MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

Em-power lifting: A case study of women's weightlifting in Aotearoa:

A Mana Wāhine Empowerment Analysis

A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of International Development

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2022

Abstract

Through application of an Indigenous (Māori) informed theoretical framing, articulated as Mana Wāhine values, this research report explores the phenomenon of weightlifting with Indigenous (Māori) women from Aotearoa New Zealand, as a vehicle for empowerment. The research project was guided by two main research questions, firstly, what is the role of weightlifting in developing personal, relational, and collective empowerment for Aotearoa New Zealand Indigenous (Māori) women? Secondly, how does this empowerment align with strengthening the values, understood as Mana Wāhine values, of Indigenous (Māori) women?

Data was collected via in-depth semi-structured interviews, nine wāhine (female) participants and one tane (male) participant. All participants were aged between 20 – 50 years old and had been participating in strength sports as an athlete or coach or both; six female and one male who were current or past Olympic weightlifters, two female strong women competitors and one power lifter. All participants were of Māori decent or coached wāhine Māori or were allies/accomplices (Whitinui, 2021) of Māori women in strength sport.

Findings suggest that weightlifting and strength-based training enhanced the development of the self, increased body satisfaction thus positivity towards body image because women identifying as feeling physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually strong and thus powerful. Their ability to set and achieve goals was enhanced and this carried over into other areas of life. While seemingly an individual sport, feelings of belonging and camaraderie indicated better relational empowerment, as well as collective empowerment due to being part of the lifting community and subscribing to a similar kaupapa. In terms of how these changes aligned with Mana Wāhine values, wāhine spoke about having a sense of authority, notions of manaakitanga and giving back to others and the kaupapa of strong wāhine.

Overall, this research highlights that strength-based sport like weightlifting can be a vehicle for personal, relational, and collective empowerment with these elements lending themselves towards strengthening Mana Wāhine values. Of great importance here was the transformative implications noted for women. However, any broader transformative impacts beyond the individuals will require the ongoing challenges of predetermined ideologies i.e., stereotypes of women not being strong, or norms, rules, exclusionary practices and under resourcing, for example, which sees women's lifting to be situated at the margins. Empowerment of the individual is all well and good, but the individual can only go so far. "Empowerment requires changes to systems, rules, and norms, which undermine large groups of people [Māori women], as well as changes at the level of the individual" (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 120).

Mihi/Acknowledgements

This investigation has been inspired by my experiences in sport as a coach, mother of tamariki (children), sports administrator and athlete. I have met many inspirational, strong, Mana Wāhine in different aspects and areas of my life and especially through sport, which brought me to this point in my journey where I get to bring together my love of sport and thirst for knowledge. This project is thus dedicated to making heard the voices of Indigenous women by bring these to life and to sport for development researchers who focus on utilising sport as a driver to make the world a better place.

I would like to thank my supervisors: Associate Professor Rochelle Stewart-Withers for her calm and supportive mannerism. I have learnt so much from her knowledge not only in academia but life in general. Dr Jeremy Hapeta and Professor Farah Palmer huge gratitude too.

Thank you to my two sons, my partner, and my mother, you have all been so encouraging and helpful in many ways during this journey. You are all are reason why I was able complete this mahi. Through this mahi I hope you see that anything is possible if you have passion, determination, and resilience. You are my biggest supporters; without you this would not be possible, I love you all very much.

To the beautiful strong unapologetic Mana Wāhine who agreed to share their pūrākau (personal stories) with me. Your participation and sharing of your valuable time allowed me to complete this research and produce this thesis. Your stories are your own and I thank each and every one of you for allowing me to share your whakaaro (thoughts) and journeys of building strength physically and mentally. The pūrākau (stories) you hold and shared with me are inspirational and heart-warming, and I know you will all continue to inspire many more wāhine in your continued journeys. I leave you the reader with these two whakatāukī which are reflective of

not only my own study journey when I think about the support given to me by my whānau, but also reflective of the wāhine in this study life and in sport journeys. These whakatāukī also speak to the idea of strength in the collective or collective empowerment.

Ehara Taku toa I te toa takitahi, Engari he toa takitini - My strength is not as an individual, but as a collective.

Ki te Kotahi te Kakaho, ka whaiti; ki te kapuia, e kore e whati - If a reed stands alone, it can be broken; if it is a group, it cannot. When we stand alone, we are vulnerable, but together we are unbreakable.

Glossary – Te Reo

Aotearoa - New Zealand

aroha ki tangata - respect for people

Haka - posture dance

hapū - sub- tribe

hauora – health

hīkoi – protest marches

hine - female essence

Hineahuone - woman of earth and mother to humanity

Hinetitama - first human form

iwi - tribe

kanohi ki te kanohi - face to face

kanohi kitea - present yourself face to face

kaua e mahaki - do not flaunt your knowledge

kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata - do not trample over the mana of the people

kaupapa - policy or strategy

Kingitanga - Māori monarch

korero - speak

kotahitanga - unity

kuia - grandmother

mahi - work

Mana - authority and status

Mana Wāhine - power and status of women

manaaki ki te tangata - share and host people

manaakitanga - generosity

matauranga – Māori knowledge

Māori - Indigenous people of New Zealand

Māoritanga - Māori cultural heritage

marae - courtyard surrounded by buildings

mauri - life force

mokopuna - grandchildren

Pākehā - New Zealanders of European descent

Papatuanuku - Earth mother

pūrākau - storytelling

taha hinengaroa - mental and emotional wellness

taha tinana - physical wellness

taha wairua - spiritual wellness

taha whānau - social wellness

tamariki - children

tane - male

te ao Māori - Māori world

Te Puni Kokiri - Ministry of Māori Development

Te Reo Māori - Māori language

te whare tapa whā - four sides of a house

tikanga - customs and traditions

tino - ultimate

tino rangatiratanga - Māori sovereignty

titiro - look

wā - time

wahine - woman

wāhine - women

whakaaro - thoughts

whakapapa - genealogy

whakarongo - listen

whakataetae - competition

whakatāukī - proverbs

whakawhanaungatanga - process of establishing relationships

whānau - extended family

whanaungatanga – connectedness

whare - house

Whenua - land or placenta

Acronyms

NGO - Non-government Organisation

PB - Personal Best

SSI - Semi-structured Interviews

WHO - World Health Organization

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Chapter One: Introduction

Me Aro ki te hā o Hine-ahu-one - Pay heed to the mana of women.

> *"As I got stronger, I loved how it made me feel? It felt good to get stronger and accomplish goals, it gives me a sense of fulfilment and purpose"* (Tia).

Researcher Positionality

As a Māori woman I have found huge pleasure in sport, socially and competitively, and like Tia in the quote above, for what it offers physically and intellectually. As a participant of sport and a mother of two boys who do sport, sport has given our lives a strong foundation and via sport my family has learnt many life lessons such as how to behave with humility, to suffer loss, and to overcome pain or injury for example. My children have grown up with the sound of bar bells crashing on our garage floor, hikes in the weekends to somewhere and nowhere; being muddy, wet and freezing in the rain and wind at rugby. Then when summer rolls around we are out in the sun all day at touch rugby tournaments, wishing for shelter and cool water. Sport has brought fulfilment and joy into our lives.

Being physically healthy and well is a core part of our values as whānau (family). We live and breathe sport, fitness, and wellbeing, and as a mother I try to incorporate all aspects of health into our whare (house). I have been lucky enough to make this passion my career for the past 12 years working as a strength and conditioning coach across different sports and in the female athlete development space. One of my sons is following in the same direction studying sport and exercise science and is involved in coaching youth sport. Sport has given my children a sense of belonging, it has increased their social skills and ability to connect with others, hence friendships through sport are important to us.

My foray into weightlifting[1] came about through participation in CrossFit. I joined CrossFit with a friend, the training was intense, and I appreciated this. While I gravitated towards the bar bell movements, it did not come naturally to me. Weightlifting is technically hard; it is challenging mentally and physically, and it was this that appealed to me. As such, in 2018 I started to solely focus on weightlifting, and since then I have experienced significant physical and psychological benefits, including increased body satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. This 'self-experience' alongside observations of other female weightlifters and the way they seem to connect with the sport, is in part, what motivates me to want to explore this topic deeper.

While sport has been a powerfully embodied experience for me, and I have seen and felt first-hand all the good that sport can do, I am also hugely aware that sport and using sport to achieve individual and community goals is not without criticism. Indeed, sport has given rise to sexism, racism, over competitiveness, corruption, cheating, arrogance, and militaristic values. Sexual athleticism, physical supremacy, manliness, and muscle worship are all challenges of sport (Theberge, 1981, p. 341).

Moreover, women who have tried to step into the sporting world have had to struggle, some have been ridiculed. Female athletes and sport teams have been disregarded by the media and thought of as inferior to male counterparts. One just needs to look at the coverage of the All-Blacks (male) rugby team verses the Black-Ferns (female) rugby team. Female participation in sport is hindered by many inequalities including funding of programmes, facilities, quality coaching (Rowe, 1998; Theberge, 1981).

[1] Throughout this report weightlifting and lifting will be used interchangeably. In Chapter Four a clear definition of the different types of liftings will be given.

Criticism of lifting types of sport and whether or not women belong in this space has also ensued. As a finer built Māori woman weightlifter my everyday experiences vary, and I have encountered many different opinions and judgements, some of them disempowering. Doctors and health specialists have shared comments such as 'you should not be weightlifting and should only partake in low impact sports like swimming or walking', or '20kgs is the maximum weight any women should lift'. Then also from colleagues who I work with in the realm of sport saying, 'you shouldn't be weightlifting you will hurt yourself', and fellow women sport practitioners saying, 'I thought you would be bigger than that'. It seems that many people have an opinion as to women weightlifters and the ways in which this sport adds value or does not add value to one's life.

Of importance to this research is also the positioning of Māori women. In Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ)[2] I am also acutely aware that Māori remain disadvantaged and marginalised impacted by the ongoing implications of colonisation (Durie, 1999; Smith, 2006, p. 5; Statistics NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2021) and even more so for women (Mikaere, 2003; NZ CEDAW Reports 2020; NZ Manatū Wāhine Ministry of Women, 2020; Pihama, 2001). As women we are often classified in terms of our differences to men. As Māori we are mostly defined in light of our differences to Pākehā and as Māori women we are defined by both. This locates Māori women in a disadvantaged and complicated classification of society (Te Awekotuku, 1991, p. 40). This disadvantagement is also true of the sport space[3].

[2] From here on in I mostly use Aotearoa unless readability warrants using NZ. When referring to organisations etc I follow the conventions they use. To refer to the country, Aotearoa, NZ or Aotearoa, NZ will be used throughout this document.

[3] This point is a generalisation as Māori men and women excel also in all spaces despite the many challenges they face.

Yet there are some sport environments Māori excel in, such as rugby and other 'muscular' sports (Hokowhitu, 2004, p. 269), or team sport like rugby or netball (McCreanor et al., 2010)[4]. It has been argued that because Māori ultimately seek to have connection and relationships that are based on mutual respect, generosity for example, this is true also of the sport and exercise space. Evidence suggests that Māori women join physical activity programmes to enjoy the company of other Māori women (Moon, 2012), and are drawn to sports which integrate Māori values, acknowledging whakapapa (genealogy), and whakawhanaungatanga (process of establishing relationships) and manaakitanga (generosity). Research undertaken by Hippolite & Bruce (2014) found key principles of difference could be seen between Pākehā dominated sports and sports that Māori engaged in. They argue that incorporating the abovementioned key principles would go a long way in breaking down barriers and creating an environment of inclusiveness, not only for Māori but all ethnicities. The importance of creating a warm welcoming atmosphere that Māori people can thrive in is highlighted (Hippolite & Bruce, 2014a).

Background to the Research

Of interest to this study is the growing movement whereby sport as a vehicle for the empowerment of women and girls is conceived of and advocated for (to be discussed in detail in the coming chapters). As evidenced by this recent statement from the United Nations (2020, para. 3),

> In recent years, sport has demonstrated its enormous capacity to propel women and girls' empowerment. It mobilizes the global community and speaks to youth. It

[4] This point is also a generalisation McCreanor et al. (2010) have written about the way in which Māori sport and Māori in sport are often portrayed "as exotic and marginal to sporting life in Aotearoa/New Zealand, alongside being subsumed within "monocultural sporting codes" (p.235).

> unites across national barriers and cultural differences. It is a powerful tool to convey important messages in a positive and celebratory environment – often to mass audiences. In addition, it teaches women and girls the values of teamwork, self-reliance and resilience; has a multiplier effect on their health, education and leadership development; contributes to self-esteem, builds social connections, and challenges harmful gender norms.

Sport, however, is also a contentious issue for Indigenous people. Sport has been a colonial tool, drawn upon as part of empire building and as a means of 'civilisation' (Coalter, 2010; Stewart-Withers & Hapeta, 2021), and assimilation (Phillips & Osmond, 2018). Colonial games were "utilized particularly by Christian missionaries and other imperial pedagogues to crush Indigenous cultural identities and practices" (Giulianotti, 2004, p. 358) as well as destroy Indigenous sports (Coalter, 2010).

Regardless, Indigenous peoples have used sport as avenues toward recognition, to make the most of opportunity and accomplish financial goals (MacDonald, & Rodriguez, 2015). Sport has offered a means for not only self-achievement, but to realise the aspirations of wider families and communities (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013). It has provided a means for transformation, i.e., empowerment.

Research Aim and Questions

Given the above, the purpose of this research is to explore the phenomenon of weightlifting with Indigenous (Māori) women from Aotearoa as a vehicle for Mana Wāhine empowerment.

The investigation has two research questions,

1. What is the role of weightlifting in developing personal, relational, and collective empowerment for women?

2. How does this empowerment align with strengthening Mana Wāhine values?

Structure of the Research Report

This research report is organised into six chapters. In Chapter One I have just outlined my positionality and my rationale for undertaking this research. The background to the research and the significance of the investigation are explained so as to position the research aim and questions. The chapter concludes by outlining the various chapters to come. Chapter Two deals with literature review and theory. As such the chapter outlines some of the key debates surrounding gender empowerment, in doing so empowerment as a concept is defined, alongside exploring the opportunities and challenges surround the empowerment agenda as argued in the literature. Chapter Three deals with context matter, specifically this chapter discusses Māori wāhine (women) in Aotearoa and introduces the sport of weightlifting. Chapter Two and three are fundamental to understanding key ideas for locating the role of weightlifting, as a vehicle for not only facilitating Māori women's empowerment, but in a way which adds to the strengthening of Mana Wāhine values. Chapter Four outlines the design of this research, inclusive of ethics and the methods of data collection and analysis. Research limitations are explained. Chapter Five presents the findings and finally in Chapter Six a discussion occurs and seeks to make clear answers to the research questions. Chapter Six also concludes the study.

Chapter Two: Conceptualizing Empowerment

Introduction

Ideas of empowerment as part of social movement, struggles for freedom, independence, and transformation date back 100 of years (Scheyvens, 2020, p.115). Over the last five decades empowerment has been embraced by various actors (Government, civil society, and the private sector) in pursuit of the development of women and girls (Cornwall, 2007; Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2009). Much has also been promised by the sport for gender empowerment agenda (UN Women, 2020). Empowerment, however, also means different things to different people, alongside becoming a bit of a buzz word, which is bandied about with little real transformation happening (Cornwall, 2007; 2016; 2018). With this in mind this chapter provides a critical conceptualisation of empowerment. The chapter is structured so as to define what is meant by power, before moving on to provide various definition of empowerment. Components of empowerment are then discussed, specifically personal, psychological, relational, collective, and social components; empowerment as transformation is explored, as are some of the criticisms surrounding empowerment. The opportunities and challenges surrounding the empowerment agenda will have been presented, important for locating the research questions.

Defining Power

The term empowerment as used in everyday language, is very vague, leaving room for more clarity (Rowlands, 1995, p. 101). The confusion generally arises from understandings surrounding the term power. It is therefore fundamental to understanding the concept of power to appreciate notions of empowerment.

Power is understood and experienced by different people in different ways (Rowlands, 1995). Power is typically seen as a hierarchy concept as domination over a person or group. It can be

the extent that one person or group can get another person or group to do something. Rowlands (1995) has described this understanding of power as "zero-sum", meaning the more power one person has, the less the other person holds. This is seen as having "power over" someone or a situation. For one person to gain power, "power to", they must take it away from another, which also assumes power must be finite.

An example of power over and therefore disempowerment in a sporting context maybe of a coach instructing his/her athletes in way where they train while injured. Thus, coaching in a 'disempowering' setting could be where a coach is highly ego-driven and controlling of the session and athletes' actions, and refuses to relinquish decision making. In contrast, an 'empowering' environment, is where the coach will deliver a session that is task-driven, looks to promoting autonomy, and is encouraging socially (Duda & Appleton, 2016). In relation to gender or women's empowerment (which will also be discussed in detail later in the Chapter), power as finite assumes that for women to become empowered, men have less power or be disempowered. This misunderstanding is why some men and women have pushed back against the women's empowerment agenda.

Moreover, understanding how power is produced and experienced by others is important when creating and implementing empowerment interventions. As touched on above, power has been defined in three ways: "power over", "power to" and "power from within". As discussed, "power over" represents having influence or domination over someone or a group. This can be a situation where one is controlled; this can be seen by men having control over women, or by dominant social, political, or economic groups having control over those who are marginalized (Rowlands, 1995, pp. 101–102).

"Power to" then refers to power and empowerment as tools which can be imparted to someone or a group, hence it is an extrinsic concept. This theorization assesses the way an individual or

groups also perceive themselves, for example, if they perceive they have little worth or value. Finally, "power from within" is intrinsically driven. This is an individual's sense of self-belief and confidence, which leads to a person having the ability to make decisions, thus change their life (Rowlands, 1995, pp. 101–102)

When understanding the word "power" and its direct relationship to empowerment it is quite clear we cannot empower someone or a group who are oppressed or marginalized, however, we can offer them the tools to facilitate empowerment (Scheyvens, 2000). We can also facilitate the process of empowerment through education, provision of opportunities, changing structures and systems which disempower and perpetuate disadvantagement and ongoing marginalization.

Empowerment Defined

As a contested term there is an enormous body of scholarship which seeks to conceptualise empowerment and definitions range from becoming self-confident to involvement in political activities leading to transformation. Much of the literature since the mid-1990s emphasizes that empowerment is about a process of becoming stronger and more confident. The term empowerment draws from numerous spaces such as feminism, the Black Power movement, opinions of women from the Global South[5], and Indigenous push back in pursuit of righting colonial wrongs, and the desire for Indigenous sovereignty. Empowerment is therefore political. Empowerment also relates to theories such as marginalized groups and individuals increasing their well-being and taking part in decision-making (Calvès, 2009).

[5] Global South denotes regions outside Europe and North America, Australasia and mostly, although not always, refers to low-income countries and those who have been economically and politically marginalized, and have suffered the consequences of imperialism and colonial rule (Willis, 2021).

Seminal development scholar, Jo Rowlands suggests that empowerment is about bringing those who sit outside of making decisions into the development process (Rowlands, 1995). Whereas academic Guierrez defines empowerment as a process of increasing personal, social, or political power, that enables humans and communities to take actions towards improving their situations and position in society (Gutierrez, 1995). Similarly, researcher Jawad Syed defines empowerment as a multidimensional process in which less powerful people experience personal and social change. This change enables them to influence organizations and structures that affect their lives and the communities in which they live (Syed, 2010). Together these academics indicate that empowerment is a complex multifaceted notion that is constantly adapting and is context specific (Mandal, 2013). Importantly, though is recognition of the involvement of those who are 'oppressed' initiating change in some way or form to improve the overall quality of their own lives.

Components of Empowerment

Understanding the different dimensions of empowerment is essential when designing empowerment interventions. Eyben (2011, p. 8) claims that empowerment project design requires thorough attention to reinforce the empowerment process. If designed well, interventions can support multiple components of empowerment. However, if there is a lack of attention contradictory effects can happen and to lead to disempowerment of a person or community.

Raju (2005) explains that empowerment must take place at three levels; a) Individual: which includes self-confidence, self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-dignity. b) Collective: which consists of self-management, organization, and group identity. c) Relational: which includes having negotiation and communication skills, having the ability to gather help, protect self-dignity in relationships and defend self-rights. Rowland's (1995, p. 103) view of

empowerment is comparable, stating that empowerment has three elements. 1) Personal: where an individual is attempting to reverse the effects of internal oppression, while at the same time developing a sense of self-belief and self-confidence. 2) Close Relationships: where a person is learning negotiation skills, the ability to make changes, and to help make decisions in a relationship. 3) Collective: where individuals work together as a team to create a bigger impact than one person can produce on their own.

The work of Rowland (1995) and Raju (2005) also relates to John Friedman's (1992) seminal text where he described empowerment to be a multifaceted theory involving psychological, social, and political dimensions. This alignment can also be seen in Scheyvens (1999) influential piece, using ecotourism as case study, where she suggests four dimensions important for understanding empowerment and disempowerment are the economic, psychological, political, and social.

It is clear from the evidence above there is a large body of literature on empowerment, which ranges from self-belief to having a voice in political issues, for this study I will focus on personal, relational, collective, social, and psychological empowerment. I now look to explore these specific components of empowerment.

Personal empowerment

Personal empowerment relates to self-esteem, self-confidence, and the way a person ultimately feels about themselves. Self-esteem is how an individual values themselves and if they are being or not being the person they want to be (Tengland, 2001, p. 129). Self-confidence has to do with a person's belief in themselves to handle situations, and responsibilities in life, and as to their ability to achieve goals (Tengland, 2008). The way a person feels about themself affects their decision making and how they interact with those around them.

Psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment has been defined by Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) as the connection between personal competence and the desire to take action in society. When women take on leadership roles or are involved in educational institutes, community groups, political decisions, and occupy land, own property and hold wealth they are argued to feel psychologically powered (Mandal, 2013). These actions ultimately increase self-esteem and self-confidence thus leading to the enhancement of personal empowerment.

Relational empowerment

Relational empowerment refers to an individual's ability to defend ones self-rights and self-dignity in relationships (Raju, 2005). Relational empowerment is an individual's capabilities to negotiate, communicate, gather support confidently and determine the boundaries of relationships. Relationships matter the most when improving the quality of women's rights organizations (Eyben, 2011, p. 6).

Collective empowerment

Collective empowerment relates to group identity, where individuals work together to achieve common goals, which can be in a community or village setting (Rowlands, 1995), or in this study as part of a sport collective. Empowerment groups have been important in changing the history of inequality and exclusion. Collective action is especially important for those who have been exposed to discrimination, i.e., poverty, sexual abuse, disabilities, race, and religious issues (Eyben, 2011). Scheyvens (2000) states that a psychological empowered community is where the group is optimistic about new opportunities, the members will be self-reliant and uphold their cultural traditions. Her research on ecotourism has shown that respect for Indigenous culture and traditions can psychologically empower local people, which has had benefits for local development.

Social empowerment

Social empowerment is important in overall human health, the World Health Organization (WHO) (Sartorius, 2006, p. 662) has described health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being". Social empowerment can be described as a community that has been strengthened and unified by a particular situation or activity (Scheyvens, 2000). Signs of a socially empowered community are youth groups, women's groups, and good involvement and attendance at group meetings. Social empowerment increases awareness of social discrimination based on gender, race, disability, and ethnicity (Mandal, 2013).

Empowerment as Transformation

Empowerment can be used as a tool or technique that can transform individuals, groups, and communities. Indeed, Batliwala (1993) defined empowerment as a process of transforming the power relationships between individuals and social groups. She describes empowerment as a process that moves social power in three ways; the first by challenging ideologies that explain inequalities like gender, class, or race; the second by shifting the structures that create and support existing power organisations, like the media, family, and education. Finally, by transforming the ideologies that justify societal inequalities like gender or class (Batliwala, 1993). Transformative empowerment is when one is free of the emotional, social, and political power of predetermined ideologies, social structures, traditional roles, or ways of doing things. People are required to act in their transformation to enable control over their lives and the decisions they make. Individuals need to create their processes to achieve the desired outcome in the reality of their own life.

Fetterman (2017) explains that once an individual can create processes to achieve desired outcomes, they have now transformed. This concept originates from Freire's notion of 'critical consciousness'. That is when an individual can critically analyse a situation, leading to action

in a series of processes to enable change (Rowlands, 1995, p. 105). Freire (1985, p.109) argues that empowerment is "the process by which human beings' participation critically in a transforming act". Therefore, if the goal is to empower those who are marginalised it is important that the educator is creating opportunities for the marginalised to create their change. Many coaches or facilitators of programs only deliver information to people; however, it is important for educators and those in leadership roles to create situations where people are enabled to think critically. An educator's role should not be to just convey knowledge; rather, they should work together with a person to transform the world around them. This enables the oppressed to move from understanding to acting (Calvès, 2009).

In explaining the work of Rao and Kelleher[6] (n.d.), Scheyvens (2020) also argues the importance of consciousness raising. In reviewing the work of Rao and Kelleher (n.d.), Scheyvens (2020) suggests that there needs to be "critical individual ***and*** systemic levels at which change is needed, along with formal and informal elements of change" for empowerment as transformation to occur. As noted in **Figure 2.1** below, the right quadrants are about formal structures, such as laws and policies, as well as access to resources and opportunities like health and education. These elements are simultaneously "important in efforts to achieve empowerment, but they are not sufficient on their own to guarantee empowerment" (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 120). What is also needed is the left quadrants as seen in **Figure 2.1**. Informal, systemic changes are needed "both in terms of how societies structure norms, ideologies, and practices which might be discriminatory and disempowering for some groups, and in terms of individual consciousness" (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 120).

[6] Also see Rao, A., Sandler, J., Kelleher, D., & Miller, C. (2016).

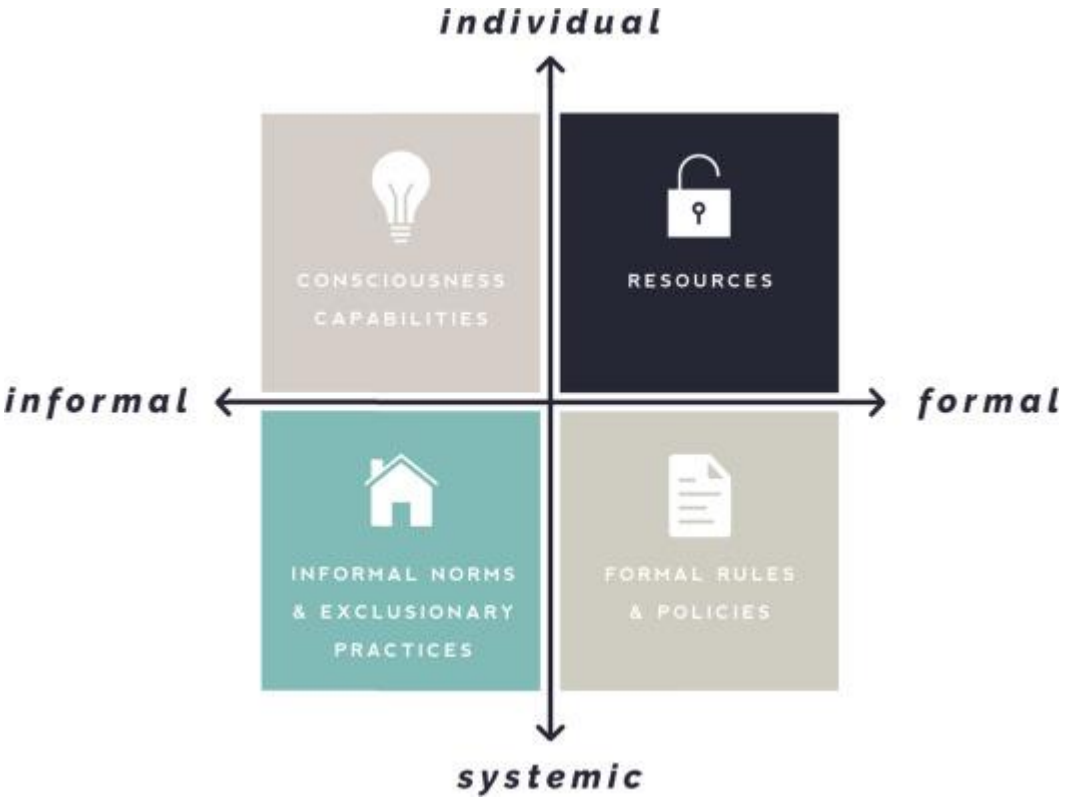

Figure 2.1: Gender at Work Empowerment Framework

Criticism of Empowerment

The term empowerment seen to be everywhere. As an overused term, a "buzz word" (and subsequently rhetoric), the lexicon of empowerment has been good on gaining people's attention worldwide and in all spheres from health to community development and with all people (youth, women, refugees etc.) As mentioned because there is lack of clarity about what empowerment means (Cross et al., 2017; Woodall et al., 2012), this diversity in understanding also makes it hard to measure and track, and so it makes it difficult if not near impossible to determine if one is actually empowered or not (Cross et al., 2017).

There are claims that empowerment theory is at risk of losing its 'power'. The term is loosely thrown around with advocates unable to convey accurately what it is (Woodall et al., 2012). Christopher Rissel (1994, p. 94) claims that perhaps there needs to be a distinction between

empowerment of the self and community empowerment. He argues that if we can identify common use of terms and language for psychological empowerment and community empowerment there will be a clear distinction of the two, for example.

Another issue is that community empowerment is very hard to measure and determine if a group has become empowered. This process may start with physiological empowerment and leads into community empowerment as seen in **Figure 2.2** (Rissel, 1994, p. 43). This figure illustrates the critical components of community empowerment and the process by which it can be achieved. The process is lengthy as collective transformation includes the achievement of political power. This is particularly important when thinking about sport initiatives as funding cycles are typically short term, thus this is yet another challenge measuring empowerment faces (Cross et al., 2017).

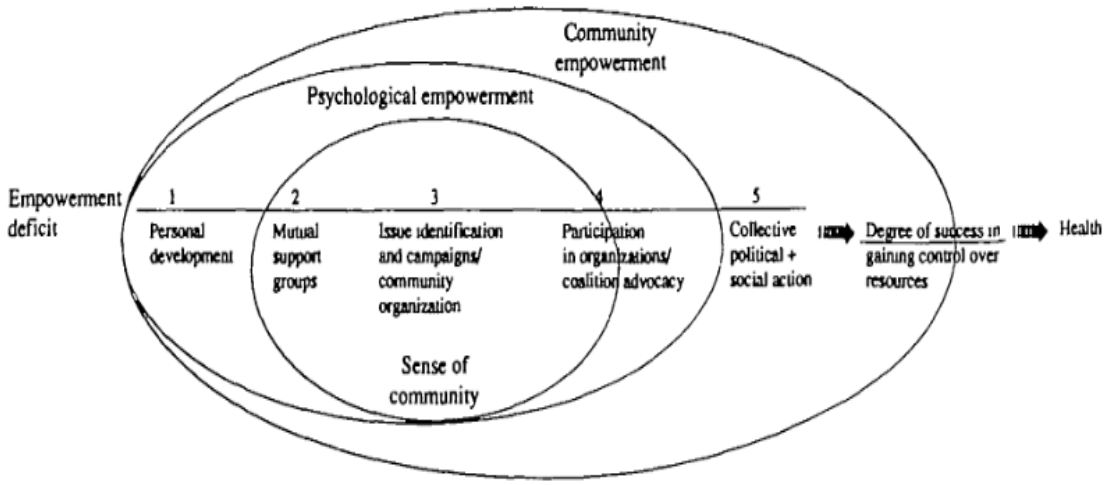

Figure 2.2: Model of the critical components of community empowerment and the process by which it may be achieved (Rissel, 1994).

With respect to Māori culture and how empowerment and self-determination is understood we must understand the term ‘tino rangatiratanga’. Tino meaning ultimate and rangatiratanga meaning well-being, the right to exercise authority, or autonomy. Simultaneously both

concepts meaning self-determination (C. Smith et al., 2021; Te One & Clifford, 2021; Whitinui, 2021). Māori self-determination can be appreciated as a holistic collective manner of self-control over one's health and wellbeing, integrated with matauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) (Te One & Clifford, 2021). For indigenous people health and wellbeing should include environmental connections, cultural identity, participation in education and society and the ability to make decisions and exercise authority (Durie, 2004). Over the past 100 years the indigenous people of Aotearoa have begun to shift from being merely vulnerable to being on the front line of protests movements, hīkoi (protests marches), and challenging the crown. With a goal to hold the government accountable for dishonouring the treaty rights and to recover a degree of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) (Harris, 2007). Arguably, we have been self-determining for a long time, since before our arrival to Aotearoa. Durie (1999) discusses 'autonomy' as Te Mana Whakahaere. Māori autonomy is reflected by indigenous people having control over their health, relevant measures of health, appropriate processes, and recognition of aspirations.

Conclusion

In summary, while a diverse range of organizations and individuals in all sectors have embraced empowerment and all that it has to offer, the empowerment agenda has also faced much criticism. Empowerment is a complex concept and how it plays out in practice is also reliant on how power is conceived of. In and of it's true self, empowerment is meant to lead to something which is transformative and is more than the individual. As indicated by Rissel (1994) for communities to becomes empowered there are also numerous steps to be seen. Moreover, as argued by Scheyvens (2020, p. 120) it is important that "we look beyond notions of empowerment" as always leading to self-efficacy. Empowerment of the individual is all well and good, but the individual can only go so far. "Empowerment requires changes to systems,

rules, and norms, which undermine large groups of people, as well as changes at the level of the individual" (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 120). She goes onto argues that:

> Consciousness-raising is regarded as an important first step in facilitating empowerment of disadvantaged peoples. If power is to come from within and if people are to realize what they are capable of—something referred to as psychological power—there needs to be a strong awareness of the political and social context of one's oppression, so that people feel that they deserve to have access to resources and to be respected. They also need to know how they can use existing economic, political, and bureaucratic systems to improve their lives (Scheyvens, 2020, p. 120).

Chapter Three. Women in Aotearoa / New Zealand

Introduction

Having discussed earlier empowerment, we now look to establish the positionality of Māori women in Aotearoa. Pre-colonisation Māori women were strong in leadership roles and both men and women made decisions in the community (Henry & Pringle, 1996). However post British settlement, society has shifted their ideologies as to where Māori women sit in the community, this has confused and disempowered Māori women for the last 200 years. Literature has consistently pointed out positive links between sport, health, wellbeing, and marginalised people. Recently, there has been some efforts to understand Indigenous women and their experiences in sport (Maxwell et al., 2017). With this in mind, this chapter seeks to define the term Mana Wāhine before moving into strength training, the barriers and benefits for women and then weightlifting in Aotearoa. Lastly I discuss Durie's Te Whare Tapa Wha model of health and wellbeing (Durie, 1994), as understanding Indigenous conceptualisation of health is important for answering the research questions.

Women in Aotearoa

In Aotearoa women are primarily understood as Māori women and Pākehā women. Māori women are descendants of the Indigenous tribes of Aotearoa i.e. Te Ātiawa, Tūhoe or Ngāti Raukawa and Pākehā women are descendants of the colonial settlers, from places such as the United Kingdom or European and Scandinavian countries (King, 2003). Although there are now many ethnicities in Aotearoa our history has predominantly been established by Māori and Pākehā associations. Our position in society as Māori women is complicated and challenging. Key Indigenous writer Ngahuia Te Awekotuku indicates that as (Māori) women we are identified in terms of our differences to men, and as Māori people we have been

identified in light of our differences to Pākehā. As both Māori and women we have been defined by our differences to Māori men, Pākehā men and Pākehā woman making our position in society much more unique and complex (Te Awekotuku, 1991, p. 40). As such Māori women often feature in the lower echelons of society and possess the poorest social and economic indicators. However, this poor positioning of Māori women vis-á-vis others has not always been the case. In many instances, in terms of status and mythology, Māori women were positioned as powerful and to hold power.

Pre-colonization in Māori society women and men were ranked by gender and age, both males and females were considered leaders and they were both responsible for passing down knowledge and tikanga. Labour was allocated by gender and everyone in the community participated except the elderly and children. Decisions for Māori communities were made on the marae, men and women attended the process of hui (meetings) and made decisions collaboratively. Whereas the early settler's society was built on Victorian gendered culture, which is based on western femininity and masculinity, often informed by Christianity. The role of a Pākehā woman was domestically based which involved management of the home and family, and reproduction of children (Henry & Pringle, 1996, p. 535). With men determined to be head of the household and family, nuclear in form. Women often possessed very little status outside that of her husband or father.

Traditionally, Māori histories have been passed down orally through many forms, including pūrākau (stories). There are many pūrākau involving a Māori woman or goddesses, there are many powerful female figures that provide leadership models; for example, Papatuanuku (earth mother), Hineahuone (woman of earth and mother to humanity) and Hinetitama (first human form) (Mikaere, 2003). This brings us to the concept of Mana Wāhine.

Mana Wāhine

Our language and dialects are what ties us to our knowledge systems and through colonization, the manipulation and misunderstanding over Te Reo Māori (Māori language) has had a huge impact on understanding our history and maintaining the knowledge of our ancestors (Pihama, 2001). Researcher Naomi Simmonds noted that we have adopted a Pākehā way of thinking when it comes to women (Simmonds, 2011), traditionally Māori women were strong and had great leadership skills. This is demonstrated through some of our pūrākau as mentioned and in the leadership of the Kingitanga movement (Māori King Movement). Princess Te Puia was a Māori leader in the early 1900s and subsequently the Māori queen Te Atairangi Kahu who was the head of the Kingitanga in the 2000s (Pihama, 2001). There is also evidence that Māori women were landowners. When the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840, there were women on the treaty as signatories, however it was the colonial decision-makers that disregarded these wāhine (women) and stopped them from further signing (Pihama, 2001).

Te Reo Māori (Language) is elegant and has several meanings behind each word, making it difficult to translate simply into English terms. This does not mean that Te Reo Māori is untranslatable (Simmonds, 2011). However, translation fails to appreciate the emotional nuance of our language, which is also evident in other Indigenous cultures (McDougall, 2016; Pihama, 2001). For example, Whānau can mean family and birth, Hapū can mean subtribe and pregnant and Whenua can mean land and the placenta. Making a simple and consistent Māori to English translation difficult to achieve (Simmonds, 2011). It may be easier to firstly understand the concepts of the two words Mana and Wāhine separately.

Mana

Mana is a complex term with many meanings, often people understand it to be power, prestige, authority or control, however it has multiple layers and can have generational energy and

spiritual influences (Pihama, 2001; Simmonds, 2011). Māori Academic Rangimarie Turuki states that mana is fundamentally untranslatable as it has dimensions of control, power, respect, leadership, and authority interwoven together. Men and women can both have mana, and it is not a person's gender that portrays their mana but it is the enthusiasm and passion that sets them apart from others (Winitana, 2008). The Māori concept of mana is comparable to other Indigenous understandings of mana, in Hawaii mana is linked with leadership and the capability to stand up and speak for the native people of the land (Trask, 1999, p. 94).

High profile personalities like Tariana Turia and Nania Mahuta possess these qualities, being in the media and having a voice for Māori people have enhanced these attributes. The media can influence a person's mana, by promoting one's contributions to the public domain (Winitana, 2008). Contemporarily the term mana is simply used by Māori and New Zealanders as having influence and power, which can be derived through leadership roles, sport, and business (Palmer & Masters, 2010). Consequently, this also correlates to 'Te Mana Whakahaere' (Durie, 1999) discussed in the previous chapter.

Wāhine

Generally, wāhine is translated from Māori to English as women or female (Moorfield, 2021), however the term wāhine is made of two concepts. Wā can be translated to time and Hine refers to the female essence. So, 'wāhine' can be interpreted as a certain space and time of a female's life. In Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) from birth a female travels through her life on a journey, she moves in and out of different phases, wāhine is one of those (Pihama, 2001).

Mana Wāhine can, therefore, be explained as a collection of times and moments in a woman's life where she has had to be strong and show leadership. Similarly, Forster et al. (2016) observes that Mana Wāhine is connected to women's leadership in a multifaceted manner as the concept acknowledges the multiple contributions of women in Māori society. Awatere

(1984) however argued that Mana Wāhine cannot occur until tino rangatiratanga (Māori sovereignty) has been achieved.

When connected mana and wāhine can have many meanings and interpretations. Mana Wāhine exists throughout Aotearoa and the wider Pacific. Brandy McDougall (2016) an Indigenous researcher recounts that in Hawai'i Mana Wāhine refers to the idea women have the power to bring new life into the world. "Sexual power and political power are very close in the Hawaiian mind" and women hold that power (pp. 29–30).

Naomi Simmonds suggests that Mana Wāhine is often recognized as a form of Māori Feminism; Mana Wāhine is not anti-men or anti-Māori men, rather it is about deconstructing oppression (Simmonds, 2011). Similarly argued in Hawaii, Mana Wāhine should not be confused with Western/normative views of feminism (McDougall, 2016). Te Awekotuku (1984, p. 333) states that Mana Wāhine should be about honoring where we have come from, what we are and what we are becoming. Which aligns to a Māori Whakatāukī (proverb) "*titiro whakamuri, kia koke whakamua"* (look to the past to move forward), recognising that Māori perceptions and futures are shaped by the past. Finally, Forster et al, (2016) argues "Mana Wāhine supports continued empowerment and expression of power and authority of women" (p. 326), for this research, I will be guided by this concept as it fits best with the current study.

Women are strong and powerful

A woman's body is and has always been strong and capable, however building strength and muscles have been historically frowned upon and discouraged. In Western society women were thought to be weak and frail, this ideology has placed many barriers on women participating in sport, especially 'masculine' sports involving power and strength. In fact, women's muscularity and strength is often seen to be abnormal and not 'ladylike' (Govan-

Brace, 2004; Grogan et al., 2004; MacShane, 2014). The sport of weightlifting for women is surprisingly a modern concept and is rapidly growing. This research analyses women in the sport of weightlifting and what role weightlifting has in facilitating empowerment for Māori women.

Weightlifting for women

In broad terms weightlifting as a sport can be defined as a competitive event of lifting a loaded barbell of a particular weight in a prescribed manner (Collins Dictionary, 2012; MacShane, 2014). For this research lifting will include Olympic lifting, powerlifting and weightlifting.

Olympic weightlifting is a competitive strength sport consisting of two lifts, the snatch which involves one movement from ground to overhead and the clean and jerk which is two movements from the ground to the shoulders and then to an overhead position. Athletes compete in weight class, gender, and age; this strength sport tests explosive speed-strength (Gamble, 2013, p. 100). Olympic weightlifting has been around for many years and has featured in the summer Olympic Games since 1920. Women have only recently been permitted to compete, debuting at the world championships in 1987 and subsequently the Olympics in 2000 (Bonini, 2020, p. 394).

Powerlifting is also a competitive strength sport involving three barbell movements, Deadlift, Bench Press and Squat. Athletes enter competition dependent on age, gender, and weight class. The first world championship was in 1971, powerlifting was more accepting of women's participation (Bonini, 2020); including females in 1980 only 9 years after the first championship. The association was much more accommodating to woman in comparison to the long-sighted 80 years waiting for acceptance into Olympic weightlifting. Academic Paulina Rodriguez (2016) reports that powerlifting assisted the progress of women's'

participation in weightlifting, helping open the doors to Olympic weightlifting and other strength sports (p. 36).

Benefits and barriers for women in weightlifting

The WHO has recognized the importance of weightlifting[7], recently they have updated the physical activity recommendations to include muscle-strengthening activities for all major muscle groups for 2 days each week at a minimum (Bull et al., 2020, p. 1456). Weightlifting for women specifically has consistently shown positive benefits for physical and mental health (Govan-Brace, 2004; Harne & Bixby, 2015; Koplas et al., 2012; Westcott, 2012). Weightlifting can assist with increasing body satisfaction, for example, Henry et al.(2006), examined 72 college females who were assigned to one of three exercise programs for 12 weeks group A; participated in aerobic exercise, group B; interval circuit training with weights and group C; a control group (no exercise). The weight training group experienced significantly greater improvement in overall evaluation of appearance and health self-evaluation, thus showing a greater improvement in self-esteem and consequently personal empowerment. This is supported by Jan Govan-Brace's work on woman weightlifters who participated in either weight training, powerlifting or Olympic weightlifting. All women described how proud they were of themselves as different to other women, or normative ideals regarding femininities. They all expressed feelings of mastery and capability through being powerful and having well developed strength. However outside of the gym most women had experienced exclusion from 'normal' unathletic woman, and they were often stared at and teased for being too muscular (Govan-Brace, 2004). Most of these women felt this treatment created a rebellious affect,

[7] Much of the literature available focused on strength training as opposed to weightlifting as a sport. Additional strength training-based sports have also been considered such a body building in an attempt to unravelling information which might also be relevant.

making them endure training until success was reached. The development of personally empowerment, life balance, self-esteem, self-control, increased perceptions of body image, and self-confidence has been well documented and supported by research (Horan, 2022; McGrath & Chananie-Hill, 2009; Probert et al., 2007). In contrast there are many perceived barriers for women including weight training takes too much time and effort, some women find it not 'women appropriate' and find it hard to find training partners, along with fears of becoming too muscular or getting injured (Govan-Brace, 2004; Harne & Bixby, 2015; Salvatore & Marecek, 2010; Walters et al., 2020). Another common barrier is the picture media has painted on what the 'ideal' female body should look like. Five-time world weightlifting champion Tataiana Kashrina has faced years of criticism that focuses on her gender and looks. Journalists have made many comments that she has too much muscle and lacks feminine traits (Sherouse, 2016). It is this type of media narrative that creates ideologies of what the female body 'should' look like and is found in many 'muscular' sports not just weightlifting.

Weightlifting for women in Aotearoa

Women's weightlifting in Aotearoa, specifically through the lens of an Indigenous women, has not yet been investigated. This investigation draws from research in and outside of Aotearoa and combined with activities beyond the sport of weightlifting, such as physical activity. There is a selection of academic, nonacademic and media articles related to strength and/or 'muscular' sports intertwined with Māori and indigenous women in sport, which helped me weave together the concepts of weightlifting for women in Aotearoa and what it might look like through the lens of Mana Wāhine values.

Powerlifting in New Zealand started to grow in the 1970s, following with the establishment of New Zealand Powerlifting Association in 1985. New Zealand host a powerlifting national championship annually and competes in the Oceania, Commonwealth and World powerlifting

championships (New Zealand Powerlifting Federation, 2021). On the global stage New Zealand women thrive, and in particular Wāhine Māori. We currently have three females that descend from Māori heritage, that hold World Champion titles in different age and weight classes. Cathy Millen, world champion in 1992 (82.5kg), 1991 (75kg) and 1994 (90kgs), Soania Manaena of Māori decent who was World Champion two times in her weight class (84+kg) and Maria Brightwater-Wharf world champion in the under 63kg category (Clayworth, 2015a; Daly, 2015).

In New Zealand Olympic weightlifting has been around longer than powerlifting, it became an organized sport in the 1930s. The New Zealand amateur weightlifting association was set up in 1935 alongside the National Championship. In 1950 New Zealand held the British Empire Games (currently named commonwealth games) where weightlifting appeared for the first time (Clayworth, 2015b). New Zealand produced our first female Commonwealth medalist in 2002, Olivia Lee (nee Baker) winning a silver medal in the 75+kg category. This sport has recently had a huge spike in female participation, in 2018 female's outnumbered male participants at the New Zealand Championship (64 men and 65 women), consequently in 2021 three out of five New Zealand Representatives attending The Olympics for Weightlifting were female including Kanah Andrews-Nahu of Māori decent. Māori and other indigenous women are flourishing in strength sports, yet there has been little research as to what may possibly be the appeal.

Indigenous health and wellbeing researcher Lyn Lavallée investigated Indigenous women who were participating in a martial arts program. It was found that physical activity served as a catalyst for personal wellbeing and empowerment. Participating in the martial arts programmes helped the women increase self-esteem and learn about their cultural identity (Lavallée, 2008). Similarly, McGuire-Adams (2017) conducted research on Anishinaabeg (a native American

tribe of Canada) women and found that physical activity empowered them to have confidence and understand their own strengths. One participant was an Olympic weightlifter she explained how lifting was her happy place, she stated “I really love Olympic weightlifting and I [am] good at it. I love the speed of it. I love the strength part of it. I love throwing heavy [weights] around and mentally it is my happy place’.

The concept of Mana Wāhine as I have used it to underpin this research is a continued expression of power, authority, and empowerment, (Forster et al., 2016). In Hawai’i Mana Wāhine is equal to muscular power and should not be confused with feminism (McDougall, 2016), perhaps Māori and Polynesia wāhine have always been strong and muscular but through colonization we have had a change of beliefs and concepts. In an newspaper article (Daly, 2015) powerlifting world champion Maria explained how she admired the strength of women who participated in lifting weights "It just looked like they were strong and confident, and I knew it was due to them lifting weights and working with weights. I wanted that feeling too,". Similarly, statement by Althea Boon NZ born Fijian women who has represented NZ in multiple sports (gymnastics, CrossFit and weightlifting). She explains that “Lifting weights is great for your physical and mental health, particularly in young females where body image issues are so common. Having muscles has become acceptable and strength is now seen as beauty”, she goes on to explain that weightlifting is inclusive and does not depend on size, aesthetics or age (Cowley-Ross, 2018).

As Māori and Indigenous women, we have been disempowered in many ways over a long period of time and when a person or a group has been disempowered for so long, it is hard to be instantly emancipated especially as this requires consciousness raising which takes time. With this said, it could it be women and in particularly Māori women are already showing the

world “they are strong, they are powerful” through the sport of weightlifting, without necessarily conceiving of it has gender empowerment.

Te Whare Tapa Wha / Health and wellbeing

As discussed previously being physically active and participating in weightlifting can led to increased overall wellness and health. Durie’s model of Te Whare Tapa Wha (the four sides of a house) describes health and wellbeing from Māori perspective, this model is widely used throughout Aotearoa as a model for health interventions. Te Whare Tapa Wha is a holistic approach to health, the walls of the whare (house) illustrate four foundations or sides of a person’s health (Campbell, 2020). Like a whare (house) the four walls create an interconnected foundation. The concept is with four equally strong foundations Te Whare Tapa Wha is fundamentally robust. If one of the four dimensions is weak or damaged a person or community can become unbalanced and consequently led to unwellness (Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora, 2017). As shown in Figure 3.1, this concept of hauora (health) incorporates four realms of wellbeing, taha tinana (physical wellness), taha wairua (spiritual wellness), taha hinengaroa (mental and emotional wellbeing), taha whānau (social wellbeing). When these four foundations are balanced it is believed that a person or community will flourish, if one of more of these walls are unstable our overall health is affected (Durie, 1994). **Figure 3.1** shows a review of Te Whare Tapa Wha with the addition of environment and Te Reo Rangatira/ first language of New Zealand. For Māori, spiritual connection to the environment is essential to health as it connects one’s mauri/life force and wairua/spirit to the setting they are in. Linking wairua (spirituality) and to the environment is a fundamental component for overall hauora (health). Taha Wairua encompasses value systems and beliefs that determine that way one lives, personal identity and for some individuals and communities it can be linked to a region for others not so much (Robertson, 2021). Therefore environment and connection to that

environment provides a strong setting for the four pillars to stand (Durie, 1994; Thorp, 2011) . Te Puni Kokiri (Ministry of Māori Development) state that alongside spiritual connection to the environment, knowledge of Te Reo Rangatira (first language of New Zealand) and Māori tikanga/customs are key indicators of Māori health (Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand, 2002; Rochford, 2004).

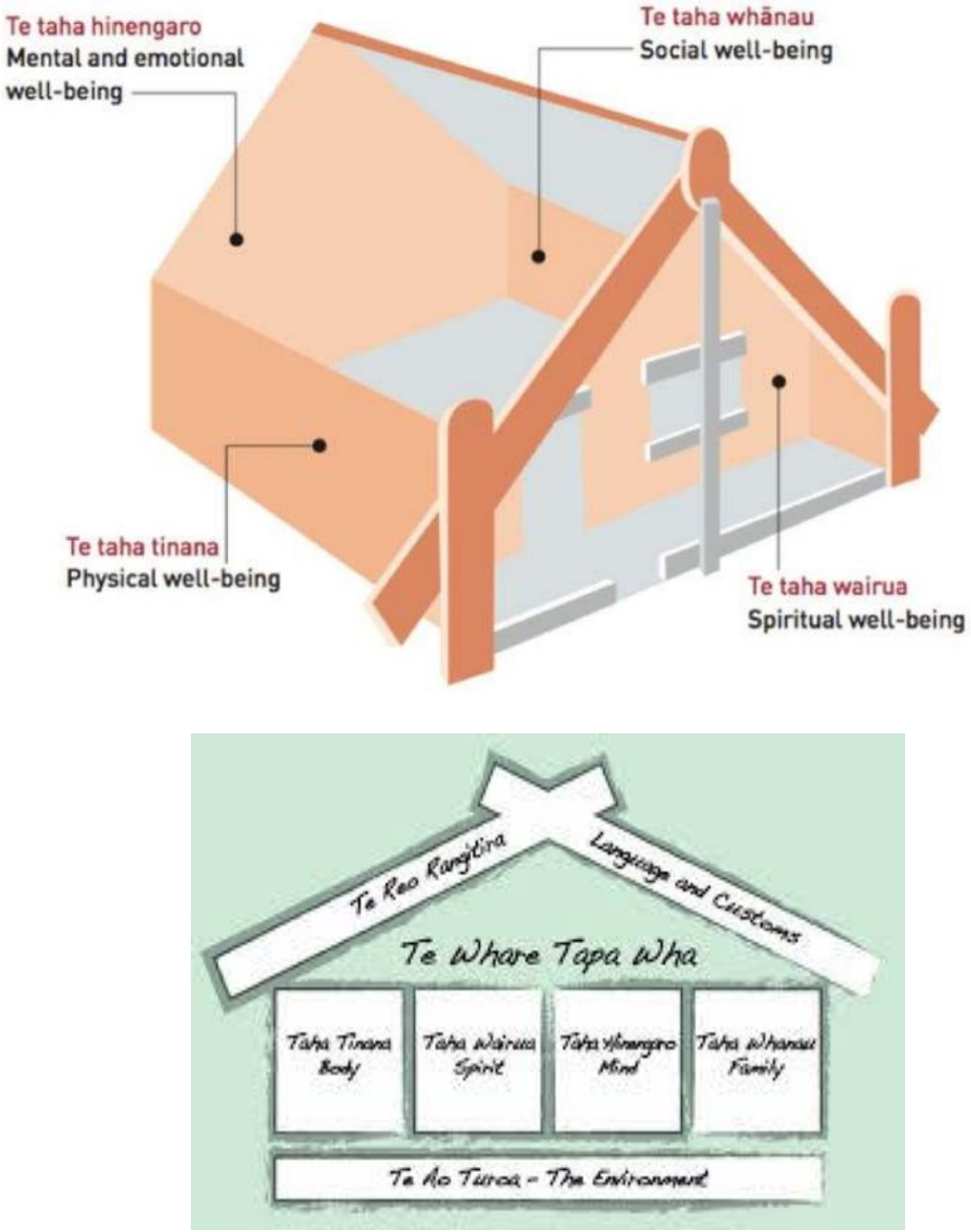

Figure 3.1: Te Whare Tapa Wha Concept of Health (Durie, 1994).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the status Māori women hold in Aotearoa, with connections to health being made. Health in general, is complicated and is affected by multiple dimensions, including a person's characteristics and behaviours, genetics, social factors, and the state of one's environment (World Health Organisation, 2017). For women and even more so Māori women health is further complicated with the addition of marginalisation and colonisation. Weightlifting is a relatively new concept for women; however, it provides a space for women to step out of the 'normal' non masculine sports that we have traditionally been encouraged to participate in.

As mentioned earlier empowerment is a complex concept, however when self-empowerment is reached it can lead to transformation not only at the individual level but also at community level (Rissel, 1994). Personal, relational, and collective empowerment can directly link to the Te Whare Tapa Wha framework presented in this chapter. For people who are marginalised empowerment requires consciousness raising, thus leading to confidence in their ability to make systematically changes and increase their overall health. Te Whare Tapa Wha concept interconnects important elements for Māori women and it has the capacity to empower individuals to improve health and life (Thorp, 2011). Interweaving both the ideas seen in the empowerment framework and the Te Whare Tapa Wha concepts could certainly be beneficial to understanding Indigenous sporting initiatives. The next chapter describes the procedures and methods used in this investigation of how weightlifting could possibly be a vehicle for empowerment and if it algins with Mana Wāhine values.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

Literature has established the sport of weightlifting has both physiological and psychological benefits for women (Brace-Govan, 2002; Govan-Brace, 2004; Harne & Bixby, 2015; Walters et al., 2020; Westcott, 2012). However, there is limited research investigating Māori women and how the benefits of weightlifting may align and consequently strengthen Mana Wāhine values. This research attempts to bring to life the voices of Māori women who participate in weightlifting and how the sport has impacted their lives. Illuminated in this chapter is the methodology drawn upon to answer the two research questions, that is the research design, ethical consideration and then how the data was collected and analysed. Some of the study's limitation are discussed to conclude the chapter.

Research Design

To date there has been no research on wāhine Māori who participate in sport of weightlifting in Aotearoa or within the context of how weightlifting could be used as a vehicle for Mana Wāhine empowerment. Therefore, the first research question will explore the role that weightlifting in developing personal, relational, and collective empowerment for women. The second research question looks at how empowerment aligns with strengthening Mana Wāhine values.

This investigation was set up as a qualitative case study, to step deeper into field of weightlifting in Aotearoa and pursue, illuminate and explore information-rich findings from wāhine. Stewart-Withers et al. (2014) observes that qualitative research can assist us in finding out the participants motivations, values, culture and aspirations with the goal of understanding the 'how', 'what' and 'why' regarding the research questions. By asking questions like "why

is that?" and 'what happened during that time?' allows the participants to be active in the discussion and can draw out deep understandings of their views (Scheyvens, 2014, pp. 60–61).

Semi-structed interviews (SSI) were used as a method of data collection. This interview structure is characterized by a series of open-ended interview questions, followed by sub-questions which allows the interviewer to probe and stimulate an open discussion allowing personal views to emerge (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The interviews were conducted in this way to explore women's insights, experiences, and attitudes. Harvey and Long (2001) describe SSI as way to open up the interview providing space for conversation and sub-topics to develop. This process helped the participants opinions to come to life. Many qualitative methods by their nature can be empowering, which is in line with feminist theoretical approaches to doing research where women's voices are privileged, and simultaneously Mana Wāhine values. Marshall and Rossman (2016) argue that feminist perspectives integrate and recognise numerous intersectionality's of individuals. Gender is not the only essential category to consider in research. Therefore we must consider multiple aspects that are weaved together including gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, language, age, class, physical and physiological health and so forth (pp. 28–29).

Kaupapa Māori Research

Kaupapa Māori research facilitates a Māori view to inform the research process and provides a chance for Māori voices and experiences to be illuminated in the research. Walker et al, (2006) state 'Kaupapa Māori Research has been defined as research by Māori, for Māori with Māori'. Throughout Aotearoa many academics and researchers use a Kaupapa Māori Theory in different forms to guide and shape their research. Linda Pihama wrote that it is important to understand that Kaupapa Māori Theory is not new concept however it is 'new' terminology in

academia. The theoretical framework is not set in concrete, it is a flowing and evolving context (Pihama, 2001, pp. 77–96).

While this research does not claim to be kaupapa Māori research there are a number of ideas which resonated with me as Māori woman new to research and in my own personal journey as a researcher. As such this is something I intend to learn more about. My main rationale for not taking a kaupapa approach was Covid restriction made it difficult to spend time with people, in the way I would want to, especially kanohi kitea, in being the seen present face. Also confines and time frame of 60 credit research also made me feel I would not do justice to the process. When I reflect on **Figure 4.1** Māori Ethical Framework I conceived of my work as sitting more within the middle sphere, work which is Māori-centred, and tried to function in way so as to still consider things how I engaged in terms of my relationship with people, and notions of justice and equity, for example.

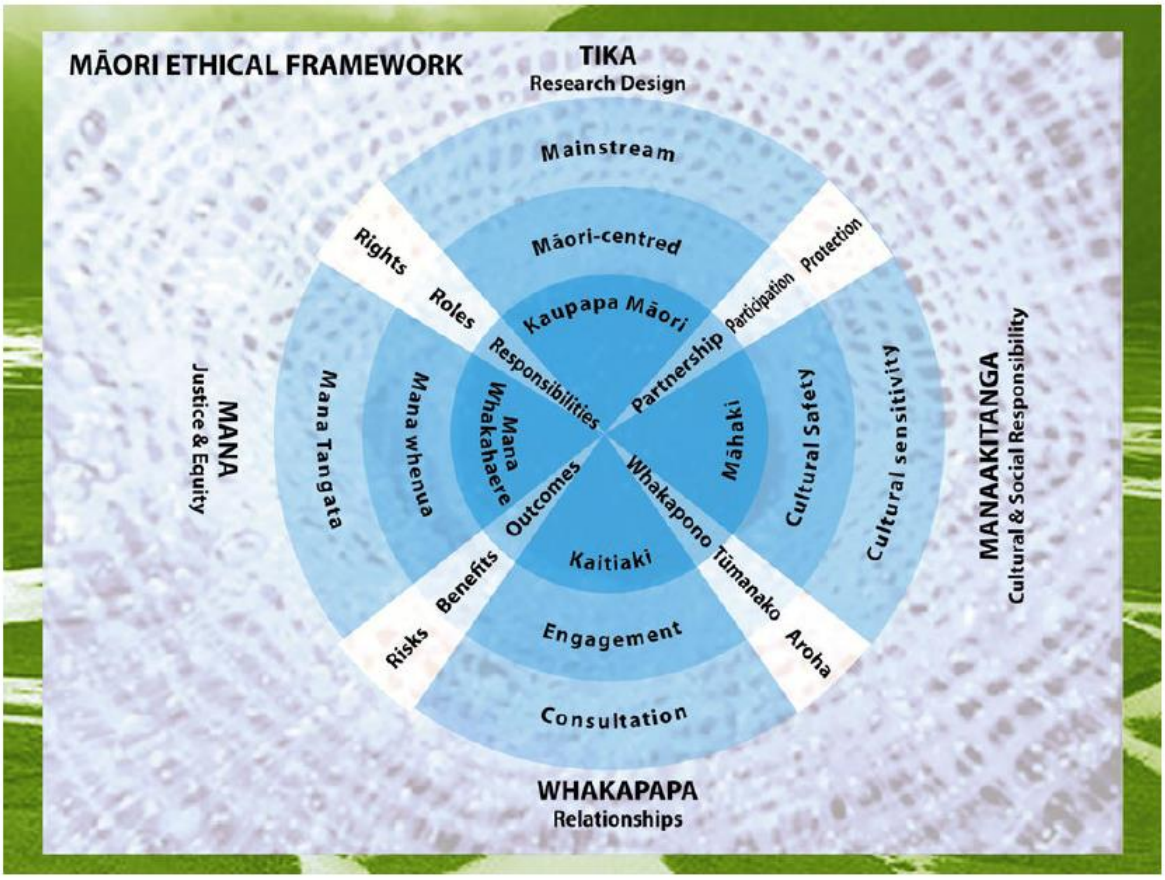

Figure 4.1: Māori Ethical Framework (Hudson et al., 2019).

Ethics approval processes

In accordance with the Massey University Human Ethical Code of Conduct for research involving human participants, the researcher ensured the basic human rights of respect for persons, autonomy, privacy and confidentiality, and incorporated the principles implicit in the Treaty of Waitangi and the Te Ara Tika Māori ethical framework (Massey University, 2017). Careful consideration was given to manaakitanga and treating people with cultural sensitivity, dignity, and respect. Three chapters were completed to the satisfaction of my supervisor prior to getting in-house ethics approval from Massey University's Development Studies programme. As this research was deemed to be low risk (See Appendix 1), full Massey University ethics approval was not sought. The researcher has no conflict of interest to disclose.

Behaving ethically

In addition to the aforementioned, I was guided by several principals similar to those outlined by Te Awekotuku (1991) and Smith (2003), seen below in Table 4.1 Principles for Culturally Ethical Research Behaviours are the principals that underpin research behaviour and elements of culturally specific ethics in the research process.

Table 4.1: Principles for Culturally Ethical Research Behaviours (Smith, 2003)

Aroha ki te tangata	A respect for people
Kanohi kitea	The seen face, present yourself face-to-face
Titiro, whakarongo korero	Look, listen, speak
Manaaki ki te tangata	Share and host people, be generous
Kia tūpato	Be cautious
Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata	Do not trample over the mana of the people
Kaua e mahaki	Do not flaunt your knowledge

In summary, qualitative research employing a participatory structure can be a useful strategy with Indigenous people (Bird et al., 2009). The process can be designed according to values, such as those above, so as to uphold and bring to the fore the voices of Indigenous people and thus share their knowledge as they see fit (Bird et al., 2009, p. 18). I now look to explain my recruitment processes and sample size in light of these voices.

Participants Recruitment and Sample Size

The sample size of Indigenous Māori women in weightlifting is small and specific. I aimed to recruit wāhine Māori who were all actively participating in the sport of weightlifting as athletes

or coaching wāhine Māori. Wherever I could it was my intention to also participate. For the purpose of my sample, all participants had to meet the following criteria:

- Work with /coach, wāhine Māori in weightlifting.
- Identify themselves as a wāhine Māori weightlifter, powerlifter or strongwomen athlete
- Possess a willingness to talk to me about their views on the way wāhine Māori have developed personal, relational, and collective empowerment through strength sports and how empowerment could align with Mana Wāhine values.

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling and whanaungatanga (connectedness). Purposeful sampling aims to seek and select participants who will have information rich cases, that can illuminate and bring light to the research questions (Patton, 2002, p. 230, see also O'Leary, 2017).

Whakawhanuangatanga is significant in determining engagement with communities and allowing time and space for relationships to establish (Jones et al., 2006). As I am currently involved in weightlifting as a competitor and a committee member on the New Zealand Weightlifting Sports Commission, I utilized connections amongst my networks to distribute the information form (Appendix 2) and selected some participants who I thought might be able to convey information rich conversations. One of my supervisor's colleagues Dr Farah Palmer has a connection with a gym owner, who established a club called 'Wāhine Strength Club'. This connection was also utilized to draw those who participate and who founded a club specifically to empower wāhine through strength sports. In Table 4.2 which follows details surrounding the research participants are presented.

Table 4.2: List of Research Participants					
Participant	Pseudonym	Sport	Age	Gender	Leadership Role
One	Rawiri	Olympic Weightlifting	39	Male	Olympic Weightlifting Coach + Weightlifting New Zealand Board member
Two	Tia	Strong Woman	35	Female	Ally for women + Māori women.
Three	Tui	Olympic Weightlifting	42	Female	Nutrition coach + committee member for Marae and Hapū.
Four	Rahera	Olympic Weightlifting	35	Female	Life Coach
Five	Manaia	Strong Woman	39	Female	Coach women and Māori women in a strength sport.
Six	Hania	Olympic Weightlifting	52	Female	Weightlifting Coach
Seven	Tarina	Olympic Weightlifting	45	Female	CrossFit Coach
Eight	Kohine	Olympic Weightlifting	20	Female	Weightlifting coach
Nine	Hana	Power Lifting	50	Female	Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation for Māori organisation
Ten	Tamara	Olympic Weightlifting	21	Female	Weightlifting coach

Data Collection

As noted, the main method to collect data was semi-structured interviews (SSI). Most of the interviews were done in person, however within the context of COVID and various restrictions and ensuing variants such a omicron some interviews were conducted online via ZOOM. Even though this is on video, and we can see each other it is not the same as face – to face. In an ideal setting all interviews would have been conducted kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face), whereby only seven out of the ten interviews were kanohi ki te kanohi. Patton et.al (2002) suggest that having direct contact with people in their own environments develops closeness and a shared sense of empathy and confidentiality, therefore participants are more likely to feel connected with the researchers. This also speaks to kaupapa Māori values of kanohi ki te

kanohi. Kanohi ki te Kanohi is a physical, interactive way of communicating. Researcher Acushla O'Carroll suggest that face to face communication is a foundational process for many practices of Tikanga Māori. When this process is used there is expectation that the speaker will ethically stand by their words and maintain integrity (O'Carroll, 2013, p. 231).

Twelve potential participants were contacted and indicated their interest to participate in the study. Initially I either called or talked kanohi ki te kanohi with each participant ensuring they understood the research, their expectations, and their rights as a participant. The initial conversation was also completed to ensure they meet the criteria before we booked in the interview. Each participant was asked if I could digitally record and safely store the interview recording for the purpose of capturing the true essence, mana, and pūrākau (stories)/ korero (conversation). An overview of the study and an information sheet (Appendix 2) was given to each of the participants, along with the participant consent form (Appendix 3). These were explained verbally to each participant and signed before the interview commenced.

Each conversation was organised at a time, day and place that was convenient to the individual. Five interviews were done in a gym setting where the participate trained, two in cafés and three online via ZOOM. Two other participants were contacted however due to the context of Corona Virus and the omicron variant I was unable to make a connection with them. The preference of each interview was to be kanohi ki te kanohi, however due to timings and COVID restrictions, travel to some participants was not viable. Out of the 12 individuals identified to participate 10 completed the interviews (see Appendix 4).

Nine wāhine /women and one tane/male met the selection criteria and participated in the study. All participants were aged between 20 – 50 years old and have been participating in strength sports as an athlete or coach or both. There was six female and one male who were current or past Olympic weightlifters, two female strong women competitors and one power lifter. All

participants were of Māori decent or coached wāhine Māori or were allies (Whitinui, 2021) of Māori women in strength sport. Participants resided in Waikato, Bay of Plenty and the Manawatu as this is where most of our connections were, they all identified with different and multiple iwi, hapū and whānau throughout Aotearoa. While they all shared something in common which was love of training and the barbell, they all had different journeys and pūrākau about where they are today and why they love and participate in strength sports.

In summary, in Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) pūrākau tended to be historically located and were used to pass information down through generations. Pūrākau assist Māori in understanding the world and offer an insight to issues in a cultural sense (Forster et al., 2016). SSI provided an opportunity for participants to illustrate visions with their voices, tell stories and as the interviewer I felt well positioned to probe for bolder discussions, while at the same time being conscious of important cultural and ethical values.

Data Analysis

The reliability of findings in this research was obtained through keeping comprehensive fieldwork notes of interviews and observations from attending training sessions and competitions where possible, difficult in a COVID context. An audio-recorder, ZOOM recorder, was used to record interviews so the researcher could concentrate on the relationships and the pūrākau. Recording of interviews is also helpful for accuracy of wording later. The interviews were then transcribed, scrutinised using a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis provides opportunity for investigators to code and analyse data thoroughly in a structed process. The process enables themes, theories, and new concepts to emerge from the data (Cooper et al., 2012). Step 1, verbatim for the direct purpose of being able to understand the entire pūrākau with the intention that direct quotes could be drawn upon to showcase the voices of Mana Wāhine. Following transcription, Step 2 was where I sought to read (and re-read) the

transcripts and highlighting common themes. In Step 3 I was looking for anything discussing the empowerment components and Mana Wāhine values and highlighting these to group together in findings.

Due to the smaller nature of this research, this form of analysis for the interviews was appropriate for its size as “it is better to become intimate with your raw data and you do this by reading and re-reading your transcripts, sorting and coding and re-sorting and re-coding your data” (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014, p. 76). The interviews produced primarily interpretive data, which is made up of people's opinions, beliefs and reported behaviours (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), which is conducive to the descriptive nature of qualitative data.

While on one hand every explanation was closely documented, so the participant's interpretation was clear and so as to avoid researcher’s suggestions as to what was happening (Creswell, 2014), on the other hand it is also well known that in qualitative research the researcher is also a co-constructer of knowledge (Stewart-Withers, et al., 2014). So rather than trying to mitigate bias one looks to acknowledge one’s positionality, as discussed, the start of this thesis, and seeks to behave reflexively and acknowledges subjectivities.

In keeping with O’Leary (2017) who has identified criteria for trusting the research is credible in qualitative research, I aimed for dependability, (which is the extent to which the findings are relevant to a different time), transferability (the extent to which the findings are relevant to similar situations), creditability (the extent to which the findings are believable by others in the discipline) and confirmability (the extent to which the researcher has managed subjectivities). O’Leary (2017) also suggests using data saturation (when new data no longer adds richness to understanding) to achieve credibility. Data saturation occurred to an extent in this research as I was hearing the same or similar key messages coming through from participants. Of huge

importance and as discussed earlier, was how I behaved ethically, and the values which underpinned my research process.

Themes identified for empowerment for women were development of the self, body satisfaction/body image, ability to set goals, building better relationships and collective empowerment. Themes recognised for Mana Wāhine were sense of authority, manaakitanga (generosity) for others and a kaupapa of strong wāhine.

Limitations

In this investigation there are several sources for error, or limitations. Due to the Covid-19 Omicron outbreak nationwide travel restrictions were set in place from the government which limited access to be face-to-face and present within the interview setting. This led to limited travel outside of regional areas, resulting in several SSI being done online via ZOOM. Therefore, genuine kanohi ki te kanohi connections may have been hindered. The notion of kanohi ki te kanohi is an important practice in Māori culture as in invokes physical and spiritual facets of a relationship (O'Carroll, 2013). This restriction also meant I was unable to undertake participant observation as many competitions and training sessions had limited capacity numbers or were cancelled. Marshall and Rossman (2016, p. 145) note that participant observation is an essential element of quantitative research. Being immersed in a setting allows the investigator to experience the reality how and what the participants do. The sounds of a training hall and the subtle way people seek approval from a senior can all be noted in a real-life setting. These types of observations cannot be found in an SSI interview setting via ZOOM.

Another limitation was my positionality as a weightlifting athlete. On one hand it was positive because I have connections and relationships with people in the weightlifting scene, I understand what it is like training and participating in strength sport and understand what it is like being a Māori female participating in a masculine sport. However, on the other hand I had

to genuinely reflect to ensure that I was not making assumptions about people based on the intimate inside knowledge of what constitutes someone who is weightlifting. For example, from a sport perspective I might not think a person is a weightlifter because she is not competitive, but from the individual's perspective she is engaged in weightlifting therefore sees herself as a weightlifter. An understanding of an investigator's positionality, biasness, and personal values one brings to the research is fundamental. It is important to understand that findings cannot be generalised for all sporting organisations (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014). I had to constantly analyse and unpack my bias opinions and positionality, I often asked for my supervisor advice in this space as I needed support in this area. The above limitations should be taken into account for this research

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a clear outline of the planning and execution of this investigation. The importance of using a kaupapa Māori way of research when working with Māori was presciently expressed throughout this chapter. An overall description of each subject was provided along with an overview of the procedure untaken to generate data that enabled me to achieve the aim of this investigation and answer the research questions. I discussed the steps used to analyse the data collected, step 1) transcribing all interviews, step 2) colour coding common themes; step 3) grouping findings that discussed empowerment components and Mana Wāhine values. Following this I talked about some limitations and difficulties faced while conducting field work. The research findings will be presented in Chapter Five, followed by a discussion of these findings and concluding points in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five: Findings

Ma te rongo, ka mōhio,

Ma te mōhio, ka marama,

Ma te marama, ka matau,

Ma te matau, ka ora.

Through discussion we learn,

through learning we enlighten,

through enlightenment we are empowered,

through empowerment the well-being of the people is achieved.

Introduction

Chapter Five is where the findings of the research are presented. For the first research question five broad themes emerged from the analysis; 1) development of the self; 2) body satisfaction/body image; 3) ability to set goals; 4) building better relationships and 5) building a community. I now look present these findings, privileging also the voices of the participants as quotes.

Research Question 1: What is the role of weightlifting in developing personal, relational, and collective empowerment for women?

Development of the self

Each contributor to this research was active in either powerlifting, strong women or Olympic weightlifting training. The women who participated in this research indicated how weightlifting assisted their self-development, and it was an important factor in many of their learnings. There was a consensus that the participants valued not only their physical health and

muscular strength but also their mental health and wellbeing. A common understanding amongst the interviewees was that through weightlifting, the feeling of being physically strong transferred to other areas of their lives and they reported development of resilience through participation and the importance of having a balanced lifestyle.

As one interviewee stated:

> *"It's a bonus having a body that looks like it's been in the gym, but it [weightlifting] has [also] been a positive vehicle for the mental side of health. The discipline you use in weightlifting spreads to all parts of your life. For example: that was a really bad lifting session, but oh well I will come back tomorrow. You know this is only one session, we have 100 sessions to worlds, nationals, or regionals. That concept carries over to other areas [of life]"* (Hania).

Understanding your physical and mental wellbeing is also a process of learning:

> *"Like anything there are lows and highs, right? It's about being able to cope with things, that's a part of life. Training, plus injuries, has made me so much more aware of myself. Getting my body and brain working well together, is hard but it is a work on. Before my injury I found that I had tied myself to weightlifting and I was nothing without it. Through the injury recovery process, I found my identity without weightlifting. I have come back better after the break, and I am mentally stronger; it has helped me develop inside and outside of weightlifting"* (Tamara).

There was a consensus that most of the wãhine were aware of the mental health benefits that weightlifting offers. The majority of participants agreed with the statement that through participation in strength training their self-confidence and self-awareness had increased.

Kohine reported that:

> *"Before weightlifting I wasn't exercising regularly, but now with regular exercise my moods are a lot better, I have something to wake up for and chip away at my goals. It [weightlifting] has made me happier and more confident"* (Kohine).

This notion was also supported by other participants.

> *"It has been a massive change for me mentality. When I first starting at the gym I would walk in with music in my ears and my head down, looking at the ground. I would walk right from the front door to the back, and I could not tell you what a single person looked like. I was tunnel visioned. My theory was if I can't see anyone, they can't see me. Whereas now I can walk in say 'Hi' to people and just do my training"* (Tia).

In agreement Hana reports:

> *"Now I'm more confident than before I started weightlifting, and as you go along your journey you hit obstacles and you might lose a bit of confidence and you must get it back again. You might work extra harder, and you hit another obstacle and you go back a bit. I guess that comes with weightlifting and developing more goals."* (Hana).

The participants overall demonstrated increased self-confidence and self-awareness, some interviewees mentioned that through weightlifting they have learnt about other aspects of health including eating well, hydration, importance of quality sleep and maintaining a well-balanced lifestyle.

"It's the discipline you learn, we could all use those learnings in life, like how to look after yourself in all aspects of health. Sleep, water and healthy food; I have really lived and practiced this through weightlifting" (Hania).

Whilst most of the outcomes were positive a small number of interviewees felt this lifestyle impacted their financial situation. Being performance focused and driven meant they made career sacrifices, as training and recovery protocols are demanding.

"One disadvantage is I don't prioritise income and I stopped working so much so I can train properly" (Kohine).

This was echoed by another woman,

"I stopped full time work to do weightlifting only. I treated it like a job; I lift for 2 hours in the morning, 2 hours in the afternoon and during the day do some swimming, go for a massage treated it like an actual job" (Tarina).

Although these wāhine have made sacrifices in terms their income, they are happy to put weightlifting first at this point and time in their lives and were content with the choices they have made.

"Financially it's not great but if you can manage it and you're lucky enough to be able to do it, go for it. So, if you can do that, I highly recommend it" (Tarina).

The chapter now looks to present the findings as to how wāhine felt about their body image and body satisfaction.

Body Satisfaction / Body Image

The majority of the participants highlighted that they were proud of their bodies and the hard work they have undertaken to gain physical strength and muscle mass. They shared similar

whakaaro/thoughts around being happy with the size and look of their bodies and being grateful for what their bodies can do in terms of performance. Tia stated,

> *"I may not be a skinny or slim person walking through the gym, but I am still walking through there 100% better than I used to because of the strength I now have"* (Tia).

This was supported by another wāhine:

> *"For me it's never been about what I look like, I have always wanted to be good at whatever sport I am doing. For me that is the pay off. How you look is just a secondary bonus of the training you are doing. In our sport it doesn't matter what you look like, the number on the scale doesn't matter. The number on the bar is what matters"* (Tui).

The numbers on the weight scales and tags on clothing sizing did not seem to faze most wāhine, this view was support by another informant who stated:

> *"I am very grateful for what my body can do. Rather than worrying about if I'm going to fit into a size 16 or a size 10. It is also an injury free body, so I'm grateful for that"* (Hania).

Majority of participants agreed with the statement that they were not on a diet or trying to manipulate their aesthetics, but they were more focused on performing well and being grateful to have no injuries. However, some reservations were also expressed about seeing the numbers on the scale increase, even though they were gaining muscle not fat.

> *"I feel good about it [my body], however, sometimes the scale factor is [still] a mentality hard thing for me. This is a different weight and I know that. I am about 100kgs, I look at myself and then I look at someone else who is 100kgs. I am then reminded that it is muscle, but I have to keep reminding myself"* (Manaia).

Another interviewee also discussed having some concerns regarding increasing numbers on the scales when moving up weight classes. However, they recognised this was important for their performance and it was not about the look of their body. Whilst some struggled initially with weight changes, others reported that weightlifting had assisted in shifting how they conceived of and valued their bodies.

> *"When I was younger, I was a bit insecure but now I just don't think about it. I am the strongest I have ever been. I am a lot stronger and more confident. Gaining muscle makes me feel better about myself"* (Kohine).

This was supported by Rahera's statement,

> *"I became less focussed on how my body looked and more on how I felt about my body. I changed from 'skinny' being a virtue, to how I feel about my body. This is a positive mental shift and outcome from the training, and I am super grateful for that. I feel strong in my body, I look strong in my body, and I feel there is a correlation"* (Rahera).

Ability to set goals

Turning now to the ability to set goals, in all cases, the informants reported they had goals of some type and showed confidence in their abilities to set and achieve goals. The participants overall demonstrated that development of powerful strength made them feel strong mentally and they could set and achieve goals. In the conversations it was found the wāhine/women enjoyed working towards goals and had processes to set and achieve goals.

As stated by Tarina:

"I do set goals, I always have my big goals, then I break them down into smaller sets of goals, then I will normally break things down into weekly goals. I also have little goals to keep me active… this process has worked for me" (Tarina).

Another informant stated that she had always been a goal setter even before weightlifting,

"I have always been a person who sets goals, even if they are a little bit airy fairy. But I will set it and say this is what I want to do and go do it. It is the same with power lifting. I wanted to set some records, win a gold medal and win my class and I have now done that" (Hana).

There was a consensus that most wāhine in this research experienced feelings of pleasure, mastery and wellbeing when achieving goals or hitting personal bests (PB).

One participant stated,

"It feels good, knowing I have achieved what I have set out to do. You have a big goal, but you must set these little goals along the way, so it doesn't seem too far away. My goal at the moment is to do this competition and I have always had a goal to do an international competition, I am nearly there" (Manaia).

This was echoed by Tui's statement,

"I don't know if it's the ability to lift something heavy, but it really gives you a sense of wellbeing and achievement that is hard to match. It's so empowering and it gives you such a strong sense of achievement, I also observe this with my friends. Everyone is the same if someone hits a PB they are elevated for a whole week after that" (Tui).

The next theme found in this research was the importance of building relationships.

Building better relationships / relational empowerment

It was observed that being strong physically crossed over to other aspects of the participants life's such as work, relationships, and family situations. When discussing relationships most wāhine felt that through increased self-confidence, they were able to build better relationships with others.

> *"I know that through my training I feel strong with the muscles I have and that this has transferred to other areas of my life, confidence in myself, my body, my business and in my relationships. It has strengthened all areas. It requires so much discipline. I feel like it provides me with a stable foundation"* (Rahera).

Most of the women in this study had come across judgement from others in some shape or form about participating in a 'masculine' sport. Regardless of comments and opinions the women in this research were proud of their discipline, hard work, their 'masculine' or strong bodies, and their achievements in the sport. The majority of participants were confident enough to not let other people's beliefs concern them and most participants would laugh about negative comments. This was reinforced with a statement from Tamara,

> *"I don't care about criticism, I think for me I just stick with my people, the people in my life are supportive of everything I do, and I stick by these people. We just laugh at any negative comments"* (Tamara).

Some wāhine felt that weightlifting had improved relationships with family members and work colleagues. They found that others outside of the training environment were intrigued by the notion of females participating in strength sport, in turn this sparked a new topic to korero (talk) about, making an easier conversation initiator, increasing their ability to connect with others.

"*Most people haven't heard of it, so it is definitely a conversation starter and people are interested"* (Tia).

When the participants were asked if they engaged in social outings outside of the gym a variety of perspectives were expressed. Some participants only enjoyed participating in physical activities with their training associates. As one interviewee stated:

> *'I am not into socialising that much. If it's a socialising thing to do with activities, going for walks, hike, playing volleyball, soccer, football, rugby I would be interested. But if it is just eating & drinking, I am not interested"* (Hana).

While others have built lifelong friendships and relationships that have turned into whānau (family) through the sport. One participant commented,

> *"You train with people for years and I have got some awesome relationships and friends that I have trained with for a very long time and through life basically. For me that is one of the absolute benefits of having that type of training in my life"* (Tui).

Some interviewees claimed that their social life had declined because they prioritised their sleep, rest, and training over being social, for example,

> *"I don't have much of a social life, I don't go out too many things and I don't have many friends because I prioritise my sleep, food and training over that"* (Kohine).

Thus, opinions differed broadly in terms of societal connections and relationships. The next common theme found was in the data was participants valued being a part of a small but wider community.

Collective Empowerment and supporting the kaupapa

Majority of the respondents liked having the ability to achieve goals and work towards personal aspirations individually without having to rely on other people, compared to a team situation where you must also rely on your teammates work ethic and skills to be successful. The comment below illustrates that some participants enjoyed having the control over their own outcome.

> *"If I want to win, I could do everything in my power for that to happen. I'm not a 'sooky bubba', I don't mind losing when I am out classed, but I do mind losing because I didn't prepare. That is why I went to solo sport"* (Hania).

This was confirmed by another wāhine who reported,

> *"I enjoy the connection piece, its individual but we are all still here together, but we are on our own journey. We walk our own journey at our own pace, but we support and encourage each other, but we are not dependent on each other or reliant on each other"* (Rahera).

In Aoteroa the strength sport community is small, and most individuals enjoyed being a part of a smaller individualised population. As suggested,

> *"because weightlifting is such a small community that understands the sport, it is easier to connect with other coaches and athletes. If I see a weightlifter, we have an instant connection"* (Kohine).

Connection and belonging were observations that emerged from the data, they felt connected to each other through a common passion for the lifting of weights.

There were some suggestions that having a small team of individuals felt more like being a whānau/family. Family was very important to most of the wāhine and they carried that family concept into their small teams. One coach observed,

> *"I find females are not as hungry to hunt down numbers and still need to be part of a community. In my experience most Māori and Pacific people value connection, community belonging and purpose. Compared to some of our Pākehā counterparts, they are not key necessities, and I am not saying they don't value those aspects. We are a team even though it is an individual sport there is still a team aspect to it and you need that support around you to get through"* (Rawiri).

One participant stated,

> *"Different clubs have different vibes. With Rawiri, me and Dad have always felt welcome, it could be because he is Māori, and we have an instant connection. Whereas other clubs don't have whānau vibes, it's just not as comfortable and welcoming. Rawiri always asks about family and things outside of weightlifting and the girls are welcoming and inclusive. Whereas other gyms are not inclusive, they aren't worried about other things in your life. Not like a whānau community"* (Kohine).

A small number of those interviewed suggested that it was important to show up and have fun and experience laughter during training, that is having fun and getting stronger together at the same time.

Summary

To recap, the participants in this study indicated the development of the self in many areas of life through participation in strength sport. It was clearly emphasised that participating in weightlifting had increased self-confidence, self-awareness, body satisfaction and self-esteem.

While most wāhine were satisfied with their bodies there was a few concerns regarding how much they weighed and the number on the scales. However, overall they were proud of their discipline and the development of their strength and muscularity. Participants spoke of the ability to set and achieve goals; it appeared that most participants enjoyed the pursuit of a challenge, and this improved personal empowerment and their awareness of health. This is not just limited to physiological health but included their psychological wellbeing, family life balance, nutrition wellness and interpersonal health.

Through strength sport participation this cohort of wāhine felt an increase in the ability to create connections with others and strengthen relationships. They enjoyed being in control of their own training and performance outcomes, while simultaneously being connected through a small but inclusive community. We now turn to the second research question to understand how the above considerations align with Mana Wāhine values.

How does empowerment align with Mana Wāhine values?

In light of how empowerment aligns with Mana Wāhine values, four key values, as noted in Table 5.1 below, are seen to be important.

Key Mana Wāhine values

Table 5.1: Key Mana Wāhine Values
The concept of Mana Wāhine acknowledges the valuable contributions of women in Māori culture and society for the continuance of whakapapa and the guidance of future generations (Forster et al., 2016).
Mana Wāhine supports continued empowerment and expression of power and authority of women (Forster et al., 2016).
Mana Wāhine should be about celebrating what we are, and what we are becoming (Te Awekotuku, 1991).
Mana may be described as charisma, an indefinable ‘X factor’ that some people possess that influences and inspires others (Winitana, 2008).

Adopted from (Forster et al., 2016; Te Awekotuku, 1991; Winitana, 2008).

Valuing wāhine, sense of authority

There was a consensus that participants continued to lift weights as they felt they were inspiring others, their children and their mokopuna (grandchildren). Mana Wāhine acknowledges the valuable contributions of women, according to Māori culture and society, for the continuance of whakapapa and the guidance of future generations (Forster et al., 2016).

Participants enjoyed their children attending the gym with them and witnessing their Mums/Nanas pick up heavy weights, in hope that their offspring would be proud and see them as a role model. Participants agreed with the statement that they felt proud when their offspring saw the strength they had built and the goals they had achieved. This can be seen in the quote below,

> *"It is heart-warming when your granddaughters say, 'my Nana can lift weights she's strong"* (Hania).

This was endorsed by another interviewee,

> *"My kids love the fact I'm their strong Mama, especially my son. He loves the fact that his mum is so little but super strong. I didn't want to be someone who just threw around a few weights. I wanted my kids and their kids to have something to look back at and be proud"* (Tarina).

Tia goes on to say,

> *"My parents never went to the gym or did sports. My girls coming to training and seeing what the gym is all about and what we do here makes me proud"* (Tia).

The participants felt they were role models for their whānau/family, and similarly it was observed that some of the wāhine saw themselves as role models to people outside of their whānau. Another key value in this research's framework is that the concept mana may be

described as having the ability to influence and inspire others. One wahine expressed that she knew doing well herself was an inspiration to other Māori people.

> *"I understand that even me doing me and looking after me, is enough. People always say, 'you know you're a role model for me, at your age you're still doing this and keeping fit and healthy'. I don't take that for granted, I don't take for granted how that can impact people's lives because I know personally how many people, I have helped to turn their lives around"* (Tui).

This comment resonates clearly, as another wāhine spoke about how other people look up to her and that is what keeps her going, especially when she doesn't feel like she is achieving anything. In our korero, the participant expressed the following statement,

> *"There are people out there who are watching you, who are thinking I wish I could be there and do that. You've always got to remember that there's always someone's eyes watching you from the corner of the room. You might be having a bad time, but they are thinking you are so good. That is literally what gets me through sometimes when I'm like fuck this is shit, you know somewhere in the corner of the room someone is watching you thinking you're pretty cool"* (Tarina).

Manaakitanga / caring and giving back to others

Within the korero (discussions) it was noted that participants in this study wanted to give back to the lifting community in some way or form; this aligns with the concept of manaakitanga. The concept of manaakitanga consist of generosity, kindness, caring, up lifting others and enhancing the mana of others (Wilson et al., 2021). A thread in the discussions was that several of the participants gave back through participating on Marae boards, sporting committees, coaching, or creating education groups. As one participant commented,

> *"A large portion of my kaupapa on the New Zealand weightlifting board is growing access to coaching, to experiences, to referees and to improvement. I would love to run a Māori Nationals for Weightlifting; it could be something we celebrate and execute in our own way"* (Rawiri).

Another interviewee stated,

> *"I run nutrition groups for free, I do it for fun and to help people. That kind of stuff is so rewarding for me. You can train for yourself and have your own goals and have all those benefits for yourself. However, it is so awesome then to take what you have learnt and help others, I have helped so many people over the years"* (Tui).

Having recognised that some women felt uncomfortable lifting in a conventional gym and needed extra support, one participant created a club called 'Wāhine Strength Club' to help empower and enhance the mana of women.

> *"I started the Wāhine strength club as a safe place for females to come. Women that are too scared to walk into a gym. We have people with anxiety that train here, so we use the garage door on the side for them to come in. If they are shy, they can come straight in, instead of walking through the reception or the big gym"* (Manaia).

Manaia started this club as she was in an abusive relationship and the gym was her out, hence she wanted to provide a safe space for women. Manaia continued to say,

> *"I started the club because you don't know what is going on behind women's doors. All my friends and family didn't know what I was going through because I hid it. I don't want women to hide it, I want them to feel like they have somewhere to go. Even if we must sit down and talk for half an hour before we start the club, its Allgood"* (Manaia).

There was agreement amongst this group that they recognised that strength sport has positive benefits for overall wellbeing and mental health. Most participants aspired to educate others about the psychological benefits, not just the physical side of the sport. One participant has hopes to take the sport into the schools to introduce it young Māori women.

> *"Weightlifting is an overall sport because you need to have the right mindset, you need to eat right to train and compete and that comes with sharing the sport. Sharing that side of the sport is important to Māori girls, so that we ensure mental health is good"* (Kohine).

Similarly, another wāhine expressed,

> *"My vision is to grow the club, empower more women to get involved in lifting not only for the physical side, but more the mental side"* (Manaia).

Kaupapa of strong wāhine

Most women in this study had a variety of achievements they were proud of; they were self-reliant and juggled many things in their lives. The participants overall demonstrated to be high achievers at work, academically, as working mothers, business owners and coaches, while some also held positions on different boards and committees. Some felt this was reinforced through the skills they learnt from weightlifting, while others stated they were already goal orientated and driven before weightlifting. However, they would all agree with the concept that they love a challenge and being part a part of a growing kaupapa of 'strong women'.

> *"I do see growth for women in general and Māori women. Māori girls are good at lifting, and I don't know why that is, it just seems to be the way. For me the barbell is so challenging, and I love the challenge. It is very much a Mana Wāhine type of activity. The females I know are defiantly a 'type'. We're not that 'sit down and not do anything'*

type of people. In whatever type of Mahi/work they [weightlifters] do they are out their breaking down barriers and stereotypes" (Tui).

This was reinforced by another participant who stated.

"There is a lot more women out there now, when I was power lifting there was less Indigenous women but now there is more. I'm now more confident because I remember where I have come from, but at times I do forget where I have come from and need to remind myself" (Hana).

These comments aligned with a key Mana Wāhine value utilised in this investigation, which is that should be about celebrating what we are and what we are becoming (Te Awekotuku, 1991).

They had similar whakaaro (thoughts) on being a part of building a community of strong women and contributing to a collective kaupapa of empowering others and the growth of women in strength sports. It was reported by one participant that women growing strong is done simultaneously and she was proud to be a part of that.

"Our club grows strong together as women and that is the theory behind it. Our hashtag is stronger together and we live by that" (Manaia).

Strong evidence was found that the participants held similar value systems of appreciating their strength, work ethic, resilience and being satisfied with their appearance. All wāhine were proud of their journey of building strength and participating in a 'masculine' sport, that was previously considered 'outside the norm for women'. For example, one interviewee said,

"What I love about all my female weightlifting friends is that they are just out there doing it. Being strong, unapologetic, all different shapes and sizes and that's really great. It's our values, our value system is aligned to what you lift, not what you look. In our world that is everything" (Tui).

Another wāhine explained that during her time participating in sport of weightlifting she has noticed women transform and become relentless.

> *"I have seen women come in and change in a positive way. I have observed it in a way that I describe as they come 'alive'"(*Rahera).

Conclusion

This research found for the participants interviewed weightlifting provided a space where the wāhine could be role models for their whānau and communities. This gave them a sense of authority and lead them into some important leadership roles within their communities. It was found that most participants enjoyed sharing their knowledge and found joy in giving back to the community. Whānau and a strong sense of belonging was a consistent theme that come through the subjects pūrākau (stories), and it seemed to be an important factor to their adherence in the sport. These findings show that for the wāhine in this study weightlifting was used as an expression of not only their physical strength, but also their emotional strength and discipline. It seemed as though they have used the sport to come together with likeminded individuals who enjoyed being a part of a kaupapa of 'strong women' and being outside of what a 'normal' women should be. In the next chapter, I will discuss the principal findings of the current investigation together with the ideas raised in earlier chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Introduction

This chapter discusses analytically the findings in line with ideas raised in the literature review and theoretical concepts raised in Chapters Two and Three, specifically empowerment and Mana Wāhine values. The chapter is split into three sections. In section one, I weave together fundamental notions from previous empowerment literature and draw on what role weightlifting has on developing personal, relational, and collective empowerment for the women in this study. In section two, I discuss how mainstream empowerment aligns with Māori culture and Mana Wāhine values to determine if weightlifting is a safe and inclusive environment for developing empowerment in Māori women, connections are also made to Te Whare Tapa Wha. Lastly, the chapter will finish with concluding remarks, with some thoughts for future research.

Research Question 1. What is the role of weightlifting in developing personal, relational, and collective empowerment for women?

Development of the self

The benefit of sport has been well researched, academics and government agencies have identified this, and realised sport has the power increase self-development, self-esteem, bring people together and transform communities. Evidence throughout this report emphasized the fact that, for the wāhine in this research, weightlifting has played an impactful role in the development of personal, relational, and collective empowerment. As discussed earlier in this research report personal empowerment relates to self-esteem, self-confidence, and how one feels about ones-self (Tengland, 2001). Wāhine who took part in this study reported views of

being confident in many aspects of their lives. All wāhine described having positive feelings about their lifestyle and were confident in themselves. It was expressed that feeling physically strong in their bodies transferred into other areas of their life. The women had learned resilience from weightlifting, they were confident in their career choices, relationship building, and their ability to set and achieve goals. As discussed in Chapter Three women who participate in strength and weight training experience increased feelings of self-control, personal empowerment, mastery, capability, and overall wellbeing (Govan-Brace, 2004; Harne & Bixby, 2015; Koplas et al., 2012; McGrath & Chananie-Hill, 2009; Probert et al., 2007; Westcott, 2012). The findings revealed participants had received a mixture of positive and negative feedback from people outside of their weightlifting communities. However, all women in this study were not concerned with what others thought of them and they were proud of their achievements regardless of feedback from others. This concurs with the outcomes from previous literature by Govan-Brace (2004) who found that weightlifting can assist with increasing body satisfaction and improve overall self-esteem, resulting in increased personal empowerment and an unruly willingness to achieve additional goals to prove people wrong.

Body image

Media and increasingly social media continues to bombard the world with pictures and comments about what a women's body should look like, how women should move, and what women should wear to be 'feminine' and 'ladylike'. A recent example, is television presenter Louise Wallace made a claim on national television stating that "size 12 is normal but size 18 is not" she went on to claim "Just tape over people's mouths with gaffer tape I mean, you know, sooner or later it's what goes in here [the mouth]." She was later called out by Olympian shot putter Dame Valerie Adam's who has dedicated her life to nutrition, sport, and self-determination. Adam's stated, "Wallace needed to be educated on the human body". she went

on to say “I am a size 18-20 depending on what it is, therefore I should tape over my mouth????”(New Zealand Herald, 2022).

Through photo manipulation and forced beauty ideologies society is constantly exposed to destructive messages of what femininity is. This has heavily influenced society’s philosophies of what sport women should participate in. An important finding in this research was that through building physical strength the women in this study suggested that their ideologies of what the ideal body shape is, have changed. Participants’ virtues and values of having a ‘skinny body’ or ‘perfect’ body had shifted to appreciating the strength that they have built, and they now are more confident and grateful for being healthy and well. It can therefore be argued that there has been personal empowerment developed through weightlifting. This has been achieved by transforming their beliefs on what the ‘ideal’ woman’s bodies should be. This finding broadly supports the work of Srilathan Barliwala who states that empowerment as a process can move social power by transforming the ideologies that justify exclusionary practices (Batliwala, 1993).

As mentioned in the literature review the way a person feels about themself affects how they make decisions and how they interact with those around them (Tengland, 2008). This links to relational empowerment, which is an individual’s capability to communicate and determine boundaries within relationships (Eyben, 2011). The participants shared that their abilities to connect with others and build relationships had increased. Some found that through increased feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, the ability to build and rekindle broken relationships had improved. Raju (2005) points out that when a person is empowered relationally, they can defend self-rights and self-dignity in relationships. All participants demonstrated this by not allowing negative comments to affect them and believing they can communicate more confidently with people.

The wāhine found that their involvement in a 'masculine' sport was a great conversation starter as most people were intrigued by a woman who participated in weightlifting. Participating in a 'masculine' sport was traditionally considered 'unladylike' and some elite weightlifters have been criticised in the media for having too much muscle and not being feminine enough (Sherouse, 2016). This study found that the majority of the participants lifted weights because they enjoyed the sport and wanted to get better. The idea of putting on too much weight or muscle from weightlifting has previously been a social barrier for women. According to earlier literature the perception of increased muscle gain can be a hindrance for women and girls to participate in sports (Govan-Brace, 2004; Harne & Bixby, 2015; Salvatore & Marecek, 2010; Walters et al., 2020). In this study also it was reported that some wāhine were initially scared of the scales moving up in weight due to muscle gain, however, this did not stop them from participating and their way of thinking about their bodies changed over time as they got stronger physically. We now look at how being physically strong can cross over into emotional strength.

Strong Physically, Strong Mentally

Lifting and physical strength go hand in hand, the question is how much of that crosses over to the development of mental and emotional strength? Current literature evaluating the effects of weightlifting and mental health for females has consistently shown positive results (Clayworth, 2015a; Govan-Brace, 2004; Harne & Bixby, 2015; Koplas et al., 2012; Westcott, 2012). This study supports this evidence, as overall the interviewees stated they felt strong mentally and were confident in their abilities to set and achieve goals. It was expressed that they were aware of their emotional health and had a good understanding of the ups and downs life has. Most wāhine in this research felt that the self-discipline they have gained through weightlifting has crossed over to other areas of their lives, including setting personal, whānau, and career goals. Personal empowerment can be defined as an internal change in a person,

leading to an increase in the ability to control their own life. Setting and achieving goals is a way of monitoring the pathway of life. This can contribute to self-fulfilments and overall quality of life (Tengland, 2008, p. 82).

Academic Sundeep Sahay states that an empowered woman is in touch with her achievements, goals, and values (Sahay, 1998, pp. 14–15). Participants mentioned they enjoyed the feelings of mastery when lifting heavy weights and achieving what the goals they have set. This directly aligns with previous arguments that mastery and self-determination are important outcomes of empowerment (Cross et al., 2017). These findings suggest, due to becoming physically and mentally strong, the wāhine in this study have been psychologically empowered. In consideration of Rissel's (1994) 'Model of the process by which community empowerment may be achieved' (see Figure 1) he points out that step 1 of psychological empowerment is personal development. From the pūrākau these wāhine have shared it seems sensical to suggest that they have certainly achieved the first step.

Development of Holistic wellbeing / Te Whare Tapa Wha

Evidence throughout this report suggests that the participants have a good understanding of holistic wellbeing and health. As previously discussed, Te Whare Tapa Wha is a model used to conceptualise health from a Māori perspective. There are synergies with this model, as empowerment is a multidimensional concept as is health for Māori. In this research, most women spoke about all aspects of health and were aware of the importance of holistic wellbeing. They understood how important it is to balance spiritual, social, physical, emotional and mental health. For example, many had learned practises of sleeping well, eating well, and balancing their family and social life through weightlifting. Several interviewees valued their mental health and wellbeing just as much, if not more, than their physical health. These findings suggest that participants are aware of additional benefits of weightlifting not just the physical

advantages. It is interesting to note that all interviewees had a holistic approach to weightlifting and life, they showed a comprehensive understanding that if life is unbalanced in different aspects it can result in poor health. They described weightlifting as a long-term process therefore the learnings were not just about the ability to gain strength but also other aspects that affect their goals.

It has been found that many women's health programmes often embrace a 'one size fits all' approach that disempowers women. Many health initiatives focus on diet and exercise over more important aspects like sleep and mental health (Chinn et al., 2022). This finding can be associated with Te Whare Tapa Wha as discussed in the literature review. Through their pūrākau (stories), for instance, most participants described that their journey of weightlifting had given them a comprehensive understanding of not only strength sport, but also health in general. Through questioning, the participants (unintentionally) related their journey directly to Te Whare Tapa Wha. Some wāhine described they had learned this the hard way through injuries or burnout or not making enough time for whānau. However, they demonstrated a conscious understanding of striving for balance in their lifestyles.

Research Question 2. How does this empowerment align with strengthening Mana Wāhine values?

Wāhine weightlifters as leaders and role models

"Ko te Wāhine kaitiaki o te whare tangata"

'Women are the guardians of the house of humanity'

As seen in the whakatāukī, female leadership in Māori culture is not a new concept, and as discussed in Chapter Four our traditional pūrākau (stories) illustrate Māori women to be powerful and hold positions of authority. Throughout Māori history there were many female

figures in leadership roles. Colonisation has blurred and complicated our positionality in society as Māori women, leaving many of us feeling hopeless and powerless. Thus, our voices have been silenced and unheard for too long a time. The second research question I attempt to answer, how does the empowerment achieved from weightlifting participation align with Mana Wāhine values? That is values which are seen to be important to Māori women.

Enhancing Mana, of the self and others

"Titiro whakamuri, kia koke whakamua"

"Look to the past to move forward"

Discussed in Chapter Four was the concept of Mana Wāhine. The notion is complex and multidimensional, thus making it difficult to determine a singular meaning. However, this study focuses on concepts discussed by Forster et al., (2016) that Mana Wāhine supports continued empowerment and expression of power and authority of women.

As earlier reviewed in the interviews it was discovered that through being active in strength sports the participants established and experienced increased self-development, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Consequently, achieving personal empowerment. The participants in this research celebrated their achievements and the accomplishments of others in their communities. One participant (Hana) stated that she was proud of how far she had come in the sport and where she was going. This concept supports Te Awekotuku's (1991) notion that "Mana Wāhine should be about honouring where we have come from, what we are and what we are becoming" (Te Awekotuku, 1991). These findings may suggest that achieving personal empowerment directly aligns with Te Awekotuku's view of Mana Wāhine, suggesting that participating in weightlifting can partially assist in the development of some Mana Wāhine values.

Psychological empowerment and leadership

In reviewing the literature, it was found that when women take on leadership roles in communities, they feel psychologically empowered (Mandal, 2013). To develop the skills to become a leader one must feel capable enough to pursue such a role and believe that they have the right skill competencies. Academic Sanjay Menon states that heightened feelings of self-efficacy and perceived competency is an essential component of empowerment (Menon, 1999). When a woman is empowered, she is thought to be able to realize her full abilities in all areas of life (Sahay, 1998). Development of Indigenous cultural identity and leadership is essential for Māori wellbeing and health. Sir Professor Mason Durie (2004) argues that Indigenous leadership includes a combination of abilities. These may consist of tribal leadership, community leadership, health professionals and leaders in sport. He then goes on to claim that Mana Whakahaere (autonomy) is a key indicator of health. Good health should be demonstrated by self-determination and promotion of one's own wellbeing.

Another important finding to emerge was that psychological empowerment has been achieved. This can be seen as most of the participants were well educated and active in leadership roles as either coaches, facilitators, board members, or on marae committees. They expressed consciousness and competence that they are mentors in their communities. This suggests that the wāhine in this research have been psychologically empowered which can be seen through their leadership roles in their communities.

Manaakitanga of others through weightlifting / Pūrākau/stories to carry into the next generation

For Māori, Mana Wāhine contributes to the continuation of whakapapa, nurturing, and development of future generations (Forster et al., 2016). As previously discussed, Māori and other Indigenous women often find fulfilment in supporting and nurturing others. Not merely

just their children but providing to and supporting the whole community (Gabel, 2019; Palmer & Masters, 2010), much like women participating in this study. Manaakitanga for others represents actions of kindness and giving in relationships. Historically, in Māori culture, the quality of hospitality given to others could affect a hapū/sub-tribe or iwi/tribe to lose or gain mana. This clarifies why manaakitanga and looking after people is highly valued (Hippolite & Bruce, 2014b).

Many of the participants' leadership roles were volunteer positions and participants expressed they enjoyed giving back to people, educating others regarding the benefits of weightlifting, and living a well-balanced life. The finding broadly supports the work of other studies exploring Māori feminism (Forster et al., 2016) and sports leadership (Palmer & Masters, 2010).

It is possible that the wāhine in this research used concepts such as manaakitanga and whakawhanaungatanga through educating their community about the benefits attained through weightlifting. Many expressed they enjoyed informing and giving others the tools to increase their health statues and discipline. Thus, empowering their offspring and other people interested in the sport. Māori women in sports leadership roles adopt values associated with Māori culture such as whanaungatanga (connectedness) and kotahitanga (togetherness) (Forster et al., 2016). Many of the women in this research knew they were role models for others in the weightlifting community, together with their own children and mokopuna (grandchildren). Their perceptions of being a role model to others increased their own adherence to their involvement in weightlifting. It was also discussed that they knew it is beneficial to their whānau to witness them achieving goals.

In many Indigenous cultures women are acknowledged as the creators of life, thus protectors of future generations (Higgins & Meredith, 2011; McDougall, 2016). The wāhine in this

research had intentions to educate and inspire their whānau through their pūrākau (stories) of success in the sport. They explained how they wanted to inherently pass on knowledge of well-being and how women can build a strong able body and identity.

However, a small number of wāhine expressed that several strength sport facilities did not have that feeling of manaakitanga when you walked in. It was described that in some settings people would not say hello and some sport clubs had a cold unwelcoming feeling. This led to discontinuation of participation for one wāhine. Manaakitanga is an essential part of a competent sport setting. In a culturally competent setting Māori would feel appreciated and valued (Hippolite & Bruce, 2014b). Although the wāhine in this research displayed manaakitanga and whanaungatanga to others, not all strength sport environments demonstrated similar principles. This directs us to discuss belonging and connectedness.

Belonging and connectedness to a collective kaupapa

Ki te Kotahi te Kakaho, ka whait; ki te kapuia, e kore e whaiti

If a reed stands alone, it can be broken; if it is in a group, it cannot.

"We grow strong together as women, that is the theory - #strongertogether" (Manaia).

The whakatāukī was drawn to commence this thesis and really speak to this notion of collective empowerment. A key concept of Māori, Indigenous, and other marginalised people is that they desire belonging, connectedness, and building nurturing relationships (Smith, 2006). Previous scholars have found that participation in sport has a positive role in creating cultural identity and connectedness for Māori (Hapeta et al., 2019a; Hirini & Flett, 1999). In Māori contexts this process of establishing relational connection is known as 'Whakawhanaungatanga'. Māori academic Russell Bishop refers to 'Whakawhanaungatanga' as the process of establishing

whānau type relationships. This is identified through your connectedness, heritage linkage, and your commitment to other people (Bishop, 1998).

This investigation revealed that the wāhine enjoyed being a part of a small community as they felt it was easy to get to know everyone and that there was an instant connection to those who participated in strength sports. This allowed them to effortlessly build a relationship with others in the sport. Socialisation with others outside of their sport was not a high priority, however, whānau was very important to them. It was found that numerous participants had children, partners, or parents who also participated in the sport. They enjoyed training together, competing together, and having common sporting intentions. Although strength sport is an individual sport, participants discussed that collective connections were significant in their involvement. Interviewees expressed there is a sense of belonging and connection in their community, through their common passion for being physically strong and their love of weightlifting. Therefore, this study confirms that connection and belonging are very important to the wāhine in this research.

Strong Wāhine

There is a common belief that Māori are 'naturally' physically strong and agile (Hokowhitu, 2004). According to Te Awekotuku, pre-colonisation Māori women were inspired to be strong and powerful in their bodies. Wāhine were actively involved in fundamental training for combat that required strength and agility. The idea that women were fragile and weak was never a concept in Māori culture. This ideology was a view of the European settlers, that has now been infused into our culture (Te Awekotuku, 1991). The belief that Māori are physically strong and good at strength sports aligned with the voices of the participants in this research. Majority of them voiced that Māori are naturally strong and they genuinely know how to lift well.

Participants also stated that they have found a sense of belonging in the weightlifting community, that has developed collective empowerment through a common kaupapa of 'strong women'. According to wāhine in this study, weightlifting and achieving goals is empowering, it gives them a strong sense of wellbeing and accomplishment. Being able to celebrate these achievements with a community who are also passionate about being strong, healthy and well was critical to their adherence and participation in the sport. Corresponding to Forster et al., (2016) mana/authority to be a leader comes from having enthusiasm for a kaupapa.

A possible explanation for this is that the participants have created a 'whānau' environment, that is supporting and developing a future generation of strong wāhine. Therefore, resulting the participants taking on leadership roles to assist the development of others, thus passing on knowledge.

Morrison and Wilson (2013) state that whakapapa and whanaungatanga connections are valuable and empowering, these concepts play are a critical role in the restoration of mauri (spirit) and mana (strength) for Māori women. Leonie Pihama, prominent researcher of Māori women's issues, states that mana is a fundamental element in relationships, the connections between people, and all realms of health (Pihama, 2001, p. 265).

Working towards a common goal of developing strong wāhine was seen in this group of participants. They wanted to contest the discrimination that has been experienced by women and go against the 'norm' in their belief that lifting weights was not just for men. They had similar opinions in their kaupapa to promote and stand up for this concept. They expressed wanting to do this collectively with others in their community. In general, it seems that the interviewees were collectively empowered. These findings suggest that wāhine in this research were collectively empowering themselves and others by being encouraging and supportive. Consistent with scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who declares mana is a concept that

relates to theories of power, strength, status, and collective recognition of achievements (Smith, 1992).

Culture as Cure

"Kia mau koe ki ngā kupu ā ōu tūpuna, kia mau ki to Māoritanga"

"Hold fast the words of your ancestors, hold fast your Māori culture."

This study has demonstrated that weightlifting can be an empowering process, that aligns with several Mana Wāhine values and principles. However, there were no explicit articulations of ties to Māori culture or spiritual connections. International research on ethnicity and identity of indigenous peoples has demonstrated that when one has a positive view of their culture and traditions, it correlates to a having increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, and personal mastery. This can lead to a constructive relationship to ethnicity identity followed by numerous health benefits (Houkamau & Sibley, 2011). As mentioned in the literature review for Māori connecting wairua (spiritual) to an environment is essential to health (Durie, 1994). As environment sets the foundation for the four pillars of Te Whare Tapa Wha to stand strong, this is a vital connection that could possibly be missing from weightlifting. Current literature states that 'culture-as-cure' is based on theory and practice that suggests increased awareness and involvement with Māori culture can lead to better health outcomes (Durie, 1994; Hapeta et al., 2019b; Muriwai et al., 2015). When sport environments are culturally competent Māori would feel welcomed and included thus, leading to increased engagement with their environment in a spiritual, ethical, nurturing and influential approach (Hippolite & Bruce, 2014b). Thus far it seems as though weightlifting could certainly be an empowering process for women, and it aligns with a variety of Mana Wāhine values. However, from a Māori cultural perspective several aspects of overall health are not being fulfilled. Therefore, these results need to be

interpreted with caution. Accordingly, there is a clear need for strength sports and weightlifting to shift their current philosophy by exploring alternate ways of working with Māori women. Allowing Māori women voices to be heard and valued. In hindsight for weightlifting to be really empowering for Māori women it needs to provide connection to the environment and belonging in all aspects of health including spirituality.

Concluding Remarks

This case study investigated women's weightlifting in Aotearoa, offering insights of empowerment through weightlifting and a Mana Wāhine analysis. The data collected from the participants revealed that weightlifting can certainly be an empowering process from a mainstream perspective. With the use of sport as a vehicle to drive female and Indigenous empowerment, the outcomes of this research may be important for NGOs and government organisations who are looking for sports to help drive these initiatives. This investigation of weightlifting has shown that personal, relational, and collective empowerment can be developed by participating in weightlifting for Māori women. If we return back to Rissel's (1994) model of the empowerment process, the results of this investigation show that weightlifting can certainly aid step 1; personal development step 2; mutual support groups, step 3; community organisation that leads to psychological empowerment and a sense of community. However due to a shortfall of resources for Māori women it fails to reach community empowerment with the potential of improving overall health and wellbeing more broadly. For it to be a truly transformative sport for women more emphasis may need to be put into the community empowerment process, in terms of acceptance and reach, particularly if a 'new' (traditional) narrative of Māori women as strong and powerful is to be achieved.

On the question of how this empowerment aligns with Mana Wāhine values and looking through a Māori cultural lens there are important aspects missing. This research has found that

strength sport can certainly provide a space for women to come together, and experience achievements, create friendships, socialise, and empower each other, their whānau, and communities. However, from the data collected it is clear that the spiritual connection to the environment was missing for the wāhine in this study and utilising Sir Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Wha model of health (Durie, 1994) we must be cautious in our understanding of this studies outcomes. For Māori connecting wairua (spirituality) to the environment is a fundamental component for overall health. Taha Wairua includes principles and beliefs that determine the way one lives, personal identity and self-awareness, for some people it can be linked to a region for others not so much (Robertson, 2021). This demonstrates that strength sport can, unquestionably, have a positive impact on an individual level. However, on a larger scale, it lacks the resources to fully support inclusiveness and the holistic needs of Māori women. This research addresses some of the inequalities for Māori women in strength sport in Aotearoa, although more comprehensive research on this topic could lead to weightlifting becoming a great tool for empowering wāhine Māori.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Low Risk Ethics Notification

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

17/01/2022

Dear: A/Pro Rochelle Stewart-Withers

Re: Low Risk Notification - 4000025416 - A case study of women's weightlifting in Aotearoa. A Mana Wahine Empowerment Analysis

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our database for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please contact a Research Ethics Administrator.

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.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note, if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Appendix 2: Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Information Sheet

A case study of women's weightlifting in Aotearoa:

A Mana Wahine Empowerment Analysis

Kia Ora Tatou

Ko Jamie Ogilvy Ahau
Te Aitanga a Mahaki raua ko Ngai tai ki Tamaki oku Iwi
Ko Horouta raua ko Tainui oku Waka
Ko Takitimu raua ko Umupuia oku Marae
E noho ana ahau i roto Kirikiriroa.

My name is Jamie Ogilvy I am a Māori woman who is passionate about Māori women in sport, and women who weightlift in Aotearoa. The aim of my research is to investigate weightlifting as a vehicle for Mana Wahine empowerment in Aotearoa. I am really interested in understanding the role of weightlifting in helping women become empowered individually and as a group and then thinking about how this then might align with and/or simultaneously strengthen Mana Wahine values.

The research will be conducted by myself Jamie Ogilvy who is a Master's level student at Massey University under the supervision of Associate Professor Rochelle Stewart-Withers, also at Massey University and as part of a broader project with Associate Professor Stewart-Withers and Dr Farah Palmer, Massey University and Dr Jeremy Hapeta, University of Otago.

Project Description

This project seeks to investigate weightlifting in New Zealand from a Māori women's perspective. This research will bring to life the voices of Māori female weightlifters in Aotearoa, as to why they participate in weightlifting and if their participation has made them feel empowered personally and collectively and in what ways. We would like to explore and understand more about weightlifting as a vehicle for empowerment and if it then aligns with Mana Wahine values.

Invitation

We are inviting you to participate as we would value drawing on your experience, knowledge and insights into how the sport of weightlifting could be further used as a vehicle to empower Māori women and strengthen Mana Wahine values in Aotearoa.

You have been asked to participate in a semi structured interview that may be 45-60mins long. I will then collate the information and bring to life the voices of Māori women weightlifters in Aotearoa.

School of People, Environment and Planning
Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, New Zealand
06 356 9099 | http://pep.massey.ac.nz

Data management

The information you provide will be kept confidential and stored safely. All data including interview recordings and notes will be stored in the researcher's password protected computer.

Participants Rights

We would be grateful if you agreed to participate in the research, but please be assured that you are under no obligation to do so. If you do decide to partake in the research, you have the right to:

- Withdraw from the study at any time
- Decline to answer any question I the researcher might ask
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- Understand that your name and club/organisation will not be used unless you give permission to me the researcher
- Be given access to a summary of the findings when it's concluded
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview, (if you have given me permission to record).

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the following:

Jamie Ogilvy
Mobile: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

Assoc Prof. Rochelle Stewart Withers
Mobile: [redacted]
Email:r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz

Committee Approval Statement

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. The Ethics Notification Number is: 4000025416.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

A case study of women's weightlifting in Aotearoa:

A Mana Wahine Empowerment Analysis

I have read or had the information sheet read to me in my first language and I have had the details of the research explained to me. Any questions I had have been answered and I fully understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given time to consider if I want to be a participant in this study and I understand that I will be participating as a volunteer.

1. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions set out in the attached information sheet.
2. I agree/do not agree to the interview being recorded via zoom or sound recorder.
3. I wish/do not wish to be identified in this research.
4. I would like a summary of the key findings on completion of this study.
5. I understand I may withdraw my statements and / or withdraw from participating at any time.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ (print full name) hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Email address for sending the summary of findings:

_____

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

	Organisation/Gym Owner Questions	Reasoning for questions
1	Can you tell be about your background, where you are from, what you do for mahi?	Whakawhanaungatanga, to understand who the research participant is and why I am interviewing her.
2	Can you tell be about your organisation and what was the drive for you to want to set this organisation up?	Examples of impact quotes. What kind of participants would join this organisation/club/sport
3	What is the current nature of your training? (Weightlifting, powerlifting, etc)? How often do you train and what modes (weights, conditioning, cardio)? Where do you train & why	To find out what sport they focus on. The amount of training and mode of training might give me an understanding on how they are feeling about their-self. Where they currently train and the people around them
4	How did your passion for weightlifting start and what keeps you interested in weightlifting?	
5	Have you had to make any changes to your lifestyle to continue weightlifting? Is there advantages or disadvantages to pursing a demanding training schedule?	To find out if changes are positive or negative, have the changes created feelings of empowerment, have they enhanced relationships
6	When you tell people outside of the gym (family, friends, work colleagues) that you are a weightlifter what is their response? Do most people have similar opinions? Does this bother you?	
7	How do you view various types of women's body shapes? How do you feel about your body? How has your body changed since starting weightlifting? What are your thoughts about the changes? Does the shape of your body concern you? Do you have any particular aims for your body?	What role is weightlifting having on feelings of personal empowerment.
8	How do you feel about your strength and how do others react to it?	What role is weightlifting having on feelings of personal empowerment.
9	Do you think weightlifting has changed the way you view yourself? Has weightlifting affected your hopes and aspirations during this part of your life?	What role is weightlifting having on feelings of personal empowerment.
10	What do you think of body building, and have you ever considered it?	
11	Do you think weightlifting has changed the way you view yourself?	

12	What have been the things that really stand out for you that have been surprising or something to celebrate regarding Māori women?	Can weightlifting strengthen the development of mana wāhine
13	What are your hopes moving forward for your organisation and the sport?	
14	Do you have any additional comments to make or observations you would like to include? Is there anything we have talked about you don't feel comfortable with me sharing in the report?	

	Weightlifters Questions	**Reasoning for questions**
1	Can you tell be about your background, where you are from, what you do for mahi?	Whakawhanaungatanga, to understand who the research participant is and why I am interviewing her.
2	What is the current nature of your training? (Weightlifting, powerlifting, etc)? How often do you train and what modes (weights, conditioning, cardio)? Where do you train & why	To find out what sport they focus on. The amount of training and mode of training might give me an understanding on how they are feeling about their-self. Where they currently train and the people around them
3	How did your passion for weightlifting start and what keeps you interested in weightlifting?	
4	Have you had to make any changes to your lifestyle to continue weightlifting? Is there advantages or disadvantages to pursing a demanding training schedule?	To find out if changes are positive or negative, have the changes created feelings of empowerment, have they enhanced relationships
5	When you tell people outside of the gym (family, friends, work colleagues) that you are a weightlifter what is their response? Do most people have similar opinions? Does this bother you?	
6	How do you view various types of women's body shapes? How do you feel about your body? How has your body changed since starting weightlifting? What are your thoughts about the changes? Does the shape of your body concern you? Do you have any particular aims for your body?	What role is weightlifting having on feelings of personal empowerment.
7	How do you feel about your strength and how do others react to it?	What role is weightlifting having on feelings of personal empowerment.
8	Do you think weightlifting has changed the way you view yourself?	.

	Has weightlifting affected your hopes and aspirations during this part of your life?	
9	What do you think of body building, and have you ever considered it?	
10	Do you think weightlifting has changed the way you view yourself?	
11	What have been the things that really stand out for you that have been surprising or something to celebrate regarding Māori women?	Can weightlifting strengthen the development of mana wāhine
12	What are your hopes moving forward for the sport? (Last Question)	
13	Do you have any additional comments to make or observations you would like to include? Is there anything we have talked about you don't feel comfortable with me sharing in the report?	