfest**. These festivals represent more than annual celebrations; they are living cultural ecosystems that serve as platforms for identity negotiation, creative expression, economic development, and civic participation. Their selection reflect both the scope of their impact across Auckland and their alignment with key research concerns, particularly regarding transnationalism, cultural performance, and Pacific led entrepreneurship.

My case studies drew on a range of secondary sources, including published academic literature, government and council reports, event documentation, and news media. For instance, detailed audience and stall-holder data were sourced from studies by Buch et al. (2011), while cultural and organisational insights were drawn from Allen and Bruce (2017), ATEED (Auckland Tourism, Events, and Economic Development) (2020), and Mackley-Crump (2012, 2015). Recent developments and perspectives were contextualised through media reporting by Persico (2025), alongside policy-related commentary from the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2024) and academic critiques by Faitala et al. (2022). While I did not collect primary data, these secondary sources provided a robust foundation for critical analysis and reflective engagement with the subject matter.

In choosing these two festivals, I was particularly drawn to their distinct but complementary characteristics. Pasifika Festival, as a pan-Pacific event rooted in community ownership and cultural celebration, represents a regional and diasporic identity. ASB Polyfest, by contrast,

centres youth, education, and inter-school competition, highlighting how cultural knowledge is passed on and reimagined by new generations. Both festivals allowed for an exploration of transnational identity formation, the politics of cultural performance, and the intersections between tradition, commerce, and visibility.

Importantly, case study research allows for this kind of contextual richness. It offers a level of adaptability that sets it apart from more prescriptive qualitative approaches such as grounded theory or phenomenology. As I reflected on my research journey, I found this flexibility invaluable for allowing me to tailor my analysis to the specific cultural and political textures of Pasifika festivals. As Hyett et al. (2014) noted, case studies are designed to suit the case and research question, and published examples show wide variation in design and application.

E sui le faiga ae tumau le fa'avae—Our practices may change, but our foundations remain.

This Samoan proverb captures the essence of the case study approach as applied here: while the structure of my research may be shaped by academic conventions, the foundations lie in lived experience, cultural knowledge, and service to community.

4.2 Case Study: ASB Polyfest—Celebrating Cultural Identity, Resilience, and Transnationalism

4.2.1 Origins: From Community Initiative to Cultural Landmark

The ASB Polyfest emerged in 1976 against a backdrop of social and economic challenges in Ōtara, South Auckland. During this time, the area experienced rapid demographic change due to Pacific migration, compounded by systemic discrimination, housing overcrowding, and youth marginalisation (Williams, 2022). In response, visionary educators such as James Garfield Johnson, the inaugural principal of Auckland's Hillary College, alongside its teachers, Bernard Gadd, and Ian Mitchell, championed an inclusive educational approach rooted in biculturalism and multiculturalism. Their goal was not merely representation, but transformation to embed Māori and Pacific worldviews within education systems and affirm the cultural worth of every young person (Williams, 2022).

Hillary College's Polynesian Club, founded in 1967, became the catalyst for what would evolve into one of the most significant cultural festivals in Aotearoa. Inspired by student Michael Rollo's exposure to overseas cultural festivals, the idea for a local celebration took shape. On 20th October 1976, the first Auckland Secondary School Māori and Pacific Islands Cultural Festival was held at Hillary College. With just four schools participating (Hillary, Mangere,

Aorere, and Seddon Colleges) and an entry fee of 50 cents, the inaugural event laid the foundations for what is now globally recognised as ASB Polyfest (NZ Herald, 2025).

Figure 3 Nga Tapuwae College Cook Island Group - Early 80s

Figure 3

ASB Polyfest performance group in traditional attire, undated. This image reflects the vibrancy, gender balance, and joy present in Pacific cultural performances. *Reproduced from ASB Polyfest, n.d., https://www.asbpolyfest.co.nz/p/4682-asb-polyfest. Copyright ASB Polyfest.*

This photograph captures members of the Cook Islands cultural group from Nga Tapuwae College performing with pride and vitality during one of the early years of the ASB Polyfest, in the early 1980s. As one of the few surviving images from this formative era, it offers a rare and powerful glimpse into the humble beginnings of what would become the world's largest Polynesian secondary school festival. From grassroot performances like this to today's multi-stage, multi-day event celebrating over a dozen Pacific and Māori cultures, Polyfest has grown into a cultural cornerstone of Auckland. This image stands as a visual testament to the enduring pride, resilience, and cultural expression of Pacific youth across generations.

Figure 4 Māori Kapa Haka Group, Tamaki College Polyfest - Early 80s

Figure 4

Māori *kapa haka* group performing at an early ASB Polyfest event in the 1980s, held at Tamaki College. Although the specific school is unknown, this image reflects the strength, unity, and grace of *rangatahi* (youth) celebrating *te ao Māori* through traditional action songs. *Reproduced from ASB Polyfest, n.d., https://www.asbpolyfest.co.nz/p/4682-asb-polyfest. Copyright ASB Polyfest.*

As one of the few visual records from Polyfest's early days, this offers a precious glimpse into the festival's roots and the foundational role Māori students played in shaping its legacy. Since then, Polyfest has grown into a vibrant and expansive celebration of Aotearoa's cultural diversity, with kapa haka remaining a powerful centrepiece of its programme.

Figure 5 Judges and Audience at Polyfest at Tamaki College - Early 80s

Figure 5

Judges and audience at one of the early ASB Polyfest events, held at Tamaki College in the early 1980s. The image captures a vibrant intergenerational gathering of *whānau* (families), elders, and community leaders, highlighting the powerful communal support behind Māori and Pasifika youth identity and performance. *Reproduced from ASB Polyfest, n.d., https://www.asbpolyfest.co.nz/p/4682-asb-polyfest. Copyright ASB Polyfest.*

This moment speaks to the grassroots strength of Polyfest in its formative years—a festival built not only on performance, but on shared pride, collective support, and the celebration of culture in motion.

From these humble beginnings, Polyfest became more than a performance stage; it became a movement. As someone raised in a Pacific family and community, I have seen first-hand how important it is for our identities to be not only acknowledged but celebrated in public and institutional spaces. Polyfest was born out of that very need: community driven, culturally affirming, and youth focused from day one.

4.2.3 Expansion and Cultural Significance

Over nearly five decades, ASB Polyfest has grown into the world's largest secondary school cultural festival. What began as a modest initiative now attracts approximately 100,000 spectators annually and features over 10,000 student performers from nearly 75 schools. The festival hosts multiple cultural stages including Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands, Māori, and a Diversity Stage representing communities such as Fiji, Tuvalu, Indian, and Chinese (NZ Herald, 2025; Wood & Homolja, 2021). Its evolution reflects not only increasing school participation, but also the broader growth and diversification of Auckland's Pacific diaspora.

However, Polyfest is more than its numbers. It functions as a powerful transnational space where Pacific communities sustain cultural connections, affirm identity, and honour ancestral knowledge. As Anayo (2017) explained, festivals like Polyfest are vital for diasporic communities, particularly smaller ones such as Auckland's Niuean population, as they provide spaces to preserve language, performance traditions, and intergenerational storytelling. The performances are deliberate acts of cultural continuity, not just entertainment. They embody identity formation, resistance to erasure, and the enduring value of communal expression.

From my own experiences of growing up in a diasporic context, I know the longing for connection to one's language, to traditional knowledge, and to the values our grandparents held. Festivals like Polyfest give our generation that connection in visible, celebratory, and empowering ways. For many young performers, it is their first opportunity to wear traditional attire, speak their language on stage, and learn their history through dance and chant. These acts matter they remind us that we are not just adapting to Aotearoa; we are also carrying our homelands with us.

E lele le toloa ae ma'au i le vai—The bird may fly away, but it will always return to the water.

This proverb speaks to the enduring pull of cultural roots. Even as our communities grow and shift across new landscapes, Polyfest helps anchor us bringing us back to the water, to our vā, to our collective identity.

4.2.4 Benefits of ASB Polyfest

ASB Polyfest delivers wide-ranging cultural, social, and educational benefits, significantly contributing to the wellbeing, visibility, and cohesion of Pacific and Māori communities. As Gilbert (2020) emphasised, Indigenous festivals such as Polyfest play a crucial role in cultural revitalisation providing spaces where communities reclaim narratives, practise cultural sovereignty, and counter historical and ongoing marginalisation. In this way, Polyfest has become more than a school competition; it is a vehicle for cultural resistance and empowerment.

Polyfest fosters intergenerational collaboration, strengthens community bonds, and offers a sense of belonging that is often absent from conventional schooling experiences. Students, families, cultural tutors, and support teams come together in a collective effort that blends mentorship, leadership, and learning. These interactions create a space where Pacific youth can take ownership of their identities while being guided and supported by elders and peers alike (Chubb et al., 2024; Gilbert, 2020).

As a Pacific student growing up in South Auckland, I remember how Polyfest transformed our school year. Rehearsals were not just about performance; they were about laughter, long evenings of learning *sāsā* (a vibrant Samoan dance where hands tell stories of paddling, weaving, climbing, and sharing food from the land) or the *siva* Samoa, the patience of our tutors, and the deep pride our families carried. There was a sense that what we were doing mattered, and that we were becoming part of something bigger than ourselves. That pride still sits with me today.

Figure 6 One Tree Hill College Samoan Group, ASB Polyfest 2015

Figure 6

The One Tree Hill College Samoan group performing at ASB Polyfest 2015. The vibrant attire, particularly the intricately crafted *tuiga* worn by the *taupou* (ceremonial maiden), reflects the artistry, identity, and cultural pride embedded in Samoan performance traditions. This image visually anchors the festival's evolution over time. *Reproduced from One Tree Hill College, 2015, https://www.onetreehillcollege.school.nz/news/2015/asb-polyfest-2015/. Copyright One Tree Hill College.*

The group's dynamic performance—blending song, dance, chant, and synchronised movements—demonstrates how Polyfest has grown from its early beginnings into a sophisticated and expansive celebration of Pacific identity. Set against a vivid cultural backdrop, this moment encapsulates the essence of Polyfest today: bold, unapologetic, and deeply rooted in heritage.

Figure 7 Westlake Girls Māori Kapa Haka Group, ASB Polyfest 2022

Figure 7

Performers from Westlake Girls' High School during their Māori *kapa haka* routine at ASB Polyfest 2022. Wearing intricately woven *kākahu* (traditional garments) and adorned with feathers, the performers demonstrate discipline and grace in their *poi* movements — reflecting the strength and beauty of *te ao haka* (the Māori performing arts worldview). *Reproduced from New Zealand Herald, 2022, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/day-2-of-polyfest-maori-and-samoan-stage-performances-kick-off/BYROP656KB2RG3KQYHDHPH34JY/. Copyright NZ Herald.*

This image serves as a powerful representation of how *kapa haka* continues to thrive in modern Aotearoa—maintaining its cultural integrity while inspiring new generations to stand confidently in their identity. As part of the evolving legacy of Polyfest, this moment exemplifies the resilience and vibrancy of Māori cultural expression in contemporary education and performance spaces.

These culturally affirming spaces nurture identity, confidence, and leadership among youth. As Triponel (2022) noted, many Pacific learners face pressures in mainstream education systems that can cause cultural disconnection. Polyfest counters this by validating cultural knowledge and expression. It allows students to perform who they are with authenticity and mana. Wearing

traditional clothing, speaking their language, and performing ancestral dances all serve to reinforce cultural identity and create positive associations with heritage.

Faitala et al. (2022) described Polyfest as "magical," not in a mythical sense, but in the very real way it transforms lives. Students develop confidence not only on stage but in how they carry themselves. The magic lies in the care of tutors, the precision of the chants, the proud tears of parents, and the leadership roles students take on. Whether performing, sewing costumes, or managing logistics, young people emerge from the experience more grounded in their identity and often more connected to school and community.

The festival also generates economic opportunities and encourages community participation through culturally meaningful fundraising. Activities such as *fiefia* or *fiafia* night (fundraiser event), common in Tongan and wider Pacific communities, serve both practical and symbolic purposes. They not only raise funds for uniforms and travel but also reinforce familial commitment and collective responsibility (Williams, 2018). These practices root the festival deeply within broader cultural frameworks of reciprocity and communal care.

Polyfest, therefore, speaks directly to all three of this dissertation's core research questions. It is a space where socio-cultural influences actively shape identity, where intergenerational learning fosters resilience, and where youth are empowered to step forward as cultural carriers and future leaders.

4.2.5 Challenges and Barriers

While ASB Polyfest has achieved remarkable cultural and social impacts, it continues to face significant challenges particularly around funding, representation, and long-term sustainability. One of the most pressing issues is that of financial stability. Organisers estimate that over NZ$3 million is required annually to run the festival at its current scale, yet available funding rarely meets this need (Fiavaai, 2025). Although the festival receives support from Auckland Council, local boards, ASB Bank Limited, and government agencies, this support typically covers only half of the total costs.

Core expenses such as traffic management, security, infrastructure, first aid, and stage construction are essential to the safe and successful operation of Polyfest. As Fiavaai (2025) observed, these are non-negotiable costs, but financial uncertainty threatens the accessibility, scope, and even the future of the event. In response, director Seiuli Terri Leo-Mauu and the festival's trust board have explored alternative revenue streams, such as monetising livestream content. While these innovations offer potential, they also raise questions about accessibility

and equity, particularly for families and communities who may struggle to engage with digital content behind pay-walls.

Historically, the festival has also contended with issues around cultural representation. Gershon & Collins (2007) critiqued early versions of Polyfest for promoting a narrow form of multiculturalism where performances were framed to meet audience expectations rather than authentically represent the diversity and depth of each culture. Performances were often limited to "safe" expressions of identity songs, dances, and food that fit comfortably within mainstream narratives. While these acts held cultural value, they risked simplifying complex traditions into consumable displays.

Fortunately, this has evolved over time. As Williams (2022) noted, Polyfest has increasingly embraced authenticity and diversity, creating more inclusive spaces that better reflect the lived experiences of students and communities. The addition of the Diversity Stage, for example, acknowledges the changing face of Auckland and the need for representation beyond the dominant cultural groups. Nevertheless, there is still room to deepen the festival's potential as a space of critical cultural dialogue, and not just celebration.

These barriers underscore a key theme in this dissertation: festivals are not neutral, but are shaped by the same power structures, resource gaps, and representational politics as other public institutions. Polyfest's ability to sustain its legacy while navigating these tensions depends on intentional planning, strong community partnerships, and systemic support that centres equity.

4.2.6 Government and Community Support

Recognising Polyfest's cultural and educational significance, government agencies have begun to formalise their support. In 2024, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples pledged NZ$60,000 toward the festival's 50th anniversary celebrations, with a further commitment to fund future milestones (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2024). Minister Dr Shane Reti acknowledged Polyfest as a platform that fosters leadership, promotes Pacific languages, and improves educational outcomes through culturally grounded initiatives such as speech competitions.

This investment signalled an important shift: Pacific cultural expression was being recognised not just as performance, but as a valid and powerful tool for learning, wellbeing, and development. When young people can engage with their heritage in school-sanctioned spaces, their sense of belonging—and belief in their own potential—grows stronger.

As Bihari (2023) argued, cultural revitalisation strengthens intergenerational bonds by enabling elders to transmit wisdom and traditions in meaningful ways. This resonates strongly with what takes place at ASB Polyfest, where school groups, families, and community leaders collaborate to prepare youth for cultural performance. The festival becomes a site where transnational identity is not just celebrated, but actively constructed, with young people negotiating their place within both New Zealand and their ancestral homelands. Through performance, language, and dress, knowledge is embodied and affirmed—strengthening social cohesion in ways that echo Bihari's (2023) assertions about cultural sustainability and resilience.

The voices of community elders also echo this sentiment. Mama Tupou Manapouri, a founding member and long-time Cook Islands stage coordinator, described the festival as a space that has shaped generations. Her testimony, alongside countless others, reinforces what many of us know intuitively: Polyfest is not just an event—it is a movement, a place where identity is not only preserved, but strengthened, performed, and passed on (NZ Herald, 2025).

I often reflect on the ripple effect this festival has had in my life. Between 1995 and 1998, I was a proud performer for the Samoan group at Otahuhu College. After the nerves and excitement of performing, I would stay on and relax, taking the chance to support my classmates on the Tongan and Cook Islands stages. Cheering them on from the crowd, helping them backstage, and soaking in the atmosphere, helped shape my early appreciation for the diversity and mana of our Pacific cultures.

Two decades later, that experience came full circle. I stood once again in the crowd but this time as a parent watching my own children perform on the Samoan stage. Seeing my son and daughter step into the same space I once did, adorned in traditional attire, dancing with pride and purpose, was a moment I will never forget. It was more than nostalgia—it was legacy in motion.

Polyfest has always been more than a festival to me. It is a cultural anchor. It connects our past to our present. It reminds us not only of who we are, but of the stories, values, and strength we carry forward through the generations.

Still, the festival's long-term success requires more than symbolic recognition. It calls for continued, consistent investment in both resources and policy. Government and local bodies must not only celebrate Polyfest's success, but embed its support into national frameworks for arts, youth, and education ensuring that cultural events are not "nice to have," but recognised as essential.

4.2.7 Polyfest as Cultural Legacy and Transnational Space

ASB Polyfest stands as a powerful testament to the resilience, diversity, and cultural brilliance of Māori and Pacific communities in Aotearoa. What began as a local initiative to address youth marginalisation has grown into a cultural institution one that crosses national, generational, and spiritual boundaries. Polyfest is no longer just an event for Auckland; it has become a transnational celebration of belonging, where diasporic communities reconnect with ancestral homelands through performance, language, and tradition.

Rooted in community and carried by generations, the festival offers a platform where young people embody cultural knowledge while actively reshaping it. This process of cultural transmission is particularly significant for diasporic Pacific communities whose connections to the Islands may be shaped more by memory, music, and stories than by physical return. Polyfest becomes the return. It is where songs and chants carry the weight of genealogy, where a student's first *siva* or *haka* becomes a rite of passage.

From a transnational lens, festivals like Polyfest strengthen socio-cultural and emotional links across the region. Anayo (2017) noted the importance of such events for smaller island communities like Niue, who use the festival to keep language, dance, and custom alive in the diaspora. These performances are not just symbolic; they are strategic acts of cultural survival resisting assimilation while embracing adaptation.

I have witnessed how these moments ripple outward not just from the stage, but into families, schools, and wider society. When our children perform with pride, we all stand taller. When communities prepare together sewing, singing, fundraising it strengthens our *vā*. As a mother, former performer, and audience member, I have seen how Polyfest weaves all these layers together into something deeply personal yet powerfully collective.

Polyfest reminds us that cultural identity is not static or nostalgic it is dynamic, lived, and renewed each year on stage. In doing so, the festival affirms that Māori and Pacific cultures are not just preserved in memory or museums but are thriving and shaping Aotearoa's future.

4.2.8 Future Directions and Opportunities

Looking ahead, ASB Polyfest holds enormous potential not just as a cultural event, but as a vehicle for educational transformation, digital innovation, community participation, and long-term sustainability. The festival already acts as a powerful space for identity-building, but with targeted support and strategic development, its impact could be amplified even further for future generations.

One key opportunity lies in strengthening the educational value of Polyfest. Participation in performance, speech competitions, and cultural activities fosters essential skills such as confidence, leadership, teamwork, and cultural literacy. Integrating Polyfest more explicitly into school curricula through cross-subject links in language, arts, and social studies could enhance academic engagement and outcomes for Māori and Pacific students (Chubb et al., 2024; Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2024). Embedding cultural festivals within formal learning spaces affirms that cultural knowledge is not extra; it is foundational.

Digital innovation also offers meaningful ways to expand Polyfest's reach. While live streaming has emerged as a response to funding pressures (Fiavaai, 2025), it also creates valuable pathways for accessibility, archiving, and international connection. Creating digital archives, virtual stages, and interactive educational resources, could allow students, families, and diasporic communities around the world to engage with Polyfest meaningfully, even from afar (Anayo, 2017; Williams, 2022). These tools can extend cultural continuity while supporting youth in navigating identity within digital spaces.

From my own experience, I know how powerful it is to see myself, my language, my music, and my movements, reflected on a stage. For our *rangatahi* (youth) who are digitally fluent but culturally searching, innovative tools that bridge cultural heritage with modern platforms are more important than ever. They deserve access to their cultures in formats that speak their language, both metaphorically and literally.

Future initiatives should also embrace co-design approaches centring youth and *whānau* in decision-making processes. Involving performers, tutors, and families in shaping festival themes and planning, ensures the event remains grounded in community voice and relevance (NZ Herald, 2025; Williams, 2022). Polyfest was born from community self-determination. Honouring that legacy means continuing to trust our communities to guide its direction.

Lastly, financial sustainability remains a crucial challenge. As noted by Hargreaves and Leo-Mauu, current government and council contributions, while appreciated, do not meet the festival's full operational needs (Fiavaai, 2025). Core costs such as security, stage construction, and logistics remain constant. Long-term, there is a clear need for national policies that embed cultural festivals into arts, education, and youth development strategies (Finkel & Platt, 2020; Stankova & Vassenska, 2015). Sustainable investment would not only secure Polyfest's future but would also signal that the cultural aspirations of Māori and Pacific youth are valued at the highest level.

These future directions reaffirm that Polyfest is not just about performance, but also about possibility. It is a space where education, technology, culture, and identity intersect. With continued support, Polyfest can grow as a model for how culturally grounded festivals empower communities, shape national identity, and create transformative change across generations.

4.2.9 Research Gaps and Future Potential

While this case study drew on a range of literature and lived experiences connected to ASB Polyfest, it also revealed a noticeable gap in academic research specifically centred on ASB Polyfest. Despite its cultural depth and intergenerational impact on Māori and Pasifika communities, Polyfest remains under-represented in academic discourse on tourism, cultural studies, and youth development.

As a Pacific researcher with personal ties to these community spaces, I find this absence not only surprising but deeply concerning. Polyfest deserves recognition not just as a school event or community celebration, but as a cultural force one that brings together history, identity, creativity, and resilience in ways that formal education alone often cannot. Its stories, its challenges, and its triumphs hold value for scholars, policymakers, and most importantly, for young people seeking to see themselves reflected in national narratives.

This gap presents a timely opportunity for future scholarship to explore Polyfest's potential as a driver of cultural visibility, domestic tourism, and international engagement. Research could investigate how strategic investment, co-designed programming, and cross-cultural partnerships might expand the festival's reach while maintaining its grassroots ethos and cultural authenticity.

In charting a path forward, we must ensure that Pacific communities remain at the centre not just as performers or organisers, but as knowledge-holders and storytellers. This is especially important for our youth, who carry both the memory and the future of our cultures.

E lē Sili le ta'i nai lo le tapua'i—Leadership is not greater than service.

Polyfest embodies this value: it is through service to our cultures, our youth, and our communities that this festival continues to thrive. To honour that legacy, we must also serve the future by documenting, investing in, and uplifting the stories that have shaped generations.

4.3 Case Study: Pasifika Festival – A Celebration of Culture, Community, and Economic Empowerment

4.3.1 A Pacific Cultural Force in Aotearoa

The Pasifika Festival is a cornerstone cultural event in Aotearoa New Zealand, embodying Pacific Island heritage, identity, and entrepreneurial spirit. Situated in Auckland, Pasifika symbolises cultural resilience, community solidarity, and economic empowerment. Since its establishment in the early 1990s, Pasifika has continuously evolved, becoming a central platform for negotiating Pacific diasporic identities, strengthening community bonds, and driving socio-economic growth.

E sui le faiga ae tumau le fa'avae—Our practices may change, but our foundations remain.

This Samoan proverb captures the essence of the Pasifika Festival: although it adapts to modern contexts, it remains firmly grounded in the cultural values and ancestral ties that define Pacific identity.

4.3.2 Historical Origins and Growth

To understand Pasifika's present day impact, one must return to its origins. The festival began in 1992 through a collaborative vision between journalist Roy Vaughan, and the South Pacific Island Nations Development Association (SPINDA) (Cudny & Maiava, 2017). Vaughan, inspired by international cultural expos, believed sustainable community initiatives must be rooted in community ownership (Mackley-Crump, 2012). Despite early scepticism and tensions around representation, he worked strategically with local leaders, Churches, and the Auckland City Council, ensuring the festival was community led from the outset (Mackley-Crump, 2012).

The inaugural 1993 festival at Western Springs exceeded all expectations, drawing over 30,000 attendees (Mackley-Crump, 2012). Since then, Pasifika has flourished, expanding to feature 11 cultural villages, 13 stages, and more than 350 stalls, with annual visitor numbers ranging between 100,000 and 200,000 (Mackley-Crump, 2015). This growth is a testament to Pacific communities' strength, passion, and organisational capability.

Today, Pasifika offers a diverse programme, including poetry, Zumba sessions, life workshops, and performances by acts such as the Fijian R&B (rhythm and blues) group, The LeftOvas (Persico, 2025). Its collaboration with the Pasifika Village Charitable Trust ensures authenticity, with a strong emphasis on cultural integrity in food, art, and performance (Persico, 2025). Such efforts keep the festival grounded in its roots, while embracing creative and dynamic expressions of Pacific identity.

4.3.3 Cultural Significance and Community Identity

Building on this foundation, Pasifika has become a site of profound cultural affirmation. Mackley-Crump (2012) described it as a "mooring post," a stabilising space for fluid identities that bridges traditional practices with contemporary Pacific expressions. From hip-hop to traditional dance, the festival offers a stage where young Pacific people can explore and express their evolving identities.

Figure 8 Beautiful Young Fijian Group - Pasifika 2022

Figure 8

Young performers presenting a traditional Fijian song and dance at the Pasifika Festival 2022. Adorned in vibrant attire with painted cheeks, *salusalu* (garlands), and intricately woven *iri* (hand fans), these *tamariki* (children) embody the values of *veiwekani* (connection) and *vakaturaga* (honour). Their joyful expressions reflect the intergenerational transmission of cultural identity and pride. *Reproduced from New Zealand Herald, 2022, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/aucklands-pasifika-festival-set-to-celebrate-30th-birthday-in-new-look-event/N374PMU6YPBJKMXOTJSLSQAPSM/. Copyright NZ Herald.*

As a visual representation of Mackley-Crump's (2012) notion of Pasifika as a mooring post, this moment highlights how heritage and evolving identity meet on stage, where young performers carry their *vanua* (land, people, and identity) with every step, every beat, and every smile. This image is a powerful testament to the Pasifika Festival's ongoing role in uplifting and preserving Pacific heritage across generations.

For many recent migrants, traditional performances evoke deep emotion and strengthen ties to ancestral lands. Pasifika villages encourage language revitalisation and intergenerational storytelling, making them powerful spaces for cultural continuity (Allen & Bruce, 2017).

Pasifika also disrupts negative stereotypes through visibility and pride. Its policy of prioritising Pacific Island and Māori stall-holders ensures that cultural integrity is upheld (Buch et al., 2011). This aligns with Caneen's (2014) view that cultural tourism requires intentional authenticity. By carefully curating participation, Pasifika maintains a uniquely Pacific atmosphere that resonates with both locals and visitors.

My experience of volunteering at Pasifika in 1995 deeply shaped my understanding of these dynamics. Observing how cultural elements were sometimes repackaged for public consumption reminded me of the ethical complexities in cultural tourism. As the Samoan proverb says, *e mamae le tava'e i nai ona fulu, e fa'apena lo'u fa'amemelo i la'u aganu'u* (the tava'e bird is proud of its feathers, like I am of my culture). That pride demands we protect our cultural spaces.

4.3.4 Audience Engagement and Cultural Participation

Pasifika's meaning is also reflected considerations of who attends and why. Currently most attendees are local Aucklanders, with international visitors making up less than five percent (Buch et al., 2011). The audience is largely under 39 and predominantly of Samoan and Cook Island Māori heritage, reflecting the city's demographic profile (Stats NZ & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010).

Visitors come for cultural experiences, food, music, and the chance to reconnect with community (Buch et al., 2011). Word-of-mouth is the key promotional tool, speaking to the festival's authenticity and reputation. More than entertainment, Pasifika offers a reaffirming experience that binds generations.

Mackley-Crump (2012) identified the festival as a transnational space where families reunite, and cultural knowledge is exchanged across geographic borders. It is a living expression of Pacific relational values, strengthening both identity and connection.

4.3.5 Entrepreneurship and Economic Impact

The cultural empowerment fostered by Pasifika also translates into economic opportunity. The festival serves as an entry point for aspiring Pacific entrepreneurs, especially those offering culturally grounded products and services (Buch et al., 2011).

Revenue from stalls supports families in Auckland and often extends to relatives in the Pacific Islands, sustaining vital transnational economic ties. Many stall-holders speak of Pasifika as a platform for both income generation and cultural affirmation (Buch et al., 2011). The vibrant stalls are more than marketplaces; they are expressions of culture, identity, and resilience.

These economic contributions reflect what Bihari (2023) described as the sustainable cultural practices embedded in Indigenous knowledge systems. The stalls at Pasifika Festival, featuring traditional crafts, ancestral recipes, and oral histories, are more than commercial spaces; they are extensions of intergenerational learning and identity transmission. Bihari's emphasis on culturally rooted entrepreneurship aligns with the lived experiences of many stall-holders who not only promote their heritage but also create viable livelihoods, particularly for migrant and second-generation Pacific families navigating economic challenges in Auckland.

Figure 9 Cook Island Stall-holder - Pasifika Festival

Figure 9

With ***aro'a*** (love) and pride, a ***Kuki 'Āirani*** (Cook Islands) stallholder shares vibrant tivaevae (quilting patchwork), handmade jewellery, and cultural crafts with festival goers at Pasifika Festival. Her stall reflects not only entrepreneurship, but a living display of cultural heritage, artistry, and resilience. *Reproduced from Auckland Unlimited, n.d., https://www.aucklandnz.com/pasifika/stallholders. Copyright Auckland Unlimited.*

Beyond commerce, the festival builds community capacity. Skills in event planning, hospitality, logistics, and leadership are nurtured through participation, enhancing both social and economic resilience (Mackley-Crump, 2012).

4.3.6 Strategic Alignment and Future Opportunities

Pasifika Festival aligns strongly with Auckland Council's strategic pillars of "Belonging and Participation" and "Opportunity and Prosperity" (ATEED, 2020). It fosters inclusion, empowers youth, and promotes cultural pride through economic and artistic expression. Environmental initiatives also position it as a leader in sustainable event practices.

Crucially, Pasifika Festival is not only a cultural and economic event, but also a civic space. It provides a public platform for political dialogue and visibility. As Pacific communities continue to grow in Aotearoa, so too does their role in shaping policy and public discourse.

This shift from celebration to advocacy reflects a deeper truth: festivals like Pasifika are integral to Pacific sovereignty and social justice. They elevate marginalised voices and give form to collective aspirations.

4.3.7 Festival Resilience and Growth

According to Buch et al. (2011), Pasifika Festival plays a significant role in revitalising and preserving traditional Pacific cultures. The festival notably enhances cultural pride and reinforces identity among Pacific migrant communities. Reflecting on their experiences, stall-holders expressed deep appreciation for the festival's capacity to counteract negative stereotypes frequently encountered in media portrayals of Pacific peoples. They emphasised that Pasifika offers positive exposure, enabling genuine intercultural engagement and understanding from attendees of diverse backgrounds.

Following disruptions from the Christchurch Mosque attacks (2019) and the COVID-19 pandemic (2020), Pasifika demonstrated significant resilience, successfully returning in 2023 (Persico, 2025). By 2025, the festival had notably returned to growth, further increasing community engagement, participation, and influence (Persico, 2025).

The emergence and expansion of Pacific festivals closely align with patterns of Pacific migration and the growth of Pacific communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Initially concentrated in urban centres such as Auckland in the mid-1970s, festivals gradually spread to regions including Wellington, Christchurch, and Porirua in the 1980s, Tokoroa, Rotorua, and Otago in the 1990s, and subsequently to Northland, Waikato, Hawkes Bay, Palmerston North, Wairarapa, and Invercargill in the early 2000s. Reflexively, this expansion highlights how festivals evolve

organically in response to community needs, providing culturally meaningful spaces that affirm Pacific identity and reinforce community cohesion within the diaspora (Mackley-Crump, 2012).

4.3.8 Political Engagement and Community Unity

Pasifika's demonstrated resilience and cultural significance are further complemented by its increasing political relevance. Beyond its cultural and economic dimensions, Pasifika Festival has emerged as a vital space for political visibility, engagement, and advocacy. It offers a unique platform where Pacific communities and political leaders intersect on shared ground rooted in cultural celebration and collective identity. Political figures such as New Zealand's Labour Party leader Chris Hipkins, have publicly acknowledged the festival's role in fostering social cohesion and celebrating New Zealand's rich cultural diversity. His presence underscores Pasifika's significance as a site of cultural pride and a dynamic platform contributing meaningfully to national conversations on inclusion, representation, and Pacific peoples' belonging within Aotearoa (Persico, 2025).

This political engagement signals more than performative politics; it highlights growing recognition of Pacific communities' role in shaping the nation's future. As Pasifika attracts large, diverse, and intergenerational audiences, it offers politicians genuine opportunities to meaningfully engage communities whose voices often go unheard in mainstream political arenas.

Critically, Pasifika also functions as a catalyst for targeted political advocacy. Green Party's Member of Parliament Teanau Tuiono's use of the festival to propose policy initiatives, such as visa-free travel for Pacific Island visitors, illustrates how Pasifika transcends cultural performance to actively address socio-political issues affecting Pacific peoples (Persico, 2025). His advocacy spotlights the festival's potential to amplify Pacific perspectives on critical policy matters, strengthening regional relationships and promoting greater equity and inclusion for Pacific communities both within Aotearoa and throughout the broader Pacific region.

Analytically, this merging of cultural celebration and political agency positions Pasifika as an influential civic space, where Pacific identities and voices are both recognised and amplified. Such platforms encourage political literacy, mobilise youth activism, and influence policy discourse within diasporic communities, demonstrating Pasifika's powerful contribution to cultural sovereignty, social empowerment, and democratic participation.

Pasifika's multifaceted role in cultural preservation, political engagement, and economic empowerment highlights crucial areas for future research and strategic development, particularly regarding digital technology, cultural tourism, and youth engagement.

The strategic integration of digital technologies, exemplified by the *Margin to Margin* project, significantly empowers marginalised communities by amplifying their voices, increasing their visibility, and promoting digital inclusion (Sarantou et al., 2018). Documentary videos, blogs, and social media, effectively highlight peripheral artists, enabling their stories to resonate widely. This demonstrates digital storytelling's potential as a powerful tool to authentically preserve and represent Pacific cultures an essential consideration for communities navigating complex identities within an increasingly digitised and globalised society.

Currently, less than five percent of Pasifika attendees are international tourists, revealing untapped potential to expand cultural tourism (Buch et al., 2011). Addressing this gap, strategic partnerships between festival organisers and local tourism agencies could significantly enhance Pasifika's global visibility, attracting tourists seeking authentic, culturally rich experiences without compromising its community oriented ethos. Future research should explore innovative digital methods to facilitate meaningful interactions between international visitors and Pacific cultures, thus enriching cultural exchange while supporting sustainable tourism practices.

Moreover, embedding digital service-learning into educational initiatives could significantly advance youth empowerment and intergenerational cultural transmission. Service learning structured around the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encourages youth to engage critically and actively with social, environmental, and cultural challenges (Aramburuzabala et al., 2023). Integrating digital service learning programs within the Pasifika community would enable young people to participate directly in cultural preservation efforts, nurturing a sense of cultural pride and responsibility while strengthening community resilience.

Finally, future studies should investigate Pasifika stall-holders' experiences more deeply, exploring both economic opportunities and barriers to entrepreneurship. Such insights would provide practical recommendations on how digital platforms and service learning frameworks could effectively support Pacific entrepreneurs. Linking economic empowerment directly to cultural preservation ensures sustainability and strengthens Pasifika's long term impact as a culturally authentic, economically empowering, and digitally inclusive event.

4.3.9 Conclusion

Pasifika Festival continues to stand as a powerful expression of Pacific excellence, unity, and belonging. For Auckland's Pacific diaspora, it is a cultural event that is a living, evolving space where identity is affirmed, stories are shared, and futures are imagined. This case study has shown how Pasifika plays a vital role in shaping diasporic identity, preserving cultural practices, and opening up pathways for economic participation and political engagement.

By intentionally blending traditional and contemporary expressions, the festival creates a space where youth can reconnect with their roots, where elders pass on knowledge, and where community pride is made visible. It reflects the strength and adaptability of Pacific communities in navigating life in a multicultural urban environment while holding fast to ancestral values. From cultural performance to entrepreneurship and civic dialogue, Pasifika represents the complex realities and aspirations of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa (Mackley-Crump, 2012; Persico, 2025).

However, despite the festival's impact and scale, there remains a noticeable lack of in-depth academic literature focusing on Pasifika, and particularly on work that centres Pacific voices and lived experiences. This gap highlights the need for future research that examines how festivals contribute to cultural sustainability, youth empowerment, and intergenerational resilience in increasingly digital and globalised contexts (Persico, 2025).

As someone who has lived and served within this community, and who first engaged with the festival as a volunteer in 1995, I see Pasifika not only as a celebration of who we are, but as a commitment to who we are becoming. It is a space for connection, reflection, and transformation, and one that deserves continued investment, understanding, and scholarly attention as part of Aotearoa's collective future.

O le ala i le pule o le tautua—*The pathway to leadership is through service.*

Pasifika exemplifies this principle: through service to culture, community, and future generations, it leads the way forward for Pacific peoples in Aotearoa.

Chapter 5: Findings and discussion

This chapter presents a critically engaged discussion of the study's key findings, situated within the broader literature and framed by the guiding research questions introduced in Chapter 1. These questions sought to explore how Pacific cultural festivals in Auckland function as sites of identity formation, heritage transmission, and economic opportunity:

1. How do socio-cultural influences shape the identity of the Pacific diaspora in Auckland?
2. What role do Pacific festivals play in promoting tourism and preserving cultural traditions?
3. What entrepreneurial opportunities exist within Pacific communities through these festivals?

The discussion integrates personal narrative, theoretical reflection, and scholarly literature to examine the significance of cultural festivals such as the Pasifika Festival and ASB Polyfest. It is guided by a Pacific research worldview that values relationality, lived experience, and intergenerational knowledge.

Affirming Identity and Cultural Belonging

Cultural festivals emerged as crucial spaces for affirming diasporic Pacific identities. The findings support the notion that these events are not simply celebratory gatherings but serve as strategic platforms for cultural revitalisation, visibility, and pride. The dynamic interplay of performance, language, and symbolism seen in Pasifika and Polyfest reflects what Mackley-Crump (2012) describes as "mooring posts" for diasporic identity—anchoring Pacific peoples in collective memory and ancestral knowledge.

As the narratives in this study show, participation in these festivals nurtures a deep sense of belonging that is both communal and personal. Identity formation among Auckland's Pacific youth is shaped not only by cultural performance but also by the emotional experience of being seen, heard, and celebrated through their cultural practices. These findings echo the work of Anae (2020) on relational epistemologies, where knowledge and identity are formed through familial, cultural, and genealogical ties (***gafa***).

Feathers of Legacy: Intergenerational Identity and Cultural Pride

The significance of cultural festivals in the transmission of heritage and the affirmation of identity cannot be fully understood without engaging the lived realities and emotional truths that animate them. While the previous sections have examined festivals as socio-cultural phenomena through academic analysis, the following autoethnographic narrative provides a

deeper, embodied insight into how these events become intergenerational vessels of identity and pride. This approach aligns with the work of Nisa-Waller and Piercy (2024), who argue that personal narrative can serve as both method and meaning in Indigenous research, allowing researchers to "see with both eyes"—analytically and emotionally.

As the Samoan proverb reminds us, ***E mamae le tava'e i ona fulu***—the tava'e bird takes pride in its feathers. Likewise, Pacific peoples take pride in their heritage, wearing their culture with dignity, beauty, and strength. This pride is cultivated not only through formal education or public discourse but through performance, memory, and the sacred everyday acts of cultural preservation.

Figure 10 Taupou of Otahuhu College – 1998

Figure 10

Taupou of Otahuhu College – 1998

This image captures a special moment from 1998 at Otahuhu College's school hall, following our post-ASB Polyfest performance. I had the honour of serving as the Taupou (The Taupou, traditionally the daughter of a high-ranking chief, is chosen to carry out ceremonial duties and represent the village in public performances and rituals.) for our Samoan group. That year, we proudly placed 3rd overall—during a time when there were no divisions between co-ed, girls', or boys' schools. All groups were judged equally. I also received 1st place overall in the Taupou category, which remains a deeply proud and joyful memory. Reproduced from Otahuhu College, 2024, Throwback to 1998 – Samoan group post-Polyfest performance at our school hall, https://www.facebook.com/share/168edKjjWf/?mibextid=wwXIfr. Copyright Otahuhu College.

Years later, I watched my own children perform on that same stage, their eyes lit with the same fire I once carried. That moment was deeply emotional. I saw the threads of continuity stretch across generations, woven through our performances, our songs, and the pride of our elders watching from the crowd. Festivals like Polyfest are not just annual events. They are sites of intergenerational learning where heritage is not only preserved but passed forward, embodied, and reimagined. In their eyes, I saw the same sense of rootedness and self-worth—a true embodiment of the proverb**, *E mamae le tava'e i ona fulu***.

Intergenerational Transmission and Cultural Continuity

Heritage transmission is a key function of festivals such as ASB Polyfest, which serve as intergenerational bridges between elders, youth, and children. The study's autoethnographic reflections illustrate how cultural knowledge is passed on through embodied practice—dance, dressmaking, language, and ceremony. The proverb ***E mamae le tava'e i ona fulu*** (the tava'e bird takes pride in its feathers) encapsulates the pride and dignity Pacific peoples invest in their cultural expressions.

Watching one's children perform on the same stage decades later highlights the embodied nature of what Bourdieu (1986) terms "cultural capital"—a form of knowledge and pride acquired not through formal institutions but through immersion, memory, and love. This lived transmission resonates with Faitala et al.'s (2022) concept of "cultural continuity", wherein diasporic youth find rootedness and resilience through active participation in festival culture.

Poetic reflection

In the twilight of the 90s, my voice began to rise from silence,
Emerging like a song long hidden beneath the noise.
Among Auckland's vibrant tapestry,
I stood as a participant in the ASB Polyfest,
Where chants and songs wove the fabric of our ancient myths,
Echoing through warm air, each note a pulse, each rhythm a heartbeat.

A deep bass drum pounded like the pulse of our ancestors,
Stirring within me a pride both profound and unyielding.
In those fleeting twenty minutes upon the stage,
Time stretched and danced,
Too brief to capture our entire cultural tapestry,
Yet rich enough to offer a glimpse—
A kaleidoscope of identities blooming in vibrant performances.

With every move, I felt the rush of excitement,
The sheer joy of sharing my heritage,
A treasure that shaped my youth,
Fortifying my spirit, anchoring me to my roots.
E mamae le tava'e i ona fulu—and there I stood, feathers on full display.

Now, years later, I sit in that same place,
Watching my son and daughters take the stage,
Their eyes sparkling with pride,
Mirrors reflecting my past,
The legacy of our Samoan heritage pulsing through them.

Twenty-five years have woven new threads into our narrative,
Modernity dances hand-in-hand with tradition,
Each movement, each word a testament
To holding fast to who we are.

The stages may change, but the essence remains.
Every performance is a dialogue with my ancestors,
A celebration of our journey, our resilience,
A commitment to pass on this legacy—

So my children, too, can rise from silence,

And let their voices echo through the generations,

In a world where our stories are always worthy of being heard.

(Palasi Koletta Su'a-Te'o)

Figure 11 Intergenerational pride.

Figure 11 Intergenerational pride through participation in ASB Polyfest. The first image (left) shows the author following her performance with the Ōtāhuhu College Samoan group in 1996. The other two images (right) feature her children in 2023 and 2024, shortly after their own performances with the same school. Wearing Samoan group supporters' tee-shirts, they embody the same quiet pride and cultural connection their mother once felt. *Photograph collage by author.*

In 2024, my youngest daughter was only 11 years old when she came home from school with a quiet spark in her eyes. "Mum," she said, almost casually, "I put my hand up to do the solo *taualuga*—the Samoan ***siva*** *(dance)*." I froze for a moment, stunned. A solo? A Samoan dance? From my daughter, born and raised in Aotearoa, a second generation New Zealander who, until then, had shown only glimpses of interest in cultural performance?

What followed was a wave of emotion I had not expected. Beneath my surprise was something deeper: pride—raw, aching, and beautiful. In that moment, I saw the quiet reach of legacy. I thought of my own parents, how they wove culture into my upbringing through *pese (song)*, *siva*, and stories whispered in the language of our ancestors. Perhaps, through the rhythms they passed on to me, and the ones I had unknowingly passed on to her, something had taken root.

Preparing her for the performance became more than just logistics; it became an act of love, memory, and reclamation. I handmade her traditional attire with care, drawing on what my

parents taught me about patterns, meaning, and symbolism. The *tuiga* (traditional Samoan head piece) she wears in this photo (Figure 5) was crafted by my own hands, guided by the knowledge passed down from my mother and father—a skill they taught me that I now honour by continuing. Every feather, shell, and thread was placed with intention. As I dressed her, I realised I was not just preparing her for the stage; I was wrapping her in our lineage.

Her decision to stand in that sacred role as *taupou* was more than performance; it was a living expression of identity: ***e mamae le tava'e i ona fulu*** (the tava'e bird takes pride in its feathers). And on that day, my daughter stood radiant in hers: proud, poised, and surrounded by generations who made her moment possible.

Figure 12 Three generations of pride.

Figure 12

Legacy and pride through siva Samoa. My daughter (centre) stands proudly in her handmade *tuiga* and traditional *siva Samoa* attire, moments after performing the *taualuga* as a soloist. Flanked by her grandparents, this image captures more than a performance — it is a living

testament to cultural legacy, pride, and the wisdom passed through generations. *Photograph by author.*

These reflections offer more than nostalgia; they represent the living transmission of cultural capital, identity, and resilience. What Bourdieu (1986) describes as *embodied cultural capital*—the deeply internalised dispositions, knowledge, and practices passed on through generations—can be seen in the dance steps learned at home, the meaning embedded in ceremonial dress, and the pride expressed in performance. Unlike institutionalised or objectified forms of capital, embodied cultural capital is acquired over time through immersion and socialisation, making it deeply tied to identity and heritage. Watching one's own children step into cultural roles once held by their parent encapsulates what Anae (2020) describes as "relational epistemologies"—where knowledge is lived, relational, and tied to genealogy (*gafa*).

Moreover, this narrative illustrates the concept of "cultural continuity" explored by Faitala et al. (2022), in which participation in diasporic festivals like ASB Polyfest fosters rootedness among Pacific youth, reinforcing both ethnic pride and resilience amid dominant societal pressures. The handmade ***tuiga***, the recited chants, and the embodied performances are not isolated acts—they are continuations of ancestral legacy in a modern urban context.

Culturally Grounded Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment

A key insight from the study is the role of Pacific festivals in fostering community-led entrepreneurship. Stallholders, artists, performers, and organisers engage in culturally meaningful economic activity that reflects communal values such as *tautua* (service) and "we-togetherness" (Khoo & Lin, 2023). Festivals provide accessible pathways to economic independence while reinforcing cultural identity.

However, the findings also caution against the commodification of culture. Autoethnographic reflection reveals the tension between cultural celebration and cultural display—especially when festivals are consumed through a tourist gaze. Scholars such as Caneen (2014) and Croes et al. (2013) highlight the risk of reducing cultural expression to entertainment. Thus, community ownership and cultural guardianship are essential to preserving the integrity of these events.

Beyond the Applause: Seeing My Culture Through a Tourist's Lens

I vividly remember volunteering at the Pasifika Festival as a 14-year-old in 1995. The festival was held at Western Springs, in the heart of Auckland city. It was my first encounter with cultural celebration on such a large scale. Pacific nations were represented through vibrant

performances, traditional cuisines, and colourful displays of heritage. My role was simple: handing out two-dollar programmes and guiding visitors to the different village areas and food stalls.

At first, I felt proud. I saw so many Pacific Islanders gathered in one space, showcasing our collective identity to the world. The music, the languages, the smells of traditional dishes were overwhelming in the best possible way. But as the day went on, something inside me shifted. I watched from the sidelines as dancers took the stage in fine mats, feathers, and shells, their hands telling stories through movement. I was moved, but I also felt distant. While they performed with purpose and pride, I stood quietly, holding a stack of leaflets, unsure of my place.

What caught my attention most was the reaction of the crowd, especially the palagi tourists. They watched with fascination, took photos, and clapped enthusiastically. It was clear they admired what they saw, but I began to wonder whether they truly understood it. To them, it may have been exotic or entertaining, but to me, it was sacred. That tension lingered. The thought that our culture was being consumed rather than understood made me uncomfortable. Even surrounded by my own people, I felt like an outsider.

At the time, I did not have the language to describe what I was feeling. Now, I understand it as the tension between cultural celebration and cultural display. My experience offered a glimpse into the complicated space where pride meets performance, and where identity can be both affirmed and objectified.

This tension between cultural pride and commercial display sparked something deeper in me. I realised that while festivals empower our communities economically, they also challenge us to carefully manage how our cultures are represented. The gaze of the tourist or outsider can sometimes reduce our rich traditions to performance or novelty. Caneen (2014) and Croes et al. (2013) cautioned against this commodification, warning that cultural tourism must be guided by ethical practices and authentic community leadership.

In this way, the economic potential of Pacific festivals must be balanced with cultural integrity. Entrepreneurship should not come at the cost of authenticity. Instead, it should be grounded in values that uplift and protect cultural knowledge while supporting economic independence. As communities continue to innovate and adapt, festivals remain key spaces where these goals can coexist as spaces where commerce, culture, and community intersect with purpose.

Looking back, I realise how important it is to navigate these spaces with care. Festivals have the power to uplift and empower, but they must also be protected. The stories we tell, the dances we share, and the foods we offer carry deep meaning. They are not just for show. They are extensions of our history, our pride, and our resilience.

That moment at Pasifika taught me the importance of cultural guardianship. It reminded me that authenticity matters and that the way we share our heritage should always be on our terms and not shaped to satisfy the expectations of others.

Lived Experience, Legacy, and the Power of Narrative

The study demonstrates that autoethnography can reveal emotional truths that conventional methodologies often overlook. Narratives of performing as ***Taupou***, crafting traditional attire, or watching one's child carry forward ancestral practices embody what Nisa-Waller and Piercy (2024) describe as "seeing with both eyes"—engaging both analytical and emotional dimensions of Indigenous research.

These stories offer more than nostalgia. They represent 'embodied cultural capital,' 'relational knowledge,' and the resilience of diasporic communities. The act of preparing a daughter for her ***taualuga*** performance becomes a sacred act of continuity—both a performance and a transmission of identity. In this way, the personal becomes political, academic, and cultural.

Positioning Within Existing Literature

This research contributes to a growing body of Pacific scholarship that situates festivals as complex, multilayered spaces of cultural negotiation. It affirms Mackley-Crump's (2015) framing of festivals as sites of transcultural exchange and builds on the work of Anae (2020), Williams (2018), and Faitala et al. (2022), who highlight the importance of youth participation and intergenerational engagement.

Furthermore, by emphasising entrepreneurship and cultural guardianship, the study offers a fresh lens on how Pacific communities creatively navigate systems of marginalisation. It supports Khoo and Lin's (2023) advocacy for Indigenous worldviews to shape mainstream institutions and redefines festivals not just as cultural events but as ethical, educational, and economic ecosystems.

Reflections on the Methodology

Adopting an autoethnographic methodology offered a powerful and culturally appropriate lens through which to explore the experiences of Pacific communities in Auckland. This approach

allowed me to draw on my own lived experience as a member of the Pacific diaspora—an insider perspective that brought depth and reflexivity to the analysis.

By weaving together personal stories, cultural memory, and secondary data of including literature, articles, demographic tables, and policy documents, this methodology enabled the integration of both subjective and analytical insights. It acknowledged the value of oral tradition, communal storytelling, and intergenerational wisdom as legitimate forms of knowledge production within Pacific contexts.

The methodology honoured the epistemological values of Pacific research frameworks, such as ***vā*** (relational space), ***talanoa*** (dialogue), and ***tautua*** (service), which prioritise connection, respect, and cultural responsibility. The act of reflecting on my own journey—volunteering at Pasifika in the 1990s, participating in Polyfest, and witnessing the transformation of Auckland's cultural landscape, became both a personal exploration and a scholarly intervention.

Practical Implications

The findings of this research have important implications for community organisations, policymakers, educators, and cultural leaders. Cultural festivals are more than celebrations; they are also strategic assets that can support community resilience, youth engagement, and economic development. They offer accessible platforms for cultural entrepreneurship and facilitate cultural learning in public spaces.

Supportive policy frameworks, sustained investment, and capacity-building initiatives can strengthen the long-term impact of these festivals. Embedding cultural events in educational programming, civic engagement, and tourism strategies can help ensure their sustainability and maximise their reach.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research set out to examine three central questions:

1. How do cultural festivals influence Pacific diaspora identities in Auckland?
2. In what ways do Pasifika festivals contribute to tourism and cultural preservation?
3. What entrepreneurial opportunities emerge from these festivals for Pacific communities?

Through an autoethnographic lens and secondary data analysis, this study has explored the multifaceted roles that cultural festivals play in shaping Pacific identities, fostering social cohesion, and generating economic pathways in Auckland. The findings highlight that events such as the **Pasifika Festival** and **ASB Polyfest** are not merely celebratory gatherings; rather, they function as dynamic and strategic spaces for **cultural resistance**, **revitalisation**, and **community empowerment**.

Cultural festivals serve as platforms through which Pacific peoples can assert cultural sovereignty, challenge deficit narratives, and nurture entrepreneurial practices rooted in Indigenous knowledge and values (Buch et al., 2011; Khoo & Lin, 2023). These events strengthen intergenerational knowledge transmission, promote youth engagement, and contribute meaningfully to the cultural and economic fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The three research questions have been systematically addressed through a blended methodological approach that combines personal narrative and critical self-reflection with analysis of secondary sources. This has enabled a deeper, more grounded understanding of the socio-cultural and economic significance of Pacific festivals in diaspora contexts.

6.1 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

This study contributes to Pacific and Indigenous scholarship by centring cultural values, lived experience, and relational ethics in the research process. The use of autoethnography provided a culturally responsive and decolonising framework, allowing me to examine identity, resilience, and entrepreneurship from an insider's perspective. Concepts such as ***tautua*** (service), ***vā*** (relational space), ***fa'aaloalo*** (respect), and ***talanoa*** (dialogue) informed both the methodology and the analysis, positioning personal narrative as a valid and powerful form of knowledge production.

In doing so, this research challenges traditional Western research paradigms that prioritise objectivity and distance. Instead, it demonstrates how storytelling, reflexivity, and community-rooted inquiry can offer nuanced insights into the lived realities of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa.

Firstly, the exploration of identity was richly unpacked through my personal experiences and the wider festival narratives presented in the case studies. Events such as ASB Polyfest and the Pasifika Festival emerged as significant sites for the negotiation of diasporic identity, intergenerational knowledge exchange, and cultural affirmation. They offer Pacific youth and communities the opportunity to navigate hybrid identities with pride and purpose, grounded in both ancestral traditions and contemporary expressions (Williams, 2022; Faitala et al., 2022).

Secondly, the role of cultural festivals in tourism and cultural preservation was examined through the evolving significance of these events in Auckland's socio-economic and cultural landscape. Supported by reports such as those by ATEED (2020) and Krieble et al. (2016), this study found that Pasifika festivals not only attract domestic and international visitors but also serve as dynamic platforms for preserving language, dance, and traditional knowledge. Their design, programming, and village-style structures facilitate authentic cultural transmission in a rapidly globalising city.

Finally, the research explored the entrepreneurial dimensions of cultural festivals, revealing the significance of these spaces for Pacific-led business development. As seen in the findings from Buch et al. (2011) and reflected in recent media accounts (RNZ, 2025), festival marketplaces have become incubators for cultural entrepreneurship. They enable community members to generate income through crafts, food, and services, while promoting Indigenous economic models rooted in cultural values.

Taken together, the findings clearly demonstrate that the research questions have not only been answered but have also opened up new areas for inquiry. The integration of Pacific worldviews and methodological approaches has provided both depth and cultural relevance to these insights, affirming the importance of community-driven, culturally responsive research in shaping future scholarship and policy.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could engage more directly with diverse voices from Pacific communities to explore the breadth of experiences across different island groups, generations, and urban settings. Longitudinal studies that examine the impact of festivals over time, particularly in response to digital transformation and generational shifts, would offer deeper insight into their evolving roles.

Research could also investigate the intersection of festival participation with digital storytelling, civic empowerment, and policy development. This would help clarify the potential of festivals as tools not only for cultural sustainability but also for broader social and political inclusion.

6.4 Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study have practical relevance for policymakers, educators, cultural organisations, and community leaders. Pacific led cultural festivals are valuable for cultural preservation as well as being vital tools for youth empowerment, economic development, and civic engagement.

Local and central government agencies should recognise and invest in these festivals as essential infrastructures for community wellbeing and cultural sustainability. As noted by ATEED (2020) and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2024), supporting cultural entrepreneurship through policy frameworks, funding streams, and skill-building initiatives can strengthen the social and economic resilience of Pacific communities.

Furthermore, integrating cultural festivals into educational and civic engagement strategies can ensure intergenerational transmission of language, identity, and values. As Persico (2025) observed, these festivals are also becoming platforms for political dialogue and digital innovation, making them highly relevant to broader conversations about inclusion, equity, and nation-building.

Bihari (2023) reinforced the idea that cultural festivals are not only celebratory but also restorative. Her work draws attention to the long-term benefits of investing in Indigenous knowledge systems, particularly through community led initiatives that foster belonging, resilience, and sustainability. This perspective underscores the need for more robust institutional support for Pacific festivals in Auckland, especially in addressing funding gaps and supporting cultural education initiatives. As this dissertation has shown, events like Polyfest and the Pasifika Festival are powerful mechanisms for cultural survival and socio-economic empowerment. Their continued success depends on recognising them as critical platforms for intergenerational knowledge exchange and cultural entrepreneurship: precisely the kind of revitalisation Bihari (2023) argued is essential for future generations.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

While this study has provided meaningful insights, it is not without limitations. The reliance on secondary data restricted opportunities for broader participant engagement, and the autoethnographic lens reflects a personal perspective that may not represent all Pacific

experiences. The scope was also geographically focused on Auckland, which may limit generalisability to other regions or contexts.

6.7 Final Reflections: Tautua as Research

This research has been more than an academic exercise; it has been a calling, a return, and a reckoning. Walking this path as the daughter of Samoan migrants, as a former Polyfest performer, and now as a researcher, has been profoundly transformative. Each step has drawn me closer to the heartbeat of my people, reminding me that scholarship is not separate from service—it *is* service.

As a form of ***tautua***, this work honours the silent sacrifices of my parents, the wisdom of our elders, and the fierce resilience of our ancestors. Their stories are woven through every word, every reflection, every insight. This dissertation is mine—it is also theirs. It is part of a larger legacy, a continuation of the work they began: protecting our languages, uplifting our youth, and holding firm to identity in lands that often fail to see us.

Cultural festivals are not decorative—they are declarations. They are living archives of Pacific memory, creativity, and resistance. They are spaces where our voices are amplified, our traditions embodied, and our futures imagined. In a city as vast and complex as Auckland, where cultures intersect and identities evolve, these festivals must be recognised not as side events, but as *central pillars* of belonging, healing, and hope.

O le ala i le pule o le tautua*—the pathway to leadership is through service.*

And so, I offer this work as a small act of ***tautua***—an offering grounded in love, responsibility, and unwavering pride. It is a tribute to the past, a dialogue with the present, and a commitment to the generations yet to come. May it stand as a reminder that our stories matter, our voices carry power, and our cultural service—whether on the stage, in the home, or through research—is a sacred leadership in itself.

References

Armah, Mildred. (2025, March 23). Record number of groups to perform on Polyfest stage for 50th anniversary. *Stuff NZ*. https://www.stuff.co.nz/nz-news/360619115/record-number-groups-perform-polyfest-stage-50th-anniversary

Lee, I. S., S., Arcodia, C., & Lee, T. J. (2012). Multicultural festivals: A niche tourism product in South Korea. *Tourism Review*, *67*(1), 34–41. https://doi.org/10.1108/16605371211216350

Allen, J. M., & Bruce, T. (2017). Constructing the Other: News media representations of a predominantly 'brown' community in New Zealand. *Pacific Journalism Review*, *23*(1), 225. https://doi.org/10.24135/pjr.v23i1.33

Anae, M. (2019). Faamatai: A globalized Pacific Identity. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity* (pp. 1–24). Springer Singapore. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0242-8_85-3

Anae, M., Airini, Mila-Schaaf, K., Coxon, E., Mara, D., & Sanga, K. (2010). Teu le va: Relationships across research and policy in Pasifika education. In *Ministry of Education*. https://thehub.sia.govt.nz/assets/documents/42367_TeuLeVa-30062010_0.pdf

Anayo, J. F. (2017). *Transnational Identities in a Digital Age: A Case Study of Niue* (pp. 1–313) [PhD, RMIT University]. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/83609034.pdf#page=187.08

Anderson, L. (2006). Analytic autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *35*(4), 373–395. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241605280449

Antchak, V. (2017). Portfolio of major events in Auckland: Characteristics, perspectives and issues. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, *9*(3), 280–297. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2017.1312421

Aramburuzabala, P., Culcasi, I., & Cerrillo, R. (2023). *Service-Learning and digital empowerment: The potential for the digital education transition in higher education*. MDPI . https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202312.0979.v1

ASB Polyfest. (n.d.). The Auckland Secondary Schools Māori & Pacific Islands Cultural Festival. Polyfest Is One of the Largest Pacific Festivals in the World Which Began in 1976. Retrieved March 24, 2025, from https://www.asbpolyfest.co.nz/p/4682-asb-polyfest

ATEED. (2020, July 31). Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development . In *ATEED Statement of Intent 2020 – 2023* (pp. 1–23). https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-

projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-annual-reports/Statements/ateed-soi-2020-2023.pdf#page=7.11

Auckland Council. (2015). *Auckland Council events policy* (pp. 1–36). https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-policies/Documents/events-policy.pdf#page=14.05

Auckland's Pasifika Festival set to celebrate 30th birthday in new-look event. (2022, April 11). *NZ Herald*. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/aucklands-pasifika-festival-set-to-celebrate-30th-birthday-in-new-look-event/N374PMU6YPBJKMXOTJSLSQAPSM/?ref=readmore

Bell, A. (2013). The dynamics of culture lost and conserved: Demic migration as a force in new diaspora communities. *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, *34*(1), 23–28. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2012.08.002

Bihari, S. (2023). CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE: REVIVING TRADITIONS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. *Sustainable Development Goals in SAARC Countries: Key Issues, Opportunities and Challenges*, *1*, 24–32. https://doi.org/https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Santosh-Mane-2/publication/373119595_Sustainable_Development_Goals_in_SAARC_Countries_Key_Issues_Opportunities_and_Challenges/links/64db643266f0e0067d9987c2/Sustainable-Development-Goals-in-SAARC-Countries-Key-Issues-Opportunities-and-Challenges.pdf#page=33

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.

Bowke, G. (2022). *Westlake Girls' College taking on the Māori stage at ASB Polyfest 2022. Greg Bowke*. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/day-2-of-polyfest-maori-and-samoan-stage-performances-kick-off/BYROP656KB2RG3KQYHDHPH34JY/

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *12*(3), 297–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Buch, T., Milne, S., & Dickson, G. (2011). Multiple stakeholder perspectives on cultural events: Auckland's Pasifika Festival. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, *20*(3–4), 311–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2011.562416

Caneen, J. M. (2014). Tourism and cultural identity: The case of the polynesian cultural center. *Athens Journal of Tourism*, *1*(2), 101–120. https://doi.org/10.30958/ajt.1-2-1

Cave, J. (2009). Embedded identity: Pacific Islanders, cultural economies, and migrant tourism product. *Tourism Culture & Communication*, *9*(1), 65–77. https://doi.org/10.3727/109830409787556657

Cave, J., Ryan, C., & Panakera, C. (2007). Cultural tourism product: Pacific Island migrant perspectives in New Zealand. *Journal of Travel Research*, *45*(4), 435–443. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287506295908

Chubb, Laura , A., Bartley, A., & Tano, M. (2024). *Culturally sustaining and safe spaces for youth* . Centre for Community Research and Evaluation | Putahi Rangahau Ngatahi,; University of Auckland. https://www.auckland.ac.nz/assets/education/research/docs/Youthtown_Factsheet_1.pdf

Croes, R., Lee, S. H., & Olson, E. D. (2013). Authenticity in tourism in small island destinations: A local perspective. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, *11*(1–2), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2012.759584

Croes, R., & Rivera, M. (2015). *Poverty alleviation through tourism development: A comprehensive and integrated approach*. CRC Press.

Cudny, W., & Maiava, O. (2017). Auckland's Pasifika Festival and the Lodz of Four Cultures Festival as elements of preserving and promoting multicultural heritage in the cities. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Sklodowska, Sectio B – Geographia, Geologia, Mineralogia et Petrographia*, *71*(2), 61. https://doi.org/10.17951/b.2016.71.2.61

de Vries, H. P. (2007). *THE INFLUENCE OF MIGRATION, SETTLEMENT, CULTURAL AND BUSINESS FACTORS ON IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NEW ZEALAND* [Thesis, University of Canterbury]. https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/a7667065-d5ac-46dd-89f4-50acff2e7e14/content

Derrett, R. (2003). Making sense of how festivals demonstrate a community's sense of place. *Event Management*, *8*(1), 49–58. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599503108751694

Dychkovskyy, S., & Ivanov, S. (2020). Festival tourism as part of international tourism and a factor in the development of cultural tourism. *Informacijos Mokslai*, *89*, 73–82. https://doi.org/10.15388/im.2020.89.41

Ellis, C., Adams, T., & Bochner, A. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *12*(1).

Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher - Using our selves in research*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Facebook. (n.d.). https://www.facebook.com/share/168edKjjWf/?mibextid=wwXIfr

Faitala, N., Taeao, S., & Lemalie, M. (2022). Polyfest–Polysuccess: Collaborative critical autoethnographic reflections of Pacific cultural festivals and the success of Pacific students in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Ethnographic Edge*, *5*(2). https://doi.org/10.24135/ethnographic-edge.v5i2.261

Fiavaai, G. T. (2025, January 29). Show must go on: Polyfest organisers vow resilience. *RNZ*. https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/pacific/540211/show-must-go-on-polyfest-organisers-vow-resilience

Finkel, R., & Platt, L. (2020). Cultural festivals and the city. *Geography Compass*, *14*(9). https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12498

Gauthier, M. T. (2013). *Labelling Identities: the Views and Experiences of Second Generation Pacific Peoples in New Zealand* [PhD, Concordia University Montreal, Quebec, Canada]. https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/978115/1/Gauthier_MA_F2013.pdf#page=11.71

Gershon, I., & Collins, S. (2007). Outspoken indigenes and nostalgic migrants: Maori and Samoan educating performances in an aotearoa new zealand cultural festival. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, *109*(7), 1797–1820. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810710900713

Getz, D., & Page, S. J. (2016). Progress and prospects for event tourism research. *Tourism Management*, *52*, 593–631. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.03.007

Giglitto, D., Ciolfi, L., Claisse, C., & Lockley, E. (2019). Bridging cultural heritage and communities through digital technologies. *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Communities & Technologies - Transforming Communities*, 81–91. https://doi.org/10.1145/3328320.3328386

Gilbert, H. (2020). Indigenous Festivals in the Pacific: Cultural Renewal, Decolonization and Nation-building. *Pacific and American Studies*, *20*, 41–56. https://doi.org/https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Helen-Gilbert/publication/344437656_Indigenous_Festivals_Transnational_Perspectives/links/63ce65aad9fb5967c2fd3a70/Indigenous-Festivals-Transnational-Perspectives.pdf

Hall, C. M., & Duval, D. T. (2004). Linking diasporas and tourism Transnational mobilities of Pacific Islanders resident in New Zealand . In *Tourism, Diaspora and Space* (pp. 78–93). Routledge. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/77223433.pdf

Heaton, J. (2004). *Reworking qualitative data*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209878

Hēnare, M., Lythberg, B., & Woods, C. (2014). Teaming with intent: harmonising heritage, innovation and multiple generations within the Māori entrepreneurial team. *The Business & Management Review*, *5*(1). https://doi.org/https://cberuk.org/cdn/conference_proceedings/rogeimra14_65.pdf

Holman Jones, S., L. (2015). Making the personal political. In *Autoethnography*.

Hyett, N., Kenny, A., Dr, & Dickson-Swift, V., Dr. (2014). Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, *9*(1). https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.23606

Jaeger, K., & Mykletun, R. J. (2013). Festivals, identities, and belonging. *Event Management*, *17*(3), 213–226. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599513x13708863377791

Jepson, A., & Clarke, A. (2014). Defining and exploring community festivals and events. In *Exploring Community Festivals and Events* (pp. 1–12). Routledge.

Johnston, M. (2017). Secondary Data Analysis: A Method of which the Time Has Come. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries*, *3*, 619–626.

Ka'ai, T., Tukimata, N., & Smith-Henderson, T. (2021). *Pacific Languages revitalisation*. Ministry of Pacific Peoples. https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Reports/Global-to-Local-Literature-Review.pdf

Khoo, Y., & Lin, J. (2023). "Asia as method" as a quest of the spirit and finding we-togetherness: A collaborative autoethnography. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *24*(2), 199–211. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-023-09827-3

Kinnunen, M., & Haahti, A. (2015). Visitor discourses on experiences: Reasons for festival success and failure. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, *6*(3), 251–268. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijefm-01-2015-0003

Kong, L. (2005). Globalisation, transmigration and the renegotiation of ethnic identity. In *Globalisation and the Asia-Pacific* (pp. 210–228). Routledge.

Krieble, T., Leung, C., Bealing, M., Gamperle, D., Spring, S., & Yeabsley, J. (2016). Pacific Cultural Centre feasibility study. In *New Zealand Institute of Economic Research* (pp. 1–33). https://objects.scraper.bibcitation.com/user-pdfs/2024-09-18/40e3f6cd-114f-4183-bcb4-61b39f4afdf2.pdf

Lee, H. M. (2003). *Tongans overseas: Between two shores*. University of Hawaii Press.

Lilomaiava-Doktor, S. (2009). Beyond "migration": Samoan population movement (malaga) and the geography of social space (vā). *The Contemporary Pacific*, *21*(1), 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.0.0035

Mackley-Crump, J. (2012). *The festivalisation of pacific cultures in new zealand* [PhD, The University of Otago Dunedin New Zealand]. file:///C:/Users/AUT/Downloads/bitstream_7428%20(4).pdf

Mackley-Crump, J. (2013). The festivalization of pacific cultures in new zealand: Diasporic flow and identity within transcultural contact zones. *Musicology Australia*, *35*(1), 20–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/08145857.2013.761098

Mackley-Crump, J. (2015). A 'Pacific renaissance'?: Exploring the Pacific diaspora in Aotearoa New Zealand through the evolution of festivals and popular music. *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies*, *3*(2), 149–166. https://doi.org/10.1386/nzps.3.2.149_1

Mackley-Crump, J. (2017). *The Pacific Festivals of Aotearoa New Zealand: Negotiating place and identity in a new homeland*. University of Hawaii Press.

MacLeod, N. (2006). 11. Cultural tourism: Aspects of authenticity and commodification. In *Cultural Tourism in a Changing World* (pp. 177–190). Multilingual Matters. http://dx.doi.org/10.21832/9781845410452-013

Macpherson, C. (2001). Evolving identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (pp. 66–80). Dunmore Press.

Mair, J. (2015). The Role of Events in Creating Sustainable Tourism Destinations. In *The Business of Sustainable Tourism*. Routledge. https://objects.scraper.bibcitation.com/user-pdfs/2025-02-11/6e05b36c-3783-4176-9401-23ff97dcb8ae.pdf

Mair, J., & Weber, K. (2019). Event and festival research: A review and research directions. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, *10*(3), 209–216. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijefm-10-2019-080

Manganda, A. M., Mika, J. P., Jurado, T., & Palmer, F. R. (2022). How indigenous entrepreneurs negotiate cultural and commercial imperatives: Insights from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, *17*(6), 1171–1192. https://doi.org/10.1108/jec-01-2022-0017

Matteucci, X. (2013). Photo elicitation: Exploring tourist experiences with researcher-found images. *Tourism Management*, *35*, 190–197. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.07.002

Mihajlović, I., & Vidak, M. (2017). The importance of local events for positioning of tourist destination. *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, *10*(2), 228. https://doi.org/10.26417/ejser.v10i2.p228-239

Mika, J. P., Fahey, N., & Bensemann, J. (2019). What counts as an indigenous enterprise? Evidence from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, *13*(3), 372–390. https://doi.org/10.1108/jec-12-2018-0102

Mila-Schaaf, K. (2010). *Polycultural capital and the pasifika second generation: Negotiating Identities in Diasporic Spaces* [PhD]. Massey University.

Ministry for Pacific Peoples. (2020). *Pacific Aotearoa Status Report* (pp. 1–146). https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Reports/Pacific-Peoples-in-Aotearoa-Report.pdf

Ministry for Pacific Peoples. (2024, March 26). Boost to Polyfest helps Pacific youth to shine. *Ministry for Pacific Peoples*. https://www.mpp.govt.nz/news-and-events/news-from-2/boost-to-polyfest-helps-pacific-youth-to-shine/

Mulipola, L., Wiles, J., & Fa'alau, F. (2024). Understanding anger with New Zealand-born Samoan youth: A Samoan qualitative exploration. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, *48*(4), 100162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anzjph.2024.100162

Muncey, T. (2010). *Creating autoethnographies*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446268339

Nisa-Waller, A., & Piercy, G. (2024). Autoethnography as a decolonising tool: Bringing identity into the classroom. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *43*(5), 1142–1155. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2024.2307924

NZ Herald. (2025, March 21). ASB Polyfest 2025: Mama Tupou marks 50 years of cultural impact. *NZ Herald*. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/talanoa/asb-polyfest-2025-mama-tupou-marks-50-years-of-cultural-impact/SSEYOM6D7NFRXKOTQZBPHC7DZY/

One Tree Hill College. (2015). *One Tree Hill College Samoan Group performing at the ASB POLYFEST 2015*. https://www.onetreehillcollege.school.nz/news/2015/asb-polyfest-2015/

Pasifika Festival 2024. (2024a). *Pasifika Festival* . https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=122151398642078749&set=pcb.427791549830240

Pasifika Festival 2024. (2024b). *Pasifika Festival 2024*. https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=122151398582078749&set=pcb.427791549830240

Perry, B., Ager, L., & Sitas, R. (2019). Cultural heritage entanglements: Festivals as integrative sites for sustainable urban development. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *26*(6), 603–618. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2019.1578987

Persico, C. (2025, March 8). Auckland's Pasifika Festival is underway and on a growth curve. *RNZ*. https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/544173/auckland-s-pasifika-festival-is-underway-and-on-a-growth-curve

Raj, R., & Vignali, C. (2010). Creating local experience of Cultural tourism through sustainable festivals. *The European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation*, *1*(1), 51–67. https://doi.org/iconline.ipleiria.pt/bitstream/10400.8/426/1/7_ejthr_vol1_issue1_creating_local_experiences.pdf

Raymond, J., & Leo-Anderson, S. (2021). *PACIFIC RESEARCH* (Auckland Unlimited, Ed.). https://acb.aucklandnz.com/sites/build_auckland/files/media-library/documents/Pacific-Research-Document-Teu-Le-Va-2021.pdf

Sanjek, R. (2014). *Ethnography in today's world: Color full before color blind* (pp. 1–312). University of Pennsylvania Press.

Sarantou, M. A., Akimenko, D., & Escudeiro, N. (2018). Margin to Margin: Arts-Based research for digital outreach to marginalised communities. *The Journal of Community Informatics*, *14*(1). https://doi.org/10.15353/joci.v14i1.3407

Scarles, C. (2010). Where words fail, visuals ignite. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *37*(4), 905–926. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2010.02.001

Scott, J. C. (2017). *Domination and the arts of resistance*. Yale University Press. https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300153569

Simati-Kumar, B. (2016). *How does the next generation of Pacific diaspora from blended backgrounds construct and maintain their identities through the spaces they inhabit?* (pp. 1–156) [PhD]. Auckland University of Technology.

Smith, L. T. (2016). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Spoonley, P., & Bedford, R. (2012). *Welcome to our world?: Immigration and the reshaping of New Zealand*. Dunmore Publishing.

Spry, T. (2006). Performing autoethnography: An embodied methodological praxis. In *Emergent Methods in Social Research* (pp. 183–212). SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984034.n9

Stankova, M., & Vassenska, Ivanka. (2015). Raising cultural awareness of local traditions through festival tourism. *Tourism and Management Studies*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/3887/388743883015.pdf

Stats NZ. (2018). *Place and ethnic group summaries*. Stats NZ. https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries

Stats NZ. (2024, June 10). *2023 Census national and regional data*. Stats NZ. https://www.stats.govt.nz/infographics/2023-census-national-and-regional-data/

Stats NZ & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. (2010). *Demographics of New Zealand's Pacific Population*. Statistics New Zealand Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs Tatauranga Aotearoa Wellington, New Zealand Wellington, New Zealand. https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Reports/Demographics-of-New-Zealands-

Pacific-Population-2010/Demographics-of-New-Zealands-Pacific-Population-June-2010.pdf#page=8.08

Stewart, I. (2017, June 9). Diversity underpins school's Maori and Pasifika achievement. *RNZ*. https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/332638/diversity-underpins-school-s-maori-and-pasifika-achievement

Suaalii-Sauni, T., & Fulu-Aiolupotea, S. M. (2014). Decolonising Pacific research, building Pacific research communities and developing Pacific research tools: The case of the talanoa and the faafaletui in Samoa. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *55*(3), 331–344. https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12061

Taleni, T. O., Macfarlane, S., Macfarlane, A. H., & Fletcher, J. (2018). Tofa liuliu ma le tofa saili a ta'ita'i Pasefika: Listening to the Voices of Pasifika Community Leaders. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, *53*(2), 177–192. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-018-0114-7

Tapaleao, V. (2015, March 12). Pasifika too far from its grassroots, say critics. *NZ Herald*. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/pasifika-too-far-from-its-grassroots-say-critics/RUKUWFFHO7QFQZNQ4NIQNSMXXI/

Tarisayi, K. S. (2023). Autoethnography as a qualitative methodology: Conceptual foundations, techniques, benefits and limitations. *Encyclopaideia*, *27*(67), 53–63. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-8670/17815

Teaiwa, T., & Mallon, S. (2005). Ambivalent kinships? Pacific people in New Zealand. In *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations* (pp. 207–229). Victoria University Press.

Tedeschi, M., Vorobeva, E., & Jauhiainen, J. S. (2020). Transnationalism: Current debates and new perspectives. *GeoJournal*, *87*(2), 603–619. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-020-10271-8

The Coconet TV. (2024). *Massey High School performing on the Samoan stage for ASB POLYFEST*. https://www.thecoconet.tv/moana-arts/polyfest-performance-highlights/polyfest-2024-massey-high-school-samoan-group/

The New Zealand Herald. (2022, April 11). Auckland's Pasifika Festival set to celebrate 30th birthday in new-look event. *NZ Herald*. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/aucklands-pasifika-festival-set-to-celebrate-30th-birthday-in-new-look-event/N374PMU6YPBJKMXOTJSLSQAPSM/?ref=readmore

The Pacific Business Hub. (2019). *LOST PASIFIKA REVENUE SALVAGED AT POP-UP MARKETPLACE*. The Pacific Business Hub. https://www.pacificbizhub.co.nz/biz-news/lost-pasifika-revenue-salvaged-at-pop-up-marketplace

Tiatia, J. (1998). *Caught Between Cultures: A New Zealand-born Pacific Island perspective* (D. Gweneth, Ed.). Christian Research Association.

Triponel, T. R. (2022, March 23). Day 2 of Polyfest: Māori and Samoan stage performances kick off. *NZ Herald*. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/day-2-of-polyfest-maori-and-samoan-stage-performances-kick-off/BYROP656KB2RG3KQYHDHPH34JY/

Vaioleti, T. M. (2016). Talanoa Research Methodology: A developing position on Pacific Research. *Waikato Journal of Education*, *12*(1). https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v12i1.296

Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism*. Routledge. (2009)

Visanich, V. (2012). *Generational Differences and Cultural Change* (pp. 1–281) [PhD]. Loughborough University.

Wade, P. (2023, February 26). *Pasifika Festival: Auckland celebrates the diversity of its Pacific Island cultures*. My Guide Auckland. https://www.myguideauckland.com/travel-articles/pasifika-festival-auckland-celebrates-the-diversity-of-its-pacific-island-cultures

Webber, M., McKinley, E., & Hattie, J. (2013). The importance of race and ethnicity: An exploration of New Zealand Pākehā, Māori, Samoan and Chinese adolescent identity. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, *42*(2), 17–28.

Williams, M. L. (2018). *The ASB Polyfest: Constructing Transnational Pacific Communities of Practice in Auckland, New Zealand* [PhD, University of Auckland]. file:///C:/Users/AUT/Downloads/whole%20(1).pdf

Williams, M. L. (2022). The ASB polyfest: The construction of transnational pacific cultural spaces in Auckland, Aotearoa new zealand. *Pacific Arts*, *22*(1). https://doi.org/10.5070/pc222156846

Wood, B. E., & Homolja, M. (2021). Strategic solidarities: Cultural festivals, relational encounters and diasporic youth identities. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *42*(4), 377–393. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2021.1939278

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. SAGE Publications.

Zhang, C. X., Fong, L. H. N., Li, S., & Ly, T. P. (2019). National identity and cultural festivals in postcolonial destinations. *Tourism Management*, *73*, 94–104. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.01.013