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**Polycultural Capital  
and the Pasifika Second Generation:  
Negotiating Identities in Diasporic Spaces**

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## Abstract

This research examines the ways in which the Pasifika second generation who have grown up in Aotearoa are operating culturally and explores the conditions in which they construct identities. The study took a positive deviance approach focusing on existing strengths within the Pasifika generation and learning from success.

Taking a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, the project analysed data from the Youth2000 Survey, which included over one thousand Pasifika participants (n=1114). This showed that pride in Pasifika identities, reporting that Pasifika values were still important, feeling accepted by other people within one's own ethnic group and outside it, and continuing to speak Pasifika languages were all associated positively with advantageous health, educational or wellbeing variables. Individual interviews with fourteen high-achieving, second generation Pasifika professionals, further explored connections between identity, acceptance and belonging.

Second generation participants talked about performing identities across many spaces of symbolic interaction where they were called into relation with multiple others. These were local, cross-cultural, national and transnational relational spaces made possible via migration, diaspora, and relocation resulting in complex negotiations of sameness and difference. In these spaces they encountered competing narratives about who Pasifika peoples ought to be.

The diasporic second generation often had to negotiate belonging from beyond the limits of what was validated as having most symbolic authority. Symbolic struggle and the politics of cultural reproduction came to the fore, as did the contested nature of Pasifika imaginaries. Identifications were further complicated by demands for cross-cultural coherence and legibility across spaces, and shifting politics of recognition.

Polycultural capital was coined to describe the ability to accumulate culturally diverse symbolic resources, negotiate between them and strategically deploy different cultural resources in contextually specific and advantageous ways. Performing strategic essentialism, strategic ignorance, strategic hybridity, dialogic distance, and bridging, were just some of the patterns identified. Manulua describes an aesthetic of shifting multidimensional cultural resolutions across many spaces in-between.

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