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Physical Education (PE) as a pathway to empowerment of  
young people in Rarotonga, Cook Islands

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## Abstract

The Cook Islands secondary school's curriculum *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being Curriculum (OTM | HWC) derives from the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). While a western education system is based on the concept of building human capital, which conflicts with Pacific Indigenous education values, The OTM | HWC has been adapted to include Cook Islands values and philosophies. Despite a well-intentioned curriculum, the implementation may face additional challenges, with resourcing and teacher recruitment. The design and delivery of the OTM | HWC has the potential to educate the whole person, but students experiences may differ from intended outcomes.

With this in mind, the aim of this research is to understand the potential that a culturally relevant Physical Education (PE) curriculum has to empower young people. This research therefore asks: 1) How has the OTM | HWC been adapted and implemented in Rarotonga, Cook Islands? 2) How is culture utilised within the curriculum and how did this play out in schools? 3) What challenges might be present with respect to the design and delivery of PE programmes? As this thesis is grounded in Development Studies and draws from theories of Sport for Development and PE for Development, of particular interest is understanding from a gendered perspective how PE can facilitate empowerment in Rarotonga.

This research is a qualitative case study. Fieldwork was undertaken in two secondary schools in Rarotonga, both of which follow an NZ model of education in the senior school, with students gaining the NZ qualification the National Certificate in Education Achievement (NCEA). Methods of data collection consisted of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, focus groups and a fieldwork journal. In total 25 participants were interviewed.

Through the application of a culturally relevant empowerment framework, which was the theoretical lens by which the findings were deliberated, this research contributes to new ways of understanding the experiences of young men and women within the PE classroom. The research found that several challenges exist including the recruitment of qualified teachers, difficulties with facilities and efforts needed to encourage students who were reluctant to participate. This research shows that social connections with friends and classmates were crucial in the enjoyment of physical activity. This is closely linked with *tu akangateitei* (respect), which students believed should be shown to the teacher and others when participating. Additionally, self-efficacy was a large contributing factor to participation and enjoyment, with girls often perceiving they lacked in ability. A prevailing hegemonic masculinity influenced the behaviours of boys in the classroom, with some sports having the potential to threaten culturally defined masculinities. For empowerment to be culturally relevant within the PE classroom in Rarotonga, focusing on inclusion and support within activities that do not always focus on physical capability is essential. The inclusion of *vaka* and other cultural games in the curriculum is fundamental to ensuring local values are maintained and perpetuated.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

CICC	Cook Islands Christian Church
EFA	Education for All
EMP	Education Master Plan
EQAP	The Educational Quality and Assessment Programme
EVI	Environmental Vulnerability Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HOD	Head of Department
HPE	Health and Physical Education
JCFD	Joint Committee for Development
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex +
LMS	London Missionary Society
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
MUHEC	Massey University Human Ethics Committee
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
NCEA	National Certificate in Educational Achievement
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan
NZ	New Zealand
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum
NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework
OCED	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OFC	Oceania Football Federation
OTM   HPW	<i>Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki</i>   The Cook Island Health and Physical Well-being curriculum document
PEDF	Pacific Education Development Framework

SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFD	Sport for Development
SPC	The Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
PE	Physical Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNESCO-IBE	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation – International Bureau of Education

## Glossary of Cook Islands Māori terms/phrases

<i>'Ae</i>	Yes
<i>Aere Ra</i>	Goodbye
<i>Akaputuputu taokotai</i>	Collaboration
<i>Akatano</i>	Discipline
<i>Akava'ine</i>	Transgender women
<i>Ama</i>	Outrigger of a <i>vaka</i> (canoe)
<i>Aotearoa</i>	Long white cloud (Māori name for New Zealand)
<i>Angaanga kapit</i>	Cooperation
<i>Angaanga taokotai</i>	Community involvement
<i>Aorangi</i>	Total environment
<i>Ariki</i>	King/Queen/High chief
<i>Aura</i>	Physical and spiritual wellbeing
<i>House of Ariki</i>	A council of hereditary leaders that advise the government on traditional matters
<i>Ka'a</i>	Twine used to connect a <i>vaka</i> (canoe)
<i>Kai</i>	Food
<i>Kia orana</i>	Hello ( <i>may you live long</i> )
<i>Kie</i>	The sail of a <i>vaka</i> (canoe)
<i>Ko au</i>	Me
<i>Ko au e te oire tangata, ko au e te toku Aorangi</i>	Me in the community
<i>Ko au e tetala ua atu tangata</i>	Me with other people
<i>Ko Akari</i>	Coconut husking relay
<i>Komono</i>	Sub-chief
<i>Kopapa</i>	Physical well-being
<i>Kopu tangata</i>	Social well-being
<i>Koutu Nui</i>	A similar group to the House of Ariki, made up of sub-chiefs



<i>Manako</i>	Mental and emotional well-being
<i>Mata’iapo</i>	Chief
<i>Meitaki</i>	Thank you
<i>Meitaki Maata</i>	Thank you very much
<i>Metua</i>	Elder
<i>Moenga</i>	Mat
<i>Nukutere</i>	Floating island
<i>Oe</i>	Oars used to paddle a <i>vaka</i> (canoe)
<i>Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki</i>	The Health and Well-being curriculum
<i>Oraanga tangata</i>	Sexuality education
<i>Pa Enuu</i>	Outer Islands
<i>Papa’a</i>	European/foreigner
<i>Peipei, Tiporo/Poroiti</i>	Juggling
<i>Peu ui tupuna</i>	Cultural traditions
<i>Peu angaanga</i>	Cultural activity
<i>Peu inangaro</i>	Cultural beliefs
<i>Peu oire tangata</i>	Cultural community
<i>Peu puapinga</i>	cultural values
<i>Pito’enua</i>	Well-being
<i>Rangatira</i>	Sub-chief
<i>Rore</i>	Stilt races, combating and single stilts
<i>Raro</i>	Down
<i>Ra’ui</i>	To place a ban on the harvesting of a particular resource/produce
<i>Tapere</i>	Sub-district
<i>Tāueue</i>	Participation
<i>Te Mato Vai</i>	Source of the water

<i>Te reo Māori Kuki Airani</i>	Cook Islands Māori language <sup>2</sup>
<i>Toku tupuanga</i>	Me being physical
<i>Tonga</i>	South
<i>Tu akangateitei</i>	Respect
<i>Tu inangaro</i>	Relationships
<i>tu Manako</i>	Mental and emotional well-being
<i>Tumu te Varovaro</i>	Source of the Echo
<i>Vaerua</i>	Spiritual well-being
<i>Vaka</i>	Sea faring canoe
<i>Vaka iti</i>	An interschool competition for the sport of canoe paddling

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<sup>2</sup> This thesis will use the macron in Cook Islands Māori, inline with official Cook Islands Ministry of Education documentation.



# Chapter 1 : Challenges in Physical Education design and delivery

## 1.1 Introducing the thesis

The genesis of this thesis stems from my role as a Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher.<sup>3</sup> As a physical educator, I am passionate about delivering quality Physical Education (PE) programmes to young people, aiming to instil an appreciation for movement and play. I have worked in education for 13 years, 12 of which have been as Head of Department (HOD) for HPE in three separate Aotearoa | New Zealand (NZ) schools.<sup>4</sup> This has given me experience in designing and delivering diverse PE programmes to meet the needs of the students within different school settings. In 2012, I completed a post-graduate diploma in Development Studies. Prior to beginning my Masters, I wondered how the PE curriculum could be utilised and implemented in such a way as to serve students from multicultural backgrounds. Drawing on both my education and development studies backgrounds, I examined whether or not the Aotearoa | NZ HPE curriculum was empowering or disempowering for young Pacific Island women in South Auckland (Greene, 2015).

Within education there is supremacy as to how subjects are valued. My own experiences and the shared experiences of other PE teachers have made me aware that PE is often not valued as highly in schools as other subjects and that many people hold an old-fashioned view of the subject thinking the educational focus is about playing and learning different sports. There can be challenges with curriculum design, implementation, and delivery at the school level as well, with some schools still prioritising an outdated curriculum design that is solely focused on physical capability.<sup>5</sup> Highlighting that it is possible for a well-designed, well-intentioned curriculum document that is culturally responsible to not be delivered and implemented well at the school level, either by the HOD or due to school resources, thus falling short of the potential the curriculum has to engage students.

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<sup>3</sup> Health and Physical Education is one of eight learning areas in the New Zealand curriculum. Both Health and Physical Education are individual subjects within this learning area. Both subjects are typically compulsory to Year 10. At Year 11, either subject becomes optional for students to study.

<sup>4</sup> Aotearoa and New Zealand (NZ) will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis to acknowledge the Indigenous name for New Zealand.

<sup>5</sup> The PE curriculum has moved away from a solely physical ability focus to one that is more holistic in nature. This is discussed further in Chapter 2.

I am acutely aware that many young people still have negative experiences in the PE classroom, either through old fashioned programmes or delivery, because it is not valued within the school setting or because physical activity is not valued at home. Whenever I mention that I am a PE teacher I find that the response I receive is a polarising one – people either loved their time in PE class or they hated it. In addition to the aforementioned challenges that the subject of PE faces, the complexities within a co-ed PE classroom, coupled with sometimes limiting views on gender within this space, have led me to want to examine in detail gendered experiences in PE.

With these views in mind, my PhD research looks to explore the PE classroom experiences of young men and women in the Cook Islands and to investigate whether these experiences can lead to empowerment.<sup>6</sup> The Cook Islands curriculum is largely influenced by New Zealand's PE curriculum, but modified to fit the local context, with the inclusion of Cook Islands values, beliefs and philosophies. Given the way in which PE is often undervalued in Aotearoa, of concern is the idea that these same issues might be present in another setting. Furthermore, the connection and commitment that NZ has with the Cook Islands as a realm country and NZ's role in providing curriculum support through Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to the Cook Islands could provide tension between the aims of each educational systems and local cultural knowledge (see section 5.4). Furthermore, there potentially may be a disconnect between empowerment models often used in development studies and how these are positioned within local contexts. Cook Islanders may not use the term empowerment but do have values and beliefs that can influence and help to shape the empowerment of young people in the Cook Islands. While this thesis applies an empowerment theoretical framework, it seeks to understand empowerment from a contextually relevant perspective, applying local concepts within mainstream international development empowerment theory.

## **1.2 The research problem**

Having reflected on my experiences as a PE teacher, with an interest in development in the Pacific, I will now outline the research problem in relation to the literature. My research sits at the interface of three main bodies of literature: 1) Sport and physical education for

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<sup>6</sup> Empowerment as it relates to this study is defined in Chapter 3.6.

development, 2) gender and physical education, and 3) physical education in the Pacific. The research problem is discussed below:

### **1.2.1 Western influences in education**

Western education systems are regarded as largely based on the concept of building human capital, which views education as a means for economic growth (Coxon, 2002; Cremin & Nakabugo, 2012; Kabini Sanga, 2005; Tarabini, 2010). Western education conflicts with Pacific Indigenous education values, which emphasise kinship, concrete and specific contexts, rank and leadership and restraint behaviour (K. H. Thaman, 2009). A privileging on western education also “denies students the chance to think locally, within their culture, about opportunities to improve their livelihoods” (Beumelburg, 2016, p. 4). Calls for cultural relevance in Pacific education came in 2002 at a Re-thinking of Pacific Education Colloquium. The ineffectiveness of Pacific education was attributed to the “increasing incongruence between the values promoted by formal western schooling... on the one hand and those held by Pacific communities in the other” (Pene, Taufe’ulungaki, & Benson, 2002, p. 1). Pacific researchers wanted Pacific knowledge and culture to take precedence and underpin development goals in the region and thus education should change to reflect this shift (Manu, 2009; K. F. Sanga & Thaman, 2009). Key initiatives in Pacific education have called for ownership of Pacific education and self-determined action to develop their own values and knowledge systems (see Section 2.4) (K. Thaman, 2007). For example, the Cook Islands prioritise the protection of culture from an increasingly globalised world, promoting language and dialect in particular after a period of language loss (Glasgow, 2011).

The Cook Islands takes ownership of development initiatives and through self-determinant action places high importance on the promotion of culture and local knowledge in education. Yet, the influence of western education models through the inclusion of the New Zealand qualification, the National Certificate in Education Achievement (NCEA) in secondary schooling is claimed to align individuals to live and work in NZ (Thomas & Postlethwaite, 2016), creating a drain from their homeland to New Zealand. While the PE curriculum has been adapted to fit the local context, there are still post-colonial influences through the underlying design of the PE curriculum and through the training of teachers in NZ, who then return to teach in the Cook Islands. To completely sever ties with colonialism, including the ongoing NZ influence of dominant *Pākehā* culture is difficult, and so challenges potentially

remain with any attempts to privilege local knowledge and culture in education especially when western models of education and attainment are prevalent.

### 1.2.2 Physical education in the Pacific Islands

Globally, PE has moved away from the sport equals PE paradigm (D. Kirk, 2009), yet this paradigm still exists in many countries around the world (Casey & Kirk, 2020). It is unclear to what extent this style of curriculum design is still prevalent in the Pacific Island context. PE in New Zealand shifted away from this style of curriculum delivery in the 1990s,<sup>7</sup> to a much more holistic approach that deals with teaching the ‘whole person’. This holistic approach is reflected in the inclusion of the Māori philosophy of *Hauora* developed by Durie (1994) in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) for HPE, outlined in section 4.1.2. *Hauora*, or well-being, has four dimensions, *taha tinana* | physical, *taha hinengaro* | mental and emotional, *taha wairua* | spiritual and *taha whānau* | social. The outdated style of PE as sport techniques is problematic for youth, as it places the body on show, allowing other students to make judgements about their bodies and their physical ability (Beltrán-Carrillo, Devís-Devís, & Peiró-Velert, 2018). Moreover, for Pacific Island girls in New Zealand, it was shown to lead to disempowerment within the classroom, with many girls opting out of lessons (Greene, 2015; Greene & Stewart-Withers, 2018). Therefore, teaching sport techniques as the dominant form of PE has not always been effective in fostering the adoption of physically active lifestyles for youth and nor has it led to empowerment (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010; Azzarito, Solomon, & Harrison Jr, 2006; Gorely, Holroyd, & Kirk, 2003; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011).

Many Pacific Island states have a ‘mixed message’ approach to PE (Hardman & Marshall, 2005).<sup>8</sup> Some Islands have little to no PE programme, such as Nauru, while others like Kiribati include PE as an integral part of their school curriculum (Hardman & Marshall, 2005). Furthermore, the priority given to PE can provide a challenge for some sport for development programmes and the uptake of particular sports, given the lack of perceived importance it had in schools in Samoa and the Cook Islands (Sherry, Schulenkorf, Seal, Nicholson, & Hoyer, 2017). If PE is not valued at school, with an obvious clear programme or objectives, then this

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<sup>7</sup> While NZ moved away from this style of curriculum, PE as sports skills still dominates as the main form of teaching and learning in many NZ secondary schools.

<sup>8</sup> Pacific and Pacific Island/s will be terms used interchangeably throughout this report for ease of reading. The researcher acknowledges that Pacific Island states are culturally diverse and the intention is not to homogenise this group.

sends clear messages to students regarding the importance of this subject and gives hierarchy to particular sports. Though, little is known about the challenges that are present in the Cook Islands (see Section 2.3) with respect to curriculum delivery and the promotion of physical activity in schools with an emphasis on the development of the whole person.

The Cook Islands have taken ownership of the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being curriculum (OTM | HPW) from the NZC for HPE. Section 2.5 outlines this ownership and the embedded cultural values and philosophies that underpin the curriculum. Nevertheless, even with a well-designed local adaptation of the curriculum, challenges may exist in the implementation of such a well-intentioned curriculum. Curriculum can be defined as the totality of what students will learn in that subject, and it has the potential to play a significant role in inclusive, equitable education (Stabback, 2016). The curriculum as a document is closely connected to the processes used to put that document into practice, thus curriculum design is only one element to consider, implementation must also be examined. When implementing the curriculum, expectations are placed on education systems and authorities, schools, teachers and students (Stabback, 2016). It is in the intention of this thesis to explore and understand what challenges might be present when implementing the OTM | HPW.

### **1.2.3 Gender and Physical Education**

The PE classroom is a complicated setting, with the potential for teachers and classroom experiences to reinforce gender stereotypes (Brown & Rich, 2002; Chalabaev, Sarrazin, Fontayne, Boiché, & Clément-Guillotin, 2013; Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016; Oliver & Kirk, 2015). These stereotypes are often binary and do not account for gender on a spectrum (Diamond, 2020; Monro, 2005). There is a long tradition of gender variance in Pacific Island communities (Ravulo, Mafile'o, & Yeates, 2019). Yet while many transgendered people are visible in the community, social acceptance of non-heteronormativity is influenced by religious, political and cultural factors, this is evidenced by homosexuality still being illegal in seven Pacific Island countries (Ravulo et al., 2019). In the Cook Islands, *akava'ine* is used to describe transgender women, and while a relatively recent terminology, the existence of a third gender was known in pre-Christian Cook Island Māori societies (see Section 5.23) (Alexeyeff, 2009). This thesis acknowledges that gender sits along a spectrum which includes understanding experiences of those who may or may not sit within traditional notions of gender such as 'boy' and 'girl' (see Section 7.2).



Problematically, sport can reinforce the 'gender order', emphasising a stabilised form of masculinity that can marginalise both males and females (Anderson, 2009; Bevan et al., 2020). Sport is seen as masculine in nature and it is suggested that boys tend to dominate PE classroom experiences (Azzarito & Solomon, 2009; Kerner, Haerens, & Kirk, 2018), for example, by retaining possession of the ball or dictating who receives the ball. Subsequently, this serves to only allow those who have perceived 'ability' to be included, thus allowing a better chance at winning (Azzarito & Solomon, 2009; Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Bevan et al., 2020; Kerner et al., 2018). Moreover, girls tend to adopt avoidance techniques, such as standing out of the field of play or giving up ball possession (Azzarito & Solomon, 2009; Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Bevan et al., 2020; Kerner et al., 2018). Yet these limitations do not account for girls who consider themselves 'sporty' as well as 'non-sporty' boys.<sup>9</sup> Nor does it account for the gender dynamics in the Pacific context, where in some cultures it is common for girls to see boys as brothers and they are comfortable challenging them (Greene, 2015).

There is little in the literature about the gendered implications of PE on participation and wellbeing in the Pacific context. Many Pacific nations can hold Christian-informed views on gender, typically around behaviour and dress (Fischer, 2013).<sup>10</sup> For this study, importance is placed on examining gender as opposed to young women, as it is believed there is value in including young men in the research. Looking at women in isolation has recognised limitations, as it only focuses on half the story (R.W Connell, 1987; Cornwall & Edwards, 2010; Kabeer, 1994; Moser, 1993). As Moser (1993) argues, focusing on both males and females provides an opportunity to critically examine the social constructs at play between genders, and in this instance within the PE setting. Additionally, schools in the Cook Islands are coeducational, strengthening the need to examine gendered experiences in the PE classroom, and whether empowerment is occurring within that space.

Of importance to this research is the development of a culturally specific PE empowerment framework. This will be achieved through the use of focus groups,<sup>11</sup> which will allow young people to work in conjunction with the researcher to develop the components of

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<sup>9</sup> Sporty is a colloquial term often used to describe someone who likes sport and is good at it (athletic).

<sup>10</sup> Some Pacific Island countries are matrilineal and have both male and female leadership. In the case of the Cook Islands, many *ariki* past and present have been women. However, Christianity can inform ideals around decorum for genders.

<sup>11</sup> The use of focus groups when conducting research is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

empowerment relevant to the PE classroom. The aim is to develop a culturally informed empowerment concept that reflects what is occurring in the Cook Islands. This research seeks to bridge the gap in the literature by examining PE through a Pacific informed empowerment lens.

### **1.3 Research Aim and Questions**

The aim of this research is to investigate current approaches in developing and delivering the Cook Island implemented *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being curriculum, with a particular focus on gender and empowerment in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. The intention is to understand the challenges involved in PE curriculum design, delivery, and implementation with respect to empowerment of young people. Additionally, this research considers the implications of western influences in educational contexts through the adaptation of the New Zealand Curriculum for Health and Physical Education to the Cook Islands.

#### **Primary research questions and objectives:**

This research has 3 primary research questions, and accompanying objectives which are:

1. How has the Cook Islands adapted and implemented *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being curriculum document in Rarotonga, Cook Islands?
  - 1.1: To critically analyse the Cook Islands adaptation of *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being curriculum, and the influence of the NZ HPE curriculum on said document, with a particular focus on culture.
  - 1.2: To identify what challenges are present in the Cook Islands with respect to the design and delivery of PE programmes.
2. Do current approaches to physical education classes enable the empowerment of young people in Rarotonga, Cook Islands?
  - 2.1: To analyse physical education classes with a focus on what constitutes an empowering environment for students.

3. What does a context specific physical education programme, which results in empowerment, look like?

3.1: To determine what a PE programme which seeks to empower ought to look like, through the development of a student-informed, culturally relevant empowerment framework.

## 1.4 Thesis Outline

**Chapter 1** introduced the research by outlining the research problem and context, including the influence of western-centric education and a call for cultural relevance to education in the Pacific; the key issues with the Health and Physical Education curriculum design and delivery, and its transference to a local setting were briefly discussed. Finally, it outlined potential challenges with respect to gender and PE. The research aim and research questions were delineated, and the significance of the research was also given.

**Chapter 2** draws upon the literature from multiple fields, including 1) Sport and PE for development, 2) gender and sport and 3) PE in the Pacific. This research sits at the interface of these three fields. Scholarship on sport and PE for development is examined and includes a discussion on the ability for young people to exercise agency in the classroom and the role that self-efficacy can play in participation. Gender and PE, is then interrogated with an emphasis on how gender is a social construct and the PE classroom has the potential to simultaneously challenge and reinforce gender stereotypes, depending on the way in which it is designed and delivered. Finally, the literature on PE in the Pacific is presented, which outlines the limited literature in the Pacific and highlights the gap in literature this research aims to bridge. The chapter sheds light on western influences in education and a Pacific call for relevance through a reclaiming of education that promotes culture, including language and dialect. An overview is given of *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Physical Well-being curriculum document, highlighting the key aims of the document and its adaptation to fit the Cook Island context, including one of the key concepts – *pito'enua* | well-being.

**Chapter 3** describes the theoretical framework for the thesis. An empowerment conceptual framework has been chosen as the lens through which to examine and understand the experiences of Cook Island young people in the PE classroom. Firstly, the chapter analyses

power, which is a key concept in the understanding of empowerment theory. This dialogue includes Thompson's (2006) term 'invisible power', which encompasses the broader social-historical cultural context within which the individual lives. The chapter moves on to discuss the emergence of empowerment as a development paradigm and a mainstream tool in development theory and practice. Criticisms of empowerment theory, including the broad nature of the term, are addressed before the empowerment theoretical framework used for this research is outlined. This framework draws on the work of Rowlands (1995), Kelleher and Rao (n.d), and the Cook Islands philosophy of well-being, *pito'enua*, utilising the *vaka* (canoe) as a visual representation of empowerment of the whole person.

**Chapter 4** presents the methodology and methods of data collection and analysis employed for this research. The chapter starts by outlining the research design and describes how this research sits within an interpretivism paradigm, which seeks to make meaning of the human experience and acknowledges that reality is socially constructed. The chapter explains why a case study approach is appropriate for this research before detailing the research focus and location and unpacking the ethical considerations related to conducting research in the Cook Islands. Fieldwork considerations, including issues of positionality and reflexivity are then discussed. The research methods used to collect data are given, inclusive of structured classroom observations, participant selection, semi structured interviews, and the use of student focus groups to privilege the voice of Cook Island young people. Analysis methods are also described.

**Chapter 5** establishes the research context for this case study, which is Rarotonga, Cook Islands. First it will begin by providing a geographical outline of the Cook Islands, including each of the Islands, and a brief discussion on some of the challenges present in such a dispersed group of islands, before examining Rarotonga in more depth. An outline of the historical milestones for Cook Islands will then be discussed, including early explorers and the introduction of religion into the Cook Islands. The chapter moves on to describe Cook Islands development aims and objectives and the special relationship it has with New Zealand. Ownership and self-determination of development objectives are thus discussed, along with the Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP), their own version of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Cook Islands' desire to establish independence and preserve and promote culture is highlighted. The chapter then previews the Cook Islands biggest cultural festival, *Te Maeva Nui* which commemorates the Cook

Island independence from New Zealand in 1964, before discussing ongoing issues with post-colonialism, including the recent referendum on changing the name of the Cook Islands group which occurred while the researcher was in the field in 2019.

**Chapter 6** is the first of two findings chapters. This chapter will address Research Question 1 and its subsequent objectives by exploring the experiences of both students and staff in two secondary schools in Rarotonga. The chapter will present the findings from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews that took place at each school with both students and staff across the two field research visits in 2018 and 2019. It will speak to the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Wellbeing (OTM | HPW) curriculum by identifying how it has been adapted to fit locally. In contrast, a western sporting influence remains in the design and delivery of the curriculum. The chapter then explores how the OTM | HPW is implemented in schools and the potential impact this has on students. Finally, some of the challenges faced by schools, staff and students are identified and explained.

**Chapter 7** is the second of the two findings chapters and has an empowerment focus, presenting the research findings with a view to answering Research Questions 2 and 3. The chapter begins by examining gender in the PE classroom, highlighting the role that sport can play in threatening the culturally accepted gender order. Here, the findings reveal that boys more so than girls face challenges when navigating behaviour within narrow concepts of masculinity. Gendered approaches to tasks are highlighted, along with the repercussions of the actions of physically capable boys within the PE space. The discussion then focuses on the part friendships can play in the empowerment process, showing how the power of togetherness can increase student enjoyment in the classroom. The role that self-efficacy and agency can play in an individual's approach to tasks, and ultimately their enjoyment of the subject is also described. The third section presents students' conceptions of empowerment in the Cook Islands PE classroom, reflecting contextual clarity through which to make sense of the research findings.

**Chapter 8** discusses the findings and their contribution to development with respect to the design and delivery of the OTM | HPW and uses the empowerment framework to analyse the empowerment of young people in PE. Firstly, I examine the findings that can inform the gender and PE literature, including the ability of young women to navigate and challenge culturally accepted norms of femininity, yet this did not extend in the same way young men.

The findings also show how sport has the potential to challenge gender stereotypes when young people participate in sports not typically aligned to gender expectations. The difficulties young men have in navigating a prevailing hegemonic masculinity is considered, arguing that they face a greater threat to narrow conceptions of masculinity than young women. Next, the findings are analysed in relation to situating the individual within the wider social context. Here, the role culture can play in PE programmes is analysed, speaking to key Indigenous activities and values included in the curriculum design and the inclusion of Cook Islands values into the curriculum document and delivery. Finally, the chapter explores the theme of holistic approaches to PE and how designing PE programmes that have less focus on ability and physical success have a greater influence on the empowerment of young people.

**Chapter 9** concludes the thesis by reflecting on how the thesis has met the research aim and answered the research questions. There are three contributions to knowledge made by this research. This thesis contributes to the wider body of knowledge for Sport for Development, Physical Education and empowerment, and gender by firstly, understanding that in order to analyse the effectiveness of PE programmes to foster empowerment, local perspectives on empowerment are needed to ensure contextual clarity. Secondly, the development of cultural knowledge and its role in the empowerment process in PE cannot be undervalued; the inclusion of Indigenous games into the curriculum can seek to mitigate a western educational influence in local settings. PE programmes that are solely based on outdated forms of the teaching and learning of sports skills seek to disempower students and disengage both males and females from the classroom experience. The findings in this study contest the notions put forth in the literature that all boys are a homogenous group whose behaviour disempowered young women and alienate them in the classroom, instead this research argues that such behaviours are not the domain of all boys but rather a group of physically capable boys whose behaviour is culturally accepted through displaying traits of the prevailing hegemonic masculinity. Finally, a student-informed revised conceptual framework is presented. The chapter briefly outlines research limitations and recommendations before concluding how PE can be utilised in the empowerment of young people.

# Chapter 2 : Literature review: The interface of Sport and Physical Education for Development, Gender and Physical Education and the Pacific Context

The purpose of this chapter is to present and critically discuss the literature that is of relevance to this thesis. The chapter first discusses Sport for Development (SFD) and Physical Education (PE) for development literature, examining the complexities within the classroom, and how a student’s agency and self-efficacy can affect their experiences. Secondly, the literature on gender and sport will be presented, with a particular focus on gender equality as a part of policy adaptation. The chapter will then explore PE in the Pacific context before moving on to how curriculum adaptation occurs in local contexts. Finally, the way education policy has been transposed from New Zealand (NZ) to the Cook Islands is explored given that the NZ Health and PE (HPE) curriculum formed the basis of the Cook Islands *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being curriculum (OTM | HPW). Bringing together the literature from these multiple fields, my research sits within the interface of these bodies of knowledge, as demonstrated in Figure 2.1.

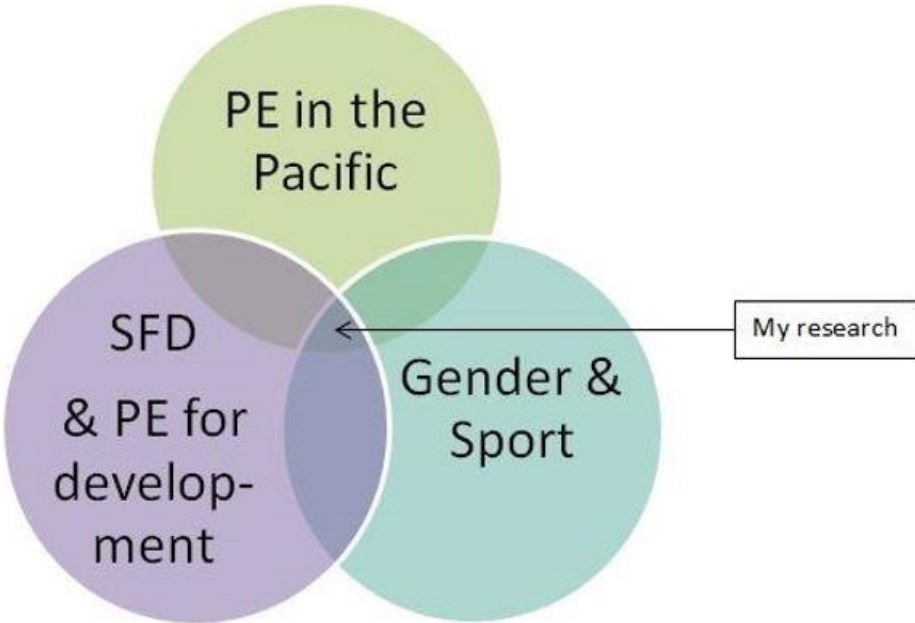


Figure 2.1 - The interface of this research (Source: Author)

## **2.1 Sport and physical education for development**

Sport for Development (SFD) has continued as a main stayer in development programmes since its inception. Sport has continued to be used as a unique vehicle for development in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace, n.d.). Sport for development is built on long-standing beliefs that the power and prosocial character of sport can be drawn upon to deal with a variety of emotional, social, physical, and economic issues, extending to tackling race and gender discrimination, or facilitating the process of empowerment through increasing one's sense of self-worth and confidence (Darnell, Chawansky, Marchesseault, Holmes, & Hayhurst, 2018; Hayhurst, 2016; Kay & Spaaij, 2012; Koss, 2011; Lawson, 2005; Nicholls, Giles, & Sethna, 2011; Schulenkorf & Adair, 2013; Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016; Spaaij, 2009c; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017). PE for development sits under SFD, and is seen as a means to develop adolescents as people, rather than a focus on educational outcomes, with many of the same objectives as SFD (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Central to one of the claimed benefits of SFD is that of building community. It is argued that through sport communities can become more cohesive, productive, and safer (Darnell et al., 2018; Spaaij, 2009c). According to Lawson (2005), sport and physical activity can bring together a diverse group of people to help build strong social networks.

Many SFD programmes can be categorised into two primary foci, the first being primarily youth focused design and delivery, and the second focusing heavily on football as the medium for such programmes (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Many government, community and development youth SFD programmes are built on the concept of asset-building that seek to promote young person's ability to maintain healthy relationships, build on life skill and to then take both of these skills into the community (Holt, Deal, & Pankow, 2020). Sport and play can be effective mediums for teaching young people key skills in the area of team building, decision-making, problem solving, and interpersonal skills (Coakley & Holt, 2016; Holt et al., 2020; Koss, 2011).

It is necessary to consider that while many sport for development programmes have been successful, sport has the potential to simultaneously produce both positive and negative outcomes and has the potential to both reflect and reinforce social inequalities (Spaaij, 2009b). Moreover, an increasing body of literature is concerned with outcomes and implications of SFD programmes (Darnell et al., 2018). Spaaij (2009) argues that programmes



need to be carefully designed in order for benefits to occur. We must not assume that sport and the space where sport experiences occur is inherently positive and fundamentally pure (Coakley, 2011). Furthermore, when SFD is used within education, there is a strong need for flexibility and an assurance that the development programme is grounded with the local context, which Spaaij and Ruth (2012, p.442) argue is at odds with standardised SFD education programmes.

### **2.1.1 The Physical Education Classroom**

SFD is an umbrella term that covers various areas, under which PE for development sits. On a broader level, quality physical education is seen as a platform for inclusion in wider society, particularly in terms of challenging stigma and overcoming stereotypes (UNESCO, 2015, p. 6). Theorists from multiple fields argue the benefits of physical education can lead to a more positive sense of self and increased levels of self-esteem (Deem & Gilroy, 1998; Fradkin, Wallander, Elliott, Cuccaro, & Schuster, 2016; Kenney, Wilmore, & Costill, 2015; Lynch, 2016; Theberge, 1987). By giving young people the opportunity to engage in sport, the school can empower both boys and girls to think more on an individual level, gain in self-confidence, leadership and interpersonal skills (Capel & Blair, 2019; Casey & Goodyear, 2015; Huggins & Randell, 2007). Indeed, there are many social gains which come from using physical education as a medium, i.e., students learn transferable life skills and psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, confidence and agency (Lynch, 2016; Woodcock, Cronin, & Forde, 2012). Quality school PE programmes provide young people with opportunities to develop the values, knowledge and skills they need to lead physically active lives, build self-esteem, and to promote and facilitate physical activity in the lives of others (Hodge, Murata, & Lieberman, 2017).

While acknowledging its challenges, proponents argue that PE can make a unique contribution to girls education and empowerment, in ways that other ad hoc physical activity and organised sport programmes, such as co-curricular sport, cannot (R. W. Kirk, 2012). By giving young people the opportunity to engage in sport, the school and teacher facilitate girls empowerment, enabling them to think more on both an individual and social level, gain in self-confidence, leadership and interpersonal skills (Huggins & Randell, 2007; Woodcock et al., 2012). Empowerment through physical education, can promote a strong sense of self and contribute to positive youth identity (Gullan, Power, & Leff, 2013). Moreover, both Gullan et al. (2013) and Lawson (2005) link behavioural empowerment through PE with increased

academic success, fewer behavioural problems and better social outcomes, leading to greater community involvement and efficacy. Physical Education can also provide a space for students to challenge stereotypes (Knez, Macdonald, & Abbott, 2012), and can provide a universal language to bridge racial, social, gender and religious divides (R. W. Kirk, 2012).

UNESCO (2015, p.6) claim that PE is *the* entry-point for lifelong participation in physical activity, and there is concern as the provision of PE is seen to be in decline across the world. While for many children PE is their first opportunity to be involved in organised play (Deem & Gilroy, 1998), in the Pacific context, this is not always the case (Ofahengaue Vakalahi & Godinet, 2008). As many parents do, Pacific parents see themselves as their child's first teachers, teaching them important aspects of their culture, including religion, language and values. In Cook Island culture we see this by drawing on the analogy of the *moenga*, discussed in section 2.1.2. Combine these early parental teachings with a strong sense of community, and it is found that most Pacific children have been actively involved in organised play and sport prior to their first experiences within the PE classroom, more often than not through church and social gatherings (Fitzpatrick, 2011a).

PE is seen as an essential site for promoting and fostering an appreciation for physical activity among youth (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005, 2006; Barr-Anderson et al., 2008; Capel & Blair, 2019; Solmon, 2014; Winnick & Porretta, 2016). Many believe this is vital in a world where declining levels of physical activity among youth, and inversely increasing levels of obesity worldwide is of concern (Antala & Luptáková, 2018; Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Barr-Anderson et al., 2008; Chalabaev et al., 2013; Fitzpatrick, 2011a; A. P. Hills, Dengel, & Lubans, 2015). Furthermore, the implications for adolescents from lower socio-economic families are more severe, as they are more likely to be less active and overweight than those from middle class families; it is considered that particular attention should be paid to this group within society (Azzarito, 2019; Azzarito & Solomon, 2005, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2011a). A weakness with this argument is that it fails to consider cultural differences and clusters together lower-socioeconomic families as one homogenous group. As previously discussed, many Pacific youth are active through church groups or social gatherings. Fitzpatrick (2011a, p. 353) points out that "acknowledging students own cultural fields might offer a way forward" in promoting physical activity, well-being and empowerment.

Decolonisation of education is crucial in order to help Indigenous people heal themselves and reshape their contexts (Battiste, 2017). A challenge faced by the subject is that PE is still largely seen as a 'western' construct, both in planning and delivery (Azzarito, 2019; Culpan & Galvan, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2011c; Whatman, Quennerstedt, & McLaughlin, 2017). The literature has highlighted that the curriculum can be delivered in such a way as to reinforce dominant western values and not pay justice to different cultures and cultural practices (Fitzpatrick, 2011b; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Stevens, Ovens, Hapeta, & Petrie, 2021; Te Ava, Rubie-Davies, & Ovens, 2013; Whatman et al., 2017). Indeed, sport, games and physical activities, the means for the development of the self and skills, often exclude Indigenous games (Spaaij, 2009a; Whatman et al., 2017). A study by Te Ava et al. (2013) examined PE in the Cook Islands and found that cultural activities were only a minor part in the PE programme, with the focus largely on skill acquisition in westernised sports such as rugby or netball. Moreover, scholars argue that in recent years, the Cook Islands have adopted western forms of PE, modelled on the NZ curriculum, at the detriment of traditional cultural activities (Te Ava et al., 2013) (PE in the Pacific is discussed in detail in section 2.3).

PE has a unique opportunity to contribute to students' understandings of diversity with respect to culture (Burrows, Macdonald, & Wright, 2013). The inclusion of sociocultural components to the New Zealand curriculum allows for an exploration of societal attitudes and beliefs, identity, sensitivity and respect, and, people and the environment (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007).<sup>12</sup> This shift in position from the fringes to mainstream policy in NZ (and the Cook Islands) allows for a space to understand and place value on a diverse collective of values, social practices and physical activity, particularly with respect to Māori and Pacific Island culture (Burrows et al., 2013). When culture is not viewed as predictable or deterministic, PE has the possibility of addressing and challenging current ways of thinking about culture, along with taking steps to address power and equity imbalances in schools (Burrows et al., 2013). Conversely, care must be taken to ensure that the dominant culture does not make all the decisions over what counts as culture, that there is not Eurocentric interpretations of other cultures (Burrows et al., 2013; Hirsch, 1990; Hokowhitu, 2003; Irwin, 1988). Through critical inquiry practices, there is the potential for PE to facilitate an understanding of culture through a plurality of meanings that does not occur in a vacuum

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<sup>12</sup> All three of these curriculum components listed are also present in the Cook Islands OTM | HPW (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006).

and that seeks to develop a sense of community through the physicality of culture (Burrows et al., 2013).

The prominent PE curriculum worldwide for the past two decades has been sport skills based (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Hardman & Marshall, 2005; D. Kirk, 2009; Säfvenbom, Haugen, & Bulie, 2015). The sport agenda teaches students the relevant sport skills and rules associated with a variety of sports, primarily team sports. Some suggest this is outdated and effective in alienating students, particularly girls (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Beltrán-Carrillo et al., 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2010). The sport skills as PE paradigm places the body on show at a time when many youth do not necessarily want to be in the spotlight (Beltrán-Carrillo et al., 2018; Kerner et al., 2018). According to Azzarito and Solomon (2009, p. 21), “power disciplines bodies through the gaze”, judging, regulating and conforming behaviours amongst peers. With the gaze of others upon them, non-sporty youth are less likely to be active or attempt tasks which require a degree of mastery where the outcome is unpredictable. With adolescents from lower socio-economic backgrounds more likely to be overweight, the power of others observing is one of the determining factors in lack of participation in the PE classroom (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Beltrán-Carrillo et al., 2018).

In sum, PE as a western construct at the exclusion of culturally relevant activities, and an over emphasis on skills-based learning, can impact on student participation, meaning some students do not receive the full potential benefits of the subject. Yet PE can make a unique contribution to youth education in ways that ad-hoc physical activity, manual work and informal leisure participation cannot (D. Kirk, 2013). PE can bestow the “experience (of) equality, freedom and a dignifying means for empowerment, particularly for girls and women” (Beutler, 2008, p. 365). Supporting this position requires well designed PE programmes. Hence regular, beneficial and sustainable participation in PE is only possible when programmes are well designed, contextually thus culturally appropriate, led by trained and competent teachers who are resourced well (D. Kirk, 2013).

### **2.1.2 Physical Education and agency**

The shaping of one’s own destiny is referred to as agency and is a key concept in empowerment theory, discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Sen (1999) argues that agency also includes the ability to have the power to remove barriers, to use one’s abilities to make use

of opportunities and to be free to participate. In the case of this research, this relates to removing barriers to physical activity and sport and being able to freely participate in such activities. Conversely, agency can also refer to young people purposefully creating barriers to participation, when trying to avoid involvement in an activity during a PE lesson. This aligns with Kabeer's (1999, p. 438) position that agency is not only decision-making, but bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, and subversion and resistance. When applied to the PE classroom, a student's ability to help shape their learning experience and have input into the lesson, could be seen as agency.

Fournillier (2012, p. 75) observes that collective agency is an option for those who believe that some goals are more easily attained through people's shared belief in their collective power to achieve desired results. The importance of friends and social relationships can be central to the involvement and enjoyment of sport and physical activity for adolescents (Beni, Fletcher, & Ní Chróinín, 2017; Eime, Casey, & Harvey, 2020; L. Hills, 2007; Kay, 2009). Through participation in team sports, a young person is provided an opportunity to enjoy the experience of group effort, support and cooperation (Theberge, 1987). The importance of collective agency and social cohesion can be applied to the Pacific context, where strong social ties are created and friendships are highly valued (Ofahengaue Vakalahi & Godinet, 2008). Being social and sharing in collective achievements is significant to many Pacific Islanders, to the extent that it is argued social cohesion is key in addressing health-related illness through the inclusion of cultural sports and games (Statistics New Zealand & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2011).

### **2.1.3 Physical education and expectancy-value motivation and learning**

The expectancy-value theory is understood as the source of student motivation, and is concerned with understanding student's expectancy beliefs for success in learning, and the value of the task with respect to content (J. Eccles, 1983). Student's expectancy beliefs are their thoughts about the possibility of success in the learning task (tied to self-efficacy) (Wigfield et al., 2015; Zhu & Chen, 2010). Task value refers to the student's perception of the worth of the task and has four components: 1) attainment value, 2) intrinsic value, 3) utility values, and 4) cost (J. Eccles, 1983). Attainment value is the extent to which a learner perceives the importance of succeeding in that task or activity, intrinsic value refer to the perceived enjoyment in the learning process, utility value refers to the perceived usefulness of the activity and cost involves the student determining if there is anything that may be

unduly experienced (or perceived to be experienced) as a result of completing the activity (Zhu & Chen, 2010, p. 512). It is maintained that expectancy beliefs and task values are a predictor of student involvement in PE (Blankenship, 2017; Chen & Liu, 2008; Xiang, McBride, & Bruene, 2004; Zhu & Chen, 2010).

Expectancy belief is closely tied with self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is one's belief in their capacity to perform actions or tasks and is a component of empowerment (Bandura, 1986, 2010). According to Bandura (1986, 2010), self-efficacy is the foundation of human motivation, performance accomplishments and emotional well-being. Bandura (2010, p. 1) asserts that "unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their action, they have little incentive to undertake activities or to persevere in the face of difficulty". Self-efficacy involves forethought through a self-appraisal of their perceived capability's and the anticipatory scenarios they construct and rehearse (Bandura, 2010). Those with a higher degree of self-efficacy visualise success scenarios and thus there is no perceived 'cost' (outlined above) in performing the task or activity (Bandura, 2010). People who judge themselves as inefficacious are more inclined to visualise their failure by focusing on their perceived inability and how things may go wrong (Bandura, 2010, p. 1). The links between self-efficacy and the PE classroom space can be seen through student's perceptions of their ability in the subject. Students who believe they are no good at sport or physical tasks will perceive there to be a greater risk in attempting the task and therefore may opt out of the activity altogether. In this instance, the student's expectancy belief is that they will not succeed, and the task value would be too costly for them to pursue attempting it. Students may reluctantly participate if there is attainment value, i.e., they are being assessed on the task. Self-efficacy is a chief component in understanding the motivation (or lack thereof) of students in the PE classroom (Azzarito & Solomon, 2009; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Hay & Macdonald, 2010a, 2010b; Parish & Treasure, 2003).

Expectancy-value theory acknowledges the broader structure of the classroom and aligns with empowerment theory by acknowledging the role self-efficacy plays in student motivation levels. The relationships that the student forms with their teacher and peers provides them with information regarding their competency, thus regulating their effort and motivation (Diaconu-Gherasim, Măirean, & Brumariu, 2019; Doménech-Betoret, Abellán-Roselló, & Gómez-Artiga, 2017). The relationship the student has with their teacher can influence their feelings of self-efficacy, with students who perceived their teacher to be helpful and offer support being associated more positively with higher levels of self-efficacy

(Borders, Earleywine, & Huey, 2004; Diaconu-Gherasim et al., 2019). The teacher can also influence the classroom climate and students' motivational beliefs around the value of the task (Diaconu-Gherasim et al., 2019). A positive classroom environment can mitigate some of the perceived negative outcomes when completing tasks unsuccessfully (Diaconu-Gherasim, Brumariu, & Hurley, 2020). Students' perceptions of the classroom environment may help to explain individual differences in self-efficacy and achievement (Diaconu-Gherasim et al., 2019, p. 148). Expectancy-value theory incorporates self-efficacy, but goes further to include how classmates, peers and the teacher can influence a student's self-efficacy and motivation in PE.

Section 2.1 has provided a summary of the literature relating to sport and PE for development. The next section will review the literature in relation to gender and physical education.

## **2.2 Gender and physical education**

As gender is a social construct (Moser, 1993), this research is concerned with the social relationships between males and females, keeping in mind there are those who might have other gender identities. Gender affects our sense of selves and our physicality from a young age (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010). Research suggests the most significant role in framing beliefs around gender stereotypes comes from parents (Boiché, Chalabaev, & Sarrazin, 2014; J. S. Eccles & Harold, 1991). However, in the gendered nature of the PE classroom, gender stereotypes can come to the fore: for example, boys should be aggressive and participate in masculine sports such as rugby, and girls are supposed to be weak and should take part in aesthetically pleasing sports, such as ballet or gymnastics (Hunter, 2004). Teachers and peers often transmit sport gender stereotypes within the PE classroom, regulating behaviour through social conformity (Brown & Rich, 2002; Chalabaev et al., 2013; Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016; Oliver & Kirk, 2015). Moreover, without consideration of classroom processes, a teacher may simultaneously reinforce and perpetuate gendered and racial norms and behaviours (Deem & Gilroy, 1998; Sánchez-Hernández, Martos-García, Soler, & Flintoff, 2018). This can often be seen in partnered ballroom dancing units, where the social convention is for boys to dislike dancing in this way and for girls to be shy. Wrench and Garrett (2018) discuss ways in which a teacher changed the pedagogy of her dance unit to be more inclusive and engaging for boys, drawing on student experiences and cooperative learning

rather than being teacher-led.<sup>13</sup> Different ways of 'doing' the unit may be more gender inclusive than the traditional method of delivery, thus highlighting the potential of PE to broadly contest gender norms.

Although contested, a number of studies have argued that the competitive nature of sport is seen as masculine in nature and thus the domain of males (Alley & Hicks, 2005; Bevan et al., 2020; Boiché, Chalabaev, et al., 2014; Clément-Guillotin et al., 2013). Moreover, competitive sports are seen to exist as a microcosm of society's gendered values, myths and prejudices about what it means to be male and female (E. D. Anderson, 2009; Athenstaedt, Mikula, & Bredt, 2009; Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016). With the majority of schools still teaching a PE as sport paradigm it is, therefore, problematic for both males and females (Kerner et al., 2018; Oliver & Kirk, 2015). This style of curriculum delivery does little to nurture an individual's self-efficacy and further perpetuates constraining gender binaries (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010; Azzarito et al., 2006; Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016; Gorely et al., 2003; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2018; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). Anderson (2009) argues that sport contributes to the 'gender order', reproducing a stabilised and conservative form of masculinity, that is detrimental to both sexes, with women and gay men in particular, being marginalised (see also Bevan et al., 2020, and Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016).

Students have reported feeling more competent and were more autonomously motivated to participate in an activity in PE when the stereotypes associated with those activities were aligned more to their gender (Boiché, Plaza, Chalabaev, Guillet-Descas, & Sarrazin, 2014; Chalabaev et al., 2013). Gendered differences exist with how bodies are viewed, with functional qualities revered by males and aesthetic qualities favoured by females (Abbott & Barber, 2010; Kerner et al., 2018; Metcalfe, 2018). These differing values placed on the body could account for the individual's belief in their ability to succeed in gender normative sports, with girls less likely to engage in sports deemed masculine and boys reluctant to participate in sports viewed to be feminine, for fear of judgement or an unwanted label (Barkley et al., 2014; Casey, Hill, & Goodyear, 2014). A student's self-efficacy was greatly influenced by the degree to which they felt the sport or activity was in keeping with their gender identity, even

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<sup>13</sup> Cooperative learning refers to a teaching method which sees small groups of students working together to maximise their own and each other's learning. It can help to develop inter-personal skills (Gillies, 2016). Teacher-led instruction involves the teacher teaching the content to the students within the classroom and is considered a more traditional teaching method, but still has a place in schools in particular contexts (Mavromatis, 2016).



when few actual physical differences existed between genders in the performance of that activity (J. S. Eccles & Harold, 1991).

In a PE space that is dominated by sport techniques as the prevailing means for individual development, it is suggested that boys tend to dominate participation and girls adopt maladapted behaviours, such as giving up, giving away (possession) or succumbing because of male privileged practices (Azzarito & Solomon, 2009; Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Bevan et al., 2020; Kerner et al., 2018). Despite the shift away from blaming girls to recognising complex interactions centred on patriarchal order, Oliver and Kirk (2015, p. 14) point out “it’s the same old story about girls and physical education”. In support of this, Okely et al. (2011), explain that girls cite boys’ ‘dominating’ behaviours as a reason for non-participation, stating they want the opportunity to choose more non-traditional activities such as yoga in PE. However, these authors fail to consider those girls who are competitive by nature or who have a high level of physical ability (Constantinou, Manson, & Silverman, 2009; D. Kirk et al., 2018; Mitchell, Inchley, Fleming, & Currie, 2015). Interestingly, Mitchell et al. (2015) discovered that girls identified themselves as either ‘sporty’ or ‘non-sporty’. Those that identified as ‘non-sporty’ were intimidated by ‘sporty’ girls during lessons, contesting the idea that involvement in lessons is gendered but rather determined by a student’s self-efficacy, irrespective of gender. Additionally, in some Pacific contexts it is common for young women to see ‘boys as brothers’ and not shy away from challenging them (Greene, 2015; Greene & Stewart-Withers, 2018).

Young people are faced with persistent media coverage on what it means to be feminine and masculine and a young person’s self-worth and self-efficacy are influenced by external standards (Fisette, 2011; Hill & Azzarito, 2012; Huggins & Randell, 2007; Kerner et al., 2018; Knez et al., 2012; Metcalfe, 2018). There are many hidden messages that are negotiated within the PE classroom and on the sports field. Young women face a barrage of messages about what it means to participate in sport that is highly masculinised (Hunter, 2004; Kerner et al., 2018; Metcalfe, 2018). Femininity and attractiveness are often determined by western understandings, issues around body size and maintaining femininity and attractiveness in a highly gendered situation is potentially difficult for young Pacific Island women (Hunter, 2004). Despite strong claims for the benefits of PE and empowerment through sport, research suggests there are serious challenges that exist in order for girls to reap the benefits of such programmes (Fitzpatrick, 2019; Kerner et al., 2018; D. Kirk et al., 2018; R. W. Kirk, 2012; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2018). Conversely, the challenges boys face in PE are often

over-looked because of the misconception that all boys, in contrast to girls, enjoy PE (Gerdin, 2017; Kehler & Atkinson, 2010). This assumption is usually based on a singular view of masculinity, with boys who do not fit within the hegemonic masculinity suffering oppression and 'damage' by those who do (Gerdin, 2017; Hickey, 2008; Kehler & Martino, 2007).

While the aforementioned studies focus on the 'sport as masculine' debate, they offer limited explanations for the effect that physical activities that are deemed 'feminine' have on participation of both boys and girls (Te Ava & Davies, 2016). Furthermore, they fail to account for the wider scope of physical education activities in the classroom, as evidenced by teachers offering some limited classroom activities which do not focus on sport skills (Te Ava & Davies, 2016). The inclusion of cultural activities such as traditional Island dancing into Pacific PE programmes had a positive effect on Cook Island girls in particular, as Cook Islanders value the skills associated with team work and cooperation (Te Ava & Davies, 2016).

Additionally, many of the studies only consider one type of femininity and masculinity, rather than multiple masculinities or femininities. Both femininity and masculinity sit along a spectrum, and the plurality of gender and gender construction is multifaceted and thus complex to define within distinct binaries (Robert W Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), even the definition of LGBTQ+ orientations are considered western in construct (Anderst, McMillan, Gorman, O'Connor, & Worth, 2020). Connell (1996; 2008; 2005; 2005), a seminal writer on masculinity, contends that one concept of masculinity provides an oversimplified view of men and boys, and reinforces that men and women are naturally different, and that masculinity is something that only men can have. Connell's analysis of gender suggests that masculinity, and conversely femininity is something that both genders can have. This literature on gender viewed along a spectrum, offers a means in which to challenge current concepts surrounding gender in PE. Narrow views on masculinity and femininity in the PE classroom could compartmentalise students into particular activities deemed masculine or feminine and have the potential to lead to disempowerment by negatively affecting student engagement (Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016; Gerdin, 2017; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2018). In the Cook Islands people who identify outside of heteronormativity can be marginalised (Anderst et al., 2020). Transfeminine people, *akavai'ine*, are tolerated in the Cook Islands but not fully accepted, outside of the family unit they are considered 'highly visible' (Anderst et al., 2020), (section 5.4 further discusses issues relating to sexuality in the Cook Islands context).

Section 2.3 now goes on to discuss the limited literature in the Pacific, which has ties to this research with respect to PE in the Islands. These studies do not have the same empowerment conceptual lens as used in this research.

### **2.3 Physical education in the Pacific context**

The discussion will now focus on the literature relating to PE in the Pacific. The limited literature regarding the Pacific context focuses on sport for development programmes, physical education curriculum implementation and PE in general terms (Baba & Puamau, 1999; Coxon & Munce, 2008; Dorovolomo, 2015; Hardman & Marshall, 2005; Kessaram et al., 2015; Siefken, Macniven, Schofield, Bauman, & Waqanivalu, 2011; Te Ava & Davies, 2016). One study focuses on the Cook Islands, one on student attitudes towards PE and lastly my own Masters research will be briefly discussed.

In 2015, Dorovolomo completed his thesis: 'Physical education in Fiji and the Solomon Islands: students' physical activity contexts' that provides insight into PE in Fiji and the Solomon Islands. Dorovolomo looked both within and beyond the classroom, examining sport in both rural and urban settings. What Dorovolomo (2015) found was "widespread neglect of physical education in schools in Fiji and Solomon Islands". Furthermore, he found that PE was often suspended in the third term, when school examinations were taking place. With very few studies on the topic, it may still be possible to cautiously conclude that the devaluing of PE in favour of examination preparation could occur in other Pacific Islands.<sup>14</sup> My research aims to identify what challenges may be present in the Cook Islands regarding curriculum design and delivery. Pressure placed on students to prepare for examinations at the expense of PE class time may be one such challenge that PE faces. A major point of difference to my research is that Dorovolomo employed a mixed-method approach, with a heavy reliance on quantitative data during observations and the design of questionnaires to gather information, whereas my research draws solely on qualitative research methods to explore and understand the experiences of young people in PE.

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<sup>14</sup> It is of note that PE in NZ is also not highly valued (Gordon, Dyson, Cowan, McKenzie, & Shulruf, 2016; Greene, 2015).

My Master's thesis focused on PE as a means of empowerment for Pacific Island young women (Greene, 2015). While it is set in the New Zealand context, it is of relevance as it examined the delivery of the NZ PE curriculum, as the Cook Island PE Curriculum is closely modelled on the New Zealand PE Curriculum. My research found that PE has the potential to empower young people, when implemented in a 'holistic' way, which the NZ curriculum advocates, i.e., not solely focused on sports skills. Many NZ schools still operate an old-fashioned sport skills paradigm, which is problematic for young Pacific Island women who were sensitive about their bodies being evaluated. Additionally, the value parents placed on physical activity at home also had a bearing on the young woman's involvement in class, with students from homes that valued physical activity more active in PE at school. After all, in order to be a part of the empowerment process, one must be involved.

Two articles examining PE in the Cook Islands are also of relevance. The first article is '*Akaoraora 'ia te peu 'a to 'ui tupuna: Culturally responsive pedagogy for Cook Islands secondary school physical education*' by Te Ava, Rubie-Davies and Ovens (2013). The research examined the outcomes following the introduction of cultural values into Cook Island secondary school PE programmes. The action research involved planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting upon the implementation of the programme. PE lessons were based upon the cultural values of *tāueue* (participation), *angaanga kapiti* (cooperation), *akataho* (discipline), *angaanga taokotai* (community involvement), *te reo Maori Kuki Airani* (Cook Islands Māori language), and *auora* (physical and spiritual well-being) (p.31). While the researchers believed the values were important to include in PE lessons, they found difficulty in assisting teachers who were not of Cook Island descent as they did not already possess a sound understanding of Cook Island values. It is common for teachers from New Zealand to teach in the Cook Islands given the alignment with the New Zealand Curriculum and the inclusion of NZ NCEA examinations at secondary schools. They found that both community cultural experts and the participating teachers agreed the value in incorporating cultural values in teaching, but teachers found difficulty in implementing the values consistently and in a meaningful way.

The second article is written by Te Ava & Rubie-Davies (2016), who were co-authors of the previous article as well. While the article is titled 'Cook Island students' attitudes towards physical education', it discusses student's attitudes towards PE in relation to the inclusion of cultural activities and games; yet this is not entirely clear from the article's title. Cultural

games and activities include dancing, drumming and music, fishing, and agricultural production (planting) as examples. As mentioned earlier, cultural games are only a small unit within the curriculum in the Cook Islands, and encompass four to six weeks of instruction over the entire school year (Te Ava & Davies, 2016). Western games still dominate the PE curriculum in the Cook Islands, aligning with the argument set forth by the literature that PE is a western construct. The inclusion of cultural games was valued by students, with girls enjoying the activities within the unit more than boys. Te Ava and Rubie-Davies (2016, p. 131) propose that boys may value a western style of PE more than girls as it allows them to show off their physical prowess and is more competitive. Te Ava and Rubie-Davies (2016) offer a way forward for PE programmes, concluding that the inclusion of culturally relevant games may be a way of curbing male dominance in PE classes, and allow girls a chance to succeed in PE. This study utilised quantitative data collection which is in contrast to the qualitative methodology employed in this thesis which seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the perspectives of students through utilising qualitative methods.

While these articles provide some insight into what is occurring in PE in the Pacific Islands, none specifically look at PE as a means for empowerment of young people. Moreover, my research is qualitative in design, again differing from the articles discussed in this section, thus underscoring the contribution to the body of literature that this research aims to establish. The qualitative research methods employed for this thesis seek to provide a rich nuanced account of the experiences of young people in the Cook Islands through privileging youth voice.

## **2.4 Curriculum adaptation for Pacific contexts**

New Zealand's connection with the Cook Islands dates back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Coxon, 2002). These connections are explored in more detail in Chapter 5: The research context: Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Of relevance to the literature discussed here relating to curriculum adaptation is what occurred after World War II. Post World War II, NZ Prime Minister Peter Fraser began a policy of decolonisation in the Pacific in response to Pacific Island peoples call for independence, which led to Pacific nations self-governing (Coxon, 2002). At the time, education was seen as a key to modernisation and these understandings were incorporated into national development plans and informed education policies for the emerging Pacific Island states (Coxon, 2002, p. 62). Clarence Beeby was NZ's Director General of Education at the time. Beeby (1966; 1992) played a significant role in promoting a more

just approach to education in the Pacific. He advocated for a more people-centred, bottom-up approach to developing education, in opposition to early modernisation thinking which promoted a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach. Beeby was widely criticised for this thinking (Coxon, 2002), yet presently his approach aligns with the desire for contextually relevant education in the Pacific.

Education as a development tool has long been influenced by western education paradigms due to colonial relationships. For example, the Republic of the Marshall Islands is heavily influenced by the American system, and the Cook Islands are closely tied to the New Zealand education model (Coxon & Munce, 2008; Tolley, 2008). Western education often has contrasting value systems to other cultures. Western education frameworks tend to value the development of human capital as a means of ensuring the individual can go on to contribute to economic growth (Maitra & Mukhopadhyay, 2012; K. H. Thaman, 2009). According to Glasgow (2010, p. 124), tension exists between the security of “instituted colonial models” and the need to promote and encourage culture and language. A western influence raises concerns of overshadowing Indigenous knowledge and often accords little relevance to traditional ways of life (A. Glasgow, 2010). The focus on a western educational model to the detriment of a local education paradigm has the potential to negatively impact how students view local ways of knowing and doing, and thus their own culture.

Coxon and Munce (2008), recognise that there are many challenges surrounding the implementation of culturally specific learning (see also Boyd & Hipkins, 2015) . Western education systems are often built on what is known as ‘factual content’. This type of content is favoured as it is easily measurable and allows teachers to prepare students for examinations, which have clear outcomes. Coxon and Munce (2008) further observe that many Indigenous Pacific systems are more practical, valuing skills relevant to life on the island, making assessment difficult for teachers. However, in actuality, there are many practical subjects in western informed curriculum, such as Music and PE. Music and PE are not assessed in a traditional examination setting, but rather have a set of criteria students can be assessed against in a practical setting. Therefore, developing assessment criteria for practical knowledge and skills is theoretically possible.

### **2.4.1 Calls for a Pacific informed curriculum**

The call for cultural relevance in education in the Pacific by academics and researchers contrasted with government lead approaches which focused on a western style education system that focused on the building of human capital through education in support of economic growth (Beumelburg, 2016). In 2002, at the University of the South Pacific, a Rethinking of Pacific Education colloquium brought together key Pacific educators to discuss challenges and issues in Pacific education (A. H. Glasgow, 2011). Many Pacific Island states have since called for cultural relevance and the reclaiming of the education process after questioning modern western approaches to education (Beumelburg, 2016; Coxon & Munce, 2008; A. H. Glasgow, 2011; Helu-Thaman, 1990; Nabobo-Baba, 2013; K Sanga & Nally, 2002; K. H. Thaman, 2009). Collectively, there was an expressed belief that “extensive reforms in Pacific education and significant investments by national governments and donor agencies had largely failed to provide for the quality human resources needed to achieve development goals” (Pene et al., 2002, p. 1).

A lack of ownership by Pacific people in the formal education process and a lack of a clear vision for education and development were identified as two key issues in Pacific education (Beumelburg, 2016; Pene et al., 2002). Key initiatives for Pacific education were the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP)<sup>15</sup> and the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE). An aim of both initiatives was collective, self-determined action in the Pacific to “improve education quality through sustainable use of Pacific people, their values and knowledge systems” (K. Thaman, 2007, p. 5). The demand for education in the “Pacific way” (Tupouniua, Crocombe, & Slatter, 1975, p. 6), was seen as a rejection of neoliberal ideals through a western education system that failed Pacific students through a lack of Pacific values and cultural relevance.

### **2.4.2 Cook Island responses**

In the Cook Islands, recognition was given to the need to protect culture from an increasingly globalised world, along with the need to promote language and dialect following a significant

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<sup>15</sup> Formally known as the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI) in 2001 but later renamed to reflect an ownership of education reform by Pacific peoples.

period of language loss (A. H. Glasgow, 2011).<sup>16</sup> While the geography of the Cook Islands has posed a unique challenge to curriculum development, with 15 widely dispersed islands and three spoken languages throughout the islands (A. H. Glasgow, 2011), work has commenced. Additionally, a strong migration from Rarotonga to New Zealand and Australia added to the challenge, with an estimate that more than 80,000 Cook Island Māori live in New Zealand (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019b). The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework was however, established in July 2002 in response to the call to localise education. *Te Kōpapa Kura Āpi`i o te Kūki `Airani* is the official policy for learning, teaching and assessment in the Cook Island Schools with a goal:

To build the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values of its people to ensure the sustainability of the language and culture of the Cook Islands, and its economic growth, and to enable the people of the Cook Islands to put their capabilities to best use in all areas of their lives (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 1).

The Curriculum Framework acknowledges the Cook Islands' place in the world, along with its special relationship with New Zealand (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 7). The Cook Islands and New Zealand are realm countries. The Cook Islands self-governs in free association with New Zealand, allowing Cook Islanders to hold dual citizenship. Through this partnership the Cook Islands implements New Zealand's National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) model and students in Years 11, 12 and 13 sit NCEA examinations. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is a development partner and member of the Education Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP) which sits within the Pacific Community (SPC) with the aim of developing quality education in the Pacific (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2021). The Cook Islands curriculum documents, such as the Health and Physical Well-being curriculum have been adapted from the New Zealand Curriculum to align with local values and concepts, thus creating ownership of the curriculum. Yet, it is argued that this alignment promotes the flow of Cook Islanders to New Zealand to seek employment or to attend tertiary education providers (A. H. Glasgow, 2011). Section 2.5 will examine *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Cook Island Health and Physical Well-being document in more depth.

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<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that Cook Island Māori only became an official language of the Cook Islands in 2003, alongside English, which up until this point had been the only official language.



## **2.5 Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki | The Health and Physical Well-being curriculum**

One of the most significant pedagogical shifts in Physical Education (PE) was through the work of Arnold (1979) who stated that PE is education in, through, and about, the physical. The phrase, in, through, and about movement, has been adopted by many physical educators, and is included in both the 1999 New Zealand Health and PE (HPE) document, and the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) document (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1999, 2007). This focus on movement as opposed to sport promoted a PE curriculum that was holistic in nature and moved beyond a performance based view of PE (Stevens et al., 2021). It argued for activities that would foster the development of communication, problem solving and cooperative skills, and that through this medium of movement the student would be able to develop a balanced self (Tinning, Kirk, & Evans, 1993).

*Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki | The Health and Physical Well-being (OTM | HPW) curriculum document was developed in conjunction with a number of key contributors. Among them was New Zealand's Gillian Tasker, who was the driving force behind the 1999 HPE curriculum document and the subsequent 2007 NZC document. While there are similarities in both the 1999 and 2007 curriculum documents, it is clear the foundation of the OTM | HPW has been built on the NZ HPE curriculum.<sup>17</sup> However, the OTM | HPW learning area has been adapted to fit the local context, with the philosophies that underpin the document coming from local belief systems, for example, *moenga* (mat) and *pito'enua* (well-being) (discussed in greater detail later in this section).<sup>18</sup> The OTM | HPW curriculum mirrors the pedagogical shift outlined above in how PE is conceptualised and delivered in schools, moving away from a solely sports skills focus to one that seeks to educate the whole person.*

The introduction to the OTM | HPW speaks to a change in Cook Island society that affects all areas of life, including work and leisure, diet, sport and physical activity, structures and roles, health care and health practices and each of these impact the well-being of young people (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006). The OTM | HPW acknowledges differences in thinking between young and old, with the need for students to be able to use traditional

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<sup>17</sup> There is little difference between the 1999 HPE curriculum and the 2007 NZ curriculum with respect to the HPE subject area.

<sup>18</sup> While *pito'enua* is unique to the Cook Islands, the NZ HPE curriculum is built on the Māori philosophy of well-being, *Hauora*, developed by the concept of Durie's (1994) *whare tapa whā* (four sided house) model. *Hauora* has four dimensions of well-being, these are i) *taha tinana* (physical), ii) *taha wairua* (spiritual), iii) *taha hinengaro* (mental and emotional) and iv) *taha whānau* (social).

knowledge alongside present day educational needs (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006). Like New Zealand’s HPE curriculum, the OTM | HPW is holistic in nature, with *pito’enua* as one of the underlying concepts of the curriculum and a means through which to forge the gap between traditional and modern knowledge. The other underlying concepts include health promotion, attitudes and values, and society and environment, summarised in Table 2.1. According to the OTM | HPW curriculum, the successful delivery of the curriculum is reliant on teachers being aware of, and competent in the teaching of these important concepts (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 4).

**Table 2.1 - Underlying concepts of the OTM | HPW curriculum**

<i>Pito’enua</i> (well-being)	A five-dimensional philosophy of well-being encompasses the physical, mental and emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of health while recognising the influence the environment has on an individual.
Health promotion	Aims to encourage students to take positive action to improve their own well-being, and that of both their community and their environment
Attitudes and values	Refers to students having a sense of social justice, concern for others, and being positive and responsible for their own well-being
Society and environment	Students can develop care and concern for other people in their community and for the environment

(Source: Adapted from Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006).

The OTM | HPW Curriculum has four strands (aims); these are A) *ko au* (me) B) *toku tupuanga* (me being physical), C) *ko au e tetai ua atu tangata* (me with other people) and, D) *ko au e te oire tangata, ko au e te toku Aorangi* (me in the community). Within each strand, there are three to four specific achievement objectives, which relate to achieving the overarching strand. There are eight levels to the curriculum, generally, Year 9 is level four, and Year 10 is level five and so on. As students move through the levels, the specifications of the strands change and progress to reflect the growth and learning of the student. The strands are explained in more detail in Table 2.2 below. Although there are variations in the wording, the NZC has the same four strands.

**Table 2.2 - Strands in the Health and Physical Well-being Curriculum** (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 20).

<p><b>Strand A:</b> <b>Ko au - Me</b></p>	<p>Learning in this strand focuses on the <b>personal health and physical development</b> of students and includes understandings about personal identity and self-worth. Students develop the knowledge, understandings, skills, and attitudes to meet their health and physical activity needs, both now and in the future. They learn about influences on their well-being and develop self-management skills that enhance their health. Students are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for the changing patterns of their life, work, relaxation, and recreation.</p>
<p><b>Strand B:</b> <b>Toku tupuanga -Me being physical</b></p>	<p>Learning in this strand focuses on the <b>personal movement skills</b> that students develop in a range of situations and environments. Learning by participating in spontaneous play, informal games, cultural activities, creative movement, dance, sport and other forms of activity enables students to strengthen their awareness of their personal identity, to experience the <b>pleasure of physical activity</b> and to develop their awareness and appreciation of the diverse nature of movement.</p> <p>Learning physical skills helps students to develop understandings about how they move and about how to care for themselves, manage competition, and make informed choices in relation to play, recreation and work.</p>
<p><b>Strand C:</b> <b>Ko au e tetai ua atu tangata - Me with other people</b></p>	<p>Learning in this strand focuses on students and their <b>relationships with other people</b>. Students examine effective relationships in classrooms, schools, koputangata and the wider community. Students consider how they influence the well-being of other people and how the attitudes, values, actions and needs of other people influence them.</p> <p>Students also develop the knowledge and interpersonal skills to enable them to interact sensitively with other people. They learn to evaluate the impacts that social and cultural factors have on relationships, in particular the impacts of stereotyping and of discrimination against individuals on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, age, economic background, sexual orientation, cultural beliefs or differing abilities.</p>

<b>Strand D:</b> <b>Ko au e te</b> <b>oire tangata</b> <b>ko au e te</b> <b>toku aorangi</b> <b>- Me in the</b> <b>community</b> <b>and the</b> <b>environment</b>	Learning in this strand focuses on the <b>interdependence of students, their communities, society and the environment</b> . Students identify physical and social influences in the classroom, the school, the family, and society that promote individual, group and community well-being. They develop understanding of their responsibilities to their communities and come to recognise the benefits that they can experiences from participating actively as community members. Students are encouraged to identify inequities, make changes, and contribute positively, through individual and collective action, to the development of healthy communities and environments.
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The curriculum has five key areas of learning, which are the contexts within which the strands are taught. These are mental health, *oraanga tangata* (sexuality education), food and nutrition, body care and physical safety, and physical activity (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006). The key areas of learning are said to reflect and address the current health and physical education needs of Cook Island students (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 10). Figure 2.2 provides a visual representation of the curriculum document.

## Moenga (Mat)

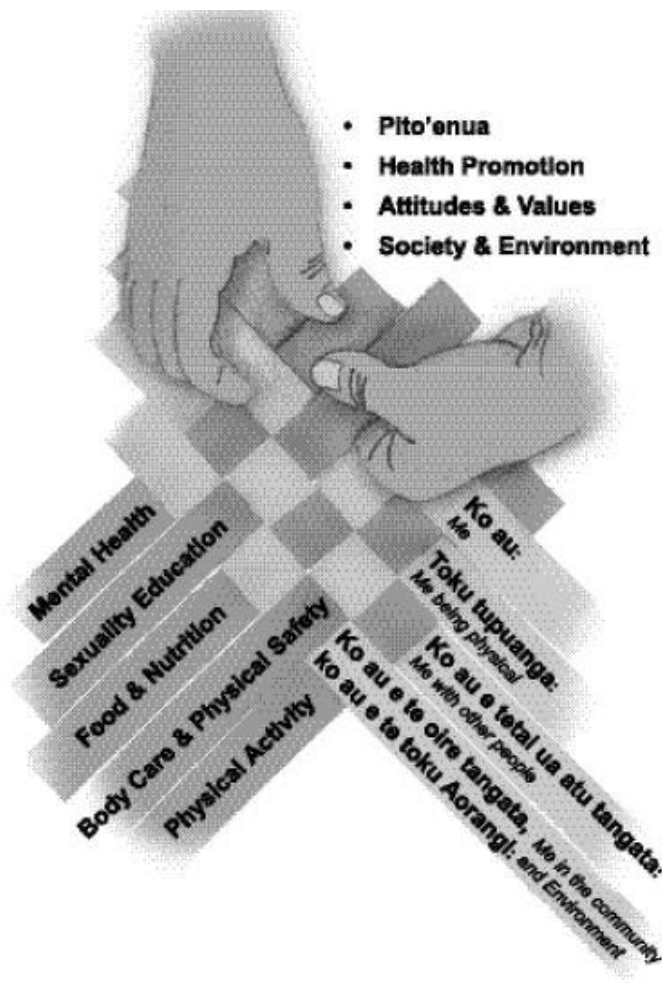


Figure 2.2 - The weaving of a *moenga* (mat) (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 10).

The *moenga* was carefully chosen to represent the weaving together of the underlying concepts, the four strands and five key areas of learning in the OTM | HPW curriculum. “The weaving and structure of a *moenga* is used to symbolise a Cook Island perspective on health and well-being or *pito'enua*” (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 5). To weave a *moenga* requires intellectual, traditional, and spiritual knowledge, alongside both physical and creative skills. It takes time, dedication, and patience to develop the *moenga*, steeped in tradition. The *moenga* is used as an analogy for the development of a child. Each student's symbolic *moenga* begins at conception, as the family plant and take care of the trees from which the *moenga* is woven, the family supports the child as it grows. Teachers join with the family to weave the *moenga* and are seen as another partner in support of nurturing and educating the child. The teacher uses “knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that our young

people need for lifelong health and well-being” (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 5). The *moenga* is unique and gathers its own life force through its creation, it reflects of the mana of the individual and the special skills of all involved in the creation of the *moenga*.

When the time comes, young people will leave school to face the challenges ahead, knowing that they are equipped with links to the past, the present, and the future, using their *moenga* on their journey through life (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 5).



**Figure 2.3 - Weaving the *moenga*.** (Source: Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006).

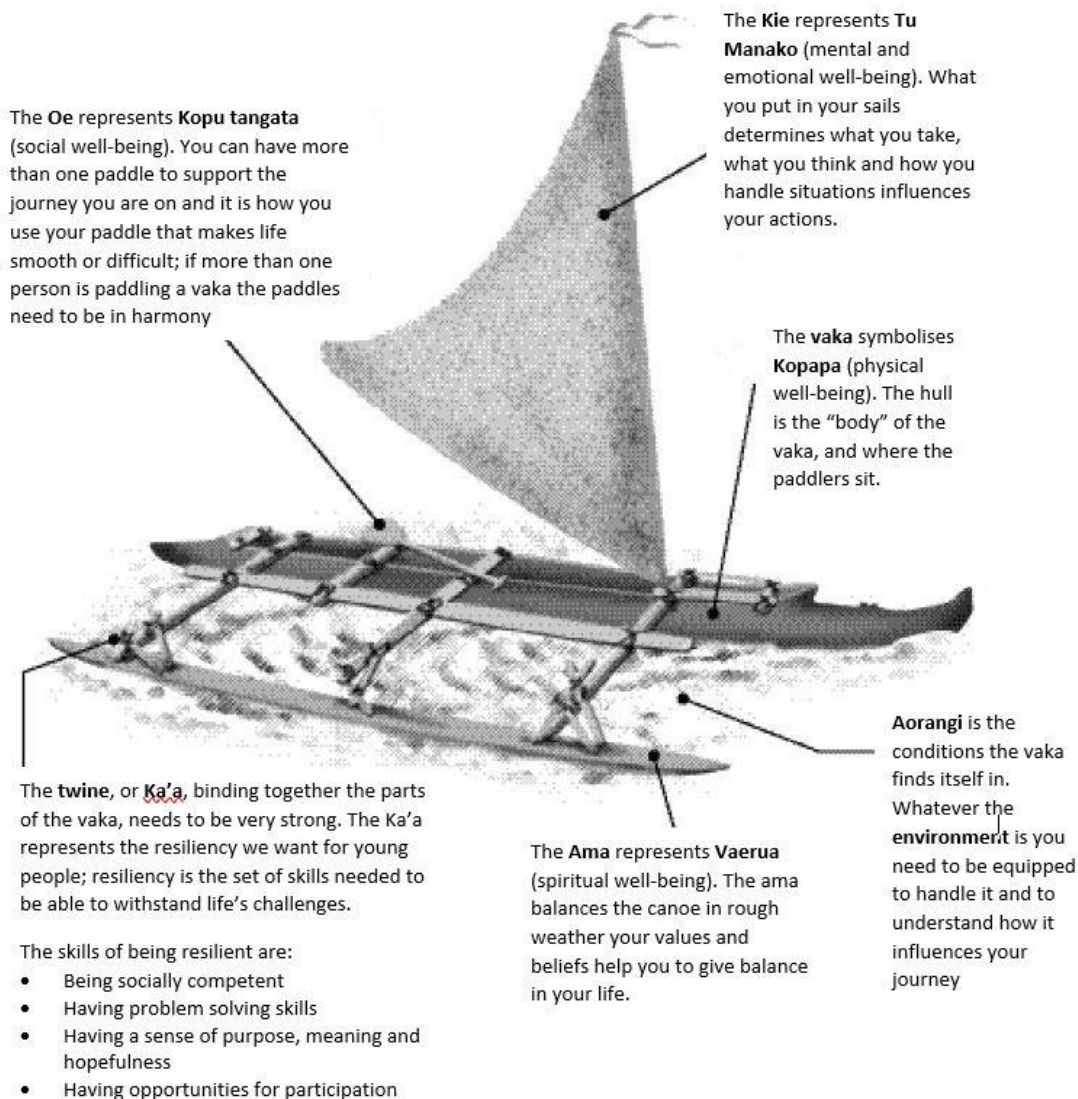
### ***Pito'enua***

To understand the curriculum, it is necessary to understand the underlying concept of *pito'enua*. *Pito'enua* is a Cook Island philosophy of well-being and is recognised by the World Health Organization (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006). The following proverb by Puati Mataiapo, Chief of the Puati tribe, reminds Cook Islanders of the need to be connected to their cultural heritage in order to be able to step into today's world (Futter-Puati, 2017):

*Takai koe kit e papa enua,*      You step on to solid land,  
*‘Akamou I te pito’enua,*      Affix the umbilical cord,  
*Au I toou rangi*      And carve out your world  
(Puaiti Mataiapo, as cited in Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006)

*Pito’enua* has five dimensions, 1) *kopapa* (physical well-being), 2) *tu Manako* (mental and emotional well-being), 3) *vaerua* (spiritual well-being), 4) *kopu tangata* (social well-being) and, 5) *Aorangi* (total environment) (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006). The affixing of the umbilical cord to the environment represents the centre of stability through which the other four dimensions interconnect. The idea being that all five dimensions are interconnected and need to be in harmony for an individual to be balanced. If one dimension is out of steadiness (unwell or under pressure) it affects all other dimensions. According to Futter-Puati (2017), *pito’enua* is the strength of body, mind and spirit/soul, along with the connectedness and strength of the relationship people have that help an individual to be resilient to the challenges faced in life.

Figure 2.4 is used in the OTM | HPW curriculum, with the *vaka* (canoe) symbolising *pito’enua*. The *vaka* represents a person and is a visual representation of how *pito’enua* encompasses the five dimensions of health and how each is equally important.



**Figure 2.4 - Pito’enua as a vaka** (Source: Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006).

### **Gender and the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Physical Well-being curriculum**

It is important to note that the OTM | HPW directly addresses gender equality. The section titled ‘Gender Inclusiveness’ details how the OTM | HPW provides opportunities for teachers and schools to address any issues that may arise from the differing experiences of boys and girls within the classroom. It articulates that learning outcomes should be “equitable, regardless of gender, across all essential learning areas” (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 37). The OTM | HPW clearly sets out seven objectives that will be addressed in the delivery of the curriculum. Some of these include ensuring that gender inclusive language,



resources materials and illustrative examples are used, that both boys and girls take active leadership roles in OTM | HPW classes, and to provide opportunities for students to critically analyse existing concept of masculinity and femininity that are detrimental to the healthy and physical activities of boys and girls, men and women. Of note, is that the OTM | HPW does not account for non-binary definitions, nor does it acknowledge any other gender other than male and female, however it does note in Strand C: Ko au e tetai ua atu tangata - Me with other people (see Table 2.4), that students will learn to evaluate the impacts that social and cultural factors have on relationships, in particular the impacts of stereotyping and of discrimination against individuals on the basis of their gender and sexual orientation.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.5.1 The similarities and differences between the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Physical Well-being curriculum and the New Zealand Curriculum

Having established that the OTM | HPW is largely based on the NZC, and outlined the OTM | HPW , the following three tables will summarise the differences and similarities between both documents with respect to the underlying concepts (Table 2.3), strands (Table 2.4) and the key areas of learning (Table 2.5). Although different wording can be accorded with respect to the underlying concept of society and environment in the OTM | HPW, and the socio-ecological perspective in the NZC, parallels exist for the meaning of the two terms, similarly for the strands in each document. The most notable difference between the two documents can be seen in Table 2.5: The key areas of learning, where the OTM | HPW has five strands compared to the NZC's seven.

**Table 2.3 - The underlying concepts of the OTM | HPW and NZC**

<b>OTM   HPW</b>	<b>NZC</b>
<i>Pito'enua</i>	<i>Hauora</i>
Attitudes and Values	Attitudes and Values
Socio-ecological perspective	Society and environment
Health promotion	Health promotion

(Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Other factors include ethnicity, age, economic background, cultural beliefs or differing abilities.

**Table 2.4: The strands of the OTM | HPW and NZC**

OTM   HPW	NZC
Me	Personal health and physical development
Me being physical	Movement concepts and motor skills
Me with other people	Relationships with other people
Me in the community and environment	Healthy communities and environments

(Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007).

**Table 2.5 - The key areas of learning for the OTM | HPW and NZC**

OTM   HPW	NZC
Mental health	Mental health
Sexuality education	Sexuality education
Food and nutrition	Food and nutrition
Body care and physical safety	Body care and physical safety
Physical activity	Physical activity
Sport studies	
Outdoor education	

(Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007).

The key arguments that are of relevance to this research, whether supported or contested, lie at the interface of the literature on physical education for development, gender, sport and PE literature and PE the Pacific, Table 2.6 below summarises these key arguments.

**Table 2.6 - Key ideas discussed in this literature review (Source: Author).**

Literature	Key arguments
Physical Education for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE is a site to foster and promote an appreciation for physical activity amongst young people</li> <li>• PE is seen as a way to address gender and social issues</li> <li>• Lower socio-economic families are considered worse off in terms of health and access to physical activity, PE is thus seen as a means to address those issues</li> <li>• PE is seen as a western construct</li> <li>• PE is argued to be young people’s first opportunity to be involved in organised play. For Pacific Islanders, this is not always the case.</li> <li>• PE equals sport skills</li> <li>• Within the PE classroom, young people exercise agency</li> <li>• A young person’s belief in their own ability (self-efficacy) has the potential to impact their involvement</li> </ul>
Gender and Sport, and PE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PE classroom is a critical site for gender to come to the fore</li> <li>• Gender stereotypes can either be challenged or reinforced in PE</li> <li>• Sport is seen as masculine in nature</li> <li>• Boys dominate physical activity and girls adopt avoidance strategies</li> <li>• Students see themselves as either ‘sport’ or ‘non-sporty’, with ‘non-sporty’ students feeling intimidated by ‘sporty’ students, and influencing their level of involvement through a lack of self-efficacy</li> <li>• The ‘PE as sport skills’ paradigm places the body on show, at a time where adolescents do not necessarily want their bodies to be judged and evaluated</li> <li>• Gender sits along a spectrum, which acknowledges that there are multiple masculinities and femininities</li> </ul>
PE in the Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NZ has constitutional bonds with the Cook Islands, through the NZ Aid Programme, NZ has a vested interest in education in the Cook Islands</li> <li>• Western education is seen to dominate Pacific education models, potentially impacting on how students view local knowledge and their own culture</li> <li>• Western education is seen as a means to develop human capital, for the benefit of economic growth</li> <li>• The OTM   HPW is built on the concept of <i>moenga</i>, the analogy for the child and <i>pito’enua</i>, the philosophy of well-being</li> </ul>

## 2.5 Conclusion

This research sits at the interface of literature on sport for development, physical education for development, gender, sport and PE and education in the Pacific. Within an outdated sports skill PE curriculum, emphasis is put on an individual's ability and the body is placed on show, which can put young people off participation. Nonetheless, well-designed PE programmes can make a unique contribution to youth education. Section 2.1 'Sport and physical education for development' focused on literature that will help to answer Research Question 1: How has the Cook Islands adapted and implemented *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being curriculum document in Rarotonga, Cook Islands? Also, Research Question 3; what does a context specific physical education programme, which results in empowerment, look like? What is not yet clearly understood is what this looks like in Pacific Island contexts.

Young people have to negotiate a range of messages within the PE classroom regarding gender and what it means to be masculine and feminine. These messages often reinforce dominant understandings of masculinity and femininity and do not account for the view of gender situated along a spectrum. Section 2.2 'Gender and physical education' further provides detail for Research Questions 1 and 3.

The paucity of research in the Pacific context on PE provides insight into potential challenges that could be present in the design and delivery of PE programmes. My research will provide an understanding of how the local adaptation of the PE curriculum can contribute to the empowerment or disempowerment of young people in the Cook Islands. The literature outlined in Section 2.4 'Curriculum adaptation for local contexts' helps to answer Research Question 2, do current approaches to physical education classes enable the empowerment of young people in Rarotonga, Cook Islands? Further details on this will emerge from the research findings in Chapter 6 and 7.

The following chapter outlines the literature relating to the theoretical framework, an empowerment conceptual framework, used in this research.

## **Chapter 3 : Empowerment**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for this thesis. An empowerment conceptual framework has been chosen to examine and understand the experiences of young people in the Physical Education (PE) classroom in the Cook Islands. First, an analysis of power is discussed in order to better understand empowerment theory. The emergence of empowerment into development theory and practice is then discussed followed by its acceptance and adoption into mainstream development. A critical examination of empowerment is given along with some of the potential challenges it faces. Finally, the empowerment framework that will guide this thesis is then discussed.

### **3.2 Power within empowerment**

In order to understand and facilitate empowerment, a nuanced understanding of power is required (J. Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2002). Understanding how power is manifested and perpetuated, alongside how it is experienced by individuals, is important when exploring possible ways to engage in the empowerment process through development interventions (Jo Rowlands, 1995).

Many individuals are constrained by the power structures within which they live and operate (Charmes & Wieringa, 2003; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kohfeldt, Chhun, Grace, & Langhout, 2011; Raju, 2005). Many individuals are also unaware that their position in relation to those power structures denies them the ability to engage in the decision-making process. According to Rowlands, (1995) empowerment must include work that seeks to undo the negative social constraints that people are situated within. If people are made aware of the oppressive nature of their situation they are more to see themselves as having the ability and the capacity to act, as opposed to continuing to live and operate within the restrictive environment (Jo Rowlands, 1995).

An all-encompassing definition of power is difficult to come by, with power and empowerment falling prey to reductionism (Thompson, 2006). Early theorist, Dahl's (1957) concept of power states that if "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (pp. 202-203). This proposes that if one has power

over another, they can then influence that person's behaviour to get them to do something they would not have normally done. Dahl spoke with particular respect to political decision-making. Dahl's concept of power is considered oversimplified and one-dimensional (Gaventa, 1982).

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) introduced the concept of a two-dimensional approach, or 'power's second face'. They suggest, in critique of Dahl's concept of power, that not only can person A exercise power over person B by influencing their behaviour, A can also exercise control over B's decision-making by limiting choices and excluding options. In response to this idea, Gaventa (1982, p. 9) (1982) further suggests that "If issues are prevented from arising, so too may actors be prevented from acting". Power's second face illustrates how those in power can limit the decision-making of suppressed people so that they do not challenge the political status quo.

A further critique of Dahl's conceptualisation of power came from Lukes who put forward a three-dimensional approach. Lukes (1974) argued that power should be analysed in terms of wants, that is when A exercises power over B, A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests. In a wider sense, Gaventa (1982) explains that in this three-dimensional approach, not only does A exercise power over B through prevailing key ideas and by preventing B from raising key issues, but also through affecting B's conceptions of the issues altogether (p. 12). Through this conceptualisation of power, we can begin to understand how systems of power may prevent the challenging of issues by individuals or groups. Lukes (1974) goes further to suggest that this type of power can occur when there is unobservable conflict. According to Lukes, unobservable conflict is the most effective and insidious use of power used to prevent conflict from arising in the first place by shaping the perceptions and thoughts of people in such a way that they accept the way things are and internalise oppression (p. 23-24). This type of thinking can also affect an individual's self-efficacy and their capacity to exercise agency (Hayward, 2000).

While early theorists' work on power allowed an understanding of how power can be exercised over another, it remained reductionist. Their work tended to focus on power as limited to the decision-making process and spaces, where conflict or force could be exercised over another which saw the oppressor as dominant and the oppressed as obedient (Rowlands, 1995). Rowlands critiqued these early definitions, as failing to take into account the complexity of power distribution through society, as they do not acknowledge how

power manifests itself and is perpetuated through gender, race, class or any other force of oppression (Rowlands, 1995, p. 101).

Rowlands’ (1995, p. 102) theory of power is generally understood in a broader sense as ‘power over’, ‘power to’ and ‘power from within’. The nature of power is outlined in Table 3.1 below. Power over refers to power over an individual. A gender analysis of ‘power over’ showed that this type of power is “wielded predominately by men over other men, by men over women, and by dominant social, political, economic or cultural groups over those who are marginalised” (Jo Rowlands, 1995, pp. 101, 102). If ‘power over’ is exercised for a longer period of time, the individual can begin to internalise the messages they receive over how they are supposed to be (Rowlands, 1995, p.102).

By contrast, ‘power to’ implies that power and empowerment are tools that can be ‘handed across’ to an individual who can then think and make decisions about issues that they may face in their lives (Jo Rowlands, 1995). According to Thompson (2006), who draws from Rowlands (1995), ‘power to’ is the most common understanding of power within the education setting. Meanwhile, ‘power with’ implies that collectively, people will work together to reach a common goal, that the process of empowerment encapsulates girls and boys gaining a sense of self-efficacy (Jo Rowlands, 1995). This type of work is central for most feminist writers’ visions of how power should be (Jo Rowlands, 1995; Thompson, 2006).

**Table 3.1 – Forms of power**

Forms of Power	Definition
Power over	Understanding the dynamics of oppression and internalised oppression
Power to	Changing the way in which individuals perceive themselves and their ability to act and influence the world around them (extrinsic).
Power with	People’s ability to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy that decision-making space (intrinsic).

(Source: Jo Rowlands, 1995, p. 102).

Rowlands’ (1995) work on forms of power will be heavily drawn upon for this thesis, particularly in terms of undoing oppressive structures of ‘power over’ and seeing power in a more positive, enabling way. Power over is often associated with a repressive government, or an autocratic environment within which the individual lives or works. Power over can be

subtle, yet it may still be possible to see or hear examples of it, therefore, I would argue it is often visible, irrespective of whether or not the individual is aware they are being denied opportunity. What is also of interest is manifestations of power that are *invisible*.

Thompson (2006) argues that invisible power encompasses the broader socio-historical cultural context within which the individual lives. Where Rowlands' conceptualisation of the nature of power places emphasis on the individual as an agent of power within the world (Thompson, 2006, p.22), Thompson's concept of invisible power acknowledges the unwritten rules that guide an individual's decision-making within the broader social context. According to Thompson (2006, p.22), groups or individuals act in a particular way because their cultural practices lead them to. This is of importance within the empowerment space, as an understanding of invisible power acknowledges the wider cultural norms that can influence a person's agency, thus making it difficult to see individuals as separate from their embedded cultural beliefs and practices (Thompson, 2006). It is also important in relating power to Pacific contexts such as the Cook Islands, where people's lives are structured strongly by communal cultural systems (Kea, 2009; Kecskemeti, 2012; Sissons, 2007). Thompson (2006, p.22) believes that to examine invisible power requires a critique of the cultural forces that determine an individual's agency. To understand how an individual may engage with power within Rowlands' (1995) Forms of Power, we must also understand the invisible power that occupies the time and space within which the individual lives, and the level of influence this has.

Rowlands draws on her work with Oxfam (2016, p. 128) to conclude that, while it is clear some people have a natural ability to engage with power analysis, power dynamics are still only partially understood in both international development and other domains of human activity. It is clear that despite improvements to the lives of many, the controlling power dynamics that keep people in poverty and inequality are still firmly in place (Jo Rowlands, 2016; Royce, 2018; Shaw, 2020). Empowerment must therefore include work that will seek to undo the oppressive structures that many people find themselves embedded in (Batliwala, 2007; Gullan et al., 2013; Jo Rowlands, 2016; Thompson, 2006; Woodall, Warwick-Booth, & Cross, 2012) .

When examining empowerment, we first must understand power. This section has shown that early definitions fail to consider how power relating to gender, race or class manifests



itself and is perpetuated (Rowlands 1995; 2016). It has also shown that power is not just a dominating force of 'power over': rather, it can be enabling and something that comes about from working with others for change. Through the empowerment process, an individual may be able to be given an opportunity to engage with power to, power with and power from within. Forms of power can occur in both visible and invisible spaces and it is important to consider invisible power as well. Thompson's (2008) concept of invisible power acknowledges that individuals are not void of the society within which they live. There are taken for granted rules that guide individuals' behaviour and influence their agency. These deeply embedded cultural beliefs and values are important to consider when examining the cultural context of the Cook Islands.

### **3.3 The emergence of a new development concept**

The discursive field of empowerment theory and practice as it relates to Global South women's development first surfaced in gender and development debates through the work of feminist writers Caren Grown and Gita Sen (1987), and Caroline Moser (1993). Their writings reflected a concern that women did not have a voice to challenge race, class and patriarchal power systems, which perpetuated and maintained inequality (G. Sen & Grown, 1987). They maintained that women would never develop unless they were empowered to challenge patriarchy and global inequality (Desai & Potter, 2013, p. 356). In their early works these feminist empowerment scholars argued that empowerment was not something that could be 'handed over' by others, but rather at its core empowerment recognised inequalities of power, placed emphasis on women's rights and sought to bring about structural change in favour of greater equality (Batliwala, 1993; Cornwall, 2016; Kabeer, 1994; Joanna Rowlands, 1997; Scheyvens, 2020).

Moser (1993) insisted that women required self-reliance and self-efficacy to be able to make decisions and influence the direction of their lives. She also argued that in order for women to progress, it was important that they were able to have a level of control over material and non-material resources. Sen and Grown's (1987) approach was collective, believing in the importance of women's organisations and groups to help bring about a societal transformation through uniting women around political issues. Even in empowerment's relative infancy, Batliwala (1994) called for a more precise definition of empowerment for fear of it losing its transformative edge. As such, Batliwala (1994) articulated empowerment

as the process of challenging existing power relations, defining power as control. Sen would later argue that, if power meant control, then empowerment was therefore the process of gaining control (G. Sen, 1997, p. 2). Debate around the meaning of empowerment continued, with Batliwala (1994), Kabeer (1994) and Rowlands (1997) building on initial conceptions of empowerment to one that recognises power inequalities at a structural level and asserting rights and acting to bring about structural change was needed to achieve greater equality.

At its inception, empowerment was considered an alternative approach to development and was utilised in mostly grassroots participation (Cornwall, 2016). While empowerment was embraced by feminist theorists and women's development initiatives, John Friedmann's (1992) book entitled *Empowerment: The politics of alternative development* is credited with bringing empowerment into mainstream development discourse (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 116). Friedmann brought empowerment into discussions around poverty and the poor – who he referred to as 'disenfranchised' - in a more general sense (Friedmann, 1992). Friedmann used the household as his means of analysis, claiming that it was not a lack of resources but rather that households had been oppressed and systematically denied access to those resources. In collectivist cultures like the Cook Islands and other Pacific countries the family could be seen as a better unit of analysis as it acknowledges the continual influence and inclusion of family members regardless of whether they are physically present in the household (see for example Stewart-Withers, 2007). Friedmann believed that households could gain access to material and social resources by focusing on empowerment through social, psychological and political spheres. Friedmann's bottom-up approach sought to empower the individual through overcoming oppression and acquiring self-determination. This approach is an appropriate position for those who are interested in the rights and knowledge of Indigenous peoples (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 116).

While Friedmann's work brought empowerment debates into development discourse in a broader sense, empowerment was still largely harnessed by those working with women. Kabeer (1994), like Batliwala (1994), argued that women internalised oppression so it was necessary for them to be aware of that oppression in order to challenge it and potentially overcome it. Kabeer (1994, p. 229) was an advocate for power from within "as a necessary adjunct to improving their ability to control resources, to determine agendas and make decisions". Kabeer also acknowledged what she called organisational power. That is, that a woman's decision-making and participation was limited to the confines of predefined development agendas. Kabeer acknowledged that the sustainability of empowerment

strategies depended on the extent to which women could challenge and reverse these priorities (1994, p. 262). Only when women could move beyond activities at the project level and move towards challenging policymaking, would we see empowerment influencing the course of development (Kabeer, 1994, p.262).

Returning to Rowlands (1995), discussed in the previous section on power, in her earlier work she suggests that empowerment must include work that seeks to undo the negative social constraints that people are situated within, in order for them to be able to see themselves as having the ability and the capacity to act. If people are made aware of the oppressive nature of their situation, she claims that they are more likely to act and do something about it, as opposed to continuing to live and operate within a restrictive environment. Rowlands identifies three components of empowerment: personal, relational, and collective. Personal empowerment includes developing personal identity, capacity, and belief in oneself – self-efficacy; the relational, which includes the capacity and bargaining ability to determine the boundaries of personal relationships; and the, collective, a cooperative collaboration between individuals to gain collective strength.

In sum, it is clear that early conceptualisations of empowerment associated with both feminist theorists and grassroots initiatives were considered radical. Conceptual understanding of empowerment in the 1980s and 1990s made it clear that empowerment is not something that is done for people or to anyone else (Cornwall, 2016). While the concept of empowerment has continued to develop and has increasingly been taken up by neoliberalists and proponents of alternative development alike, Cornwall suggests that there are three key insights from these early writings that remain current. Firstly, theorists suggest that empowerment is fundamentally about changing power relations (Cornwall, 2016, p. 344). This recognises that in order to bring about change for those who are marginalised and poor, there must be some type of challenge to the power relations of the individual or collective group. She describes this as being possible through building critical consciousness (see further discussion of this in the section to follow). Secondly, Cornwall argues that there is a clear recognition of the social nature of empowerment, the relational dimensions that Rowlands alludes to. And lastly, empowerment does not necessarily have an endpoint – it is not a fixed state, but rather it is a process. This acknowledges the complexity of the empowerment process; it can be temporary, disempowerment may also occur along a path, and what might empower one person or group may not necessarily empower another (Cornwall, 2016, p. 344).

### 3.4 Mainstreaming empowerment

From the mid-1990s notions of empowerment began to work their way into mainstream development. In 1994 empowerment was identified at the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development as a way of addressing over-population and development issues, for example, empowering young women through access to contraception could keep down the birth rate. In the following year at the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing a 'Platform for Action' set in place an agreement on a relatively clear and transformative plan for achieving empowerment (Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2008). This Platform for Action provided a directive for the United Nations for mainstreaming gender and empowerment. In this plan women became not only the beneficiaries of change but also the agents of change (Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2008). The conference report affirmed its commitment to:

The empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society (United Nations, 1996, p. 3).

The adoption of empowerment into the United Nations agenda solidified its presence in development discourse. Others, however, believed the UN's ideals were too lofty, and likened it to holding up half the sky, pointing to the widening gap between rhetoric and reality (Otto, 1996). Uptake of empowerment by the UN opened the door for it to also be applied in other development approaches. The World Bank also sought to empower poor people, this time through a market-based approach. Empowerment in this sense was seen as a means to enable poor people to "engage effectively in markets" (World Bank, 2000, p. 39). This neoliberal view of empowerment focuses on building the capacities of poor people to be able to lift themselves out of poverty, thus being able to meet their own needs and reducing their dependence on the state (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 116). There is a danger that empowerment, as conceptualised in this way, is only used to improve productivity within the status quo rather than as a means of transforming oppressive structures (J. Parpart et al., 2002, p. 1). This neoliberal view of empowerment places the responsibility on the individual to get themselves out of poverty rather than looking at how development programmes might bring about changes in society that benefit a wide range of vulnerable or excluded people (Scheyvens, 2020).

Theorists have continued to build on the work of early writers such as Sen and Grown, Moser and Rowlands to name a few. Cornwall (2016) recognises that there is no one size-fits-all approach to empowerment. She does contend though that, in programmes where there is an element of engaging people in critical, conscious reflection of their own circumstances and sharing those reflections with others, the project is more likely to have elements of success (Cornwall, 2016). Critical consciousness, as Cornwall describes it, has long been a part of feminist practice. Many believe it is a vital first step in facilitating the empowerment process (Calman, 2019; Cornwall, 2016; Lim & Dixon, 2017; Scheyvens, 2020; Yu, 2018). By raising the awareness of the oppression that keeps disadvantaged people marginalised, people are more likely to realise they are capable of acting (Scheyvens, 2020). Developing critical consciousness can help to build both power within and power with (Rowlands, 1997) through expanding an individual's possibilities, leading to a potentially transformative impact (Cornwall, 2016).

Theorists have also been interested in the relationship between empowerment and space. The notion of creating space can be linked to Indigenous groups attempts to reclaim traditional land and having the means to challenge the political nature of space (Scheyvens, 2020). But creating space can also mean having a place to raise concerns or voice opinions in a safe and supportive environment (Mathur, 2008; J. L. Parpart, 2013; Paterson, 2008). The concept of claiming space shows a clear link with power, as those who are marginalised often experience 'power over' so having the ability to claim space allows them a chance to challenge the status quo (Paterson, 2008). Mathur (2008) contends that the body can also be considered 'space'. Mathur's (2008) work on body integrity and women's empowerment in India raises some interesting considerations around the rights of women to claim their bodies as space. Naming and claiming rights to body integrity allows individuals to have an element of control over their bodies and to challenge discrimination (Mathur, 2008). However, within a performance based setting, such as the PE classroom, when we claim space we are then subject to what Björk calls 'the gaze' (2011). In PE the gaze can regulate behaviour through student's desire to not stand out amongst peers, either through success or failure of a given task. Nevertheless, Björk (2011) asserts that space equals possibility, freedom, authority, power and 'voice' (p. 56) and represents much of what empowerment work seeks to achieve.

### 3.5 Critiques of empowerment

Empowerment theory is not without criticism. Cornwall (2016, 2018) contends that empowerment is one of the most elastic international development buzzwords. Many believe the term to be ambiguous, complex and applied liberally to a range of situations and processes (Cross, Woodall, & Warwick-Booth, 2017; Úcar Martínez, Jiménez-Morales, Soler Masó, & Trilla Bernet, 2017). In this way, empowerment acts as a convenient term to apply to already established projects or, what Parpart et al. (2002) describe as a 'motherhood term', comfortable and unquestionable and able to be utilised by different institutions and practices. Caution must be taken to clearly define empowerment in order for it to be contextually and conceptually understood. A lack of definitional clarity has potential flow on effects and critics argue that this has led to difficulties in measuring empowerment (Cross et al., 2017). However, there is a limitation with this argument: if one clearly defines empowerment with theoretical consideration for the given context, then the ability to measure empowerment can be somewhat mitigated.

The language used surrounding collective empowerment assumes that communities and groups are homogenous entities that face the same advantages and disadvantages, interests, morals and values (Hamilton, 2019; Scheyvens, 2009). The assumption that empowerment can happen to a particular group assumes that there is a non-problematic transition from individual to collective power (Yuval-Davis, 1994). This limitation to the way the collective is theorised does not allow for individuality within the group context. Not all individuals of a particular race, group, school, or class think and act collectively. Similarly, not all members of a group are going to experience empowerment in the same way, and what may be empowering for one person, another might find disempowering (Yuval-Davis, 1994). It is important to consider that the collective is a social construct, whose norms and structures are evolving through continuous struggles and negotiations (Yuval-Davis, 1994, p. 181). Thus, recognising that individuals operate within the collective is crucial to provide a deeper understanding of collective empowerment.

It is important to note that discussions surrounding empowerment have largely been carried out with respect to adults (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). There is a danger for youth empowerment to be conflated with youth development, which is conceptually different (Kaplan, Skolnik, & Turnbull, 2009). It is clear from the literature that youth empowerment is theorised in a similar way to Rowlands' (1995) conceptualisation with emphasis being placed

on the personal, relational and collective components of empowerment (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). Personal empowerment is considered through the process of personal growth and wellbeing (Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, & Green, 2003; Luttrell, Quiroz, Scrutton, & Bird, 2009; Morton & Montgomery, 2013; Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, & Laub, 2009). Relational empowerment is often understood in a different way when dealing with young people, particularly when an adult has a key role in the environment (Úcar Martínez et al., 2017). 'Harmony' between the adult and the youth facilitates positive empowerment through self-esteem, development of abilities and social competencies (Travis & Bowman, 2012). Consideration for the specific position in which youth are situated is necessary in order to make sense of their experiences.

Another point of critique is that there is an assumption that scholarly concepts are universal (Laverack, Ofanoa, Nosa, Fa'alili, & Taufa, 2007). It is argued that western theorists suffer from ethnocentrism and an inability to relate to the cultural ethos of the countries where development work takes place (Laverack et al., 2007; Rahman, 2013). Laverack et al. (2007) warn against this, saying it is important to understand a concept like empowerment from the world view of the specified cultural groups. Furthermore, empowerment theory can be seen as a western construct (Rahman, 2013). Rahman (2013, p.12) contends that western empowerment discourse fails to capture the cultural reality of gender relations in non-western parts of the world. As a researcher from a different cultural background to my research participants, this analysis is of particular significance. I attempted to mitigate this through the development of a student-informed empowerment framework, presented in section 7.4, which acknowledged my cross-cultural research responsibilities (Scheyvens & Leslie, 2000). By building upon students' conceptions of empowerment and drawing on a culturally relevant Cook Islands philosophy of well-being, the student-informed framework sought to align with an interpretivist perspective, which privileges the knowledge of my Cook Island research participants.

Difficulties may arise in assessing empowerment in Pacific contexts without an understanding of Pacific concepts of empowerment. While there is little in the literature specifically relating to empowerment from the perspective of Pacific peoples, we can begin to get an understanding of what it might look like when we examine some of the key words used to define or explain empowerment. A key aim of empowerment more broadly is the development of self. Within a Pacific worldview the development of self is seen through two key components. The first is building one's autonomy. Tā Mason Durie's (1999) *Te Pae*

*Māhutonga*: a model for Māori health promotion discusses the concept of *Te Mana Whakahaere* | Autonomy. While this concept relates directly to health promotion there are clear links to wellbeing. Durie (1999) argues that autonomy is reflected in people's participation, aspirations, and capacity for self-governance. Promoting *Te Mana Whakahaere* is not all about the self, and can lead to collaboration between individuals while still allowing an individual to have an element of control over their own wellbeing and development (Durie, 1999).

The second component of the development of self is capacity building. This is achieved by developing knowledge, the ability to engage in critical discussions, involvement by choice (not forced) and meeting one's own needs (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995; David W Gegeo, 1998; Laverack et al., 2007; Meyer, 1998; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1992; Wilson, 2004). Further to the development of knowledge through education, is the development of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is seen as important for the maintenance and development of culture and cultural practices (Meyer, 1998; K. H. Thaman, 2003; Wilson, 2004). Wilson (2004) argues that Indigenous knowledge has been stifled by colonialism, which saw alternate ways of knowing as irrelevant in a modern world. Wilson (2004, p. 371) aptly states that the recovery of Indigenous knowledge leads to Indigenous empowerment.

Pacific empowerment acknowledges that the individual is 'rooted' in culture (David W Gegeo, 1998). The maintenance and perpetuation of culture is closely tied with Indigenous knowledge but acknowledges broader connections to land and the environment. We can see examples of these connections in the Cook Island philosophy of *pito'enua*, discussed earlier in section 2.1.2. Here, Cook Islanders use the metaphor of the umbilical cord to recognise the attachment to the land and culture. This reflects the idea of being anchored to your environment in order to be able to live your life the way you choose (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 6). Empowerment through Indigenous knowledge and culture recognises that the individual has a collective affiliation with the community (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995). The collective plays an important part in perpetuation of culture within Pacific communities (David Welchman Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001).

Relational components of empowerment are an important feature in many Pacific Island communities where 'self through others' is an important way of acknowledging relationships (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995; Laverack et al., 2007; Meyer, 1998). Relationships foster knowledge and indicate reliance and a degree of reciprocity amongst family and the community (Meyer,



1998). The individual sitting within a broader social context aligns with the idea of relational components of empowerment put forth by Rowlands (1995), which acknowledges the role that community plays in the knowledge and capacity building of the individual. Laverack et al. (2007) highlight that differences in views can exist between young and old, creating tension for some commonly held views. This tension, they believe, can lead to changing attitudes and beliefs in Pacific Island cultures (Laverack et al., 2007). This idea allows us to understand and acknowledge that Indigenous culture is not “locked in a frozen embrace with the past” (Kidman, 2012, p. 198), it is not static, but rather a fluid entity that evolves with time.

### **3.6 An empowerment framework**

Contextual clarity is needed to ensure theoretical consideration has been given to the term empowerment (Cross et al., 2017). In order to understand the empowerment process as it relates to this research, we must first define the term empowerment as without a definition, difficulties lie in the ability to identify or observe empowerment.

A key definition that is pertinent to this research is that “empowerment is the process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals, families and communities can take action to improve their situations” (Gutierrez, 1995, p. 229). This also aligns with Rowlands’ (1997) thinking on the personal, relational, and collective elements of empowerment, which is built into Table 3.2 below, showing the components of empowerment. Lawson (2005, p. 147) adds to this, defining empowerment in relation to three aspects: 1) power, 2) resources, and 3) collaboration, noting that “empowerment is a voluntary, collaborative process in which power and resources are redistributed and shared with the aim of enhancing individual and collective capacities, efficacy and well-being, addressing inequalities and, where poverty is implicated, promoting social and economic justice”. Lawson’s definition of empowerment acknowledges collective capacities, efficacy and wellbeing, all of which are relevant to the PE classroom context.

In this research, how gender is positioned within the PE classroom is essential to whether or not students are limited by gender constraints placed upon them, either by the teacher, their culture, their friends, or themselves. Any analysis of the discourses, and the individual devoid of the social structures within which they function, denies the relational positioning of the individual within social fields (Hunter, 2004, p. 176). Additionally, the relationship between

the teacher and the student is of importance. The PE teacher has a large degree of influence over what is taught, the components of the curriculum that are fostered and developed, and practices and procedures that occur within the classroom environment. The teacher is a key component to the empowerment process (Hunter, 2004; Lawson, 2005).

Central to empowerment theory is the notion that empowerment must be a cooperative and collaborative process – this is also true within the PE classroom. According to Lawson (2005), collaboration is one key to the empowerment process, and teachers should share power, collaborate with students to develop the capacities of the students and support the acquisition of efficacy and agency. Collaboration can occur through co-construction of classroom activities, or through student feedback. Cooperation in PE extends to both the interactions with the teacher and other students. Without cooperation, it would be difficult to negotiate classroom interactions, let alone engage in the set activity. A student's unwillingness to cooperate or collaborate in this setting would hinder the empowerment process.

Of relevance to this thesis is the work of Rowlands (1995), and Kelleher and Rao (n.d.). Rowlands' (1995) framework focuses on three key components: the personal, which includes developing personal identity, capacity and belief in oneself (Jo Rowlands, 1995); the relational, which includes the capacity and bargaining ability to determine the boundaries of personal relationships; and the collective, which involves a cooperative collaboration between individuals to gain collective strength, outlined in Table 3.2.

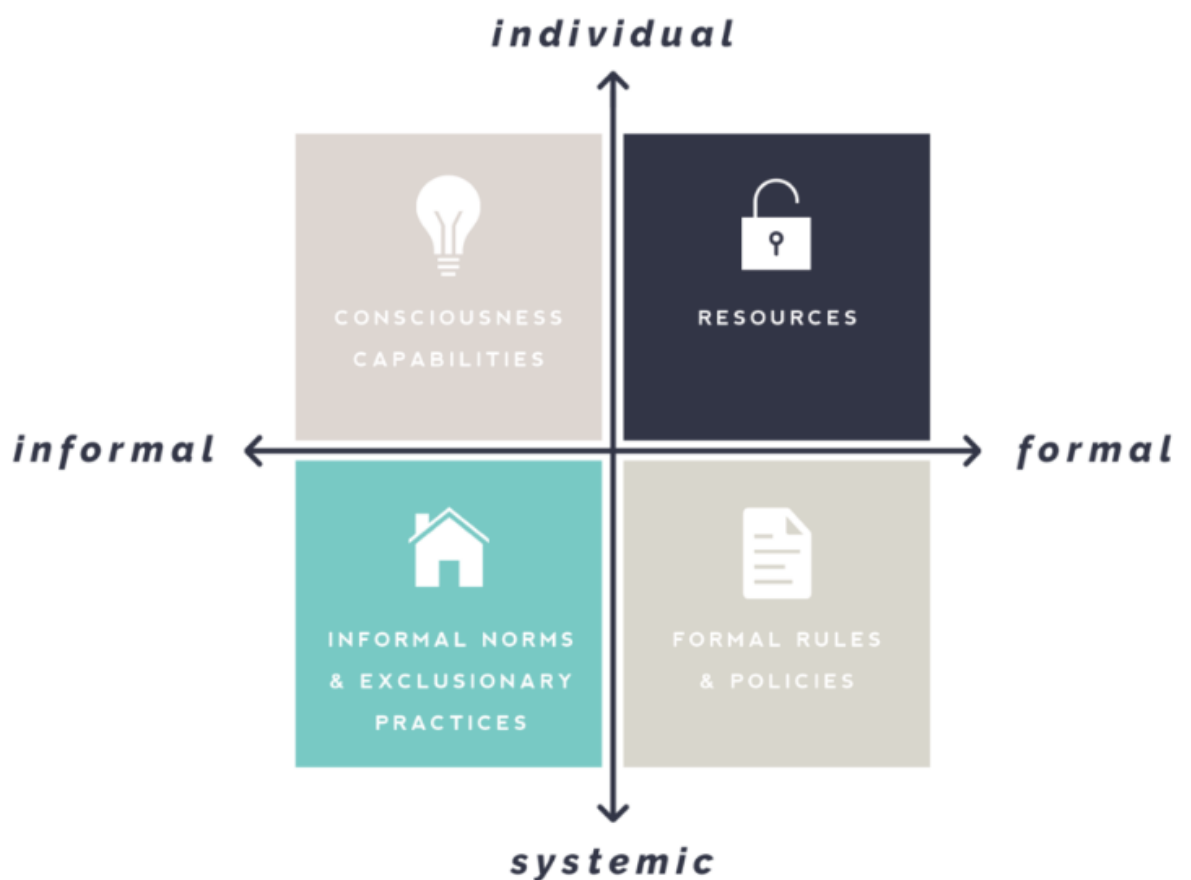
**Table 3.2 – Definitions of Rowlands (1995) components of empowerment**

Components	Definition
<p><b>Personal</b></p> <p><i>Self-esteem, self-efficacy and agency</i></p>	<p>Self-esteem refers to the way that people feel about themselves, which reflects and affects their on-going interactions with their environment and the people they encounter in it (Kernis, 2003).</p> <p>Self-efficacy - if an individual has belief in their own physical ability or their ability to negotiate 'the gaze' they are more likely to be engaged. The individual must want to engage in the empowerment process in order for empowerment to occur (Lawson, 2005).</p> <p>Agency refers to people's ability to make and act on their own life choices, even in the face of others' opposition (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14).</p>
<p><b>Relational</b></p>	<p>The capacity and bargaining ability to determine the boundaries of personal relationships (Jo Rowlands, 1995). Relationships matter (Eyben, 2011).</p>
<p><b>Collective</b></p>	<p>Social empowerment refers to a situation where a group's (class, year group) sense of cohesion and integrity is strong and positive. Social cohesion has been confirmed or strengthened through an activity or set of shared experiences (Scheyvens, 1999).</p>

(Source: Author).

While this conceptualisation of empowerment focuses largely on the student, it is also important to consider the wider sociocultural context. As discussed previously in 3.2: Power within empowerment, the individual is not separate from the broader societal constructs, what Thompson (2006) called invisible power. This can influence an individual's way of behaving or acting and acknowledges people's embedded cultural beliefs and practices. Empowerment does involve the individual but should also include changes to systems, rules and norms, which undermine large groups of people (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 120). Cornwall (2016) argues that when we look more broadly within a cultural context, we may begin to see gendered conceptualisations that influence how a man or woman should act. The framework developed by Kelleher and Rao (n.d.) highlights individual and systemic dimensions where change is needed and the interrelationship between them (Scheyvens, 2020). The framework also demonstrates that change can either be formal or informal. As mentioned, consciousness raising is considered an important step in the empowerment process. By raising one's consciousness they become aware of their situation and help to build power from within as they develop a sense of self-efficacy. In Kelleher and Rao's (n.d.)

framework, in Figure 3.1 below, the top two quadrants relate to the individual and the school. In the PE context, the curriculum OTM | HPW lies on the bottom right as formal rules and processes; school-based resources, for example, access to areas to play in during wet season, equipment such as *vaka*, as well as access to experienced Cook Island teachers, are situated at the top right quadrant; individual teachers and their training and skills are top left under consciousness and capabilities; finally, the bottom left – informal norms and exclusionary practices - would account for the attitude towards PE in schools and the potential lack of importance placed on PE in comparison to other subjects, along with the gendered norms around masculinity and femininity.



**Figure 3.1 – Gender at Work empowerment framework (Source: Kelleher & Rao, n.d.)**

Kelleher and Rao’s empowerment framework allows me to examine not only the individual, their thoughts, feelings and actions, but also their access to resources, while acknowledging both the informal norms of the Cook Islands culture and the school setting. This includes the informal norms within the class itself. Additionally, the framework includes the formal rules and policies that are present in the Cook Islands and at the school they attend. This

framework looks beyond the individual and acknowledges the *invisible power* that can influence their thoughts and actions, for example, the view that certain sports or activities are only playable by one gender, or what might be deemed appropriate attire for young people to wear for sport or PE. Rowlands' (1995) framework allows me to make sense of what the student is experiencing within the classroom setting with respect to their thoughts and feelings, how they negotiate relationships (friends, other students or teachers) and the collective nature of their friend groups or class. Through a gendered lens, we can examine the interrelationship between gender equality, the organisation, culture, social forces, and the *invisible power* that enforce the 'rules of the game' (Kelleher & Rao, n.d.). Table 3.2 and Figure 3.1 intersect to allow for a deeper analysis of empowerment in the PE classroom. However, they do not go so far as to acknowledge local conceptualisations of empowerment.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

Empowerment is a highly contested concept, with many arguing that there are difficulties faced in defining and evidencing of the term. Understanding how power is linked with empowerment is central to discussions on gender. Within the classroom space, the teacher and other students play a key role in determining what type of power is perpetuated at any one time, particularly with respect to gender roles or stereotypes. Therefore, being able to observe whether or not opportunities for empowerment may exist in the PE classroom requires the use of key empowerment components. The empowerment components of the personal, relational, and collective are utilised with a gendered lens in order to determine whether PE classroom experiences are empowering or disempowering for young men and women. Furthermore, the wider context within which the individual is placed is also acknowledged. Understanding that they are not separate from their culture, community, or school and that these systemic dimensions can either formally or informally influence a person's feelings, behaviours and decisions is also a key consideration. The following Chapter 4 describes the research approach and considerations, and the methods used to generate and analyse data.

## **Chapter 4 : Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology utilised in this research, including the research design, chosen methods, participant selection and ethical considerations. As this study seeks to understand the lived experiences of secondary school students in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, it lends itself to qualitative methodology. Examining these perspectives informed the choice of a case study approach. A range of data collection methods were selected to answer the research questions.

The first section of this chapter describes the qualitative research approach that underpins the research and explains the rationale for utilising a case-study. The second section discusses the research considerations, including research focus and location, the two fieldwork visits, ethical considerations, along with acknowledgement of positionality, reflexivity, and reciprocity. Finally, the third section examines the qualitative research methods employed in this research along with the data analysis process. The research limitations are also briefly discussed.

### **4.2 Research Approach**

#### **4.2.1 Research design**

It is the choice of the paradigm that sets down the intent, motivations and expectations for the research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). It is important to position research within a research paradigm (Tuli, 2011), in order to “address the philosophical dimensions of social sciences” (Wahyuni, 2012, p. 69). Ontology and epistemology are the two main philosophical dimensions used to distinguish existing research paradigms (Kalof, Dan, & Dietz, 2008; Wahyuni, 2012). Ontology refers to the ways of constructing reality, “how things really are” and how “things really work” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 201). Epistemology acknowledges that there are different forms of knowledge of that reality, and acknowledges the nature of the relationship that exists between the researcher and the researched (T. Anderson, 2013).

Of importance to these two philosophical dimensions are two basic beliefs that affect the way a researcher investigates reality; these are axiology and methodology. Axiology references the set of values in the research, and the researcher’s stance in relation to the subjects studied (Wahyuni, 2012, p. 70). While methodology is the research process utilised within a particular research paradigm (Wahyuni, 2012). As this research seeks to find out the nature of reality within a wider social system, it sits within an interpretivism paradigm (Tuli, 2011; Wahyuni, 2012).

The overarching approach to this research draws upon an interpretivism paradigm which seeks to make meaning of the human experience and acknowledges that reality is socially constructed (T. Anderson, 2013; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Tuli, 2011; Wahyuni, 2012). This research aims to understand the participants lived experiences within the PE space, and relies upon the participant’s views of the situation being studied, while acknowledging the researcher’s positionality (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Furthermore, interpretivist researchers do not begin with a theory, but rather allows patterns of meaning, or ‘themes’ to emerge from the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). A summary of the philosophical underpinnings of the research within an interpretivism paradigm can be found in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 - Interpretivism fundamental beliefs**

<b>Ontology:</b> The position on the nature of reality	<b>Epistemology:</b> The view on what constitutes acceptable knowledge	<b>Axiology:</b> The role of values in research and the researcher’s stances	<b>Methodology:</b> The model behind the research process
Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of the situation, the reality behind these details, subjective meanings, and motivating actions.	Value-bond and emic. Research is value bond, the researcher is part of what is being researched, they cannot be separated and so will be subjective	Qualitative

(Source: Adapted from Wahyuni, 2012, p. 70).

The interpretivism research paradigm takes the ontological standpoint that reality is socially constructed by the individuals within it and their perceptions of what is taking place (Wahyuni, 2012). My interactions with students, teacher and key informants aligns itself with interpretivism, as dialogue with the participants is favoured (Arghode, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012). The epistemology of the interpretivism paradigm is especially concerned with “multiple truths”, that is I made sense of what I saw and heard by understanding that there can be more than one explanation for the lived experience of the individuals (Arghode, 2012, p. 4). While I sought to understand the “social reality from the perspectives of the people themselves” (Wahyuni, 2012, p. 71), interpretivism also acknowledges that the researcher is a part of the research and plays a part in the generation of data and its analysis (Wahyuni, 2012, p. 71). Attempts to control the level of researcher influence will be discussed in 4.3.5, where I discuss my positionality and reflexivity.

The methodology for this study is therefore qualitative in design. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study as the focus is on the depth of experiences of participants over quantity (O'Leary, 2010). When the emphasis is placed on the individual's experience, this allows the researcher to delve deeper into social complexities by exploring interactions, attitudes and the lived experiences of the participants (O'Leary, 2010).

#### **4.2.2 A Case Study Approach**

A case study approach was used in this research in order to understand a particular case and to come to know it well, “particularization not generalization” as Stake (1995, p. 8) asserts. A qualitative case study approach was considered an appropriate approach to examine what is occurring within the school settings and on the Island, with respect to sporting initiatives or events. A qualitative case study approach occurs within a “bounded context” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27), and it falls upon the researcher to define what is of interest and thus draw boundaries around their inquiry. According to Merriam (1998), a case study approach differs from other research tools in that it has three distinctive attributes. The first attribute is that it is particularistic, that it focuses on the observation of a particular type of event or situation. Secondly, it is descriptive, allowing the researcher to gain dense accounts of the situation. And thirdly, it is heuristic, enabling the researcher to discover and better understand what is being studied (Merriam, 1998).



Conducting a case study approach is preferable for this research as it will allow the researcher to observe contemporary events within the defined, or “bounded context” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). The researcher will then seek to interpret these events in order to make meaning from them. In this respect, the researcher is what Stake (1995, p. 99) describes as a ‘gatherer of interpretations’. Therefore, a case study approach can provide deep and varied sources of information that can lead to the research becoming richly descriptive (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016, p. 16).

Within a case study design, a selection of data collection methods can be utilised. For this study these are classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Criticisms of this particular research strategy include a lack of rigour within the case study approach (Yin, 2003). In order to combat prejudices against this particular research strategy, a range of data collection methods were used, along with multiple research sites in order to reach data saturation and triangulate results (Patton, 2015) .

### **4.3 Research Considerations: Location, ethics, and fieldwork**

#### **4.3.1 Research Focus**

My research focus originated from my work as a Physical Education (PE) teacher in New Zealand, and is, in part, an extension of my Masters research. I began teaching Health and Physical Education (HPE) in 2003. In my second year, I became a Head of Department (HOD). Although I was inexperienced, I had a good department and I began to develop a passion for curriculum development. My second appointment as an HOD (at a different school) is where I began to develop a programme with a gendered focus, as I was teaching at an all-girls school. The idea of developing a programme that was not only suited to the students at that school, but also one that ‘captured’ everyone, even those reluctant students, became my main focus as an educator.

At an undergraduate level, I had taken a Development Studies paper as part of course requirements for my second teaching subject. The paper, Rich World, Poor World, sparked an interest in Development Studies that had always been there, but never channelled into a particular field. I left university with a desire to complete my Masters, at some stage, in Development. Whilst teaching at the all-girls school mentioned earlier, I began studying part-

time towards my post-graduate diploma in Development Studies, with a view to then complete my Masters. In 2013, I applied for and gained a TeachNZ research study award.<sup>20</sup> This award allowed me to study full-time in 2014, while my position was held at my current school.

My Masters research drew together both my passion for PE and development. With this in mind, and given my circumstances at the time, I wanted to focus on young women. Students who attended the school I was working at also lived at the school and came from a relatively privileged position. Access to sport and physical activity for these young women was only affected by time constraints and/or their level of motivation. There were many facilities available to them and I began to consider what it might be like for young women who were not in a privileged position. Moreover, I wanted to understand how experiences within the classroom affected young women's desires to be active in their own time. PE classes are argued to be a complicated setting for young women, one that has the potential to put young women off participating in physical activity (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Granero-Gallegos, Baena-Extremera, Gómez-López, & Abrales, 2014). Through consultation with Development Studies academics, I decided to examine how PE could or could not be an empowering experience for young Pacific Island women. My Masters research (2015), 'Get into Groups: Young Pacific Island Women and the potential for empowerment in Physical Education' was conducted at three schools in South Auckland.

My PhD research continues to combine my two passions of PE and Development Studies. My PhD research is undertaken in Rarotonga, Cook Islands and with the view to better understand gender within the PE classroom space, the experiences of both males and females and the interactions that occur within and between these gendered experiences. My research extends to understanding the complex and historical relationship between New Zealand and the Cook Islands, and the potential challenges that may or may not occur within education as a result. More specifically, I want to examine potential challenges or successes that may occur through the national adaptation of the HPE, which is largely modelled on the New Zealand HPE Curriculum. This is discussed further below in section 4.3.2, research location.

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<sup>20</sup> Each year the Ministry of Education, through TeachNZ, grants 75 study awards to secondary teachers in New Zealand. The award provides paid leave to complete full or part-time study in an agreed education priority area.

### 4.3.2 Research Location

When I began thinking through what my PhD research might be, the intent was to view it as having a connection with my Masters' research. About a month prior to my PhD confirmation my intended research focus, questions and location shifted from what is discussed in this chapter. The change occurred due to health issues which placed location limitations on me. Thus, it meant I had to rethink my choice of research location and subsequently my research focus. Through discussion with my supervisors, the Cook Islands were chosen as the intended location. This change was seen as fortuitous by both myself and my supervisors as it allowed me to strengthen my research focus and to ultimately be of more relevance to development research.

Fieldwork was carried out in the Cook Islands. The Cook Islands has strong ties with New Zealand (NZ). The Cook Islands gained independence from NZ in 1965. It is self-governing in 'free association' with NZ, which allows residence dual citizenship with NZ (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019b). The selection of the Cook Islands was partially driven by NZ's close ties with the Cook Islands. Moreover, the Cook Islands HPE curriculum is closely modelled on the NZ HPE curriculum with the most significant point of difference being adaptation of the Māori philosophy of *Hauora* (well-being), which underpins the NZ HPE curriculum. A Cook Island philosophy of well-being, *pito'enua*, replaces *Hauora* (see Chapter 2). The adaptation of the NZ HPE curriculum to fit local context allowed for a critical discussion into the effectiveness of local policy adaptation from western constructs. Figure 4.1 provides a map of the Cook Islands.



**Figure 4.1 - The Cook Islands.** (Source: Cook Islands Aquatics, 2019).

Prior to fieldwork I had not been to the Cook Islands. The intention was to complete fieldwork on Rarotonga and Aitutaki, and as such both Islands were included in the research visa application (discussed further in 4.3.3 below). Difficulties in getting to the other Islands played a role in this decision. Additionally, the cost and time involved in such travel was also a factor. Ultimately, research has to be both practical and doable (O'Leary, 2010). Both Rarotonga and Aitutaki were visited during my first field research trip. However, during my second trip, fieldwork was conducted solely on the main Island of Rarotonga.

Murray and Overton (2014, p. 34) call for the need to be flexible during field research as “no piece of research goes exactly as anticipated”. As argued by Billo and Hiemstra (2013), flexibility is a tool that can work in favour of the researcher, and again, this change has been seen as a positive for my research. Each of the Islands that make up the Cook Islands is diverse in their own right. Drawing comparisons between Rarotonga and Aitutaki would have been difficult as both Islands are unique. Focusing on one Island context allowed my research to

generate a broader understanding of what is occurring in Rarotonga, thus allowing me to draw more robust and 'pure' findings (O'Leary, 2010).

#### **4.3.3 Setting up the fieldwork: Relationships and connections**

Fieldwork consisted of two research visits. My first fieldwork visit was June 2 – July 16, 2018, just over six weeks. To undertake research in the Cook Islands requires researchers to obtain a research visa. I completed the relevant application form and attached the necessary documents and sent the application to the National Research Committee on May 9, 2018. My PhD confirmation occurred on May 18, 2018. The departure date for my first research visit was June 2, 2018, allowing only one month for processing of the research permit, which I was told looked relatively straightforward. However, delays in obtaining the research visa meant that I travelled to the Cook Islands prior to the visa being approved.

Relationship building began prior to the research visa approval. I had begun to visit with schools to make contact and gauge interest in my research. During this time, I also attended sporting events or activities that were held in various locations on the Island. The local newspaper was a great source of information regarding events that were occurring on the Island, which was of benefit to me during the waiting period for my research permit. Flyers were also on display at cafés, supermarkets, and convenience stores. This allowed me to gather observational data prior to commencing in-school observations and semi-formal interviews. On June 26, 2018, my research application was approved (see appendix 3) and I could begin formally gathering data in schools. Once the permit was approved, I had one week in Rarotonga, and one week in Aitutaki to conduct preliminary observations, informal conversations and potentially some semi-formal interviews.

Gaining access to fieldwork sites is a crucial part of conducting research, but usually sits within complex social and cultural situations (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016, p. 535). School 1 was very receptive to my research. I spent two days with PE staff. Despite a positive meeting with School 2 and being given a verbal go-ahead to come in, nothing formal was able to be arranged with the school and as such I was unable to do a preliminary visit at School 2. I was also unable to visit with School 3, but I was told of their interest and to try again next year. On Aitutaki, my visit coincided with that of a group of young teachers who had come over to the Island from England to spend time in the school. Because of this, I was unable to formally observe any classes.

My second period of fieldwork was from March 9 to May 4, 2019. Prior to this second field research visit, a colleague who worked at a school in New Zealand suggested that he could put me in touch with a friend of his, Rose, who was a Cook Islander living in Rarotonga. Rose had previously come to New Zealand to be educated as a PE teacher, she had also lived in NZ and taught here for some time, before returning to the Cook Islands in 2016. According to Binns (2006) a good contact in-country can play a vital role in advising on the practicalities of research in that country. My association with Rose was particularly beneficial during the first couple of weeks, as I was unable to enter into schools until the third week. I worked with Rose on a voluntary basis to further develop my understanding of the more broader fieldwork context in which schools are located. Perhaps somewhat different to when I undertook my Masters research where the schools were more bounded research sites, for my PhD my fieldwork site was more than the schools, that is it also encompassed the wider community. As such, in getting to know Rose and the community, Rose also came to know my background as a PE teacher, and I was able to assist in helping her run a sports session as part of the Sport for Development programme she was involved in. I also assisted her with coaching, as well as running coaching sessions in her absence. Rose became a cultural advisor and initiated connections with other key informants. Furthermore, people were more willing to speak with me or engage with my research when I mentioned that I knew Rose. This highlights the importance of establishing mutually beneficial partnerships in the field (Meo-Sewabu, Hughes, & Stewart-Withers, 2016). In all, I spent 14 weeks in-country for fieldwork.

#### **4.3.4 Positionality, reflexivity, and reciprocity**

While outside researchers bring valued different perspectives, they also bring their own cultural baggage and they see Pacific Societies, cultures, structures and institutions largely through the 'lenses' of their own socialisation (Taufe'ulungaki, 2001, p. 8).

Central to the research process is the researcher, and as such, it is important to acknowledge positionality in relation to the research as well as reflexivity, in order to control assumptions and bias (Corbin, Strauss, & Strauss, 2014; Stewart-Withers, Banks, McGregor, & Meo-Sewabu, 2014). Furthermore, my positionality as a researcher, that is my gender, ethnicity, life experiences and class, all play a role in the production of knowledge (Billo & Hiemstra, 2013). Therefore, it is important for the researcher to understand and state their position prior to conducting fieldwork in order to understand how their view may alter the

interpretation of the findings and to ensure rigour (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

### **Positionality**

I am an educated, white, middle-class, New Zealand woman. I have been a PE teacher in New Zealand for 14 years, 13 as a Head of Department. I have taught at a range of schools in a variety of settings, rural and city, single sex and co-educational. I conducted my Masters research in New Zealand with Pacific Island participants. I developed an understanding of how to work alongside Pacific young people. However, travelling to the Cook Islands is a different experience and my position is that of a non-Indigenous outsider who could be seen as having 'power over' the students. Recognition of this was vital, as a key focus of this study was to understand power and power relations. Prior to commencing fieldwork, it was important for me to reflect deeply over both my position as an outsider and insider, and consider just how students and staff might perceive me. This reflexive behaviour is important as it allows the researcher to situate themselves "socially and emotionally in relation to respondents" (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 419).

### **Reflexivity**

It was important to me to attempt to mitigate my role as an outsider. This included selecting and staying with local residents in AirBnB accommodation. This connection with my host, Bryn, allowed me to further understand life in Rarotonga as well as provide an introduction with locals living in the area. Additionally, my connection with Rose (see Section 4.3.3) and our mutual reciprocity allowed me to have access to sporting events on the Island, as well as introductions to those running the events. Additionally, my assisting in coaching of both the Sport for Development initiative and at the local level helped me to be accepted by parents and locals by allowing them to see I was there to also give back to the community (see Meo-Sewabu et al., 2006, who assigns this to be important). Finally, at the school level, I attempted to negotiate power structures by being an observer rather than an enforcer of the school rules or teachers' requests of the students. Students were able to see that I was not there in the same capacity as the teacher. Learning some key Cook Island phrases also helped to somewhat alleviate my role as an outsider as it showed a willingness to learn and understand Cook Island language. The Cook Islands is home to a number of ex-patriot New Zealanders, so my presence at the schools was not necessarily out of context, as both of the schools I visited had European New Zealanders working in them.

Nevertheless, I was a non-Indigenous researcher, spending a relatively short amount of time in Rarotonga. Because of this I did not have an insider's view of Rarotongan culture or knowledge. In addition to the strategies mentioned above, when interviewing participants I was careful to not lead questions, or prompt students and key informants in their answers (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008), but rather to show that I was there to "sit down, listen and learn" (Chambers, 1983). I would seek clarification to answers, rephrase questions and check my interviewing approach with PE staff and my cultural advisor. I was advised at School 1 that some students' literacy levels were low, and care was taken to ensure that questions were not complex and that the language used was at an appropriate level.

### **Reciprocity**

Reciprocity occurred not only as part of respecting Pacific research principles, but also to ensure rigour (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014; Meo-Sewabu et al., 2016). This happened in a number of ways. I was grateful to my cultural advisor Rose for welcoming me and allowing me to be a part of some of her sporting activities on the Island. I showed reciprocity by taking her coaching sessions when she was unable to and generally assisting with some of her coaching responsibilities. Within each school, I was able to provide electronic teaching resources to teachers. I also showed my appreciation of the department's inclusion in my research by providing morning tea for the PE staff. I grappled with an appropriate gift to interviewees and settled on giving a block of chocolate after seeking advice from Rose. Chocolate is expensive in the Cook Islands and while it was gratefully received by staff, students and key informants alike, I did feel conflicted in handing over a block of chocolate to students as the Cook Islands have a prevalence of diabetes and issues around obesity and healthy eating. After transcriptions were completed, each school received a two-page summary of the findings at their school. This was also emailed to any parents and students who had requested it on the consent form.

#### **4.3.5 School recruitment**

The schools on Rarotonga that were selected to take part in the research were all schools that followed the Cook Island HPE Curriculum and schools that, at Year 11, offered the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) standards. Three secondary schools on the Island did so and were selected to take part in the research.



As mentioned, I was able to visit with schools to gauge their interest during my first fieldwork visit, while waiting for my research permit to be approved. This was done in the fourth week, when I hoped that the approval would be imminent. It was then that I found out that the Research Office had already contacted schools on my behalf to gauge their interest and inform them of my research. At School 1, the Principal was aware of who I was and what was in my research application. The Principal was interested in my research and allowed me to spend time at her school. The two PE teachers were also welcoming, and I had valuable conversations and informal interviews with each of them. I felt assured they would be willing to participate again in my second research visit.

I met with the Principal at School 2 and talked through my research intentions and what I would give by way of reciprocity. She seemed very positive and verbally agreed to participate. I left the meeting feeling positive and with the instruction to come back in a couple of days to formalise the details, during which time she would speak with the HOD. I returned two days later and was stopped at reception. I naturally became confused, as the first meeting had gone so well. I returned a further three times, the same thing occurring each time. I felt I was treading a fine line between being persistent and being rude. Time restraints meant I was unable to persist further and I decided to seek advice from my supervisor regarding the experience. Clark (2011) asserts that gatekeepers occupy an important role within qualitative research, and it was clear to me the Principal was the gatekeeper. Moving beyond her agreement to participate was going to have to be carefully negotiated at the second research visit.

School 3 was unable to participate in 2018. While the Principal had no issues with allowing me access, he asked that I try again in 2019. When I did try again in 2019, school buildings were under construction to replace buildings that were destroyed in an arson attack in 2013. I was unable to gain access to the school for longer than a few days. It was felt that that time frame would not be long enough to do justice to any observations and subsequent findings. Thus, I decided that I would undertake a more in-depth analysis of Schools 1 and 2.

When I returned for a second visit in 2019 there had been movement of the Principals. School 1 had a new Principal. Regardless of this, he was still approving of my research. He took me to meet with the interim PE teacher (discussed further in Chapter 6). I was allowed to return the next day to commence data collection. After the challenges faced during my first visit,

this was a positive. I spent 10 days at School 1, observing lessons, speaking with staff, conducting interviews, and observing various school events.

When I returned to School 2 in 2019, I brought with me a gift in addition to my research information. Again, the meeting with the Principal went well. She did advise me that the HOD would be away the following week and she would be unable to allow me access until she had spoken to him. While gatekeepers have an interest in “maintaining their credibility and ensuring that the research does not jeopardise their relationships in the community” (McAreavey & Das, 2013, p. 116) they may also have preconceived ideas about outsiders conducting research in their environment (McAreavey & Das, 2013). As in 2018, I was unable to progress beyond this initial meeting. When discussing this with my AirBnB host (who is a Cook Islander), he suggested trying another avenue to gain access. The suggestion was made to contact the HOD directly. As Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016) argue access is not necessarily a linear task, free from complexities. Subsequently, 10 days later I arrived at the school gymnasium just before the end of the school day to find the HOD. I introduced myself and my research and told him the Principal had agreed to my conducting research at their school. I gave him further information and he agreed to participate. He contacted me a couple of days later with a plan for my class observations. My first day at the school, I was invited to staff briefing to be introduced to the staff. The Principal warmly greeted me and spoke with me afterwards. What I considered a non-linear means of gaining access was accepted by the gatekeeper as appropriate (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016).

#### **4.3.6 Ethics**

I was aware from the beginning of my intended research that I would need to gain full ethics approval as the age of my primary participants would be between 13-16 years of age. Full ethics approval was sought and gained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) Southern A (see appendix 1 and 2). Having gained full ethics approval for my Masters research, I was aware of how the process worked. Additionally, my first supervisor was Chair of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) Southern B, which further assisted me in having a solid base from which to complete the application. I gained full ethics approval without the need for any amendments. Gaining full ethics approval can be a valuable process as it required me to consider my fieldwork approach and methods on a deeper level, prior to entering the field. In addition to gaining MUHEC full ethics approval, I also obtained a research permit from the National Research Committee in the Cook Islands,

(see Section 4.3.3 and appendix 3). This ensured my methods and research goals aligned with the cultural principles of the Cook Islands. No amendments were required for my research permit.

The revised Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research involving human participants (Massey University, 2017), requires researchers to consider and follow the following ethical principles:

- Autonomy – To what extent will doing this research enable others to free decide to participate in light of their own beliefs and values
- Avoidance of harm - to what extent will doing this research risk or cause harm?
- Benefit – to what extent will doing this research create, support, or make likely benefit?
- Justice – to what extent will the benefits and burdens of this research be fairly distributed?
- Special relationships – to what extent would doing this research honour the ethical norms generated by the special relationships that the researcher has?

A researcher has moral and ethical obligations that should be adhered to ensure the rights of those being researched (O'Leary, 2010). I was careful to consider my role in the research, and I was cautious to not take advantage of those I wished to gather data from. Furthermore, a key aim of my research is to do 'no harm' and to ensure the cross-cultural research is conducted in a responsible manner (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014). Ethical challenges occur in qualitative research, as both the researchers and participants are personally involved in the study at various points (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014).

A key consideration for this research is that of consent. The ability for young people (under 16 years of age) to give informed consent was given much thought. Young people have the ability to give informed consent themselves, as they have 'agency'. However, given the cultural context parental consent is also optional, with a space for a parental signature on the consent form. This addition was included out of respect for the parents as well as understanding that the young person does not act alone and is part of a bigger family unit (Graham, Powell, & Taylor, 2015; Munford & Sanders, 2004). While parental consent may not be actively sought, this allows parents to be included in the process for recruitment. That being said, if a parent did not want their child involved in the study, their wishes would be

respected, ensuring the Pacific Research Principles of valuing relationships and respecting the role of gatekeepers and elders are adhered to (Meo-Sewabu et al., 2016). Furthermore, if the school required parental consent to be sought, then their wishes were followed, and consent forms amended. Consent is an on-going process, and occurs at various points throughout the research (Crow, Wiles, Heath, & Charles, 2006).

Pacific research principles were also followed throughout the field research. The principles include respect for relationships, respect for knowledge ownership, reciprocity, holism and using research to do good (Meo-Sewabu et al., 2016). As part of the research permit requirements, I am to provide the National Research Committee a copy of my thesis when completed. This not only demonstrates reciprocity but also an acknowledgement that my research is part of broader knowledge. Reciprocity will be discussed further in Section 4.3.6, below. Banks and Scheyvens (2014) place emphasis on conducting research ethically from the ‘bottom up’ (pp. 162–163). These principles apply in Indigenous contexts and were utilised during my research in the Cook Islands, as shown in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2 - Ethics from the bottom up**

i.	Consider local needs/concerns when identifying the research topic
ii.	Show respect for the knowledge and traditions of the communities we work with
iii.	Follow research protocols in-country, and cultural protocols on permission from communities
iv.	Build mutually beneficial relationships with the people we meet
v.	Act in a sensitive and respectful manner
vi.	Ensure that our research is of value to those who give up their time to participate in our study
vii.	Share the findings of our research with our research participants in an accessible manner and allowing for dialogue and feedback.

(Banks & Scheyvens, 2014, pp. 161 - 162).

When thinking about applying Pacific research principles, it was also important to consider local metaphors for the research process. School 2 used the *vaka* (canoe) metaphor to outline

the education process, which resonated with me in terms of my research. Each member of the school community plays a role in the education of the individual. The *vaka* metaphor has also been utilised in Pacific research (see Newport, 2019).

*For the vaka to take us to our destination we must all play our part. Sometimes we will find it difficult to see beyond the crest of the waves, the mist of the sea and the shadows of the sun. If we work together, we can be the best we can be. (School 2, Learning Charter).*

There are identified advantages to applying metaphors such as *vaka* in research. Of particular relevance to this research is that it provides a vivid way in which to 'articulate' concepts of relationships, problem-solving and reflection during the research process (Ruru, Sanga, Walker, & Ralph, 2012). When I consider the quote above in relation to my research, everyone on the *vaka* plays a part in the research process. At times, I may be navigating, at other times I may be going where the *vaka* takes me, allowing others to steer on our journey.

#### **4.4 Methods – Data generation**

This section outlines the research methods used to generate data in order to answer the three research questions, along with the processes used for analysing the data. This study utilised qualitative research methods, including structured classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. A fieldwork journal was also kept and played an important role in acknowledging positionality and being reflexive in the field (Corbin et al., 2014; Stewart-Withers et al., 2014). Using research methodologies that are qualitative in design allowed for the exploration of multiple perspectives and realities and provide depth of experiences within the PE classroom space (O'Leary, 2010; Stewart-Withers et al., 2014).

##### **4.4.1 Structured classroom observations and event observations**

While interviews tend to be the primary source of data within qualitative research, observations are argued to be equally as important, particularly within case studies research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Observational data can provide a first-hand account of what is occurring within the PE classroom. Observations occurred within two secondary school settings, School 1 and School 2. Over a two-week period within each school, 4-5 classes were observed. These classes ranged from junior to Year 11 senior PE classes, as I aimed to capture

a range of experiences across a range of ages. Coming from a PE teaching background, and also with the added experience of my Masters research, I was able to look beyond the everyday occurrences of the classroom, to the underlying, more complex interactions or avoidance strategies of students, helping to mitigate being, what Patton (2015) calls, an untrained observer.

As an observer, my intent prior to classroom observations was to take on the role of *observer as participant*, as described by foundational writer Gold (1958). The students knew why I was there and what I was doing, however, participation in classroom activities was secondary to the role of information gatherer (Gold, 1958). By taking on the role of *observer as participant*, or what Adler and Adler (1998) refer to as a *peripheral membership role*, my aim was to build a rapport with students, thereby being accepted as an 'insider' rather than an elder or an outsider, allowing for closer observations and interactions. Often in PE classrooms there can be peripheral behaviours that occur away from the main centre of activity, behaviours that occur on the side-line where the teacher may not always be aware of what is going on or see that behaviour. Sometimes this type of behaviour often pushes the boundaries of what is considered acceptable by the teacher or the school. By taking on a peripheral membership role, I observed those behaviours but did not attempt to interfere or report them to the teacher. This was a particularly important approach as it helped to build a level of trust with the students, that I was not there as a rule enforcer but an observer, positioning me alongside the students. This approach supported the centrality of building relationships when conducting qualitative research within the Pacific context (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014).

Relationships built on mutual trust, aided by adopting a "non-judgemental stance towards the thoughts and words of the participants", help to ensure the observations are 'pure' in nature, and the researcher is observing the "true thoughts and feelings of the participants" (Holloway & Galvin, 2016, p. 8). Furthermore, establishing trust was particularly effective in allowing me to engage in 'informal interviews' with students about their experiences in PE through conversation within the structured classroom observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). These informal interviews, along with skilled, systematic observations, allowed for verification of results and the ability to triangulate observations (Patton, 2015).

#### **4.4.2 Participant selection**

When conducting qualitative research, various strategies for participant selection are able to be employed in order to answer the research questions. In the case study of the two secondary schools, I was able to utilise a purposive sampling method to recruit students and generate in-depth data (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Stewart-Withers et al., 2014). Purposive sampling requires the researcher to select participants using sound judgement, as it is crucial to select suitable candidates to ensure that data is collected appropriately (Etikan et al., 2016). Within the school setting, participants were purposively selected based on either their level or engagement or disengagement in PE classes. Male and female students from a range of year levels were interviewed. The aim was to interview a diverse group of students, drawing from 'both' genders, a range of ages and levels of involvement from within the PE classroom.

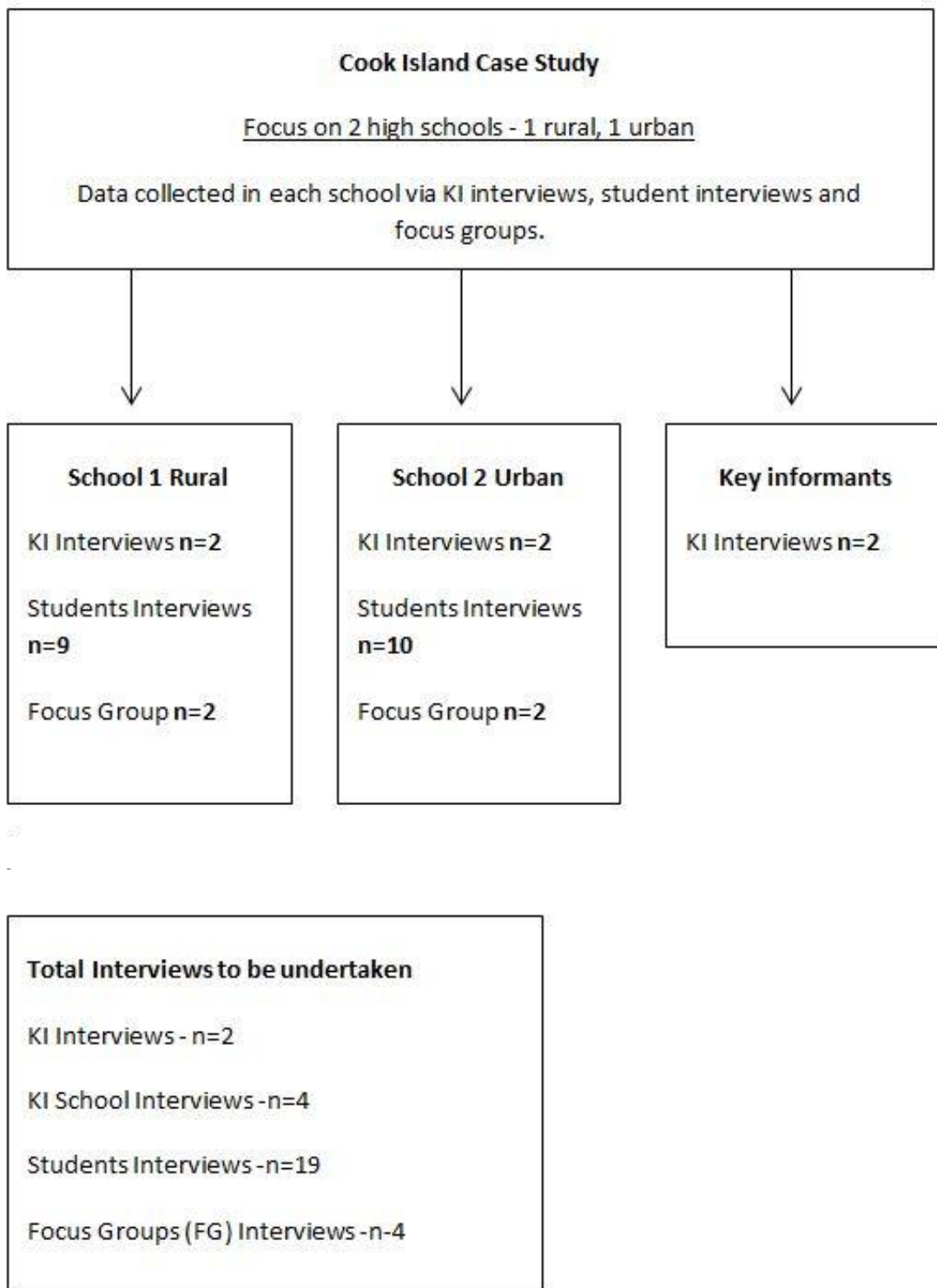
While participants were selected in this manner, the way in which they were recruited differed at each school. The participant interview selection stemmed from a discussion with the school as to what was considered an appropriate means of recruitment. In School 1, it was decided that the PE teacher would select students to participate, as they knew the students better than I did, and felt they would be able to select students who were confident enough to express their opinion freely to an adult whom they did not know. I discussed with the PE teacher that I wanted to interview students from a range of involvement levels, both students who are fully engaged and those who are reluctant. He then selected 3-4 students per class. Interviews did not occur straight away at each of the school visits. They were conducted after four days of observations. This was done intentionally to allow my presence to be accepted and also allow time for relationship building amongst both staff and students. Interestingly, School 1 deemed it appropriate to give consent for the student's participation, as a result they did not feel the need for me to inform parents or seek parental permission. However, students were still required to give consent themselves. Students were read the information sheets and then asked to give consent. This process occurred alongside their teacher, so that they did not feel any undue pressure from me as an outsider to participate.

At School 2, I was required to send home information sheets with students to seek both their consent and their parents. This added a further time pressure, although it was manageable. It meant that students needed to be recruited earlier to allow for the time taken to get permission slips signed and returned. Recruitment of students occurred in two ways. With

one particular teacher, she selected students she deemed would be appropriate to participate, based on the information I gave her regarding student experiences. Two other PE teacher spoke to the class, explained who I was and what I was doing and asked for volunteers. In general, the interviews with those students who volunteered to participate were much richer in that they were much more descriptive in the way they described their experiences. That is not to say the other interviews were not valuable as well. Interestingly, while I struggled with my choice of appropriate reciprocity for the students (see Section 4.3.6), once other students saw that participants were getting a block of chocolate as a thank you, I suddenly had more volunteers.

A total of 25 research participants were interviewed for this study. At the country level, key informants were people who work for the Ministry of Education, and those in the gender, empowerment and sport fields. At the school level, a further two PE teachers (including the relief PE teacher filling in at School 1) were interviewed. Also, at the school level, 9-11 students were interviewed at each in two focus groups conducted at each school. Figure 4.2 summarises the breakdown of interviews. Additionally, classroom observations at each school occurred, with a total of 4-5 classes being observed at each site.





**Figure 4.2 - Breakdown of interviews**

#### **4.4.3 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate methodological tool for this research as they allow the interviewee's voice to be drawn out and rich descriptions of lived experiences to be heard (O'Leary, 2010). Semi-structured interviews follow a flexible structure, that is they can have a defined questioning plan, but have the added benefit of flexibility, allowing the interviewer to pursue any interesting tangents that may arise (O'Leary, 2010, p. 195). It also allows for a level of consistency, as the same content is covered in each interview (Corbin et al., 2014).

The interview process was determined by how much and what kind of information the individual was willing to share with me, this may have impacted on the kind of data I collected (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014). My position as an outsider, a white female New Zealander, could have had an impact on what students were comfortable in sharing with me. As a result, care was taken to determine whether or not I needed a research assistant to assist with conducting the interviews. In discussing this with the schools, and also my Cook Island contact, I decided to begin conducting interviews myself, and review how comfortable the students seemed when talking with me. This placed further emphasis on the need to build a good rapport with students, to ensure they feel open to sharing their experiences. Care was taken to ensure that participants were given the opportunity to add any additional information to the interview. As Corbin et al., (2014) caution, participants may have something additional to say, but are not given the opportunity to, as the interviewer did not directly ask the participant. Furthermore, the addition of focus groups allowed students a further opportunity to express themselves in an informal setting, as focus groups can allow participants to find strength in the collective group (Lloyd-Evans, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person for students, teachers, Heads of Department (HODs) and Key Informants. Interviews took between 45-60 minutes in length, were in an appropriate setting either at the school or at the key informant's place of work. Interviews were recorded via a recording device and stored in a safe to ensure privacy. An interview schedule was created for each participant group, as part of the MUHEC application. However, adjustment of the interview schedule occurred after the first interview, based on how well the first interview went and as part of on-going reflective practices (Corbin et al., 2014).

Research participants were identified once in the field. In the case of student participants, as mentioned, a purposive recruitment process took place and was facilitated by either the classroom teacher or myself, depending on the school and to some extent the class dynamics. Key informants were identified once in the field. Key informants at the school level were recruited during my time at each school. Other key informants, those participating in Sport for Development projects or Cook Islands sports, were identified through working alongside my Cook Island contact at village sporting events. Table 4.3 below details the participant's codes, while Table 4.4 provides a summary of the total number of participants.

**Table 4.3 - Participant codes**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Year 9 Student</b>	Aged between 13 and 14 years old
<b>Year 10 student</b>	Aged between 14 and 15 years old
<b>Year 11 student</b>	Aged between 15 and 16 years old
<b>PE Teacher</b>	Teacher of Health and Physical Education. HPE teachers in the Cook Islands were also responsible for coordinating extra-curricular sport for students at the school.
<b>HOD</b>	Head of Department for Health and Physical Education.
<b>Key Informant</b>	A person in the wider community, who is not directly working for a secondary school but is involved in sport or the Pacific Island community.

**Table 4.4 - Interview Participants**

School 1	Students			Staff		
	Pseudonym	Year	M/F	Pseudonym	Role	Ethnicity
	Tipoki	9	F	Anna	PE teacher	Cook Island Māori
	Amiria	9	F	John	PE teacher	Cook Island Māori
	Mavai	9	M			
	Hina	10	F			
	Alice	10	F			
	Charles	10	M			
	David	10	M			
	Nina	11	F			
	Rosa	11	F			
School 2	Pseudonym	Year	M/F	Pseudonym	Role	Ethnicity
	Bianca	9	F	James	HOD	NZ European
	Mary	9	F	Anita	PE teacher	Cook Island Māori
	Tariana	9	F			
	Amber	9	F			
	Finn	9	M			
	Eve	10	F			
	Jade	10	F			
	Michael	10	M			
	Marama	11	F			
	CJ	11	M			
K's	Pseudonym	Role				Ethnicity
	Jane	Sport for Development Programme Coordinator				Cook Island Māori
	Rose	Sports Coach and sport administrator				Cook Island Māori

\* All students were Cook Island Māori

#### 4.4.4 Student Focus Groups

To ensure triangulation occurred via the use of various qualitative methodologies, focus groups with students were also held. I conducted two focus group per school, one for boys and one for girls, totalling four focus groups. Focus groups have the capability of generating data from “a group of participants who can hear each other’s responses and provide additional comments that they might not have made individually”, thus allowing for a broader understanding of the research problem (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014, p. 545). Moreover, focus groups can elicit ideas, perceptions and thoughts, and points of agreement or controversy surrounding PE experiences (Flick, 2014; Holloway & Galvin, 2016; Krueger & Casey, 2014).

According to Krueger & Casey (2014), focus groups work best when the participants feel respected, comfortable, and free to give their opinions without fear of being judged. Creating an informality around the discussion is therefore important, as well as ensuring participants do not simply fall into 'chatter' or continuous anecdotes without reference to the issues being discussed (Flick, 2014). Care must be taken to ensure the experience is a valuable one for both the researcher and the participants. Kruger & Casey (2014, p. 1) believe focus groups can turn into 'wasted time' when the purpose is unclear and/or inappropriate processes are employed.

A focus group schedule was created at the time of the ethics application, identifying themes to be followed. These took further shape once in the field, as other themes or ideas become apparent or were revealed, ensuring that there was a clear purpose to the focus group activity. Additionally, research has been conducted on the processes surrounding running focus groups. This, along with my prior experience as a facilitator in student group work, meant that appropriate processes were followed during the focus group. That being said, the first focus group was still a learning curve and helped further refine the following groups as a result. Students were initially reluctant but in each group there were one or two students who were willing to lead discussions, which then saw quieter students take part. Some of the discussions surrounding gender in particular were stronger in the focus group sessions than in interviews, with students in general feeling somewhat more comfortable talking in an open, informal environment compared with the one-on-one nature of the semi-structured interviews.

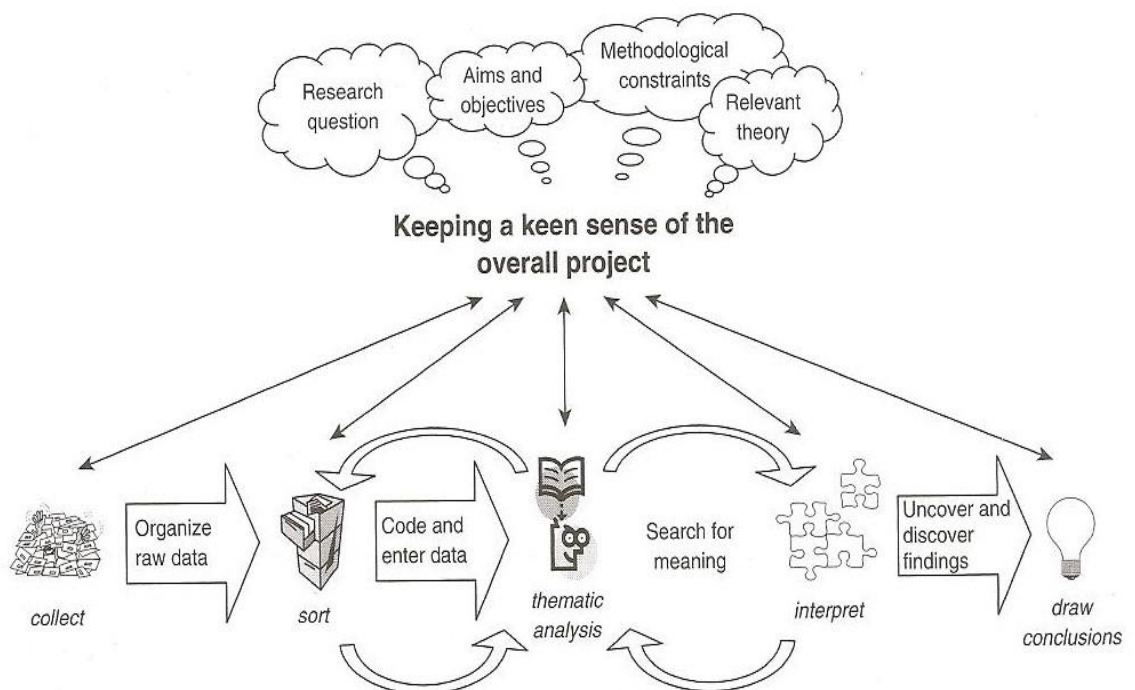
#### **4.4.5 Data Analysis**

A range of strategies were employed to ensure data credibility and validity such as debriefing participants, triangulation and the use of a reflexive journal (Carter et al., 2014). According to Corbin et al., (2014), a researcher cannot continue to collect data. Sooner or later, no new emergent themes will appear and the researcher will have to be "done with that data" in order to give it significance and to make sense of it, this is known as data saturation (Corbin et al., 2014, p. 58).

Qualitative data analysis is a process whereby the researcher is 'on the hunt' for themes and concepts that help to make sense of the data gathered in the field (Boyatzis, 1998; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). A theoretical thematic analysis was used to analyse and make sense of

the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). A thematic Data analysis is an iterative process. According to Srivastava & Hopwood (2009), the role of iteration is not as a repetitive, mechanical task but as a deeply reflexive process, which they believe is key to develop meaning from the data. Furthermore, “reflexive iteration is at the heart of visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understandings” (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77). Field journals and the interview transcription process can be a useful place to start analysing the data in order to identify emerging themes, whilst continuing to collect data (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014).

A criticism of qualitative data collection is that it is easy to get lost in the raw data and to lose focus (O'Leary, 2010). While moving through the data, it is important to keep the big picture in focus while maintaining and overarching perspective (O'Leary, 2010). Good quality analysis requires a degree of openness, a willingness to be flexible along with a high level of curiosity (O'Leary, 2010). However, a degree of creativity in data analysis need to be balanced with rigour (O'Leary, 2010). Figure 4.3 summarises the qualitative data analysis process.



**Figure 4.3 - The qualitative data analysis process (Source: O'Leary, 2010, p. 257).**

For this study, respect needs to be given to the raw data. Using a thematic analysis when the data is in a person's own words, or actions is 'more sensitive' in nature (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 61). When conducting a thematic analysis, the researcher must allow themselves to be reflexive and move forward and backwards through the systematic approach (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). The six-phase model involved transcription, data familiarisation through the use of journals and transcriptions, coding, theme development, revising themes, naming themes and writing up as part of the final analysis (see Braun et al., 2016, p. 7). Furthermore, Braun et al., (2016) emphasise that analysis is a process and is produced "through the intersection of your theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, research skills and experience, and the content of the data themselves". Once I had moved through the data, I was able to then map the themes to my research questions and objectives to ensure that they had been met. This allowed for new themes to be exposed, these major themes form the basis of findings Chapters 6 and 7.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This research drew upon a qualitative methodological framework in order to explore the experiences of individuals within the PE classroom space and those working at the local level. Using a case study approach, this research critically examined whether or not PE is able to provide a pathway for gender empowerment. Using the *vaka* metaphor, the researcher and participants are seen to be on the journey together, equally contributing to the production of knowledge. The range of data collection methods employed add validity to the research by allowing triangulation and data saturation to occur, while also ensuring the research was conducted with rigour. Qualitative methods include structured classroom observation, semi-structured interviews and student focus groups, drawing on a range of experiences and allowing for the individuals voice and experiences to be heard. Data analysis took a thematic approach when making sense of the raw data. Respect was being given to the analysis process, as individuals are involved in the research on a personal level – it is their thoughts, ideas and selves that are on show. In terms of ethics, this research was informed by the Massey University Code of Ethical conduct, along with the Pacific research principles, in order to assist in building a good rapport with participants and provide a safe space for individuals to share their experiences, both in and out of the PE classroom. In the chapter that follows the research context of Rarotonga, Cook Islands is presented.

## **Chapter 5 : The research context: Rarotonga, Cook Islands**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 outlines the research context for this thesis. Firstly, I will situate the Cook Islands' geographical position within the Pacific, along with a map of the 15 Cook Islands. A brief history of the discovery of the Cook Islands is then given, followed by a discussion on the Cook Islands independence from New Zealand in 1965. The chapter then shifts to focus more specifically on Rarotonga, where this research took place. The origin story of Rarotonga, along with early visitors and then inhabitants are described. Christian missionaries visited Rarotonga in the 1800s, after which followed a period of exploration in the Pacific by England and Russia. Other aspects of life on Rarotonga are discussed, including traditional governance and modern governance. Finally, an examination of Cook Island development and education takes place, outlining the Cook Islands connection with New Zealand, formally and currently through the New Zealand aid programme, how the Cook Islands asserts ownership of their own development priorities and their desire to deliver culturally relevant education.

### **5.2 The Cook Islands**

#### **5.2.1 Geography**

The Cook Islands consists of 15 islands situated in the South-Pacific. They are the most geographically dispersed group of islands in the world, scattered over two million square kilometres, with some islands only accessible by boat (Wood, 1967). They are often referred to as two clusters, the Northern Group, which consists of six coral atolls and the Southern Group, made up of eight islands, which are volcanic in origin, and one atoll (Gilson, 1980). The majority of the 17,459 Cook Island population live in Rarotonga, home to 75 per cent of population, 19 per cent are accounted for in the other Southern Group islands and just 6 per cent in the Northern Group (Government of the Cook Islands, 2016a). Of the Islands, Manuae and Takutea are uninhabited and Suwarrow has just two inhabitants, caretakers who are appointed every five years. Figure 5.1 situates the Cook Islands in the South Pacific Ocean.



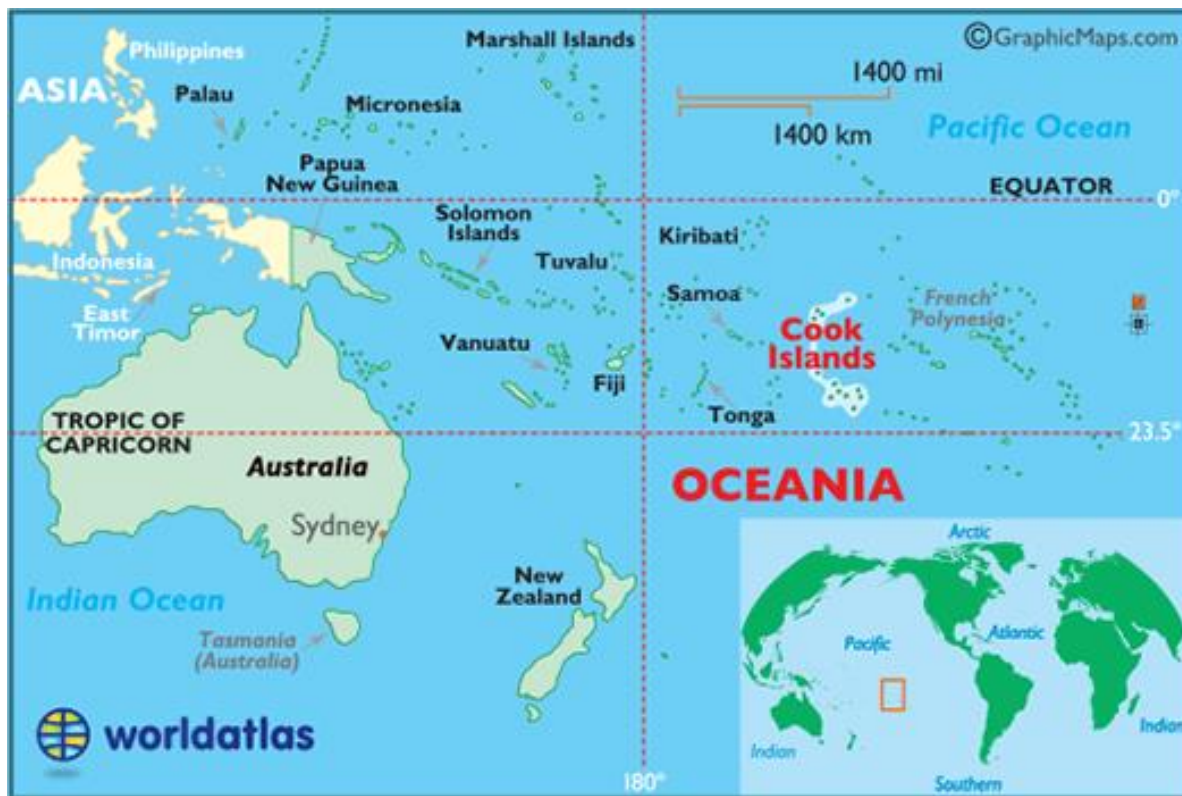


Figure 5.1 - The location of the Cook Islands (Source: World Atlas, 2020).

The Cook Islands have two official languages, Cook Islands Māori and English, however, there are considered to be three distance languages, Rarotongan, Pukapuka and Penrhyn, with both Rarotongan and Penryn having different dialects (Herrman, 2005). In Rarotonga, English is frequently used, with some citing its dominance over Cook Island Māori (Herrman, 2005). Efforts at both the government and community level have been put in place to address the language decline, as the preservation of language is seen as vital for youth cultural identity and wellbeing (Rupeni, 2020).

### 5.2.2 A brief history of the Cook Islands

Cook Islanders are seafarers of the Pacific. Oral accounts of travellers to Rarotonga go back to 150AD but it is thought to have been settled by migration from Samoa and the islands that make up French Polynesia as we now know it, in the 13th century (AhChing, 2013). Oral history recounts onward migration to New Zealand, with *vaka* (canoes) leaving Rarotonga in 1350 headed south (King, 2003). The Cook Islands culture derives from eastern Polynesia, with similarities in language, social order and values, most notably being that of hereditary hierarchy and rank (M. T. Crocombe, 1983). While the Islands were not formally united, it is

thought that there were still links between each island, with Mangaia and Penryhn understood to be settled from Rarotonga, with ancestry through a Rarotongan warrior (Kloosterman, 1976). Each of the islands is believed to have connections with other islands, with the exception of Palmerston and Suwarrow, the only two whose pre-Cook Island history is unknown.

The written history of the Cook Islands began in 1595 with the sighting of Pukapuka by Spaniard Alvaro de Mendaña. The first British arrived in 1764 and on discovering they could not land, named Pukapuka, Danger Island. During this time period, Pacific exploration was prolific, with colonial powers seeking to extend their reach ("The Cook Islands," 2020). Landings in the Cook Islands became more frequent during the early 1800s with the arrival of missionaries. John Williams arrived in Aitutaki in 1821 with the view of converting residents to Christianity. The spread of Christianity through the islands was responsible for huge cultural change (M. T. Crocombe, 1983), discussed further in section 5.5.1. Not only did missionaries change social order, they were also responsible for introducing western disease, which spread through the islands, having a dramatic and significant effect on population numbers (Lange, 2017).

During the 1870s, Makea Takau proclaimed herself Queen of Rarotonga. She was said to be an imposing force and ruled over the island for many years (Gosset, 1940). By 1882 four of the five *ariki* (high chiefs) were women. In 1888, Makea sought British protection over the southern islands, which were then known as the Hervey Islands, as she thought there would be an imminent invasion by the French (Gilson, 1980). The British flag was raised on Rarotonga on October 26, 1888. On 27 September 1900, New Zealand parliament approved the annexation of the Hervey Islands to New Zealand, the proclamation of annexation of Rarotonga to New Zealand was read on October 8, 1900 and by 1901, the boundaries were extended to include all the Northern Cook Islands (Beumelburg, 2016; Kloosterman). At that time the country was renamed the Cook Islands, after Captain James Cook who sailed many times through the islands between 1773 and 1777 (Gilson, 1980).

It is important to note that the Cook Island group, as it is known today, has had many names in the past, these names have been both of Māori and *Papa'ā* (European) origin (Kloosterman, 1976). Some of the names used today are traditional names that go back to a pre-European past, while others have a more recent history. Kloosterman (1976, p. 7)

contends that names are given by people and “the giving of a name was a means by which man claimed possession or lordship”. This can be seen in some of the accounts mentioned above, when European and Spanish explorers discovered an island and sought to name it in accordance with their own agenda, rather than seeking to learn the name of the island. The names of the islands used in this thesis are their present-day names. Of note was the recent call to change the Cook Islands name. Name changes were rejected in 1994, and while in the field in 2019 the call to change the name of the Cook Islands was renewed. The push came from Queen Pa Upkotini, an *ariki* in Rarotonga who felt it was time to have their own Indigenous Māori name as a means of expressing sovereignty over their own country and no longer wanted to hold onto a colonial era name (Fennell, 2019). There was strong resistance from Cook Islanders still living in the islands and abroad, who felt that it would be better to spend time and money addressing other more pressing issues. The name change was thus abandoned; however, a Cook Island Māori name would be added alongside. Pa Upkotini renewed her push for a name change in July 2020, and discussions are ongoing (Radio New Zealand, 2020).

### **5.2.3 Cook Islands independence**

On 26 July 1965, New Zealand passed the Cook Islands Constitution Amendment Act which saw the Cook Islands become its own state in free association with New Zealand. The agreement was seen as a pivotal moment in the Islands history, a step away from colonialism and a chance to claim independence (Spurrier, 2018). The agreement was also seen as pivotal to the development of the Cook Islands state as practically, the free association agreement means:

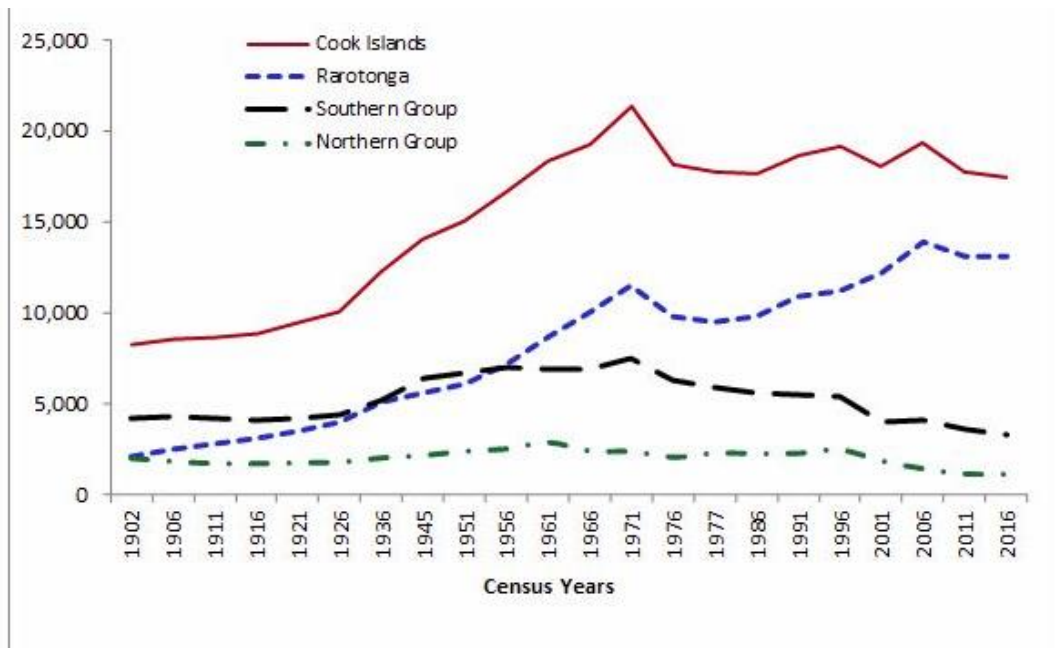
- The Cook Islands Government has full executive powers;
- The Cook Islands was free to make its own laws;
- Cook Islanders were able to keep New Zealand citizenship thus having dual citizenship in both states; and
- The Cook Islands remains part of the Realm of New Zealand and Queen Elizabeth II is Head of State of the Cook Islands.

(New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019b)

This close relationship remains between the Cook Islands and New Zealand. The Cook Islands uses the New Zealand dollar as its currency, with local coins used interchangeably with New

Zealand coins. The close ties were strengthened in 2011 when the Joint Committee for Development (JCfD) was signed, committing \$83 million from New Zealand's development assistance over a three year period (Beumelburg, 2016). New Zealand's continuing support of the Cook Islands and the Pacific region can be seen through the Pacific Reset. In March 2018, the NZ Government announced the Pacific Reset, significantly lifting its ambitions and investment in the region, aiming to form partnerships and applying five key principles of engagement: 1) understanding, 2) friendship, 3) mutual benefit, 4) collective ambition and 5) sustainability (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019a). Development cooperation with the Cook Islands focuses on building capacity in health, education and tourism, while also supporting critical infrastructure works with water, sanitation and communications (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019b).

A large number of Cook Islanders leave the Cook Islands in search of economic opportunity to live abroad in New Zealand and Australia. In addition, many Cook Islanders travel to NZ and Australia for higher education. Figure 5.2 shows the population trends for the Cook Islands, Rarotonga, and the Southern and Northern groups across time. There has been a trend since the 1970s of a population shift within the Cook Islands to Rarotonga, and additionally a migration of Cook Islanders to live in New Zealand or Australia, largely to seek educational or employment opportunities (Government of the Cook Islands, 2016a). This is discussed further in section 5.6.1. It is estimated that more than 80,000 Cook Island Māori live in New Zealand (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019b).



**Figure 5.2 - Cook Islands total population.** (Source: Government of the Cook Islands, 2016a).

The preservation and perpetuation of culture is an important aspect of Cook Island life. Each year the *Te Maeva Nui* festival celebrates the Cook Islands gaining independence in 1965 and the festival is seen as a “mass preservation of culture” (Syme-Buchanan, 2020, para. 18). The festival is a week-long celebration of trade and food, culture, and sporting events with each island traveling to Rarotonga to participate (Syme-Buchanan, 2020). The festival has evolved over the years, with earlier celebrations in the 1970s and 1980s being tied more closely to political celebrations, now it is said to be a celebration of nationhood, with a theme being chosen each year (Syme-Buchanan, 2020). The logistics of the celebration are large in scale and come at great expense to the country. Currently, each island’s travel is subsidised to allow full participation, however, the likelihood of this continuing each year is uncertain (Syme-Buchanan, 2020).

Other ways of celebrating culture and nationhood are experienced in the Cook Islands such as the Cook Islands Games held in Rarotonga in October 2020. Close to one fifth of the country’s population from 11 of the 15 islands come together to participate in 24 sports played over a three week period (Tuara, 2020). With the Cook Islands COVID-19 free status,

<sup>21</sup> the games are heralded as a success, given the rest of the world is in large part locked down (Tuara, 2020).<sup>22</sup> The Games have included traditional sports into their agenda, such as *rore* (stilt races, combating and single stilts), *peipei tiporo/poroiti* (juggling), and *ko akari* (coconut husking relay) (Tuara, 2020). Gatherings are included throughout the week, including cultural celebrations and dinners. In a further effort to promote individual islands, Island communities were given the opportunity to design their own flags and anthems for the games (Tuara, 2020).

Controversy surrounded the games prior to their commencement when the decision was made to not allow transgendered athletes to compete in the same field as their gender identity; rather they were to compete against other athletes of the same sex they were assigned at birth (Etches, 2020b). The decision to allow the athletes to compete in women's events was initially put to the 11 participating islands and a "large majority" agreed to not allow them to compete in their gendered event, instead those seen as biologically male but identifying as female were to compete in the male events (Etches, 2020b). The local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) association was disappointed by the decision and called for the Cook Islands to work collaboratively to frame a policy that was inclusive moving forward from these games (Etches, 2020b). Additionally, it is important to note that homosexuality is still illegal and remains a criminal act in the Cook Islands. A review of the law was scheduled at the end 2020 following public consultation but presently remains delayed. However, it looks set to remain illegal following strong opposition from churches (Chumko, 2020). According to Chumko (2020), the country was tolerant of same-sex relationships prior to the arrival of foreign Christian missionaries. In considering the wider cultural context for this research, the criminalisation of non-heterosexual sexual preferences is of significance and speaks to the influence of Christian values on non-heteronormative sexualities and identities.

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<sup>21</sup> COVID-19 is a type of coronavirus that can affect a person's lungs and airways. The COVID-19 pandemic is a global pandemic which began in 2020, and at the time of writing, is still on-going.

<sup>22</sup> Lock down (or locked down) was a strategy put in place as a means to halt the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Lock down can occur on an individual level as directed by the government, i.e. an individual self-isolates at home to prevent the spread of the disease. It can also occur regionally within a country, and country-wide, which can result in border closures. Such is the case for the Cook Islands.

### 5.3 Rarotonga: Origins

*An island, whose lofty mountains and fertile shores welcomed so many voyagers, could not escape being named many times.*

(Kloosterman, 1976)

The God Tonga-iti is said to have discovered the island floating on the ocean, he named it *Nukutere* (floating island) (Kloosterman, 1976). He climbed onto the island, stomped on it to make it firm while his wife, Ari, dove down to the ocean floor to anchor it firmly in place (Kloosterman, 1976). Tangaroa, God of the sea and fertility, is of cultural significance in Rarotonga. Tangaroa is said to have liberated his people from the land of Avaiki to Rarotonga (Reynolds, 2010). After his great achievements he was elevated to godlike status and after his rebirth he acquired supernatural powers and become the principal God of Rarotonga (Reynolds, 2010). The image of Tangaroa has been adopted by Cook Island promotional material, Cook Island Government departments and his image features on store signage and in carvings around the island.

Accounts vary as to the first early human discovery of Rarotonga. Kloosterman (1976) contends that *Tu te rangi marama* is the first to have discovered Rarotonga in 450AD.<sup>23</sup> While Tu was absent from the island, it was visited by Tangaroa.<sup>24</sup> However, traditional oral history relates the first person to discover Rarotonga to be Tangaroa, who arrived from what is now known as French Polynesia. It is thought that he did not stay upon discovering the island, instead he returned back to his homeland. He then gave the island its first name *Tumu Te Varovaro* (Source of the Echo) (Browne, 1897). While little is known of early inhabitation of Rarotonga, of great historical significance is the construction of the *Ara Metua* inland road,<sup>25</sup> which is estimated to have been constructed sometime around the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Downes et al., 2018). Translated as *raro* | down and *tonga* | south, there are accounts of early Pacific navigators referring to the island as Rarotonga (M. T. Crocombe, 1983; Kloosterman, 1976). The settling of the island was said to have been by two great warrior chiefs, Tangi'ia from Tahiti and Karika from Samoa, who arrived in *vaka* (Best, 1927).

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<sup>23</sup> *Tu te rangi marama* – bathed in the light of heaven or erect in the light of heaven

<sup>24</sup> In this instance, Tangaroa was a man

<sup>25</sup> Also known as *Te Ara Nui o To'i* (The Great Road of To'i).

While not the first *papa'a* to visit Rarotonga, missionary John Williams is thought to be the first to have placed the name of Rarotonga on maps of the Pacific (Kloosterman, 1976; Reynolds, 2010). Other European missionaries had passed by the island prior to Williams; nonetheless, he is famed for bringing Christianity to Rarotonga (see section 5.5.1). The period of 1827 onward was characterised by a reorientation of power from Rarotongans to the English missionaries (M. T. Crocombe, 1983). The arrival of *papa'a* to the island saw the introduction of foreign disease, such as tuberculosis, measles and influenza, which had a devastating effect on Rarotongans (M. T. Crocombe, 1983; R. W. Kirk, 2012; Lange, 1984).

### **5.3.1 Christianity changes social order**

The London Missionary Society (LMS) sent a group of eighteen missionaries, including five wives to Tahiti and other Pacific Islands to introduce Christianity to the Pacific people (M. T. Crocombe, 1983). Despite initial setback, including slow progress, being ill prepared for the climate and members defecting to live amongst the locals, the LMS continued to send out missionaries (M. T. Crocombe, 1983). In 1810, Tahitian society underwent social and political upheaval, newly converted Tahitians were then entrusted to travel to other islands in the Pacific to spread the Christian faith, a term the LMS referred to as 'native agency'. Papeiha from Raiatea, travelled to Aitutaki first, then on to Rarotonga with converted Aitutaki residents in 1823. In 1827 English missionary Charles Pitman settled on Rarotonga.

Missionary John Williams, who had previously worked with Papeiha, had a particular sense of duty to bring Christianity to the Pacific, as "each pagan island was to him a single challenge amidst a vast sea of souls away salvation" (as cited in Gilson, 1980, p. 20). Establishing Christianity in Rarotonga introduced new moral principles, political restructuring, laws and a formal education system (M. T. Crocombe, 1983; Reynolds, 2010). The reorganisation of the judicial system actually saw a heightening of powers by the *ariki*, many of whom became judges and deacons within the church.<sup>26</sup> A fundamental aspect to achieving conversion was the destruction of old traditional theology and carvings of the Gods (M. T. Crocombe, 1983; Reynolds, 2010). Idols were destroyed, being burned or torn to pieces in front of Rarotongans (Reynolds, 2010). Social order changed too, it saw the end of polygamy and cannibalism,

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<sup>26</sup> A deacon is a member of a Christian church that is associated with service of some kind, usually with respect to the priest or Chaplin.



curfews were introduced and traditional dancing was deemed too sensual and thus banned (R. W. Kirk, 2012; Reynolds, 2010).

Today, Christianity and the Church still play a large role in life in Rarotonga. Many of the “conservative values and principles that the missionaries introduced almost two hundred years ago” still remain (Reynolds, 2010, p. 14). In many instances, modern theology has evolved as time moves on, however, while many of the 19<sup>th</sup> century puritan theology ideals are said to remain, they are slowly beginning to be challenged in the Cook Islands. Examples of this can still be seen in terms of attire and respect for Sunday as a day of rest. More change can be seen in Rarotonga than other islands, with some stores and service stations opening on a Sunday. While in the field, a small group of locals on Aitutaki were peacefully protesting flights arriving to the island on a Sunday.

### **5.3.2 Rarotonga: Traditional governance**

Social organisation and land tenure in the Cook Islands were closely related and segmental in structure (R. G. Crocombe, 1961). Single households are headed by a *metua* (elder) and joined with other related households to form a minor lineage under a *rangatira* or *komono* (sub-chief), the title going to the most elder senior by descent (Campbell, 2003; R. G. Crocombe, 1961). Related minor lineages combine to form a major lineage under the headship of a *mata’iapo* (chief). Major lineages are united under an *ariki*. Each major lineage occupies a *tapere*, *tapere* are wedged shaped and run from the outer reef inland towards the centre of the island. Individuals rights within each *tapere* depended on his or her social status within it (R. G. Crocombe, 1961). Traditionally an *ariki* was descended from the Gods and their descent could be traced back to them (Campbell, 2002; R. G. Crocombe, 1961). The *ariki* had the power to impose a *ra’ui* on any particular produce throughout a tribal area in order to protect it from be depleted or for a forthcoming feast (Tiraa, 2006).<sup>27</sup> When Europeans began to change social order in the 1800s, women were able to become title holders, when previously only men were able to hold titles.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ra’ui* is a Polynesian form of resource management. If a resource is placed under *ra’ui*, it becomes *tapu* (sacred) and a ban is placed on that particular resource.

### 5.3.3 Rarotonga: Modern governance

After the Second World War, as decolonisation began to take place globally, steps were taken to begin the process of self-governance. These steps included a Legislative Council, established in 1946, which was seen to be an advisory group (Sissons, 1999). The group then became the Legislative Assembly of the Cook Islands in 1957, the change brought with it increased legislative powers (Sissons, 1994). In 1963, two years prior to Cook Islands independence, a new executive committee was formed with a chosen Leader of Government and four other members (Gilson, 1980; Sissons, 1994). In 1965 full internal self-governance was granted and under the terms of the Constitution Act of 1964, the Cook Islands would make laws for their own country in free association with New Zealand. The Cook Islands has a democratic government, with a cabinet of ministers, led by the Prime Minister. Parliament has 24 members, elected for a five-year term.

The House of Ariki is a council of hereditary leaders, a parliamentary body that sits alongside the government in an advisory role. It was established in 1967 and is comprised of 24 Cook Island *ariki* representing each island (Jonassen, 2009). One of the roles of the House of Ariki is to advise the government on traditional matters, such as custom and land ownership (M. T. Crocombe, 1998; Gilson, 1980; Meller, 1984). Sissons (1994, p. 371) argues that the House of Ariki has come to symbolise “continuity between a precolonial past and a postcolonial present”. This connection between past and present does provide tension for those who allocate more weight to a traditional form of governance, and this places a continual reminder of separation from the past (Sissons, 1994). In modern society, *ariki* and *mata’iapo* are no longer seen as mediators between the ancestral Gods and people but rather as Christian leaders who are actively involved in the welfare of their people and community (Sissons, 1994). In the 1970s, the *Koutu Nui* was established (Sissons, 1999). The *Koutu Nui* was made up of traditional leaders and was to complement the House of Ariki. However, according to Sissons (1999), in many instances it began to displace the House of Ariki through opposing views and political allegiances. Currently in 2020, the Cook Islands government is looking to disband the *Koutu Nui*, a decision that is being strongly opposed by the *Koutu Nui* and the opposition party, The Democratic Party Opposition (Etches, 2020a).

The traditional leadership of the House of Ariki is in association with the Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC) (Kecskemeti, 2012). The connection with the church and the House of Ariki thus makes the church “a significant social and political presence” in the Cook Islands

(Kecskemeti, 2012, p. 17). Part of the CICC presence is in the form of the Religious Advisory Council. The Religious Advisory Council is a multi-denominational council comprising of six representatives. The Religious Advisory Council was founded in 1968 and was established to advise the government and traditional leaders on key social, economic, and cultural issues relating to the people of the Cook Islands (World Council of Churches, 2020). Christianity plays a large role in daily life in Rarotonga (and the Cook Islands). The church contributes to not only the spiritual needs of Cook Islanders, but are also present at many functions, both political and village based, as well as contributing to the social cohesion and needs of Rarotongans. This connection with the CICC and the role of the Religious Advisory Council in wider governance and everyday life exemplify the importance of the role the church plays in Rarotonga.

## **5.4 Cook Islands: Development**

### **5.4.1 New Zealand aid assistance**

On 1 January 2020 the Cook Islands graduated from eligibility for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) after having exceeded the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) high income threshold for three consecutive years (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020). This is a significant achievement as the Cook Islands are the first Pacific Island country or Territory to graduate since 2000. This graduation has not affected New Zealand's commitment to continue to support Cook Island development, as the Cook Islands still remain a realm country. Recent development achievements through NZ aid in the Cook Islands include the funding of the *Manatua* cable to ensure high speed, reliable internet, improvements in specialist health care access, and support of the tourism sector (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020). New Zealand is also committed to *Te Mato Vai*,<sup>28</sup> to improve the drinking water in Rarotonga in a partnership with the Cook Islands and China, and the development of Cook Islands infrastructure in order to deliver essential services, including health, education, and tourism. Development priorities include continued support for the effective self-governance to ensure that all Cook Islands have a sustainable economy and improved wellbeing, this priority is inclusive of *Pa Enua* (outer islands), a commitment to environmental sustainability and to

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<sup>28</sup> *Te Mato Vai* is the name of the clean drinking water project, translated it means source of water

continued mutually beneficial regional relationship between each nation (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2020).

#### **5.4.2 Cook Island Development Priorities: The National Sustainable Development Plan**

Through the lens of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),<sup>29</sup> the Cook Islands was able to review their development experiences (World Health Organisation, 2015). When the MDGs were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),<sup>30</sup> the Cook Islands continued to be committed to improving the lives of their people and used the SDGs to establish their own development plan. *Te Kaveinga Nui*, the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020 (NSDP) (2016b) outlines 16 goals that represent the Cook Islands aspirations for the development of society. The 2020 National vision is:

*Te oraanga tu rangatira kia tau ki te anoano o te iti tangata, a kia tau ki ta tatou peu Maori e te aotini taporoporoia o te basileia.*

To enjoy the highest quality of life consistent with the aspirations of our people, and in harmony with our culture and environment  
(Government of the Cook Islands, 2016b, p. 8).

The NSDP is a comprehensive plan to implement positive change in the Cook Islands. The sixteen goals represent an emphasis on improving life for Cook Islanders (Government of the Cook Islands, 2016b). Of relevance to this thesis are the following goals: Goal 7 – Improve health and promote healthy lifestyles (Government of the Cook Islands, 2016b, p. 33), Goal 8 – inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities (p. 35), Goal 9 – Accelerate gender equality, empower all women and girls, and advance the rights of youth, the elderly and disabled (p.36), Goal 14 Preserve our heritage and history, protect our traditional knowledge, and develop our language, creative and cultural endeavours (p. 47). The NSDP sets out a national scorecard along with monitoring tools to check progress.

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<sup>29</sup> MDGs(United Nations, 2000)

<sup>30</sup> SDGs (United Nations, 2015)

## 5.5 Cook Islands Education

### 5.5.1 Education and aid: pre-and post-independence

Pre-independence education in the Cook Islands was shaped by two competing schools of thought. One argued that a western style of education would make people discontented with village life, while the other understood education to be a natural assimilation of Europeanisation and essential for progress in social and economic spheres (Coxon, 2002). The building of human capital to support the colonial belief that modernisation was necessary as a development strategy was also prevalent. During this time, policy was divided between a more western style of education, like that of New Zealand, or a belief that practice trade-based knowledge was important for students, and this was particularly evident in outer islands. Despite the varied nature of policy, the main driver of education was thereby having the ability to fill the many public service positions that were in the colonial government (Cook Islands Task Force on Education, 1989). Schooling, through a limited curriculum, was being used as a form of political, social and economic control (Coxon, 2002, p. 60).

While independence occurred in 1965, changes began much earlier than this, in order to aid the transition to self-governance. As mentioned in section 5.5.3, in 1963 a new government was formed and the New Zealand aid programme was established (Coxon & Tolley, 2005). In the period following 1965, the focus was on gaining an education to the same standard as what students in New Zealand received, with a view to enabling the 'catching up' process that was necessary for modernisation (Cook Islands Task Force on Education, 1989; Coxon, 2002). With Cook Islanders now holding dual citizenship, emphasis began to be placed on filling job shortages in New Zealand with a Pacific Island labour force, making it easy and an attractive option for Cook Islanders to seek employment in New Zealand (Coxon, 2002). This new opportunity for a higher paying wage saw rapid migration to New Zealand in the late 1960s and 1970s (Coxon, 2002; Coxon & Tolley, 2005; Wright-Koteka, 2006). The purpose of schooling was increasingly seen as a means for preparing Cook Islanders for a life in New Zealand (Coxon, 2002).

By the 1970s there was growing discontent with the current education agenda (Coxon, 2002). Education was seen to only benefit a few and the vast majority whom it did not benefit, would return to village life without any relevant education (Coxon, 2002). It became increasingly clear that education for modernisation was not as an effective strategy as once

thought and a more relevant education was called for. This coupled with New Zealand's decreasing need for migrant labour due to the world-wide economic recession, began to see a call for change, and a more relevant, locally embedded education. By the 1980s a major push for educational relevance was underway, with a multi contributory approach to developing curriculum, unit development, and teacher training that was reflective of the socio-cultural contexts of schools. Regionally, increased dialogue between education policymakers, administrations and educators began to take place, as other Pacific Islands also pushed for cultural relevance in education (Beumelburg, 2016).

New Zealand's neoliberal economic policies in the late 1980s and 1990s saw a refocusing of aid-funded development in South Pacific education (Coxon, 2002). In 1988, Pacific Education was moved from the NZ Department of Education to what was then the NZ Ministry of External Relations and Trade (Coxon, 2002, p. 64). Government Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were introduced due to pressure as part of the NZ aid agenda and by the Asian Development Bank (Alexeyeff, 2008). Privatisation of Government assets and services were pushed as the resolution to the Cook Islands financial and economic problems, but privatisation did not happen which resulted in the cutting of half of all public service jobs (Alexeyeff, 2008). Furthermore, a third of the working population migrated to New Zealand in search of employment over the course of 10 years (Coxon, 2002). With a strain now placed on government finances, the education budget for the social and cultural features of the curriculum was cut, and more emphasis was once again placed on achieving a western qualification focused education (Coxon & Tolley, 2005).

The "Pacific Reset" strategy was put in place by the Labour coalition government in 2018 and sought to re-frame NZ's aid to the Pacific (Ratuva, 2019). A key aim of the reset was to position NZ to work in partnership with the region and sought to move beyond the scope of formal aid funding establishing the Pacific Enabling Fund, supporting initiatives for cultural and sporting diplomacy, and other people driven initiatives (Ratuva, 2019). The Cook Islands have directed their own development priorities through this reset, the previously mentioned *Te Mata Vai* water project is an example of how strong local leadership and ownership has led to innovative development projects (Overton, Murray, Prinsen, Ulu, & Wrighton, 2018, p. 245). While the Pacific Reset denotes a shift in aid approaches, it can be argued that the Cook Islands have largely driven their own development initiatives and sought to link development

goals “to their own values, resources and aspirations” (Overton et al., 2018, p. 291), as can be evidenced in their NSDP and Education Master Plan (EMP), and within the OTM | HPW.

### **5.5.2 The Cook Islands educational priorities**

The Cook Islands EMP was seen as an important step forward in outlining the intent and goals for Cook Islands education. It recognised the need to build on existing initiatives in order to strengthen education (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2007). The plan was established in 2008 and is set until 2023. Perhaps one of the key differences in the EMP compared with other educational plans is the strategic outline of how children, adults, parents, businesses and the Cook Islands itself will benefit from improved educational experiences. The inclusion of businesses into the EMP suggests that clear links have been made between education and economic development. Gould (2014) contends that educational policy is shaped in response to the dominant political ideology of the day. In the Cook Islands economic development measures are important to ensure that businesses have the ability to “draw on a pool of educated employees” (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8), thus improving economic development.

In parallel to the EMP’s (2007) focus on improving human capital, it is also dedicated to building cultural capital through the promotion of Cook Island language, culture and identity. *Taku Ipukarea Kia Rangatira’s* focus “involves strength in Māori language, culture, perspectives and aspirations and will provide a firm foundation for engagement with the wider world” (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 4). A key driver is the promotion of a bilingual education, with a goal of ensuring that all children are reading at their chronological age by the end of year in both English and Cook Islands Māori (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2007). Evidence suggests that student achievement is raised when the teaching and learning experiences are inclusive of students’ first language, knowledge, culture and epistemology (Graeme Aitken, 2005; GV Aitken & Sinnema, 2008; Quiroz, 2002).

Relevant culturally responsible pedagogy is being increasingly recognised as a key educational approach in the Cook Islands. This can be evidenced through the work of Te Ava and Rubie-Davies (2011) and their conceptualisation of the *tivaevae* model of culturally responsive pedagogy. It is of further relevance to this thesis as it was developed around the *Ora’anga e te Tupu’anga Meitaki* | Health and Physical Well-being curriculum. Te Ava and Rubie-Davies’ work highlighted the need to include the following:

*Te reo Māori Kuki Airani* (Cook Islands Māori language), *peu ui tupuna* (cultural traditions), *peu inangaro* (cultural beliefs), *tu inangaro peu puapinga* (cultural values), *akaputuputu taokotai* (collaboration), *peu angaanga* (cultural activity), and *peu oire tangata* (cultural community) (Te Ava & Rubie-Davies, 2011, p. 122).

Inclusive of this was the recognition that in order to include the above, teachers needed to be adequately trained. Te Ava and Rubie-Davies (2011) highlighted the need for effective teacher training in order to pay tribute and do justice to the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy in further facilitating an understanding and an appreciation by students for their culture and well-being.

### **5.5.3 Committed to achieving multilateral objectives**

Further to the Cook Islands governments' commitment to education is their commitment to meeting multilateral initiatives that originate outside of the country. The EMF has been aligned to the previous MDGs (United Nations, 2000), Pacific Education Development Framework goals (PEDF) (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009) and Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2011) (Scott & Newport, 2012). The Cook Islands commitment to these objectives has seen a review in their considerations to ensuring equitable access to quality education, teaching and programmes. Additionally, the Cook Islands government placed importance on numeracy, life skills and literacy for students, and particularly those in *Pa Enua*, taking steps to ensure quality education takes place (Scott & Newport, 2012). By making gains towards these external goals, the Cook Islands have implemented reflexive practices to continue to improve upon the educational experiences of students.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Chapter 5 has outlined the research context of Rarotonga, Cook Islands. New Zealand's close ties with the Cook Islands extend back to 1900 with the Cook Islands gaining independence in 1965. The Cook Islands have a history of exerting sovereignty over development projects including the adoption of their own National Sustainable Development Plan and the Educational Master Plan. Preservation and perpetuation of culture in education is seen as vital. Ownership of such development initiatives and education allows for cultural relevance and the inclusion of Cook Islands values to be held at the core. The adaptation of the OTM |



HPW can be seen as an example of this, where cultural connections are at the core of the document. Chapter 6 will present the first of two findings chapters for this research.

## **Chapter 6 : Implementing *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Wellbeing curriculum, in Rarotonga, Cook Islands**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This is the first of two chapters that presents the key findings of the research, drawing on fieldwork interviews, observations and informal conversations from the two field work visits made in 2018 and 2019. The findings articulated in this chapter contribute to answering Research Question 1 (RQ1): how has the Cook Islands adapted and implemented the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Wellbeing (OTM | HPW) curriculum? It will also partially address the subsequent research objectives under RQ1; 1a - critically analyse the Cook Islands adaptation of OTM | HPW curriculum and the influence the New Zealand (NZ) Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum has on said document, with a particular focus on culture; and 1b - identify what challenges are present in the Cook Islands with respect to the design and delivery of Physical Education (PE) programmes.

This chapter comprises of four sections. Firstly, a snapshot of life in Rarotonga will be given. This helps situate young people within the broader context of life in Rarotonga, in order to understand how young people engage in physical activity outside and within the classroom. The framing of how life is changing in Rarotonga for young people, young people's commitment to their families and their obligations within the wider family, along with how village life is changing and thus necessary to explore. Secondly, the OTM | HPW adaptation in Rarotonga is unpacked, along with examining the significance of *pito'enua* and the influence of western education. Thirdly, the implementation of the OTM | HPW curriculum is presented, a discussion on the domination of western sport in PE is given along with a shift away from a sport skill focus for one school, and the inclusion of Indigenous culturally relevant games and sports. Lastly, the challenges present in the delivery of local PE programmes will be outlined; these include potential complexities faced by schools, staff and students.

### **6.2 Situating young people and sport in Rarotonga**

In order to understand what is occurring for young people in the two schools that participated in this study, it is necessary to situate the individual within the broader context

of life on Rarotonga. It is important to understand what other sports initiatives are happening and the challenges individuals may face when it comes to engaging in physical activity.

### 6.2.1 Changing times for youth

It is evident that for many young people, life on Rarotonga looks different than it did twenty years ago (Lee, 2019; Page & Te Ava, 2019). With an increase in everyday technology use experienced globally, Rarotonga also faces similar challenges with respect to a balanced use of devices. When speaking with Rose, she told me about her return to the island two years ago after having lived in NZ. She said she expected to find kids climbing coconut trees and running around as it was in the old days. Instead she spoke to the challenge of getting young people off phones and computers', highlighting that increased technology use is as prevalent an issue in Rarotonga as it is in the rest of the world. This was reiterated by James,<sup>31</sup> who relayed to me that many students try to get work after school and on weekends, in order to have money to spend on phones or games. Some students conveyed to me of the desire to work, to be able to afford to buy things, including mobile data.<sup>32</sup> They also expressed a desire to be somewhat self-sufficient and less of a burden on family through employment. A few students who were interested in gaming preferred this as an option to participating in outdoor activities or sports, but they were a minority.

In addition to external influences on time, such as phones or gaming, life in Rarotonga is busy. As mentioned, many young people work, not just to afford a mobile phone, but to help contribute to the family. In addition to work, there are also church commitments, village sport, village activities and chores to be done around the home, alongside homework. Rarotongans take great care and pride ensuring their properties are tidy, this includes clearing the leaves on their properties which are raked and burnt each evening.

*I usually have to go home after school and do chores. It's very important to my family and to me that I help out at home. Once I have done my chores, I have to do homework, so I don't really get time to do sports. I guess maybe I would do stuff if my family was into sports, but we have other things we do. (Hina, Year 10: S1).*

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<sup>31</sup> All names used are pseudonyms. James was Head of Department at School 2.

<sup>32</sup> Mobile phone data and Wi-Fi was expensive to purchase in the Cook Islands.

*In school is the only time I get to do sports, because when I get home, I have to do my homework and chores around the house. I don't get time to play, and my family aren't sporty, so we don't really do anything. (Tariana, Year 9: S2).*

Obligations or commitments placed on young people and the family's time are many. And for many Rarotongans balancing a wide ride of involvement in different activities can put time pressure on families, if physical activity or sport is not a priority, other areas take precedence. In order to understand broadly how young people engage with PE in school and sport and physical activity, outside of school, it is important to consider what other commitments or time pressures play a role in deprioritising sport.

### **6.2.3 A community commitment to sport**

Village life is an integral part of life for many Rarotongans. Each village has a strong commitment to sport. The sports season runs over approximately a four-month period, although it was reported to me by Megan at Just Play that this has been getting longer in recent years (Just Play is discussed in detail shortly). Each sport is organised and coordinated by that sports federation, with teams and coaches in each village. The village sport programme moves through a set rotation of the sports, for example starting with rugby league, then moving to rugby, soccer and so on. Village teams' practice and play against other villages for the designated time that the sport code is running, and then they move to the next sport code. People can play just one sport and specialise in that sport, however, increasingly people are overlapping as strains are placed on the population pool from which to garner players. According to Megan, this has meant that a lot of people, particularly young people, are struggling with their development because they are in a few sports or they cannot make up their minds which sport they want to do.

Village sport is available for children as young as eight years old, with some sports strictly available to males only and females only. Netball is exclusively for girls and women and rugby league is available for boys, rugby is available for junior girls, but not senior. For those young people who are in Year 12 and Year 13, village sport is often the only organised sport they have an opportunity to participate in. As there is only one secondary school on Rarotonga that has Year 12 and 13 students, students from that school are unable to participate in any school-based sports competitions.

Another option available in the villages for younger students is the Just Play programme. Just Play is a sport for development initiative run the by the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) which focuses on building stronger, healthier communities through reinforcing positive social messages. With many children not getting enough exercise each day, Just Play aims to give students the opportunity to come together through the medium of sport, get 60 minutes of exercise and learn about positive social change, such as showing respect and ending violence against women and girls. In Rarotonga, the Just Play programme was not limited to football, but included other sports like athletics, rugby, cricket and so on. Volunteers from each of those sporting codes would come in and run activities, students would rotate around each of those activities. Megan (Just Play: KI) ran the programme monthly, each month at a different village around the island. She found that people were either unable or unwilling to travel outside of their village to participate, and so to encourage maximum participation she now goes to each of the villages.

While in the field I was able to take part in the running of one sport in two village Just Play sessions while in the field. Social messages included ending violence against women and girls, celebrating International Women's Day, healthy eating, exercise, and respect for others. Just Play also provided football units for primary school's football, as it was conveyed to me that many primary teachers are uncomfortable running PE lessons due to in part a lack of training or their own personal knowledge and experience. Megan's beliefs around the benefits and challenges of her programme are outlined:

*Sport has the power to change so much, it is incredible. We use this as a platform to deliver social messages. Just Play has grown in popularity since 2013, but we struggle to get volunteers to run the programme, or people just don't turn up. A lot more girls are involved now, because we found at the beginning lots of the sports available were only for boys, so girls couldn't lay, but now we have more sports that everyone can play. Our country is very competitive. Often parents are the biggest barrier to participation, it's difficult for them to see the benefit of sport because they think it's just playing but they don't see how much they can learn through participation in sport. We do have a lot more parent engagement now, parents just don't drop their kids off, and they stay and watch and support them. That's why I use the loudspeaker when I ask the kids questions about the key messages, because I want the parents to hear. Non-communicable diseases are killing are people. We have to get kids involved*

*in sport and having fun so they can see the benefits of exercise and learn positive messages. (Megan, Just Play: KI).*

Photograph 6.1 was taken at the end of the first village festival I participated in. There was a large turnout of children and their parents or caregivers, who watched their children play. Megan told me in the early day's parents would drop off their children and come back at the end. Steadily she said, parents stayed to watch and observe, and it was her hope that some of those positive messages were being taken in by parents as well.



**Photograph 6.1: The Just Play programme**

Some of the positive messages reinforced through each village afternoon were on display at the drinks stand. Respect for others was a key message at both of the sessions I attended and was actively spoken about to the young people. Other messages included healthy eating, drinking water and daily exercise were discussed at the end of the afternoon. Photograph 6.2 shows some of the messages on display at the drinks station at the first session I attended.



**Photograph 6.2: Some of the key messages taught to children during the Just Play programme.**

It is evident that sport has a place in Cook Islands culture. Sport has the ability to bring together people within village settings to compete and be social. These can be seen across a range of ages, from the very young, such as those at the Just Play programme to older generations. Initiatives to get people moving and be active happened frequently while in the field with flyers being posted in public spaces. It was not evident though what was available for senior citizens or those perhaps who were injured and no longer able to participate in team sports. Young people have the ability to participate in both school and village activities.

Having explored some of the time pressures facing young people in Rarotonga and the village sport and other sporting opportunities available to them, the chapter will now discuss the transfer of the OTM | HPW.

## 6.3 The *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being Curriculum and its transfer in Rarotonga

### 6.3.1 The inclusion of *pito'enua* in the curriculum

The inclusion of *pito'enua* into the Cook Islands OTM | HPW seeks to place a Cook Islands understanding of well-being at the heart of the curriculum. It was a key point of difference between NZ's curriculum and the OTM | HPW. James spoke of the inclusion of *pito'enua*,

*Really, the curriculums are pretty much the same; the only difference is the philosophy of well-being here is pito'enua. It provides a local understanding of well-being that students generally respond well to and makes it more relevant for Cook Island young people. If we teach with pito'enua in mind, and keep bringing it back to pito'enua, it reinforces students own understanding of the place they live, the people they live with and their connection to the land and the environment around them. (James, HOD HPE: School 2).*

By keeping this concept in the forefront of curriculum development in both health and PE, School 2 was able to make clear links with the concept of *pito'enua* as the foundation of what is done in health and PE. Students were able to answer questions around *pito'enua*, including what it meant to them.

*I think with pito'enua it's been good to learn about. We need to learn about our environment, where we live. Sometimes I think young people just want to get jobs so they can play on their phones, or play games, and I think they forget about how things used to be done, how we lived off the land. I think it brings them back to that, like who we are as a people and what we're all about. We have to take care of each other and where we live. (CJ, Year 11: S1).*

At School 1 connections with *pito'enua* were evident in health education, but less so in PE. It is difficult to ascertain how long this has been the case, as it is likely that with the previous year's PE teacher taught *pito'enua* across both areas. This year, with John who was a relief teacher,<sup>33</sup> the focus of PE lessons relied heavily on physical skill development with little connection to *pito'enua*. As an experienced educator I could see that John delivered good PE

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<sup>33</sup> See Section 6.5.1: School level challenges in delivering PE for further explanation regarding John's temporary teaching position at School 1.



lessons. The skill set he had meant the focus tended to be on practical skill development, which is understandable given he may not fully know all aspects of the curriculum. For Year 10 students, *pito'enua* had not been retaught yet, and some had difficulty recalling what *pito'enua* was, but knew they had learnt about it in Year 9. One student commented,

*Oh yeah, I think we learnt that in health last year. Yeah maybe we did a couple of things in PE with it. Yeah, it's like being with other people, right, like being a good person, and making sure you stay active and stuff? Is that it? I don't remember too much more. (Nina, Year 10: S1).*

The connection to the Cook Islands concept of well-being was strong at School 2 but potentially through the school's current circumstances, students were less able to recall what *pito'enua* was at School 1. An informal interview with Anna, a PE teacher at School 1 reflected her desire to see *pito'enua* utilised in more initiatives across the island. Anna felt

*There is benefit to reinforcing this concept through other avenues, whether getting people active, connect with communities or getting people to reflect on their connection with their environment. (Anna, PE teacher: S1).*

Students' understanding of *pito'enua* and the relationship it has with the benefits of regular physical activity will also be discussed further in section 6.5.2 – Challenges for teachers in delivering and designing PE programmes.

### **6.3.2 A western influence: New Zealand trained teachers**

The OTM | HPW is based on a NZ model for health and physical education. The inclusion of *pito'enua*, outlined above, does help to mitigate some of the western influence embedded within the curriculum. Nevertheless, it is difficult to fully detach from a NZ influence in this subject area. At both of the schools all seven PE teachers who worked there had been educated in NZ, including the PE teacher whom I met at School 1 back in 2018 who no longer worked at the school in 2019. Some had also taught in NZ schools before returning to teach in the Cook Islands. This said, while the Cook Islands OTM | HPW is based on the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) it has been adapted to fit the local context. Yet teachers are still trained in NZ and thus are influenced by a western education setting. While the NZC does acknowledge and incorporate Māori philosophies of well-being and there are definitely similarities, there are also differences from the to Cook Islands' understanding of well-being (see Tables 2.3,

2.4 and 2.5). It is clear that some of the same challenges exist in both NZ and the Cook Islands with respect to delivering PE programmes. However, unique, context-specific local challenges are also present, ones that are not experienced in Aotearoa, or at least not to the same extent as they are in Rarotonga.

All teachers interviewed were Rarotongan, except for James, Head of Department (HOD) at School 2, who is a NZ European. Cook Island teachers were able to mitigate that western influence through their own knowledge of their culture and the cultural context within they were teaching even though a western influence exists within the OTM | HPW and through teacher training.

*I trained in New Zealand, did some teaching at a few schools there and then came back here a couple of years ago. There are a lot of similarities teaching PE in New Zealand and here but there is also a lot of differences. I mean for starters it's so much hotter! It's not just that though, the kids are different, there are different expectations placed on them, different ways they view things that influences how you teach. You have to change things so that you are doing PE in a way that gets all the kids involved and enjoying it, and it helps that I'm from here so I understand some of those 'hidden' things. (Anna, PE teacher: S1).*

## **6.4 Implementing the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being curriculum**

### **6.4.1 A shift away from solely sport skills learning**

As noted in Chapter 2, the implementation of PE has tended to focus on the technical aspects of sport, such as the acquisition of sport specific skills as the means of assessment for attainment in the subject. When James began as HOD at School 2 seven years prior he noticed that the programme was heavily skewed towards skill learning, without a balance of other broader aspects of PE. James recognised that a programme based solely on the teaching and learning of sports skills was exclusionary to girls in particular and did not utilise the curriculum to its full potential. James therefore set about to change the teaching and learning programme in the PE department to one that was more inclusive for students.

*When I arrived, PE was very heavily about sport and how well you performed certain tasks within that sport. I found that a lot of girls regularly opted out or tried to opt out of classes because they did not enjoy that style of programme. So, when the curriculum changed, I brought in less of a focus on skill learning within each unit, and some units we don't even assess their ability in that sport. That had a major effect on the participation of girls in PE. There was almost an immediate change. I mean it did take a while because they thought that it was going to be the same type of experience in PE as it had been the year before, but once they figured it out there was a clear difference in the way girls engaged in PE. There are still the same ones who try to sit out but you are usually always going to get those students, and sometimes I think it can depend on the teacher a bit too, how much they work with the students to get them involved. (James, HOD HPE; S2).*

Through interviews with students at School 2, it was evident that the young women in particular appreciated the inclusion of activities that focused less on performing in front of others and involved students each working towards achieving their own task. This meant that other students were focused on their own achievement of that task and not on the performance of the students who were reluctant participants. One such example was the unit of gymnastics. Several Year 10 female interviewees pointed to gymnastics being their favourite unit in the previous year. They explained that each lesson they had tasks to complete, usually set up in rotation, they would spend a set amount of time at each station attempting to perfect a given skill, then moved on to the next station when the teacher signalled it was time. Students stated that they enjoyed the lessons because others were focused on their own skills development and did not focus on them. They were also not put into a high-pressure situation where their performance may influence the outcome of the sport. Furthermore, students were able to choose peers to be in their group, they were able to move from station to station with friends who they got along well with, who were supportive and in their eyes, did not judge them on their ability.

*I enjoyed gymnastics because everyone was doing their own thing, no one was paying attention to you, everyone was just having fun. I like it when no one is paying attention to you. We had a bunch of places we would go, and you would rotate around, you're in groups, everyone is doing their own thing and they are all trying. And it helped too because everyone was new to gymnastics, not a lot of people had done it before, so we're all starting at the same place. When I fell, I just laughed it*

*off, like everyone was just having fun and it wasn't too serious. I didn't mind my group watching me, but I think if I was with more intimidating people I probably wouldn't have tried so much, but my group was good, so I was ok with it. (Evelyn, Year 10: S2).*

James' curriculum development to move from an all sports skills development style PE programme to one that was more balanced, included differing types of activities and different foci for assessment, such as the use of interpersonal skills, was beneficial for young women who often came to PE anxious about having to perform to a high level in front of their peers. Yet, there remained a challenge in engaging these types of students when the focus was on sports skills development. This is explored further in section 6.5.3: Challenges for students in the PE classroom.

#### **6.4.2 A balancing act between western sport dominance in PE and the inclusion of local games and activities**

It was clear at both schools that there is a tension between the dominance of western games in PE, such as rugby and netball over the inclusion of local cultural games and activities. Dance was not mentioned by students or staff in discussions surrounding local Indigenous games. While dance was included in junior PE, dance was also included in other curricula and/or school wide initiatives or activities. Dance practice was observed at School One, but this was done during lunchbreaks as a group of students were preparing for an overseas trip to New Zealand. While the PE programme is primarily based on western sports, and there is the inclusion of culturally relevant activities and games such as *vaka iti* (examined in greater detail in section 6.4.5),<sup>34</sup> it was felt that there is not enough Indigenous games included in the PE curriculum. James at School 2 also commented on the tension between western sports (also referred to as conventional PE games) and Indigenous games with respect to student engagement. He observed that there was a fine balance between including too many Indigenous games over conventional PE games. While he wanted to include more locally relevant games and activities into the programme and to move away from western sports, he found it difficult to entirely do so as many students wanted to play conventional PE games, and moreover Cook Island sport does utilise western sports in their village competitions.

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<sup>34</sup> *Vaka iti* is the sport of canoe racing and culminates in the interschool competition held each year in Rarotonga. Throughout this chapter it may be referred to as *vaka*, as students often shortened it.

While there is the inclusion of Indigenous activities, it can be difficult to get student buy in due to the popularity of western games, such as rugby.

*The first year or so we implemented it [a programme which included Cook Island traditional games] some students were reluctant, but now it's just a normal part of the programme so they know we are going to do it no matter what. I'm not sure we could get rid of netball or rugby for example completely, but we have to try and find a balance between the two. We have a unit where students create their own game, and they enjoy doing that to. You have to persevere through that initial reluctance because they do end up enjoying it. Students really look forward to the game creating unit and vaka iti in particular. (James, HOD HPE: S2).*

Megan at Just Play also commented about the desire to play western sport by young people compared to local traditional games.<sup>35</sup>

*We are a competitive people. We like to play sport and we like to win. Young people now are much more connected with the outside world; they can watch American basketball or grid iron much more easily than we ever could. So, they want to play those sports. We want to be on the world stage, playing against other countries in rugby and league, and we have a sports programme based around that development, the development of our young people and adults in sport. There are some more traditional games happening on the island, and they are gaining in popularity but I'm not sure if we could ever go away with things like rugby and we don't want to anyway. (Megan, Just Play: KI).*

Despite this expressed tension suggested by James, students did seem to respond well to the inclusion of non-western sports, often reporting that they enjoyed those units as there tended to be less pressure and less competitive than western team sports.

*Yeah, I really liked the games we did [in that unit], it was so fun. We got to play with our friends, and it wasn't all in one big group. I have a supportive group of female friends and we enjoyed being able to be together the whole time and learning new games. (Marama, Year 11: S2).*

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<sup>35</sup> With the exception of *vaka iti*, this had a large uptake of participation by young people in Rarotonga.

The inclusion of western sport in PE is thus not entirely negative. Cook Islanders enjoy playing western sport and often village sport is centred on it. James admits to completely take out all western sport would be challenging for their programme in terms of student engagement. It therefore became a balancing act in valuing both western sport and incorporating other games and activities, such as Indigenous Cook Islands games into the PE programme.

#### **6.4.5 The inclusion of *vaka iti* into the Physical Education programme**

The *vaka iti* competition has been in Rarotongan schools for eight years, beginning in 2012. The aim of the festival is to get young people into water sports, and to provide a flow on effect into local paddling clubs to further this culturally important sport. At Year 11, students undertake a teaching and learning programme designed around the sport of *vaka iti*. Students from secondary schools on the island are taken to an area in Avarua District (next to Vianna's Bistro and Bar) where the *vaka iti* training and competition takes place. I was delighted that field work coincided with the training for this competition and the competition date itself in 2019. The school staff did not run practice sessions, rather they were run by local helpers and parents involved in the sport. I was able to observe several practice sessions across two different classes at School 2. One classroom observation can be seen in Photograph 6.3 which was taken during my time at School 2. There was a high level of participation from students in this class, with all students actively participating. This was in contrast to the participation levels observed in the second class (discussed further in section 6.5.2.)



**Photograph 6.3: James' Year 11 class preparing for their training session**

Two Year 11 students interviewed at School 2 conveyed their enjoyment in participating in the *vaka iti* competition. CJ and Marama both spoke of how it was their favourite unit in PE so far.

*I feel really good about myself, honestly, when I'm participating in our vaka sessions. This is my first time getting into the sport. I can see it means a lot to a few people, including my parents. For me, it's feeling what it's like to be paddling that is really cool. Everyone is into it and I know it's an important part of our history, of who we are. Being on the water like our ancestors were, paddling is so cool. (CJ, Yr. 11: S2).*

A similar sentiment was expressed by Marama, who also drew some gender comparisons about the sport.

*I always try to push myself to do better, and I feel like at vaka we get to do that. We are encouraged to participate and do well, and it's such a team sport that you want to do well for others. Sometimes in PE, some of the boys do judge you and yell at you because they want to win, but at vaka it's mixed and we are working together with the boys to try and win. It's more about teamwork and we get treated as teammates. Vaka iti and netball are my favourite sports. I like them because in vaka we get to work together with the boys and in netball we get to show the boys how good we are. (Marama, Yr. 11: S2).*

Students who do not like to participate in PE in general found *vaka* seemingly had less judgement associated with it than other sports done in PE. For Alice, who historically did not enjoy physical activity outside of school either, *vaka* increased Alice's desire to be more physically active, for example it allowed her a pathway into village sport as she was able to continue with her village team once training at school had finished. This was a significant change for Alice, who "could count the number of times she had participated in PE to date on one hand". In fact, Alice was proficient at getting out of PE, even getting her mother, a teacher at her school, to write her notes to excuse her from participating. She later relayed that she now no longer has to come up with an excuse as the teacher no longer asks her why she is not participating.

*I really like vaka, it's one of my favourite sports. I sometimes go biking as well. Vaka is less judgmental, I feel like people don't judge me the same when I'm doing it. That's why I don't really like PE, is because of the way people judge you. If you get things wrong, you suck and people shame you, so I don't really feel comfortable playing in PE. But vaka is different, everyone gets involved and you're more even with everyone else. I do it with my village too, it's good because I don't participate in much else but it's good to be involved with it, because lots of people see it as important or whatever.*  
(Alice, Yr. 10: S1).

For some students there was an understanding that *vaka* had significance to themselves as Cook Islanders and being able to participate in the sport was a way of continuing on the link to the past. For some of the girls, they felt there was much less judgement involved in *vaka* and that boys and girls were equal in terms of performance. The interschool competition brought a sense of togetherness on the day of competition. Despite the weather the atmosphere and engagement by students and adults was impressive to watch. Photograph 6.4 was taken by a professional photographer on the day of competition. Students wore their schools PE uniform on competition day.





**Photograph 6.4: The *vaka iti* competition day, 2019 (Source Tokerau Jim Images, 2019).**

## **6.5 Challenges of local Physical Education programmes**

### **6.5.1 School level challenges in delivering Physical Education: Employing and retaining qualified teachers**

When School 1 allowed me to conduct research at their school, they informed me that their current PE teacher was a relief teacher as they were trying to find a permanent PE teacher. In 2018, the school had two part-time PE teachers, with one teacher solely teaching PE and the other, Anna, also teaching in another department, which is not uncommon in small schools. While I had met and spent time with both PE teachers during fieldwork one in 2018, Anna continued to work at the school in 2019, while the teacher who solely taught PE had resigned. The school had difficulty filling the position over the summer break and then asked John to relieve once the school year had started while they continued the recruitment process. An informal discussion with the principal regarding the situation helped to illuminate some of the difficulties they faced in terms of recruitment. On two separate occasions, they had appointed a teacher, who accepted the job stating they would start work on the following Monday, only to have them not turn up for the job. In discussions with other Cook

Island teachers at the school, having someone accept the job and then not turn up was not an uncommon occurrence. This still placed the school in a difficult situation, whereby it was doing all it could to employ someone but for whatever reason, successful applicants did not begin their contract. In general, there was a feeling amongst some staff that as the school was a small rural school, it was sometimes forgotten about by the Ministry of Education (MOE), and they felt more could have been done by the MOE to help secure a teacher for the position.

John, the relief PE teacher, was a semi-retired primary trained teacher who had previously done some relief teaching work at the school in the past. He was employed to stay for four weeks, however, difficulties in securing a permanent teacher meant that John's relief position had been extended. I was careful to ensure I spoke with John prior to commencing research to reassure him that I was not there to assess his abilities as a PE teacher, along with talking through the nature of my research. He spoke of not wanting to work full-time at the school, and that his relief position was meant to be a temporary situation, but also that he felt he could not walk away and leave students without a teacher.

*They asked me to come in for four weeks, and here I am, still here another four weeks later. But what can I do? They don't have anyone else and I don't want to leave the students without a teacher. But at the same time, I hope they find someone soon. They've [the school] had a rough time of it and it just seems like no one's trying to help them find someone. (John, relief PE teacher: S1).*

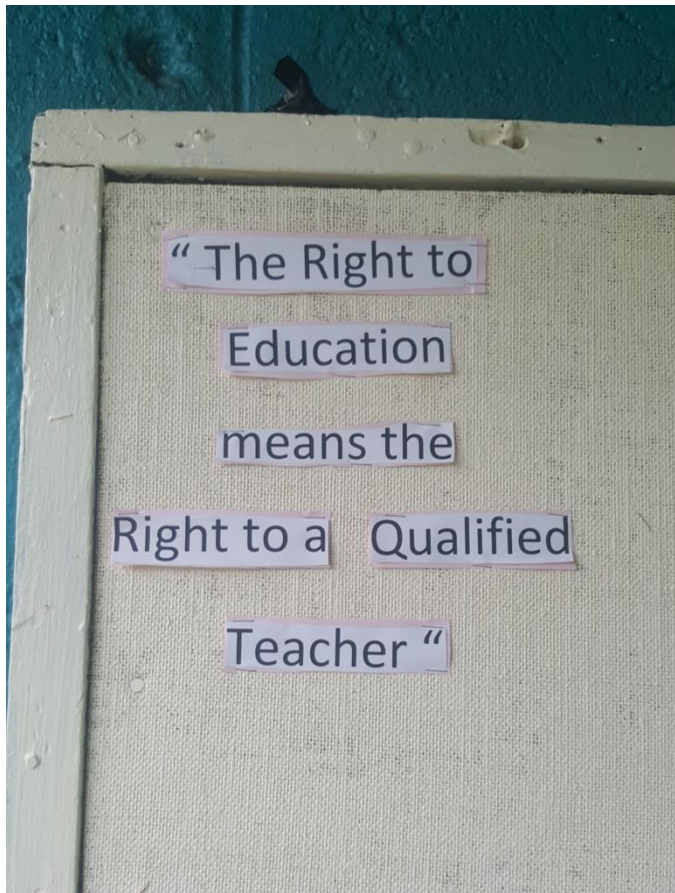
While John may not have been secondary school PE trained, he was familiar with PE and ran well-structured lessons. There were, however, implications for not having a qualified PE teacher. Most notably, Year 11 students would miss out on a term of their National Certification in Education Achievement (NCEA) work because John was not able to teach achievement standards in PE. Year 11 students played games in their normal PE time for term one. While most were fine with this arrangement, some students expressed concern at being behind in their NCEA work and the stress of either having to catch up at a later date or missing out on potential achievement standard results.

*I like Mr P [John] and I have fun in his classes, but we're not doing in PE standards stuff. Like, we should have started some standards. It's nearly been a term now and I haven't got any credits in PE – I have in other classes. I'm really wanting to do something PE related when I leave school, so I hope we can have a proper teacher soon. (Nina, Yr. 11: S1).*

There were also implications for those students who try to opt out of PE classes and those who sometimes need some encouragement to participate. It became clear in classroom observations that little was done to address students who did not want to participate. That is of course, not to say that all PE teachers address non-participants effectively, but in light of his temporary role at the school, John did not feel it was his responsibility to address on-going issues with student who did not bring gear or displayed a lack of participation. This left these students with an easier than normal option of being able to opt out with little to no ramifications, and the broader issue behind their lack of participation not being addressed. As mentioned earlier, Alice in Year 10, no longer had to come up with an excuse as the teacher did not inquire. During my time at School 1, it was evident that the same group of students took advantage of this informal arrangement and opted not to participate in each lesson. Those students who were somewhat reluctant but could be persuaded to be involved, expressed a desire to have a teacher who did encourage them.

*I think if I could change one thing about PE this year it would be if we had a teacher that encouraged us, that would be good. This year the teacher doesn't really care about what we do, so sometimes we just don't do anything. Last year the teacher was really good, and she was like, always excited about what we're doing, and that rubbed off on us. (Isabel, Yr.11: S1).*

When walking past a noticeboard at School 1, I found the phrase outlined in photograph 6.5 pinned up on it.



**Photograph 6.5: A noticeboard at School 1**

This aptly highlights that while students have a right to education, they also have a right to having a qualified teacher in front of them. While all was being done at School 1 to try to ensure students were not disadvantaged, and it appeared as though most were not, it still left the underlying issue of schools not being able to secure qualified applicants for positions. School 2 was unaware of School 1's situation when I began my time with them, and through discussions had decided to contact School 1 to see what support they could offer.

### **The availability and condition of facilities**

Another challenge in delivery PE programmes for schools was facilities. The second round of fieldwork in 2019 coincided with the end of the wet season on Rarotonga. For School 1 this posed a large problem. For the better part of the first term the school field was under water, and when not under water, it was too wet to be used for PE lessons. This left little options in terms of spaces for PE staff to conduct their lessons. What was left was 'the courts', an area marginally larger than a Netball court (see photograph 6.6). This meant that as space was

limited, restricting the types of activities that could be undertaken for lessons. Moreover, the court was often hot, and as many students did not have sports shoes, they either wore bare feet or jandals,<sup>36</sup> sometimes effectively and sometimes not. Jandals are not normally associated with sports footwear; however, student's main purpose in wearing them was to protect their feet from the hot courts. There seemed to be little complaint from students, who just accepted that that was the way things were. John in supporting this stated;

*It can be a bother sometimes, but we just make do and work around it. We can sometimes get on the field down this right end corner, but we don't have much more space than the courts, it's just that they find it easier to run around in bare feet on the field. (John, relief PE teacher; S1).*



**Photograph 6.6: The only space for PE classes during the wet season.**

School 2 was more highly resourced, and adjacent to more community facilities. It is a larger school and more space provided more opportunity for staff to be able to spread out around the school and not have the distraction of another class in close proximity, unless of course that was the intent of the lesson (class vs class). School 2 was lucky enough to have a school

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<sup>36</sup> Jandals are the NZ term for a light sandal with a thong between the big and second toe, sometimes known as flip flops.

hall that was also the gym and housed the PE office. This dual space arrangement is not an uncommon one, and something that is experienced in New Zealand (NZ) schools as well. This often means that at times where there is a school assembly, performance or the like, the PE staff gives up the space as the event takes precedence over classes. While in the field this occurred once where the PE class gave up their lesson to set up for an assembly which was to follow. While it is not usually too much of a problem for staff who easily worked around this issue, problems were faced when it was wet, leaving the class with no indoor PE space for the lesson. Often, staff would run a health lesson in a classroom instead, as there was some flexibility with when the health lessons occurred as long as they met the set number of health lessons each term. The hall was an older building and not specifically designed for PE lessons. Ventilation was an issue with a hot day leading to a very uncomfortable environment for taking part in physical activity.

*It does get very hot in the gym and we try to open up all the doors and have the fans going but students get very hot, especially when it's a physical game. It is in the (redevelopment) plans that we will have an upgraded PE and health space; we are really looking forward to that. (James, HOD HPE; S2).*

Wall mounted fans were spread out around the hall and provided much needed relief for students. Again, there was little complaint from staff or students about the facilities, as it was stated to be *'just the way it is'*.

## **6.5.2 Challenges for teachers in designing and delivering Physical Education programmes**

### **The challenge of non-participants**

One of the key challenges facing PE staff at both schools was students who do not participate, more commonly known as non-participants. This discussion excludes students who are legitimately unwell or injured but rather discusses students who opt out of lessons either through the guise of forgetting their PE gear, feigned illness or injury, or through the use of a note from parents, either legitimate or forged by the student or a peer. It was more often than not apparent to PE staff students who were non-participants, as they regularly and repeatedly attempted to get out of doing PE. Students who were unwell or injured who wanted to participate usually did so again following their recovery.

As mentioned in the previous section, at School 1 John did not feel it was part of his responsibility to follow-up with students who did not bring their gear, his focus was on the PE lesson itself. He relayed that whomever they employed as the PE teacher would address the issue of students without gear. There was a core group of regular students who very quickly realised John was not addressing non-participants and each lesson opted out. It should be noted though, that this group was a small group, and, in some classes, no students opted out. It was more common at Year 9 and 10, with the largest non-participant group observed (5 students) being in Year 10. Some students who were interviewed from School 1, including those who regularly participate had views on the situation.

*I don't like it when people argue with the teacher; they should just get on with it. I don't like it when people are talking to each other instead of participating. I want to see everyone involved, but some students just don't want to do it. I try to encourage them and help them, then they might come play for a bit, but the next lesson they're sitting out again. It's kind of annoying because I just want everyone involved and everyone to have a good time. (Meilani, Yr9: S1).*

Students who did participate were often frustrated with those who did not and felt that they should participate out of a sense of duty, because it was what the teacher was instructing. John did not spend any time with those who did not have gear, unless they were engaging in something they should not have been doing during the lesson, in which case he told them to come and sit back down again. Alice, a regular Year 10 non-participant, spoke of the influence that the previous year's teacher had on her participation, alluding to the idea that the teacher can influence students who are reluctant to participate in lessons.

*Last year Miss would get alongside me and encourage me. She knew each lesson that I was trying to get out of it, well – wanting to get out of doing PE. So, she would come up to me and we would have a chat about what the lesson was going to be, it helped to know what we were doing beforehand, so I could kind of prepare for it. Then sometimes during class she would say to me you could do this, or try this, and it was good because it usually meant that I didn't have to do stuff where there was a lot of pressure on me. The thing she suggested was often something that would mean I could go off to the side and practice or do a little game with a friend. It was so much better. It didn't always work though, like sometimes I had to join in with everyone else, and I didn't really like that. It was ok sometimes but sometimes it gets really*

*competitive too. But Miss would change things up and we didn't always do big games with everyone, so it was better joining in with a smaller group. But this year, Sir doesn't really do that and it's always big games, so I just don't play. It's just easier. I do some biking at home but yeah, I don't really like PE this year. (Alice, Year 10: S1).*

These two accounts of student's opinions of non-participants speaks to challenges that teachers face in encouraging students to be involved and designing lessons in such a way as to be inclusive for all students. The previous year's teacher had developed strategies to encourage participation and active involvement, with Alice even mentioning that she enjoyed these lessons and they were of benefit to her. Although it was predominantly females who opted out at School 1, there were a couple of males who regularly sat out. After I observed several lessons an informal conversation with one boy revealed similar concerns over being physically able in games and not wanting to make errors. He much preferred individual sports, and participated in Badminton, as he felt less pressure in game situations and it was either just himself, he was relying on, or he had one other teammate, who was often more forgiving of errors.

Addressing non-participants was also a challenge for staff at School 2. It appeared as though the teacher had a large influence on not only the student's degree of participation but also their ability to continually opt out. That is, in classes where the teacher did minimal to address non-participants and they could sit and chat with friends on the side-line with no repercussions for not bringing gear or discussions and encouragement for future engagement, students continually opted to forget their gear. For them, being able to sit down and chat to friends outside for a period was much more rewarding than participating in PE lessons, and as they did not receive any adverse consequences for this, such as getting a detention, picking up rubbish or parents being contacted, they continued to 'forget' their gear. A discussion with a group of boys and girls sitting on the side-line in one lesson conveyed this;

*"Nah, Mr doesn't care. So we just sit here"*

*"Yeah, we just get to talk to our friends all lesson"*

*"Sometimes he does get tough, so we bring our gear for a bit, but then we just start forgetting again"*

*"Don't tell him though" (giggles). (A group of Year 9 non-participants: S2)*



This was not the case for every class, and as mentioned it appeared to be somewhat teacher dependent. While observing students participate in *vaka* lessons, there was a clear contrast between the two classes. In one class, taught by James, there was a high uptake of student involvement. All students appeared to be interested in training; with some stating it was their “favourite unit” at secondary school thus far. Student engagement on the water was high, and students were actively involved for the two periods they were practicing. The second class I observed was with another teacher, Rona. In Rona’s class, 14 students did not have gear and sat out of the learning experience. Students were not required to do anything, other than sit for the entire session and not cause any mischief. It appeared as though the tolerance staff had for students not bringing gear, along with how the teacher framed the lesson played a role in the level of student engagement. James encouraged students to participate, made connections with the cultural heritage and had clear consequences for students who did not bring gear, thus not bringing gear (and thus not participating) was not seen as an easy option for students, and they were fully involved. However, for Rona, students were aware there were no consequences for not bringing gear, so sitting on the beach talking to mates rather than being out in the *vaka* was an option almost half the class opted for. In this instance, the PE teachers influence on the class had an impact on the level of involvement students had. It was evident that some students from Rona’s class were likely to try and get out of most activities, yet in this instance, they were able to ‘recruit’ friends to sit out as well.

Engaging students in PE lessons to the benefit of their well-being is a challenge faced by teachers at each of the schools, and indeed in NZ. As mentioned earlier, HOD James spoke of changing the PE programme so that there was less of a focus on sport skill acquisition as the main form of teaching and learning, and assessment, to a programme with a broader more holistic approach to PE which included non-traditional PE games,<sup>37</sup> Indigenous games and drawing on other forms of assessment rather than physical ability.<sup>38</sup> While this change saw an increase in participation, particularly for girls, engaging students in physical activity in such a way as to improve their well-being remains a challenge present for PE staff.

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<sup>37</sup> When James spoke of non-traditional PE games, in this sense he was meaning games other than ones that are mainstream, such as netball, rugby, soccer etc.

<sup>38</sup> For example, the use of interpersonal skills to help improve the functioning of a team

### **Conveying the benefits of physical activity and sport: Health promotion**

The benefits of physical activity and sport are important to understand, particularly in contexts where obesity related illnesses are present. The importance of a healthy lifestyle that could stave off Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes and heart disease are key aims of The Cook Islands Ministry of Health (Te Marae Ora Cook Islands Ministry of Health, 2021). Helping young people recognise the benefit of being active and it is hoped in Rarotonga that through positive experiences in PE, young people will continue to be active into adulthood. Both PE programmes did have units built into their curriculum outlining the benefits of regular physical activity, either through PE or health lessons. Indeed, *pito'enua* is all about understanding well-being; however, students did not necessarily make the connection with *pito'enua* and physical activity. Of all students who were interviewed only one made the connection to *pito'enua* when asked if they knew the benefits of physical activity. Their understanding of *pito'enua* seemed to be more general, they understood each of the dimensions and their connection with their environment, and how various things might affect their well-being, but not necessarily how regular physical activity improves well-being. The one student at School 2 who made the connection said the following;

*Oh, that's like pito'enua eh? Yeah, if you are active then you have a balanced life, like it's good for your well-being and stuff. Being connected to the environment and being outside and doing stuff is good for you. (Michael, Year 10: S2).*

Other responses by student interviewees either spoke of no understanding of physical activity benefits or a very extreme understanding of what a lack physical activity could lead to. That is, no students identified that regular activity can lead to improve cognitive function, feelings of happiness and so forth; they understood that a lack of physical activity meant that you would get diabetes and other NCDs, there appeared to be no middle ground. Some student responses are outlined below.

*Yes, but they aren't positively enforced. It's very much like, we've got a diabetes problem so you better exercise, so you don't get that. So, it's quite a lot of fear tactics. They don't give us intermediate benefits to the body or to the mind, it's just 'do physical activity or you'll die'. (Alice, Year 10: S1).*

*We watched a video about a man who had type 2 diabetes. I think the whole class got something from that video because of how it affected the man and how he felt*

*about himself because he had to get his legs cut off due to that happening. And we all realised that maybe if we stay being active now and stop eating badly, and be active, then maybe in the future we can avoid that. (Charlene, Year 10: S1).*

*NCDs and diabetes can happen. When I hear about that I think what would happen if I was in that situation. If I was reluctant to do PE, then I might not be in the shape I am in now and it might not be good for my health. (CJ, Year 11: S2).*

It was clear that some students were getting the message that a healthy lifestyle can lead to the avoidance of diabetes and other NCDs, while other students simply stated that they were unaware of the benefits, or that they remember it being talked about but could not remember what the benefits were. There did not appear to be any middle ground of students understanding with respect to the benefits of being physically active. Bridging that gap in understanding is a challenge present for PE teachers in the two Rarotongan schools who took part in this research.

### **6.5.3 Challenges for students in the Physical Education classroom**

#### **Team sport and the pressure to perform: The competitive nature of Physical Education**

One of the key challenges identified by students who were both physically proficient and those who were less so, was negotiating the competitive nature of PE. More often than not, students engaged in team sports during their PE lessons, or were involved in learning tasks for team sports. Multiple practical reasons were identified by teachers, including team sports engaging more students at one time and being able to run on a smaller ground/space and with less sporting equipment comparative to individual sports. Additionally, staff also recognised that Cook Islands students preferred to be involved in team sports to individual ones.

Despite this preference, there was a clear tension between the penchant for team sports in order to enjoy the benefits of being together as a group and the competitive nature and pressure that team sports placed on the individual. Of note was that this pressure was experienced by both able and less able students, however, it was more easily negotiated and

handled by those students who were physically able than those who were not. Physically able students were expected to perform to the high standard they normally would, and when they did not meet this standard, they were more often than not made fun of for their error. This 'joking around' did not last long and was soon forgotten about by their peers, for the student on the receiving end, they were able to not let it get the better of them, sometimes laugh along with it hoping that it passed quickly. However, for students who were not as physically able the anxiety and fear that the pressure to perform to a good standard placed on them was not something they wanted to experience, and thus either opted out and carefully moved away from where the ball was in order to avoid being involved. If they did receive the ball, and made an error, they were not as resilient in getting over the error and felt as though they were letting down their team. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this finding was that the division between less able and more able did not have gendered lines. That is, students were less able or 'not-sporty', both male and female, reacted and behaved in a similar way to the pressures experienced in a team environment. Although the pressure experienced by students was not divided by gender, it did appear that those applying the pressure were more often than not boys. This will be discussed further in Chapter 7, where empowerment in PE is discussed at great length.

*But for PE, um I mean, I think the thing that's always bothered me, it's not the sport, well sometimes it is, but it was sometimes the students. I never really like competitive things because I know how some people can be. I like it when there's not so much of a focus on winning, or being the best, when things are so competitive. Maybe if the activity is less about winning, gymnastics was more about having fun, it wasn't about who wins or not, there was less pressure. And I guess I don't like being singled out. (Evelyn, Year 10: S1).*

Linked to the pressure to perform in PE class, the pressure of 'the gaze' was also experienced by less sporty students in classroom situations. Students conveyed that they disliked situations where everyone was watching them. This was not just limited to them having been passed the ball, but instances where they were asked to demonstrate a skill or having to perform a task in front of the whole class or even a small group. The gaze was highly regulating and impacted students desire to be involved in lessons.

*I don't like to do stuff in front of the class. That puts me off. Sometimes I keep to myself, but I like to help others. But I wouldn't want to demonstrate in front of the*

*class, nah, no way. I don't want people watching. I get really nervous. (Amiria, Year 9. S1).*

It was much easier for less able students to be involved when they felt as though no one was watching. It became evident that students who felt the pressure to perform also felt as though everyone was watching them, even in instances where this was not the case. Bianca outlines below that she thought everyone was watching her, but when she looked around, she realised this was not the case.

*I really don't like it when everyone is watching. Like when Miss goes to ask someone to show the class how somethings is done, I just want to hide and not have her pick me. But even the other day, we were doing a warm-up in small groups, and we had to go up and down the hall. And I didn't want to do it, and then I started doing it and I thought everyone is watching me. But when I got to the end of the hall, I looked up and looked at others and they weren't! They were all just doing the activity, no one really cared. So, I think sometimes that I think people are watching, but they really aren't. (Bianca, Year 9: S2).*

While students at both schools enjoyed the togetherness of team sports, it is clear it also brought with it challenges. Both sporty and non-sporty students felt the pressure to perform in a team situation and felt as though there was little room for error in these situations. Errors were usually followed with some type of disappointment from the rest of the team, but how those criticisms were handled by more and less able students were quite different, with those students who were not as physically able finding it more difficult to recover from the anxiety and guilt they experienced when letting their team down. Additionally, the power of other students watching was also an influence on student's involvement in class. Students who were not as sporty did not want to be the centre of attention in classes, either through a teacher led demonstration or during activities where others might watch their performance. What was of significance was neither of these findings had gendered differences, but rather was experienced differently by students of differing abilities.

### **The Physical Education uniform**

Both schools that took part in this research had PE uniforms that consisted of a school uniform singlet with the school's name on the back, and a pair of shorts of their choosing,

sometimes girls wore skirts at School 1. The heat likely played a role in the school's decision for the PE uniform to be a singlet, as it can get very hot and humid all year round. There was no other option available for students to wear, for example there was no PE uniform t-shirt that students could wear in place of the singlet. Wearing a singlet for PE was an issue that some students raised in interviews, particularly girls and particularly students who were heavier. Interestingly, this was not something boys addressed as an issue. Students who found the current uniform challenging expressed a desire to have an option of what they could wear, and that they would feel more comfortable in a t-shirt as opposed to a singlet, but they had not ever raised this concern with their teacher or another adult at the school, as they accepted that it was unlikely it would be an option made available to them. When Alice was asked what one thing she would change about PE class to make it better, she replied;

*Mine would be uniform. I really don't like the uniform. It's just a singlet, and you have to wear it. It doesn't cover your arms and you feel kind of like everyone is looking and like you're showing too much. I tried to bring my own t-shirts for a while, but I got into trouble because it wasn't the uniform, but I just don't like it. I feel uncomfortable, and then we have to do PE in it, so we're moving around. I just want something a bit more covered. (Alice, Year 10: S1).*

A similar sentiment was expressed by students at School 2, who also had a singlet for their PE uniform.

*Sometimes I feel like in PE you're judged a lot. Like, you're judged on how well you can play stuff, like how good you are at sport. And then I feel like the uniform also makes people judge you. I don't like wearing a singlet; it feels like I should be covered more. I don't want people looking at me and judging me about that too. I just wish we had a choice, that's all, like if we had a t-shirt too, then we could just choose which one we wanted to wear but we just have to wear the singlet. (Marama, Year 11: S2).*

While practically it makes sense in a year-round hot and humid climate that a singlet was chosen for the PE uniform, the sole use of them in PE excluded some students who felt self-conscious about wearing them in front of their peers. Furthermore, to then perform physically in the singlet students felt further exposed by not having all of their chest and arms covered with a t-shirt. The challenge of wearing a singlet was not enough for all students who

were uncomfortable to opt out of class, they still continued to participate, but did express their unease and preference to have an option. For the two female students who had a higher body mass and indicated that the uniform was an issue, it did cause them seek opportunities to opt out, or break school rules by bringing in their own non-uniform t-shirt, which they saw as a valid course of action in order to feel more comfortable in class.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the first of the research findings and addresses research question one and its two objectives, how has the Cook Islands adapted and implemented *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Wellbeing curriculum document in Rarotonga, Cook Islands? To critically analyse the Cook Islands adaptation of *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Wellbeing curriculum, and the influence of the NZ HPE curriculum on said document, with a particular focus on culture, and to identify what challenges are present in the Cook Islands with respect to the design and delivery of PE programmes.

An overview of life in Rarotonga was presented with a discussion on village sport programmes in Rarotonga. Understanding the role that sport plays within Cook Islands culture is important part of situating the young person within broader Rarotongan life. The adaptation of the OTM | HPW was then explored, including the inclusion of pito'enua into the curriculum and its importance, finding that there was a clear tension existing when designing and delivering the curriculum between a western influence and the inclusion of local cultural activities. The implementation of the OTM | HPW was examined, including the key findings of a shift away from a sports skills focus in School 2, balancing the sport played in class with western sports and local games and lastly, the *vaka iti* training and competition for Year 11 students is discussed, proving to be a very popular sport amongst students and making a clear link to culture. Lastly, the chapter presents the findings in relation to the challenges of PE programmes in Rarotonga. Some of the challenges present for the school, teachers and students are all discussed including 'capturing' the reluctant student and students desire to be involved in team sports to share in success, yet team sports can also be a source of anxiety as people watch and potentially criticise performances. Having explored the findings relating to Research Question 1, Chapter 7 will present the main findings in relation to Research Questions 2 and 3.

## **Chapter 7 : Empowerment of Young People in Physical Education: What Physical Education ‘ought’ to be like**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The second of the two findings chapters explores the findings relating to empowerment and gender in Physical Education (PE). It addresses Research Question 2; do current approaches to PE classes enable the empowerment of young people in Rarotonga, Cook Islands? And objective one, to analyse PE classes with a focus on what constitutes an empowering environment for students. It also addresses Research Question 3, what does a context specific PE programme, which results in empowerment look like? In order to achieve Research Question 3, Objective 3.1 sought to determine what a PE programme which seeks to empower ought to look like through the development of a student-informed culturally relevant empowerment framework.

The chapter is in four sections. Firstly, when completing tasks, we begin to understand the differences according to gender as experienced by young people within the classroom. Secondly, key themes relating to empowerment are identified by students, who often used simple terminology to convey what they enjoyed and what made them feel good about themselves, versus what they did not like and what made them feel bad. Through interviews, focus groups and observations, a student-informed PE empowerment framework is presented in section four.

### **7.2 Gender and Physical Education**

#### **7.2.2 Sport and the risk to social gender**

As evidenced in the previous findings chapter, it was clear through talking with Megan at Just Play that people in the Cook Islands still hold limiting views on which sports males and females should play. She relayed to me how in the beginning of the programme it was exclusionary to young women because they only offered sports young men could play, but once they included more sports perceived to be belonging to females, they had a bigger buy in from young women. It does appear these ideas still hold firm in youth understandings of sporting options for males and females. Students commented on what they saw to be



appropriate sports for males and females to take part in, and interestingly, who was at a greater perceived threat to disrupt social gender and gender stereotypes if one gender decided to play a sport largely assigned as the domain of the other gender,<sup>39</sup> potentially placing societal pressure on gender expression.<sup>40</sup>

It was evident once in the field that discussion surrounding young people who were not heteronormative would be limiting. When asked about students who are non-binary some were confused by the term and others were embarrassed. I was reminded of a discussion with a teacher at School One during my first fieldwork visit.

*Students are probably not comfortable talking about it at all. Generally, here, you are male or female and that's it. There are a small number of people in the community who are gender diverse, but it's not really out in the open, I mean it's not talked about, I guess. Some students feel really strongly that it is wrong, against God's wishes and that awful things might happen if you accept it. I remember starting a discussion about sexual orientation with my Year 11 students; I remember being quite shocked at what they were saying. It was clear that it wasn't talked about or covered in a health class, that's something I want to change. I have found a few students are more open to accepting gender diversity and sexuality, generally if someone in their family doesn't stick with traditional gender norms. But yeah, you might find it hard leading discussions on it with students, also given that you are an outsider. (Anna, PE teacher: S1)*

This discussion largely informed the framing of questions in interviews during fieldwork visit two. While the question below was framed as 'male or female', I did ask Year 10 and 11

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<sup>39</sup> Social gender "includes gender roles and expectations and how society uses those to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms" (Gender Spectrum, 2019, para 8). Gender expectations are communicated through every aspect of our lives, including culture, family, schools, community, media and religion, social gender refers to those external pressures (Gender Spectrum, 2019).

<sup>40</sup> Gender expression is defined as "the external appearance of a person's gender identity, usually expressed through behaviours, clothing, haircut of voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined masculine or feminine behaviours and characteristics" (Adams, 2017, para 11). Gender expression is about the individual and how they behave, and whether they will conform or not to societal pressure.

students what it would be like in PE for students who were LGBTQ+. Only one Year 11 female student responded,

*I think it would be really difficult for people if they weren't the gender they had at birth. I don't really know anyone, but I could see it would be hard for them. Mostly because people say stuff, like maybe if they were older but at school, I think they would get a hard time. I think the school would probably be ok with it, but other students might not be. Not at first anyway, I mean I would hope that they would be. I don't think it would change much in PE, but out of PE I don't know if they could play in the gender of the sport they identify with, like I don't know if they would be allowed to. (Marama, Year 11: S2).*

With this in mind, one of the questions students were asked was 'what they thought the implications might be for boys and girls to play a sport typically associated with the other gender'. The question was in two parts, first asking 'how a girl might be perceived if they play a sport that only boys play', often giving the example of rugby union or rugby league as it is typically a male domain in the Cook Islands. Although girls up to the age of eight are allowed to play in village sport, after which time it does become more difficult for females to play. Then the second question asked, 'what people might say about boys who decided to play a sport that generally only girl's play', and often netball was given as an example as netball is considered solely women's sport. Students' responses for the question 'what it would be like for girls who played a boys sport' are outlined below. It is of note that these two questions garnered thoughtful responses from students, with every student I spoke to having an opinion to express.

*I think its fine, the girls can do it, it's fine but they would have to be tough physically. (Charles, Year 10: S1).*

*Rugby is a girl's sport too; it's not a problem if a girl plays rugby. But if they were doing just a boy's sport, then nah if she wants to, she can, I don't see a problem. (Mavai, Year 10: S1).*

*I think its fine for girls to be involved in all sports! (Nina, Year 11: S1).*

*I think people would be open to it. Except when it comes to actual competitions then I think the girl might get the blame. People might say 'well there's a girl in the team so of course they're going to lose'. Here it goes boys, and then girls, so girls are seen as lesser than boys. Some boys are like brothers to me, but some aren't. (Alice, Year 10: S1).*

*I don't think so, I don't think it's ok. Because most people think girls shouldn't be playing sport with the boys. (Hina, Year 10: S1).*

*If it was these boys, they would be all good, but if it was other people that don't really know me, they would probably judge me. We're all good with letting the boys play our games, because netball is a sport for everyone. (Amiria, Year 9: S1).*

*I think it's ok for girls to play in boys sport, much better than if boys were to play a girl's sport. It's not as serious if a girl is playing but if a boy is playing, he will get teased, like, a lot! (Tipoki, Year 9: S1).*

*Not as much as they boys, like they wouldn't be teased as much as them. If you're playing rugby as a girl then you are considered the man. (Jade, Year 10: S2).*

Students replies when asked what it might be like for boys who play sports that girls typically only play are as follows,

*If I played a sport a girl normally played, I think they would think that I was girly and kind of a sissy. I would get teased and I wouldn't like that. (David, Year 10: S1).*

*I think it would be fine if we were just playing at school, but not if I tried to play serious, people would make fun of me and I would just get teased. It wouldn't be fun. (Charles, Year 10: S1).*

*They would laugh and they would tease me and say, 'why are you playing netball, that's for the girls?' (Mava, Year 10, S1).*

*Yeah, it's ok if they are just mucking about, but not if they were to take it seriously, the boys would probably get teased then. (Nina, Year 11: S1).*

*I think it would be ok if he was just mucking about with people it would be fine, but not if he tried to do it seriously. (Tipoki, Year 9: S1).*

*Because every sport should be for every gender because it doesn't really matter what gender they are as long as they are interested in that sport. But a boy might get put down – but it shouldn't really matter. (Jade, Year 10: S2).*

On the whole, it appeared more acceptable for girls to play a boy's sport or be involved with a group of boys playing sport. Some even considered that she would be thought of 'as the man'. But when asked about boys it was clear that a lot of teasing would take place for them, it was usually considered ok if it was with a group of female friends at school, or with others who knew they were mucking about, but even some students still said it they would get teased in this instance. It was clear though that if a boy was serious about wanting to compete in a female sport, ridicule would take place, with some students noting that their sexuality may even be questioned. Therefore, it was more of a threat to masculinity to be involved in a girl's sport than it was a threat to femininity to be involved in a male's sport. In fact, for many it was quite the opposite for the female who some thought would be revered amongst both males and females.

There also appeared to be a difference in opinions compared with age, with younger students often saying if it was acceptable or not, in black and white terms, while older students interviewed in Year 11 were able to reflect on how things were and generally say their opposition to what was considered the norm. CJ in Year 11 at School 2 is a great example of this. His comments regarding girls playing in traditionally boy's games are presented below.

*I know there is a lot of discredit because they say females can't do this and males are better, but honestly there is a lot of inequality but really at the end of the day both men and women can play the same sport, it doesn't really matter. I think some young people get frustrated by these restrictions that are placed on us, like girls can't do this and that, we want to change that. (CJ, Year 11: S2).*

This idea CJ has about wanting to change the status quo shifts slightly when asked what it would be like for boys to be involved in sport that is typically dominated by women and girls.

*I reckon the boys would get teased. Some people are fine with it, but some people would tease them. It's different for boys than girls, it shouldn't be, but it is. You have to be manly, and if you try to do something that is just for girls' people might start to question you. It's just the way it is, I don't think it should be that way because it's just something as simple as playing sport but yeah, I think it's harder for boys to do different things, that aren't seen as manly. (CJ, Year 11: S2).*

Taking part in a sport typically assigned to the other gender had different perceived implications for boys and girls. While some students expressed a desire for it not to be as it was, they also recognised that it was more difficult to change how things are for boys more so than girls. Restrictive notions of masculinity still prevail, appearing to limit choices for boys for fear of being teased or questioned. Young people seem much more willing, or perhaps able to challenge societal restrictions placed on girls.

### **7.2.3 Gendered responses to Physical Education: Ability and gender**

#### **Confidence linked to gendered experiences**

Another key finding relating to gender was the differing approaches that boys and girls took, particularly when faced with perceived challenges like that of learning a new sport. Students very much preferred to play games that they knew as it made them feel secure. Students knew what to expect, they knew that they may or may not have the ability to play that sport and they generally knew no unexpected outcomes would occur. When introduced to a new sport, there is a lot of uncertainty experienced by students as they generally did not know if they would be able to perform tasks well, and what their peers or others might think of them. Students who were somewhat reluctant to be involved overall preferred learning a new sport because everyone started at the same level, whereas students who are more able generally found the experience to be riskier because they perceived they had more to lose in status if they were unsuccessful.

*Everyone gets quite nervous at the start because we don't really know the sport or how to play, or what to expect. But then at the end we have fun. (Hina, Year 10. S1).*

There were clear gender differences observed in the classroom when a new sport or activity was introduced. Noted through classroom observations and confirmed through informal discussions with staff, overall, boys were generally willing to learn new sports and had more confidence to try new things than girls were. The girls were shy and preferred to sit back and observe initially rather than be fully involved. What appeared to be a lack of confidence on the part of the girls was revealed through interviews to be more of a considered approach.

*So yeah, we started this new unit on basketball and Sir said we needed to be involved and playing and we didn't really want to, me and my friends. When we learn something new, I would much rather watch others do it and play so I can pick up how I am supposed to be doing it, rather than just going straight in. That way I can learn by watching them, we find that it's easier to watch others and then when we do play, we are a bit better at it. (Jade, Year 10, S2).*

When I asked one of the male participants from the same school how he approached learning a new sport or activity, he responded,

*I mean yeah, sometimes we just want to play the same sports and we don't really want to learn anything new, but then once we learn it, it's all good and we usually like it. But we just sometimes, just don't want to learn new sports, I don't know why. Usually my mates and I just get involved, we just try it out and we don't really care if we get it wrong or not, it's not a big deal because no one really knows what they're doing. But yeah, we just play and learn as we go. (Michael, Year 10: S2).*

As students learn the sport, their level of confidence and involvement increased. The Year 10 class I observed playing basketball was at the end of their unit and was a great example of this. The class were preparing for an assessment, with two teams playing and one watching, then they would switch over. From as soon as I arrived at the class it was clear there were some very dominant girls in the class, who were more than willing to challenge the boys and control the flow of the game. I was surprised and impressed watching them. In discussing this with the PE teacher, he responded,

*You should have seen them at the beginning. This is a new unit for them, they hadn't played last year. At the beginning the girls were very standoffish and shy, they did not want to get involved and wanted to just watch. But as the unit as gone on and*

*they have learnt some new skills they have really come into their own. They give the boys a run for their money, that's for sure. It's been such a big difference from the beginning of the lesson to now. (Male PE teacher: Informal conversation: S2).*

To summarise, gendered responses to learning a new sport differed with boys more likely to just 'get involved' from the beginning and give it a go regardless of outcomes, and girls more likely to wait and learn from observing. This position of holding back did change as the unit progressed with girls much more willing to be involved and control the game play at the end of the unit. This was observed at both School 1 and 2.

Photograph 7.1 depicts a Year 10 class at School 1 who were nearing the end of a unit in PE. Equal participation from boys and girls was noted. Additionally, students displayed confidence, respect for others and a shared collaboration during the game.



**Photograph 7.1: Equal participation in the lesson from both boys and girls at School 1.**

Section 7.2.4 now looks to examine the research findings in relation to physically capable boys and the implications they have in the PE classroom environment.

#### 7.2.4 Physically capable boys

A significant finding in the research was that of the behaviours of physically capable boys defined as boys who have a high degree of natural ability in PE, who can play a range of games or sports, and who also acquire new skills easily. The impact of physically capable boys was keenly felt by other students, both male and female, and many spoke of what it was like to be in class with a group of male students who were physically dominant.

*The boys who are really good they tend to hog the ball and then they just show off and don't give anyone else the ball. Mostly the girls, they won't pass to us, but there's a small group of boys who like to hold onto the ball all the time, and sometimes we end up just standing there, because they don't pass to us. (Amiria, Year 9: S1).*

*The boys who are good tend to dominate the game, it tends to be those boys who make the negative comments about when we miss a shot or say that we suck because they get quite competitive. (Alice, Year 10: S1).*

*Yeah, they boys are too serious and they like yell at me if I do something wrong, so then I don't want to play. They need to chill out a bit. (Mavai, Year 9: S1).*

*Yeah, the boys who are real good think they are better than others and that they should be able to pick their own groups, and we all know that isn't very fair. And they like to think they are the best and just tell the whole world. We don't mind them saying it, it's just when they rub it in your face and make you feel bad about yourself, that's kind of a bad thing. (Charlene, Year 9: S2).*

*Some of them tend to act as if they are in a team of their own and they like to take all the credit, and they like to get cocky and stuff. Sometimes they don't pass it to others and just keep it in their own group. They are annoying. (Jade, Year 10: S2).*

*Not saying all the boys, but the boys who are good at sports they definitely hog the ball, especially if no teacher is watching, they just play by their own rules. I think sometimes they can be difficult to play with. (Evelyn, Year 10: S2).*



It was interesting to observe Mavai's comments, a Year 9 boy at School 1, who recognised that those boys were 'too serious' and their competitiveness lead to them putting him down if he did something wrong. This shows that these boys did not discriminate by gender with their put downs or exclusionary tactics, rather they would put down either gender if they made an error and keep the ball in play amongst themselves. An excerpt from an interview with a Year 11 female student is presented below. Marama was able to reflect on her time in PE from Year 9 to Year 11, clearly articulating how these behaviours have impacted her.

*The boys who are good at sports do judge you and yell at you. It's really common that they want to win but some things they should stop and think about our feelings. They do that quite often so sometimes I have to relocate myself to a different group. I have found a really good group of classmates that will help to push me and not put me down.*

*This one time when we were playing softball and I missed the ball and they yelled at me. They were saying stuff like you suck and I don't think they know that words like that hurt. I really wanted to leave but I couldn't because it was a whole class game, so I couldn't just go off. It's just that group of boys that do the put downs. And when they win, they're always rubbing it in our face. It's really annoying.*

*Sometimes they do tell you how to do things, like they try and help you, but sometimes they make out like they're so high and mighty, they treat us differently. If they are to pick a team, they won't pick a weakling, they just leave them out and then Mr puts them into teams – Mr should just pick the teams I would prefer him to put us into groups. Mr knows who they are, but he still lets them go together, so I wish he would just split them up. They always say go away and we know you can't play this, so we don't want you. They are always like that, it's wrong but no one knows how to fix it, so it keeps going on like that. (Marama, Year 11: S2).*

Marama expressed a desire to want to change the classroom environment but that she did not know how to, so the behaviour kept repeating. She was able to take herself away from this behaviour in certain situations, but in others, like the softball game she mentions above, she was unable to remove herself from the situation, which added to her unease. She spoke of an apparent awareness by her teacher of the types of behaviours these boys were engaging in, but that in her view the teacher did not address the situation.

It is evident that physically capable boys' behaviours during PE lessons have a negative impact on other students in the class. Linked with the competitive nature of many sports is the desire to win by this particular group of boys. This desire to win can lead them to exclude other students when selecting teams, exclude students during the game by not passing them the ball or including them in the game play, and also by putting down students for errors. These put downs were keenly felt by students and lead to their general unease about participating in whole class activities. These experiences occurred at both schools that took part in this research. Students who were on the receiving end of this behaviour expressed a desire for change, but did not know how to, so the negative behaviour prevailed.

### **7.3 Physical Education as an empowering process**

Both the case study approach and the empowerment framework, which underpins this research, necessitate understanding how classroom experiences can lead to the empowerment of young people, through emphasis being placed on the personal, relational, and collective experiences. The following section will focus on the individual student, their thoughts and feelings, alongside how they negotiate relationships and share cohesion in the social space of the classroom. The nature of the PE classroom is such that it has the potential to both simultaneously produce positive and negative outcomes for students. Understanding areas that lead to greater feelings of self-esteem, self-efficacy, agency, and cohesion as necessary components of the empowerment process is integral to this research. Equally important to understand are aspects of the design and delivery of the curriculum that are problematic for students and that have the potential to lead to disempowerment.

The component of personal empowerment refers to the way people feel about themselves, their belief in their own ability and their ability to make and act on their own choices, their self-esteem, self-efficacy and agency collectively (Kabeer, 2005; Kernis, 2003; Lawson, 2005; Jo Rowlands, 1995). Evidence of these key personal empowerment components can be found in the findings for this research. Experiences in the PE classroom affect student's sense of self-esteem, and this has been highlighted throughout both findings chapters and will be evident throughout the discussion chapter. Students felt positively about themselves when they were able to achieve tasks or goals. Additionally, a great deal of self-satisfaction came from assisting peers. This type of assistance varied and ranged from students encouraging

their friends to participate in the lesson, students working together towards a common goal and students supporting and consoling friends who felt the pressure of competitive sporting situations and who had not physically performed at a level some in the class expected. In these instances, empowerment through physical education can promote a strong sense of self and contribute positively to youth identity (Gullan et al., 2013).

### 7.3.1 Self-efficacy

While the findings revealed that responses according to gender differed when trying new tasks through the level of confidence students exhibited, it should also be noted that gendered responses in light of general participation were not observed as predominately. That is, in Chapter 6, section 6.5.2: Challenges for teachers in delivering and designing PE programmes, non-participants were discussed as a challenge to teachers during PE programme delivery. During observations of non-participants, the decision to opt out and not participate tended to be one that related to the student's perceptions of their own ability, rather than according to gender. That is, both boys and girls who did not have belief in their own self-efficacy were more likely to sit out rather than it being just girls who opted out all the time. Self-efficacy played a large role in determining a student's level of engagement in the lesson.

*I'm not as good as those others, so I don't usually get involved or if I do, I just stay to the side and move away if the ball comes near me. Generally, I can do that, but sometimes I do get passed it, and I freak out. The others are way better than me though and they just get annoyed if you do something wrong, so it's just better to not get the ball if you can. (Jade, Year 10: S2).*

Jade then reflected on times where she had experienced success in class. She was asked what was occurring in the classroom at the time, what the classroom environment was like. Initially, it was difficult for her to admit a time where she had success, but rephrasing the question to exclude the word success itself appeared to help her reflect on times where she had done well, or done a great pass or shot.

*Oh I think we did a unit last year where we had small tasks to do in a little group, I was with a friend of mine, and we were trying to do this thing where we had to learn these skills, but it was just in a small group, so not in front of the whole class. My*

*friend helped show me how to do it properly and then I took a shot and it went in! I couldn't believe it. She was so good showing me how and then I felt really good that it had worked. I don't think I got a chance to have a go in the class game, but when we were away from the others I would keep practising and I got quite good at it. But it's hard to do it in front of a big group, I'm not sure if it would have gone in. (Jade, Year 10: S1).*

While Jade experienced success in a task, she was still unsure if this could be transferred into a game situation. It did help her self-esteem and her belief in her ability to complete that task, but only in set conditions, and she doubted if she would be able to do this again in front of others. Self-efficacy is not something that is easily realised through the success of one task, or a group of smaller tasks. It appeared as though in order for Jade to feel as though she was competent, success would have to occur within a game environment, which would place additional stresses and pressure on her. The perceived probability of being unsuccessful could potentially be linked to the negative stressors in a game situation than her ability to actually do the skill. Student's self-categorisation of either sporty or not sporty was not one that was easily changed. It appeared as though once students had categorised themselves thusly, that label stuck with them during their time at school. The only exception to this was Evelyn at School 2. Evelyn was the only student who despite not believing in her ability in Year 9, was resolute in her desire to get more enjoyment from PE and try more things in class in Year 10, speaking to her own personal determination to get involved.

Males and females who were more confident in their ability were actively involved in PE lessons. Typically, these students got annoyed at the other students who continuously opted out of lessons. Conversely, the approaches that boys and girls with a high degree of self-efficacy used to try and encourage participation had a gender element, with girls more likely to try to encourage their peers to join in, and boys tending to ignore the non-participants in favour of playing the game.

*Us girls we always try to encourage everyone to get involved and come and play. I think the girls are better are trying to get everyone to play. And we will try to help them too and give them tips or some feedback. I don't put anyone down because I know how it feels to get put down. Sometimes they'll come and play for a bit and then just sit down again, but we always try to get them up each lesson and doing something. (Marama, Year 11: S2).*

To recap, self-efficacy was a bigger determinant of general participation in PE than gender itself. Students self-categorised their own level of ability with just two categories, they were either good at sport or they were not. They did not see any in-between nor did they see movement between their own categorisations. While this did not appear to be different between males and females, gendered approaches did exist when it came to trying to encourage those students who had a lower belief in their ability, with girls more likely to continually encourage participation from students who did not see themselves as very physically able, or non-sporty.

### **7.3.2 Exercising agency and respect in the classroom**

#### **Agency**

A key empowerment theme that emerged in the research was that of exercising agency in the classroom. Agency can be exercised in the classroom through student's ability to make their own decisions regarding their participation and thus potential outcomes, as well as being able to bargain and negotiate (Kabeer, 1999). Agency can be exhibited in order to be productive or seemingly unproductive with respect to the classroom task, i.e. through either increased or decreased participation. Additionally, being able to have a say in the learning experience has shown to have a positive impact on student's experiences within the class (D. L. Anderson & Graham, 2016; Mitra, 2018), yet instances where students were able to sit out of lessons showed how some students exercised agency to avoid participation in order to try and more positively shape their classroom experience.

Students were able to demonstrate a level of agency within the classroom still felt frustrated at times when they were unable to have a choice. Even so, students who were reluctant to participate many times still got amongst the activity. Students felt a degree of relief when they knew what the lesson was going to be about; they felt they could mentally prepare for the upcoming lesson. But this transparency was seen by active participants as a problematic approach to lessons, as they felt that if everyone knew beforehand what the lesson would be, that would then give students time to decide if they were going to participate in the classroom activities, Carlene outlines her views below:

*To be honest, it's not the activities; it's kind of the kids in the class. I'd change like; I'd probably change the activities every day, so they don't know what they are playing*

*next. Because sometimes they are like, oh we have this now and this next week for PE, so I'm not going to play, and they won't bring their change [of clothes i.e. their PE uniform]. (Charlene, Year 9: S2).*

Agency was expressed through the decision to sit out or not, for students who generally did not enjoy the subject. Certain situations allowed this to be easier than others, for example if the teacher did not follow-up those who did bring their PE gear, then students were able to sit out on a more regular basis with little to no consequences. This was observed at both School 1 and 2 with particular teachers. However, this was not always an option for students if the teacher followed up and there were clear consequences for not bringing their gear. In these instances, students were less likely to opt for this strategy. Photograph 7.2 depicts a small number of students participating in the lesson, while out of view are a group of non-participants who opted out.

*I don't always bring my gear. I mean sometimes I do forget and then sometimes I just say I forgot. Sometimes we just have to go pick up some rubbish or something because we forgot. Some people just go to the bin and pick out stuff and show it to Mr, and then he says we can just go sit down! (Biannca, year 9: S2).*



**Photograph 7.2: A small group of students engaging in a PE lesson at School 1, with others in the class opting out of participating.**

Other ideas relating to agency have been mentioned prior to this chapter, they include selecting teams for a game or activity, with some students saying this was unfair as it allowed those who were more able to stack a team with the best players. Additionally, it has been mentioned that students like to have the option to be able to have at least one friend on their team to work with. Through classroom observations, small negotiations with the teacher were also witnessed. This was more evident at School 2 than School 1. However, students in Year 10 at School 1 did tell me they had been able to do this with their previous year's teacher. These kinds of negotiations included things like being able to have a say in what warm up activity was done, being able to persuade the teacher to allow a student to swap teams, in order to have their friend on the same team. Students also did this covertly, that is without teacher knowledge. They would negotiate amongst themselves for two individuals to swap teams to allow friends to be on the same team.

*I mean, generally I don't mind but I do prefer it when my friend is on my team. It just depends what we're doing. Sometimes if Miss is busy, we will just switch (team) bands and then we're together. Mostly no one notices but sometimes we get caught out. (Mary, Year 9: S1).*

*We're always together, people in our class just know and so if they don't put us in a team together, we just switch. Usually Mr just lets us because I think he gets sick of us asking all the time! I mean, sometimes we don't go in the same team and it's ok, but we prefer to just switch teams. If we can't we sometimes just stand together near the edge of the court anyway. (Amiria, Year 9: S1).*

Another way students felt they had agency, which made PE more enjoyable, was when they were able to work in smaller groups and where they have a high degree of input within that group in being able to meet the task requirements. The ability to make decisions, be listened to and influence outcomes were positive examples of exercising agency in PE tasks in the context of small groups. At School 2, young women often discussed their enjoyment of the gymnastics unit, which allowed them to work in a small group capacity. At School 1, students spoke of liking the responsibility that came along with this type of activity, that it helped them feel more mature and that they enjoyed being able to have a say.

*Usually the teacher always runs the activity, but sometimes he puts us into small groups [so we get to run things]. I like it when we can work in small groups. We are usually with our friends, so when we are trying to do it, we are talking to each other and everyone listens when you have something to say. When we are in a big group it's the same ones who always run things or have a say. So yeah, I do like it when we are in small groups because I feel like I can have a say in how we do things. (Meilani, Year 9: S1).*

*I definitely enjoyed PE a lot more last year because we could do more by ourselves or with friends. She would set us a task and then we would work on it, but no one was watching so there was less focus on us because everyone was doing their own challenge. It was much better because it was less pressure on us to get things right. And I felt like everyone in our group worked really well together. If someone shared an idea, we are all respectful of it and you didn't get put down. I liked last year because a teacher was a female so I could relate to her. (Alice, Year 10: S1).*

In summary, student's ability to exercise agency in the classroom can be seen in multiple ways. Students were able to opt of PE lessons, in some instances with little consequence. While in these instances this type of action may be seen as detrimental to the empowerment process, it can still be argued that in these instances students were exercising agency by taking steps to shape their own environment (Kabeer, 1999) thus this research suggests that agency can be exercised in the PE classroom through a range of techniques used to increase their level of enjoyment and satisfaction but not necessarily to increase their level of involvement. Students were also able to find ways to be in the same team or at least spend time with their friends during the lesson. However, this was not always inherently seen as good, with some students conveying their dislike when groups were formed that consisted of all physically capable participants. Students were also able to negotiate to some degree with their teacher, particularly with respect to the choice of what to do for smaller activities. Lastly, students felt a higher degree of satisfaction and enjoyment when they are able to control and have input into the outcome of a classroom task.



## **Tu akangateitei | Respect**

A core value within Cook Islands culture is that of *tu akangateitei*, respect (Malone, 2011; Saxton, 1996; Te Ava & Page, 2020b). It is believed that Cook Islands HPE education should be based on the value of respect, along with values of collaboration, “reciprocity, relationships and a shared vision between teachers, students and community” (Te Ava & Page, 2020a, p. 8). This section will expressly address respect within the classroom. One of the key messages that were brought up by students who were actively involved in lessons was that of others not respecting the teacher. School 1 appeared to be more traditional in their approach to authority and the place of students and teachers. Students were often very aware of the respect they were to show those in positions of authority, such as teachers. It should also be noted that within the school environment, students required more encouragement in interviews to express their opinions openly, perhaps due to the respectful distance students exhibited, seeing me both as an outsider and an elder. Charles from School 1 told me of his frustrations when his fellow students did not show their teacher respect.

*I don't like it when they're mucking around and they're not doing what Mr is saying. We just need to listen to him, he's the teacher. I get annoyed that they don't always listen. They should just do it, but they just are silly. I don't like seeing Mr get annoyed by them. Sometimes I tell them off, or say 'hey listen to the teacher', but sometimes they don't listen to me. (Charles, Year 10: S1).*

Charlene at School 2 was also keenly aware that they did not want to upset their teacher, she and her friends did this by ensuring they did as the teacher requested and following her instructions.

*Sometimes the boys will make up games to play while Miss is busy, so sometimes they take the lead. But my friends we try to do what Miss asks, because we don't like to see Miss upset. (Charlene, Year 9: S2).*

Following on from showing respect to teachers, students also expressed their disappointment with others in their class when they did not show respect for their fellow classmates. This was largely seen through students not wanting others to put another person down for making a mistake. Students felt that if others showed more respect to everyone in the class, more students would enjoy their time in PE. It did appear to be ‘that group of boys’ mentioned in section 7.2.4 – physically capable boys, were the students being referred to.

*I just wish they had more patience, that they were less serious about it all the time. I feel like they could do a lot to help others instead of putting them down. That would be much better for everyone in the class. (Amber, Year 9: S2).*

*I always help my friends. I try to get them involved all the time. I like helping them. I think everyone has a better time when you help. (Jade, Year 10: S2).*

Respect for others in class was something that a number of students expressed in interviews, informal conversations and in focus groups.

### **7.3.3 The power of togetherness: Friends in Physical education**

The power of friendship and the social collective was a strong recurrent theme for students in Rarotongan PE lessons. Being together, enjoying friendship, participating with friends, and sharing in success with others were all strongly reported as positives of PE lessons. On the whole, friendships were positive influences on students, with only one student conveying through an interview that she 'recruited' a friend to sit out with her when she did not want to participate, thus friends were seen as encouraging influences on participation and general lesson enjoyment. The desire to be paired with friends or in a team or group with a friend was very strong. Students felt a sense of safety being able to have a friend in their team. This was so for students who were physically capable and those who perceived that they lacked in ability. In the instance of physically capable boys, having a friend that they knew was as able as they were meant that they felt they had a high chance of succeeding in the game, while for those with lesser skill ability, friends provided a safety net of sorts, that they could find security with. Friends were also seen as a source of support when they may have been teased for an error.

*I like smaller activities, so we can communicate with our friends and work together. There is less pressure when it's just our group of friends working together. (Mary, Year 9: S2).*

*I prefer team sports over individual ones. I like having others with me. My favourite games are soccer and rugby because there are more people that I play with, it's better playing sport in a big group, its way more fun to have everyone involved and playing. (Charles, Year 10: S1).*

*I enjoy PE the most when my teammates are having fun, like being with friends. I like being in a group with friends. I do like to be in a group with others too, as I can get to know them. It's just nice if I have one friend on my team. (Jade, Year 10: S2).*

*I've got a good group of friends; we all stick together so when they boys who are good get annoyed at us; we stick up for each other. (Hina, Year 10, S1).*

These same students also stated that if their friend did not want to participate after they had encouraged them to be involved, they would then consider they had tried their best and then return to the class activity. They did say that often their encouragement would work, but that the student opting out would only participate for a short time, before returning to the side lines. This did not deter them from continuing to encourage their involvement in subsequent PE lessons though, as each lesson they would try again to get them involved.

*We tell each other to sub off when we get tired. We try to get the girls who are always out to get involved but they aren't interested. Sometimes the teacher tries to get them to play, they will come on, and then they will sub off when the teacher isn't looking, like they go straight off. Or they don't play properly, so there's no point them being on the field, because the ball comes to them and they don't catch it, or they don't even run around, they just stand there. But each lesson we try to get them involved, it's just sometimes it doesn't work. (Tariana, Year 9: S2).*

The power of friendships was discussed by students and observed at each of the two schools, with the one negative influence being observed at School 1. More often than not, the girls did the majority of encouraging of their peers, boys and girls alike, while boys tended to offer a single statement then leave their friend alone and get back to the game.

*I will go up to them and encourage them to play but if they are still reluctant then I will let it be. I don't like seeing people putting people down because it tells them they aren't good at it and it can ruin them mentally. (CJ, Year 11: S2).*

Students wanted their peers to be involved in lessons, with several saying their favourite time in PE was when everyone was participating. More enjoyment was experienced when everyone was involved and doing as they should. These shared experiences were very important for students; they did not want other sitting out as they were potentially missing out on opportunities for enjoyment. Charlene at School 2 talks about her favourite time in PE:

*I think the thing I like about PE is when everyone is involved, and no one talks back to the teacher. It's just more fun when everyone is involved and doing what they're supposed to. (Charlene, Year 9: S2).*

The concept of social empowerment was a key theme which emerged. Students found security in their friendships, they wanted to encourage their friends to be involved and enjoy the lesson, they were a source of support during negative situations, but overarching this students desired to share their achievements with others, whether that is their own individual achievement in succeeding during a game or the whole team success. Success on an individual level in an individual sport was seen as almost boasting and others might think you 'had a big head'.

*There's no point really in doing an individual sport, because if you win, who do you have to share it with? You can't go round saying 'I'm the best', no one would like that. It's much better being in a group, then you can encourage each other and when you win, you can share that with your friends, that's way better, I think. (Nina, Year 11: S1).*

Students from a class at School 2 were part way through a ripper rugby unit as seen in Photograph 7.3.<sup>41</sup> Students enjoyed the social aspect of the game, were actively involved and sharing in each other's success. In contrast to this level of involvement, and which cannot be observed in this photograph, was a group of boys and girls who had opted out of the lesson by forgetting their PE gear (either intentionally or unintentionally). They too were enjoying the social nature of their shared situation, despite participants being annoyed at their lack of involvement.

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<sup>41</sup> Ripper rugby is a non-contact version of the game rugby. All players wear a belt with two tags at either hip. Instead of tackling, opposition players pull a tag from the belt.



**Photograph 7.3: Students playing ripper rugby at School 2.**

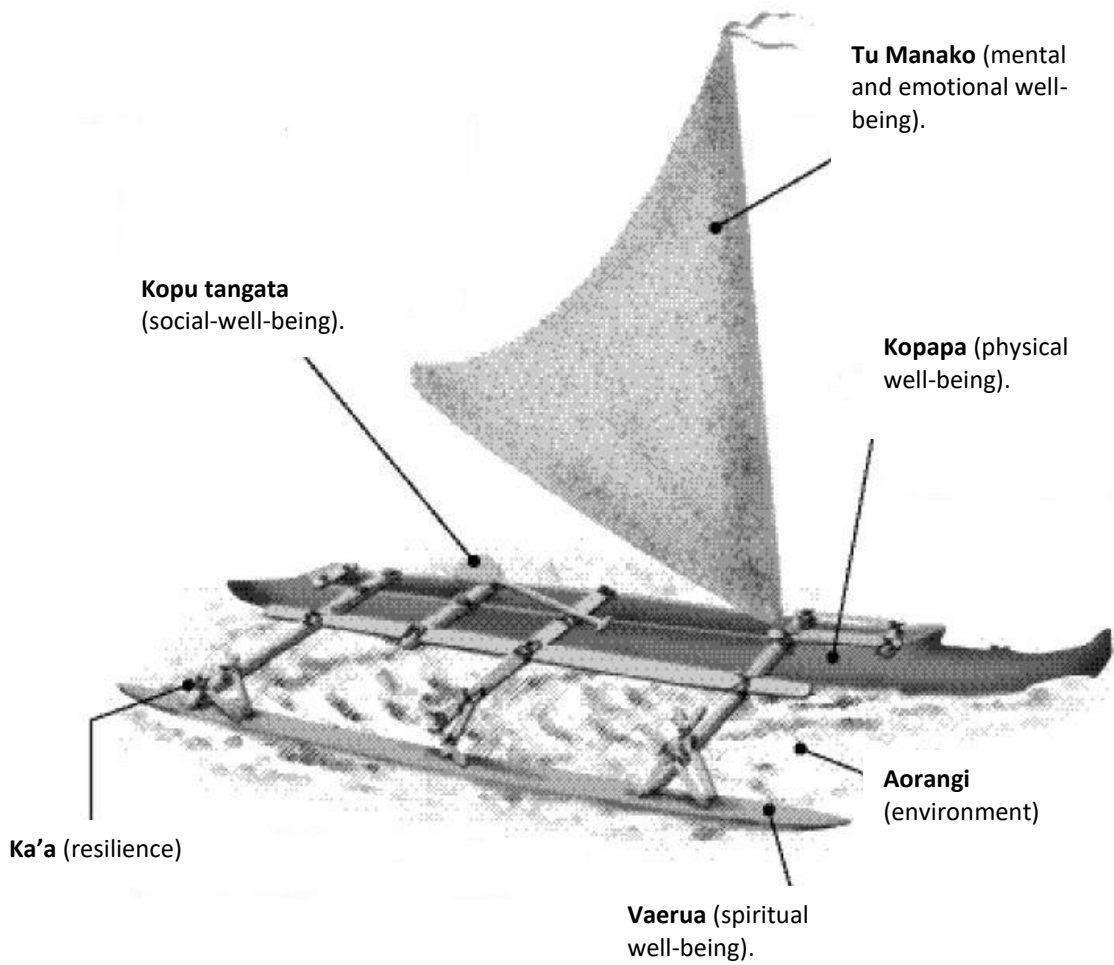
The concept of togetherness also extended to students participating in sport outside of school. Students were asked whether or not they would likely engage in their own individual fitness outside of the classroom setting. It was a fairly even split between students saying they either did or would, and students saying they did not have enough time to engage in their own fitness because of school work, home chores or a job (as described in Chapter 6), and other students simply saying they did not want to. Of the students who said they did engage in their own individual fitness, such as going to the gym or going for a walk or run, all of them said that they would engage in individual fitness with others. They would go to the gym with a friend or family member or go for a walk with someone else. No one said they would partake in individual activities on their own. This was also observed through my time at the local stadium and in and around villages. I had spent time at the stadium assisting with various groups, and observed adults coming in to walk the track. They were always in at least pairs, exercising together. People would also walk along the road with friends in order to gain fitness. This was rarely observed during my first fieldwork visit in 2018, yet this was noticed on several occasions during fieldwork in 2019, this could be due to the longer time spend in-country in 2019. The power of the collective could potentially offer a way forward to encourage people to participate in personal fitness for health benefits.

In sum, the significance friends and social relationships in PE is widely noted in the literature (Beni et al., 2017; Eime et al., 2020; L. Hills, 2007; Kay, 2009) and in the Cook Islands students emphasised the central role friends played in their enjoyment of sport and physical activity. In the PE space, friendships were equally important for those participating as they were for those choosing to opt out of the lesson.

Section 7.4 – Students conceptions of an empowering Physical Education programme will present the findings from focus group sessions as they relate to key empowerment themes.

#### **7.4 A student-informed empowering Physical Education programme**

A student-informed PE programme could be more empowering for students. Figure 7.1 utilises the Cook Islands philosophy of well-being, *pito'enua* (outlined back in Section 2.5), to identify concepts that relate strongly to empowerment. To follow, Table 7.1 uses those Cook Islands Māori concepts to link to key aspects of the PE classroom that led to the empowerment of students. Two focus groups were undertaken at each school, one with boys and one with girls. I and another female PE teacher led discussions in the female focus groups, while a male teacher led the discussion in the boy's groups. While the aim was to consider gendered approaches to PE lessons, it was clear that similar themes were revealed by both young men and women in relation to their time in PE. There were both similarities and differences according to gender in some areas, and these are presented below.



**Figure 7.1 - The *vaka* and *pito'enua* : Linking well-being to empowerment** (Source: adapted from Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006)

**Table 7.1 - Students conceptions of empowerment in Physical Education**

Empowerment component	Description
<p><i>Tu Manako:</i> Self-efficacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One's belief in their ability was a large determinant of participation. When students reported 'not being very good', they would either try to avoid the game play on the field or opted to sit on the side-lines as a non-participant. This was the case for both males and females. Self-efficacy was a bigger determinant of participation and enjoyment than gender itself.</li> <li>• Students self-categorised as either sporty or not sporty with no in-between (although some acknowledged that 'sometimes I am good at certain tasks'). Once students had placed themselves in a category, they believed that to be true and there was little movement between each category.</li> <li>• A student's belief in their own ability was either positively or negatively reinforced through classmates, with peers seeking to validate and praise and other classmates potentially using put-downs when errors occurred.</li> <li>• Individual students preferred to work in smaller groups, with peers and on tasks that were seen as less competitive and less pressured to help reduce the potential for error and thus teasing.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Tu Manako:</i> Agency</p>	<p>Students exercised agency in the classroom in a number of ways. Agency is expressed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having the ability to select teams or influence team selection</li> <li>• Having the ability or opportunity to be able to have a friend in their team.</li> <li>• Deciding whether or not to participate in the lesson once they knew the intended learning activities of the lesson.</li> <li>• Choosing to opt out of the classroom activities, this was usually done through 'forgetting' to bring their PE gear (or 'change' as referred to in School 2).</li> <li>• Bringing their own PE top when they felt uncomfortable wearing the PE uniform singlet (although this was often only possible on one-off occasions or for short period of time without repercussion).</li> <li>• Students were sometimes able to remove themselves from the competitive situation and position themselves closer to friends.</li> <li>• Some students were able to negotiate activities with the teacher, either warm up or games.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students generally had a higher level of satisfaction in group activities where they had a degree of agency that they could exercise over the situation, typically within smaller groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vaerua and Ka'a:</b></p> <p><b>(Tu akangateitei</b> –Respect)</p>	<p>Students wanted others to show <i>tu akangateitei</i> for the teacher by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>following what the teacher said,</li> <li>being fully involved in the lesson,</li> <li>not ‘mucking about’, and</li> <li>not upsetting the teacher.</li> </ul> <p>Students also wanted others to show respect to their classmates by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not being so severe to them should they make a mistake,</li> <li>having an understanding and showing support for others by helping them to succeed</li> <li>trying to be less competitive and serious about the outcome of a game</li> <li>Not using put downs in class</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kopu tangata:</b></p> <p>Social</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The power of togetherness was a strong theme for students</li> <li>More fun was had by students when everyone was involved.</li> <li>More enjoyment was experienced when working with their peers to complete a task (in smaller groups).</li> <li>There was a strong desire by students to have at least one friend in their team.</li> <li>Students felt there was ‘safety in numbers’ with peers providing support in competitive situations.</li> <li>Students enjoyed team or collaborative situations where they could share successes with each other.</li> <li>Students enjoyed encouraging classmate participation.</li> <li>Girls are more likely to continually encourage than boys.</li> <li>Students wanted the picking of teams to be done by the teacher and not left to students. They felt it fairer if the teacher selected teams, as when students were left to pick their own teams, the teams were often stacked with all good players on one team and then those who were selected last or not at all found that to be very damaging for the self-esteem.</li> </ul>

## 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has related the experiences and views of young men and women in PE lessons in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Their understanding of the classroom processes at play is critical to understanding what components facilitate feelings of achievement and enjoyment, and those that led to them feeling less empowered. The majority of the students were motivated and joined in PE classroom activities, with a core group seeking to opt out regardless of the

activity. The findings showed that sport had the potential to threaten social gender, challenge accepted social norms surrounding gender stereotypes, with boys more likely to experience stigma when participating in a sport deemed for females only. Students almost unanimously reported that it was fine for girls to be involved in male dominated sports but for boys, question may be raised, and teasing would occur. The first section also examined the behaviours of physically capable boys, that is boys that have a high degree of ability in PE. It was often a small core group in each class that would often dominate activities and control the game play.

The findings revealed that students did not enjoy or feel empowered by some approaches to classroom activities. It was clear from the insights from students that key factors played a role in their enjoyment of classroom activities. These included *kopu tangata*, social well-being through the power of togetherness through a shared experience, thus team activities were preferred over individual ones. Also relating to social aspects of the class, was the reassurance they felt in having peers in their team. This was for added support in situations they felt were high pressured and also because they simply had more enjoyment when sharing experiences with friends. *Tu manako*, mental and emotional well-being is an important component of empowerment in PE. In particular, self-efficacy played a pivotal role in the degree to which students were actively engaged in lessons and was a bigger determinant of participation than gender. Students who had low self-efficacy categorised themselves as not being very good at PE, and once in that category they did not move out of it, even when success was experienced. Students also enjoyed being able to exercise agency in the PE classroom through their interactions with the teacher and peers, and when it came to completing small group activities with friends, as they were able to be heard. Section 7.4 presented the findings from focus group sessions to allow for a student-informed PE for empowerment matrix.

In the chapter that follows, the findings from Chapters 6 and 7 will be drawn together and analysed using the empowerment framework developed for this research as first presented in Chapter 3. The aim is to understand how these experiences lead to the empowerment or disempowerment of young people PE lessons in Rarotonga, Cook Islands while outlining the contributions this research has to the gender and PE and PE for development literature.

## **Chapter 8 : A discussion on the lessons to be learnt from the design and delivery of the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Physical Well-being curriculum and its contributions to development**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This research contributes to our understanding of how PE programmes can lead to empowerment of young people in junior secondary school programmes in local contexts. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will focus on the findings as they relate to gender and PE, showing that girls felt able to challenge cultural expectations surrounding gender more so than boys, thus PE programmes can facilitate a higher degree of consciousness raising in young women than young men. The research contests the notion that all boys seem to dominate play in PE. The findings determined that only a small group of physically capable boys dominated play and took part in exclusionary practices at the expense of young women and other young men who did not fit into the prevailing hegemonic masculinity. The second section will discuss how the research findings show the inclusion of culture in the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Physical Well-being (OTM | HPW) curriculum document plays an important role in the empowerment of young people by promoting cultural connections and links to their environment. The inclusion of Indigenous games and activities such as *vaka iti* into the design of PE programmes not only instils a sense of cultural pride in students, but also a means to address gendered differences and ‘capture’ students who were previously reluctant to engage in PE classes. Moreover, the inclusion of the Cook Island philosophy of well-being, *pito’enua*, aids in our understanding of how we can apply local concepts of well-being to empowerment. The final section of the chapter will examine holistic approaches to PE and the challenges on the ground of implementing a document that has so much promise.

## **8.2 Gender and Physical Education**

### **8.2.1 Young men and young women's ability to challenge culturally derived gender expectations**

This section discusses the findings presented in Chapter 7 relating to gender and the PE classroom. The findings showed that PE has the potential to challenge the gender order while simultaneously reinforcing it. Students were asked to express ideas and thoughts on current cultural norms surrounding gender as they related to sport. At both schools' students' responses were similar. Students reflected that it was fine for young women to play sports typically deemed the domain of males, but it would not be as acceptable for young men to play a sport that mostly young women played. The inclusion of this question into the interview schedule provided valuable insight into the *invisible power* (Thompson, 2006) dynamics at play in this classroom both collectively and individually, and systemically within the wider cultural context. Situating the student within the wider cultural context, it was clear from students' responses that they received both formal and informal messages surrounding what it meant to be male and female. Kelleher and Rao's (n.d.) framework (Figure 3.1) observe that formal and informal messages inform and guide behaviours. The formal rules are those held by officials, the school and even the teachers. While informal messages are received from other students, parents or reinforced through attitudes, values and exclusionary practices. Formally, the gendered messages were reinforced through the access to play certain sports at the village level, and informally through the regulating comments of peers and other students. Many students individually did not agree with the gender confines placed upon them, yet they felt they had little means to affect change and contest those limiting notions of masculinity and femininity outside of school life. When analysing these sentiments in light of Kelleher and Rao's (n.d.) framework, students did not have the conscious capability or resources to live outside of the culturally accepted gender norms consistently.

#### **Young women contesting culturally derived notions of femininity**

When examining the experiences of young women in PE in Rarotonga, differences emerged in the perceived ability for young women to challenge these norms within the school setting. It was generally well accepted that young women could contest limiting cultural notions of femininity and would be perceived as a heroine for doing so, or as some boys put it, seen as

'the man'. For young men, engaging in feminine sport was not as acceptable and only tolerable if it was 'just mucking about'. Divergent views of male and female students on the capabilities of women and the value they can add to society were evidenced in students' reflective comments and young women's willingness to make a stand by participating in activities typically seen as masculine in nature, thus challenging power relations (Cornwall, 2016). Young women challenging culturally derived notions of femininity and engaging in sport allows for an exploration of the notion that sport is seen as masculine and thus the domain of males, as put forth by Bevan et al., (2020). Young women's involvement in sport contests the idea that sport is the domain of males and shows their ability to navigate competitive conditions. In contexts where young women have an ability to challenge conceptions of femininity, it is considered more socially acceptable to engage in sport that is seen as masculine in nature. If the PE curriculum is implemented in such a way as to allow include more competitive 'male' sports, then it is possible for young women to engage in those sports in such a context.

### **The challenges for young men and limiting concepts masculinity**

Yet the same ability young women had to challenge culturally derived gender expectations did not extend to young men who similarly wanted to challenge traditional notions of masculinity. Problematically, a prevailing hegemonic masculinity existed within the wider cultural construct of the Cook Islands that influenced and guided the behaviours of young males in class. This is in line with the literature, which suggests that the challenges faced by young men in PE are often over-looked (Gerdin, 2017; Kehler & Atkinson, 2010). Within the PE context, the prevailing hegemonic masculinity extended to limiting sporting options for boys to those that were deemed masculine and thus appropriate for boys to participate in. Additionally, it led to the exhibition of dominating behaviours by physically capable boys, who were somewhat 'expected' to behave in a way that showed off their physical prowess. This type of behaviour had negative consequences for females and those males in the class who did not fit into this category, as noted in Chapter 7. A singular view of masculinity is argued to have the potential to oppress boys who do not fit within its narrow confines (Gerdin, 2017; Hickey, 2008; Kehler & Martino, 2007) and this was evidenced in the field. Boys who did not fit into the accepted form of masculinity often opted out of activities or got frustrated by those who dominated games. The latter group did not feel able to challenge the dominating behaviours of other males, and thus conceded by allowing the behaviour to continue and not participating to their fullest. The literature on gender and PE previously

contended that only girls adopted maladaptive techniques to avoid the group of boys that dominate play (Azzarito & Solomon, 2009; Bevan et al., 2020; Kerner et al., 2018). However, this research clearly demonstrates that, in the face of physically capable boys, boys who do not align with the aforementioned group also adopt adaptive behaviours. These male privileged practices are displayed within a small group who subscribe to culturally accepted norms of masculinity and thus sheds light on complex interactions within the PE classroom (see Bevan et al., 2020; Kerner et al., 2018).

### **Young men's limiting space to challenge masculinity norms**

Notwithstanding the limitations boys felt, there were some instances where young men were able to challenge cultural masculinity norms within the school setting. In these instances, the classroom environment largely dictated if this was possible. In applying Kelleher and Rao's (n.d) framework, if the teacher had the resources and ability to create a supportive classroom environment, boys were able to participate in sports deemed more feminine within the safety of the PE classroom, because "it was part of the PE lesson so it didn't matter so much that I was doing it" (David, Year 10: S1). Moreover, if the classroom environment was one where students' *kopu tangata* (social well-being) was well-supported and students' were 'paddling in unison' (see Figure 2.4, Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006), then students were more accepting of individuals operating outside of norms and exercised greater power from within to determine their own agendas and make decisions (Kabeer, 1994). However, many students voiced that it was only alright in these instances, or if the boys were just "playing around" outside of class time. A boy who wanted to seriously play a sport traditionally seen as feminine would be teased, and questions would be asked and/or accusations made about that boy's sexuality. In contrast, in situations where similar cultural expectations of girls existed, boys actively relayed that girls should not follow these narrow cultural restrictions placed upon them and girls were far more capable than they were often given credit for. Problematically they did not recognise they too could challenge the broader formal and informal norms and practices, often conveying that for boys it was just the way it was. The broader social cultural context within which boys live, the *invisible power* (Thompson, 2006) that influences boys lives has a more powerful hold on regulating their behaviours. It is possible that boys experienced more instances where power is exercised over them, 'power over' (Rowlands, 1995), and they have internalised those messages surrounding how they are supposed to be. The unquestioned acceptance of these boys to

not challenge norms in formal and informal ways is an interesting contrast to the girls' willingness to challenge the same gender constraining norms.

This research has shown that the empowerment of young women in the Cook Islands through PE has led to consciousness raising, whereby young women are made aware of their situation and feel they are able to act and challenge limiting notions of femininity. Conversely, it argues that young men have some way to go in order to challenge the limiting cultural expectations of masculinity, this is congruent with the work of Gerdin (2017) who believes that the challenges boys face are often over-looked. While, in many instances, the young men were aware in an informal capacity that they had power to freely act in PE and sport, they did not believe they had the capacity to engage in challenging this power, either through discussions with others or free involvement in any activity they wished, (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995; David W Gegeo, 1998). Consequently, they did not have the conscious capability to act in order to challenge the resources available to them (see top left quadrant of Kelleher and Rao's (n.d.) framework, Figure 3.1). As Cornwall (2016) has argued, there needs to be conscious capability for people to challenge the resources they have available to them, the young men in this research did not exhibit this capability.

The findings in this study contest the notion that boys are a homogenous group whose behaviour seeks to disempower young women and alienate them in the classroom (Alley & Hicks, 2005; Azzarito & Solomon, 2009; Bevan et al., 2020; Kerner et al., 2018; Okely et al., 2011). Additionally, other arguments previously put forth, that girls and gay men are marginalised by boys' dominating behaviours (Bevan et al., 2020), are not fully supported by this research. Instead, it has shown that these behaviours are not the domain of all boys, rather a specific group, referred to in this thesis as physically capable boys. That is not to say all physically capable boys behave in this way, rather it refers to boys who feel the informal pressure to adhere to a prevailing hegemonic masculinity which invisibly dictates and regulates behaviours. This pressure to stay within the narrow confines of what it means to be male of good sporting ability is one these students acutely feel. Their behaviour in class can seek to, not only negatively impact young women, but also other males who do not fit into this category, irrespective of sexuality, again differing from the literature which contends that only girls are marginalised by these behaviours (Bevan et al., 2020; Boiché, Chalabaev, et al., 2014; Kerner et al., 2018). Interestingly, in the Pacific context, not all females were put off by this behaviour, with some young women attempting to put boys in their place. Though

some young women had the confidence to 'tell the boys off', it often had little long-term effect on regulating such behaviours as these boys continued to behave in the way they believed was expected of them. As suggested in the PE for development literature, peers play a role in regulating behaviours through social conformity (Oliver & Kirk, 2015). This research has found that in these instances peer groups of boys have more influence than the other students in the class trying to modify that behaviour.

### **8.3 Cultural relevance in Physical Education**

#### **8.3.1 Conflict between Indigenous knowledge and formal education**

This section will now move to discuss the need for cultural relevance in physical education programmes as a necessary component in engaging young people in physical activity and empowering them through their connection to others and their environment. Each of the two schools who took part in this study align themselves with New Zealand (NZ) qualifications in the senior school, with senior students sitting the National Certificate in Education Achievement (NCEA) assessments. While the Cook Islands have developed their own curriculum for each subject, this alignment does show the relationship that the Cook Islands educational system has with NZ's. As mentioned, the Cook Islands OTM | HPW has been adapted from the current New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) document for Health and Physical Education (HPE). Significant for this research is the potential impact of a western-informed education system in a local context. As Wilson (2004) contends, Indigenous knowledge has been stifled by colonialism, which views alternate ways of knowing and doing as irrelevant in a modern world. The following poem was found in Cook Islands Library and Museum in the Avarua district and highlights a local view of the tension between the western educational system and Cook Islands knowledge, one founded in the development of human capital and the other focused on culturally relevant traditional education and values.

*Show off with your New Zealand degree!*

*Think you're smart?*

*Let's compete climbing for coconuts!*

*Can you husk my number of nuts?*

*Can you dive and fill the sack with pearl-shells?*

*Think you're smart?*



*Count, see who's got the most?*  
*You really think I'm dumb?*  
*You're not aware of the darkness within your light*  
*How I pity you!*  
*Foreign knowledge has blinded your heart*  
*When I welcomed you with a greeting kiss*  
*You offered your cheek to someone else.*  
*When I slapped your thighs to say Hello*  
*You thought I was seducing you.*  
*I spoke to you in Māori but you replied in English.*  
*You wouldn't lend a hand unless I paid cash*  
*I despair, my friend, you leave me desolate!*  
(Kauraka, 1985)

The conflict between practical local knowledge and its continuance is in contrast to the often theory based knowledge of western education models, like that of NZ (Coxon & Munce, 2008; A. Glasgow, 2010). The research showed that concerns over western educational models overshadowing Indigenous knowledge was felt by older generations who often commented that many young people today have lost some of the traditional knowledge the older generation deem important for life in the Cook Islands. The development of Indigenous knowledge is an important component of the maintenance and perpetuation of culture and cultural practices (Meyer, 1998; K. H. Thaman, 2003; Wilson, 2004). The Cook Islands ownership and adaptation of the curriculum meant that the curriculum document was well-designed and included local values and philosophies that in practice resonated with students when taught in a meaningful way.

### **8.3.2 The inclusion of Indigenous games: The importance of culture in PE**

Within the PE classroom, the inclusion of Indigenous games and activities could be seen as answering the call for cultural relevance and reclamation of the education process (Beumelburg, 2016; Coxon & Munce, 2008, p. see also; A. H. Glasgow, 2011; Helu-Thaman,

1990; K. H. Thaman, 2009). The Head of Department (HOD) at School 2 noted the benefit of including non-traditional PE games into the curriculum. James (HOD) spoke of his desire to include a balance between western PE games and Indigenous games as a means to pay justice to cultural practices and mitigate some of the perceived western dominance in PE (Fitzpatrick, 2011b; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Te Ava et al., 2013; Whatman et al., 2017). James' reorganisation of his school's junior PE year plan sought to include more non-conventional PE games, which despite initial reluctance from students proved beneficial, particularly for young women. These findings are similar to those reported by Te Ava and Rubie-Davies' (2016) whose research into Cook Islands PE programmes concluded that girls benefited the most from the inclusion of cultural activities into PE programme, activities such as dance, music and drumming. It is unclear to what extent cultural activities should be included, and the research showed that western PE games still account for a large percentage of the sports played in PE.

Pacific empowerment acknowledges that the individual is 'rooted' in culture (David W Gegeo, 1998). The research found this rootedness with two local cultural activities providing students with strong feelings of both self and cultural pride – *vaka iti* and the Cook Island philosophy of well-being, *pito'enua*. Although *vaka iti* was a valued part of the PE programme at Year 11, at School 1 it was included at Year 10 as Year 11 was the final year at School 1 and they had a lower roll number than School 2.<sup>42</sup> The running of the programme by people from the community meant that it allowed students to learn from those directly involved in the sport. This was significant as it was a means of encouraging continued participation outside of school through village sport and facilitated a sense of community through the physicality of culture, highlighting Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo's (2001) position that collective activities play an important role in the perpetuation of culture within Pacific communities. This was the case for Alice, (see Chapter 7), who, prior to joining *vaka*, had been open in her avoidance of PE at School 1. Alice found something in *vaka* that allowed her to connect with her cultural self in a setting that was supported by village volunteers and allowed her a pathway into participation in sport outside of school. Speaking to *aorangi*, the environment component of *pito'enua*. the metaphor of the umbilical cord is used in the OTM | HPW to recognise the attachment to the environment and culture (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006). PE is often seen as a potential stepping point into recreational physical activity (as noted in Capel

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<sup>42</sup> If students wished to remain in school beyond Year 11 they would have to attend School 2, which offered schooling for Year 12 and Year 13.

& Blair, 2019; Hodge et al., 2017; Solmon, 2014; UNESCO, 2015). What is of significance in this research is the potential for the Indigenous games in PE to capture those students who are reluctant to participate and generally opposed to taking part in PE and provide them with a pathway into recreational sport outside of schooling. This clearly demonstrates that culturally relevant games in PE have an important role to play for all students' engagement.

The degree to which students felt a sense of cultural pride in taking part in this Cook Islands Indigenous sport was strong, and many felt a connection with the past and their ancestors. Young women in particular found the inclusion of *vaka* to increase their self-esteem, self-efficacy and agency. This finding is consistent with the work of Te Ava and Rubie- Davies (2016) who found that Cook Island girls benefitted the most from the addition of cultural activities into PE programmes. Femininity and masculinity sit along a spectrum with a plurality of genders and gender construction (Robert W Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). *Vaka* itself allowed the girls to feel a sense of physical evenness with boys in their class, accounting for a broader gender view to play through and be informally accepted as the norm by both boys and girls. While western sports in the PE programme tended to highlight and reinforce gendered differences (as argued by Azzarito & Katzew, 2010; Fitzpatrick & McGlashan, 2016; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2018), *vaka* levelled the playing field and provided a means by which to challenge limiting conceptions of femininity and masculinity and allowing for a plurality of gender constructs (Robert W Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). *Vaka* can be seen as a means to curb male dominance in PE, in accordance with the literature (see Te Ava & Davies, 2016). Yet, as this research has determined, not all males dominate play in PE. Thus, this study argues that the inclusion of cultural activities such as *vaka* can provide a pathway through which to curb the dominance of physically capable boys.

Furthermore, the inclusion of Indigenous games into the PE curriculum can seek to undo the sometimes negative consequences of conventional competitive PE games. Collectively, in *vaka*, all students must work together to paddle the *vaka*. *Kopu tangata* (social well-being) was enhanced through this collective action. Differences in ability were not as noticeable as the *vaka* moved as one entity, promoting collaboration amongst genders. This meant that less judgement prevailed. *Pito'enua* uses the *oe* (oar) to represent social well-being, by having more than one person paddling you are supported as a group, so how you paddle determines if the journey is smooth or difficult (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006). The extent to which students were 'individuals within a team' when participating in *vaka* was

lessened compared to other conventional PE games, such as netball or rugby. Burrows et al., (2013) discuss the place that PE can have to facilitate an understanding of culture through a sense of community and physical expressions of culture; this research has found that social practices and physical activity can promote collective values and address power imbalances within cultures. The value placed on the inclusion of cultural activities into the PE curriculum is one that other countries could adopt in order to improve empowerment outcomes for young people within the PE classroom setting.

### **8.3.3 Indigenous games and values in PE enable empowerment**

The inclusion of cultural games into the PE curriculum has far reaching empowerment benefits, leading to consciousness raising and a broader access to resources in a formal setting, yet *vaka* was the only cultural activity observed in these schools. James (HOD, School 2) spoke of including other Indigenous game into the year plan for Year 9 and 10. Some students' spoke of the inclusion of these activities and the benefits they experienced, but it was clear that *vaka* had the greatest impact on empowerment for students. Due to the employment situation at School 1 while the researcher was in the field, it was unclear to what extent Indigenous games had been included in the past, and it was not possible to know of their inclusion in the future. While cultural games can facilitate empowerment, if they are not included in the school's PE programme students potentially miss out on the benefits of these. The need for cultural relevance in PE encourages greater participation, can mitigate western educational dominance and seek to empower young people through a collective affiliation with the community (Burrows et al., 2013; Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995; K. H. Thaman, 2003; Whatman et al., 2017; Wilson, 2004).

The inclusion of *pito'enua* as an underlying philosophy of well-being into the curriculum has a meaningful place through which to understand how young people can be educated and empowered in PE. The pedagogical shift in PE being education in, through and about the physical, including the body and physical activity, community engagement and societal influences (Tinning et al., 1993), allowed for the development of broader, more holistic understanding of the self, through which teaching and learning in PE can educate the whole person. The NZC includes the Māori philosophy of well-being, *Hauora* into the curriculum, and the Cook Islands includes *pito'enua*. The adaptation of the curriculum to include this philosophy has far reaching benefits for young people in PE. Students were able to make

broader connections with their environment, culture and social well-being as well as providing a lens through which to understand the empowering experiences of young people in the PE classroom. *Pito'enua* and its holistic nature can provide a way forward for other countries to adopt similar culturally relevant philosophies as the underpinning of the PE curriculum. The potential for local understandings of well-being to improve the empowerment of young people in PE programmes is evident, proving that calls for cultural relevance in education in the Pacific improve outcomes for young people (K. Thaman, 2007).

The development of cultural knowledge and its role in the empowerment process in PE cannot be understated. The inclusion of Indigenous games into the PE curriculum can seek to overturn western educational underpinnings and the implications of these (see Te Ava & Davies, 2016; Te Ava & Rubie-Davies, 2011; Te Ava et al., 2013). Additionally, fostering student appreciation for Indigenous games within the curriculum can add to a student's own understanding of their culture and their place within it. Moreover, the inclusion of culturally relevant philosophies within the curriculum further contributed to a PE programme that was of relevance to students and connected students with their environment.

## **8.4 Holistic approaches to Physical Education**

### **8.4.1 The importance of moving away from outdated forms of PE delivery**

PE programmes that are solely based on outdated forms of the teaching and learning of sports skills seek to disempower students and disengage both males and females from the classroom experience (see also Kerner et al., 2018; Oliver & Kirk, 2015). Despite pedagogical shifts away from this type of PE programme, the existence of them is still prevalent in many countries around the world, including NZ and the Pacific Islands. The focus on sports skills as PE is still prevalent because it depends on who designs the PE programme. It is possible to have a well-intentioned curriculum, but it is up to the Head of Department, and subsequently the classroom teacher, to determine how that curriculum is delivered. PE programmes that utilise the PE curriculum in a holistic way, drawing on local conceptualisations of well-being, facilitate a higher degree of student satisfaction and enjoyment, and have the potential to foster an appreciation of movement and physical activity thus creating a more inclusive gender neutral classroom environment. Additionally, understanding the role that connections to others have on students' mental and emotional wellbeing can provide a way forward for empowerment to occur. PE programmes that seek to educate the whole person,

that is not only their ability to play sport but also their thoughts and feelings, connections with others, their culture and the environment, play a substantial role in the empowerment of young people and encourage a tolerant gender inclusive PE learning environment. This was evidenced in the field, but this did vary between schools, and even with the same school, it varied amongst teachers.

#### **8.4.2 Self-efficacy in PE**

The role that self-efficacy plays in student involvement and enjoyment (and conversely disengagement and dislike) of classroom activities is a significant finding in this research. As discussed in Chapter 2 through the presentation of literature on the expectancy-value theory is necessary to consider when analysing empowerment as it is closely tied to self-efficacy, the belief a student has in their relative success or failure of a task can influence their motivation of completing said task (J. Eccles, 1983). When asked to participate in an activity many students evaluated the likelihood of success in the task, which then led to their involvement if there was not too much risk associated, or disengagement by either completely opting out of the whole lesson, or parts of the lesson (Bandura, 2010; Wigfield et al., 2015; Zhu & Chen, 2010). One must be engaged with the empowerment process in order for empowerment to occur (Lawson, 2005). The tone of the classroom did have some influence over feelings of self-efficacy as some teachers were perceived as more helpful and offered support throughout the task (see Diaconu-Gherasim et al., 2019). What was observed in the field was that self-efficacy did not appear to be gendered. That is, both boys and girls were neither more or less inclined to believe themselves capable or not. Students tended to categorise themselves as either sporty or non-sporty and once labelled, they rarely reevaluated themselves. Mitchell et al. (2015) discovered this in relation to girls' categorisation of their ability in PE. This research argues that the same process occurs for boys in the PE classroom as well. The division between sporty and non-sporty saw those students who identified as non-sporty intimidated by those who were sporty, contesting notions that self-efficacy is tied to gender (Mitchell et al., 2015).

Student's feelings of self-efficacy and thus motivation was present more frequently when tied to activities that focus on the performance of sports skills, with clear outcomes of success or failure. A sports skills style curriculum delivery, as discussed in Chapter 2, is an outdated form of teaching and learning in PE. This style of curriculum delivery focuses on teaching technical skill development and is argued to be outdated and effective in alienating students

in the classroom (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Beltrán-Carrillo et al., 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2010). Moreover, it places the body on show and subjects students to ‘the gaze’ and judgment of others at a time in adolescents when many students would prefer to go unnoticed (Beltrán-Carrillo et al., 2018; Kerner et al., 2018). The power of ‘the gaze’ impacted young women more so; this was evidenced in many girls’ desire to wear a t-shirt in PE, rather than a singlet. This research found that performance curriculum design still dominated the majority of PE units at School 1 and while School 2 had predominantly moved away from this PE design, the affects that units with this focus had on students was still apparent. Furthermore, when sport skills units were taught within a western sport, students felt pressure to perform much more deeply as it was felt that western sports were more competitive in nature, thus highlighting differences in student ability. As noted in Chapters 6 and 7, students who did not physically perform at what some perceived to be a high level faced being put-down or teased for their performance, demonstrating on a need to focus on *kopu tangata*, social well-being.

#### **8.4.3 Challenges in utilising the *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Physical Well-being curriculum to its potential**

The design on the OTM | HPW by the Cook Islands is one that focuses on a range of skills within the PE classroom, (see section 2.5) and is underpinned by the holistic Cook Islands philosophy of well-being, *pito’enua*. While the philosophy of well-being has great potential in the PE classroom, the effectiveness of staff to facilitate this learning varied. The resources available to staff to effectively incorporate *pito’enua* may need to be examined in the future (see Figure 3.1, top right quadrant of Kelleher and Rao’s framework). Effective resourcing would help to raise the conscious capabilities (see Figure 3.1, top left quadrant) of PE teachers and allow them to draw on *pito’enua* as a connective cultural concept to improve student learning and empowerment.

Examining the individual through Kelleher and Rao’s (n.d.) framework, the top right quadrants, the OTM | HPW itself speaks to educating the whole person through a range of activities, not just those focused on teaching and learning of sports skills. The degree to which the document is implemented depends on a range of factors, including schools, teachers and students (in line with Stabback, 2016). Much can be learned from this research with respect to the practical challenges of implementing a well-designed curriculum. A well-intentioned curriculum can only go so far in meeting its intentions if implementation is challenging. In

applying Kelleher and Rao's (n.d.) framework, the research findings showed that challenges existed in formal school resources such as PE equipment and fields of play (which were often under water at School 1 in the wet season), while individual teacher challenges existed including the ability to appoint qualified teachers, teachers training and skills, including non-Cook Islands teachers' ability to implement the culturally-embedded values and philosophies that underpin the curriculum and the teacher shortage which saw retired teachers employed to cover staffing shortfalls.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This aim of this chapter was to discuss how the research findings can inform the gender and PE and the PE for development literature, with a view to understanding how PE curriculum design and implementation can empower young people. Of significance to this research was the extent to which girls felt able to challenge restrictive notions of femininity, while boys felt much less able to. Boys whose behaviours did not align with the prevailing hegemonic masculinity in the PE classroom and on the sports field experienced marginalisation and often sought to not participate in lessons as a way of staving off undesirable outcomes. The findings have shown that the role culture plays within the PE classroom cannot be overlooked. Balancing a western sport dominance with the inclusion of Indigenous games into the curriculum had benefit to students, allowed a broader alliance with village sport, provided a connection to ancestry and developed an appreciation for their own cultural heritage. Indigenous games were less gendered than western games, with girls reporting they felt on an even level with boys. While particular sports have the potential to challenge gender stereotypes, as the inclusion of cultural games have highlighted, particular sports included in the curriculum can also facilitate the perpetuation of limiting stereotypes. Finally, PE programmes that focus on physical capability can actually disengage young people from the empowerment process. Moving away from this type of curriculum design in schools captures students who do not categorise themselves as sporty and aids in the empowerment of young people through greater social cohesion, a greater ability for students to exercise agency and improvements in self-efficacy.

The final chapter brings the discussion together to demonstrate how the three research questions have been answered and it draws conclusions surrounding the role PE can play in the empowerment process.



## **Chapter 9 : Physical Education as a means of gender empowerment**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This final chapter presents the conclusions of the research which aimed to understand how the design and delivery of *Oraanga e te Tupuanga Meitaki* | The Health and Well-being (OTM | HPW) can lead to the empowerment of young people in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. The research used the case study of two secondary schools in Rarotonga who follow the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) assessments in the senior school. The two out of three schools in Rarotonga that align with New Zealand (NZ) qualifications were chosen to allow for an examination of the potential challenges and implications of curriculum adaptation from a predominately western education system like that of NZ to a local context such as the Cook Islands. In order to make sense of these challenges it was important to work with students to develop, with contextual clarity, what a Cook Islands Physical Education (PE) programme that resulted in empowerment might look like. It is necessary to understand the role that PE can play in the empowerment of young people through positive and contextually relevant programmes if PE is to 'capture and foster' young people's appreciation of movement and physical activity, positive experiences in the classroom are considered essential to this.

The first section speaks to the contributions to knowledge, including the key conclusions which come from answering the research questions. Secondly, a revised culturally relevant empowerment framework is presented, which builds on the conceptualisation of *pito'enua* in the Cook Islands OTM | HPW and is informed by the ideas of students who took part in this research. The limitations of this research are briefly discussed; I identify other possible areas for further research. Finally, in my concluding statements I highlight how PE has the potential to empower young people.

## 9.2 Contribution to knowledge: Answering the research questions

### 9.2.1 Curriculum adaptation to account for cultural contexts

The first research question set out to examine how the Cook Islands has adapted and implemented the OTM | HPW curriculum document for use in schools in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. The findings in Chapter 6 clearly indicate that while the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) for Health and Physical Education (HPE) has informed the foundation of the Cook Islands OTM | HPW, adaptation of the OTM | HPW to be culturally relevant in the Cook Islands has occurred. Glasgow (2010, p. 124) notes that tension exists between the security of “instituted colonial models” of education and the need to promote culture and language within the Pacific context. With NZ and the Cook Islands closely tied it is important for Cook Islanders to have ownership over their education model through ensuring culturally relevant values and concepts are embedded in their curriculum.

The adaptation of the OTM | HPW curriculum to include the Cook Islands concept of well-being, *pito'enua*, has significant relevance to both students and staff alike. Students were able to relate to the concept through units of work in both Health and PE. While students made clearer links to the concept at School 2 more so than School 1, this is not necessarily indicative of what might be occurring at School 1 presently, with the addition of a newly appointed Health and Physical Education (HPE) teacher. Indeed, Year 10 students at School 1 recalled the concept, indicating they had been taught it the year prior, although they were not able to closely apply it to life in Rarotonga, as well as students in School 2 could. *Pito'enua* as a concept clearly resonated with students, who were able to articulate the importance of looking after oneself and their connection with the land. Some students reflected on the ways their ancestors lived and the importance of continuing and preserving culture.

The adaptation of the OTM | HPW curriculum document for cultural relevance was evident, yet challenges existed in the delicate balance of cultural relevance in PE curriculum design and delivery. Local sport in villages centres on many western sports such as rugby and netball, though this is shifting with the inclusion of local games in the recent Cook Islands games held in Rarotonga in 2020. With young people having greater access to global sports such as American sports, students often idolise these athletes and want to participate in western sports as they are held in high esteem, leading to challenges for PE staff when designing the PE curriculum. PE staff often cited reluctance on the part of young people to be involved in

non-traditional PE game or Indigenous games during PE lessons. Staff did note, however, that this reluctance was somewhat temporary and often occurred at the beginning of such units. Students often reported they enjoyed these units from the midway point, demonstrating that perseverance for the greater end goal was beneficial, rather than giving up at the off-set. Despite this, staff felt that a balance between offering both western sport and non-traditional PE games such as Indigenous games was best for student engagement and enjoyment. The exception to this was the *vaka iti* unit. The inclusion of *vaka iti* into the PE programme had meaningful positive impacts on both male and female students who were involved. Students felt a strong sense of cultural pride in taking part in the activity. Additionally, when taking part in *vaka*, students felt there was an even playing field of male and female participation, a sense of working together with others which improved social well-being, and less judgement that was often present in other team sports.

Other challenges also existed for PE staff including the availability and condition of facilities. This was more apparent at School 1, though School 2 did face its own set of challenges. PE gear or resources that were old or not fit for purpose impacted on the type of games and activities that could be conducted in class, particularly at School 1. In the Cook Islands this was further impacted by the weather, with flooding occurring on school fields in the wet season. With the provision of PE seen to be in decline in the world (UNESCO, 2015) it is of importance that staff can run quality programmes. That is not to say they need state of the art facilities, but rather facilities and equipment is needed that allows PE to occur to a reasonable standard. Calls for funding or for resources were sometimes not heard, particularly at School 1. Despite these challenges the PE staff were resilient and adaptive and were able to deliver PE units in creative ways.

### **9.2.2 The effectiveness of Physical Education to empower**

The second research question set out to examine how current approaches to PE can enable the empowerment of young people in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. The evidence from this research, detailed in Chapter 7, strongly suggests the inclusion of particular sports and types of activities can lead to empowerment. A central component of the empowerment process is the individual, their self-esteem, self-efficacy and their ability to exercise agency (see Table 3.2, Jo Rowlands, 1995). Nevertheless, the individual is not devoid of the wider context, so it is imperative to consider how the individual relates to others alongside the cultural context

within which they live, including the informal and formal norms and rules that can guide behaviour (see Figure 3.1, Kelleher & Rao, n.d.). PE staff and students spoke informally about the empowerment process, and through the analysis of the research findings common themes that have the potential to lead to empowerment emerged.

Firstly, the ability of team sports to foster empowerment was strong in the Cook Islands. Both male and female students noted that team sports allowed for, not only greater security through friendships, but also that if one was to participate in sport, it was better as a team as they could share in their relative success or loss. Having the inclusivity of such sports in PE programmes allowed students who were somewhat more reluctant to participate alongside other friends in the same position. Having at least one friend in their team allowed students to feel cohesion through shared experiences thus leading to collective empowerment (Rowlands, 1995). Despite this, the problematic nature of competitive team sports meant some students had difficulty negotiating and determining the boundaries of personal relationships with students whose physical ability exceeded their own. That is, students often cited a particular group of dominating boys as the reason for feelings of disempowerment in PE. Significantly, this group played a key role in the disempowerment of both boys and girls whose physical ability was perceived to be less than theirs. The competitive nature of sport led to students feeling the pressure to perform and thus being judged by others within the classroom. Simultaneously, sport provided the social cohesion and togetherness that many young people wanted to experience while also producing potentially negative experiences through the competitive nature of such activities and the dominating behaviours of physically capable boys.

Another component of PE programmes that could enable empowerment was a shift away from the sole teaching and learning of sports skills. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the implementation of PE in western contexts has tended to focus on the technical aspects of sports, such as sport skills acquisition. A sport skills acquisition programme has typically dominated school PE programmes despite a clear pedagogical shift away from this type of instruction in the last two decades (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; D. Kirk, 2009; Säfvenbom et al., 2015). The findings of this research aligns with the literature and argues that this method of teaching PE is outdated and alienates students, particularly girls (Beltrán-Carrillo et al., 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2010). The Head of Department (HOD) at School 2 shared that these outdated methods were a large part of the curriculum design when he began teaching at the

school. He changed the PE programme to one that was more balanced and holistic as he saw girls' low engagement in class was directly linked to a sole focus on skill acquisition. After change was implemented, he witnessed a marked improvement in girls' participation and enjoyment in class. He did not note the effectiveness of this change on the outcomes for boys who did not perceive themselves as sporty, which is arguably due to this group being underrepresented in observations and in the literature. Boys' behaviours are often collectively grouped to perpetuate a boys' vs girls' polarity. Nonetheless, developing the curriculum to be more holistic and provide for a range of activities that did not always focus on the requirement to perform a task to a high standard contributed positively to the empowerment of students in junior PE programmes.

### **9.2.3 A contextually relevant Physical Education programme that seeks to empower**

Key to this research was the development of a culturally relevant lens through which to examine the PE empowerment process in the Cook Islands, addressing Research Question 3. The development of this framework was student-informed through their perceptions of what types of activities or scenarios they enjoyed, felt good doing, and contributed to their sense of wellbeing, and made them feel empowered. A total of four focus groups were conducted during this process – one female and one male focus group at each of the two participating schools with myself and a female teacher running the female group and a male teacher facilitating the discussion in the male group. The aim of focus groups was to allow participants to listen to others speak and provide additional comments in a situation where they may not normally have contributed (Carter et al., 2014), this was seen as vital to the research process in order to fully explore the topic of discussion. The development of the student-informed empowerment framework for PE in the Cook Islands is presented in Chapter 7, Table 7.1. While it was crucial for this matrix to be based on student discussions in order to provide contextual clarity through which to interpret the research findings, most of what they iterated in the focus groups had either been observed or revealed also through interviews. The inclusion of this activity into the methodology of this study did, however, provide students with the opportunity to collaboratively discuss their experiences, and as such it was seen as an enriching experience by students and an enlightening one for PE staff.

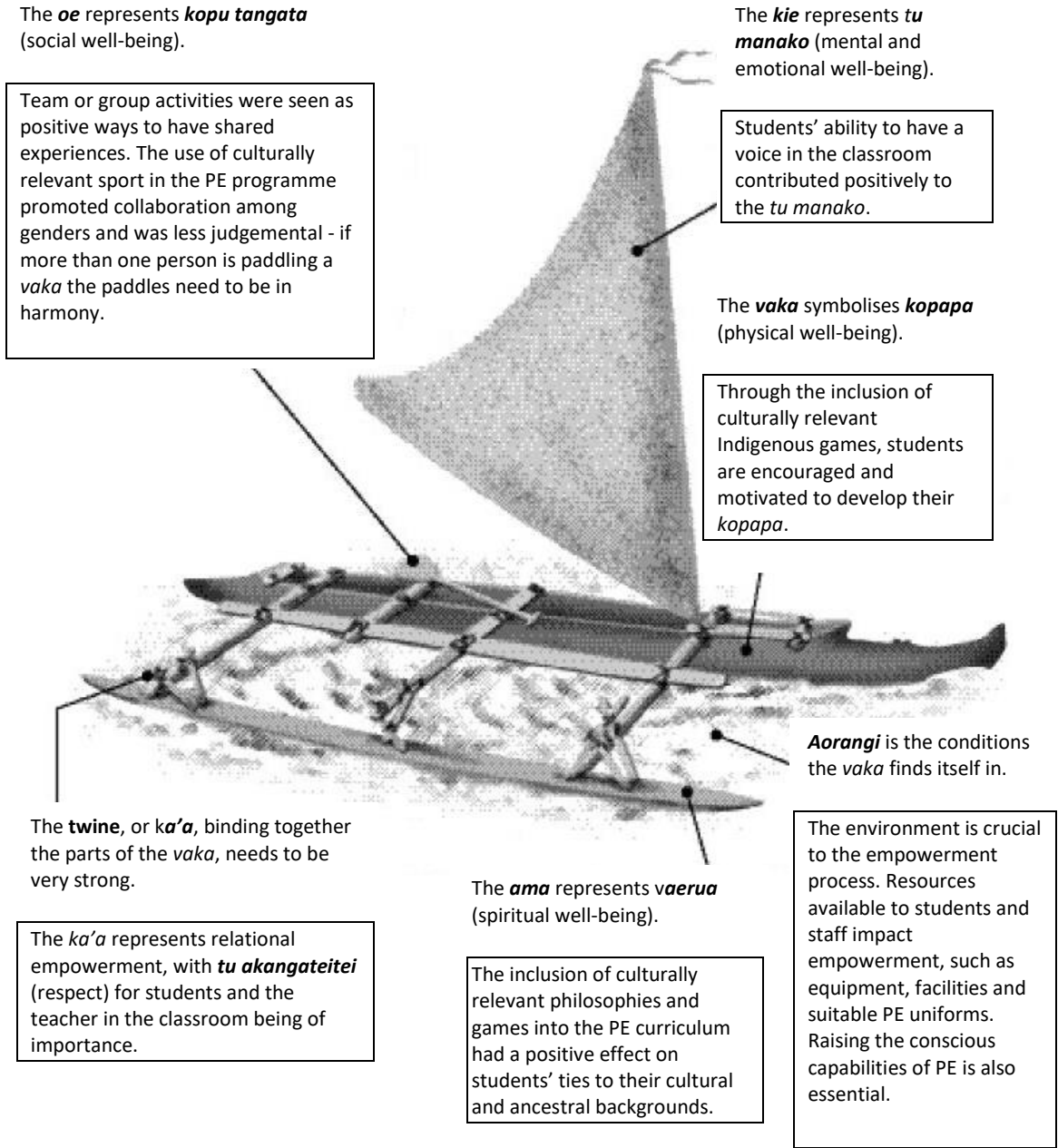
Students identified key empowerment themes that linked with the *pito'enua* concepts of *tu manako* (mental and emotional well-being), and *kopu tangata* (social well-being). Students

spoke of the importance of friendships in the PE classroom, and the power of togetherness was strong for both males and females. Students also spoke of the desire to have the whole class involved in activities and not have people opt out, reiterating the importance of *aorangi* or the classroom environment. They also viewed team and collaborative activities as the most rewarding as they could share in their achievements with others. This idea was very clearly articulated by students in interviews and in the focus groups, to the point where some students did not see value or benefit in participating in individual sports, as they felt the social cohesion element was lacking in these scenarios.

Situations that related to *tu manako* were also identified in the matrix. These included self-efficacy, agency and *tu akangateitei* (respect). Students who believed they were not capable or 'sporty' allowed their self-perception to determine their level of involvement in lessons. They would often try to avoid the activity all-together or they would appear to be involved but actively avoid being called upon to perform. Students also identified that they experienced empowerment when they were able to exercise agency in the classroom, instances where they were able to have a say in what occurred within the classroom setting in some small way. This could include selecting the warm-up activity, participating in selecting teams or influencing team selection and attempting to ensure at least one friend was in their group or team. Students were able to judge and foresee situations that had a potential negative outcome, thus leading them to opt out of the activity before it even began. And finally, *tu akangateitei* played a large part in student's conceptions of empowerment. How a student conducted themselves in relation to not only their peers and classmates, but also to the teacher was of importance. Students felt strongly when other students in the class did not follow what the teacher said, were not fully involved in lessons, were 'mucking about' or being silly on the field and purposely upset the teacher. In this context, youth are seen to give respect to elders or others in positions of authority, and instances of disrespect negatively affected those students who were respectful of their teacher.

Returning to the first empowerment framework utilised for this research, presented in Chapter 3, an adapted framework is now presented in Figure 9.1 below, to illustrate the student-informed conceptualisation of empowerment in the Cook Islands context as discussed in this chapter. Students' contributions are presented in the boxed sections of each component of *pito'enua*. Student's perceptions of empowerment aligned with the Cook Islands concept of *pito'enua* and paralleled with Rowlands (1995) conceptions of personal,

social empowerment and relational empowerment. However, it was not devoid of the broader cultural context and classroom environment, bringing in elements of Kelleher’s and Rao’s (n.d.) framework. When examining *aorangi*, the resources available to schools, such as the availability of equipment impacted the types of activities that could be done in PE. Resources available to students also played a role in their engagement, as many students felt uncomfortable in the compulsory PE uniforms.



**Figure 9.1 - Applying empowerment to the *pito’enua*, well-being framework** (Source: adapted from Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2006).

#### **9.4 Research limitations and recommendations**

A number of limitations of the research should be considered, along with recommendations for further research. Firstly, the generalisability of the case study is subject to one island in the Cook Islands group, notably the most populous island. Thus, it is difficult to know if the findings are representative of what may be occurring within each of the islands. The size of this research limited the ability of a broader examination of PE in the Cook Islands. Coupled with this were constraints around access to other islands and the time needed to travel to them. As this study was aimed towards “particularization not generalisation” (Stake, 1995, p. 8), one island, Rarotonga, was selected as the site of the research in order to draw a boundary around the context of this study (Merriam, 1998). The findings provide useful insights into PE in local contexts and, while some of the findings for this research have parallels to my own Master’s research which took place in Aotearoa (Greene, 2015), it is not possible to conclude that all findings from this research can be translated and applied to each of the islands with secondary schools in the Cook Islands group. Travel to each of the other islands would be needed in order to better understand the unique lived PE experiences of students and staff in these locales.

Another point to consider with respect to this research was the potential benefit of including a male research assistant or male cultural advisor in conjunction with the female cultural advisor. In acknowledging my own positionality (see Section 4.3.4) (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and on reflection, the lens through which the examination of results is gendered, with both myself and my cultural advisor being female. While my cultural advisor was able to assist my understanding of the results through a Cook Island person’s lens, a male cultural advisor may have been able to add to my understanding around the prevailing hegemonic masculinity in the Cook Islands given it was a significant research finding. Despite this limitation a prevailing hegemonic masculinity was still uncovered through the research findings, and boys who participated in the research gave rich accounts of their experiences in PE. Although not a specific research objective for this thesis, one recommendation is that further research be conducted with a view to more deeply understanding the male experience in PE and the implications of their experiences within the wider local context, with particular respect to cultural expectations surrounding masculinity. A closer examination of the underpinning of the behaviours of the physically able boys in PE could also be considered to aid with understanding the informal expectations they believe are placed on them.



The research was limited to the experiences of mostly junior school students, from Year 9 and 10. While there is the inclusion of some Year 11 students' views, it predominantly settles on privileging the voices of junior students. While junior PE is compulsory in secondary schools in Rarotonga, thus making it attainable to interview these students, older students may have been able to reflect more critically on their experiences in junior PE. Access to junior students was more easily gained, and observations of their classes were also more easily arranged. Given the nature of schooling in Rarotonga, focusing on senior students would have meant that this would have been possible at only one school on the island, as only one school was available for students in Year 12 and 13 to attend. Yet access is rarely linear (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016), and while it is possible to retrospectively reflect on the inclusion of senior students, the reality may have been quite different and fraught with complexities (Billo & Hiemstra, 2013). It is simply not possible to know. Another recommendation is for more research into senior students' experiences in order to provide depth and reflection compared with compulsory junior PE experiences.

Further research in the Cook Islands should seek to value the importance of spending time on-site to build relationships prior to data collection. Spending time immersing oneself in the culture, attending local events and making connections with can help to somewhat mitigate the outsider perspective and better understand the research context.

### **9.5 Physical Education as a means of empowerment for young people**

Physical Education has great potential to foster an appreciation for movement and physical activity, and holistically empower the whole individual. If PE is to live up to its potential and to be valued in schools, then it is essential that PE is afforded the same importance as other subjects at school. Undervaluing the subject can lead to under resourcing and the loss of lessons to complete other school tasks, such as setting up chairs for assembly. A western influence in education is not wholly bad, as evidenced by the findings of this research, but the need for cultural relevance when curriculum is transported to local contexts is essential in order for students to have relevant and positive experiences within the PE classroom. Negotiating the fine balance between the inclusion of conventional PE games, often largely western based sports such as rugby, and the inclusion of Indigenous games remains a challenge for PE curriculum design, as acquiring student buy-in is essential for participation and for the empowerment process to occur. Further considerations are necessary when

designing and implementing a PE programme that lead to the empowerment of young people so that sport is not contributing to negative representations of masculinity and femininity. This is particularly the case in the Pacific context, where traditional notions of what it is to be male and female are often prevalent. Understanding the formal and informal rules and norms within a given context is crucial in order to develop a PE programme that can lead to the empowerment of young people, challenging the *invisible power* (Thompson, 2006) that often holds individuals to account for their thoughts and actions, even if it differs from what they wish to do or how they wish to be. Young people showed the ability to negotiate those norms, in creative ways in the PE classroom, even though faced with sometimes constraining limitations, they were able to exercise agency.

*When I am at school, I actually much prefer to spend time with the girls in the class, particularly in PE. Some of my closest friends are girls. But I have to kind of be careful not to spend too much time hanging out with them during games or always getting into pairs with them. Because sometimes people say stuff, or they aren't very nice. PE is way more fun for me when I can do activities with the people I want to; otherwise sometimes I get put down. I'd rather play team games and team sports, just not with all the people in my class! If they played better, and were more respectful, then yeah, it would be better. But the girls are more respectful of me than some of the boys, so that's why I tend to want to go to them. It's hard because I don't see why people should say stuff, just because I'm not behaving like the other boys who are good at sports. I don't want to act like them anyway because they can be rude.*

*The only time I think that those boys are all good is when we're doing stuff that is new to them, or games that are Cook Island games. I'm not really sure why. I think sometimes because they don't get away with as much when it's those types of activities. The one I enjoy the most is vaka iti. Everyone takes it seriously and because we all have to paddle together, we are kind of more like one group, or one unit working together to achieve the same thing. Everyone is keen to paddle and go faster. It's a really good event too, like the day we have the races. Everyone comes along and I feel really proud to be a Cook Islander because I am taking part in something my ancestors used to do. (Michael, Year 10: S2).*

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Massey University Human Ethics Committee full ethics approval

humanethics@massey.ac.nz

20/4/2018 16:52

## Human Ethics Application SOA 18/07 Approved

To michelle.greene.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

---

HoU Review Group  
Prof Glenn Banks  
Prof Kathryn Rountree  
ReviewerGroup  
Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers

Researcher: Michelle Greene  
Title: Physical Education (PE) as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment: An Analysis of the Pacific Region and Case Studies of Samoa and Fiji

Dear Michelle

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Human Ethics Southern A Committee at their meeting held on 20/04/2018.  
On behalf of the Committee I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are approved.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.  
If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

If you wish to print an official copy of this letter, Please logon to RIMS (<http://rims.massey.ac.nz>) , and under the Reporting section, View Reports you will find a link to run the Ethics Committee Report.

Yours sincerely  
Dr Brian Finch, Chair  
Massey University Human Ethics Committee

## Appendix 2: MUHEC Ethics amendment one approval

Patsy Broad <p.l.broad@massey.ac.nz>

29/5/2018 11:13

### HEC: Southern A Application SOA 18/07 Ethics amendment One

To Michelle Greene <michelle.greene@xtra.co.nz> Copy Rochelle Stewart-Withers <r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz>

---

**SOA 18/07**      **Physical education (PE) as a pathway for gender empowerment: An analysis of the Pacific Region and case study of the Cook Islands**  
Michelle Greene (HEC: Southern A Application SOA 18/07)  
Department:      School of People, Environment & Planning  
Supervisor:      Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers

Thank you for your email dated 24 May 2018 outlining the change you wish to make to the above application.

The change, to undertake the research in the Cook Islands, has been approved and noted.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee. If over time, more than one request to change the application is received, the Chair may request a new application.

Regards

Patsy

*Patsy Broad*

*Team Leader, Research Ethics*

*Research Ethics Office*

*Courtyard Complex, Room 1.23*

*Manawatu Campus*

*Massey University/Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa*

*Private Bag 11222*

*Palmerston North 4410*

*NEW ZEALAND*

*Extension: 83840*

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*Email: [p.l.broad@massey.ac.nz](mailto:p.l.broad@massey.ac.nz)*

*Fax 06 355 7973*

*<http://rims.massey.ac.nz/rmenet/>*

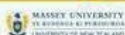
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**Appendix 3: Cook Islands Government approved research letter**



**COOK ISLAND RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

PRIVATE BAG, RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS

Phone +682 211-50 Facsimile +682 20-856

Email: [research.secretariat@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:research.secretariat@cookislands.gov.ck) Web: [www.cook-islands.gov](http://www.cook-islands.gov)

---

File ref: 510.3  
Letter no: 17-038

19 June 2018

Michelle Greene  
PHD Candidate  
Massey University  
Auckland  
New Zealand

Kia Orana,

**RE: APPROVED RESEARCH APPLICATION**

I am pleased to advise that the National Research Committee has granted approval for your research titled "Physical Education (PE) as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment: Case Studies of the Cook Islands and Niue" in Rarotonga and Aitutaki from 20 June 2018 — 20 June 2019.

Enclosed is your research permit issue # 38/17

The following conditions listed below have been imposed by the National Research Committee

The researcher complies with the Cook Islands Immigration

-The researcher provides a preliminary report to the Office of the Prime Minister at the earliest - The researcher provides three (3) hard copies + one (1) e-copy of the final output generated from this research to the Office of the Prime Minister by June 2020.

Kia Manuia

  
Bredina Drollet  
**CHAIRPERSON**

PERMIT TO UNDERTAKE

# Research in the Cook Islands

This is to certify that: Michelle Greene

Has permission from the Foundation for National Research to do a research in the Cook Islands from: 20 June 2018 — 20 June 2019.

On the island(s) of: Rarotonga and Aitutaki

The topic of research is: "Physical Education (PE) as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment: Case Studies of the Cook Islands and Niue"

The Cook Islands Associate Researcher is: n/a

The following special conditions apply to this research:

- The researcher complies with the Cook Islands Immigration, Ministry of Marine Resources and National Environment Services requirements
- The researcher provides a preliminary report to the Office of the Prime Minister at the earliest -The researcher provides three (3) hard copies + one (1) e-copy of the final output generated from this research to the Office of the Prime Minister by June 2019.

Permit Issued on: 19 June 2018

Issued by: Bredina Drollet

CHAIRPERSON

The image shows a handwritten signature in blue ink over a horizontal line. To the right of the signature is a circular official seal. The seal features the national emblem of the Cook Islands in the center, surrounded by the text "OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER" at the top and "COOK ISLANDS" at the bottom.

the Name of the Researcher and the  
CHAIRPERSON

Receipt Number: 308411

Reference Number: 38/17

Signed:

For enquiries concerning this permit, please quote the Name of the Researcher

Reference Number to the Chairperson, Foundation for National Research, and Office of the Prime Minister, Rarotonga, and COOK ISLANDS. Phone (682) 29 300, Fax (682) 20

856, or Email: [research.secretariat@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:research.secretariat@cookislands.gov.ck) Website: [www.pmooffice.gov.ck](http://www.pmooffice.gov.ck)

#### Appendix 4: Letter to Principals requesting access

Michelle Greene  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear: Insert name

My name is Michelle Greene and I am studying towards a PhD of International Development with the Institute of Development Studies at Massey University, New Zealand. I am a fully registered Physical Education teacher in New Zealand (Reg no: 243749) and am taking time out to complete my PhD. My thesis topic is looking at **current approaches in developing and delivering Physical Education (PE), with a particular focus on gender equality and empowerment**. I would be happy to speak with the Head of Department, where I can talk more about my study and gauge interest as to whether your school, teachers and pupils would be like to be part of this study. I am currently undergoing the ethics process to gain approval for this project; this will be gained prior to entering schools for the purpose of data collection.

Should you and your staff agree to be part of this study, I would look to undertake observations of both junior and senior Physical Education classes, so as to identify possible participants. From those classes, 5-7 boys and girls will be asked to take part in the study, which would require them to be involved in a one on one semi-structured interview lasting no more than 45-60 minutes. They will also have the opportunity to participate in a focus group session, similar to group work, this will also be 45-60 minutes in length at a time suitable to the school. Classroom observations and thus interviews will run over the course of six weeks in June and part of July, 2018.

Given the age of the participants, it is possible for students to consent. However, parents must be fully informed, thus an information sheet about the project will be send out and they will be given the opportunity to state if they do not wish their child to be a participant. However, if the school requires me to gain parental consent in addition to the students consent, I will do so.

In terms of interviewing yourself and/or teachers, about the PE curriculum and student engagement in PE I would also require between 2-3 key informant interviews, again for no more than an hour. As a teacher with 13 years' experience in middle management, I understand how busy schools are. It is my aim to cause as little disruption as possible to the day to day running of the school while I am there. I would also like to reassure you that I am there to understand the student's motivation in the subject in order to gain a better understanding about how best to deliver Physical Education.

I look forward to your response. I am happy to discuss with the research with you, either by phone or in person. Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor; Dr. Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Institute of Development Studies, Massey University, 06 356 9099 ext. 83657, [r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz](mailto:r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz)

Sincerely,



Michelle Greene

## ***Physical Education as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment***

### **INFORMATION SHEET (STUDENT)**

**Researcher Introduction:** My name is Michelle Greene, and I am undertaking a PhD of International Development at Massey University. I have previously been a PE teacher, and have been Head of Department for 13 years. I have taken several years out of teaching to complete my PhD. I live in Wellington, New Zealand.

**Project Description and Invitation:** My research aims to investigate current approaches in developing and delivering Physical Education (PE), with a particular focus on gender equality and empowerment. Of particular interest is whether or not both boys and girls feel that they have the freedom to participate in a range of sports, even ones that are not typically associated with their gender. Additionally, I wish to find out whether or not young people are empowered through their experiences, that they feel more confident and have higher self-esteem as a result of participating. I am also interested in how involved young people are in physical activities outside of school, within their communities.

**Participant Identification and Recruitment:** I have been observing your level of participation during class, and I would like to invite you to take part in the study. It will involve being interviewed by me; this will take place at school, either during school hours or directly after school. Students are asked to keep their parents informed of the appointment time if you select to be interviewed after school. The interview will be 45-60 minutes in length. It is my intention to interview between 20-28 students in total, across a range of years in several schools in the Cook Islands.

**Project Procedures:** Interviews will be conducted at an appropriate venue at school, as indicated by the school. The interview consists of 18 questions. There is no anticipated risk to you. However, you may feel uncomfortable talking about personal issues when discussing your level of participation during PE class. You do not have to answer all the questions if you do not want to and you may stop the interview at any point or decide to leave the research all together. Please keep your parents informed regarding the study; an information sheet is included with your one. If they wish to sign the consent form as well, there is space for them to do so. This is optional. Please give them the information sheet provided to you along with this information sheet and complete the consent form and return them back to me.

**Focus Group:** There will be an opportunity to participate in a focus group session. This will be similar to a group activity involving other students and run by myself. The focus group will be a relaxed discussion and is not meant in any way to a difficult or stressful experience. I will ask if you wish to participate in this at the end of the interview and again prior to the focus group session. The focus group will run for approximately 45-60 minutes.

### **Data Management**

All of the information (data) I gain from interviewing you and from observing various PE classes will be used for research purposes only. The data will be stored as password protected digital file. After the completion of the field research, a summary of the project findings will be made available to you. Please note that for privacy purposes, no students will be named and schools participating in the project will be coded. This means that your identity will not be known to anyone else.

### **Participant's Rights**

Please note that do not have to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have to the right to

- decline to answer any particular question
- withdraw from the study up until one month after fieldwork finishes
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is finished.

If at any point you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you may ask for the recorder to be turned off.

#### Project Contacts

Should you have any further questions, please contact myself,  
Michelle Greene,

██████████ or (insert local number)

██████████

Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor at any point during the study.

Dr. Rochelle Stewart-Withers  
Institute of Development Studies, Massey University  
+64 6 356 9099 ext. 83657  
r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz

### **Committee Approval Statement**

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 18/07. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Lesley Batten, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85094, email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz).*

# ***Physical Education as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment***

## **INFORMATION SHEET (Parent)**

### **Researcher Introduction**

My name is Michelle Greene, and I am undertaking a PhD of International Development at Massey University. I have previously been a PE teacher, and have been Head of Department for 13 years. I have taken several years out of teaching to complete my PhD. I live in Wellington, New Zealand.

### **Project Description and Invitation**

My research aims to investigate current approaches in developing and delivering Physical Education (PE), with a particular focus on gender equality and empowerment. Of particular interest is whether or not both boys and girls feel that they have the freedom to participate in a range of sports, even ones that are not typically associated with their gender. Additionally, I wish to find out whether or not young people are empowered through their experiences, that they feel more confident and have higher self-esteem as a result of participating. I am also interested in how involved young people are in physical activities outside of school, within their communities.

### **Participant Identification and Recruitment**

I am undertaking the research in several high schools in the Cook Islands, and as part of recruiting participants for this project I have been observing PE classes. After several observations, your child has been invited to take part in the study. In total, I will be looking to interview approximately 20-28 students. Your son/daughter has also been given an information letter and consent form to complete.

### **Project Procedures**

Interviews will occur during the months of June and July, 2018. The interview will take place at school, student interviews will be conducted at an appropriate private venue at school as indicated by the school. The interview consists of 18 questions and can be completed during a lunch break or after school. The interview will be recorded. There is no anticipated risk to your son/daughter; there may be some discomfort when talking about personal issues surrounding their level of participation during PE class. I will make sure your child is made



aware of appropriate school support systems should they experience any discomfort and wish to discuss anything further.

### **Data Management**

Data will be obtained through observations of PE classes and interviews and will be used for research purposes only. After the data (document observations and recorded interview and transcripts) has been obtained, it will be stored as a password protected digital file. After the completion of the field research, a summary of the project findings will be available, a copy will be given to your child. Please note that for privacy purposes, no students will be named and schools participating in the project will be coded. This means that your child's identity will not be disclosed.

### **Participant's Rights**

Please note that your son/daughter is under no obligation to accept this invitation. If they decide to participate, they have the right to;

- decline to answer any particular question
- withdraw from the study up until one month after fieldwork finishes
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- provide information on the understanding that her name will not be used
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

If at any point your child feels uncomfortable, they may ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interviews. If you have any questions regarding the research that your child is involved in, please contact me using the details provided below.

#### Project Contacts

Michelle Greene,

██████████ or (insert local number)

██████████

Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor at any point during the study.

Dr. Rochelle Stewart-Withers

Institute of Development Studies, Massey University

+64 6 356 9099 ext. 83657

r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz

### **Committee Approval Statement**

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 18/07. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Lesley Batten, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85094, email [humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz).*

# ***Physical Education as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment***

## **INFORMATION SHEET (SCHOOL, HOD: PE, TEACHERS, SPORT COORDINATOR)**

### **Researcher Introduction**

My name is Michelle Greene, and I am undertaking a PhD of International Development at Massey University. I have previously been a PE teacher, and have been Head of Department for 13 years. I have taken several years out of teaching to complete my PhD. I live in Wellington, New Zealand.

### **Project Description and Invitation**

My research aims to investigate current approaches in developing and delivering Physical Education (PE), with a particular focus on gender equality and empowerment. Of particular interest is whether or not both boys and girls feel that they have the freedom to participate in a range of sports, even ones that are not typically associated with their gender. Additionally, I wish to find out whether or not young people are empowered through their experiences, that they feel more confident and have higher self-esteem as a result of participating. I am also interested in how involved young people are in physical activities outside of school, within their communities.

### **Participant Identification and Recruitment**

The project would require observations of PE classes. Observations would take place with no intention of disrupting the normal classroom procedures. The observations are solely in relation to the engagement of the students and no direct critique of the teacher or the teacher's ability will take place. After several observations, students will be invited to take part in the study. Students will be given information letters for themselves and their parents and consent forms. If any students with a learning disability wish to participate and cannot give informed consent, I will go through a process in consultation with the student, parent and school. I intend to observe both junior and senior PE students. I wish to interview 2-4 students who have chosen to take PE and if possible interview 2-4 students who have not. The aim is have to have between 5-7 students at each school interviewed (with 20-28 students in total taking part), agreeing to take part in semi-structured interviews. Students will also be invited to take part in a focus group. Ideally around 8-10 students participating would be ideal. This session will run for 45-60 minutes in length and be held at a time that is convenient for the teacher and/or school. I am happy to share ideas and/or resources, by way of units or examples of student work or year plans.

### **Project Procedures**

The research will take place during the month of June and half of July, 2018. Schools are very busy places and I wish to assure you and the subject teacher that there will be minimal disruption to classes and no addition to the teacher's workload, aside from agreeing to be interviewed at a time that suits them. All interviews will take place at school, student interviews will be conducted at an appropriate venue at school and there will be 18 questions. I do not foresee any undue to risk to participants, there may be some discomfort when talking about personal issues surrounding their level of participation during PE class. I will ensure students are made aware of appropriate school support systems and inform the school if anything is discussed in the interview that places the young person at immediate risk.

### **Data Management**

Data will be obtained through classroom observations and interviews and will be used for research purposes only. After the data has been obtained, it will be stored in password protected digital file. Data will be stored for the duration of the research and will be disposed of in a timely manner after the thesis submission. After the completion of the field research, a summary of the project findings will be available to you. Please note that for confidentiality purposes, no students will be named and schools participating in the project will be coded.

### **Participant's Rights**

Please note that you are under obligation to accept this invitation as a school. If you decide to allow me to use your school as a study site, I will look to meet with the PE Department to gauge their interest in the study and for the purpose of recruitment. Those who agree to the study have to the right to

- decline to answer any particular question
- withdraw from the study up until one month after fieldwork finishes
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- provide information on the understanding that their name will not be used
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Both the student and the parents will be given full information sheets regarding the study. Consent for the study should be signed by both the parent and the child. They will also have my contact details, giving them the opportunity to contact me concerning any questions they may have.

### **Project Contacts**

Should you have any further questions, please contact myself,  
Michelle Greene,  
[REDACTED] or (insert local number)  
[REDACTED]

Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor at any point during the study.

Dr. Rochelle Stewart-Withers  
Institute of Development Studies, Massey University  
+64 6 356 9099 ext. 83657  
r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz

### **Committee Approval Statement**

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# ***Physical Education as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment***

## **INFORMATION SHEET (KEY INFORMANTS OUTSIDE SCHOOLS)**

### **Researcher Introduction**

My name is Michelle Greene, and I am undertaking a PhD of International Development at Massey University. I have previously been a PE teacher, and have been Head of Department for 13 years. I have taken several years out of teaching to complete my PhD. I live in Wellington, New Zealand.

### **Project Description and Invitation**

My research aims to investigate current approaches in developing and delivering Physical Education (PE), with a particular focus on gender equality and empowerment. Of particular interest is whether or not both boys and girls feel that they have the freedom to participate in a range of sports, even ones that are not typically associated with their gender. Additionally, I wish to find out whether or not young people are empowered through their experiences, that they feel more confident and have higher self-esteem as a result of participating. I am also interested in how involved young people are in physical activities outside of school, within their communities.

### **Participant Identification and Recruitment**

The project would require observations in PE classes. Observations would take place with no intention of disrupting the normal classroom procedures. The observations are solely in relation to the engagement of the young people and no direct critique of the teacher or the teacher's ability will take place. From observations, students will be invited to take part in the study. The aim is have to have between 5-7 students at each school interviewed, in four schools, with a total of 20-28 students agreeing to take part in semi-structured interviews. Additionally, I would like to interview between 4-6 key informants at the national level. I would like to speak with you, as someone who may have expertise on the subject, for example, gender empowerment, gender equality, PE curriculum delivery, or education. This would take place at a time and venue that suits you.

### **Data Management**

All of the information (data) I gain from interviewing you will be used for research purposes only. The data will be stored as password protected digital file. After the completion of the field research, a summary of the project findings will be made available to you. Please note that for privacy purposes, no participants will be named and schools participating in the project will be coded. With your consent, however I will look to identify you in relation to your role or position, e.g. Sports Coach.

### **Participant's Rights**

Please note that do not have to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have to the right to

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study up until one month after fieldwork finishes
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is finished.

If at any point you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you may ask for the recorder to be turned off.

### **Project Contacts**

Should you have any further questions, please contact myself,  
Michelle Greene,  
[REDACTED] or (insert local number)  
[REDACTED]

Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor at any point during the study.

Dr. Rochelle Stewart-Withers  
Institute of Development Studies, Massey University  
+64 6 356 9099 ext. 83657  
r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz

### **Committee Approval Statement**

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# ***Physical Education as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment***

## **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – STUDENT & PARENT**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I have discussed the study with my parents and have given them the Parental Information Sheet.

I **agree/do not agree** (*please select*) to the interview being sound recorded.

**Date:**

**Student Signature:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....

**Date:**

**Parent Signature:**

*(optional)*

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....

I **do/do not wish** (select one) to have a two-page summary of the research findings emailed to me.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

# ***Physical Education as a Pathway for Gender Empowerment***

## **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – SCHOOLS, TEACHERS, KEY INFORMANTS**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I **agree/do not agree** (*please select*) to the interview being sound recorded.

**Signature:**

.....

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....

I **do/do not wish** (select one) to have a two-page summary of the research findings emailed to me.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Confidentiality Agreement: Focus Groups

### Project Description and Invitation

My research aims to investigate current approaches in developing and delivering Physical Education (PE), with a particular focus on gender equality and empowerment. Of particular interest is whether or not both boys and girls feel that they have the freedom to participate in a range of sports, even ones that are not typically associated with their gender. Additionally, I wish to find out whether or not young people are empowered through their experiences, that they feel more confident and have higher self-esteem as a result of participating. I am also interested in how involved young people are in physical activities outside of school, within their communities.

### Procedures:

If you participate in this study, you will be in a group of approximately 8 – 10 students. There will be a facilitator who will ask questions and guide the discussion. This session will be recorded. If at any point you want the recorder to be turned, I will do so. If you volunteer to participate in this focus group, you will be asked some questions relating to your experience in Physical Education classes. These questions will help us to better understand what occurs within PE classes.

**Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study up to 1 month after fieldwork finishes.**

### Risks:

Everyone will be asked to respect the privacy of the other group members. All participants will be asked not to disclose (not to talk about) later anything said within the context of the discussion, but it is important to understand that other people in the group with you may not keep all information private and confidential. To be safe please avoid using names or other ways that individuals can be identified.

### Confidentiality:

Anonymised information from this study will be used by myself for my PhD research. No individual participant will be identified or linked to the results. All personal information obtained in the research will be kept strictly **confidential**. All materials will be stored in a secure location, password protected file. As mentioned earlier, a two-page summary of the results will be provided to you, if you wish to read. Please provide your email address at the bottom of the page, only if you have not done so already.

### Consent:

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this focus group.

**Participant's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:**

*(if not previously provided)*

### Appendix 8: Class observation timetable for School 2



Classes for Michelle Greene Observations

Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	9TC (HT)  Hall	9TK (ST)  Hall		9MA (ST)  Hall	9LC (HT)  Outside
2	L1SPS (AH)  Paddling	9IK (HT)  Outside	L1SPS (ST)  Paddling		
3				9LC (HT)  Hall	10LC (HT)  Hall
4		10IK (RE)  Outside			9MA (ST)  Outside
5	9TK (ST)  Outside		10IK (RE)  Outside		