

Sport means “Family and Church”: Sport in New Zealand Pasifika Communities.

This study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the role that sport plays in New Zealand Pasifika communities. Eight focus groups and six key individuals were interviewed using a Talanoa approach. Spirituality, family and friends, the developing of life skills, fitness and health, and the release of aggression were all seen as important outcomes from participation in sport.

Sport was conceptualised in a variety of ways by those interviewed. These differing conceptualisations of sport, many of which differed markedly from the traditional viewpoint, have ramifications for those working and researching in this area. While participants' experiences of sport were predominately positive, sport was also seen in a negative light by others. The negativity of some towards sport also suggests the need to consider reframing, reducing, or possibly replacing sport with alternatives when looking to promote physical activity.

Introduction

New Zealand is a small multi-cultural South Pacific country that includes a substantial Pasifika community, a youthful community that is steadily growing in its size and in its influence on New Zealand society. Although it is sometimes considered relatively homogenous in nature, the Pasifika community is, in reality, a culturally diverse one that is represented by at least 13 distinct languages and cultural groups (Ministry of Pasifika Affairs, 2010). Within these groups there exists further diversity with varying levels of commitment to traditional cultural expectations, a range of fluency in language, and differences between immigrants born in the Islands and those born in New Zealand and in the strength of their ties to church and family (Sauni, 2011)

There has been some ongoing interest in the role that sport plays within the Pasifika community. Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) has completed a number of major nationwide surveys in which “Pacific Island” has been identified as a discrete sub-group. The 1997-2001 New Zealand physical activity surveys found that 91% of Pacific Island adults (aged 18 and over) had participated in at least one sport or active leisure activity in the previous month compared to 93% of all New Zealand adults. Five years later, the Active New Zealand Survey found that 80% of Pacific Island adults (aged 16 and over) had taken part in some sport and recreation in the previous month, which was lower than the 90% participation rate for all New Zealand adults. According to this survey, the most popular sport and recreation activities among Pacific Island adults included swimming, touch, dance, volleyball, rugby, running/jogging, and basketball.

One of the factors that has generated interest in the participation levels in sport and physical activity in the New Zealand Pasifika community is concern about the status of their health. According to the results of the Ministry of Health (2004) New

Zealand Health Survey, lifestyle-related diseases such as coronary heart disease and diabetes are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among Pacific populations, and they occur at higher levels than in the wider New Zealand population. The health status of Pasifika, when aligned with population growth, has led to concerns being raised about the potential economic and societal impact in the future (Kolt, Paterson, & Cheung, 2006; Russell, Parnell, & Wilson, 1999; Simmons et al., 1998). Increased participation in sport, while not suggested as a panacea for lifestyle-related disease, has been identified as one possible means of increasing activity, thereby helping alleviate these health concerns (Ministry of Health, 2004; Tuagalu, 2009).

While health benefits are often cited as a reason for attempting to increase participation levels in sport, it should not be forgotten that this is only one specific area of benefit. Participation in culturally appropriate, high quality sport has the potential to offer a myriad of other positive outcomes including increased social interaction, improved self-esteem, and increased cultural identity. It is therefore important that programmes are presented and run in such a way that they appeal to, and encourage, Pasifika involvement.

The SPARC survey results indicate that sport is an integral part of the life of Pasifika communities and that a high percentage of adults have some level of participation. This level of interest and involvement offers a strong base from which increased participation can be built. For this to occur, however, it is important that those working with Pasifika have a valid understanding of how sport is culturally located in Pasifika life.

This project was designed to go some way towards identifying the meanings that are attributed to sport, to explore the participants' experiences of sport, and to

establish what contribution they felt sport made to themselves and to their community.

Having a valid understanding of these issues is important for all those involved with Pasifika and sport including fellow players, coaches, clubs and the raft of agencies involved with the promotion of sport, recreation, and health. For agencies involved with Pasifika, a shared understanding of what sport means and how it is situated within Pasifika life is required in order to identify and meet Pasifika needs when developing policies and/or working in practice. This understanding can then be used as the basis for conceptualising and implementing programmes and for establishing good relationships and effective communications. A failure to achieve this understanding will place even the most well-funded and highly organised programmes at risk of failure through miscommunication and cultural disjoint. This may ultimately lead to mistrust and the non-participation of members of the very communities with which the programmes are attempting to engage.

Pacific methodology

An interest in gaining a legitimate and valid Pasifika perspective was an important stimulus for this project. The research team was aware that research conducted in ways that were not culturally appropriate had the potential to generate incomplete or erroneous conclusions. As Vaioleti (2006) commented:

Research methodologies that were designed to identify issues in a dominant culture and provide solutions are not necessarily suitable in searching for solutions for Pacific peoples, whose knowledge and ways of being have unique epistemologies, as well as lived realities here in Aotearoa [New Zealand]. (p. 22)

It was decided that this project would use Pacific Island methodology, an approach that has only been used to a limited degree in sport and recreation research to date (Tuagalu, 2009). Two documents were used to inform the design of this project. The Pacific consultation guidelines and the Health Research Council (2005) consultation guidelines both recommended a variety of culturally appropriate means of collecting data. These recommendations included the three methods used for data collection in this project: focus groups, interviewing key informants and community leaders, and facilitating fono [meetings].

A decision was also made by the research team that all interviews would be based on a Talanoa approach. A number of Pasifika researchers and writers have recommended Talanoa as a suitable approach for researching Pasifika groups (see for example McFall-McCaffery, 2010; Otsuka, 2005).

According to Vaioleti (2006), “Talanoa...means talking...and interacting without a rigid framework” (p. 23). Unlike more traditional research approaches, Talanoa provides opportunities for people to share, challenge and validate each other’s ideas in order to reach a group consensus. Although the purpose of the Talanoa should be stated at the beginning, an open technique should be employed and the nature of the questions should be based on the way the conversation develops. As Vaioleti points out, “The Talanoa and interview will end when it loses its malie [participants lose interest] or starts to revisit areas covered already” (p. 26).

In accordance with this view, the interviews in this research were not restricted by a pre-determined time limit but continued until they naturally ended or the exchange of ideas had completely stopped. This enabled the two Pasifika researchers conducting the interviews to focus on building relationships and to engage with the participants face to face for as long as was needed.

The Talanoa approach also promotes the interaction and active participation that comes naturally to Pacific people in safe and trusted settings. The dynamic nature of the focus group allows participants to exchange ideas with each other and, as is common for Pacific people, to communicate collectively in a group. Talanoa is widely supported by Pacific peoples because they feel that this process is aligned with the other safe processes of engaging in discussions and consultations that occur in families, church, community and village settings. The Talanoa approach also offers participants a more meaningful role in the research process. The value sought is trust:

Talanoa promotes mutual accountability, which adds to the trustworthiness and quality of the research. The effect of the exchange when people give time and knowledge is the expectation that the information will be used well with respect and honour. The researcher will not want to let down the participants with whom he or she has developed a relationship. (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 26)

The methodology for this project was conceptualised and completed by a research team that included two Pasifika researchers who were experienced with researching in Pasifika communities in both New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. Their experience gave added assurance that the methods selected and the way they were implemented were appropriate for the communities involved in this project. In summary, it was important for the research team that the whole process was clearly undertaken in a respectful, transparent, inclusive, competent, and culturally reciprocal manner.

Ethical approval

This project involved ethical considerations at both individual and community levels; consequently ethical review encompassed both of these levels. Ethical approval was obtained from the Victoria University of Wellington, Human Ethics Committee.

Participants

The project consisted of two distinct phases. Phase one consisted of a fono with a leading health and social services provider in a small urban city in New Zealand, the completion of six focus groups, and the interviewing of four individuals (Figure 1). The participants in this initial phase were selected to offer a range of ages, gender and experiences in sport and recreation. One focus group consisted of senior secondary school students while a second consisted of university students. At the completion of the first phase, the data received initial analysis, and tentative findings were produced. A full-day meeting of the research group discussed the provisional findings that had emerged from the data. As a result of this process a number of areas for further examination were identified. These included the role of spirituality and the church, the relationship between sport and education, and the role of sport in releasing aggression. In the second phase, two focus groups were completed and two individuals were interviewed (Figure 2) with the explicit aim of clarifying and exploring the key issues emerging from the first phase.

Figure 1:

Figure 2:

Analysis

The qualitative analysis of the interviews/focus groups followed a fully inductive process with no attempt being made to generate categories prior to the start of analysis. An inductive approach was chosen in order that meaning could emerge, undirected, from the data. Transcripts of all interviews were carefully analysed, using

a constant comparative method, in which segments of data were compared to determine similarities and differences. This process resulted in the identification of a number of broad categories that were both heuristic and responsive to the research questions (Merriam, 2009). The initial coding was used as the basis for detailed analysis of the transcripts which led to the identification of a number of new and sub categories. These groupings were then used as the basis for interpretation, a process whereby the research team sought to identify patterns and connections in order to help develop understanding.

The analysis and interpretive process was completed after the first stage of interviews. Following the second series of interviews this process was repeated using the new data. In the final stage of analysis all data were considered together in order for a full and detained understanding to emerge.

The analysis and interpretation process was supported by the use of the NVivo Qualitative Research software package.

Findings

It is important to acknowledge at this point the contested issue of to what degree the knowledge and understanding that emerges from qualitative research can be generalized to other contexts. It is not the intention of this article to claim the results can be generalized to the wider New Zealand context; rather, the authors would prefer the reader to consider the findings in terms of identifying connections:

[there are] ... two possibilities for making connections develop. They are the interview researcher's alternative to generalizability. First the researcher may find connections among the experiences of the individuals he or she interviews. ... The researcher calls these connections to the reader's attention for inspection and exploration... Second ... interviewers open up for readers

the possibility of connecting their own stories to those presented in the study.

(Seidman, 2006, p. 52)

What is the meaning of sport?

This project explored the meaning that the Pasifika participants gave to sport, what they considered were its major characteristics, what activities they considered could be situated under the broad definition of sport and, as a result of this exploration, whether a discernable difference between their ideas and what could be considered a ‘traditional’ view of sport could be identified.

While there is no definitive definition of “sport”, there have been a number of attempts to define it. Siedentop, Hastie, and Van der Mars (2004), for example, defined sport as “playful competitions whose outcomes are determined by physical skill, strategy, and chance” (p. 2) while the Reed Dictionary of New Zealand English defines sport as “any activity for exercise or enjoyment, especially one involving physical skill and organized with a set form, rules, etc.” (Orsman, 2001).

When the Pasifika participants were asked what they considered were the characteristics of sport, many identified activity, exercise, physical exertion and working hard as being fundamental. One participant placed a Pasifika cultural lens on this physicality when he commented:

I think the reason why we participate in a lot of physical sports is inherent in the culture – and I can only speak of Samoan culture, mainly – we’re a people that... we live by the sweat of our brows; if someone came in and said that person’s a hard worker, we’d wear that as a medal of honour, and sometimes these sports are a reason because of the hard work that comes with it, the sweat that comes with it.

The second essential element identified by many was competition, with a number of statements associating sport with being competitive and winning. While competition was generally seen in either a positive or a neutral light, for some of those interviewed the over-emphasis on competition and winning had a negative impact on both enjoyment and participation.

During the interviews it quickly became apparent that there was a wide diversity of opinion on what activities could be described as sport. When asked to give examples, many identified what could be described as traditional sports – rugby league, touch, basketball, rugby, volleyball etc. Other responses, however, indicated that there was a range of beliefs about what constituted “sport”. The following examples illustrate the diversity of answers that were given by those interviewed:

Oh, basically everything that I do is sports. Looking after these little ones, if I walk down to the shop that’s a sport; basically I think a sport is anything that’s active, so if you’re active in doing something, to me that’s what equals sport.

Fun, and it could also be a cultural thing for us, like haka, that’s our culture; same with... I know with Samoans the cricket on the lawn, all of that; so it’s fun. Slap dance, boxing and the hula.

Sport for me means a lot of things; it means a walk down the road with the wife, it could be spending some time with my family. When I was young, sport for us was going to church; it could mean getting together, and just church activities.

They go to church, and they want to sing; most of our adults, they want to go to choir practice, mum and dad were in there forever, and that was a sporting activity for them.

The diversity of meaning attributed to the term sport has implications for those working with Pasifika and offers the potential for confusion and a breakdown of communication. When seeking information, for example around levels of participation in sport, it is important that there is a commonality of understanding between all parties. The potential for invalid conclusions, where one party is thinking about traditional sports and the other is thinking about being involved with a choir or taking the kids to the shop, is obvious and therefore clarity of understanding is important. While the discussions around the meaning attributed to sport were held predominately in English, there is an awareness that by doing so there were subtle nuances in the various Pasifika languages that could have been lost. It is a useful exercise to consider the variety of Pasifika words and their various meanings in the general area of sport/recreation (Figure 3).

Figure 3:

An example of the way subtle differences in meaning can be lost can be seen in the term *Fai o le faiva* which is associated with activities such as fishing or hunting. While it could be assumed to have the same meaning as recreational fishing and hunting, *Fai o le faiva* relates to fishing and hunting, not as recreation, but as activities concerned with providing food for the family and community. As such, it is a fundamentally different concept to recreational fishing or hunting as may be understood by Palagi [Europeans].

Experiences of sport

Participants were happy to share their stories, both positive and negative, and these stories indicated that for many people sport had been, and continued to be, a positive influence in their lives and for their communities. Mention was made of working hard as a team to succeed, the development of self-confidence, the joy of winning important games, and being held in high regard for their proficiency. For some, who may not have seen themselves as academically able, sporting prowess was also seen as an important aspect in maintaining self-esteem while at school. The experiences of individuals differed of course, depending on their personal interests and backgrounds, but there were some common themes emerging from the narratives.

Spirituality and church

In any discussion on Pasifika communities it is important that the pivotal role of spirituality and church is acknowledged. Just as spirituality is infused throughout Pasifika life, it also underpins Pasifika sport:

Yeah, so the spiritual side for us, everything we do, we play sports, we say a prayer; we start work, we say a prayer – everything is spiritual for us.

God comes first, but hugely, right behind God, is sport, in whatever form it takes.

For some, spirituality was shown by how they conducted themselves during sporting activity, with a belief that their actions should demonstrate an acknowledgement of, and commitment to, a greater being:

So sometimes playing sport is not an easy task; someone might punch you ... but they [the player punched] will glorify God by standing up and walking back to their position and continuing to play. ... And it's not about the score at

the end of the day... it's that we glorify God, at the end of the day, that's what we come to do.

The church as an institution was identified as both a strong promoter of sport and recreation but also as a factor that could work to limit involvement. For many, their memories as younger people were strongly associated with attending church and being involved with sport and recreation as part of the whole experience. When asked if she felt that church was a factor in encouraging sport, one woman responded:

I would totally agree with that. I mean, you look at most of the churches everywhere ... You've got your youth groups, and how do you get your youths into church, how do you get your youth motivated? It's through some form of sports activity, whether it be dancing, acting, going out and doing things together, it's some form of sporting activity.

For some of those interviewed, however, the church was also seen as an agent that restricted participation:

... we're not allowed to play on Sundays. There's also all these cultural developments that are... we also have to abide by, especially coming from Islands over to New Zealand, where Sundays is like a normal day of the week, but it's not for Pasifika, and so a lot of the sports that are played on Sundays, we're not part of it, because it's part of our culture to go to church.

Commitments to the church generally had a strong influence on decision making about participation and the time available for sport, an issue that will be more fully addressed in the discussion section.

Family and community gatherings

Social interaction and the opportunity to meet and socialise with family and community were mentioned by many of the respondents as an important outcome of sport. The coming together for a ‘relaxed’ common purpose was a significant finding in relation to positive experiences. While a number of the comments around social gatherings were specifically associated with church activities, others considered that the enjoyment of gathering together was a part of the wider Pasifika culture:

I think the sports for Pacific people is gathering, you know, and getting to know... acknowledge each other, coming to sports and acknowledge each other, and how are you doing, and having fun together, that’s it; and afterwards having something to eat.

A number of sport-related activities were identified as facilitating the gathering together of family and friends. These ranged from playing sport at church or at the beach with family, pick-up games with friends, or simply meeting at a local park to play cricket and participate in a shared meal. More structured gatherings were also seen as opportunities to gather and to play sport:

Family reunions for us is huge, and that’s a big part of our sports and upbringing, especially in our family ... you’ll notice that when we get together, sport is really huge, so even our mums and dads, grandparents even, they can hardly walk, trying to play kilikiti, active ... that is a fundamental part of my culture, growing up.

These interactions were seen as ways for people to bond with each other to develop trust and relationships and as “a good way to meet people”.

Life skills and personal development

The belief that participation in sport could lead to the development of useful life skills and positive personal development were mentioned by a number of those interviewed. While only a small number identified which specific life skills they believed were developed, those who did tended to be concerned with areas such as developing good character, team building, goal setting, anger management, and building discipline and self-esteem.

One male had organised a boxing club in a small provincial town for many years based on the firm belief that this context offered a valuable means of improving young people's lives and of helping his community. He believed that the 'kids' who gravitated to the sport were the high-risk, high-needs ones and that "fighting is a thing that's admired in their culture" and that his club had an impact on instilling alternative ways to deal with discipline, had a strong work ethic, and helped keep kids off the streets:

cause they only need to be in it for a little while and they realise that you don't just pick it up like that, it requires hard work and discipline and a positive attitude ... there's millions and millions of people throughout the whole world that have changed their life in boxing, and martial arts, and the like.

For others, personal development included developing knowledge about their own culture. Cultural dance groups were one example given that allowed for personal and cultural development:

Island dancing, we have our Cook Island dance group and a lot of people just go to get fit and sweat it out and stuff like that rather than going there to kind of learn your culture sort of thing oh you know as well. But are you learning something about your culture as well when you get together for dancing?

One woman, who was involved in a recreational sports club involving adolescents, felt that the activities associated with being involved in the club offered the opportunity for positive socialisation to occur:

The newsletter goes out, all the ladies bring a salad, guys bring the meat, something to put on the barbecue, then you ask your juniors, age 14 to 17, guys, you be the cooks, we'll clean up, so the parents – I don't know if they know, but the kids are actually cooking for them, they say thank you for driving them to the thing, and they're learning, they're learning.

Fitness and health

Fitness and improved health were identified by a number of people as being a specific reason for participating in sport while for others “getting fitter” was seen as an extra bonus of participation. There was some comment about the place of physical activity in alleviating the health-related issues that impact on the Pasifika communities, including obesity and diabetes:

Our population's increasing, and they say 2020, I think they say we'll be the majority together, Māori and Pacific; if that happens, we'll bankrupt the health system, 'cause our health is so poor, we're filling up the hospitals every day. So the government knows that they've got to get these people up and active.

Some of those interviewed shared their own experiences with increased weight and the resulting problems with their health and quality of life. Their stories helped with understanding not only the problems associated with poorer health but the factors that make participating in sport and recreation more difficult. These included different cultural obligations such as child minding and church-related activities:

...and anyway, as I had more children, the weight piled on, and I found, as a mother, it was either my kids or my weight, so I did a little bit of both, and then I concentrated on weight ... and about 25 years [ago] I was diagnosed with diabetes, it was out of control ... but I have controlled it through the sports, watch what I eat and I'd been helping a lot of people, talking at these health things for sports.

The role of sport in helping manage the stresses of life was also mentioned by a number of people. One older male, for example, described running as an easy and accessible means of stress release:

I quite like running if I'm a bit stressed cos you don't necessarily have to be the best sports person to just run and it's free ... I just like that feeling if I'm stressed or whatever, just getting out and clearing my head.

An interesting discussion around the role of sport in health promotion for Pasifika occurred in phase two. The general consensus for this group was that obesity and poor health were obvious problems for Pasifika and that the promotion of grassroots sport and recreation was an important step in helping alleviate these issues:

I think that if SPARC [Sport and Recreation New Zealand] was to tackle it now, it would save a lot of money in the future. And so if they poured a lot of money into the communities in regard to recreation and sport, in terms of what is healthy live-styles, even healthy eating ... then you would see greater gains, greater outcomes ... not a million dollars to one person [elite athletes].

There was also some discussion in the interviews that alluded to a Pasifika way of looking at health and well-being that differed from the traditional western view. These discussions included comment about the role that sport could play in helping participants to improve their health. When asked, for example, whether

bringing communities together was an important role for sport, two interviewees agreed, with both identifying community health as an integral part of personal health:

Absolutely. Having a good community improves a healthy lifestyle, because when you feel part of the community, there's more ownership, and it does make you healthier.

The family and community together. Yeah, because we are Pasifikers, they're all about laughter and fun, and if we're like that, then health comes after that.

The possible disjoint around the understanding of health held by Pasifika communities and that held by policy makers and researchers is an issue worthy of further exploration. While it is outside of the scope of this paper to discuss this different conceptualisation in more detail, interested readers will find *The Fonofale Model of Pacific Health* (Pulotu-Enderman, 2009), created for use in the New Zealand context, informative.

Release of aggression

Whether the opportunity to release aggression in a structured context was a legitimate outcome for sport and recreation was another interesting area of discussion. For one participant, it was a simple matter of physical release:

It helps with anger, or something. If you're angry, you hit a bag, or something; stuff like that.

For another, however, this was not such a simple matter and his comments illustrated the powerful cultural interplays involving family and culture:

As a vent? [for aggression]. No, because then it's exhibited on the field, and it gives not only that sport a bad name, but the Samoan culture is then also tainted, ... but they don't look at the name, they look at the culture. And it's

like, if I'm naughty, it's not going to be my name that's trashed, it's my dad's name.

The idea that Pasifika people are culturally aggressive was generally dismissed. One female sportswoman was very certain, replying “no, no way” when asked if she felt Pasifika players went into contact sport because they were already aggressive. For another, the question itself was loaded:

... it depends on the person, what happened with that person in their childhood.

And we're always put out in the limelight for that, for bad things like that, so how did the question come about, you know?

Negative experiences with sport

A number of those interviewed recounted their experiences around participating in highly competitive sports. While there were many positive comments, it was also noted that a large number of respondents mentioned negative experiences which had either turned them away from participation or limited their enjoyment. There seemed to be a number of factors that led to this negativity, including the influence of powerful members of the family, injuries, the behaviour of coaches and team mates, different expectations for females, and the pressures associated with participating in highly competitive sport.

While fathers were often seen as a positive influence, they also received more than their fair share of criticism with a number of people commenting unfavourably on their behaviour and influence:

[A] said he was put off sports at an early age, because my husband was right into rugby and league and so because [A] was our own son, as soon as he turned six, [B] put him in to play, and [A] was really, really put off by his dad's

comments, and he was only little. That's one example of parents being too hard, and [A] would never ever play any sports again.

For others, sport-related injuries were seen as a negative result of participation. A number of respondents listed injuries or talked about their "bodies packing up" while one had suffered a serious spinal injury as a result of playing rugby league.

A number of comments were also made about abuse from the coaches or team mates as having a negative impact on participation with the impact of swearing from the sideline being a concern for some:

...and you have got kids around who are hearing this type of thing and are probably saying to themselves oh that must be alright to do that. So it's sending out negative messages to these kids.

One interesting cultural factor that emerged from the interviews was the different expectations and experiences held for Pasifika females by many of the families and some in the community. Restrictions on their participation in sport, because of their gender, were reported by many of the females interviewed:

My parents were quite... weren't allowed to do this, weren't allowed to do that... so high school was about the only time that I was allowed to play, actually no I wasn't. Volleyball was a family sport you see, of course the brothers played and that made it easier for me to play whereas I wouldn't have been allowed otherwise. So yeah once I left home it seemed a bit easier to join club volleyball. The pressure was still hard, if you got married then you got married and it was like your father again you are not allowed to do this. So I think there are barriers that were there growing up in a PI family, growing up was quite negative, but once I did play it was a great experience.

While this was the experience for some, there were also female interviewees who did not report that they had been restricted in their participation due to their gender.

Other reasons given for having negative associations with the playing of sport included the fear of being mocked, becoming obsessed with sport and consequently not doing right by the family, and feeling great pressure to do well and be successful.

Discussion

The intention of this research was to help gain some understanding of how sport is culturally situated in Pasifika communities within New Zealand. A useful theoretical framework to underpin discussion in this area has been developed by Sauni (2009).

Sauni's framework relates to the concept of the space (time) available for Pasifika and the differing cultural obligations and expectations that fill up the finite space.

Sauni considers that the reality for Pasifika communities is that their space is filled with obligations that may differ to those of other groups within New Zealand. These obligations include family, extended family, common related issues with families, church and spiritual commitments, financial obligations to Aotearoa and remittances to the Pacific Islands, funerals and wedding commitments, health priorities, and education. While some, in fact many, of these obligations may be common to other groups, the degree of obligation and the composition of the demands filling the "space" is different for Pasifika communities. If we take the example of church, we find that many Pasifika people are engaged not just all day Sunday, but most or all nights during the week. Church-based commitments may include youth nights, bible study, prayer meetings, choir practice, and Saturday night socials. Each activity has its own commitment to the whole function and purpose of church, and participants are left feeling guilty if these church commitments are not highly prioritised.

The impact that these obligations have on the space (time) available for participation in, and commitment to, sport is a factor that needs to be acknowledged. The differing influences and obligations also impact on the decision-making process. Many coaches and policy makers consider decision making (including participation in, and commitment to, sport) in terms of the decisions being made by and as individuals. Pasifika also have the group (family, church, community) to consider and accommodate. How a decision will impact and reflect on family, church and community is a consideration that needs to be acknowledged and given full consideration. All those involved with Pasifika and sport, therefore, need to be aware of these dynamics and the influence they have on the decisions that are made.

The diversity of understandings around the meaning of sport and recreation presented by the interviewees has implications for attempts to understand and measure participation. If the understanding of what sport and recreation means is not shared by those asking the questions and those being asked, this raises some obvious concerns. Many of the activities identified in this research as being sport, for example, differ from the traditional conceptualisation, and this confusion has the potential to impact on the validity of data collected.

While this research has given some insight into the meaning that sport has for Pasifika in New Zealand, and has examined participants' personal experiences and their beliefs about the contribution sport makes to themselves and their communities, it has also raised a number of issues that are worthy of further examination.

The first issue concerns the fundamental value of sport. There appears to be a strong belief that sport is a "good" thing to promote for a variety of reasons including that it is a way to increase activity levels and to improve participants' health. While there was no expectation that sport would be seen in a positive light by everyone

interviewed, the degree of negativity towards competitive sport in particular was unexpected. For many, participating in sport had the potential to turn them away from activity and/or to leave them with long-term injuries. The question then arises whether there is a need to reframe, reduce, or possibly replace sport with alternatives when looking to promote physical activity. Can sport be uncritically considered as a ‘good’ thing when so many participants report negative experiences arising from involvement with it?

While a number of quotes have been offered to help illustrate the outcomes that those interviewed considered were important for sport, the following offered by an older male to a question about what sport had given him is perhaps a good summary of a Pasifika view:

It has helped me to maintain health, good health, it brings... gives me an ability to maintain good health, that’s a positive side-effect. You mingle, too, you interact, integrate into the community, and meeting new people, and friends, and all that. I think in sports also you’re given an opportunity to express who you are and your talent, and I think sports can be a good place to build yourself up into a place of, what do you call it, your maturity in the way you see things, you become mature, what’s the word I’m trying to get here... self-esteem, that’s it.

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Figure 1: Participants in Phase One

Figure 2: Participants in Phase Two

Figure 3: Pasifika Words Related to Sport and Recreation

Figure 1. Participants in Phase One

Individuals

- 1 Female (Niue)
- 2 Male (Samoa)
- 3 Male (Fiji)
- 4 Male (Samoa)

Focus groups

- 1 Niuean Community (three male, three female).
- 2 Samoan community (one male, four female) plus one male Māori.
- 3 Samoan Community (four male, four female) plus one female Māori, one female Cook Islander.
- 4 Samoan high school students (three female)
- 5 University students: One male one female (Tongan); one male one female (Samoan); one male one female (Cook Island)
- 6 Tokelauan Community (two female, three male)

Figure 2. Participants in Phase Two

Individuals	
1	Female (Samoan)
2	Male (Samoan)
Focus groups	
1	Samoan (two males one American Samoa)
2	Tokelau (four female) Fijian (male) Cook Island (female) Nuiean (male)

Figure 3. Pasifika Words Related to Sport and Recreation

Fa'a afu=raise a sweat
Ta'aloga=game or sport
Ta'alo=to play
Malolo=to be restful, relaxed
Fai feau=to participate in home activities, physical domestic jobs
Fai Faiva=good luck with activity, fishing, hunting,
Kolegi=to train, to spar, a pass time

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