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James Prescott is a senior lecturer in accounting and programme leader for the accounting component of the Bachelor of Business degree. Since joining AUT in 2000, he has lectured in Financial Management, Advanced Business Finance and Investment Analysis in the Bachelors Degree and International Risk Management, Corporate Finance and Investment Analysis and Management at the postgraduate level. His research interests are in SMEs and Micro-enterprise business formation and sustainability. His present research is towards a PhD where he is specifically investigating business sustainability among pacific island owned and/or operated businesses in New Zealand.

Prior to joining the university, he worked in both the private and public sector as a management accounting, senior financial accountant and financial manager. He has and currently serves on a number of community and government ministerial boards and is a director on a number of small companies. He had been a long serving member on many trusts including the Pacific Business Trust and health boards with which he has continues with his research and contact. Having served on so many boards and trusts, James has extensive networks with the pacific island community across a number of sectors including, education, health broadcasting and commerce.

Mr Prescott is a Tongan-born researcher and is fluent in both Tongan and English. His present research interest is a product of his commitment to advancing pacific island development in commerce, education, health and politics.

Approaches to Researching Ethnic Minority Businesses in New Zealand

It is a reasonable suggestion that the approach to a particular study or research should embrace the general and unique characteristics of the issues or subjects being studied. The following article is a discussion of the unique characteristics of Pacific Island businesses and business people and how these peculiarities may be incorporated into the design of a research project or study. Although the paper makes specific reference to Tongan people and communities, there are many aspects that will have relevance to research involving other cultures and indeed the indigenous people of New Zealand. The paper also discusses how existing means of data collection including interviews and case studies may be appropriately used to effectively collect the required data.

Maori and Pacific Island businesses in New Zealand are arguably a misunderstood and yet important part of the small to medium size enterprises (SME) sector. Media coverage tends to highlight the negative aspects of how Maori and Pacific Island people carry out business and many of the performance measurement tools ignore the significance of the cultural element that underpins the nature of these operations.

Although Maori and Pacific Island business research has been included in the popular research basket, the literature does not support this. Research in the area of Maori and Pacific Island business still represents a gap in the academic literature. As different research institutions begin researching Maori and Pacific Island businesses, they will need to embrace a set of methods and methodologies that capture not only the financial sustainability of these businesses but also the complexity of the cultures, past, present and future that underpin and gently shape the actions that inevitably determine the success and sustainability of these businesses.