Abstract

Between Worlds: Fuata Niue Explore Their Multiple Ethnicities and Connection to Their Niue Cultural Identity in the Aotearoa New Zealand Context

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Abstract for a Master of Professional Practice research thesis

This research study investigated how young people born in Aotearoa New Zealand who self-identify as having multiple ethnicities connect with their Niue cultural identity and heritage. It aimed to explore the experiences of fuata Niue (young Niue people) with multiple ethnicities who reside in Aotearoa. The research considered how participants develop a strong sense of identity in their cultural background, with particular focus on their Niue identity. The motivation for this research stemmed from the migration story of Niue people who came to Niu Silani (Aotearoa New Zealand) for a better life, more opportunities, and a better financial status. Aotearoa was considered as 'the land of milk and honey' with unlimited potential.

The process of making the bright and distinctive yellow kahoa hihi (Niue neck garland) guided this research, recognising it as a significant ethnic marker for tagata Niue in the diaspora of Aotearoa. Within this population, around 40% report belonging to at least two ethnic groups, while 27% of tagata Niue are aged 15–29 years (Stats NZ, 2023). The research explored how six fuata Niue navigated their multiple ethnicities within a North Island centre in Aotearoa.

A qualitative research approach was employed to investigate the experiences of Aotearoa-born fuata Niue who identify as having multiple ethnicities. The research design provided a platform for participants to share their knowledge, voices, and experiences of having mixed heritage. Talanoa methodology was chosen to ensure that the interviewing process was culturally aligned with the selected participants' backgrounds.

Participants were recruited via Niue community networks, social media platforms, and word of mouth. Six fifine Niue (young female) aged 18–25 years participated in two fono fuata (youth meetings) or focus groups facilitated by the researcher. The fono fuata were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. An inductive thematic analysis of the transcripts identified three key themes: Niue Ki Luga (Niue Pride), Hiki e fakahihiga (Code switching), and Tuaga He Niue Mooli (Justifying a position in society).

All participants prioritised their Niue cultural identity over their other ethnicities while sharing the intricacies of managing their multiple ethnicities in different contexts. The fuata Niue had both diverging knowledge of Niue cultural practice and Vagahau Niue (Niue language), which led to discussions about the need to bridge the space between their Niue and their other ethnic identities.

This thesis gives a voice to a small group of fuata Niue, capturing a snapshot of the phenomena of tagata Niue with multiple ethnicities in Aotearoa.

KEYWORDS: Mixed ethnicity; Niue identity; Pacific youth; Vagahau Niue

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