

## The new kava user: Diasporic identity formation in reverse.

S. 'Apo' Aporosa

### Abstract

'Diaspora' studies have broadened their definition to now include hybridised identities situated in both the past and future. The formation of the Indo-Fijian ethnicity is an example of the evolution of a hybrid diasporic identity. This article briefly discusses Indo-Fijian diaspora in Fiji before shifting its focus to Aotearoa New Zealand. In this new setting, diaspora understanding will take a new direction that concentrates on the uptake of kava drinking and aspects of the kava culture by some Māori and Pālangi/Pākehā. In doing so, the article examines how these Māori and Pālangi/Pākehā, as the 'hosts', are expanding their cultural identity by embracing an icon of identity that came with a diasporic population – Pasifikans to Aotearoa – essentially creating diasporic identity formation in reverse.

**Keywords:** diaspora, diasporic identity formation in reverse, kava, non-Pacific kava users, Māori, Pālangi/Pākehā

### Introduction

For some time, social scientists have taken a keen interest in the assimilation of migrants and the blending of identities and cultures within diaspora environments (Kraidy, 2002: 323; Khanlou, 2005: 13; Hanlon & Vicino, 2014: 56-8). However, less attention has been paid to the reverse: the intentional embracing of migrant cultural practices and identity expressions by those in the host community/country. That is the aim of this article. After briefly explaining diaspora and how diasporic identity is formed, I will turn 180 degrees and discuss the uptake of kava by some Māori and Pālangi/Pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand (A/NZ). This will illustrate their intentional use of an icon of identity brought to their homeland by Pasifika migrants.

The term Māori refers to those who *whakapapa* (ancestrally connect) to the indigenous people of Aotearoa. Pālangi/Pākehā are common terms used by Pacific peoples and Māori to refer to those who are mostly of European

ancestry. Pasifika/Pasifikan is a term often applied in A/NZ and Australia to those of Pacific Island ancestry as a collective and/or those who live in a 'foreign' country, whether as visitors, recent migrants, or even those born in that 'foreign' country, who identify first and foremost with their ancestral homeland in the Pacific.

### **The evolution of diaspora studies**

Professor Robin Cohen's (2008) four stages of diaspora studies suggest themes that illustrate an evolution in diaspora meaning and application. Stage one is essentially the Jewish dispersal approximately 700 years prior to the birth of Christ. The second stage is a period in which academics broadened the definition of diaspora to include people groups who had been 'wrenched' from their homeland (p.1-2). This included groups such as indentured Indians and Chinese (p.4-5). The third stage can be viewed as a period of social constructionist critique that sought an even wider definition and application from that of the second stage (p.1, 6). This led to a fourth stage in which diaspora meaning was extended to include the movement of all people groups, whether expelled, 'wrenched', or "dispersed for colonial or voluntarist reasons" (p.6).

Although Cohen does not specify a fifth stage, this has nevertheless evolved. Diaspora studies now include identity hybridity in which dispersed people retain links to their ancestral homelands but also embrace selected practices and identity expressions found within their new host environment (Safran, 1991: 95). This though has also reinvigorated the critical debate with some suggesting that "the word 'diaspora' seems to have escaped its conceptual cage" and has been pushed well beyond its original scope (Cohen, 2008: 9; also see Rynkiewich, 2012: 295). It has also been argued that this new definition of diaspora – taking on identity features of the host – is not diaspora at all, rather it is "transnationalism" (Spoonley, 2001: 82; Rynkiewich, 2012: 283, 294). Further, regarding cultural hybridity, May (2009) argues that this theory opposes notions of tradition or cultural "rootedness" since the postmodern world fractures identities as opposed to hybridising them (pp.38-9).

In this article, I accept a fifth stage model in which diaspora includes hybridised identity which has its foundations in two worlds: the past – 'where I have come from' – and the future – 'my new environment'. As Stuart Hall (1990: 235) stated, identities are "constantly producing and reproducing

themselves anew". In diaspora, this influences hybridized notions of self situated in both the old homeland and the new host environment.

### **Illustrating fourth and fifth stage diasporic identity formation**

The development of the Indo-Fijian ethnicity demonstrates both fourth and fifth stage diasporic identity. This people group currently account for around 37.5 percent of the Fijian population, with many of them descending from the 60,000 indentured labourers brought to Fiji from India between 1879 and 1916 (Voigt-Graf, 2003: 367). I use the term 'from India' in a general sense. This is because these labourers came from across sub-continental India and represented different caste structures and language groupings with varied cultural practices and worldviews (Lal, 2000: 169; Voigt-Graf, 2004: 2000). In the years immediately following the initial indenture period, in which 75 percent of the labourers remained in Fiji (Howard, 2011: 48), the first major diasporic identity transformation in diaspora occurred for this people group. This was the melding of Indian identities, essentially the coming together of Indo-ethnic 'personalities' to form a single diasporic Indian identity that unified this group as Indo-Fijians (Lal, 2000: 115).

An illustration of this identity shift to greater pluralism was the development of 'Fiji-Hindi', a single language comprising a blend of Indian Hindi, Tamil, Teluga and Malayalam (Lal, 2000: 115; Voigt-Graf, 2004: 182) which also drew in some iTaukei (indigenous Fijian) words and phraseology (Mugler, 2004). Fiji-Hindi is now the language spoken by the majority of Indo-Fijians (Mugler, 2004: 234). The indenture of this people group and their subsequent formation of the Indo-Fijian ethnicity demonstrates the formation of the fourth stage of a diasporic identity whereas the adoption of selected aspects of the iTaukei language illustrates the formation of a hybridised identity or fifth stage. From an atheistic perspective, Indo-Fijian practices continue to reflect generalised images of India which remains an important "source of their culture, identity and traditions" (Voigt-Graf, 2003: 380). An exception to this is the uptake of kava by a large portion of the male Indo-Fijian community (Voigt-Graf, 2004: 183).

Kava is a drink made by straining the roots and basal stump of the *Piper myhisticum* plant through water (Aporosa, 2008: 33-35). Kava's effects are soporific, relaxant and calming with clear-headedness, lacking the excitability, euphoria and loss of inhibition experienced with alcohol intoxication (Aporosa

& Tomlinson, 2014: 164). The consumption of kava and the cultural practices that accompany it are considered to be one of the most potent and universally recognised markers of traditional Pasifika identity (Aporosa, 2015: 83-85). Known as the 'drink of the gods', kava is believed to contain and be capable of transferring *mana* (spiritual power), carrying with it powers of healing, recognition, reconciliation and affirmation (Aporosa, 2014: 35-39, 67-73). iTaukei refer to kava as *wainivanua*, a term that infers 'an ingestible manifestation of the land, people and their cultural practices' (Aporosa, 2014: 67-70). Further, many iTaukei believe there is a moral obligation to consume this traditional drink as part of demonstrating 'Fijian-ness' (Toren, 1988: 704). In taking up kava and selected practices that accompany it, Indo-Fijians have hybridised a quintessential expression of iTaukei identity with Indian culture (Voigt-Graf, 2004: 183) and in-turn demonstrate a fifth stage in the formation of diasporic identity.

Indo-Fijian kava use is not isolated to Fiji. Large numbers of Indo-Fijians who have migrated to A/NZ and other countries continue to use this indigenous substance, extending their fifth stage diasporic identity expression into new environmental spaces (Voigt, 2003: 380). For example, members of the Hamilton (New Zealand) Indo-Fijian Community recently celebrated their annual Diwali Festival of Lights, an observance with its roots in India (Voigt, 2004: 193), while drinking large volumes of kava (T. Wihongi, personal communication, 2 March 2015).

Although kava use among Indo-Fijians in both Fiji and A/NZ is commonplace, very little has been written on this theme, especially in relation to identity (Aporosa, 2014: 72, 121). Additionally, in a recent edition of *Pacific Studies*, Rynkiewich (2012) stated that while "diaspora studies have blossomed during the last two decades" (p.280), it is still in its infancy, with little attention given to Pasifika in general (pp.283, 286). This provides a great deal of latitude for commentators to push definitions and applications of diaspora to create new dialogical space. Instead of considering diaspora as simply those dispersed from their homeland and taking their identity and hybridising it with aspects of their new host environment, this article considers a reverse scenario. That reversal will illustrate the hosts – Māori and Pālangi/Pākehā in A/NZ – engaging and embracing the practice of kava drinking, an action which represents a potent symbol of identity generally attributed to Pasifika peoples. I will call this concept diasporic identity formation in reverse.

### **Illustrating diasporic identity formation in reverse**

Pasifikans living in and visiting A/NZ have been using kava in this new environment for many years. For instance, I have heard numerous stories when at home in Fiji from former iTaukei seasonal workers who described bringing kava with them to A/NZ in the 1960s and 1970s and mixing this indigenous substance at the end of the working day with their non-Fijian co-workers. Today, kava is relatively easy to source in A/NZ, being sold in many Indo-Fijian owned dairies and fruit and vegetable shops. The use of kava by NZ Pasifikans is believed to be increasing with many using this traditional drink "as a visible means of affirming and demonstrating their Pasifika-ness" (Aporosa, 2014: 72, 176). By combining Census New Zealand statistics with Ministry of Health (Mason, et al., 2010: 141) data on drug use together with several recent ethnographic studies that considered kava use by Pasifikans in South Auckland (Fehoko, 2014; Port, 2014; Taufa, 2014) and Hamilton (Aporosa, 2014), it is estimated there are more than 20,000 kava drinkers in A/NZ on any given Friday or Saturday night. Moreover, from personal observations, these numbers appear to be increasing, bolstered by a growing number of non-Pasifika kava users. The uptake of kava by non-Pasifikans is not limited to A/NZ. Commentators report a growing interest in kava among American adolescents (Stacy, 2011) and the opening of kava bars in the USA (Renfro, 2015).

Admittedly, there has been some kava use by non-Pasifikans in A/NZ for a number of years. Until recently though their numbers have been small and tended to reflect the likes of long-term kava user 'Mike' (fictitious name) whom I have known for a number of years. 'Mike' is a Pālangi/Pākehā who lives an alternative nature-focused lifestyle in a North Island coastal town that many would stereotype as 'hippy'. However, over the past five years I have noted increasing numbers of new kava users who reflect a greater sense of general A/NZ, especially those from the Māori and Pālangi/Pākehā ethnicities. For example, despite a high Pasifika presence at the annual Raggamuffin Reggae Festival, the majority of drinkers at The Kava Lounge (within the festival) have been of Māori and Pālangi/Pākehā ancestry. Discussions with Māori attendees regarding their kava use gleaned comments such as, "my wife is Tongan, so I drink [kava] with her brothers", "it's good for us coz kava makes us relax, not like alcohol", and "kava fits with our culture and *kōrero* [conversation style]". Comments from Pālangi/Pākehā attendees at The Kava Lounge included, "I tried it in Fiji and liked it, so try to drink when I can", "I sometimes drink kava

with the Islanders from work”, and “I first heard it was good for stress and sleeping. I mix it up and keep it in the fridge, have like one cup a-day before bed” (various, personal communication, March, 2012; March, 2013).

These comments from Kava Lounge attendees provide the first hints of diasporic identity formation in reverse resulting from the use of kava by non-Pasifikans in A/NZ. Of added interest is the representation of females at the Raggamuffin Kava Lounge where female attendees often outnumbered the males. Although Pasifika woman consume kava in their homelands and A/NZ, when compared with their male counterparts, they are usually the minority. This is partially influenced by kava’s association with masculine ideologies and roles (Lebot, Merlin, & Lindstrom, 1997: 137-138). I will return to this theme later.

### **Motivating kava-related diasporic identity formation in reverse**

Several factors appear to be promoting and encouraging the uptake of kava by non-Pasifika users in A/NZ. These include access, health, and changing attitudes toward alcohol. As Mike Jay (2012a) points out, people have sought out and used drugs for their effects since the beginning of time (pp.6, 9-10). The freedom of travel, globalisation and access to a wider variety of drugs has increased knowledge, popularity and availability (Jay, 2012b: 1min.20sec). Concerning health, the benefits of kava are widely documented (Lebot & Cabalion, 1988: 23-29), especially kava’s use as an anti-anxiety aid (Sarris et al., 2013). Schmidt (2014), citing a June 2014 German Court ruling, stated that kava is safer than anxiolytics such as "benzodiazepines [as these] and other chemically defined pharmaceutical medications" cause higher rates of liver toxicity. Kava is also a mild anaesthetic (Singh & Singh, 2002: 734) with Rasmussen (2005: 6-7) explaining that in a hepatotoxicity safety study which compared kava and paracetamol, kava was found to be "dramatically" safer than "a popular non-prescription drug widely sold through grocery outlets."

More recently, scientists have been investigating the link between low-occurrence rates of specific cancers, namely ovarian, bladder and lung cancer and leukaemia and kava use (Sotheeswaran, 2002: 17; Tabudravu & Jaspars, 2005: 26; Zi & Simoneau, 2005: 3485-6; McNarie, 2012: 92-4; Leitzman et al., 2013; Vasich, 2014). Kava therefore offers a unique alternative for those who are considering or seeking out a sugar and calorie-free traditional substance with health related benefits that do not cause marked euphoria, increased anti-

social behaviour or manifest the nasty hang-over effects of alcohol. Further, because kava is not alcohol and does not “befuddle the mind” (d’Abbs, 1995: 169; also see Aporosa, 2011: 159), I have noted an increase in users from the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and Islamic community where alcohol use is forbidden.

I would suggest though that sports and sporting celebrities – especially those from the rugby league and union codes – are leading influences for the introduction of kava to new users which in turn contributes to diasporic identity formation in reverse. For instance, Zorim – of Waikato-Tainui (Māori) *whakapapa*, a former Penrith Panther’s and Warrior’s rugby league player – commented that former rugby league team captain Ruben Wiki – of Samoan/Māori ancestry and nicknamed the *Kava King* – played a key role in his introduction to kava. Zorim is only one of many who Wiki has influenced (Wilson, 2014). In a 2012 TVNZ documentary (Lumsden, 2012), Wiki explained his motives behind introducing kava to his fellow players stating it was an attempt to “...change the culture. There was a lot of bad publicity... due to guys going out after the game and getting caught in the [news] papers due to too much alcohol. I wanted to change [this].”

The benefit of kava over alcohol for some is not limited to the professional sports arena. For instance, within 12 months of the Australian government placing import restrictions on kava (DA&H, 2011), reports of increased alcohol use and anti-social behaviour began to surface from within the Australian Pasifika community. One commentator reported,

What is now happening is alcohol has become the substitute for kava; kava's promotion of a gentle sense of contentment is being replaced with the violence so often associated with excessive drinking. The good work done with young people by fostering their traditional culture... [is being] undone by pushing them towards alcohol (Pinomi, 2008: 15).

Fehoko (2014; 2015), in his study that focused on young Tongan men and their attendance at *faikava* venues in South Auckland, described these environments as "cultural classrooms" critical to increased levels of empowerment and wellbeing. Moreover, these *faikava* circles were shown to deter alcohol use and in turn decrease the likelihood of anti-social behaviour and gang involvement by attendees (also see Black, 2015). This suggests the value of kava over alcohol and its role in both cultural continuance and socio-cultural stability

within Pasifika communities, a factor that plays a role in kava use by some professional rugby union and league players.

*The Dox Brothers Kalapu* is an example of a rugby kava venue in A/NZ that has gone on to influence non-Pasifikan kava users. This club was initially founded by former Waikato Chiefs (A/NZ rugby union franchise) and All Black (A/NZ national rugby team) Sione Lauaki (Tongan). Initially members were rugby union and league players of Pasifika ancestry, although this expanded as players from non-Pasifika ethnicities began attending. In another example, former Waikato Chiefs and All Black Sitiveni Sivivatu (Fijian) and Auckland Blues (A/NZ rugby union franchise) and All Black Jo Rokocoko (Fijian) frequently had non-Pasifikans being introduced and subsequently returning to kava drinking in their homes in A/NZ prior to taking up rugby contracts in France. Sivivatu and Rokocoko are now introducing European friends to kava, some of whom had never heard of this traditional substance prior to meeting this pair.

Current Waikato Chiefs, All Black and Māori All Black, Liam Messam is a regular at kava sessions in Hamilton and when on tour he occasionally takes kava with him to drink with his team-mates. An example of this can be seen in a recent Pacific TV video (2014: upload). It shows some of Messam's All Black team mates drinking kava following their game against Scotland in November 2014, a kava 'session' that included several of the Pālangi/Pākehā players. Additionally, near the end of the 2014 ITM Cup (New Zealand) rugby union competition season, Te Karere news (2014) interviewed Northland Taniwha players (Māori and Pālangi/Pākehā) who described the team coming together and drinking kava following their game. These are but a hand-full of rugby league and union players who regularly drink and introduce new consumers to kava (also see Walshaw, 2014). Kava use by sporting heroes has increased its popularity among ethnic groups not usually associated with it and in turn facilitated diasporic identity formation in reverse.

While the reasons cited above also contribute to the uptake of kava by Māori, many from this ethnicity are also introduced to this traditional substance following inter-marriage and the blending of their families with Pasifika immigrants. But there are also wider issues at play. Hoturoa Kerr, a Waikato-Tainui tribal member, academic and traditional navigation expert adds an interesting perspective. He is a regular kava drinker who is married to a Hawaiian. Kerr stated that while his wife's family had some influence on his

kava use, "we Māori originally came from the Pacific, so kava is already in us" (H. Kerr, personal communication, 22 Oct., 2014). Kerr went on to explain that while *whakapapa* and ancestry is critical to 'being' Māori, many Māori perceive their ancestral line as commencing at the arrival of Māori to Aotearoa some 850 years ago. "We [Māori] talk about coming from Hawaiki [the pre-migration homeland of Māori], but at the same time we are mostly inward focused and see ourselves as separate, with no Pacific link".

Kerr added that imagery such as Steel & Goldie's famous 1898 painting entitled, 'The arrival of the Maoris in New Zealand', plays a role in this. He stated that the painting – presented in Figure 1 – creates impressions that Māori arrived in Aotearoa emaciated and near death which in turn fuels notions of a severance between Māori and Pasifika ancestral, cultural and environmental ties due to 'return' appearing impossible. "That painting is rubbish" asserts Kerr; and he should know, he is the owner of *Haunui*, a double hulled *waka haurua* based on traditional specifications similar to the vessels used by early migrating Māori. Kerr has sailed *Haunui* from Aotearoa, through the Pacific Islands, to South America (NZMM, 2013). He explained that *Haunui* can sail between Fiji and Auckland, New Zealand, in seven days, demonstrating the ease in which early migrating Māori could travel between Aotearoa and their former Pasifika homes (Kerr, 2014). "Kava has always been important to Islanders. Early voyagers would have taken kava with them, brought it here [to Aotearoa], used it here. Kava is part of Māori culture, but we gave it up once we got established here."



Figure 1. "The arrival of the Maoris in New Zealand"; a famous painting by Louis John Steele and Charles Frederick Goldie suggesting Māori arrived in Aotearoa emaciated and near death. (Source: Steele & Goldie, 1989).

Commentators add to Kerr's assertion. For instance, Huffman (2012: 25) stated,

Early Pacific Islanders considered kava a desirable and tradeable commodity. It had to be traded because, lacking flowers and seeds, it cannot reproduce naturally... Well cut and wrapped fresh kava branches can be planted after sea voyages of up to two weeks... Thus, we can attribute the entire distribution of drinkable kava across the Pacific to the earlier maritime explorers of the region, long before the late arrival of European explorers.

Crowley (1994) spoke specifically of early Māori and kava;

The first Polynesian migrants in New Zealand probably also brought kava with them, though it failed to grow in the colder climate. However, the plant kawakawa of the related *Macropiper excelsum* from a different genesis (which the Māori used for medicinal purposes) is found there. The word kava in Māori is also used to mean 'marae protocol', which would accord with kava having been previously used in a ceremonial context as we find in Polynesia today (p.95).

Additionally, Taylor (1848: 24, 100) presents a Māori proverb – "*Eaha te tohu o te Ringaringa he kawakawa*", literally meaning, "What is the sign in our hands? Kawakawa leaves!" – and suggests that kawakawa – which Bock (2000: 176-7) called "Māori kava" – was consumed as "*cava*" when Māori first arrived in Aotearoa. Adding weight to this theory is Anderson (2000) who suggests that the Māori place names of Parikawakawa (at Kaikoura), Te Kawakawa and Kawaranga (near Thames) were given by Māori to reflect their meeting together and drinking of kawakawa, mirroring their traditional consumption of kava prior to sailing south to Aotearoa (p.393). Finally, Aporosa (2014: 29-31), drawing on several sources of literature, argues that early Māori would have used kawakawa spiritually and recreationally as a substitute for kava, adding that this knowledge was lost following the introduction of the 1907 *Tohunga Suppression Act*. Kerr, as part of revitalising traditional knowledge concerning early voyaging, is playing a critical role in the creation of diasporic identity formation in reverse related to kava use framed within Māori-Pasifika ancestral and cultural connections. In recognition of Māori's Pasifika links, kava is frequently consumed aboard *Haunui* (Figure 2).

An additional factor that appears to encourage new non-Pasifika kava users and thereby facilitate diasporic identity formation in reverse are venues which are not dominated by one Pasifika ethnicity. This, I would suggest, is because multi-ethnic venues appear to be more inclusive and less threatening to the new user. *The Dox Brothers Kalapu* provides a good example of this. This

kava club (shown in Figure 3) is situated in a garage near Templeview, Hamilton, and is currently run by an A/NZ born Tongan. Unlike the Tongan *faikava kalapu*, iTaukei or Indo-Fijian groups that meet across Hamilton, since its inception, *The Dox Brothers Kalapu* has not been dominated by one particular Pasifika ethnicity. Non-Pasifika attendees at this *kalapu* quickly adopt and engage in Pasifika behaviours and values. This includes reciprocity by offering small amounts of kava, sweets and fruit as a contribution to drinking sessions, sitting cross-legged on woven mats on the floor, showing respect to one and other and the kava by clapping when receiving and finishing their cup of kava (Toren, 1990: 35), using Pasifika words and phraseology associated with kava use, and wearing *sulu/lavalava* and *bula/aloha* shirts or t-shirts depicting symbols of Pasifika culture.



Figure 2. Crew members drinking kava aboard *Hauui* (*waka haurua*). (Source: Turanga Kerr, 2011).

In the case of *The Dox Brothers Kalapu*, diasporic identity formation in reverse results from more than simply ‘drinking’ kava. It is created through a cultural engagement with Pasifika people through kava. The Pasifika influence comes from across the Pacific region as opposed to a single environment such as Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu or Hawaii. Non-Pasifika attendees create hybridised Pasifika expressions based on personal understanding by self-selecting and using cultural expressions related to kava from the various Pasifika environments. This adds depth and meaning to the experience and is critical in the development of diasporic identity formation in reverse. I will expand further on this shortly. Although *The Dox Brothers Kalapu* is a male only

environment, I frequently see Māori and Pālangi/Pākehā female kava drinkers in other venues across Hamilton and Auckland. Admittedly these numbers are fewer than at the Raggamuffin Kava Lounge; however it does appear that diasporic identity formation in reverse for kava drinking females is unaffected, or not concerned by, the masculine discourse and concepts associated with Pasifika kava consumption.



Figure 3. Multi-ethnic attendees at *The Dox Brothers* [kava] *Kalapu* (Hamilton, New Zealand). (Source: Author, 2013).

An example of this new Pālangi/Pākehā kava user is Marty and Richard who I have known for approximately four years. Both are first and third generation New Zealand born Europeans. Visually and vocationally these two contrast the likes of long-time kava user 'Mike', mentioned earlier. They dress more conservatively, with Marty a post-doctorate university researcher and lecturer and Richard a doctoral chemistry student. Both started coming to *The Dox Brothers Kalapu* as a result of meeting kava drinking Pasifika men at Church and in the community. Richard, recalling his first time at *The Dox Brothers Kalapu*, stated,

The atmosphere blew me away. It [the club house] was dimly lit, with 20 plus men sitting on chairs with the legs cut off, in a circle on the floor. They were all age groups... a mixture of Polynesian and Pāpalangi [Pālangi]. There were Tongans, Samoans, Fijians, Fijian Indians, and even Niueans – all associating together in mutual respect, without animosity or any kind of class system... At no point did I

ever get made to feel out of place; in fact I felt like they were honoured for a Pāpalangi to be taking such interest in their culture (R. Brunton, personal communication, 5 Nov., 2014).

When asked why he continues returning to *The Dox Brothers Kalapu*, Marty added, because “we talk about important things... I’ve made new friends... it [kava] relaxes me and sharpens the mind... [and] the next day... I’m much more relaxed... One thing I appreciate is the semi-ceremonial way we drink...” (M. Atkins, personal communication, 5 Nov., 2014).

Marty and Richard have since acquired their own kava drinking utensils and drink in Pālangi/Pākehā only groups in their own homes having formed a kava club called *Kalapu Pālangi*. Marty stated that when drinking at his house with Pālangi/Pākehā friends, “we still observe the same cultural aspects... Drinking kava out of this context seems strange and not as enjoyable.” As they have become more familiar with the kava culture, they have ventured into new environments dominated by one ethnicity (Tongan, Fijian etc.), spaces in which non-Pasifika peoples would never have been seen a few years ago. This adds to, and strengthens, diasporic identity formation in reverse.

## **Conclusion**

Kava is arguably one of the most potent icons of collective Pasifika identity (Aporosa, 2015). Its influence as an input of ‘who I am’ is increasingly being taken up by those who traditionally had very little or no connection with this traditional substance and the cultural practices associated with it. As Pasifika kava users have immigrated to new environments and engaged fifth stage diasporic identity change, they have also contributed to diasporic identity transformation in reverse as some non-Pasifika hosts have taken up kava use, an imported Pasifika identity marker (Spoonley, 2001: 95-96).

New non-Pasifika kava users cite health, alcohol alternative, camaraderie and good discussion as reasons for pursuing and then returning to kava consumption. These observations also add to earlier speculation by Lebot et al. (1997) on whether or not kava might be the next “world drug” (p.198-9). Whereas most drugs are popularised due to their effects (Jay, 2012: 22), the traditional aspects and identity elements associated with kava – often borrowed and incorporated into the use practices of these new users – add efficacy to Lebot et al.’s world drug proposition. Moreover, this would suggest these new kava users are adding to their sense of self and defining their identity in

comparison to, and in association with, an ethnicity in diaspora. Marty reinforces this observation when he stated,

What is New Zealand 'Kiwi' culture? How do you define it? My parents came from England, but I don't call myself English. Kava gives me a connection to something physical, to people, to a culture. It adds to me as a person (M. Atkins, personal communication, 4 Nov., 2014).

Richard added:

As a white New Zealander, at times I feel a disconnect from what my cultural identity is supposed to be. When people speak of New Zealand culture, it often takes the shape of alcohol-fuelled gatherings, which I want no part of. Kava is not native to [me... but] I feel that I am able to include the practice of kava drinking into my culture. Although racially I am white, I do not accept that I must follow the practices and culture that my race predominantly follows. Instead, I feel that I am able to create my own culture, and I feel connected to other cultures that use kava as I do so (R. Brunton, personal communication, 5 Nov., 2014).

In taking up kava drinking, these new users are drawing on and including identity attributes of a people group in diaspora and in turn outworking diasporic identity formation in reverse. This is particularly the case for Pālangi/Pākehā.

While a similar case could be made for Māori, perhaps this is more-so identity re-construction in diaspora following a 850 year hiatus? As Kerr stated, kava "is" an aspect of Māori culture, but one that was given up during the early settlement of Aotearoa. As Māori continue on their path of decolonisation, identity solidification and self-determination, maybe a day will come when kava will again sit alongside the dominant Māori cultural markers of *pōwhiri*, *waiata* and *kapa haka*, re-embracing a powerful identity element that was, until 800 odd years ago, also what defined Māori identity. Such a move would have similarities with male Hawaiian post-colonial re-engagement with their former kava culture, much of which was lost following the arrival of the early missionaries (Kanahele, 1995: 108). Of interest here is Tengan (2008: 12, 62-3, 216) who explains the role that Māori have played as part of this Hawaiian cultural revitalisation, a partnership that could possibly be reversed to aid Māori in reuniting with an element of their pre-migration Hawaiki culture.

While this article has added to Rynkiewich's (2012) observed lack of commentary regarding Pasifika diaspora and identity, it has also demonstrated that Pasifikans have identity markers that some within their host environment

find attractive. This has occurred to the point that some hosts have stepped out of their comfort zones to pursue new ways of learning and participation in order to enhance their own sense of self through reverse diasporic identity formation. In return, as Pasifikans have seen hosts embrace aspects of their culture, this has resulted in increased notions of empowerment for Pasifikans which in turn adds new dimensions to their fourth and fifth stage diasporic identity formation experience.

### Glossary

<i>aloha/bula shirt</i>	Colourfully patterned shirts frequently worn by Pacific Islanders.
<i>faikava</i>	Recreational kava consumption (Tonga).
<i>Fiji-Hindi</i>	Common language spoken by Indo-Fijians.
<i>Indo-Fijian</i>	Mostly the descendants of the 60,000 indentured labourers brought to Fiji in the late 1800s, early 1900s.
<i>Hawaiki</i>	Pre-migration homeland of Māori (see Smith, 1910: 257-60).
<i>iTaukei</i>	Indigenous Fijian.
<i>kava</i>	The <i>Piper myristicum</i> plant and traditional beverage made from it.
<i>Kalapu</i>	Contemporary creation for the word 'club' (Tonga).
<i>kapa haka</i>	Cultural performance (Māori).
<i>kawa</i>	Protocol, ceremony (Māori).
<i>kawakawa</i>	<i>Macropiper excelsum</i> ; an Aotearoa native plant.
<i>Kiwi</i>	The flightless native bird and national icon of New Zealand; also a term of reference/nickname for people from New Zealand.
<i>kōrero</i>	Conversation, discussion (Māori).
<i>lavalava</i>	See sulu.
<i>mana</i>	Spiritual power, super national power (for the purpose of this article; Firth, 1940: 485).
<i>Pākehā</i>	A New Zealander of European descent.
<i>Pasifikan</i>	Term often applied in Australasia to those of Pacific Island ancestry.
<i>Pālangi</i>	Term used by Pacific peoples to refer to those of European ancestry.
<i>Pāpalangi</i>	This, and Pālangi, are used by some Samoan's and Tongan's to refer to those of European ancestry.
<i>pōwhiri</i>	Māori welcome ceremony.
<i>sulu</i>	Cotton wrap-around skirt typically worn by Pasifika men and woman. Also known as <i>lavalava</i> and <i>sarong</i> .
<i>taniwha</i>	Water spirit, monster, powerful creature, powerful leader (Māori).
<i>The Dox Brothers Kalapu</i>	A kava club in Hamilton, New Zealand, with its name inspired by Tongan language; ' <i>Dox</i> ' is slang for <i>Tokoua</i> , a Tongan word literally meaning 'brother'. ' <i>Kalapu</i> ' is a contemporary creation for the word 'club'.
<i>Tohunga Suppression Act</i>	Regulation enacted in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1907 aimed at encouraging Māori to forsake their religious practices and traditional healing systems.
<i>waiata</i>	Song, chant, psalm (Māori).

<i>wainivanua</i>	Inferring 'water of the land, people and their cultural practices' (Fiji).
<i>waka</i>	Double-hulled voyaging canoe (Māori).
<i>haurua</i>	
<i>whakapapa</i>	Genealogy, lineage, descent (Māori).

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'Apo' Aporosa is maternally related to the village of Naduri in Macuata, Fiji. He has a PhD in Development Studies from Massey University, New Zealand, focused on the interplay between traditional kava use and contemporary society. He was awarded the 2016 New Zealand Health Research Council Pasifika Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship. Situated at The University of Waikato's Anthropology Programme and working with the University's School of Psychology's Traffic Road Safety Research Group (TARS), Aporosa is

investigating driver fitness following the consumption of large traditional volumes of kava. [www.aporosa.net](http://www.aporosa.net)