

URC RESEARCH REPORT

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Project Title: Pacific Diaspora Media Pilot Project

1. What is(are) the research question(s)?

What Role Do Diasporic Media Play in Addressing the Communication Needs of the Pacific Island Communities in NZ?

2. Rationale

This was a pilot project. It aimed to signal the need for a larger project.

Objective 1: identify Pacific Islands Diaspora media in NZ and define the role they play in Pacific Island communities in regards to addressing their communication needs.

NZ has the largest Pacific Islands diaspora communities. However little is known in terms of their communication and information needs. By understanding the communication needs of these communities and the role these media play in sustaining cultural identities, we can have a better understanding of how Pacific diaspora media can assist with integration in the host country.

Objective 2: formulate a methodology that will inform an extensive research project

There is limited evidence of research on the increasing presence of Pacific Islands diasporic media. This project was designed to address a gap in knowledge methodologically and create an information data-base of value to future researchers and the communities themselves.

3. Methodology

The pilot was designed to include:

- a) An Audience Survey to identify the information needs and media preferences;
- b) Focus groups with Pacific Islanders living in diaspora followed by the general audience survey;

¹ Dr Sara Donaghey, initially part of the research team that designed the research proposal withdrew from the project in January 2008 (at the beginning of the project) because of her new duties as undergraduate program director at the Dept of Communication Studies. This led to some delays which demanded an extension so that the project could be completed.

- c) A media survey to identify the goals and the content offered currently by Pacific diasporic media based on Brown's typology of ethnic media, mainly through interviews with media editors/producers/practitioners;
- d) Participant observation/field trips.

4. Outcomes / findings

Over a period of 15 months (January 2008 to April 2009) the principal researcher with the assistance of Naomi Strickland (research facilitator) conducted an extensive number of interviews with:

- Pacific diasporic media, media practitioners and community leaders (including the Pacific Media Network, community media, Pacific Islands journalists working in the mainstream and diasporic media, Pacific Islands church and educational leaders)

and conducted:

- several focus groups interviews with different groups (Tongan, Cook Islands, Samoan and others), including 2nd/3rd generation Pacific youth, 1st generation immigrants, women, church members, on-line users, diasporic returnees.

Included in these interviews and focus groups were:

- field trips to two Pasifika Festivals and Otara Market in south Auckland - data collected with informal conversations and interactions with the general public
- (Otara market: Pacific music/DVD/tapes stalls - extensive information provided by Samoan and Cook Islands stall owners on production and distribution of Pacific media content in NZ and indicated other people to contact for this research. Informal discussions with shoppers and stall owners painted a clearer picture of this particular segment - South Auckland - of the Pacific Islands diaspora community).
- interviews with media and media practitioners in Tonga (April 2009) and Cook Islands (Feb 2009) *
- interviews and focus groups with diasporic Tongans and on-line social network sites users in Tonga (April 2009) *

* (Although this component of data collection was part of the pilot project, funds for the last two activities were made available through the principal researcher's associate professor research funds)

Findings:

This was an extensive pilot project which collected a significant volume of data that are still in the process of analysis (some recorded data is still in the process of transcribing). This rich data collection has generated a number of initial observations:

Pacific Islands communities in the Auckland region are a multi-layered group that comprises of:

- island or origin
- time of immigration (1st , 2nd , 3rd generation immigrants)
- age (youth vs. adults)
- residence (South Auckland vs. West Auckland vs. other areas)
- integrated or non-integrated
- proficiency in Island language
- level of education
- interests

The role of Pacific media seems to be varying amongst these groups. Diaspora cultures are complex and multilayered constructions that become autonomous of their home based culture. This is particularly the case for established diasporic communities that incorporate second and third generations born in the host country. Depending on their point of departure and time in the host country, diasporas' uses of both diasporic and mainstream media changes. Any data analysis therefore will have to take these elements into consideration.

Pacific Island Identities:

- Multiple/poly-ethnic identities
- Contested identities
- Hybrid identities
- Misrepresented identities by the mainstream media

Pacific Islands Diaspora media are identified by:

- Type of outlet
- Levels of service (local, translocal, international / transnational, regional etc)
- Policy
 - Are there government policies that assist Pacific Island media in acquiring licensed outlets?
 - Are there policies/laws/codes of ethics that safeguard good practices?
 - One's own Pacific Island group?
 - Inclusive of other Pacific Island groups?
 - Which age, gender and geographical location is the focus on?
 - How is contact between audience and media taking places?
- Primary audience
 - 1st/2nd generation, youth, island origin, religion, location
- Programming
 - focus: Information, education, entertainment (contemporary, traditional, popular, etc)
 - representational or participatory
- Media Service-Pacific Community Links

Pacific Diaspora operational goals are defined by the following factors:

- Maintaining links with the 'ancestral homeland'
- Preserving, restoring or advancing the use of a Pacific Island language
- Providing and/or restoring a sense of pride in the Pacific community's accomplishments (cultural, social, political, and economic)
- Combating negative stereotypes, especially those provided by media
- Indicating how diaspora and mainstream media can/do work together
- Serving as source of information on health care, education, financial aid etc
- Illustrating that Pacific Island communities are capable of operating media services

Pacific Islands media content comes in different forms and from different sources:

- Media products in DVD formats/on-line produced in the islands for the use of diaspora communities (i.e. amateur recordings and productions of village entertainment, beauty pageants; on-line magazines/newspapers that have sections devoted to diasporas);
- Diaspora media content/products (diasporic radio stations, newspapers, magazines).
- Some of this content is also consumed by audiences back in the islands (i.e. Bro'Town), contributing to a shared sense of identity;

- Mainstream media Pacific programs like Tagata Pasifika (a Pacific Islands current affairs program) that is broadcasted regionally to the islands and internationally through the TVNZ's website;
- The most popular form of diasporic media is the radio, following the traditional Pacific Islands oral (story telling) tradition
- Extensive on-line content (Pacific forum sites, online social network sites, family websites, news/music sites)

Pacific media have different functions and play different roles depending on their target audience:

- Diaspora implies that a sense of particularity and ethnic belonging is not only attached to the experience of migration, but it might have an on-going importance for younger generations who have not experienced migration processes ... diaspora implies that particular cultures survive, transform and remain relevant even when members of an ethnic community have not lived in the original Homeland.
- The Pacific media in New Zealand has been shaped and diversified along these lines, addressing those New Zealand-born residents and those born in the islands and have migrated here. The former group which includes those NZ-born urban English speaking Pacific peoples, educated or middle professionals tends to be catered by media outlets such as Tagata Pasifika, Pacific Beat Street, Niu FM and Spasifik magazine. While the latter is catered by a plethora of community radio stations and newspapers, more likely to be working class and older first generation migrant families.

Diaspora media contribute to the process of formation of diasporic identity at the local level.

- They often attract an audience based on a certain familiarity of their homeland culture but contributing to the construction of a new hybrid culture as well. *Spasifik* magazine's outlook, for instance, indicates the profile of a diaspora media that caters for the hybridized identity of NZ born, educated, young, English speaking segment of the Pacific Islands diaspora.

The wide under and mis -representation of the Pacific Islands population in the NZ mainstream media means that many Pacific islands people are turning to Pacific Diaspora media such as the Pacific Radio Network to listen to their stories from their perspective but also to listen to mainstream news not only from a Pacific perspective but a Pacific news style too.

- Early observations from participants in this project have indicated that Pacific audience makes a distinction between mainstream media news style and Pacific ways of presenting news that follow the Pacific story telling mode.

Concluding remarks:

The Pacific diasporic media perform a number of functions, catering to a complex, multi-layered audience. They address and cover a significant number of information and communication needs of the Pacific Diasporas in NZ but are not to be seen as compensating for the lack of Pacific media content in the mainstream media which remains to be addressed. They cater to different, culturally specific communication needs which contribute to the cultural/social wellbeing of these communities.

Further research:

The data of this pilot project have indicated other areas for future research that will enhance the analysis of what has been collected so far in this pilot phase: more

research on issues of diasporic identities and their link to island identities, the increasing importance of on-line communication modes for pacific diasporic communities, communication links amongst diasporic communities residing in different countries.

The next 6-8 months will be dedicated in analysing all data in depth with the aim of producing more publications.

More funds will lead to researching in depth some of the aspects identified so far in the pilot phase and will eventually result in a book.

5. Publications and dissemination

Conferences:

Papoutsaki, E. & Strickland, N. 2008. *Pacific Islands Diaspora Media: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations for a Pilot Study*. New Zealand Communication Association, 20th Annual Conference, Hamilton, New Zealand, 4-5 Dec (refereed conference proceedings available on line)

Papoutsaki, E. & Strickland, N. 2008. *Pacific Islands Diaspora Media: Sustaining Island Identities Away from Home*. 17th AMIC Annual Conference, 'Changing Media, Changing Societies: Media and the Millennium Development Goals', Manila, Philippines, 14 – 17 July (paper selected for publication by AMIC in an edited volume, see below)

Forthcoming:

Papoutsaki, E. & Strickland, N. 2009. *Diasporic Islands: Communicating Pacific Cultural Identities in Diaspora*. 5th International Conference on Small Island Cultures, June 24-30, Sado Island, Japan

Papoutsaki, E. & Latu, J. 2009. *Navigating Oceanic Waves On-line: New Connecting Threads for Pacific Islands Diasporas*. 18th AMIC Annual Conference, 'Media, Democracy and Governance: Emerging Paradigms in a Digital Age' July 13 – 16, New Delhi, India

Book chapters

Forthcoming

Papoutsaki, E. & Strickland, N. 2009. *Pacific Islands Diaspora Media: Sustaining Island Identities Away from Home*. Chapter in an edited volume by AMIC

Journal articles:

Papoutsaki, E. & Strickland, N. 2008. *Pacific Islands Diaspora Media: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations for a Pilot Study*. *Fijian Studies Journal*

Forthcoming:

Papoutsaki, E. *Pacific Diaspora Media Diversity in NZ: A Balancing Act*. To be submitted to *Pacific Journalism Review* for the autumn 2009 issue

Papoutsaki, E. *Diasporic Islands and communication practices*. To be submitted to the *Island Studies Journal*

Further publications planned: 1-2 journal articles – 1 conference paper (Australian 2009)