Labelling Identities: the Views and Experiences of Second Generation Pacific Peoples in New Zealand

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Abstract

Labelling Identities: the Views and Experiences of
Second Generation Pacific Peoples in New Zealand

Martine Tousignant Gauthier

The second half of the twentieth century saw a large scale migration of peoples from Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands to New Zealand, to the extent that they now represent more than 7% of the total population of that country. It was only after their arrivals to New Zealand that they experienced being grouped together and labelled in panethnic terms. Second-generation Pacific peoples, though born in New Zealand, have faced their own set of challenges in regards to establishing their identity in their new homeland. This research investigates how second generation Pacific peoples negotiate and articulate their identity as New Zealander and as Pacific peoples. Through exploring identity labels (i.e. *Fresh of the boat* and *plastic),* I examine these negotiations and articulations both in terms of assimilation and in terms of panethnicity (i.e. *Pacific Islanders, Pacific peoples, Pasifika*). Nineteen individual and one group interview were conducted with Wellington University students of Samoan, Tongan and Cook Islands background. The narratives reveal a paradox surrounding these identity labels: while they are a creation of outsiders and are criticised for being pejorative, they are also embraced by some members of the group to whom they apply. I argue that the acceptance and usage of controversial identity labels (in this case, panethnic labels and *Fresh off the boat)* by in-group members is attributable to an ongoing re-appropriation process

whereby individuals or groups reclaim a term and redefine it in their own words in order to give it a more positive meaning.

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Terminology

Pakeha (Maori)/ **Palagi** (Samoan**)/ Palangi** (Tongan): These terms refer to New Zealanders of European descent, and are sometime used to describe Europeans in general. Pakeha has been defined as "New Zealanders of a European background, whose cultural values and behaviours have been primarily formed from the experience of being a member of a dominant group (Fleras and Spoonley 1999:83). Palagi/Palangi can be translated into "sky breakers" (i.e. "those who broke the sky with their boats, referencing the first explorers to arrive in the Pacific and be seen on the horizon" (Mila-Schaaf 2010:341). Despites the due regard to consistency, these terms are used interchangeably throughout this thesis – particularly in the speech of participants. This is partly the consequences of their diverse ethnic heritage which often dictate their choice of terminology. Occasionally, the term "white" is used by the students I have interviewed to refer to people of European descent or Western things.

Pacific/ Pasifika (also spelt **Pasefika** and **Pacifica)/Pasifiki**: These terms, used in their different linguistic varieties, refer to diasporic Pacific (Polynesians, Melanesians and Micronesians) peoples, cultures and languages of New Zealand. It distinguishes them from the ones in the islands, from other New Zealanders and Maori, or even could sometimes be used to refer to Polynesians only. There is no unanimity (Mackley-Crump 2012:*vi*) on the best word to use to describe this panethnic group; some have argued in favor of the Tongan transliteration *Pasifiki* (Mila-Schaaf 2010) and some have shown a preference for the spelling of *Pasefika* (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga 2001). *Pasifika* remains the most common in usage, reinforced by the New Zealand television and other media. In this thesis, I use both the term *Pasifika,* which, as Mila-Schaaf (2010) suggested, “carries all the tensions, echoes and politics” (2010:25) of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, and the term *Pacific peoples* in its plural form, to acknowledge the diversity among the group. I also avoid the term *Pacific Islanders* which carries pejorative connotations, although my research participants/interlocutors generally did use this term (along with its acronym PI). Chapter two goes into detail explaining the subtleties of these terms

Introduction

Issues of identity and ethnicity continue to be debated in anthropology. In the last decades, the issue of the ethnic identity of people with migration backgrounds has triggered the interest of many scholars. In New Zealand, a large number of Pacific peoples have settled, bringing diversity to the bicultural society (composed of Pakeha and Maori), and creating a stage for the emergence of new ethnic identities.

Spickard (2002) proposed three ways that authors have generally conceived and interpreted data on human migration. The "immigrant assimilation model" which mainly focuses on the immigrant's absorption into the host society; the "transnational or diasporic model" which emphasizes the continuing links with one's people at home or elsewhere abroad; and finally, the "panethnicity model", in which a broader group is forged from the incorporation of smaller immigrant groups from a common region, such as the Pacific peoples of New Zealand (2002:9-15).

The transnational or diasporic model has been considered particularly relevant to Pacific Islanders in the United States (Spickard 2002), and much of what has been written about Pacific peoples in New Zealand context is based on studies of its diaspora. Although this latter concept is very useful for investigating the experience of the first generation of migrants, it fails to account for their descendants whose experience of ethnic culture and idea of homeland differs from their parents.

This research will look through the lenses of the panethicity model and the assimilation model to investigate how second generation Pacific students in Wellington

New Zealand negotiate and articulate their identity as New Zealanders and as Pacific peoples.[1]

Division of chapters

In the first chapter, I will discuss the concepts of identity, ethnicity and ethnic identity. My review of these theories demonstrates how the concept of panethncity challenges assumptions made by primordialist and instrumentalist theories. On the contrary, a number of ideas stemming from the constructionist model of ethnicity provide valuable conceptualisation for the study Pacific panethnicity in New Zealand.

In the second chapter, I will explore a central paradox regarding the Pacific panethnic category in New Zealand: this category is criticised by Pacific peoples on many fronts, mainly because it lumps together people from different origins and undermines their linguistic and cultural diversity; on the other hand, they often celebrate and promote their Pacific community. In the first section of this chapter, I will consider the origin, terminology and limitations of the panethnic categories. The second section, which is mainly based on Anae (1997; 1998) and Macpherson`s work (1999; 2003), explores the emergence of panethnic identities among the Pacific community. These include their knowledge and cultural competence, as New Zealand-born, which differ from the ones of their parents; their similar socio-economic conditions that results in the fact that New Zealand-born Pacific peoples have generally:

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[1] According to Portes (1996), second generation is an all-encompassing label because it can consist of immigrant children, children of immigrants and native-born children of native parentage. For the purposes of my research I define second generation Pacific peoples in a broad sense. Therefore, participants included anyone who was born in or immigrated to New Zealand at an early age and has spent the majority of their life in New Zealand, and individuals whose parents are born in New Zealand (third generation).

> lived in similar homes in the same suburbs, attended the same schools and churches, competed in the same school cultural festivals and Sunday school scriptural examinations, played in the same rugby and netball team, learned the same songs and hung out at the same malls in various suburbs (Macpherson 2003:143);

The high rate of intermarriage between different Pasifika communities, as an outcome, many second and third-generation Pacific migrants have multiple ethnicities. Moreover, the increased visibility offered through the media, the university, the sport scenes and popular culture have accentuated a sense of belonging and identity among some young members of the Pasifika community. The third and final section of this chapter is ethnographically-based and explores the individuals` interpretations of the Pacific panethnic grouping and the various reasons they may (or not) identify with this grouping. I found that because the panethnic identity is more fluid and inclusive than the ethnic-specific identities (as opposed to Pacific specific), some participants have found the pan-Pacific identity more convenient for them. However, the identification with the panethnic identity is highly situational: most people who identify with the panethnic identity also relate it to their specific ethnicity. For instance, when one identifies as a Pacific person in the presence of significant Others (such as Pakeha or Maori), one also reaffirms identification with one's specific island and emphasizes distinctive cultural markers such as tattoos or good language proficiency, when in the presence of other Pacific peoples.

In the last chapter, I will explore the various and changing meanings and stereotypes associated with the labels *fresh off the boat (*or its acronym *FOB*) and *plastic*. The assimilation model becomes relevant in this chapter as those labels are used to describe people according to an "acculturation spectrum" (Pyke and Dang 2003). While the term *fresh of the boat* is often used to describe a person whose way of talking, acting or dressing is considered to be "too ethnic", the term *plastic* is associated with someone considered assimilated. Both of these terms are derogatory and carry stigmatized identities. Other studies have shown that those labels are used less to classify co-ethnic peers than to position oneself in the "bicultural middle", so as neither "too ethnic" nor "too assimilated" (Pyke and Dang 2003). In this chapter, I contribute to the discussion by arguing that the term *fresh off the boat* is going through a re-appropriation process whereby it acquires a more positive meaning than it formerly did, and has become more desirable than the term *plastic.*

Background : The Pacific Migration

Mobility for inhabitants of the Pacific is not a recent phenomenon as its diaspora is "thousands of years old" (Spickard 2002:2). Certainly, they were navigating the seas to settle in the various islands, which involved movements over centuries of:

> islands-hopping by small boat, small groups of peoples moving back and forth […] from mainland Southeast Asia through what is now Indonesia and the Philippines, thence through Melanesia and Micronesia, and on to Polynesia, finally spreading north, east, and south to the habitable extremities of the ocean (Spickard 2002:3).

Once established in the Pacific region, a history of long distance travel and interconnectedness continued. As the Tongan anthropologist, Epeli Hau'ofa (1994) reminds us, in his landmark essay *Our Sea of Islands*, the islands are shaped by their history of exploration, trade, reciprocity and connectedness:

> From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby expanding social networks for greater flows of wealth. They traveled to visit relatives in a wide variety of natural and cultural surroundings, to quench their thirst for adventure, and even fight and dominate (1994:154).

Much like their ancestors, Pacific peoples continued moving, in modern times, “enlarging their world as they go, but on a scale not possible before” (Hau’ofa 1994:155). The most extensive waves of emigration from the Pacific countries to the Pacific Rim – mainly New Zealand, Australia, and the United States – occurred after the World War II. In the early 2000s, more than 600 000 people of Pacific islands origins lived in those three countries alone (Stahl and Appleyard 2007:7). While not very significant in terms of the Pacific islands population as a whole (which is more than 7 millions), these figures are highly significant for the small countries of Polynesia.[2] For instance, 22, 476 Niueans reside in New Zealand, while only 2, 166 live in their home country (*Statistics New Zealand* [*SNZ*] 2010b).

Migration routes are greatly shaped by the colonial history of each country and the choice of destination is often linked to political ties that may facilitate entry to some countries. Examples of such affiliations include American Samoans and Guamanians in the United States, Norfolk Islanders and Papua New Guineans in Australia, French Polynesians and New Caledonians in France, and Cook Islanders, Tokelauans and Niueans, and to a certain extent Western Samoans, in New Zealand. New Zealand has by far the largest number of Pacific peoples among all industrialized nations.[3] Here, the Polynesian diaspora is the most significant with five or the six largest Pacific migrant groups being Polynesians.

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[2] Those numbers are the population abroad and living in the islands, in the early 2000s, of 11 Pacific countries (Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu). The numbers are thus underestimation of the total population of the Pacific Countries. The United Nations (2011) estimates the population living in Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia to almost 10 million, ten years later, in 2010. The numbers of people abroad is also growing as shows the *net migration rate* of all those Pacific countries, which is either nil or negative (United Nations, 2010).

New Zealand's involvement in establishing an empire in the Pacific can be traced back to the 1840s (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2003:21). New Zealand`s reign in the Pacific includes the annexation of the Cook Islands and Niue, at the turn of the nineteenth century; the declaration of Tokelau as part of New Zealand in 1949, after a British protectorate, and the control over Western Samoan at the start of the World War II. New Zealand also helped Great Britain to maintain colonial rules over Fiji (Mackey-Crump 2012:69-70).

Small episodes of migration of Pacific peoples to New Zealand occurred in the first part of the nineteenth century, and consisted of soldiers, visitors, spouses, missionary trainees, domestic workers and girls attending schools (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2003; Macpheson 2006:97). Large-scale migration began after the World War II. From a New Zealand perspective, the shortage in labour force caused by the loss of young men during World War II and the reform in the national economy incite New Zealand to open up to migration to Pacific peoples from former territories (Macpherson 2006:99). The Pacific nations embraced the opportunity to migrate, in search of better jobs, education and general life opportunities. Connell (2003) summarizes the reasons for the exodus from the Polynesians states:

> the recognition of substantial income differential between Polynesia and metropolitan countries such as Aotearoa/New Zealand and the United States,

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[3] Samoa`s 13 islands are divided into Samoa and American Samoa. Six islands east of the 171st meridian were annexed by the United States in1899. New Zealand assumed control of Western Samoa at the start of World War I, and retained it until 1962, when Western Samoa became independent. Western Samoa is now known as Samoa.

> increased expectations of superior education and health services, improved transport links, a reduction of transport cost and growing population pressure on domestic resources (2003: 42).

Hau'ofa (1994) convincingly rejects the colonialist attempts to persuade Pacific peoples of their belittlement and isolation, and the neo-colonial claims of economic dependence and vulnerability of the region. According to Hau'ofa, Pacific peoples are mobile "not so much because their countries are poor but because they are unnaturally confined and severed from many of their traditional sources of wealth and because it is in their blood to be mobile" (1994:156).

The first substantial wave of migration came from Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau Islands in the 1950s. During that same period, people came in smaller numbers from Tonga, Fiji, Kiribati, Tuvalu and French Polynesia, all nations that hold no constitutional ties with New Zealand (Macpherson 1996). In the 1960s economic expansion, semi-skilled and unskilled labour was on continuous demand and inhabitants of Fiji, followed by Samoa, with smaller numbers from Tonga, Niue and the Cook Islands migrated to New Zealand. In the 1970s, jobs and educational openings kept attracting Pacific peoples, but Tonga became the dominant supply nation. Successive migration relies on previously established networks that enable family members to join relatives to New Zealand; a migration pattern described as chain migration (Pitt and Macpherson 1974; Macpherson 1996; Macpherson 2006) with its obvious consequence of enclave formation (Macpherson 1999:53; 2001:72-73).

Because of the particular association with New Zealand, some countries fared better than others. The Cook Islanders and Niueans gained independence in free association, respectively in 1964 and 1974, and their citizens retained the right of free entry, residence and New Zealand citizenship (in duality with the Cook Island or Niue citizenship). The Treaty of Friendship signed at Western Samoa's independence ensured emigrants would not have to register in New Zealand as aliens (*SNZ* 2010:120).

For other independent nations of the Pacific, access to New Zealand was not always easy, particularly for unskilled workers. However, over the decades, the New Zealand government implemented labour schemes that made it possible for immigrants to work in the country for a certain period of time. The Tongans benefitted from such a scheme in the 1970s, and they were able to migrate to New Zealand temporarily to work in unskilled jobs in the processing industry (*SNZ* 2010:121). However, those who overstayed were sent back in the mid-1970s as a result of the Dawn Raids Campaign, when police and immigration officers were deployed to search for people with expired visas. The Muldoon government in place at the time chose to target illegal overstayers in an attempt to reduce the unemployment that had caused an economic downturn. The targets of the dawn raids were Polynesians, even if:

> the majority of the quarter of a million visitors who came to New Zealand in 1973 could not possibl[y] [...] have been Polynesian. And yet there has been no record of Europeans being constantly raided in the manner that Pacific Islanders, innocent or otherwise, have been (de Bres and Campbell 1976:21).

Connell observes that "migration is rarely absolute, unambivalent or final; it is not a cause and consequence of a definite break with a cultural life that is part of history, but a partial and conditional state, characterized by ambiguity and indeterminancy" (Connell 1994:277). Some Pacific migrants returned home after several years abroad. However, the volume of return migration is small in comparison to the outward flow and is at least partly due to the great differences in incomes levels between the island and the metropolitan periphery (Connell 1994:45). This is especially pronounced for children of migrants who were educated in New Zealand and thus have lost some degree of contact with their "homeland". Often, they have lost critical linguistic skills. Epeli Hau'ofa summarises: "once you are educated, once your mind is expanded, subsistence on a remote little island is simply unacceptable... psychologically we are no longer islanders" (Dyson 1982:120).

Pacific Peoples in New Zealand Today

As Albert Wendt famously joked, it is only when one arrives at Auckland airport that one becomes a Pacific Islander (Anae, 107:128). This label is somewhat irrelevant for Samoans, Tongans or Cook Islanders, as Spickard points out when speaking of Pacific peoples who migrated to the United States.

> Yet almost no person arises in the morning thinking of herself as a Pacific Islander American. Most think of themselves as Tongans (or Tongan American), Samoans, Fijians, and so on. A few would recognize the terms "Polynesians", "Melanesians", and "Micronesians" as somewhat larger categories which they have been told apply to them. But those are not indigenous categories, either (Spickard 2002:43).

It is for administrative and political convenience that migrants were labelled in such a way rather than because they constitute cohesive and united community (Macpherson 1996). The Pacific population had always been much more socially and politically fragmented than a category such as Pacific Islander implied (Macpherson 1996). Today, the Pacific population in New Zealand comprises more than 30 different ethnic communities, each with its own distinctive culture, language and history of settlement in New Zealand (I will provide more statistical information in the following section).

The concept of ethnicity contained in New Zealand`s official statistics provided little scope for recording those subtleties. The statistical category of Pacific peoples, as it is understood by governmental agencies, includes the seven largest Pacific communities: Cook Island Maori, including each island group, Fijians except Fiji Indians, Niueans, Samoans, Tokelauans, Tongans and Tuvaluans.

The category also encompasses, in smaller number, groups of:

> Australian Aboriginals, Austral Islanders, Belau/Palau Islanders, Bouganvilleans, Caroline Islanders, Easter Islanders, Gambier Islanders, Guam Islanders, Hawaiians, I-Kiribati, Kanaka, Marquesas Islanders, Marshall Islanders, Nauru Islanders, Papua New Guineans including all island groups, Phoenix Islanders, Pitcairn Islanders, Society Islanders, Solomon Islanders including each island group, Tuamotu Islanders, Vanuatuans, Wallis Islanders and Yap Islanders (*SNZ* 2001:1).

Although individuals are able to choose their ethnic identity in the national census, with some flexibility (i.e. they can select more than one ethnicity, write a category not listed in the form, and can freely change their ethnic identification from one census to another) (Gray 2001), some may feel compelled to identify in terms intelligible to outsiders and opt for a pan-Pacific identity. A Niuean participant in Macpherson's study explains this: "sometimes, you had to get used to being a 'Pacific Islander' because bodies like the Government and the City Council only gave resources to 'Pacific Islanders''' (Macpherson 1996:130).

Socio-Demographic Data

In 2006, 265 974 persons claimed a Pacific ethnicity which makes up 6.9% of the New Zealand population (*SNZ* 2006).[4] The Samoans were by far the largest Pacific group, numbering over 131,103 and making up almost half the Pacific population in New Zealand. Cook Island Maori were the next largest group (58,011), followed by Tongans (50,478), Niueans (22,476), Fijians (9,864), Tokelauans (6,822) and Tuvalu Islanders (2, 625) (*SNZ* 2006).

The New Zealand Pacific population lives mainly in urban communities. This is one consequence of the chain migration. As early migrants settled in New Zealand, younger members of the family were sent to work or attend school in New Zealand and live with the established migrants, creating a concentration of Pacific migrants in particular residential areas. The majority (66%) of the Pacific groups, except for Tokelauans who live predominantly in Wellington (51%), are residing in the Auckland region, also known as the "Pacific Capital" of the world (*SNZ* 2010:120). In this region, 27% of the population claim a Pacific ethnicity (*SNZ* 2005). It is not surprising that the bulk of studies about Pacific peoples have been conducted in Auckland. The Wellington region has the second concentration of the Pacific population with approximately 13% of all Pacific peoples residing in the Capital city region (*SNZ* 2010:120). With 34 752 residents, the Pacific population of Wellington should not be underestimated, cities such as Porirua, in the suburbs of Wellington, comprises more than 25% of Pacific peoples (*Porirua City Council* 2008:37).[5]

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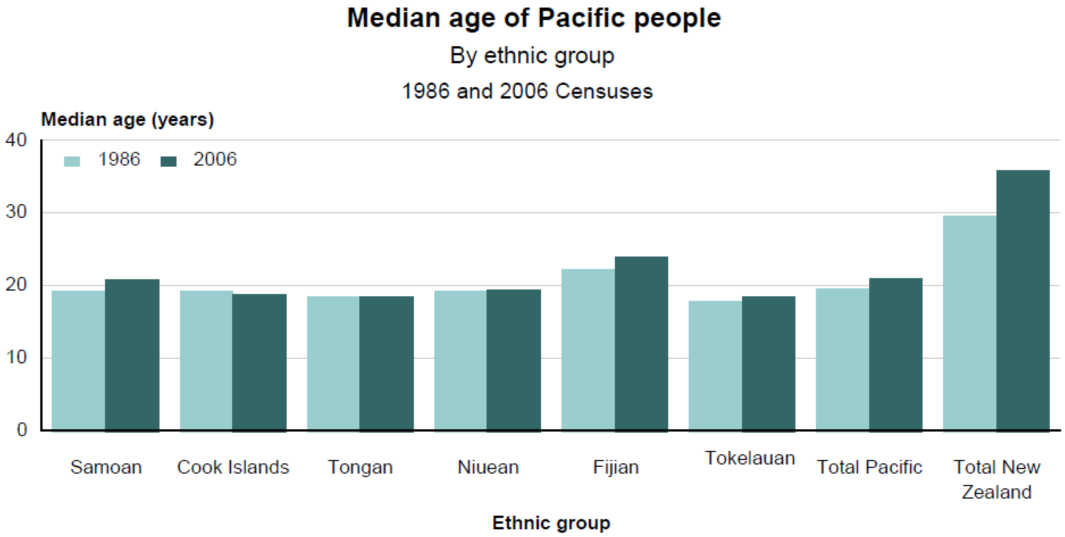
[4] The data provided in this section is from the New Zealand 2006 Census which represents the more recent and complete data about the New Zealand population. The 2011 census had been postponed to March 2013, mainly due to the major Earthquake that stuck Christchurch and caused the displacement of the resident population.

By comparison with the total New Zealand population, Pacific peoples have a very youthful population (see Figure 1.1 below), with a large proportion being under 15 and a small proportion over 65 years of age. This difference is mainly the result of Pacific peoples' consistent migration, especially for the younger working-age group (15-24 years) during the 1970s and a high fertility rate (*SNZ* 2010:119).

Figure 1.1



Source: Statistics New Zealand 2006 Quickstats About Pacific Peoples-2006 Census.

The majority (60%) of the Pacific population is born in New Zealand (see Figure 1.2 below). There are of course small differences in birthplace between Pacific groups – as there is also in age structure: 60% of Samoans are born in New Zealand, 56% of Tongans and 73% of Cook Island Maori (*SNZ* 2010:119). Having a youthful and a New Zealand-born population brings a totally new dynamic to the Pacific communities and identity(ies): interethnic marriages are more frequent, the level of education is higher and Pacific languages are less spoken.

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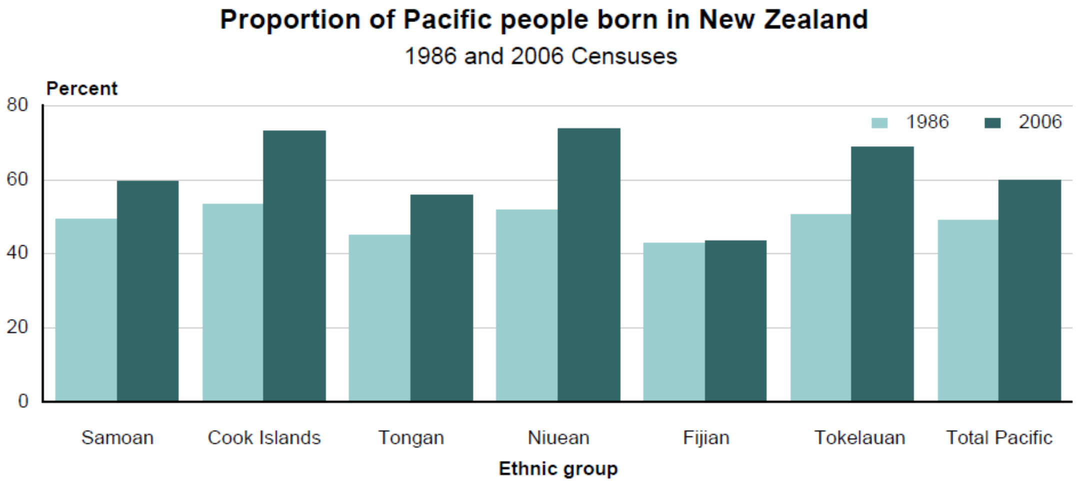
[5] Porirua is the third largest town with the highest count of Pacific peoples after Auckland city and Waitakere City in the Auckland region. One third of the peoples I have interviewed reside in Porirua, and commute from Porirua to Wellington University on school days.

Figure 1.2



Source: Statistics New Zealand 2006 Quickstats About Pacific Peoples-2006 Census.

The rate of marriage outside of one's Pacific group is significantly higher for those born in New Zealand (Callister and Didham 2007). Using data on 42 160 Pacific children for a period of 2000-2004, Callister and Didham observed that over half (54%) percent of all Pacific children have at least one other ethnicity (23% of all children claim another Pacific ethnicity) (Callister and Didham 2007). Intermarriage with Maori is also frequent: more than 25% of all children under the age of five, who claim a Pacific ethnicity, also claim a Maori ethnicity (*SNZ* 2010:120). Factors influencing intermarriage include: attitudes, time in the country, level of residential segregation, relative sizes of ethnic groups, considerable imbalances between the number of men and women in the main couple forming age groups, and also, the level of education (Callister and Didham

2007). Better-educated people are more likely to marry outside their group (but more likely within their educational group) (Callister and Didham 2007).

The New Zealand-born Pacific population have higher educational qualifications than those born in the islands. However, Pacific peoples as a whole are still over-represented among those having no formal education (Callister and Didham 2007). There are significant differences between the Pacific groups: Fijians have generally higher qualifications (27% of Samoans have no qualification as opposed to 39% of Cook Island Maori and 16% of Fijians) (Callister and Didham 2007). While historically more men than women attended tertiary education, the situation is now reversed with 65% of women having completed a university degree in 2005 (Callister and Didham 2007).

A person’s ability to speak a Pasifika language also differs strongly between New Zealand-born and island-born individuals (*SNZ* 2006). Pasifika language loss and retention are different for each community. While the New Zealand 2006 census reports that the Tongan and Samoan languages are relatively healthy at present time in New Zealand (61% and 63% people from the respective communities state that they can have a conversation about everyday things in Tongan or Samoan), the Niuean and Cook Island languages appear much less secure (25% and 16% of community members state that they can have a conversation in their respective languages), and a large proportion of these speakers are overseas born (*SNZ* 2006). An increasing proportion of the New Zealand Pasifika communities are second and third generation New Zealanders and have English as their first language. Since most Pacific peoples in New Zealand are no longer fluent in their origin language, linguistic distinctiveness is likely to find expression in English, the lingua franca of the broader New Zealand Pasifika community (Bell and Gibson 2008).

Methods and Setting

Between January 2011 and May 2011, I conducted fieldwork and interviews at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), a place I was already familiar with from having completed a post graduate diploma in the Pacific Studies program in 2008. I had then noticed the important presence of the Pasifika community in the university life (something I will discuss further in Chapter Two), especially predominant in the Pacific and Samoan Studies Department. This previous experience at VUW, and the connections I have built back then, had proved to be indispensable as much for the access to the field as with the recruitment of participants.

For my fieldwork, I conducted observations in different university locations, including cafes, library, study rooms and the recreation center. A former professor allowed me to attend the undergraduate Pacific Studies class she was teaching that semester. About 50 students were attending that class, most of them from a Pacific heritage.

The bulk of my ethnographic insights, which form the basis of this thesis, emerged from the twenty interviews I have conducted. These consist of nineteen individual semi-structured interviews and one follow up group interview, conducted with five of the persons whom I interviewed individually. Each interview was recorded and lasted between 45 to 70 minutes. Given my initial proposal to study the production of linguistic variables – characteristic to the Pasifika New Zealand English dialect – and to link it to the person's level of integration in his or her ethnic community, I needed a quiet room, as soundproof as possible, in order to get a clear recording of participant's linguistic performance. I decided to conduct the interviews in closed study rooms of the Central Library of the university.

My recruitment for interview participant began with the precious help of the aforementioned Pacific Studies professor, who made announcements in class to inform possible interested students. I also pinned notices on the university walls and bulletin boards – in the library, the recreation center, halls, cafes, bathrooms – in order to reach other Pacific students, not majoring in Pacific studies. After I had conducted the first interviews, the friend-of-a-friend or snowballing method became a very helpful means of finding participants.

I selected participants who met two criteria:

1. they had to be born (or had migrated at an early age) and been raised in New Zealand
2. they had to self-identify as Nieuans, Cook Islanders, Tongans or Samoans.

Notwithstanding the importance of the other communities within the Pasifika group, I chose to limit the interview to these four groups for two reasons. Firstly, they are by far the four biggest Polynesian groups in New Zealand. Secondly, the decision was also influenced by the available background information on these four groups provided by the sociolinguistic study of *Pasifika Languages of Manukau Project* –data which could not be found to such an extent on other Pasifika communities.[6]

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[6] Given my initial proposal of research, it seems logical to consider the availability of such data. The *Pasifika languages of Manukau project* is an extensive project conducted by Allan Bell, Donna Starks, Karen Davis and Melenaite Taumoefolau, and was designed to investigate the attitudes and contribute to the maintenance of the four main Pasifika languages of Manukau region, South Auckland. The project

Considering the heterogeneity of the Pasifika population, I decided to choose participants who were born and/or raised in New Zealand, hoping this criterion would draw out shared commonalities. Unlike their parents and other Pasifika peers who grew up in the islands, New Zealand-born Pacific peoples attended key institutions (such as the New Zealand education system) together, lived in the same neighbourhoods, went to the same churches, and played on the same teams as other Pacific peoples. Equally important, they shared the experience of having been labelled "Pacific peoples" their whole life. It would be fair to assume that this particular experience of socialization opens up to greater chances of association with other Pasifika peers and self-identification with the broader pan-Pacific group.

However, the considerable diversity of the Pasifika population was well reflected in this study corpus. People I interviewed come from the four corners of New Zealand and have very different individual backgrounds. Some were born in a Pacific island, some in New Zealand and others have been in New Zealand for three generations now. Although some have mastered their ancestral language better than English, others can only understand it, while yet others wish they could. Some are Christians, some Mormons, and others do not go to church anymore. Some are "full-Samoan" or Tongan, some are from a mixed-marriage with an Asian, Maori, Pakeha or another Pacific island parent. As well, some look Pasifika, while others do not. In the end, one might conclude that the main commonality between members of this group, beside their self-

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involved 120 interviews, 20 per each of these ethnic groups: Samoans, Tongans, Niueans and Cook Islands Maori.

identification as Pacific peoples, is their status as university students, presumably middle class people (see in Appendix A the socio-demographic data of the corpus).

My semi-structured individual interview questions were designed to cover the following topics:

1) Background information: name, age, grade and discipline studied, high school attended, birthplace and parents' birthplace, places of residence through their life, professional and leisure activities, career aspiration, place they call home and place they wish to live through their life.
2) Language spoken: first language and languages learnt; languages spoken by parents (mother tongues and languages learnt); language most often spoken at home, with relatives and with friends; level of proficiency in each language spoken (written, spoken, understood and read); importance associated with teaching those languages to their children or future children; occasion during which the Pacific language is spoken (university, home, church, Pacific groups, et cetera.), people with whom the Pacific language is spoken.

3) Personal experiences with pan-Pacific and/or ethnic-specific community. Participants' visits to Pacific islands, visits from family members who reside on the islands; church denomination; participation in church services; other gatherings (wedding, anniversaries, et cetera); participation at Pacific university activities and groups; usage of Pacific media (radio, television, websites, magazines and journals);

4) Self-identification and intercultural differences.[7] How participants self-identify in terms of ethnicity; the perceived differences of Pacific peoples born in New Zealand compared to those in the island; components of their identity which are significant in everyday life; questions on English accent

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[7] This section was initially designed to understand language attitudes, but ended up being fruitful for understanding interethnic relations, inclusion and exclusion processes

> and perception of their accent, and possible code-switching; if they express themselves differently verbally – accent –, physically – facial expressions, hands –, subject of conversation, sense of humour – among various ethnic groups.

Although questions were prepared in advance, each interview was unique and I was gifted with stories and accounts of experiences that would not have otherwise been shared had I followed my list of prepared questions. A semi-structured interview approach not only allows flexibility with the order of the questions but also the relevance of it can shift to some extent following the respondents interests and concerns. In comparison to structured interviews, they are more likely to generate detailed responses and bring forth life-stories type data.

This flexibility enabled me to explore areas that I had not previously considered such as the labeling practices and how these affect participants, and provided unexpected insights. In light of these revealing contributions, I decided to change the focus of my research hoping to do justice to the valuable life stories and experiences some participants generously shared with me.

Chapter One – Theoretical Discussion

New Zealand can no longer be considered an ethnically homogenous nation. The Maori were the first to challenge this idea, by using the notion of indigeneity. And now, recent migration is challenging the bicultural model of national identity. In a world of increasing democratization, whereby the voices of citizens and groups presumably count in shaping the future of their country, it has become more and more common to hear claims and debates over one's place in the political landscapes, based on their identities and values.

* * *

In this chapter, I introduce the concept of identity, showing its plural, fluid and ideological dimensions. My discussion focuses on the concepts of ethnic identity, ethnicity and panethnicity, all of which are particularly relevant for the study of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. I will outline three approaches that have dominated the literature on ethnicity: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructionism.[8] I will then show how the concept of panethnicity challenges certain assumptions of the instrumentalist and primordialist paradigms. However, a number of ideas about ethnicity, stemming from the social constructionist model are compatible with the tenets of panethnicity and provide a valuable foundation for conceptualizing the Pacific panethnicity in New Zealand.

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[8] It has been argued (Lustick, 2001; amongst others) that instrumentalism is a branch of constructionism will treat instrumentalism. I will however agree with most scholars by treating instrumentalism and constructionism as different paradigms.

One only has to turn on the television or read the newspapers to quickly realise that references to identity are everywhere. One problem about "identity", according to Brubaker (2004), is that "it tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)" (2004:28). He suggests, then, to make a distinction between "identity" as a "category of practice" and as a "category of analysis". By category of practice, he means, the use of identity by social actors themselves in making sense of themselves, "of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from, others" (2004:32). Identity as a category of analysis is one that "bears a contradictory theoretical burden" but one which is "made to do a great deal of work", and refers to how it is used by social scientists to theorise about ideas on identity (Brubaker 2004:35).

Identity is important – through this lens people make sense of the world they inhabit and assess "who`s who (and hence what`s what)" (Jenkins 2008b:5). It serves as a "social radar" (Hale 2004) that guides people navigating their social world. Identity involves:

> knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on: a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and out places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities (Jenkins 2008b:5).

One`s place – or identity – in the social world is, however, not singular or stable. Each individual expresses a wide range of identifying characteristics such as age, gender, class, ethnicity and so forth, which "make(s) the singular notion of identity a misnomer" (Butler 1990:4). Within a collectivity, individuals experience countless combinations of identity axis, making the unifying feature of identity of the group multi-faceted. For example, an ethnic identity, such as the Pasifika identity, finds different expressions depending on one's age.

Having access to a repertoire of identity dimensions, individuals might privilege particular traits over others in specific circumstances. In other words, people portray themselves differently depending on the situation. In this sense, identity is inherently situational, and in being situational, it is also ever-changing. If identity is defined by how a person relates to the social world, then once the person's environment changes, for example, when one encounters a new situation, meets new people or learns new things, one is led to revaluate their relationship to the social world (Hale 2004:466).

Dimensions of identity –such as age, gender, class, ethnicity and so forth – also have shifting relevance and carry varying connotations across different historical and cultural settings. Any discussion of identity should thus recognize its plural, multi-faceted quality, its cultural and historical specificity and should consider it as dynamic rather than unchanging. Towards this, Stuart Hall (1996:2) suggests the notion of *identification,* which recognises the transitory quality of identity and explicitly refers to it as a work in process rather than a final stage. In the same train of thoughts, Jenkins adds that identity can only be conceived as "the process of 'being' and 'becoming' […] never [as] a final or settled matter" (Jenkins 2008b:17), it is not something people possess, but rather "something they experience, use, learn and *do* in their daily lives" (Jenkins 2008a:15).

Brubaker rather suggests making a distinction between the "weak" and the "strong" understandings of identity. Identity, in the strong sense, refers to the most "common-sense" meaning of the term, preserving the idea of stability of identities and emphasising the "sameness over time or across persons" (2004:37). The strong understanding of identity carry problematic assumptions that identity is something people and groups have, can have without being aware of it, and as collective identity, the strong conception implies "group boundedness and homogeneity" (2004:37). Contrastively, the weak conception of identity is inconsonant with the everyday uses of the term and distance itself from the hard, stable and graspable connotations. Rather, the weak understanding, which is more commonly used in recent discussions and theories about identity, perceive identity as "multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated, and so on" (2004:38).

In his effort to untangle the contradictory meanings around the term identity, Brubaker details three different areas of conceiving identity:

> *Identification and categorization*
>
> How one identifies oneself - and how one is identified by others by a position in a relational web (a web of kinship, for example, or of friendship, patron-client ties, or teacher-student relations) and/or by membership in a class of persons sharing some categorical attribute (such as race, ethnicity, language, nationality, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, etc.). Self-identification and the identification and categorization of oneself by others are fundamentally situational and contextual.

Self-understanding and social location

> The social processes through which persons understand and locate themselves; emphasises that the bounded self and the bounded group are culturally specific rather than universal forms. It designates one's own understanding of who one is. It cannot capture others' understandings; privileges cognitive awareness; and as “situated subjectivity” self-understanding does not capture the objectivity claimed by strong understandings of identity.

Commonality, connectedness, groupness

> This is the emotionally laden sense of belonging - especially in discussions of race, religion, ethnicity, nationalism, gender, sexuality, social movements - to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders. “Commonality” denotes the sharing of some common attributes, “connectedness” the relational ties that link people. Neither commonality nor connectedness alone engenders “groupness” – the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group.
>
> (Brubaker 2004:41-48)

1.1 Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity

Throughout the world, the relatively recent accelerated movement of people, culture, capital and ideas has irrevocably changed the notions of cultural discreteness and isolation (Appadurai 1997; Hall 1997). The concept of ethnicity has become one of the main areas of inquiry among social and cultural anthropologists since the 1960s (Eriksen 2010:1). It has replaced concepts of “tribes” and “cultures” (Jenkins 2008a:17-27). The term ethnicity is a minefield to describe because it overlaps with other equally slippery terms such as “nationality”, “race”, and “ancestry”. In brief, “ancestry” generally refers to person`s family descent, “nationality” to the country to which a person belongs by birth or citizenship, and “race” to some supposed biological characteristics used to classify individual into one of the four races (Eriksen 2010:5). Even though the idea of race has been disproved by modern genetics, the concept is still widely used in the United States as “the main divisive mechanism of [the] society” (Eriksen 2010:7).[9] Although “nationality”, “ancestry”, and “race” are different from “ethnicity”, they may play a determining role in how a person perceives her/his ethnicity and can be used as criteria for belonging to a particular ethnic group.

So what is ethnicity, exactly? To answer this question, I turn to the classical debate over the nature of ethnic identity and the divergent, but not completely opposed, positions of primordialist and instrumentalist theories.

1.2 Primordialism and Instrumentalism

Is ethnicity fixed, ascribed at birth and based on deep primordial attachments to a group or is it a strategic choice, situationally defined, and an easily manipulated instrument? These are the positions taken by primordialism and instrumentalism, and although the literature on ethnicity tends to side with one of those two theoretical camps, it is noteworthy that different varieties of primordialism and instrumentalism exist, and that the opposition between the two groups is not as clear-cut as it initially seems. [10]

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[9] The three main arguments against the concept of ‘race’ are, first, that the interbreeding between human population has blurred the supposed boundaries; second, the variation within a group is greater than between groups; and thirdly, the general agreement among social sciences scholars that no hereditary characteristics explains cultural variation.

Primordialist Theories of Ethnicity

The primordialist approach is the oldest of the two paradigms, and predominant through the 1960s. According to this perspective, ethnicity is something relatively fixed and permanent, and ascribed at birth. While there are subtleties to the broad idea, scholars adopting this approach generally understand ethnicity to be an intuitive bond, a primordial aspect of human nature or a given facet of social life.

Among anthropologists, Geertz is the figure most often associated with a primordialist model (Geertz 1973). Writing in 1963, he drew on the work of Edward Shils (1957) who was concerned "to understand the obstacle that "primordial attachments" […] posed to the development of the modern political sentiment of citizenship, in the emergent post-colonial "new states" (Jenkins 2008a:46).

Geertz (1973) described the concept of primordial attachment as: "one that stems from the 'givens' – or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' – of social existence" (1973:109). Although ethnicity takes its meaningfulness from its birth connection, the "givens" include not only the actual circumstances of birth or genetics, but involve:

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[10] Tilley (1997) notes that inattention to the differences between biological, cultural and psychological approaches, depicting them all "primordialism" has resulted in an extreme confusion (197:499-500). Similarly, the use of a single term "primordial" which, she found, can be attributed to at least five different definitions, is ill-defined (1997:502).

> immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves (Geertz 1973:109).

Such an understanding of ethnic ties cannot be reduced to biological or innate attributes. Geertz' explanation made clear that primordial attachment derives as much from locality and culture (e.g. religion, custom, language) as it does from blood. Those "givens" are *assumed* as primordial by individuals, and overlooking these subtleties would result in mistakenly depicting primordialists as "analytical naturalizers" rather than "analysts of naturalizers", as Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov put it (2004:49). To better understand these nuances, Cornell and Hartmann (1998) suggest that:

> Instead of beginning with blood ties that, in turn, produce an ethnic identity, that therefore has power, we begin with an identity that we claim is rooted in ties of blood, and we thereby give it power (1998:58).

The primordialism is not founded in ethnicity *per se* but in the significance attributed to it (Cornell et Hartmann 1998:58).

Some of the evidence appears to favor the primordalist view. By focusing on deeply rooted ties, primordialism offers a plausible reason for the durability of such attachments (Espiritu 1992: 4). It captures the emotional force of ethnicity and explains group solidarity. It has the strength to explain the high degree of commitment of group members and the willingness of individuals to engage in “seemingly irrational and costly conflicts that occur along ethnic lines” (Ruttan et al. 2006).

However, there are many shortcomings to this approach. First, as Jenkins (2008) highlighted, “much ethnographic evidence exist on the fluidity and flux of ethnic identification, and of the differing degrees to which ethnicity organizes social life in different settings” (2008a:48). He suggested that ethnicity may be a *primary* social identity because of its salience, but not a *primordial* dimension of individual identity (2008a:49). Another criticism is that primordial ties do not always lead to ethnic solidarity (Espiritu 1992:4). Although ethnic group members often claim having the same origins, Eriksen noted that it is the “current commonalities at the levels of culture and social integration tend to be more important as source of solidarity and collective identification” (Eriksen 2010:9).

Instrumentalist Theories of Ethnicity

This second paradigm became the dominant means of studying ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s.[11] This perspective considers ethnicity as a strategic tool. It argues that ethnicity is an instrument that can be deployed and modified as necessary by leaders. It is also an instrument for individuals who would choose their membership according to the possible advantages (psychological, financial, political and so forth) that can be obtained in a certain group *vis-à-vis* another. Individuals and groups can emphasize their own ethnic identities when it is advantageous to do so. One expresses their ethnicity as a strategic choice made after assessing the outcomes of each available positions or identities (Espiritu 1992: 5).

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[11] This paradigm is also called “circumstantialism”. Cornell and Hartmann (1998) explained their preference for the latter term: first, it focuses the analysis on what they believes should come first: the circumstances rather than the instrument; second, the circumstances sometimes encourage or produce ethnic and racial identities without the intervening mediation of interest (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:62).

Unlike primordialists who view ethnicity as ascribed at birth and fixed instrumentalists consider ethnicity as artificial, fluid and socially constructed. Rather than being based on a real, genetically established common ancestry, instrumentalists view ethnicity as based in people`s "historical" and "symbolic" memory (Jenkins 2008a). Cohen (1974) even takes an extreme position in defining ethnicity exclusively as common interest groups. "Ethnicity", he writes, "is fundamentally a political phenomenon…it is a type of informal interest grouping" (Cohen 1974:97).

The main criticism of the instrumentalist approach is that it essentially fails in accounting for the force responsible for the persistent attachment to a group when it appears politically and economically disadvantaged. Nonetheless, ethnic attachments should not be regarded as superficial, and the salience of ethnic identity, is well accounted for in some circumstances (in times of election for instance (see Eifert et al. 2010)). As Patterson observed: "where ethnic allegiance is in individuals own best interests, intense feelings will be attached to it" (Patterson 1975:312).

Although the perspectives of primordialism and instrumentalism may seem opposing, they are not completely divergent views. As Jenkins (2008) noted, the outcome of this dispute has shed "more heat than light" (Jenkins, 2008a: 46). Choosing one perspective over the other, he observes, is an "unreal choice":

> Calculation and emotions are not alternatives. There is no necessary contradiction between instrumental manipulation, on the one hand, and powerful ethnic sentiment, on the other (Jenkins 2008a:48).

1.3 A Social Constructionist Model

Anthropologists have taken up several approaches to try and resolve the disjunctures between primordialism and instrumentalism, using elements of each perspective. Cornell and Hartmann (1998) summarise the place of the constructionist approach in the debate as one "accepting the fundamental validity of circumstantialism [instrumentalism] while attempting to retain the key insights of primordialism" (1998:22). The constructionist approach to the formation of ethnic identity is described as:

> the creative process by which ethnic groups construct themselves (including) both the passive experience of being "made" by external forces […] and the active process by which a group "makes" itself (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:80).

The tenet of constructionism is that ethnicity is artificial, fluid and socially constructed. Ethnic groups are created or constructed, but can also be destroyed or, in the postmodern terms, fragmented and deconstructed.

Jenkins outlines four basic notions or enduring ideas of the "basic social anthropological model of ethnicity" (2008a:14) which apply the constructionist theory of ethnicity, most often identified with the work of Barth:

1. "Ethnicity is a matter of cultural differentiation – although […] identification always involves a dialectical interplay between similarity and difference" (Jenkins 2008a:14);

2. “Ethnicity is centrally a matter of shared meanings –‘culture’ – but it is produced and reproduced during interaction” (2008a:42);

3. “Ethnicity, rather than being fixed or unchanging, is, depending on situation and context, to some extent variable and manipulable” (2008a:42).

4. “Ethnicity, as an identification, is both collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and the categorization of others, and internalized in personal self-identification” (2008a:14).

A matter of cultural differentiation

We would have no sense of self in isolation. Identities – more specifically ethnic identities – only exist in relation to one other. Ethnicity is understood by what it excludes as well as what it includes (although it is more often recognized by the differences than similarities). Stuart Hall explains this in his discussion on *Englishness*:

> To be English is to know yourself in relation to the French, and the hot-blooded Mediterraneans, and the passionate, traumatized Russian soul. You go round the entire globe: when you know what everybody else is, then you are what they are not. Identity is always, in that sense, a structured representation which only achieved its positive through the narrow eye of the negative (Hall 1997:21).

An essential component in the formation of ethnic groups is the idea of boundaries, delineating “us” and “them”, marking the inclusion or exclusion of members. In his essay, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969), controversial for its time, Fredrik Barth argued that it is “the ethnic boundary that defines the group not the cultural content that it encloses"(1969:15) to stress the maintenance of difference as being more important than the content of that difference, what he called the "cultural stuff". He adds:

> We can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of objective differences, but only those which the actors themselves regards as significant… some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied (Barth 1969:14).

Boundaries also exist within ethnic groups, as internal boundaries marking differences among subgroups. Such boundaries can be recast and new ethnic groups may be formed. According to Eriksen (2010), there are two possible ways by which a new ethnic category – and hence a new identity – can be formed: either by the reduction of the size of a former group – a concept known as *fission* in sociological terms – or throughout extension of an existing identification (2010:82).

Drawing extensively on the work of Barth, Eriksen (2010) identifies boundaries simply as a set of criteria such as language, political organization, and political contiguity. He insists that there are no clear cut ethnic boundaries, given that what constitutes them – language, culture, political organization, and political contiguity and others – do not completely correlate.

As per Barth, Eriksen's emphasis is not on the content of ethnicity but the social processes which produce and reproduce boundaries of identification and differentiation between ethnic collectivities. Ericksen understands ethnicity to refer to those "aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive" (2010:4).

Shared meaning as being (re)produced during interaction

Cultural content or shared meaning associated with ethnic identities is always socially constructed out of dynamic interactions:

> groups begin to fill those categories with their content, telling their histories in their own way and putting forth their own claims to what their identities signify, then they are engaging in a classical process of constructing ethnicity (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:30).

The notion of shared descent, central in most ethnic ideologies (Eriksen 2010:81) is also constructed or reinforced during this process.

The construction process involves “agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation” (Jenkins 2008b:17). The interaction is continuous and the construction an ongoing project: “ethnic identities are constructed, but they are never finished” (Cornell and Hartman 1998:80).

This creative process, by which ethnic groups construct themselves, is not a one-way process. It involves:

> both the passive experience of being “made” by external forces, including not only material circumstances but the claims that other persons or groups make about the group in question, and the active process by which the group “makes” itself. The world around us may “tell” us we are racially distinct, or our experience at the hands of circumstances may “tell” us that we constitute a group, but our identity is also a product of claims we make. Their claims may build on the messages we receive from the world around us or may depart from them, rejecting them, adding to them or refining them (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:80).

Ethnic identity is therefore constructed through discourse and should also be understood as an idea or discourse rather than as an empirically observable social unit defined by features such as dress, language or customs (Tilley 1997:511).

> Criteria for ethnic membership are developed by the participants in the social system, and are not externally given; rather, ethnic "identities" are "creatively imagined" to explain a group identity in relation to some Other whose identity is likewise "imagined" (Tilley 1997:511).

As fluid, changing, situational and manipulable

Understanding ethnicity as fluid presupposes that ethnic identities are created, negotiated, confirmed or transformed in the course of interaction between strategizing individuals who are trying to reach particular goals in various situation. This claim is well anchored in instrumentalist logic.

Individuals have many statuses and many possible identities and some become more relevant than others, depending on context. As Nagel (1994) noted, individuals carry a "portfolio" of ethnic identities that are more or less salient in various situations and vis-à-vis various audiences: as audiences change, the socially-defined array of ethnic choices opens to the individual changes. This produces a "layering" (McBeth 1989) of ethnic identities which combines with the ascriptive character of ethnicity to reveal the negotiated, problematic nature of ethnic identity" (Nagel 1994:155). Nagel provides an example of the fluid and situational character of ethnic identity:

> An American Indian might be a “mixed-blood” on the reservation, from “Pine Ridge” when speaking to someone from another reservation, a “Sioux” or “Lakota” when responding to the U.S. census, and "Native American" when interacting with non-Indian (Nagel 1994:155).

There is however a limit to the manipulation of ethnic identity. Eriksen (2010) reminds us that ethnic identities cannot be indefinitely manipulated: “one cannot ascribe any identity to someone by claiming, say, that an Irish person is ‘really’ a Jamaican” (2010:38).

As individual and collective, externalized and internalized

Identity is both individual and collective. Individuals have access to a repertoire of identities and can choose to display a certain facet of their identity depending on the context and the situation. Yet, identity is also collective, as individual relate to pre-existing ideologies of groups or power structure to build their sense of self. In this sense, collective identity is often referred to as an “imagined” community. This idea of “imagined communities” comes from the contribution of Benedict Anderson who conceived a nation as an “imagined political community” (1991:6) with members sharing a mental image of their affinity. For Anderson, community is imagined primarily because not all of its members will know everyone in the community, however they can identify with this same group of people and have a sense of belonging. Amit (2012) argued that the idea of imagined community is “decoupl[ing] the idea of community from an actual base of interaction” (2012:15). She suggested that social scientists “reinsert the social back into the community" (2002) by looking at how members realize the idea of community in quotidian social interactions, an understanding which can be achieved by exploring and realizing the "visceral nature of community, that these are not coldly calculated contracts, but embodied, sensual and emotionally charged affiliation" (2002:16).

The constructionism model also assumes that there are two kinds of interactions that make up ethnic identities. The first process is concerned with the internal definition whereby group members signify to others, individually or collectively, who they are, their identity (Jenkins 2008a:55). Secondly, there is the process of external definition, which are "other-directed processes, during which one person or set of persons defines the other(s) as 'X', 'Y', or whatever" (2008a:55). The external definition is also both an individual act and a collective act as there is an audience involved and the "subjects" of the definition could feel a meaningful intervention in their life. The two processes are intertwined: categorizing "them" is part of defining "us" (Jenkins 2008a:83).

Ethnic identity, then, is the result of a dialectical process, or a negotiation, involving the internal and external processes of individual and group self-identification and ethnic designations of non-members (Nagel 1994: 154). However, these two processes are not of equal strength; one might end up having more importance than the other. For instance, a categorised group or individual could "internalise" the terms by which others have defined them (Jenkins 2008a:74).

A word on stereotypes and labels

One usually resorts to stereotypes and labels when categorising the Other. Boundaries between groups are fuzzy, ambiguous and situational, and stereotypes and labels serve to organise a complicated universe into more defined categories. Stereotypes are the creation and application of standardised notions of the cultural distinctiveness of a group (Eriksen 2010:29) and help divide the social world into types of people (2010:30). The establishment of clear labels, on the other hand, for large categories of people may have a reifying effect on groups, as they become official names and their members start using them in their self-identification. It is worth noting that labels and stereotypes are both used by the dominant group and by dominating groups. They are systematized notions that define both the Other and our own group.

1.4 Panethnicity

Te Yen Espiritu, sociologist and scholar in Asian American studies, coined the term panethnicity to describe the "politico-cultural collectivity made up of peoples of several, hitherto distinct, tribal or national origins" (1992:4).

Panethnicity might be a political neologism, but this process of grouping together formally separated ethnic groups, is not a new phenomenon. "Polynesians", "Melanesians" and "Micronesians", have been grouped together by Western explorers and colonizers, who found similarities between the groups. Then later, when they migrated to New Zealand or the United States, they were unified under the label of

"Pacific Islanders". Pakeha, too, was a panethnic label. This Maori term grouped together newcomers from England, Ireland, the Netherlands and so forth who settled in New Zealand. This term is now used to describe "white" New Zealanders. The grouping together and collective labelling of different distinguishable ethnic groups is found more commonly in multicultural societies and usually occurs when these ethnic groups finds themselves in a new geographical and/or political setting (Spickard 2002:14) (examples include "Latinos", "Asian Americans", "Blacks").

The concept of panethnicity challenges assumptions carried by both the primordialist and instrumentalist view of ethnicity. According to Espiritu (1992), both perspectives assume a stance that (1) ethnic affiliation is a personal choice; (2) national origin is the prime characteristics for defining an ethnic group; and (3) members of this group share a unique and unified culture (Espiritu 1992:5-9). In the following sections, I will show why the phenomenon of panethnicity cannot be adequately explained by either of these perspectives.

To begin, panethnic identities cannot be linked to a possible primordial origin, as those groups are more often than not, ascribed by others. Primordialists and instrumentalists understand ethnicity to be dependent on self-identification and a matter of personal choices. These perspectives assume that the individual voluntarily opts for the ethnicity that is believed to provide optimal returns. Likewise primordialists believe that individuals gain material and/or psychological support from affiliating with a certain ethnic group (Espiritu 1992:5). These propositions imply that ethnicity is largely a matter of choice – in the sense that individuals and groups can choose to keep or discard their ethnicity according to their changing psychological and material needs (Espiritu 1992:3).

However, this conceptualisation of ethnicity as a personal deliberation overlooks the very important process of categorisation (1992:6). Sometimes, this process of categorisation – whereby one group classifies another – is more influential than self-identification, as Jenkins suggests:

> A group may define itself in one way, but the Other`s alternative categorization of them may turn out, in the local context of power relationships, to carry more weight and be more consequential (to the degree that the original group in question may, in fact, eventually come to see itself in terms that have been defined by the Other) (Jenkins 2008a:57).

The fact is, people are not always in a position to choose their ethnicity. Categorisation is bound with power relation, as Espiritu proposes. She notes that ethnicity may be "an exercise of personal choice for EuroAmericans", but that the same cannot be said for non-white groups in the United States, for whom ethnicity is not always voluntary, but can be coercively imposed (Espiritu 1992:6). At the most consensual level, categorisation of one`s group by the Other is a validation of one`s internal definition of themselves, but at the most conflictual end, it is an imposition of "names and/or characterization that the categorized do not recognize (Jenkins 2008a:55). The constructionism approach acknowledges this ascription process.

Panethnicity is not solely something imposed on others. It can come from below as people from different origins can forge alliance to protect and promote their collective interests, augmenting their numeric power. The concept of panethnicity thus challenges the assumption that an ethnic group is primarily "distinctive, integrated culture" (Espiritu 1992:8) even if they are perceived to be homogenous by outsiders. Consequently, the dynamic and emergent quality of culture is overlooked: “culture not only is inherited but can also be created and re-created to unite group members” (1992:8). When new panethnic groups are formed, their members do not necessarily share a unified and unique cultural content beforehand. However, this common “culture” could emerge as members interact with one another. As Abner Cohen (1981) reported, when different cultural groups affiliate themselves in opposition to other groups, their differences quickly disappear (Espiritu 1992:8). In this process, members can reinterpret a common history which may form the basis of their solidarity and/or voluntarily ignore their differences, if this erasure of difference works at the advantage of the new group formed.

The third assumption generally carried by primordialists and instrumentalists and which is challenged by the panethnicity approach is that ethnic groups are designated using nationality origin (1992:7-8). This conception overlooks the multiple levels of identity, “from small, relatively isolated kin groups to large categories of people bound together by symbolic attachments” (1992:7). As I will discuss in more details in Chapter Two, Pacific peoples conceived their ethnicity to be based in village affiliation, islands of origin or extended family. This conception of an ethnic group based on national origin ignores the multi-layering of ethnicity and the difference within national origin group.

1.5 Panethnicity and Cultural Hybridity

Panethnicity, either as a coalition formed by members or as an imposition on members of formerly separated groups, have had the result of increasing the socialisation between members of the – often marginalised – panethnic groups. We can ask if these increased interactions between panethnic members have the potential to create a cultural hybridity, that is the merging of multiple hyphenated ethnic cultures of that panethnicity alongside the New Zealand dominant culture. Gilroy (1997) has defined hybridity as follow:

> A mix, a hybrid, recombinant form, that is indebted to yet reproduce neither of the supposedly anterior purities that gave rise to it in anything like unmodified form (1997:323).

Similarly, Bhabha (1990), a key author in hybridity literature, also speaks of hybridity as the production of a new element made from two previous ones.

> For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is a "third space" which enables other position to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood by received wisdom (1990:211).

Hall has associated hybridity with the experience of diaspora. Referring to the "black experience" in Britain, he writes:

> the black experience, as a *diaspora* experience […] carries the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization and "cut-and-mix" – in short, the process of cultural *diaspora-ization* (to coin and ugly word) (1996:447).

Without explicitly mentioning the concept of panethnicity, Hall also implies a link between hybridity and panethnicity, by taking the example of the "Blacks" panethnic category, a category that emerged to resist racism and marginalization in Britain. Although this category groups people from "very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities”, the “black experience” is marked by a hybridization of ethnic identities, in the sense that

> The “black experience” is a singular and unifying framework based on the building up of identity across ethnic and cultural difference between the different communities, became “hegemonic” over other ethnic/racial identities – though the latter did not, of course, disappear (1996:443)”

A few problems arise when invoking the concept of hybridity. First, hybridity as described above implies the “purity” and boundedness of two previous existing cultures. If the process of integrating and combining elements of two separated cultures categorised as hybrid, then we can ask, can any culture be conceived as not hybrid? Hybridity assume the stableness of culture and ignores the dynamic nature and capacity to adapt to foreign things. As Sahlins (2000) wrote: “cultures are always universal in compass and thereby able to subsume alien objects and persons in logically coherent relationship” (2000:488).

The concept of hybridity also assumes the fusion of two cultures resulting in a third *singular* product. Hall critiqued this aspect, inviting people to abandon “essential categories”, he writes:

> What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category “black”; that is, the recognition of “black” is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature (1996:443).

There are thus multiple panethnic identities that are expressed differently depending on the different members' background. The notion of hybridity has been also largely rejected in relation to Pasifika cultures (Anae 1998; Wendt 1999; Mila-Schaaf 2010). One of the reasons is that hybridity suggests the emergence of a "new cultural product", that is a mix of cultures rather than a cultural continuity. Wendt (1999) explains the reasons he rejects the term:

> You'll notice I use the term blend or new development and avoid the term "hybrid/hybridity," a term which sprouts prolifically in a lot of papers and students essays. Why? Because it is of that outmoded body of colonial theories to do with race, wherein if you were not pure-Caucasian or "full-blooded", Samoan or what have you, you were called "half-caste," "quadroon," "mixed race," "coloured," "a clever part Maori," and inferior to the pure product. When Picasso developed from African art and other influences was cubism called a hybrid, or a new development (Wendt 1999:411)?

Instead of hybridity, alternative terms are preferred among the Pasifika literature to describe the cultural negotiation of second generation Pacific peoples in New Zealand; some examples of preferred terms are "cross-cultural" (Tupuola 2004), and "edgewalkers" (Tupuola 2004), being "on the edge" (Teaiwa 2001) "in-betweens" (Bhabha 1995), "third space" (Bhabha 1995), "polycultural" (Mila-Schaaf, 2010).

Conclusion

Identity is a commonly discussed topic and indispensable in tracing "who's who" (Jenkins 2008b:5) in a complex social world. However, the presumption of identity as a singular, unchanging fixed state needs to be challenged, first because identity – or identification, which refers specifically to the transitory nature – a process of "becoming". Second, individuals have a repertoire of identifying characteristics and the relevance of one can be emphasised in various situations and muted in others. In this sense, identity is fluid and subjective, changing and manipulable. One dimension of identity, ethnicity, has been debated by scholars, especially over the terms of its nature. In this chapter, I reviewed the main theories on ethnicity in the field of anthropology. Here, a closer look at the concept of panethnicity questions several assumptions made by primordialists and instrumentalists and proves the constructionist theories to offer a better foundation for conceptualising Pacific panethnicity experiences in New Zealand. Whether imposed or a created by group members, who form a coalition to further their interests, panethnicity – which groups various independently distinguishable ethnicities – calls attention of the multi-layering of ethnicity, the coercively imposed nature of ethnicity and the (re)creation of "culture". Ethnic identities are collectively and continually constructed through interactions that involve the production, negotiation and transformation of shared meanings. Although there is a great linguistic, cultural, experiential diversity that exist inside the collective grouping, as interactions increase between members, differences can be erased and a common "culture" can emerge – different than the individual ethnic ones. The relatively recent emergence of a "PI identity" and "PI music" in New Zealand is an example. However, locating New Zealand-born Pacific peoples as "hybrids", therefore as doubly inauthentic (not quite New Zealander and not quite Samoan, Tongan or Cook Islander) poses a few problems: it refers to the idea of a "pure" culture of ethnicity or even race; it implies the emergence of a “new product”, a break in the cultural continuity of Pacific cultures; suggests a singular product, ignoring the multiplicity in which identities are expressed. In the next chapter, I explore the creation and recreation of the Pacific panethnicity in New Zealand, its limitations and individuals’ articulation and motivation to identify with this pan Pacific identity.

Chapter Two – Panethnic Identity Articulated

The language of dominant-group categorization and control has become
the language of subordinate-group self-concept and resistance (Cornell 1988:146)

The Pacific panethnic category, first imposed by New Zealand media and governmental agencies to Samaoans, Tongans and Cook Islanders who migrated to New Zealand (Macpherson 1996) has been criticised for lumping together people from different ethnicity and nations, thereby eroding the cultural and linguistic diversity within the group of people from Pacific origin. On the one hand, the myth of a coherent Pacific community is easy to shatter when one considers their linguistic, cultural and experiential differences in the spotlight. Yet many second and third generation migrants from the Pacific islands now embrace and celebrate their panethnic identities (Macpherson 1996). This chapter aims to understand this paradox.

This chapter is divided in three sections. The first section establishes a backdrop, reviewing the origin and reasons for the Pacific panethnic classification and terminology and shows the limitations of this category by the difficulties first generation Pacific migrants have identifying in panethnic terms.

It has been said that the circumstances under which this second generation of migrants has grown up provide a platform for the emergence of a youth pan-Pasifika identity (Macpherson 2004:143). The second section shows that a common pan-Pacific identity is celebrated by some organisations and events and embraced by second generation Pacific peoples. Among the spaces within New Zealand that provide a stage for the celebration and promotion of the Pasifika community, I will focus here on spaces and activities within the university context that are designed for – also often *by* – Pacific peoples. Through these examples I demonstrate how the coexistence of different Pasifika ethnicity is lived by the students and how the panethnicity is performed. In the second part of this section, following Anae (1998) I will discuss how New Zealand-born Pacific peoples experience their identities in a way that differs from their island-born parents and other New Zealanders (Anae 1998).

The third section focuses on individuals` interpretations of their panethnic identity and discusses how it can be variously framed to include one`s membership. By looking at those articulations of the panethnic identity, I will focus not so much on the content of Pasifika identity, the "cultural stuff" as Barth (1969:14-15) puts it, but on the creation, definition and negotiation of ethnic boundaries. As Anea (2001) noted,

> there is no generic "Pacific community" but rather Pacific peoples who align themselves variously, and at different times, along ethnic, geographic, church, family, school, age/gender based, youth/elders, island born/New Zealand born, occupational lines or a mix of these (2001:7).

I will look at individuals' motivations to identify (or not) with the umbrella category of *Pasifika.* It is important to bear in mind that ethnic identification is not only an internal process, but is also configured by external forces – one of the most important being the restriction of the categories available because of the categorisation by others.

2.1 Panethnic labelling: origin, terminology and limitations

Panethnic labels are often a construction by outsiders. Explorers, colonisers and then anthropologists, have variously grouped together people as “Pacific Islanders”, “Polynesians”, “Melanesians” or “Micronesians”. Macpherson (1996) reminds us that, among locals, “the Pacific […] was a creation which has never really existed in practice [among locals]” (1996:124). He explains that the label “Pacific Islanders” was imposed on Samoan, Tongan and Cook Island migrants (and to other Pacific migrants) by New Zealand media and governmental agencies from the 1950s through the 1980s for an administrative perspective as it was more convenient for the government and the ministries to engage with people from different ethnicities and nations as a single group (Macpherson 2001).[12] He explains that public and private agencies sought information about these new migrant populations so they could recruit and manage the labour force, exploit the new population or gain political support (1996:126). The Pacific population was thus treated as a whole rather than as separate communities, “as it were single, homogenous entity for which a single solution could be found” (1996:127). Dealing with different Pacific peoples as one community, in turn, contributed to the public perception of a united and single community (1996:127).

Brubaker (2004) notes that ethnic categories are easily imposed by the state.

> The state is thus a powerful "identifier," […] because it has the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting with which bureaucrats, judges, teachers, and doctors must work and to which non-state actors must refer (Brubaker 2004:43).

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[12] This label refers to any individual from Oceania who migrated to New Zealand, yet, the focus of this research is on those three ethnic groups.

The construction of this grouping is still highly debated within Pacific communities, and there is also no unanimous agreement on which term should be adopted to describe this grouping (Mackley-Crump 2012:*vi*). For institutional and statistical purposes, ethnic categories are defined and chosen periodically for the national census (Macpherson 1999:51). The choice of the nomenclature is a complex exercise undertaken by various government departments. The term "Pacific Islander" has derogatory connotations (Macpherson 1996), and is no longer used officially. There is however no consensus among the ministries on the correct word to use. The Ministry of Pacific Affairs (2006) has opted for the term *Pacific peoples,* to describe "peoples living in New Zealand who have migrated from the Pacific Islands or who identify with Pacific Islands because of their ancestry or heritage" (*Ministry of Pacific Affairs* 2006:2), admitting it is a one "of convenience used to encompass a diverse range of peoples from the South Pacific region" (2006:2). The Ministry of Education (2012), in contrast, has preferred the term *Pasifika,* which refers to "people, cultures, and language of Pacific groups who are now living in New Zealand" (*Ministry of Education* 2012:1). Acknowledging the controversial issues with this term, the Ministry explained that their adoption of the Pacific transliteration is an important tool "for empowering marginalized groups" (Fergeson, Gorinski, Wendt Samu and Mara 2008:5). There is no term that seems suitable to describe this category, and this probably has to do with the inherent limitations the category itself carries.

Limitations with panethnic grouping

Panethnic groupings have been criticised for homogenising and blurring the boundaries between the ethnic identities of Samoans, Tongans, Cook Islanders, Niueans, Fijians, Tokelauans, Tuvaluans and other Pasifika groups. Moreover, these panethnic categories do not match the established cultural and organisational practices of the people so labelled. As Tuimaleali'ifano (1990) points out, "the daily reality for most is a sense of identity which links people to family, village and nation before the Pacific region in any way" (1990:157). As well, each ethnic group organises themselves differently, as Anae (1997) explains: "Samoan social groups are said to be differentiated in extended or '*aiga* [family] lines or transnational corporations of kin, Cook Islanders on island lines and Niue on village lines" (129).

The panethnic grouping is also challenged by the association with the negative image of the "overstayer" left behind by the now infamous Dawn Raid. During the 1970's,

> the effect of the first oil shock hit New Zealand […], inflation, housing shortages and fears of unemployment led to public resentment of the fast growing and very visible Pacific Island community and pressure on the authorities to act against overstayers grew (Mitchell 2003:238).

The police and immigration officials were given the authority to raid homes belonging to people from Pacific communities and to conduct random checks in public places on people who appeared to be of a Pacific ethnicity (Krishnan, Schoeffel Meleisea and Warren 1994:15). The narrow targeting of only one (pan-)ethnic group – Pacific peoples – was of great concern because "an estimated 40 percent of the overstayers were from other countries including Great Britain and the United States" who had never been raided (Mitchell 2003:236). Although Tongans were the key targets, as "they did not hold any of the citizenship privileges other Pacific Islanders could claim" (Teaiwa and Mallon

2005:209), the broader Polynesian community, too, was affected by random street checks and late night house incursions.[13] As Anea (1997) explains, the negative stereotypes of Pacific Islanders as "overstayers" have left a bitter taste for most Polynesians (1997:129) and the campaign against illegal "overstayers" remains the most salient reason for people to object to the panethnic labelling (Anae 1997:129). Although there was likely potential for each group to highlight their distinctiveness, the experience of marginalisation compelled a sense of collectivity, as Simativa Perese (2006) stated:

> Our new found opportunity and prosperity was met with the dawn raids and police dogs. The stigma of overstaying tested our resolve and sense of community with New Zealand. The dawn raids attacked our collective psyche, touched the core of each Pacific person, and questioned our place in New Zealand. The images and experience of dawn raids changed our perception of New Zealand and New Zealanders perceptions of us. It was a wake-up call that we were a politically weak group and easily targeted (Earl 208:32).

Pacific peoples have politicised this identity under the basis of their marginalisation and to protest against the ethnic discrimination they faced. Despite the fact that this category has originated in the mind of outsiders and has been imposed, people with distinctive histories and separate identities have occasionally united to protect and promote their collective interests. Some situations, such as the Dawn Raids, led Pacific peoples to forge connections based on shared experiences. In the next section, I look at some circumstances that enabled the second generation of Pacific peoples to articulate new (pan)ethnic identities.

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[13] For more information on the Tonga's relationship with New Zealand, see the "The Pacific Migration" section in the Introduction.

2.2 A common Pasifika identity celebrated

I have shown in the first section of this chapter that the panethnic labelling was used by outsiders (namely governmental agencies and media) and that most migrants from the Pacific Islands nations reject this identity because it homogenises diverse groups and does not recognise their linguistic and cultural specificities nor their own organisational practice of grouping. The promotion of a unified Pasifika identity might therefore seem ironic at this point. However, panethnicity can emerge from below, as "acts of popular mobilisation and consciousness" (Gutiérrez 2013:1). In this regard, many Pacific scholars have attempted to build a common regional identity or a so-called "Pacific way", because most believe that building a common identity is necessary as "smaller groups and countries working alone have little chance of protecting themselves against global capitalist expansion" (Wood 2003:349). Yet, they argued that the "Pacific way" is not an attempt to erase the distinctiveness but to find unifying elements.

Building a common identity carries its own set of challenges. Albert Wendt (1976) has noted, that Oceania has "a cultural diversity more varied than any other in the world" (1976:57). For him, visions of "a Way" seem a poor means of building a unifying regional identity for the twenty-first century. In a region with 1,200 indigenous languages, plus several settler-imported tongues and three pidgins and creoles, more is likely lost than gained when the idea of a supposed common culture is presented as the grounds for building a regional identity.

> There are many Pacific Ways…What we want to encourage is the variety of voices, ways of seeing the Pacific. I don`t encourage one Pacific Way, because

> there are hundreds of them – there were hundreds of ways – even pre-European (Mila-Schaaf 2010:22).

This articulation of Pacific identity, then, needs to be framed so it is inclusive rather than exclusive. According to Hau’ofa, this identity should be based around the idea of “homeland”. In *A Sea of Islands*, Hau‘ofa (1994) inaugurated his project of building a regional identity by emphasizing that Pacific Islanders have a long history of connectedness, trade, exploration, and reciprocity, a history temporarily slowed but not ended by colonialism. In “The Ocean in Us”, Hau‘ofa (1998) went further to offer “a substantial regional identity that is anchored in our common inheritance ... the Pacific Ocean” (1998:392). Hau‘ofa insisted that this or any regional identity should not diminish differences within the region. Diversity is essential in “the struggle against the homogenising forces of the global juggernaut” (1998:393). Hau‘ofa’s concept of regional identity rooted in the ocean thus does not aim to replace but instead to add to the numerous, particular cultural identities people already possess. Margaret Jolly (2001) pointed to one problem with the vision of Hau’ofa: many Pacific Islanders, perhaps the majority, “have no senses of ancestral connections to the ocean, no knowledge of how to make canoes, and indeed [have] never seen the sea” (2001:423). Furthermore, according to Wood (2003), “because each homeland is unique, individual articulations with multiple specific places in Oceania discourage the construction of a unifying regional identity”. Still, as Teaiwa (2001) declared, “In Oceania, the need for regional cooperation is as urgently needed, as it is difficult to achieve” (2001b:150).

In New Zealand, multiple spaces are structurally intended for Pacific peoples, these places are contact zones, where identities can be created and re-created and have the potential to reinforce the Panethnic identity.

Pasifika identities through spaces at Victoria University

In 2010, more than 1,150 students of the Victoria University of Wellington [VUW] (about 5% of all university students) self-identified as having a Pacific Islands heritage (*VUW* 2011b). Many spaces at the university – which I will briefly describe in the following paragraph – are designed for Pacific students. These spaces assert physical, social and political roles: they are sites where Pasifika identities can be articulated and negotiated.

For most students, those spaces are places of encounter, where those with a Pacific heritage can meet fellow Pacific students, exchange with them, and potentially create a sentiment of belonging and a sense of ownership, and discover new Pasifika identities. For those who have been brought up in the "white towns"[14] of New Zealand – these spaces introduce some students to the notion of a panethnic identity as Kristen explains: "I see it only through university that *Pasifika* is one group. […] It's all the islands put together as one group rather than separated into their own separate groups" (Kristen, personal communication, April 26 2011).

Some spaces at the university are ethnic-specific – such as the Tongan, Samoan, Fiji and Melanesian associations or to some extent, the Samoan Studies program, although students from any background are allowed to register in this program – whereas other spaces are panethnic (some inclusive of Maori). Everyone I interviewed has been involved at some point in one or more of those spaces. Involvement ranged from participating to the orientation day to having a more important role of decision-making in one of the student associations.

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[14] Towns with a large majority of Pakeha inhabitants were described by participants as 'white towns'.

The Pasifika imprint is visible as soon as you enter the Central Library of the university. Near the main entrance is the *Te Taratara ā Kae*, one of the study spaces designed for Pasifika and Maori students at the VUW: two *pou* (gateposts*)* – figuring Tawhaki and Karihi "who ascended to the heavens and brought back knowledge" and their wives, Maikuku and Maikaka "who watch over those who seek knowledge". Between those *pou,* placed on the floor, is a large Pasifika design rug, woven in the traditional Maori colours of red and black. This pattern and placement is symbolic, as we can read on the library website: "the frangipani pattern represents Pacific students and Pasifika culture" (*VUW* 2011a).[15] Its placement just inside the *pou* acknowledges Pasifika as *manuiwhiri tuatangi* (illustrious guests). Adjoining the rug is a versatile arrangement of large tables and shelves of books and documentation of the Pacific and Maori collection, which can be moved around by students to suit their needs. Physically and socially, this area offers a comfortable and familiar environment for Pacific and Maori students to study in group. It is also a place where they can politicise their identity, as this space, designed just for them, contrasts with the other spaces (Western and white) usually found at universities.

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[15] The choice of the singular is one of the Library.

An important space at the university is the department of Va'aomanu Pasifika (Pacific Studies and Samoan Studies). Students enrol in Pacific Studies courses predominantly out of interest and often take only one elective course; only a minority will major in Pacific Studies at VUW (Teaiwa 2011:218).

In *Rethinking Pacific Islands Studies*, Terence Wesley-Smith (1995), outlines the three main rationales for the creation and establishment of such departments: the pragmatic rationale, grounded in foreign policy concerns; the laboratory rationale, which is "neocolonial state-driven and peculiar to anthropological and historical approaches to the small island societies of the Pacific" (Teaiwa 2010:115); and the empowerment rationale, "the idealistic belief that Pacific Studies can empower Pacific peoples who can be empowered to in turn transform academic values and practices" (Teaiwa 2011:219).

This Pacific Studies programme teaches students "facts" (Teaiwa 2011) about their Pacific heritage and language, Pacific pop culture or policies affecting the Pacific peoples in New Zealand or in the islands. Moreover, it provides students with alternative epistemologies and ways of doing, thinking and knowing different from the ones proposed by the dominant Western academia. For a few decades now, scholars of Pacific studies have challenged Western methodologies and Western views on the Pacific, too often associated with colonization. Students, mostly but not exclusively from Pacific backgrounds, are introduced to such empowering literature, resisting the dominant ways of doing, and reaffirming their Pacific identities.

Teaiwa has noted the difficulties of “deep learning”:[16]

> What students bring with them from outside the classroom, often even before they come to school or university, usually has the deepest roots and strongest hold and is what the classroom has to contend with. Examples of prior learning that is more deeply embedded then what we offer in Pacific Studies include: the way students speak about Samoa or Fiji as “an island”, even though we cover the geography of these island groups and point out that there is not a single island with either of those names; the way students profess to have been impacted greatly by Epeli Hau’ofa`s “Sea of Islands” essay, but still go on to talk about the islands as small, dependent and lacking in development… (Teaiwa 2011:220).

For Pacific students, the classes in Pacific studies are a place of encounter, where one can not only take pride in one’s origin and learn about other Pacific Islands, but also to articulate, debate and negotiate their shared identity.

Another Pasifika site at the university is the Pasifika Students’ Council that offers students support through mentoring programs and academic advisors, as we will see later. But more importantly, the association is responsible for organising its most attended event, Orientation Day, which takes place every year (generally at the end of February) before the first semester starts, and is intended for first-year Pacific students. It is one of the first encounters Pacific students will have with Pacific peers at the University. Most of the people I interviewed attended the big barbeque and other activities that took place on this day. Some told me this is where they met some of the people who are now their friends. This first event was pivotal for further participation; some students will seek the security of those places and frequently participate in similar events and activities, while others will have a hard time finding their place within the larger panethnic group.

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[16] Deep learning is described by Ramsden as “the qualitatively change in a person`s view of reality” (Teaiwa 2011: 214).

Similarly, the Pacific Student Support Association was holding *Loto'aho* (Study sessions) every Wednesday (when I did my fieldwork in 2010). Although, the objective of the meeting was to provide help for writing assignments, many among those who attended were not drawn so much by the counselling that took place, as they were by the opportunity to meet other individuals sharing similar ethnic backgrounds.

In this latter section, I briefly showed that spaces in New Zealand are especially constructed for – and very often *by* – Pacific peoples, such as Pacific festivals or university spaces. Through these sites, one can take pride in their ethnic heritage, meet other people from the broader Pacific group, and more importantly, articulate their Pacific identities. In the next section, I will demonstrate how New Zealand-born Pacific peoples are very familiar with such pan-Pacific spaces, in contrast to the first generation of Pacific migrants.

Niu Pasifika Identities: New Zealand-born Identity Experiences

Macpherson (1996) notes that, due to their upbringing experiences as New Zealand-born Samoans, Tongans or Cook Islanders, the second and third-generation of migrants are more willing to embrace panethnic identifications. This position departs from the ones held by their parents who were born in the islands and has resulted in striking differences between the lifestyle and worldviews of the New Zealand-born and island-born individuals (Anae 2001), which for most of the people I interviewed, translates into generational differences. As Macpherson (2004) describes, in the eyes of an island-born individual, New Zealand-born Pacific people's lifestyles echo "the urban, capitalist, humanist, individualist and consumerist environment, to which they had been exposed, and the pedagogies and curricula of the institutions in which they were formally educated" (Macpherson 2004:142). Their cultural identities are often questioned, undermined and ignored by island-born Pacific peoples living in New Zealand or in the islands. Jane, a New Zealand-born Cook Island Maori, told me how she experienced being seen as "different" because of her "palangi way of living": "they make you feel like that when you go back [to the island]." Many Pacific peoples who grow up in New Zealand feel excluded from being a "real" Samoan, Tongan or Cook Islander. It is furthermore the case for those who do not speak the language, as Kelly, a third generation Samoan migrant explained.

> To me being a New Zealand-born, I don't feel as though I'm full Samoan, for one, I can't actually speak the language properly, I can't understand it, and for me, being really, to classify myself as a full Samoan I would have to be brought up in Samoa and be able to understand the culture as well as the language. Because for me, if you don't speak the language, then you can't fully understand the culture, language is a huge part of a culture (personal communication, April 4 2011).

Certainly, New Zealand-born individuals have a different knowledge and different competences (such as speaking the language) of their Pacific culture compared to their island-born parents. The participants generally agreed there were particular differences between island and New Zealand-born people. The differences are often centered on a dichotomy of traditional-modern. For many, being "modern" was equated to losing touch with the cultural or traditional heritage of their parents. The participants describe island-born individuals as having a "wider understanding of the culture and traditions", which encompass the faculty of "know(ing) the language", "hold(ing) Tongan or Samoan traditions", "respect(ing) and know(ing) how to treat people really nice" as stated by various participants. They admit that there is very little place for learning about Pacific "cultures" and traditions in New Zealand: "it is just not an everyday thing we see at school", "we don't find it as important" and "here, we take things for granted" (various participants). Most have come to realise that their way of living is not consonant with the Samoan, Tongan or Cook Island identity of their parents.[17]

Similar generational gaps exist elsewhere in the Pacific also as a result of migration – internal migration in the case of the most of Melanesia. In her study on changing urban modalities of language use by residents of Honiara, in the Solomon Islands, Christine Jourdan reported a "generation gap" between the linguistic repertoire of young urbanites and older ones who were born in rural areas (2007:38). She noted that young urbanites have appropriated Pijin as their language (2007:41), distancing themselves from the vernacular spoken by their parents. This separation reflects a detachment from the vernacular's culture, perceived as "unsophisticated" (2007:39). The variety of Pijin spoken by young individuals is seen as the language "of the 'interstitial culture of the town'" (2007:41), and has undergone sociolinguistic changes that reflect the transformation in the value system that is associated with urbanisation (2007:40). Concurrent with these sociolinguistics changes, Jourdan also observes the emergence of new identities for young urbanites who do not make “automatic reference to the world of the village or to ancestral land” (2007:39).

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[17] I have put identity singular here, but I am mindful of the plurality of Samoan identities, Tongan and Cook Island identities.

In my ethnographic setting, the gap between the experiences, lifestyle, worldviews of those who were brought up in the islands and in New Zealand has also resulted in the emergence of alternative identities (Macpherson 2004:143), variously called the “NZ-born[18]”,”P.Is”, “Polys”, “Nesians”, or “Pasifika”, among many others. These labels symbolise the familiarity with the New Zealand life, with the panethnic ones revealing the shared experiences and proximity of Pacific peoples with one another. Anea (2001) and Macpherson (1999; 2004) suggested that the New Zealand-born Samoans, Tongans and Cook Islanders, Niueans and others Pasifika peoples have more in common with one another than they do with their parent’s generation or other New Zealanders. Macpherson believes that because of the circumstances by which Pacific migrants became incorporated into the New Zealand society and economy, “their neighbours, friends, fellow students, rugby or netball team mates, fellow worshipper were frequently other Pacific islanders” (Macpherson 1999:56). New Zealand-born Cook Islanders, Samoans, Tongans had, in many cases:

> lived in similar homes in the same suburbs, attended the same schools and churches, competed in the same school cultural festivals and Sunday school scriptural examinations, played in the same rugby and netball team, learned the same songs and hung out at the same malls in various suburbs (Macpherson 2004:143).

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[18] The “NZ-born” label, in this case, refers to a unique identity (Anae 1997). According to Anae, this identity is defined by certain features including a preference towards the English language, an upbringing through the New Zealand education system, an understanding of their parent’s culture that differs from their parents’ understanding (Anae 1997:133). The use of this same term, without the brackets, in this chapter, has to be read literally as “people who are born in New Zealand or moved to New Zealand at an early age” without necessarily making reference to a specific identity.

The persons I interviewed also "performed" panethnicity. Even the ones who grew up in towns mostly composed of Pakeha, told me that they affiliated with people from Pacific origin in Wellington. When asked to name the ethnic group(s) of the three persons they spend the most time with, eighteen out of nineteen participants mentioned friends from Pacific and Maori heritage.

Although the participants have very different backgrounds, are coming from different cities in New Zealand, have different degrees of competencies of their culture and language, they did share some similarities based on their experience of growing up in New Zealand and having the same kinds of struggles. Many shared their experience of discrimination. One young woman, Marissa told me the story about her move from South Auckland, a relatively disadvantaged district with a large Polynesian and Maori population, to East Auckland, a socio-economically mixed district with a somewhat multi-ethnic population and new school she attended.

> It took a while for me to adjust in school, it was so hard. Everyone was so different and everyone already knew each other. It was hard to make new friends and we had a different background... So, I've been through a rebellious stage because I didn't like it at school… There was a time where the teachers were focused on the attitude of my brother and I because we were brown (personal communication, April 13 2011).

Amongst the similarities, Pacific students I spoke to also have in common having been brought up at the periphery of society and feeling marginalised. Their life experiences, lifestyles and behaviours, as New Zealand-born Pacific peoples, set them at the margin of "what might normally be readily recognised and accepted as Samoan or Tongan or

Pasifika or “New Zealanders” (Mila-Schaaf 2010:33). In this sense, they are operating “on the edge” (Teaiwa 2001a) or are “edgewalking” (Tupuola 2004), a place where they face the pressure of negotiating their inclusion. According to Mila-Schaaf (2010), rather than seeing this edgewalking process as conflictual, and considering them as belonging to neither of these groups, it can be understood as an ability to weave within and between cultures, as New-Zealand-born Pacific peoples possess the “cultural capitals” of their parents and of dominant New Zealand society (Mila-Shaaf 2010).

In her PhD research on the identity of young New Zealand-born Samoans, Anae (1998) suggested that panethnic identities are a “youth phenomenon but that on reaching maturity, this self-identity will change” (1998:110). She conceived individual`s identity as a journey, in which the individual experiences a “liminal” stage of identity confusion and finally reaches a “secured” identity (Anae 1998). For Anae, panethnic identities were part of the liminality and the destination, the “secured” identity, was always the Samoan identity, rather than a panethnic identity, although she admitted that Samoan identity could take diverse forms. Mila-Schaaf (2010) acknowledged the Anae’s very interesting idea of conceptualising the identity as a journey, but critiqued her idea of final destination and fixed identity. Mila-Schaaf maintains that identity is fluid and rejects the linear approach of the journey, arguing that Pacific peoples share a circular view of life (2010:124-125). I am also not convinced by Anae`s view on a “final” and “secured” identity. The data I have gathered during the interviews –described in the next section – show that there is no “single” ethnic identity experienced by the Pacific students that could be secured, but rather multiple identities experienced in parallel. Although some Pacific students do feel confident in the ethnic-specific identity and will principally identify with that ethnic group, they do experience and use in tandem other panethnic identities. Their identity experience resembles more a layering of identities than a single line with a finite destination.

2.3 Individuals` articulations of the panethnic identity

In the previous section, I explained that New Zealand-born individuals experienced their *Samoanness*, *Tonganness* or *Cook Islanderness* differently from their parents` (migrating) generation. They shared a certain social proximity – of growing up in New Zealand as Pacific peoples – with other Pacific peoples, something that was not available to their parents. This is accentuated by the existence of spaces designed for Pacific peoples which acts as contact zones through which identity can be articulated. Moreover, there is a growing influence of things Pacific in New Zealand, what Anae (2004) described as the "browning" of New Zealand, which is increasingly visible through pop culture, music, politics, theatre, media, literature, sports scenes, and do have the potential to convince young second generation migrant to take pride in their ethnic origin. For the year of 2004 alone, Teaiwa and Mallon (2005) gave the following examples:

> Tana Umaga being named the first Pacific Islander All Black Captain; Christchurch based hip-hop artist Scribe's debut album topping the local charts and winning seven New Zealand Music Award categories; the launch the glossy monthly magazine, *SPASIFIK,* to cater for a readership of upwardly mobile Pacific classes, Pacific youth and their friends; the debut to phenomenal ratings of TV 3's prime-time animated series, *bro' Town*, featuring three Samoan teenagers as the central characters; and the opening of a $NZ6 million Fale Pasifika on the grounds of the University of Auckland. (Teaiwa and Mallon 2005:210)

All these factors have resulted in the emergence and affirmation of new identities for the New Zealand-born Pacific peoples.

A few questions remain to be answered. Are those commonalities (the shared socialising experience) with other Pacific peoples enough for someone to accept the panethnic label and self-identify with such a broad and diverse group? This brings us to a parallel question: is identification only an individual and voluntary choice? In the next section, I will try to answer those questions by looking at individuals` understandings of the label, and the negotiation of their membership, and at the motivations (both individual and collective) that lead people to identify in panethnic terms.

For some New Zealand-born Pacific peoples, panethnic labels such as *Pacific peoples*, *Pacific Islanders* and *Pasifika* are convenient to identify with because of their inclusive nature. The boundaries of this category are fuzzy and changing, including and excluding ethnicities at different times, depending on context. For others, this category is considered too generic to make any sense.

For most people I interviewed, the labels *Pacific peoples, Pacific Islanders* and *Pasifika* are synonymous. A few, however, see the term *Pasifika* as holding a slightly different meaning than the other two. It is "one group (including all the Pacific nations), except the Melanesians", as Kristen, a second generation Cook Islander, explained to me. Although, any person of Polynesian, Melanesian or Micronesian descent is a legitimate candidate for membership into the panethnic category, most people referred only to the Polynesians, certainly because of their prominence as they significantly outnumber other Islanders in New Zealand. As Mila-Schaaf (2010) explained, "what is constituted and imagined as Pasifika carries the weight of Polynesian (and Samoan as the largest ethnic group) dominance" (2010:59). The categories of *Pacific peoples, Pacific Islanders* and *Pasifika* do not usually comprise New Zealanders (Maori or Pakeha), although some people like to frame the category in order to include New Zealand as it is "an island in the Pacific" (Kelly, personal communication, April 4 2011). As with any ethnic group, the boundaries shift as people negotiate their membership.

I mentioned Kelly earlier, who explained that despite having two Samoan parents, she did not feel like a "full Samoan". She described the term *Pasifika* as both encompassing her ethnic-specific identity, inherited from her parents and her identity as a New Zealander, her birthplace: "I've learnt with the Pacific Studies that New Zealand is a part of Polynesia so I can classify myself as a *Pasifika* because I'm from both New Zealand and Samoa".

The students I spoke with found the panethnic category to be inclusive for different reasons. Some appreciated that the panethnic category could include their New Zealand upbringing as well as their Pacific descent. Meanwhile, second or third generation migrants appreciated this category because it resonated with their multiple ethnicities. There is a high rate of intermarriage among Pacific peoples from different ethnicities, and this results in a growing proportion who identify as belonging to more than one ethnic group. Almost 50 percent of the people I interviewed claimed membership in more than one ethnicity. For those who grew up learning two sets of cultural traditions and languages, and witnessing its coexistence, panethnicity take all its significance. Similarly, the *Polynesian* or *Nesian* identity is convenient for those who have New Zealand Maori origins.[19]

A few of the people I interviewed found the panethnic identity to be the best suited to describe their mixed ethnic identity. However, many others expressed some reservations concerning the label, found it to be too generic, but had to identify with it as they had little other recourse. There are no other appropriate ethnic categories available and more important, as Lisa points out, people have to identify in terms intelligible to outsiders:

> I would still describe myself as a Pacific Islander, but if I was to describe myself, I would still say I'm Samoan. Usually I say I'm Islander...but I'm Samoan. Well, the thing is when I'm asked what my ethnicity is, when you are a Pacific Islander, you're a Pacific Islander...people don't really want to know the specifics, this is how the forms are filled out, any form, anything with Uni., work, it's never a specific Islander, so we get grouped into one thing. But if I had it my way, I'm definitely Samoan… I say I'm an Islander, because I also had to say I'm an Islander all my life (personal communication April 11 2011).

Many of the students I spoke with echoed their parents' dissatisfaction with the lack of understanding and recognition of the heterogeneity of Pacific peoples from dominant elements in New Zealand society. Jane, a second generation Cook Islander states:

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[19] Teaiwa and Mallon (2005) showed the "ambivalent kinship" which exists between Maori and Pacific peoples. The ties can be traced back to an ancient kinship: Maori are Polynesians who navigated the sea –most probably from Society Islands and the Cook Islands to settle in Aotearoa/New Zealand around 1200 AD to 1300 AD. "It is not unusual for Pacific groups to be greeted formally by Maori on *marae* with an acknowledgment that they are *tuakana* or elder siblings" (2005:209). Behind this "romanticised narrative of mythic Polynesian kinship" (2005:210) a reality of certain tensions however exists between the local and indigenous Maori and the immigrants of Pacific nations. This does not stop many from affiliating in different contexts as proven by the high rate of intermarriage.

> [Panethnic categories] are all right in trying to group a whole lot of people from around the same area, but in saying that, I don't think the English and the Scottish and the Irish like to be identified under the same umbrella. I think that's the lack of understanding from their part when grouping the whole of Pacific people under the one…putting Samoans with Tongans, Tokelau and Cook Islanders all under one banner. They don't understand it's the same thing of us identifying Scottish and English and Irish and they hate to be identified together (personal communication, April 5 2011).

The pan-Pacific labels are used widely in New Zealand, and tey are commonly viewed as a cohesive and homogeneous entity by the dominant society (Krishnan, Schoeffel and Warren 1994:1).

> That's why I don't understand people telling me: "how can you tell the difference between islanders" and I'm like "Oh my goodness, put me in a room and I'll point out who's Samoan and who's Tongan and who's Cook Islander" (Lisa, personal communication, April 11 2011).

Some people I have interviewed, such as Stephanie, do not feel any sense of belonging with the greater pan-Pacific community, even if she has a hyphenated Pacific heritage. Stephanie is half Maori and half Cook Islander and grew up in a town in the North Island of New Zealand with very few Pacific Islanders. Her move to Wellington provided her the opportunity to meet other Cook Islanders, something she had looking forward to for some time now. It is for this reason that she decided to participate in a Wednesday meeting offered by the Pacific Students Support Association of the University:

> I don't know any other Cook Islander, but this year with Nick [her cousin] because we both went to the Pasifika group… I went with my flatmates who's Samoan and she knows heaps of Samoan stuff. So we went there, there just seems

> to be all Samoans, I looked and there weren't any Cook Islanders. Nick and I, we tried to find a Cook Islander from Wellington, but we haven't so far. Nick was in the Cook Island group at high school, but at my high school there weren't any Islanders and so I took more the Maori direction I guess. I would have really really liked to but... (personal communication, May 11 2011).

Having not found any other Pacific Islanders, Stephanie never returned to the meetings.

Sej, a Samoan-born who came to New Zealand as a young teenager, told me that she participates in many activities designed for Pacific peoples, among those, the Wednesday night meetings. She admitted to me that the first time she entered the group's meeting room, she looked for a Samoan – someone who would either be speaking Samoan or looked like one – to go sit next to. Unlike Stephanie, Sej regularly returned to Wednesday meetings.

This could be explained by the prominence of Samoans among the greater Pacific peoples (as they outnumber any other Pacific groups in New Zealand). As Brown Palu pointed out, "as a consequence of demographic privilege, the concept of Pacific peoples in New Zealand is bounded to an aesthetic crafted by the Samoan-Polynesian living in Auckland story" (Brown Palu 2007:5).

The two examples above highlight an inevitable reality within the panethnic group, and within ethnic groups in general: they are highly contextual. While Stephanie and Sej do affirm their identity as Pacific peoples in contrast to significant others (such as Pakeha or Maori), once in a panethnic context such as Wednesday meetings, it is the intraethnic distinctions which are felt and emphasised by the members.

Some cultural markers – such as tattoos or speaking one`s language - can be made visible by some members, calling attention to their *Tonganness, Cook Islanderness* or *Samoanness*, and exposing simultaneously their distinctions.

There is still a sense of "we" and "us" in the discourse of the Pacific students and not a complete denial of the commonalities between members of the Pacific group. When I asked about the linkages uniting them, people pointed to similar values and cultural traits, but mainly to a shared genealogy and the idea of a common descent. Although the formation of the panethnic category is a construction by outsiders, many accepted it as a social reality. I have been told that, as Pacific peoples, "we are all brothers or cousins", "we are all Pacific Islanders" (referring to the common geographical area). Melani explains:

> I like the term, there is nothing wrong with it. It's just that some people take it to the heart I guess […] We always say we are brothers and sisters through Christ. We are neighbours; our islands are not too far from each other (personal communication, April 21 2011).

Those unifying elements, at the core of the construction of the panethnic identity, are useful for establishing group solidarity. Espiritu (1992) reminds us of the need for smaller groups to unite politically: "the panethnic concept is a political resource for insiders, a basis on which to mobilize diverse peoples and to force others to be more responsive to their grievances and agendas" (1992: 7).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the concept of pan-Pacific ethnicity in New Zealand from a theoretical and an ethnographic point of view.

Based on the work of Macpherson (1996; 2001; 2004; 2006) and Anae (1997; 2001), I have discussed that, like the first generation of migrants, Pacific peoples born and raised in New Zealand are able to see themselves as "Pacific peoples" with Pacific interests (as shown by the high level of participation in the spaces within the VUW contexts). As Macpherson suggested before, their common descent and "similar experiences" as New Zealand-born Pacific peoples have provided a platform for the emergence of a Pasifika identity (2004:143). Moreover, the promotion of the panethnic identity, through the media, popular culture and spaces at university, have undoubtedly motivated and supported people to self-identity as "Pacific peoples".

The panethnic label is a productive means of inquiring into the many negotiations and ambivalent experiences among the people I interviewed which resulted in neither a full condemnation nor a full acceptation of the panethnic label. Certainly, everyone I interviewed acknowledged and insisted on recognising the diversity among the Pacific peoples, as there is no single and unified Pasifika identity, just as there is no single and unified Pasifika community. As Mok (2000) mentioned, this identity "does not require ethnic homogenisation" (2000:17). Whether individuals identify as Pacific peoples, occasionally or recurrently, because of external pressure, for access to resources, as a lack of better alternative or for other reasons, those who identify with the broader Pacific group do not do it on their own; they identify in parallel with an ethnic-specific group or national origin (Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islander). They experience a layering of ethnic identities, rather than competing identities. One identity may be emphasised over the other in a particular situation. For instance, Pacific students will identify with the broader Pacific group in contrast to significant Others, but in a panethnic context, it is the specific ethnic identity that is emphasised.

Chapter Three – “Fresh off the Boat” and “Plastic”: The Negotiation of Identity

The heterogeneity of the Pasifika community is undeniable. In addition to the inter-insular and the inter-generational differences, described in the preceding chapters, there are also differences of the (perceived) level of allegiance to their cultural heritage. In this chapter, I investigate the use of the labels *Fresh off the boat* and *plastic* that emerged from my interviews. These two concepts indicate the level of assimilation to the host society and the “authenticity” of a person. I examine both how they are articulated by the individual and imposed by others. The study of labels sheds light on the construction, maintenance, and alteration of social identity (Galinski, Hugenberg, Groom and Bodenhausen 2003:222). Moreover, labels are used to organise and make sense of a complex social life. Because group labels are filled with stereotypical information about a group, which is more easily processed, integrated and remembered, they serve as a “processing lens for interpreting and integrating social information” (Galinski et al. 2003:222).

Before conducting the interviews with Pacific students, I knew very little about these labels except that they were derogatory terms. As I investigated their meaning, I was struck by the spectrum of feelings these labels evoked among Pasifika Students. It ranged from discomfort and disagreement around its usage to what seemed to be a sense of pride. I understood that something far more complex was at work behind their meaning.

3.1 Plastic

The term *plastic* is one used to denigrate someone who is considered shallow. When used as a racial epithet, it refers to a person who is perceived as too assimilated, changed or different, that he or she can no longer be accepted as inside the parameter of the ethnic boundaries,

The label *plastic* perfectly symbolises the artificial nature of an individual, someone who is "made out of plastic", someone perceived to be "fake". On the exterior, it may look like that person is from the Pacific, but the interior (their behaviour) is considered inconsonant with their exterior. The colour of the skin and other physical traits of the person are seen as merely a "plastic" shell. A drastic example would be someone who does not want to be associated with their Pacific heritage as described by Lisa, a 19 year-old New Zealand-born part-Samoan, Palagi and Maori:

> I view *plastic* as somebody who is Islander but doesn't have anything to do with being [an Islander]… If someone asks me what ethnicity I am, I would immediately say Samoan, but then like, there's a boy in our hall who we say is *plastic* because he would say he is Irish, but he is blatantly Samoan (personal communication, April 11 2011).

According to Lisa, this boy, despite his obvious physical Samoan characteristics, pays more allegiance to his Irish heritage, to the point where he seemed to deny his Pacific heritage. The term, however, is not limited to people who seem to disassociate themselves from their cultural heritage. Generally, this label is used to describe someone whose lifestyle reflects the urban life and Western values to which the person has been exposed. This person is perceived as being "too assimilated", as "acting too white" or as "trying to fit in" with the dominant society by the other members of the group, as stated by various participants. This can be indicated by their behaviour, way of dressing or way of talking, for instance, many of the people whom I have interviewed told me that they resent being labeled as *plastic* because they speak New Zealand mainstream English.

Labels similar to *plastic* exist elsewhere in the world. Natacha Gagné (2005) found a similar term *riiwai* (potato) that is used by some Maori as well as the term *apple* by some indigenous people of Quebec, to symbolise the color of the skin, on the exterior, brown or red, with a white interior. Relatedly, I have also heard Asian Canadians using the image of *banana* for analogous ends. Pike and Dang (2005) talk about the label of *whitewashed* among young Asian Americans, a label which compares the assimilation as a process of "whitening".

These epithets are used by members of the same ethnic group. They serve as a mean of distancing themselves from the more assimilated members. Hickman (2002) explains this with the example of Irish migrants is Britain.

> "Plastic Paddy" is a term deployed in order to deny and denigrate the second generation Irish in Britain; the implication being that if you were not born in Ireland your claim to Irishness lacks authenticity and can safely be ridiculed. […] This naming process, with its message that accent is the primary marker of ethnic identity, ensured that an emigrant returning either for a visit or for family business found that they had become "outsiders". They were subject to intense scrutiny by the "insiders" (people born in and living in Ireland) as to whether they had made it and discovered that various hurdles had to be negotiated before a returnee could feel comfortable settled back into Irish society (2002:16).

Being called *plastic* is common for many students I have interviewed. Due to the circumstances of their upbringing, there is no doubt that their lifestyle is tinted with the New Zealand or more Western way of living – they were born and educated in New Zealand. This leaves little opportunity to learn their parents' cultural traditions, and only a few could hold a conversation in a Pasifika language as the supremacy of English at school made it their language of choice. All of them are university-educated, which certainly brings positive outcomes, but has negative consequences on their Pacific cultural capital (Anae 1997). All in all, they are accustomed to being labelled *plastic,* with all the frustrations that it may cause. Some seem to have even internalised the label, as Kelly's story reveals.

Kelly hid her Samoan origins during her youth. Her parents were Samoan but born in New Zealand and did not feel confident enough in their Samoan language skills to teach her the language. On many occasions, she took advantage of her physical similarities with the New Zealand Maori to mislead people about her ethnic origins, ashamed at the time to say she was Samoan. It was only in her second year of high school, when she found out that Tana Umaga (a famous rugby player) was Samoan, that she started to be proud of her roots and started embracing her Samoan cultural heritage. Kelly describes her experience of participating in a Polynesian cultural group:

> I had a friend who was Tongan and she got me into their Poly group, so I joined and *I was the only white person...well whitest Samoan* [emphasis added]. Yeah, I really enjoyed it, but as soon as I heard the word Palagi, I know they were talking about me (personal communication, April 4 2011).

Kelly was referred to as *white* or *Palagi* not so much because she played down her ethnic origins, but rather because of her limited knowledge of the Samoan culture and language in contrast to other group members. The quote above shows that Kelly had internalised the label given to her – she also considered herself *white*. It is important to note the difference between white and plastic. She does consider herself more white or *Palagi,* but not plastic.[20] In fact, no one I have interviewed described themselves as plastic. Rather, they were told they were plastic as this label is too derogatory to be self-descriptive. *Plastic* means much more than being imprinted by Western culture or "dressing or acting like a *white*". A person who is plastic is one who is psychologically assimilated to the point of not knowing where they are from and is therefore considered inauthentic. Although it is possible for one to admit that their lifestyle is influenced by the society they grew up in, it is also possible for them to concede that their participation with cultural activities is not as frequent as it should be, it is demeaning to accept being tagged as "fake" or "inauthentic".

As opposed to *plastic,* being *white* can be regarded as a positive status as it can symbolise modernity, advancement and socio-economic success. Acting like a *palagi* or speaking like one is a way to be accepted by the dominant society. Jane explained to me how she pays special attention to the way she speaks to avoid the stigmas associated with being a *Fresh off the boat* Islander: "I feel when I'm around *palagi*, I feel like I have to talk more clearly and stuff so I'm not a useless Islander" (personal communication, April 5 2011). While the label *plastic* causes a lot of frustration for the person who is tagged as such and pushes them in a constant justification of their authenticity, they have to beware of not acting "too ethnic" or *Fresh off the boat* knowing this label is equally stigmatised.

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[20] In her PhD thesis, Anae (1997) showed that it is common for island-born Samoans to be called New Zealand-born Samoans because they "speak English, liv[e] as *palagi* do, and come from a country (New Zealand) unknown to them", and that *Palagi* is a term applied to people who do things differently (1997:206).

3.2 Fresh off the boat

The origin of the term *Fresh off the boat* (and its acronym FOB and diminutives *fresh* and *freshy*) can be traced back to the 1960s, and is defined as an "*informal* and often *offensive"* term describing "recent migrants, especially regarded as being unassimilated" (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2). Although the prime target of the FOB stereotypes is the newcomer, the label can be applied to the second or even the third generation of migrants who display any of several ethnic identifiers such as speaking an accented-English, speaking their original language with peers and dressing in a style associated with the homeland. The term is not unique to New Zealand: in the United States and Canada, FOB generally refers to Asian migrants, in Australia, to Greeks, South East Asians and Pacific Islanders, and is associated with Pacific Islanders, all nationalities combined, in New Zealand.

While this denotation – of the newcomer displaying foreign behaviours – seems global, yet local interpretations do exist. Each local representation is positioned in a particular socio-historical context that modifies the meaning of FOB. In other words, FOB is a category filled with stereotypes of what it means to carry foreign traits and be an "unassimilated" Pacific person in New Zealand at a given time and in a certain situation.

When the term Fresh off the boat surfaced in popular usage in New Zealand in the 1970s, it referred to people who were not accustomed to a New Zealand way of living, especially to its urban life (Loomis 1990). At that time, the media highlighted the "anti-social" conduct of new Samoan migrants, which included sexual violation, extreme violence and heavy alcohol consumption (Macpherson 1999:55).[21] As Macpherson describes it: "[the] public anger and suspicion assumed the dimensions of what sociologists call a 'moral panic' and led to widespread discrimination against migrants from the Pacific" (Macpherson 1999:55). As a result, Palagi increasingly portrayed *all* Pacific peoples with those negative stereotypes. Many Pacific peoples, citizens of New Zealand, responded by attempting to distance themselves from younger and recently arrived Pacific Peoples who were associated with the negative stereotypes of the FOB (Macpherson 1999:55). Some aligned themselves with the mainstream critics on the "anti-social" behaviour of the *freshly* new arrived. This strategy enabled some distancing from the label FOB, but at the same time, reinforced the stereotypes constructed by the host society (Macpherson 1999:55).

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[21] In its 1988 version, McGill`s Dictionary of Kiwi Slang, the entry for FOB was simply: "Samoan". In 2003, in McGill`s Reed dictionary of New Zealand Slang, the word FOB is defined as "Pacific Island immigrant, meaning 'fresh off the boat'". This suggests that the term FOB was previously used predominantly for Samoans rather than all Pacific Islanders and that it eventually changed to describe all Pacific peoples. This can also point out to the fact that Samoans, who largely outnumbered any other Pacific group, can just be the umbrella term under which all Polynesian migrants Islanders were being determined for lack of not being able to differentiate. Another suggestion comes from Macpherson proposing that Samoans were "widely regarded at the most 'dangerous' of the Pacific migrants" (1999: 56).

3.3 Stereotyping FOB in the interviews

During my interviews, I encountered many negative stereotypes about the label FOB, namely that FOB is an “uneducated”, “unemployed”, “lazy”, “not resourceful” or at worst, a “useless Islander”. The theme present in these stereotypes stems from the belief that Pacific nations are small, isolated and limited places lacking resources. This presumption originates in the colonialist attempts to persuade Islanders of their belittlement and isolation, and the neo-colonial claims of economic dependence and vulnerability of the region. Hau’ofa (1994) convincingly rejects this conception in his landmark essay *Our Sea of Islands*. He reframes the vision of the Pacific by emphasising the cooperation among the Pacific peoples that sustains the economic and social vitality of the diasporic Pacific communities, portraying them as interconnected rather than isolated and economically dependent.

The media is also responsible for promoting negative stereotypes of Pacific peoples as “unmotivated, unhealthy and criminal others who are overly dependent on Palagi support” (Loto, Chamberlain, Nikora, Karapu and Barnett 2006). It does not seem therefore surprising to come across similar findings in my interviews. Loto et al. noted that media representations are not equitable vis-à-vis Palagi and Pacific peoples: the former are portrayed more positively and the latter more negatively (Loto et al. 2006: 105). The media selectively draw attention to the low degree of education rather than the high value Polynesians place on education. (Anae 2002).

The most obvious characteristic associated with the FOB label and which almost automatically triggers negative stereotypes is a strong Pacific accented-English, as described by Stephanie

> If you hear someone speaking, you might think that they are not as intelligent or as well-spoken as other people […] not as affluent, and not value their opinions as important as someone who can speak quite well and deliver their thoughts quite well verbally (personal communication, May 11 2011).

Another more positive stereotype articulated by my informants is that of being *funny*. Here, *funny* caries two denotations. On the one hand, some participants referred to the stereotypical ways of dressing, talking and acting that is unconventional to the New Zealand urban style. Stephanie, explained this idea well:

> I think it's funny, but I think it's also in a sense unique; no other sorts of group can really talk like we do, or communicate the way that we do. […] It grows in identity sort of thing...we just have to learn to accept it (personal communication, May 11 2011).

More commonly, people had described *FOB* as *funny* to refer to the sense of humour of Pacific peoples. Everyone I interviewed agreed on the great differences between the Palagi and the Pacific peoples' sense of humour.

> I think Pacific Islanders have a huge sense of humour and it just, no offense, but Palagi, everybody is different, but as a whole group, I think we would have a bigger sense of humour. I'm not saying palagi are not funny, but there are things I find not funny. (Lisa, personal communication, April 5 2011).

This stereotype is powerful, almost serving as an essentialist characteristic of being a Pacific Islander. Nick, an 18-year-old who is half-Cook Islander and half New Zealand Maori, explained how he is being discriminated against because his peers do not consider him funny enough:

> Nick: I get that all the time. “You’re a plastic Islander”
>
> Martine: Do you think it’s because you don’t speak the same way as they do?
>
> Nick: Yes, that and because I`m more serious about things than they are. PIs [Pacific Islanders] when they speak to each other, they make a lot of jokes to each other, just back and forth, jokes, jokes, jokes. Whereas Pakeha, I don`t think there would be much jokes.
>
> (personal communication, May 10 2011)

The stereotype of Pacific Islanders, and FOBs, as funny and entertainers, has been encouraged largely by comical theater plays and television shows. Certainly, these stereotypes seem to display more gratifying characteristics, but they fail to go beyond the myth and become commonly held assumptions or illusions that are accepted as “true”. Anae has criticised the animated show *bro*’ *Town* for perpetuating negative images of Pacific peoples by promoting the stereotype of the “happy-go-lucky funny brown coconut” (Spratt 2006).

3.4 Strategies to avoid stigmatisation

The labels *plastic* and *Fresh off the boat* both have their fair share of negative stereotypes and prejudices. It goes without saying that those labels cause much frustration to the people on which they are ascribed. Some have therefore developed strategies to distance themselves from the social stigmas conferred by these labels. As I mentioned earlier, the label *plastic* is often applied to someone who is perceived as having a restricted cultural and linguistic knowledge. Many of them, having their *Pacificness* questioned, have opted for what I called “the discovery of their ethnic identity”. For some, it has meant learning about their cultural heritage by either taking part in cultural groups and participating more fully in cultural events or by taking classes from the Pacific Studies or Samoan Studies program. Several of the young adults I interviewed chose to discover their ethnic identity by immersing themselves in the language and way of life of their respective islands. For instance, they took advantage of their school breaks to spend some time in their parents’ islands, often living with their grand-parents or other family members who still reside there. These trips helped young Pacific peoples to learn about the place in which their parents grew up, and by extension, where they themselves are from. Many have chosen to “discover” their culture by learning their *Pasifika* language. Language is for many of the people I interviewed the most significant aspect of one`s culture. Many who do not speak the language have been discriminated against and called *plastic*. Kelly explains the reasons that compelled her to learn the Samoan language, when she was in her late teens:

> I was really keen to learn the language so one day I would know what they [Pasifika schoolmates] are saying and be able to talk back to them. Cause we could speak in English, but if they wanted to talk about me or someone else, they would talk in Samoan so I wouldn’t be able to understand. So that was one drive that got me into learning the Samoan language. But also when we went back to Samoan couple of years ago, I really enjoyed hearing my grand-father speaking Samoan to

> the taxi driver, I thought that was pretty cool (personal communication, April 4 2011).

Some like Kelly took language courses, while others visited the islands several times. However, one soon realises that marginalisation does not stop, and to make it worse, some feel it stems from both sides: from other Pacific peoples and from Palagi. Those who acquire two cultural capitals among the Pacific peoples and of New Zealand society (Mila-Shaaf, 2010), can adopt strategies to avoid being considered "too ethnic" or *FOB* in the presence of Pakeha, considered *plastic* in the presence of other Pacific peoples. Most participants mentionned constantly having to negotiate and justify their identity.

Many then found a way to dissociate with the label *Fresh off the boat* and its social constraints by paying attention to their way of speaking as explained by Jane:

> Because I don't want to sound ... I don't know, when I'm around, I feel when I'm around Palagi or Pakehas, I feel like I have to talk more clearly and stuff so I'm not a useless Islander (personal communication, April 5 2011).

Pyke and Dang (2003) suggested another strategy for avoiding the stigmas associated with the labels of *plastic* and *Fresh off the boat* in their study of similar social categories among second generation Asian American. The authors discuss "intraethnic othering", a process by which one applies the labels to ethnic peers who they perceived to be "more assimilated" or "more ethnic" than themselves. By doing so, they can actually position themselves somewhere in the middle of the "acculturative spectrum", and thereby be considered "normal", neither too whitewashed or FOB. The labelling practice, therefore, "reveals more about the labelers than it does about the people to whom the labels are applied" (2003:156).

Nevertheless, re-using these derogatory labels is reinforcing the racist stereotypes attached to them and reaffirms these categories as legitimate. Pyke and Dang have explained that phenomenon as a form of internalised racism (2003). During this process:

> [subordinates are] accepting and internalizing mainstream racist values and rationales, known as "sincere fictions" […] often without a conscious awareness of doing so, [which] justify the oppression of their group with a belief in their own inferiority (Pyke and Dang 2003:4-5).

According to Pyke and Dang, young Asian Americans construct *Fresh off the boat* identities as an adaptive response to the racial oppression. However they recapitulate it by affirming the category "Fresh off the boat*"*.

Without denying that a similar process takes place in New Zealand – as seen in the previous section it is in part taking place and, are reproducing the negative stereotypes brought up by the dominant society – I want to point out to another parallel phenomenon which is taking place: the re-appropriation of the term *Fresh off the boat.* While the internalization of racism presents the passiveness of the marginalised groups, the re-appropriation process highlights their agency in resisting the racism in place. The active intervention of members to adopt an externally imposed label and try to make it more acceptable for use, is another strategy used to counter the stigma of the devalued identity.

3.**5 Re-appropriation of *Fresh off the boat***

[Hate speech`s] injurious power is the same fuel that feeds the fire of its
counter-appropriation – *Brontsema* (2004:1)

Although labels and their stereotypes are created and imposed by the dominant social groups, this does not determine how the "labelled" ones may respond. Similarly we can argue that the meanings of the labels are not fixed or stable. Language by nature is dynamic, words are constantly changing, and so do their meanings according to the context. In other words, language ownership is not exclusive. The creation and use of words by one person, intended to target another, does not prevent others from using it in a new context with different intentions or unexpected ways.

This is exactly what happens with the term *Fresh off the boat* with targeted members' attempting to re-appropriate it. The process of re-appropriation (also called *reclamation*) has been defined by Galinski et al. as:

> the phenomenon whereby an ostracized group re-values an externally imposed negative label or symbol by self-consciously referring to itself in terms of that label or symbol (2003: 222).

Years before, in the 1970s Foucault called this same phenomenon "reverse discourse" by which "the labelled use the same vocabulary […] the same categories by which he was disqualified […] to demand that its legitimacy be acknowledged" (Foucault, 1978).

Re-appropriations of racial slurs is commonplace. A well-known example is the re-appropriation of the word *nigger,* which most can agree is derogatory. However, some African Americans do use this term to refer to themselves, a pattern which is illustrated by the song of hip hop artist Ice Cube, "The Nigga You Love to Hate" (1990). Randall Kennedy (2002) stated that African Americans have added a positive meaning to *nigger* and "thrown the slur right back in the oppressors" faces. Another well-known example may be the reclamation of the term *queer*, on which Galinsky et al. (2003) provides a succinct explanation:

> Where "queer" had connoted undesirable abnormality, by the fact that it is used by the group to refer to itself, it comes to connote pride in the groups' unique characteristics. Where before it referred to despised distinctiveness, it now refers to celebrated distinctiveness. Re-appropriation allows the label's seemingly stable meaning to be open to negotiation. In addition, the defiant act of re-appropriation may attack the negative evaluations of the denoted group.

From this quotation, I identified five implied basic notions that underlie the phenomenon of re-appropriation of slurs:

(1) The term was originally a derogatory epithet.

(2) The term was used by a majority in order to oppress a minority.

(3) The term has to be reclaimed by in-group members.

(4) The goal of re-appropriation is to neutralise the term, reverse its value and/or (as in the case of queer) to even take pride in the distinctiveness.

(5) The reutilisation of the word provokes a negotiation around its meaning.

In the following section, I will draw on those notions to show how the term *Fresh off the boat* is undergoing a process of re-appropriation as well as to investigate the successfulness of this process.

1 - The term was a derogatory epithet

I have shown in a previous section that *fresh off the boat* was pejorative. All the evidence suggests that the word also originated as a slur. In Herbert Gold's novel, *The man who was not with it,* published in 1956, *FOB* was used alongside other despised and marginalised groups: “No F.O.B.’s, C.O.D.’s, junkies, lushes, agitators.” (Gold, 1956: 87).

2 - The label was used by a majority in order to oppress a minority

Whether the term is used by a member of dominant society of the host country towards the new migrants or among the group of migrants itself to describe a marginalised subgroup, the word is always oppressive. It surfaced in New Zealand out of an anti-immigrant fear and was based on negative racial stereotypes (Macpherson, 1999). Following Green`s Dictionary of Slang which describes FOB as “a newly arrived Asian immigrant”, it is also a “derogatory term for any minority group”.

3 - The term has to be reclaimed by in-group members

Ake, a 19-year-old New Zealand-born Samoan, explained that to me the use of FOB by a non-Pacific person would be regarded as racist. Only in-group members have the right to transform the negative connotation of the term by using it.

> I don’t mind it [the term FOB], but it’s only offensive when it is not a Samoan saying it. […] I would describe myself as FOB, but then we just get taught to own the name, the term. But it’s only when other people say it “you are FOB” [that the term is offensive] (personal communication, April 20 2011).

Reclamation has to come from the inside in order to lessen its pejorative connotation. Ownership is crucial: applying the term to oneself has the power to disarm those who intended to use the word as a weapon. Galinski et al. provide an insightful analogy:

> [imagine] someone trips and stumbles in the presence of a group of people. The person who tripped may first check to see if everyone failed to notice and if so, then

> the clumsiness is concealable. If others noticed, the person may decide not to do anything. In this case, if another person points and proclaims the person to be a klutz, the individual is trapped in the negative implications of the word, in a position of weakness. However, if the person self-consciously refers to him- or herself using the label "klutz," then the negative implications of the label may be limited… another individual has been denied the opportunity to use the label as a weapon, and thus the negative implications of the label may be defused (2003:237).

Is the self-initiated use of racist slurs a sufficient means of re-appropriation? The example above is a case of *individual* re-appropriation. This strategy diminishes the stigma of the label, but can go only so far in changing the meaning of the word. In order to be effective, re-appropriation requires repeated occurrences, a certain public visibility and has to be collectively re-appropriated and accepted.

One example of a public act of re-appropriation is the theatre play called *Fresh off The Boat,* co-written by Oscar Knightley (a Samoan-born who moved to New Zealand at a young age) and Simon Small. The play, first performed in New Zealand in 1993, portrays a stereotypical FOB character, Charles, who recently moved from Samoa to New Zealand to live with his sister Elizabeth and his two nieces. Despite appearing like the mere replication of the naive "happy-go-lucky" stereotype, the authors actually "question [the] effectiveness [of this representation], eventually broaching conflicts of dislocation and cultural clash deriving from the migratory process" (Fresno-Calleja 2010:180).

Another illustration of public re-appropriation comes from the t-shirt industry, which picks up the slur in a somewhat humorous fashion. Popo Hardwear company, a local New Zealand brand, produced a t-shirt designed by Siliga Setoga (Colchester 2003:187), which defines, as would a dictionary entry, the term *freshy*:

> n., derived from the abbreviated expression
> *f.o.b.* – fresh off the boat, a term given to Polynesian natives
> The expression must only be used in a light humorous manner
> as this fob may perceive your humorous intention
> derogatory and bust you in the eye

This t-shirt, with its authoritative tone, not only re-emphasises the importance of word ownership, it also makes the word visible. On the one hand, the recycling of a derogatory term can be a slippery slope, but on the other hand, the repetition can "defuse the impact of derisive terms by making the name more commonplace" (Galinski et al. 2003: 231).

4- The goal is to neutralise the term and/or reverse its value: assessing success and failure

The success of the re-appropriation is very difficult to assess. Galinski et al. claim that for achieving success, a re-appropriation has to go through three stages: first, the individual – perhaps occasional – self-labeling situation; second, the in-group revaluation of the label; and finally, the successful re-appropriation which happens when out-group members have re-valued the derogatory group label. However, measuring the success is not that simple or unidirectional, and having the word revaluated by others does not always lead to a successful re-appropriation. If one's goal is to claim the term as their own, and thus be the only one allowed to use it, would the fact that outsiders also use it (even in a positive way) a sign of success? The success of re-appropriation needs to be measured by matching the goal with the outcome (Brontsema 2004).

The success of re-appropriation not only depends on the goals that were set, but also depends on the perceptions members have about re-appropriation. Brontsema (2004) has identified three different perspectives that were also reflected in the discourse of the people I interviewed. The first perspective is that the term is inseparable from its pejoration and therefore, people who buy into this idea are opposed to its reclamation, believing the derogatory meaning will always be central.

While there was a general agreement among the participants over the racist connotation of the term FOB when used by outsiders, some students were also reluctant to see the term used by in-group members. For them FOB was always derogatory. Lisa explained to me how she did not like anyone using the word, not a Palagi and not even a Pacific person. For her, the negative stereotypes attached to it are irreversible, so when she hears her friends calling each other FOB, she feels like "they are putting each other down". She adds:

> Sometimes I get it that they try to say I'm fresh and stuff, I just don't like people being determined on that sort of thing. […] I don't like how people view it, I just feel like they are degrading themselves sort of thing (personal communication, April 11 2011).

People who support this view will never consider the re-appropriation of FOB as successful. However, there is another perspective that considers that the term is separable from its pejorative nature, which makes its reclamation possible (Brontsema 2004:8-10). However, this perspective fails to recognize the complex nature of reclamation. As Bontsema explains:

> a reclaimed word partly depends on the pejoration that drove its reclamation; indeed, this very pejoration allowed for its metamorphosis, its rebirth into something new and different from its original derogation, but never completely separate from it (2004:9).

Finally, the third perspective suggests that the term is inseparable from its pejoration, but that its reclamation is supported. The usage of the term in an acceptable manner is, then, contextual. The use of *FOB* by a Polynesian does not make it legitimate nor empties it of its pejorative connotative. Only the context could, when its usage is purposely made to challenge the stereotypes. Lisa was a fervent user of the term FOB*,* using it to describe herself and her friends, however she explained to me how the meanings of the term alternate depending on its contexts:

> I can see it as being negative too. Like, 'you should learn'. I've seen people calling others FOB and telling them to learn to speak English, it's kind of negative. I think it depends on the situation, like if it's a normal conversation, but if it was use as a negative connotation and they were using FOB, than I would find it racist, but like it just depends on the situation (personal communication, April 11 2011).

It does depend indeed on the situation and the term is acceptable only in the contexts in which it has been re-appropriated, negotiated and collectively accepted as somewhat positive. The term will also remain more or less linked to its original pejoration, which makes it hard to assess if it has been successfully re-appropriated.

Having said that, there is an example of reclamation that seems undeniably successful and involves the term *canaque,* which refers to the indigenous people of New Caledonia. Etymologically, the word comes from the Polynesian word *kanaka*, meaning human being. However, in the local context, it was used in a derogatory fashion by Europeans to refer to Pacific Islanders generally. In the early 1970s, during the rise of the independence movement, the local population began to re-appropriate the term, changed its spelling to *kanak,* and have been using it as a symbol of pride (Winslow 1995).

However, in many cases, the process of re-appropriation is not unidirectional or with a clear marked end and it often results in multiple representations of the term which have emerged out of negotiations. During the process of re-appropriation, the term is reused and reinterpreted in different contexts and its reutilisation opens the door to a negotiation of its definition. While the objective is to add a more positive meaning to the word, the outcome is unfixed and unstable, unpredictable and pluralistic.

5- The reutilisation of the word provokes a negotiation around its meaning: Four different usages of the term

Language is ever-changing and no one can ever exclusively own any one term. I will demonstrate the relevance of this argument for my ethnographic findings by showing four different ways that Pacific peoples use to negotiate the meaning and use of the term *Fresh off the boat.*

The first and probably the most common usage of the term FOB, as discussed earlier in this chapter is one that simply denotes a person who recently arrived in a new country and his or her behaviours stand out from what is considered normal. Melani, a 20 year-old New Zealand-born Tongan, explains:

> We call FOB people that just come from the island. Just the way they act and their appearance, it's so FOB, just straight from the island (personal communication, April 21 2011).

The second use of *Fresh off the boat* describes a style or subculture. Kelly described what FOB meant for her.

> Like kids in [a town in New Zealand] they are all gangster sort of thing […] they want to be all gangster and cool like people in the States (personal communication, April 4 2011).

This is a departure from the definition established in the previous section. Kelly described second generation children from a town next to the one she grew up in, a town with a very small Pacific islands migrant population. The children she described grew up in New Zealand, went to school where Pakeha were the majority and are very familiar with the New Zealand urban lifestyle. Moreover, they dress in a style that is reminiscent of American hip hop culture.

The third use of the word FOB can be applied for a friend who is part of the same ethnic group, as Lisa explains:

> I find it kind of ...if it's at me, I find it funny, because I don't think I'm *FOB*, but I can understand, I would probably say *FOB* more than I would say Samoan, I know it's not a culture, but I use it as a culture...(personal communication, April 11 2011).

Lisa uses the word "culture" in her vocabulary in a similar way that I use "ethnic group". For her, FOB is a term used as a substitute for the word *Samoan* when she is speaking with friends. In this context, the term seems to lose some of its derogatoriness and is less fixed on the negative stereotypes previously described. In this context, its meaning is closer to a "bro" or "a Samoan friend".

The final usage of the term *fresh off the boat* holds the meaning of "being true", "authentic" or "real", someone who had retained his/her cultural and ethnic identity. These elements of pride make this particular usage more acceptable. That particular significance of *fresh off the boat* also functions as a marker of inclusion and exclusion. To put it simply, when the term is used by another Pacific person it could mark inclusion, as being real and being part of the group, as being "a *real FOB"*, in contrast to being *plastic.* Conversely, if it is uttered by a Pakeha, it can mark the Pacific person's marginalisation from the New Zealand dominant society.

The term *Fresh off the boat* meets the five criteria of re-appropriation – namely that it was originally a derogatory epithet, used by a majority in order to oppress a minority, that the term has been reclaimed by in-group members themselves, with the aim of neutralising the term, and it has provoked negotiation around the meaning of the term – which informs us that it is indeed undergoing the process of re-appropriation. Does this mean that it is now acceptable to use the term? No. The term remains linked to its original pejoration, and this is even more accurate when the term is used by outsiders. It is clear that efforts are made to reclaim the word, but the re-appropriation by in-group members is still happening on a small scale. Moreover, the process of re-appropriation is not unidirectional or with a clear marked end and has results in multiple representations of the term.

Conclusion

The New Zealand-born Pasifika students have been described as having "access to two different life-styles and oscillate between the two or embrace one while denying the other" (Anae 1997:133). In this chapter, I focused on how Pacific students negotiate their identities as Pacific peoples and as New Zealanders. As a New Zealand-born Pacific person, they attempt to find a balance between being "too assimilated" and "too ethnic" – by becoming "just enough" assimilated and ethnic – to escape the stigmatisation of being *plastic* or *Fresh off the boat.*

The labelling practice is particularly interesting in the case of *FOB*, as this label is a disparaging one imposed by outsiders yet used by the population it denigrates. The utilisation of this label and its racial stereotypes work ambivalently, on the one hand, reproducing the same hierarchies and placing Pacific peoples in a marginalised position, and on the other, creating subversive images, challenging the pre-established reading of Pacific peoples in New Zealand.

The re-appropriation of *Fresh off the boat* – the deliberate use of a slur, by the same members it originally intended to target, with the intention of revaluating the term – is possible as language is dynamic, the meaning of words is never stable and cannot be exclusively owned. Keeping this in mind, there is no predictable end or final destination for a word. Yet a particular history will always be embedded in the term *Fresh off the boat*, one that has been created out of anti-immigrant fear, and which also includes a re-appropriation which denotes pride in one's cultural distinctiveness.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

This research looked through the lenses of the panethicity model and the assimilation model to investigate how second generation Pacific students in Wellington New Zealand negotiate and articulate their identity as New Zealanders and as Pacific peoples. It examined the various ways second generation Pacific peoples combine their ethnic and cultural heritage with their New Zealand experience.

Fleras and Spoonley (1999) recognise that as

> with culture that have undergone colonisation and migration, the process of re-establishing an identity in a new land is fraught with difficulty. Major challenges to traditional cultural values and practices emerge, which means challenging those who embody such tradition (Fleras and Spoonley 1999:213).

This research first looked at whether these new emerging identities take a panethnic form, in other words, if second generation Pacific peoples feel a sense of membership and identify with the pan-Pacific group. Secondly, the research turned its attention to Pacific students' negotiation of identity in terms of assimilation to the host society. It asked how, as New Zealand-born Pacific peoples, they conciliate between being "too assimilated" and "too ethnic" and escape the stigmatisation associated with the labels of *plastic* or *Fresh off the boat.*

The exploration of identity labels (as self-labelling and as the labelling of others) was used in the research as a productive means of inquiring into the many negotiations and experiences of the people I interviewed. Identity labels are social constructs that aim to simplify "who`s who" in a complex social world. They tell how people are defined and classified among a society, how they perceive themselves, how they think people see them, and so forth. The establishment of clear labels for large categories of people may have a reifying effect on groups, as they become official names and their members start using them in their self-identification.

In exploring the panethnic labels, I found that Pacific students, unlike their parents' generation, were not condemning the panethnic labels, although there was a marked preference for the ethnic-specific ones. They were able to see themselves as "Pacific peoples". However, the identification in panethnic terms seems to be one of convenience: it has the capacity to encompass hyphenated Pacific ethnic identity (for those whose parents are from different Pacific ethnicity), for some it represents both their Pacific ethnic and cultural heritage and their experience as New Zealanders, which appears to be more significant for people who feel they do not have a "sufficient" cultural competency, and perhaps, feel excluded, from their ethnic-specific boundaries.

The identification with the panethnic group is always situational and is never singular: people always identify with (an)other individual group(s) or national origin(s) in parallel. They experience a layering of ethnic identities, rather than competing identities. One's identity may be emphasised over the other in a particular situation. For instance, Pacific students will identify with the broader Pacific group in contrast to significant Others (Pakeha and Maori) in a university context for instance, but once in a panethnic context, it is the specific ethnic identity which is emphasised.

It has become clear throughout this research that ethnic labels that are preferred by Pacific peoples are not the ones imposed from the outside, but the ones that are generated within the ethnic group. It seems paradoxical that the panethnic category, as a creation of outsiders, is then embraced by second-generation Pacific peoples. The contradiction can be unfolded by understanding that the acceptance of the panethnic label is conditional to the re-definition of this same label by Pacific peoples. Such a definition must be one that recognises the diversity of the Pacific group, one that is inclusive of all Pacific groups and one that exists to empower the group, as an ethnic minority in New Zealand.

The self-definition of labels is thus a prerequisite to the acceptance and usage of those. The case of the pejorative label *fresh off the boat* is no different. This label is a disparaging one imposed by outsiders yet used by the population it denigrates. The deliberate use of the slur *Fresh off the boat*, by the same members it originally intended to target is done with the intention of revaluating and owning the term. There is a general agreement on the pejorative connotation of this label when used by outsiders, but only some are reluctant to consider the use of this label among in-group members as problematic.

The utilisation of those labels and their racial stereotypes works ambivalently, on one hand, reproducing the same hierarchies and placing Pacific peoples in a marginalised position, and on the other, creating subversive images, challenging the pre-established reading of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. For instance, panethnic labels can be empowering as there is power in numbers. But they can be disempowering as they tend to ignore the distinctions that make ethnic and national identities meaningful, and the rough categories erase differences among groups, thus making it more difficult to see and, thus, problematize disadvantage.

I provided less description on the label of *plastic,* although most of the participants have experienced being labelled as such. There is an uncertainty surrounding the origin of the label *plastic* as it is used in the context of this research. Generally, *plastic* was not used specifically to describe someone's unauthentic ethnicity, but used to refer to any shallow aspect of an individual. *Plastic* is also different from the other labels discussed above as it is more a product of intra-ethnic labelling than a creation of others imposed by the dominant group, and furthermore, would associate an individual with the dominant New Zealand group. With the perspective that this label is used by the group itself to exclude and discredit some members, I did not find any participant who would claim it as a self-label. However, it does not mean that this label cannot be re-appropriated in order to associate this label with positive qualities. We can ask if subsequent generations will be more inclined to use those labels or if they will keep their pejorative meanings. Further research could investigate also how the labels *Fresh off the boat* and *plastic* work as a mode of inclusion and exclusion, mark social group boundaries and create internal hierarchies.

The panethnic labels are more interesting as they get more officially established in the New Zealand society and further analysis could contribute to understanding if individuals would be more prone to accept panethnic labels depending on their ethnic-specific origin, their place of living, their age along with other criteria. One thing seems certain: the panethnic labels are here to stay. What is more ambiguous is how their meanings will be re-evaluated and if later generations of Pacific peoples in New Zealand would become more inclined to identify primarily in panethnic terms.

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Appendix: Socio-Demographic Data of Participants

Individual Interviews

Interviewee	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity*	Place of birth**	Residence	Language spoken**
1	Sej	F	19	American Samoan	Pogo Pogo in Am. Samoa	Porirua	Samoan / English
2	Kelly	F	18	Samoan	Wellington(grew up in Waitarere)	Wellington	English
3	Rose	F	19	Samoan/ Tokelauan	Porirua	Porirua	Samoan /English /Tokelau
4	Jane	F	21	Cook Island Maori	Porirua	Porirua	English
5	Lisa	F	18	Samoan	Auckland (grew up in Christchurch)	Wellington	Samoan/ English
6	Emily	F	19	Cook Island Maori	Roratonga	Wellington	English
7	Mele	F	17	Samoan/ Chinese	Porirua	Porirua	English / Samoan
8	Marissa	F	18	Samoan	Auckland	Wellington	English / French
9	Aroha	F	19	Cook Island Maori	Rarotonga	Wellington	English
10	Kristen	F	51	Cook Island Maori / Welsh	Wellington	Wellington	English
11	Tane	M	18	Samoan	Porirua	Porirua	English / Samoan
12	Ake	F	19	Samoan/ Pakeha	Lower Hutt	Lower Hutt	Samoan / English
13	Melani	F	20	Tongan	Lower Hutt	Lower Hutt	Tongan / English
14	Hannah	F	18	Cook Isl. Maori/ NZ Maori / Pakeha	Porirua	Porirua	English
15	Myriam	F	19	Samoan / Pakeha/ NZ Maori	Tauraga	Wellington	English
16	Anne	F	22	Tongan/PNG	PNG	Wellington	English / Tok Pisin/ Tongan
17	Nick	M	18	Cook Island Maori / NZ Maori	Tokoroa	Wellington	English
18	Stephanie	F	22	Pakeha/NZ Maori/Cook Island Maori	Hawkes Bay	Wellington	English / NZ Maori
19	Teresa	F	18	Tongan	Tonga	Wellington	Tongan / English

Group Interview

Interview	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Place of birth	Residence	Language spoken
1	Sej	F	19	American Samoan	Pogo Pogo (Am. Samoa)	Porirua	Samoan / English
2	Lisa	F	18	Samoan	Auckland (grew up in Christchurch)	Wellington	Samoan / English
3	Nick	M	18	Cook Island Maori / NZ Maori	Tokoroa	Wellington	English
4	Melani	F	20	Tongan	Lower Hutt	Lower Hutt	Tongan / English
5	Myriam	F	19	Samoan / Pakeha / NZ Maori	Tauraga	Wellington	English

*The categories found in the *ethnicity* box are the answer given by the particiapant to the question "What ethnic group do you identify with?" There was no prior list from where to could choose from; the category listed above is the ones they proposed, with the single exception of "Cook Islander" and "Rarotongan" which I converted into "Cook Island Maori" for a consistency purpose. Participants were told they could enumerate more than one ethnic group and rank those in importance, which is the order listed above.
**In two cases, the birth place is not very significant as they moved at a very young age and spent their childhood in a different town. In those two cases, the place they grew up in written in parenthesis.
***The languages spoken are languages in which the participant can at least hold a basic conversion in that language. They could be languages learnt as achild or later in their life. The order in which they are listed is simply the order in which the participant mentioned them.