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The ASB Polyfest: The Construction of Transnational Pacific Cultural Spaces in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

Abstract

This paper connects historical and ethnographic research to examine the construction of physical and ideological transnational Pacific spaces within Aotearoa New Zealand's longest-running Pacific festival and performance competition, the ASB Polyfest (The Auckland Secondary Schools Māori and Pacific Cultural Festival). The festival was established through the self-determination of Māori and Pacific peoples and progressive educational leadership in Auckland during the 1960s and 1970s. First staged in 1976 as a competition amongst four community-driven "Polynesian clubs," it has grown over four decades to involve approximately 10,000 individual participants and is a significant site for cultural transmission for transnational Pacific youth in Auckland. The origins of the festival are contextualised in the establishment of Māori and transnational Pacific communities in the southern suburbs of Auckland, who migrated for work opportunities during a period of rapid industrial growth and defied socio-economic and geographic marginalisation. A present-day ethnography of rehearsals for the ASB Polyfest music and dance competition examines the processes by which physical spaces are transformed into socio-temporal spaces where transnational Pacific communities of practice are developed and a place of Pacific belonging is established. Ethnographic vignettes describing key milestones in festival preparation, and the culmination of these preparations at the festival competition, highlight the progression of the formation of communities of practice. These examples support the central argument that ASB Polyfest school cultural groups are uniquely constructed socio-temporal Pacific spaces where transnational Pacific identities are explored and represented.

Keywords: *music, dance, transnationalism, cultural transmission, youth, arts education, performance, cultural festivals, identity, ASB Polyfest*

Scholars have found that cultural festivals in the Pacific are sites for the negotiation of ethnic, local, national, post-colonial, and global Pacific identities.[1] For transnational Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific festivals play a particular role as a locus of identity. Firstly, Pacific festivals act as "visible beacons of

belonging," which establish Aotearoa as a place where transnational Pacific peoples belong, as well as belonging to Pacific homelands, whether as a home remembered or imagined.[2] Secondly, within New Zealand's multicultural and urban locales where Pacific festivals are staged, preparations for these events play a crucial role in cultural transmission, especially through music and dance. The majority of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa are New Zealand-born, and markers of identity exist within particular realities. Pacific languages have shifted in various degrees to English, Pacific peoples are increasingly likely to identify with multiple Pacific and/or non-Pacific ethnicities, and Pacific youth find commonalities in multiple forms of expression, including popular music and other globally-influenced art forms.[3]

The importance of the ASB Polyfest (The Auckland Secondary Schools Māori and Pacific Cultural Festival), Aotearoa New Zealand's longest continually running Pacific festival, as a primary venue for the teaching and learning of Pacific music and dance in Auckland cannot be overstated. Nearly 10,000 annual participants compete in school-based teams—called cultural groups, in Māori, Cook Islands, Niuean, Sāmoan, and Tongan categories—performing required programmes evaluated by expert judges. Rehearsals for the festival take place over six to eight weeks. Success at the festival relies upon the collective commitment of instructors, educational staff, families, and students, the latter having widely-varying degrees of culturally-specific knowledge before participating in the festival.

This paper contextualises the festival's origins within the socio-political climate of the late 1960s to mid-1970s and outlines how the festival emerged through community self-determination and progressive educational leadership in the Auckland suburb of Otara. After a summary of the festival's progression from its first staging in 1976 to its scope in 2021, I present findings from a field study of rehearsals from 2012–13 at Mangere College, one of the festival's founding organisations. I examine how transnational Pacific "communities of practice" are constructed through the formation of cultural groups and weeks of festival preparation.[4] I argue that teaching and learning practise incorporate culturally-specific ways of moving, speaking, and behaving to transform school rehearsal sites into unique socio-temporal Pacific spaces. I conclude with an ethnographic account of a day at the festival, examining how the festival's events, sensory experiences, and social rituals represent the reification of teaching and learning within the ASB Polyfest community of practice as a whole.

Communities of Practice and Theorising Social Learning

In research on Pacific festivals, teaching and learning practises have received little attention despite the fact that it is during these hundreds of hours of social learning that identity-forming experiences are played out and a place of belonging is created, constructing socio-temporal space where the work of cultural construction takes place. A useful framework for examining groups of people pursuing teaching and learning, developed by sociologist Etienne Wenger, defines these social learning spaces as communities of practice "formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor."[5] They are places where theories and understandings of the world are developed, negotiated, and shared. Over time, a community creates a shared repertoire of resources for negotiating meaning, such as vocabulary, specific concepts, routines, symbols, actions, or stories. This shared repertoire not only reflects the history of engagement, but it is also applicable for future development of practice.

Given that learning happens through social participation in the world, Wenger posits that within these processes, individuals find and continually negotiate meaning. Through participation (the action of taking part in a community and constructing identities in relation to that community) and reification (the act of giving form to their experience and providing a point of focus for the negotiation of meaning), members of the community of practice shape and are shaped by their experiences.[6]

Identity is at the core of communities of practice. Fundamental to Wenger's thesis is that learning is a universally-human experience that is reflective of the social nature of human beings; as individuals participate in and contribute to the practises of their communities, learning can be transformative for their identities.

> Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming . . . We accumulate skills and information, not in the abstract as ends in themselves, but in the service of an identity. It is in that formation of an identity that learning can become a source of meaningfulness and personal and social energy.[7]

The following section outlines how the beginnings of the ASB Polyfest were situated in the formation of Māori and Pacific communities of practice, working towards the common goal of creating cultural space in migrant communities in the south of Auckland in the late 1960s.

The Origins of the ASB Polyfest

During the post-war boom in the world economy, New Zealand government policies that promoted industrialisation and full employment combined to create labour shortages.[8] The government looked to the South Pacific, including New Zealand's territories of the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau, as well as former territory Sāmoa, to supplement the workforce. Population pressure, rising economic demands, and lack of employment opportunities encouraged these island nations to promote emigration.[9] The disruption of indigenous economic systems and declining demand for agricultural labour also led to Māori relocating to Auckland from rural areas.[10]

Personal histories of Pacific migration describe the desire for better work and educational opportunities as reasons for moving to New Zealand.[11] However, the realities of the labour economy meant that Pacific and Māori workers were concentrated into unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in secondary industries accompanied by low wages, less job security, fewer opportunities for advancement, and poorer conditions.[12] Many employers were open about their exclusionary attitudes toward Pacific workers, viewing them as a source of able-bodied and inexperienced but compliant labour, and regarding them as a "last resort" to fill labour shortages.[13] When economic prosperity in New Zealand took a downturn in 1973, rising unemployment, urban decay, and crime became racialised, as these conditions were increasingly associated in politics and the media with growing Pacific communities.[14]

The early 1970s was a period of "explicit and populist racism" toward transnational Pacific people.[15] Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent; non-Māori New Zealander) New Zealand was uneasy with increasing Māori political self-determination and the noticeable presence of Pacific communities. The National Party was, at the time, run on platforms of immigration reform and law and order, both of which identified Pacific people as "socially distinct and 'not part' of an imagined New Zealand" and suggested the country's decline in quality of life was, in part, their fault.[16] The party capitalised on these fears during the 1975 election. Although the general laissez-faire policy toward migration during prosperous times meant the government had turned a blind eye to the practise of "overstaying" work permits in 1974, a review of immigration policy meant restrictions would be enforced and overstayers were at risk of prosecution and deportation.[17]

Though the majority of "overstayers" were from the United Kingdom, as were the majority of recent migrants in general, the term became synonymous with Pacific people.[18] It was they, and Māori who resembled them, that were the target of the immigration division's campaign. This agenda was notoriously manifested in the Dawn Raids, raids of the homes of suspected overstayers carried out by police, under

orders from the immigration division, in the middle of the night between 1974 and 1976. Police sometimes targeted homes belonging to legal residents, who were arrested if not able to provide their passports, and their methods were often violent.[19]

Aupito Suʻa William Sio was a student at Hillary College in Otara the early 1970s, and serves as the New Zealand government's minister for Pacific peoples at the time of this writing. In a 2013 interview, he recalled his family's experience of being raided:

> So, for our family, we were raided in the early days, '74, '75. But we were raided because we had family living with us, in the garage. About six boys on my father's side of the family were living there . . . [Police] came early in the morning, it was six o'clock, they knocked on the door, they had German shepherds barking. And immediately they knew people were in the garage. Some of my relatives ran into the bedroom, some hid in the bathroom, others hid underneath the girls' bedroom. . . . So, the ones they found they took, and the others just stayed hidden. And my mother and father were upset, because it was like what you see in the movies, the Gestapo—because they felt like they just had the freedom to come in and push people aside and look for the people they were looking for . . . because of whatever the rule changes at the time, everyone got picked up who looked like an overstayer. Māori were upset about it, being picked up, Cook Island[ers] and Niueans were upset, because they were New Zealand citizens. . . . I remember [the police] mucking me around, but because I spoke English better than most, in the end they just told me to get lost and go home.[20]

The Dawn Raids established the fraught nature of relationships of Pacific people with other communities and the state, which was slow to change.[21] The lingering stereotype of Pacific people as "overstayers" and their association with economic and social problems meant "[i]t took a long time for the myths about these new New Zealanders to be dispelled and for there to be an acceptance of their very positive contributions to the development of New Zealand's society, economy and cultural identity as a 'Pacific' nation."[22] It was not until August 2021, at the behest of the Polynesian Panthers—a social justice organisation formed during the Dawn Raids era—that the New Zealand government issued a formal apology for the actions of police and acknowledged the long-standing trauma that the Dawn Raids inflicted upon Pacific communities in New Zealand, as well as their legacy of racist stereotyping.[23]

Preceding, and subsequently concurrent with, these politically and socially tumultuous events in Auckland, educational reform and Māori and Pacific self-determination were unfolding in Otara, a planned public-housing estate built on 1,200 acres

of farmland in South Auckland. Following its construction in the late 1950s, the population of Otara grew quickly, as Māori travelled mainly from Northland areas for job opportunities and to join family members already in the area. There was an even more rapid increase in Pacific residents, as the availability of manufacturing jobs, motorway construction in inner-city Auckland, and housing discrimination against Pacific people pushed more residents out to southern suburbs.[24] The number of Māori and Pacific residents totalled 33% compared to 17% in the rest of the newly incorporated Manukau City, then a separate local government entity to Auckland.[25] Otara quickly became associated with overcrowding, adult and youth crime, and single-parent homes. A 1967 magazine article described Otara, and other housing estates like it, as a "new kind of slum," "truly bleak, isolated and barren of interest or involvement for the people who live in them," and physically unattractive.[26]

Many of the efforts to create a more liveable community in Otara were supported by the leadership of James Garfield Johnson, the inaugural principal of Otara College, Otara's first secondary school. Johnson, who would later lend his sometimes-controversial progressive views as chair of the Committee on Health and Social Education, was influenced by the educational philosophies of John Dewey and the work of Māori scholar Ranginui Walker.[27] Johnson embraced philosophies of bicultural education in ways that few of his Pākehā contemporaries had, in what Bowler describes as a Freirean style of leadership.[28] Johnson called for bicultural education from early childhood, asserting that secondary school was too late. He argued that "Māori children need to know that the system is theirs, not just decorated with things Māori."[29] The social problems associated with Otara motivated Johnson to rename the school Hillary College after Sir Edmund Hillary, citing the symbolism of Hillary's and Tenzing Norgay's pioneering summit of Mount Everest: "Two people of different races working together embodied the kind of spirit we wanted in the school."[30] Guidance counsellor Jill Amos, in a 1998 interview, said, "we were the only school of its type in the country. Every other school had a Pākehā majority, and was contentedly monocultural."[31]

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

> schools are placing heavy demands upon young Polynesians, expecting them to be culturally adaptable and flexible and able to fit neatly into a monocultural school . . . My thesis is that the endorsement of multicultural education means that while cultural common ground is important, each individual has the right, in addition, to cultural identity at variance with that of the majority.[32]

Gadd asserted that, in addition to the teaching of Māori and Pacific languages, arts, crafts, and customs, "Polynesian heritages should have a natural place in every school course" and relevant topics of study should be integrated into humanities and sciences.[33] It was suggested that parents could enter the classroom as teacher aides or arts and craft tutors. Conscious of the need for relevant materials for its students, the school published a number of its own texts in-house, with many titles authored by Gadd.[34]

Teacher Ian Mitchell, who was influenced by the philosophies of progressive New Zealand educator Sylvia Ashton-Warner, later implemented his ideas about bicultural and holistic education through the Whanau Unit at Hillary. The Whanau Unit was characterised by open timetabling, common areas, self-directed learning, and community outreach projects.[35] In 1973, in a display of self-determination and community solidarity that would challenge even the hardest of cynics, a group of students rushed into Mitchell's classroom, frustrated with media coverage of the Department of Social Welfare's report on juvenile crime in New Zealand, which pointed squarely at Māori and Pacific youth. The students decided to seek their own solution to Otara's lack of community services. With the guidance of their teachers, they approached government officials about the construction of a community centre—Te Puke O Tara—which they helped to design, raise funds for, and later manage.[36] After Ian Mitchell's death in 1998, an editorial argued that many of Mitchell's ideas in the 1970s were "revolutionary."[37] Mitchell "understood some of the answers to meeting the needs of South Auckland children well before any of us had worked out any of the questions."[38]

In a conversation with former Hillary College student Boaz Raela, he recalled, "We had the strong leaders, we had amazing teachers, young and old . . . and then we had just this crop of young people at this period of time, just had a sense that they just wanted to achieve. They wanted to be somebody, wanted to be somewhere."[39] It was in this environment that the school's Polynesian Club was formed with the help of Ian Mitchell in 1967. From the start, "Poly Club" was a part of Hillary's ethos of community inclusiveness; it involved students, parents, and local organisations.[40] Ian Mitchell acknowledged the significance of the Polynesian Club for his pupils:

> I'm convinced you can't learn certain things, pride and confidence, and, in fact, perhaps a deeper knowledge of the wellsprings of one's own conscience, without activities like the Poly Club . . . I'm sure that kids that were starting to get restless and pretty hopeless, [were] invigorated by this.[41]

In an interview with former Hillary College student Ron Lau'ese, he recalled how social, school, and sporting worlds converged through the Polynesian Club.

> Our Poly Club was very unique. Most of the guys in the Poly Club were in the 1st XV [rugby squad]. Wherever we went, the Poly Club went. When we went to play 1st XV, the Poly Club was there, and no school could match us when it came to the formal functions after the game, the singing, the dances we presented. . . . The Poly stuff was in school, it came into our social life, and it continued from there. So, we didn't have any fights! . . . And this is the thing we realise now, the impact that [Johnson and Mitchell] had. We had no idea.[42]

In 1976, Māori student Michael Rollo, who taught *kapa haka* (Māori forms of stage performance) to the other students in the club, proposed that the school hold a cultural festival. Former student Aupito Su'a William Sio recalled that

> Michael was a senior student, and he had the opportunity to travel to China, and when he came back, he reported to the full assembly. He talked about how China, all year round, celebrated different events. And he couldn't understand why in New Zealand, who had just as much cultural aspect to our way of life, that we shouldn't be doing the same on a day-to-day basis. So, he presented the school with this idea, and many of the students [agreed]. There were some teachers who came on board, particularly the Māori teachers, and some of the Pākehā ones.[43]

The three additional schools that joined Hillary College to stage the first festival—Aorere College, Seddon College, and Mangere College—were each negotiating the needs of their communities and multicultural student bodies. Aorere College, in the South Auckland suburb of Papatoetoe, was one of several Auckland schools that pioneered a full community school model and embraced the concept of schooling being available to people of all ages. Adult learners equalled the number of youth and joined the school in both evening and day classes. The community was "engaged in a growing range of activities in the recreational, cultural, culture sharing, craft and design and personal development areas," including a "Polynesian culture sharing group" whose meeting time overlapped with the young students' Polynesian Club.[44]

Seddon College, which had recently relocated from midtown Auckland to the suburb of Western Springs in west-central Auckland, was going through a difficult transformation from a technical school to a neighbourhood school. Seddon was

attempting some of the same reforms as Hillary—no streaming, no corporal punishment, and even no uniforms—and to establish itself as a multilateral co-educational school with a multicultural emphasis. In particular, Seddon was seen as an "unsuccessful" school and was trying to change its reputation.[45]

Mangere College was the most recently built school to join the festival—having opened only five years earlier in 1971—and asserted the importance of its role in Auckland as a multicultural school.[46] At the time, Mangere was a young state-housing suburb not far from Otara. Mangere had a strong Polynesian Club, numbering about sixty students, which had even earned praise from the governor-general.[47]

The first festival was held in the school hall at Hillary College on October 20, 1976 (cf. Fig. 1). Although there were only four participating schools, the festival was popular, with a sizeable audience and an introduction by the mayor of Manukau City, Lloyd Elsmore. Mangere College took first place.[48] Boaz Raela recalled,

> It was fantastic. It was a fantastic day. We, just as performers and as students in the group, we just enjoyed the fact that we had this opportunity to perform. And it was in a place where there were expectations to do your best. It was that sort of expectation. But also to enjoy.[49]

Figure 1. Glenn Jowitt, *Performers from Hillary College, Otara,* 1981. Courtesy of Glenn Jowitt Trust

The festival that emerged from school Polynesian clubs in Auckland defied youth crime statistics, economic marginalisation, and institutionalised racism against Pacific peoples and the Māori that resembled them. In a letter to Garfield Johnson, Māori scholar and activist Ranginui Walker described Johnson's time at Hillary as "halcyon days when we believed anything was possible and we set out to make it happen."[50] In an interview, Boaz Raela echoed this sentiment: "It was the best six years of my life because it was the only place where I could be—I could be known, be successful, all those sorts of things. I loved it."

The Present-day Festival

After more than forty years, the ASB Polyfest presently takes place over four days at the Manukau Sports Bowl and Velodrome, with approximately 10,000 students from more than eighty schools participating and an equal number of audience members. Event management is outsourced to a professional company, and a large number of community volunteers provide additional support. Student groups choose a stage on which to compete: Māori, Cook Islands, Niuean, Sāmoan, or Tongan, as well as a Diversity Stage, which accommodates students performing from Asian, African, and other minority Pacific and non-Pacific populations. The naming sponsor, ASB, one of New Zealand's major banks, offers financial support along with universities and polytechnic colleges, who sponsor individual stages. The festival also includes Te Reo Māori and Pacific language competitions, entertainment from rising Māori and Pacific pop stars, food stalls serving both traditional Pacific fare and youth-friendly fast food, carnival games, and film crews recording footage for a Saturday morning television programme that is aired for six weeks after the festival. Because of the opportunities for good optics with Māori and Pacific communities, local and national politicians regularly make appearances.

A testimony to the festival's network of organisation and support is that it has been staged annually in late summer since 1976, with the exception of two significant events that posed major safety threats to the festival. When terrorist attacks at two mosques in Christchurch—the worst mass shooting in New Zealand's history—occurred on the third day of the 2019 festival, the remainder was cancelled out of concern for the safety of the students and public. In 2020, in the very early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Polyfest organising committee elected to cancel the festival in its entirety. New Zealand's largely successful response to the pandemic allowed schools in Auckland to remain open for most of the 2021 school year and for the festival to return in April of 2021, with new dates shifted a month later to accommodate

several short-term lockdowns and subsequent school closures in February and March 2021.[51]

Cultural Groups and the Construction of Pacific Spaces at Mangere College

Polyfest has consistently been a significant part of school and community life at Mangere College since 1976. One of the four schools that collaborated to stage the first festival, over the years Mangere has assumed competitor, host, and leadership roles. Vice Principal Mele Ah Sam has been the Sāmoan Stage Coordinator at Mangere College for over 25 years, and John Heyes, the school principal at the time of my fieldwork and a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to education, was a member of the Polyfest Board of Trustees in 2011.[52] Mr Heyes welcomed my interest in the school and arranged for me to conduct fieldwork at the start of the school year in 2012 for six weeks, and again in 2013 for same period. I positioned myself with students at the school primarily as a "supporter," joining family and community members who came to rehearsals both to encourage the students and to demonstrate their commitment to the groups' success through their physical presence. Although as a white American immigrant my differences were obvious, my sincere interest in the students' learning and my participation in Pacific dance groups outside of the school helped me to transcend my outsider status. As a former classroom teacher, I aligned well with the teaching staff and could be sincerely empathetic to their needs and the minor disruptions my research project caused. I moved amongst supporter/teacher/colleague positionings throughout my study.

Mangere is a leafy suburb between Auckland Airport and coastal views of Manukau Harbour, situated about 15 minutes south via motorway of the Auckland city centre. Although they are a relatively small secondary school, with fewer than 700 pupils—giving them an underdog status compared to the far more populous grammar and Catholic schools that dominate the competition—Mangere College has regularly made a strong showing at Polyfest, bringing groups competing on each of the Māori, Cook Islands, Niue, Sāmoan, and Tongan stages, an Indian group to the Diversity Stage, and winning multiple first-place prizes in recent years. The majority of the pupils at the school are of Pacific heritage, followed by Māori students and a small number of Asian and African students, most from refugee families relocated to the neighbourhood.[53]

The onus of organising and bringing a cultural group to the festival depends on the staff who assume the voluntary role of teacher-in-charge—one who recruits students to form a group, manages the rehearsal timetable, secures a physical space

to rehearse, liaises with parents, attends informational meetings for the festival organising committee, submits the entry paperwork required to compete, and delegates duties to other members of staff who will supervise rehearsals or perform other tasks as needed. If they have the expertise, teachers-in-charge will sometimes also assume the role of the group's instructor, or tutor, though this role is usually outsourced. I knew of tutors who had high profiles in the Pacific arts community and who worked for schools capable of paying for their services, but at Mangere College, family connections were typically called upon to find tutors in the school community willing to donate their time for a gratuity of cash or other gifts, dependent on fundraising efforts. Each cultural group also had student leaders, who were nominated by teachers-in-charge or tutors to take on extra responsibilities within the group and to assist them with teaching, disciplining, and motivating their peers. Student leaders were essential personnel for the success of cultural groups and were recognised with their own award category on most of the Polyfest stages. Teachers-in-charge or tutors chose some students as leaders because they had several years of experience in the group or were amongst the most skilled performers and could assist the tutors with helping newcomers.

Organising cultural groups is an undertaking that begins from nearly the very first day of school. The school year in New Zealand starts during the first week of February, and the scheduling of Polyfest in March harnesses the energy and momentum of the first term of school and avoids conflicts with school exams later in the year. Warm, fair weather can usually be counted on for outdoor practises—necessary with limited indoor space available for large groups of students—and the fresh air is welcomed after a day in classrooms. Once cultural group practises can begin—usually within the first two weeks of the school year—students commit to two to three hours of practise per weekday, and often on Saturdays, over a six- to eight-week period. Many students choose to join the group that corresponds with their cultural heritage or one reflecting a component of their multi-ethnic heritage, but there is no impediment to joining a different group, and some students do so due to interest in the performance genre or being in a group with established friends.

During my fieldwork period at Mangere College, I observed that the group tutors were methodical in sequencing their instruction. As students would accompany their dances with their own singing while performing at Polyfest, songs were taught first, so that harmonies, rhythms, pronunciations, and vocal styles could be established and the song lyrics memorised before adding choreography. Students used printed handouts, overhead projectors, and, in the case of outdoor rehearsals, poster boards to help them learn lyrics. When the students were ready to add movement, the choreography for individual items would be demonstrated—usually in four- to

eight-beat phrases—imitated, observed, and corrected, then drilled until students reached a sufficient level of competence to move on to the next phrase. If there were two tutors available, the boys and girls would be split up and taught their respective parts simultaneously. Those who lagged behind went to extra practises at lunchtimes, which the leaders organised, or were paired with more experienced students, who could take them through the movement sequences slowly during breaks in practise. When an entire performance item was learned and could be drilled with a minimum number of stops for correction, the transitions between items were practised. Smooth transitions—during which students change postures from sitting, standing, or kneeling in formation—are essential for a well-received performance. Tutors choreograph sixteen to thirty-two beats to move to the correct position for the next item. Items and transitions are gradually stitched together until the entire set can be performed in its entirety.

The practises I observed were mentally strenuous, and there were plenty of emotional peaks and valleys. The physical toll on students from practising was observable as well. Dancing and singing are physically taxing, as is the mental focus needed to commit words and movements to memory and replicate them correctly. Students were constantly in motion for two hours at a time, and formal breaks were infrequent, even for the toilet. One of my field notes after a particularly gruelling Cook Islands practise reads, "there was [figuratively] blood on the floor." A student leader, Paulina, commented on the challenges of long practises:

> Not only do you spend six hours at school, then you have two or three more hours of practise, and it can make you cranky, it makes you angry. Sometimes at practise you don't want to be there, but you have to because you made a commitment to the group.[54]

There were instances in which tutors' frustrations boiled over, and students spent time sitting on the floor, with their legs crossed and heads bowed, being chastised during tirades about their apparent lack of focus or commitment. However, tutors and teachers-in-charge recognised that space to relax, play, eat, and laugh at each other's mistakes were essential for boosting morale and strengthening bonds between members. For example, Tuteru Samson, who tutored the Cook Islands group, was nothing short of masterful at sensing when his students needed to be sat down for a pep talk, a reprimanding, a huddle with the student leaders so they could hear from fellow students about their progress, or even a day off from practise when they had made significant headway.

After a long week of practising after school every day, students were rewarded on Saturday practises. Without bells, school business, and school uniforms to think

about, students arrived from home in their street clothes more rested than during the week. The day was always broken up with a shared meal after praying together and blessing the food—often provided and paid for by the tutors; their gifts of barbecued sausages, pizzas, or burgers from the shops at the Mangere Town Centre tacitly reminded the students that though they would frequently be "growled" (reprimanded), they would also be fed. Students would be given some leisure time with their fellow group members as well—sometimes the pool would be opened for the students to swim or a rugby ball would be tossed around. There was plenty of gossiping and joking. All this helped to balance the physical and mental labour of practising and creating the memories with friends for which the festival is known.

Cultural group practise was a place for family too, and coming to the school for support was welcomed. The tutors' families sometimes attended to lend a hand with teaching. At Tongan group practises, there were parents and grandparents consistently present to sing the accompany for the *maʻuluʻulu* (a seated action song) and many of the mothers' and grandmothers' hands were busy folding the endless number of ribbon rosettes that made up essential details of the students' costumes. For other family members, support was simply through the act of turning up and being there. Around the gymnasium at Cook Islands practise, mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, cousins, and siblings sat on the floor chatting, snacking, and minding the smaller children who played away from the practise area. I asked the grandmother of one of the students, with two young grandchildren playing nearby, why she liked coming to practise. She replied, "If it's something to do with our culture, we like to be there."

Figure 2. Mangere College Sāmoan group Saturday practise, 2012. Photograph courtesy of the author

Transforming Space

At Mangere College, there were no dedicated physical spaces for cultural group practise. Classrooms, the gymnasium, and outdoor spaces were adapted, the requirements being enough room to move and a minimum of hassle with locks and keys (negated by practising outdoors). Each cultural group claimed an area for their daily practises. The Tongan group gathered in the "hot spot," a paved inner courtyard that was home to the school canteen; the Sāmoan group used the Sāmoan language classroom (Fig. 2) and the wooden deck and lawn that fronted it; the Niue group met on a grassy area between classroom blocks; and the Cook Islands group made use of the auditorium, and later the gymnasium when the volleyball season was over.

Appropriated rehearsal locations such as the gymnasium and sports fields—spaces in which cultural transmission cannot be taken for granted—were transformed at Mangere College by the intentional gathering of diasporic cultural groups.[55] The efforts for these transformations were seen at Mangere College in the teachers who added hours to their workdays chaperoning cultural practise, the tutors who re-arranged their work and family schedules, and students foregoing playing sport and hanging out with their friends, inviting physical exhaustion and perhaps repercussions for unfinished homework. Participation was not limited to the instruction-related roles of teacher and learner, and family presence and time for eating, socialising, and relaxing helped to construct a space of Pacific community and belonging.

The transformation of space through sound was a significant aspect of the construction of Pacific spaces at Mangere College. Sound itself territorialises, allowing music groups to make a claim of physical space present in the school during the Polyfest season by means of the high-pitched Cook Islands *tokere* (slit log drum) and rattle of Sāmoan "biscuit-tin" (metal box) drums; the bright, high-pitched, percussive strums of the Cook Islands *ʻukurere* (ukulele); the slaps and claps of the Sāmoan *faʻataupati* (a standing body percussion dance performed by men); the masculine growls in the Niue *takalo* (war dance); and the vocal imitations of gunfire in the Tongan *taufakaniua* (battle dance).[56] The sounds of Pacific languages were also present in a number of ways, sometimes as the only language used for instruction, in the instruction of pronunciation of song texts, "counting off" when drilling, and in sung lyrics themselves. These culturally-specific sounds, iconic of other Pacific spaces in Auckland and Pacific homelands (whether real or imagined), when combined with environmental sounds—of buzzing cicadas, planes flying overhead to the nearby Auckland Airport, and the clattering, echoing cacophony of drumming in the hard-surfaced gymnasium—created a unique Mangere College Polyfest soundscape.[57] Over the college's grounds after school and on Saturdays, sounds from the four groups competed

and overlapped, announcing individual Cook Islands, Niuean, Sāmoan, and Tongan spaces as well as creating an "aural signature" of the school's diversity within its Pacific representation at Polyfest.[58]

Rehearsal spaces are also transformed by the changes to the bodily hexis—"the ways of standing, speaking and walking, and therefore thinking and feeling"—which, in transnational communities of practise, takes on additional intention, responsibility, and imagination if these embodied habits are not easily acquired from their environment.[59] In dance, where choreography imitates activities of daily life, this presents particular challenges. In the Mangere College Sāmoan group, for example, students performing the *sasa* (a seated dance that includes logogenic movements of everyday activities) needed to portray activities typically done in Sāmoa, such as preparing *ʻava* (kava), climbing palm trees, weaving sennit, and casting fishing nets, as well as more abstract logogenic movements in Sāmoan dances accompanied by songs. Their tutor, Agnes Masoe, struggled to motivate the students to move with the appropriate weight and tension—with rigid torsos, fluid hands, and expressive eyes characteristic of the Sāmoan *maʻuluʻulu*—and to communicate elements of the bodily habitus she acquired growing up in Sāmoa; in essence, to make their movements *more Sāmoan*. For students with more embodied knowledge (even if only because they were more experienced in their group's dance forms and had a better ability to mimic their tutors) these changes were instantaneous as they entered the practise space, while for less experienced students, they happened over time as their bodies learned culturally-specific ways of moving and vocalising. As students acquired competence, the cohesiveness of the cultural group as a community of practice increased.

Between students' daily incremental progress at cultural practise and their performances at the festival, an important milestone is the *fiafia* (Sāmoan; Tongan *fiefie*). A combination of dress rehearsal, fundraiser, and social event for families and other supporters, the *fiafia* events at Mangere College are a particular kind of Pacific space—what ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino calls a "heightened form" of diasporic cultural expression.[60] They represent the culmination of the many hours of participation and the reifications that have emerged from practise, as well as the tutors' expertise and patience, students' embodied knowledge, and their families' commitment to the success of the group. In particular, the following ethnographic vignettes highlight costumes and fundraising, two significant and highly symbolic reifications of the practise of cultural groups.[61]

Vignette: The Tongan Group *Fiefie*

The Tongan fiefie *was scheduled for the Saturday afternoon before the festival in the gymnasium. When I arrived, rows of chairs for the families and a speaker system were already set up. I had been asked to videotape the performance, so I set up my tripod and camcorder. Tongan pop music was playing at top volume, and some of the women, wearing festive, shiny* kofu *(blouses) and feath-er* tekiteki *(headpieces), got up to dance. The atmosphere was relaxed as family members trickled in and chatted with one another. Around the perimeter of the gym, and in the courtyard outside, mothers helped their children with their* teunga *(dance costumes). Both boys and girls wore white* tupenu *(wrap skirts), the girls' made of shiny white satin and the boys' from a cotton blend (Fig. 3). The girls paired their* tupenu *with* kofu *trimmed with blue ribbon and the boys with white collared* sote *(shirts). Blue and white are Mangere College's school colours and were chosen for the* teunga *at a parents' meeting.*

Over the performers' tupenu, *finely woven* taʻovala *(mats of pandanus leaf fibres) were folded, wrapped around their waists, and tied with* kafa *(braided rope).* Taʻovala *are valuable handmade items that are sometimes family heirlooms, and are essential for formal occasions. Over them were placed the* fakahaʻapai, *wide fabric belts decorated with dozens of blue and white ribbon rosettes—which the mothers had meticulously folded during hours at cultural group practises—and trimmed with long, concertinaed ribbons. The students' feather* tekiteki, vesa nima *(wristbands), and* vesa vaʻe *(anklets) with the same ribbon rosettes emphasised the movements of their heads, hands, and feet respectively. The ensembles were completed by* kahoa *(garlands) of the ribbon rosettes. The girls were also wearing* kahoa puleʻoto *(cowrie shell chokers) (Fig. 3).*[62]

Viliami, one of the more boisterous boys, who I have never seen still or quiet, leaned over deferentially as his mother, frowning with concentration, adjusted, tightened, and tucked. I saw her also looking after Tau, a Cook Islands student, as he folded and wrapped a borrowed taʻovala. *All around the gymnasium I saw the cheeky boys—the ones who always answered my questions with well-crafted jokes, goofed off at practises by doing one-armed pushups, and pretended to shoot each other with their* taufakaniua *(battle dance) props—silent and deferent as their mothers carefully and expertly fitted their* taʻovala *and straightened their collars and* tekiteki.

As their punake *(director), Vaivai Kailahi, gathered the students outside the gym entrance so that they could process inside as a group, the students were quiet with anticipation, but the underlying sense of excitement was palpable. The external transformation of the students into their* teunga *had shifted something internal as well. Practise was over, and it was finally time to perform.*

Figure 3. Student receiving help with her costume from her mother at the Mangere College Tongan group *fiefie,* 2012. Photograph courtesy of the author

The debut of costumes at the *fiefie* is a powerful reification for students and their families. For students, the receiving of their costumes represents their progress as performers in the cultural group. It is a reward for their commitment to their peers and an acknowledgement—after hours of the repetitive drilling, memorising, and perfecting of performance routines that must be completed in order to be worthy of performing at the festival—of their newly acquired competence. The careful fitting of the *teunga* in the socio-temporal space of the *fiefie* is a brief, but highly symbolic exchange between parents and their children—a sharing of embodied knowledge that marks the final transformation from cultural practise to performance.

The receiving of costumes is also a reification of the commitment of families and tutors over weeks of cultural practise. Like the Tongan group parents' hours of meticulous folding and knotting of ribbon to create the accessories for the *teunga*, and the sourcing of materials and sewing of *tupenu* and *kofu*, all groups directed significant time and energy toward costume design and production. Not only were points awarded for their costumes at the festival, but cultural group and school pride were at stake as well. Creating a full set of Cook Islands costumes is particularly onerous, as a minimum of two costume changes is expected, as well as distinct costumes

for a highlight of the performance set—a portrayal of a Cook Islands legend—and the boy and girl leaders. Many schools had three costume changes. The Samson family, who tutored the Cook Islands group, had erected a makeshift factory for costume making under a large marquee in their back garden. Tautape Samson's specialty was as a costume designer, and friends and family worked tirelessly to make the elaborate head-to-toe outfits and accessories using fibres, shells, and feathers specially ordered from the Cook Islands and Sāmoa.

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

Vignette: The Sāmoan Group Fiafia

I arrived at the auditorium at 7:00 p.m. on the night of the Sāmoan fiafia*. It was Wednesday, three days before the students were scheduled to compete at the festival. The raised stage area was too small for the group without it being cramped, so the floor space had been cleared of chairs, with the parents seated in the "stadium style" area at the rear. One of the Year 9 students, Christian, was stationed at the door to collect a "gold coin" offering ($1–$2), a common New Zealand fundraising custom. Lemoa Henry Fesulua'i, the teacher-in-charge, and Mrs Mele Ah Sam, the deputy principal and the Sāmoan Stage Coordinator, collected more substantial cash donations at a row of tables set up next to the entrance, logging each one in a notebook. Families trickled in and elders took their seats early, waiting patiently. There was a soft murmur in the room as the adults visited with each other and younger siblings played in the aisles. When it was time to begin, the students, in their formal wear—the girls in* puletasi *(form-fitting long dresses with short sleeves) and the boys in* 'ie faitanga *(skirts falling below the knees) and white collared shirts for the boys)—took their seats in neat rows on the floor; the costumes' "reveal" would be later in the evening. Henry took the microphone and welcomed the families in Sāmoan and English—the latter was likely only for my benefit. After a prayer was invoked to bless the evening, he introduced the group as a whole, then passed the microphone on to student leader Mose, with instructions for each student to say their name and their family's*

ancestral village(s) in Sāmoa. Regardless of their fluency, which I know varies widely amongst the students, each student was able to do this confidently.

After each student spoke, it was time for the students to siva (dance) *for donations. Individual female students were called up to dance, sometimes paired with a boy to dance with her as an* aiuli *(clown), their families' cue to come down to the floor with their cash gifts.*[63] *The other students sang, swayed, and clapped to accompany the dancers. Mothers tucked notes down the front of the girls'* puletasi *and into the boys' shirt pockets. Male relatives placed their donations in a hastily created donation box, made from a torn soda-can box, on the floor in front of the dancers. Other donations were more presentational—an uncle scattered $20 notes in the air (a practise called* lafo *in Sāmoan), and a father walked down the stairs holding an* ula *(garland) of bills taped together, which he draped around his daughter's neck. After nine or ten students had performed, student leader Ailini was chosen. She looked stately and elegant in a champagne-coloured* puletasi *with a cowl neck, and she bowed to the audience before she began her* siva*. Her grandmother made her way down to the floor to join her. Watching the two generations dance together—smiling and occasionally locking eyes—was truly magical. The two generations of women performing together was one of the most memorable moments of the evening.*

About twelve siva *in total were performed, with Henry reading out the amount donated for each one—a practise done in some Sāmoan churches—to enthusiastic applause.*[64] *A portion was presented in envelopes to the group's tutors, Fa'apoi Tofa and Nese Masoe—this is their payment for tutoring. The students filed out of the auditorium to change into their costumes for their first official performance, but an equally important event for the evening had just successfully concluded.*

Fundraising for festival costs at the school contributes to the construction of a particular kind of Pacific space. Families financially support cultural groups throughout the festival season, providing materials such as paper goods for selling food items and free services like sewing. However, raising funds at the *fiefie/fiafia* also provides family members the chance to actively participate in highly meaningful, culturally-specific displays of financial support, which are done similarly at other occasions in Pacific communities in New Zealand and are a component of complex community and social relations. For example, in Tongan communities in New Zealand, cash is viewed as a suitable gift for nearly all social transactions, particularly ones that mark life milestones.[65] Describing an example of a Tongan birthday celebration on Maui in Hawai'i, Tevita O. Ka'ili explains that to *fakapale* (place donations on the dancer's body) during the *tau'olunga* allows diasporic Tongans to express *mafana* (warmth), practise *tauhi vā* (the nurturing of sociospatial ties), and fulfil *fatongia* (community

obligations).[66] Giving cash gifts at events like the *fiefie* enables adults to model *fe'onga'iaki* (the values of mutual help, respect and empathy) to young people.[67] Cash gifts presented as part of dance performances are a reification of the families' commitment to the community of practise, and also legitimate Polyfest cultural groups as part of their greater cultural world.

Fiefie/fiafia at Mangere College intensify the Pacific spaces that are constructed by cultural groups over their weeks of rehearsal, and represent the development of a community of practise from its inception to its maturation. They are heightened "intentional gatherings" of students, teachers, tutors, and parents, transforming the school halls into "special landscape[s], marked by symbolism, practise, ritual and function."[68] The sounds territorialising the spaces are more ordered during *fiefie/fiafia* than at cultural practises, as they include formal speeches and well-rehearsed songs. Bodies wearing lovingly created costumes perform dance movements that have been perfected, and family support is embodied in dancing and the rituals of gift-giving. In the socio-temporal spaces of these intimate, celebratory occasions, the intentions, sounds, and bodies claim unique transnational Pacific identities.

Competition Day at the Festival

The formation of cultural groups and participation in weeks of rehearsals for Polyfest are all geared toward the goal of the festival performance. Although festival days lack the intimacy amongst students and their families experienced at *fiafia/fiefie* events, the physical and socio-temporal festival space is the only time of year when the entire ASB Polyfest community can gather in one place—where hours of practise, planning, fundraising, meetings, arguments, negotiations, and resolutions are reified into the festival events. In addition to the competition performances and the allocation of points and prizes by the judges, the four days of the festival—its structure, sensory experiences, and social interactions—are an integral aspect of the shared repertoire that give meaning to membership and engagement in a Polyfest cultural group.

ASB Polyfest is staged at the Manukau Sports Bowl and Velodrome, a sprawling complex of mainly grass fields where events including greyhound races and cycling races take place at other times of the year. The festival's audience is largely family members of performers; outsiders, like myself, are rare. Stage areas are located around the complex, with the largest area dedicated to the Māori stage. The Pacific stages are allocated space accordingly to the size of their audience, with larger areas for the Sāmoan and Tongan stages and smaller ones for the Cook Islands and

Niuean. The clubhouse behind the greyhound track serves as the hub for VIP guests—sponsors, dignitaries, and committee members—and provides much-needed shade.

Situated between stage areas are rows of vendors selling food, crafts, clothing, and souvenirs; portable toilets; and tents or booths for public services and community organisations such as the NZ Fire Service and Auckland Museum, who offer activities and free promotional merchandise. The food for sale contributes to the festival atmosphere. Māori *hangi* (meat and starchy vegetables cooked in an underground oven) and Pacific foods such as Sāmoan *sapasui* (chop suey), Tongan *'otai* (a watermelon and coconut drink), and Cook Islands *poke* (steamed fruit pudding made with pumpkin or bananas)—usually sold by churches and youth groups to raise funds for their organisations—are sold alongside fast-food fare including chips, doughnuts, sausages, smoothies, and ice cream.

ASB, the naming sponsor, runs the carnival-like ASB Village, with games of chance and prizes bearing the ASB brand. Universities and colleges, naming sponsors of individual stages, have information stalls promoting their study programmes and support for Māori and Pacific students, reflecting the festival organisation's emphasis on educational opportunity. Local radio stations provide entertainment by their programme hosts, live performances from rising Māori and Pacific musicians, and competitions for prizes. Stage emcees tell jokes, hold dance contests to give away t-shirts or other donated prizes, announce lost children, and keep the event running smoothly over the day of competition. One of the measures of a successful Polyfest stage manager is to keep the event running according to schedule, but achieving this in practise is usually difficult.

Students rise very early on their assigned competition day; the first slot on some stages is at 8:00 a.m. Students meet at their school and pack into buses that take them to the Velodrome in time to check in with the stage volunteers, unpack their costumes in the changing tent "backstage" (a set-up of tents and marquees to the side of the physical stage and minded by a volunteer who restricts access to schools at their assigned time), dress, add face paint and other finishing touches, say a unifying prayer to bless the performance, and take the stage under the judges' watchful eyes, tempered with the exuberance of their friends and family in the audience (Fig. 4). Afterwards, the process goes in reverse; they decamp backstage, change back into their school uniform (if on a Friday) or street clothes (on Saturday), and are free to roam the festival.

A day spent as a spectator at the ASB Polyfest is marked by distinctive sensory experiences. The festival takes place in late summer, and the cool and damp mornings give way to the relentless Auckland sun, which is especially powerful due to New Zealand's very thin ozone layer. A water truck and free sunscreen provide some relief.

Figure 4. Mangere College Tongan group members clowning for the cameras before their performance at ASB Polyfest, 2012. Photograph courtesy of the author

There is no seating, so parents, grandparents, and siblings stake out good viewing positions sitting on synthetic mats on the grass; older relatives unapologetically sit in

camping chairs that block the view of anyone sitting on the ground behind them. Shade is at a premium; most stages put up a marquee but request that only older patrons use it. Some watch performances peeking out from underneath umbrellas or *'ie lavalava* (sarongs) draped over their heads. Heat rises off the tarmac; the grass is inevitably sun-baked, dry and scratchy to the touch, and dotted with dusty patches from the thousands of feet carving paths between the stages, food vendors, and souvenir stalls. The occasional cloudbursts are torrential, scattering the crowds to find some kind of shelter until the rain passes.

When a student's competition performance is out of the way, or if they are there only to be a wildly enthusiastic supporter of their classmates, a day at the festival means freedom from the confines of school and the supervision of their teachers. Students move from stall to stall to look at souvenirs with their friends and cousins, meet students from other schools, flirt with potential love interests, indulge in festival foods, gather around Auckland radio station booths set up with live performers and anywhere else giving away prizes or gift bags, and shuffle through bottlenecked crowds to see their own schools perform. Perhaps the most distinctive sound at Polyfest is the exuberant screaming of classmates that begins once schools take the stage. No amount of pleading from the adult stage manager for quiet—so that judges can hear the opening song lyrics—can abate it.

The social experience of the festival is a reward for weeks of hard work and commitment to their cultural group, but also a key component of the shared repertoire of the ASB Polyfest community of practise. Within the festival space, young Pacific people experience kinship with other youth across school affiliations and ethnicities, and with real or imagined island homelands. For urban youth within Auckland's multicultural environment, the village-like atmosphere of the festival grounds is a socio-temporal place of belonging.

Prize presentations, held in the late afternoon on the final day of competition, are the ritual that mark the end of the festival. Those who are able to stay until the awards ceremony gather in front of the stage, and those who cannot eagerly check their phones for news of the "placings," with the hope that their school is amongst the winners. Awards categories differ slightly between stages, but generally include awards for individual routines, the highest aggregate scores, student leadership, and costumes. The final vignette describes this experience for the Mangere College Cook Islands group.

Vignette: The Cook Islands Stage Performance and Prizegiving

Moana Samson, the matriarch of the Samson family, has staked out an area in front of the stage for Mangere College parents and supporters with plastic mats, easily visible by the red t-shirts that were custom made for the students to wear at the festival. I hunkered down next to them as the emcee, Mr George George, filled the wait-time with recorded Cook Islands pop music and a few prize giveaways. The schedule was running slightly behind, making the anticipation even sharper. It had already been a long day. We had started the day at dawn, meeting at school to take a chartered bus together to the festival grounds, and then checking in the students in the early late summer's morning's chill and wet grass. It all felt like a blur. As the students dispersed to enjoy the festival, I lost track of them, but I knew they would make their way to the changing tent at their designated time. Tautape Samson would be fussing over the girls to fit their skirts and titis (feather hip bands) *and one of the* mamas *would be helping the boys fit their belts, elaborate headdresses, arm bands, and anklets. I could imagine the students in a circle, holding hands and with their heads bowed in prayer as we had done together in the final rehearsal on Friday afternoon. It had all come down to this.*

The performance, in sum, was brilliant. The voices were bright, the group adjusted to the size of the stage well, they nailed the transitions. The lightweight-but-awkwardly-bulky Styrofoam statue of Tangaroa, god of the sea, was placed in perfect timing during the transition between the kapa rima *(action song) and the legend (Fig. 5). The vocal harmonies in the* kapa rima *were right on the money—the tune had been borrowed from the song "We Are the World" and the surging key change was a hit with the audience. The students hammed it up with wild abandon during the legend, playing opposing tribes in battle. There was a nail-biting pause during the one of the key trouble spots—would Jackson, the student assigned the role of the* rangatira *(chief), remember every word of his speech and would the students be able to change into their full second costume for the* ura pa'u *(drum dance), the climax of the set? Jackson did remember his lines, and the costume changes went smoothly. Very importantly, only one or two costume accessories fell off during the entire performance—they did mean deducted points, but very few.*

Figure 5. Mangere College Cook Islands group performing *kapa rima* at ASB Polyfest, 2013. Photograph courtesy of the author

By this point, I knew every note and every word of each song. My heart was in my throat and I felt like I had been holding my breath for the entire twenty-five-minute set. Relief flooded my body on the final drumbeat. The students' hard work had paid off a hundred-fold. There was only one more school left to perform and then the lengthy wait for the results. The students who had performed, flushed and happy and now decked out in their red t-shirts, picked their way through the crowd and filled up the rest of the mats. While we waited for the judges to tally up the scores, the emcees kept us all entertained with songs, jokes, and dance-offs to drumming—it was a much-needed time for the students to relax, have some belly laughs, and get up spontaneously and dance when the drumming moved them. Finally, the formal start to the prizegiving began. The trophies and wooden plaques were set out at a long table and, after a series of remarks by the major sponsors, the third-, second-, and first-place prizes for the individual items, leaders, and costumes were read out by radio host Bernard Tairea's smooth voice. Every prize announcement was met with exuberant cheering and sixteen beats from the drummers, so the leaders from the winning schools could dance across the stage—one even punctuated his entrance by doing a split! Mangere College accumulated quite a few prizes, including first place for the ute *(traditional song),* kapa rima, *and* ura paʻu*, and for its drummers. But taking the overall first place had been the aim of Tuteru Samson, Mangere College's*

Cook Islands team tutor, from the start—to "take the trophy home again" as he told us. Even though the students had performed brilliantly and we couldn't really have asked more of them, coming second would be crushing.

After what seemed like an eternity, it was time to announce the overall winners.

"In third place . . . Tangaroa College."
"In second place . . . Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate."

This was the moment when we all realised we had come in first. Elation washed over our faces as we grinned maniacally at each other. In an unfortunate anti-climax, Bernard Tairea delayed the formal announcement of the winner for the lowering of the Cook Islands flag and the singing of the national anthem.

"And the first place overall for the Cook Islands stage 2013 is . . . Mangere College . . ."

The end of the announcement was drowned out by screams as a sea of red shirts went airborne, fists punched the sky, bodies jumped up and down, whooping and cheering and hugging each other as the drummers played their final sixteen victory beats. As the band played a closing prayer and the crowd dispersed, the students embraced their friends and family, took photos, and relished the moment that for many of them will be the highlight of their school years. The following week there was a final gathering at school to celebrate the Polyfest season over shared food and a video-watching party, after which the students turned their focus to the sports season and other school activities and the group's tutors returned to their normal lives. Mangere College's cultural groups would re-form in a year's time, beginning the process anew.

On festival days, tutors see who their students have become through what they have learned. Performers glean ideas from other schools' performances. Old members initiate the new members in the rituals and protocols of their roles. Young children, who watch their older siblings from the audience, may set their intention to take the stage one day, and a parent may feel motivated to volunteer their time the following year. When the prizes have been given out and the festival finishes late Saturday afternoon, the ASB Polyfest community of practise continues its activities, with another year added to its history and its practises further developed.

Conclusions

The origins of the ASB Polyfest exemplify the self-determination of transnational Pacific peoples in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand to transform physical and ideological spaces into sites for the continuation of cultural transmission. Countering social and economic marginalisation, Māori and Pacific communities created physical space—the Puke O Tara community centre—and cultural spaces through multicultural educational norms, including the Polynesian Club, with the support of progressive educational leadership at Hillary College. Similar efforts at Aorere College, Papatoetoe High School, and Seddon College led to a collaboration amongst schools and communities to stage the first festival in 1976.

As interest in and support for the ASB Polyfest has grown exponentially, it has become a significant site for cultural transmission for Pacific youth. Teaching and learning practises in gymnasiums, sports fields, school courtyards, and auditoriums "recode and alter spaces into particular Pacific places, territorialising and changing the places in which they occur."[69] Collaborations between tutors, students, teachers, and families co-create Polyfest cultural group practises as socio-temporal spaces where ideals of cultural representation, participation, and expression are explored and negotiated.

The creation of cultural space at Mangere College through cultural group practices illustrates how transnational communities of practise can transform physical and social environments through the development of a shared repertoire of routines, rituals, language, and sound.[70] In my fieldwork, The observation of daily rehearsals revealed incremental changes: the establishment of norms and procedures, the embodiment of new knowledge, the spontaneous creation of inside jokes, the development of relationships, and the peaks and valleys of group morale. The *fiafia* events described here are reifications of the extensive preparation of communities of practise over weeks of rehearsal, and demonstrate the investment in cultural transmission by students, their tutors, teachers, and families. This is followed by the final culmination of practise at the competition day itself, during which the sport and racing facilities of the Manukau Velodrome are transformed by the gathering of the ASB Polyfest community in its entirety and the shared repertoire of the festival space—competitive performances, victories, disappointments, soundscapes, foodscapes, friendships, and play.

This paper is a brief representation of the forty-five-year period during which the ASB Polyfest has constructed unique cultures of music and dance transmission and performance within Auckland's transnational Pacific com-munities. The festival continues to be transformative for Auckland students, and is an ideal representation

of how transnational Pacific communities in New Zealand are dynamic, responsive, and continuously developing communities of practice.

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Notes

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[7] Wenger, *Communities of Practice,* 215.

[8] Patrick Ongley, "Pacific Islands' Migration and the New Zealand Labour Market," in *Ngā Take: Ethnic Relations and Racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. Paul Spoonley, David. G. Pearson, and Cluny Macpherson (Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press, 1991), 17–36.

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[13] Fleras and Spoonley, *Recalling Aotearoa*, 196.

[14] Sharon Liava'a, "Dawn Raids: When Pacific Islanders Were Forced to Go 'Home'" (MA diss., University of Auckland, 1998), 21–33; Ongley, "Pacific Islands' Migration," 17–36; Spoonley and Bedford, *Welcome to Our World?*, 122–153.

[15] Spoonley and Bedford, *Welcome to Our World?*, 136. The use of "transnational Pacific people" here includes both migrants of other nationalities and Pacific peoples with New Zealand citizenship (Cook Islanders, Niueans, Tokelauans)—all were subject to discrimination.

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[21] Fleras and Spoonley, *Recalling Aotearoa*, 191–213.
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