‘Get into Groups’
Young Pacific Island Women and the potential for Empowerment in Physical Education

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a case study of three South Auckland schools, the aim of my research is to investigate how Pacific Island young women are empowered or disempowered through their experiences in the Physical Education classroom, and how they negotiate these experiences. Ways to improve the delivery of the Physical Education Curriculum to ensure it is meaningful, engaging and empowering for young women of Pacific Island descent are also explored. This research is qualitative in design and underpinned by feminist research principles, hence the voices of these Pacific Island young women are privileged.

The findings of my study show that delivering a Physical Education Curriculum where the focus is not solely on physical skill acquisition seems to resonate with Pasifika young women. One which includes a broader understanding of health and wellbeing where emphasis is placed on appreciating the whole body, and the importance of non-physical skills such as relationships and interpersonal skills. Feelings of empowerment were thus experienced. Having supportive friends in the class and the desire to have a positive adult role model is also strong. Teachers are better positioned to facilitate transformative experiences when a rapport has been built. The degree to which empowerment was felt within the Physical Education classroom appeared to have some impact on the young women’s involvement in co-curricular sport. However, parental influence was the largest contributing factor of participation levels in physical activity outside the classroom setting, contesting views surrounding the influence of schooling as a sole means to promoting physical activity.

This study supports findings in the Sport for Development literature, of which Physical Education is a part of who argue that using sport and physical activity as an opportunity for development must combine sport and play with other non-sport components, such as leadership, in order to enhance effectiveness. This is particularly so if empowerment is to occur. Thus, the old ‘sport techniques’ paradigm, which still appears to prevail in New Zealand secondary schools is argued not to be conducive to the empowerment process. If empowerment is to occur on the individual level, as well as relational and social, a more holistic approach should be applied within the classroom. Finally given the influence of parents, if Physical Education is to be truly empowering to Pacific Island young women, especially in the longer term, the establishment of effective partnerships with Pacific Island families and community, such as the church, are also required.
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I am grateful to the Ministry of Education for providing teachers with the opportunity to gain higher degrees while being able to retain their current position at a school. Gaining the TeachNZ scholarship allowed me to study full-time and it has been a wonderful opportunity.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>BMI</td>
<td>Body Mass Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAWN</td>
<td>Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Deputy Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>The World Declaration on Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDI</td>
<td>Gender Development Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEM</td>
<td>Gender Empowerment Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPE</td>
<td>Health and Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUHEC</td>
<td>Massey University Human Ethics Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZC</td>
<td>New Zealand Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCEA</td>
<td>National Certificate in Educational Achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>S4D</td>
<td>Sport for Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEPE</td>
<td>Sport, Exercise and Physical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPAD</td>
<td>Sport and Physical Activity for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED</td>
<td>Sport and Physical Education for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TKI</td>
<td>Te Kete Ipurangi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAD</td>
<td>Women and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>The World Health Organisation</td>
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