
**Te taha hinengaro: Using talanoa to facilitate an
interconnected analysis of psychosocial
development shared by Māori and Pasifika young
men in Rugby League**

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Abstract

Psychosocial development is one aspect of talent development (TD) that has generated considerable attention; however, studies which use Indigenous frameworks are scant. For many teenage Māori and Pasifika athletes, the psychosocial aspect within the realms of sports in general, can be more arduous than the physical aspect (Napier, 2015). My PhD contextualises psychosocial development specifically within a High Performance (HP) Rugby League (RL) context in Aotearoa, New Zealand, using an Indigenous Māori and Pasifika framework. In 2017, 100% of the Junior Kiwis (Aotearoa's top under-20s age group male RL team) were of Māori and/or Pasifika heritage. At present, there are a lack of tools, practices and processes that respond appropriately to the psychosocial needs of Māori and/or Pasifika athletes. Consequently, it seemed appropriate in my research to explore nine high performing Māori and/or Pasifika junior RL players' perceptions to identify, define and understand the process of developing psychosocial determinants of success for them.

Two focus groups were established, which included five under-20s (aged 18-20) and four under-18s (aged 16-18) junior RL players of Māori and/or Pasifika heritage who were embedded in a professional RL club's TD programme. Five sessions per age group were conducted over nine months using a Pasifika method, Talanoa (Vaiolleti, 2006). Data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999), as guided by the underpinning collective Māori and Pasifika framework.

The results of the research found that each participant had personal and collective experiences that shaped their perceptions regarding the identification and operationalisation of each determinant of success. Specifically, *sacrifice, attitude, resilience, preparation/routine, selfless, and a network of good influences* were identified as instrumental to the successful progression along the TD pathway. Given the cultural underpinnings of my study however, a significant finding was the importance and value of relationships with other persons (i.e. family, significant other, adult mentor). More specifically, reciprocal relationships were key to successfully navigating the complexities of the HP TD pathway for the participants. Findings suggested that an optimal relationship is one that is anchored by trust and emanates an unspoken/unseen energy conducive to enhancing individuals' capacity to unpack, process and overcome the mentally and emotionally trying times that a high performing junior RL player encounters along the HP TD pathway. By utilising a methodological approach more reflective of the

targeted demographic, my findings (re)defined psychosocial as the interconnectedness of *relationships, trust and energy*.

Essentially, the establishment of reciprocal relationships were foundational to psychosocial development and pre-requisite to the development of specific determinants of success. Therefore, to optimise the preparation and performance of Māori and Pasifika high performing junior RL players, there is a need to integrate practices throughout the TD process that facilitate opportunities to establish trusting relationships that stimulate and support an energy conducive to the reinforcement of psychosocial development.

Keywords: *psychosocial development, Māori and Pasifika athletes, talent development, talanoa*.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed _____ Date _____

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Getting to this point has truly been a collective effort and it would be selfish of me not to acknowledge the hands, hearts, minds and voices who contributed to my aspiration to empower and advance our Māori and Pasifika peoples, particularly those involved in the High Performance sports arena! In sum, I’m reminded of the whakataukī “Ehara taku toa, i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini”. *My success should not be bestowed onto me alone, as it was not individual success but success of a collective.*

Glossary of Terms

He kupu Māori	<i>English translation</i>
Aroha ki te tangata	<i>Respect for people</i>
Hīkoi	<i>Journey</i>
Kai	<i>Food</i>
Kanohi-ki-te-kanohi	<i>Face-to-face</i>
Koha	<i>Gift/present</i>
Pou	<i>Post or pillar</i>
Tangata whenua	<i>People of the land</i>
Te reo Māori	<i>Māori language</i>
Te reo Pākehā	<i>English language</i>
Te taha hinengaro	<i>Mental or emotional dimension of well-being</i>
Te taha tinana	<i>Physical dimension of well-being</i>
Te taha whānau	<i>Social/family dimension of well-being</i>
Te taha wairua	<i>Spiritual dimension of well-being</i>
Te ao Māori	<i>Māori worldview</i>
Tino rangatiratanga	<i>Self-determination</i>
Tuakana/teina	<i>Elder sibling/younger sibling of the same gender e.g. Older brother/young brother</i>
Tūpuna	<i>Ancestors</i>
Whakaaro	<i>Thoughts, opinions</i>
Whakapapa	<i>Genealogy</i>
Whakataukī	<i>Māori proverb</i>
Whakawhanaungatanga	<i>Building family-like relationships</i>
Whānau	<i>Family</i>
Whanaungatanga	<i>Relationships, kinship, sense of family connection</i>
Whare	<i>House</i>
He kupu Samoa	<i>English translation</i>
Fale	<i>House</i>
‘aiga	<i>Family</i>
He kupu Tonga	<i>English Translation</i>
Talanoa	<i>To engage freely in conversation</i>

N.B. This glossary includes only those words which are used more than once in my thesis. The English translation for all other Māori, Samoan or Tongan words will be highlighted in the footnotes of the respective page.

Chapter One: Background to the Study

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata
(Whakataukī)

*What is the most important thing on earth? It is people, it is people, it is people
(Māori proverb)*

Chapter Introduction

Psychosocial development has been referred to as one's psychological development within a social environment (Larsen, Alfermann, Henriksen & Christensen, 2014; Woodcock, Holland, Duda & Cumming, 2011). Given that there is no direct translation for the term 'psychosocial' in Māori¹, or any of the Pasifika² languages, the current study explored this notion through a collective cultural framework. This was done to account for the interrelated factors that contribute to the psychosocial aspect of talent development (TD) within the wider context of well-being and development, as afforded by the cultural lens. Hence, the main purpose of my study was to use a cultural lens to contextualise psychosocial development as it pertained to TD, specifically with male Rugby League (RL) players, aged between 15 and 20. Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) were the respective Māori and Pasifika holistic models of health and well-being that were used as the collective framework to explore those interrelated elements that contribute to psychosocial development. Added to this framework is the Samoan concept of the va (Wendt, 1996). The va is a theoretical concept that gives spatial context and meaning to relationships by considering the sacred and secular aspects of such connections which impacts on one's personal and collective well-being (Airini et al., 2010). Inclusion of the va helps to frame the varying social environments that participants engage in, and therefore adds cultural context to a participant's perception of psychosocial development as a Māori and/or Pasifika male

¹ Refers to the Indigenous people of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

² Broad term used to refer to people with ancestral ties to the Island nations of the South Pacific.

adolescent, who is also a high performing junior RL player. The team environment of the High Performance (HP) Rugby League (RL) space offers a unique platform whereby an athlete has multiple and varied opportunities to observe and learn from others to construct their personal psychosocial skillset (Larsen, Alfermann, & Christensen, 2012). This aligns well with the social and learning structure of collectivist cultures such as Māori and Pasifika.

Given the shared oratory traditions of Māori and Pasifika peoples, the gathering and dissemination of information was done through the Pasifika method, Talanoa (Vaioloti, 2006). Participants' perceptions were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis given its aim to give voice to the participants (Smith et al., 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2008), however, the analysis was guided by the collective cultural *te ao Māori (Māori worldview)*, and the Pasifika worldview. Furthermore, a small external group of cultural advisors was formed (outside of my academic supervisors) to keep me culturally accountable to the principles and processes of Kaupapa Māori (*Māori philosophy*) and Pasifika research. This facilitated congruency between the design of the study and the participants' voices and ensured that the participants' sense-making process was appropriately measured and presented. Each cultural advisor's background and expertise will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three. The previously mentioned models, concepts and methods, including the formation of a cultural advisory group, will be elaborated upon in the methodology chapter of this thesis (Chapter Three).

This chapter begins retrospectively with a letter to my 'pre-PhD self,' as guided by the talanoa method. This retrospective letter, and all subsequent personal retrospective letters, which will be addressed to my 'PhD candidate self', will be intertwined throughout the thesis. The letters draw from my self-reflexive journal and have been inserted to highlight my personal *hīkoi (journey)* as well as the participants, using a narrative medium that resonated with the cultural framework of my study. The personal

retrospective letters in this chapter elucidate the context wherein the current study emerged. My impetus for this study is then outlined, followed by the emergence of New Zealand Rugby League's (NZRL) requested research topic. Before introducing the study's theoretical approach and overarching guiding principles, I locate my voice in the research process. It is important to note that an in-depth discussion surrounding the theoretical approach will be divulged in Chapter Three. The research questions are presented next, followed by the common terms used in this thesis. The chapter will conclude by providing an outline of the thesis.

Letter to My Younger Self #1

To my 'Pre-PhD' self,

You stare at this impending PhD hīkoi with intent. You visualise this opportunity to create something of value and empowerment for Māori and Pasifika RL players, whānau and community. But the truth is, you started this hīkoi way back when you were about the same age as the young men that you may potentially collaborate with, should you accept the offer to enrol in this doctoral programme and carry out this research.

Remember that one coach you had when you were playing U18s rep basketball for Waikato³, and how he pushed you away from your first love? Yeah – your hīkoi began way back then. It continued when you saw your friends return home from America earlier than expected because they couldn't handle the demands of being a student-athlete even though they were on full-ride university basketball scholarships in the States.

Because of your experiences, you have gone through life knowing that you want to help athletes develop the critical tools and skills that are necessary to succeed in all aspects

³ Refers to a geographical location in the upper North Island of Aotearoa.

of their lives. You just haven't known how you could help athletes because you weren't strong enough or patient enough to live out your own aspirations that you once had to be a professional basketball player. Hei aha! (Never mind!) You have a golden offer on the table right now that really, you can't refuse. You have been blessed with an opportunity to do what you know you've always wanted to do. That is, to help our Māori and Pasifika athletes and their families become successful both on and off the courts/fields!

I know you're hesitant for lots of reasons but trust me. Take the offer. Yeah, you hate reading and writing, but trust me. Take the offer. You will be challenged, you will break down, but unlike your U18 self, you WILL be strong enough and patient enough to succeed this time. Heavenly Father has prepared a way for you to fulfil your calling in life to bless others, sis – so TRUST HIM. TAKE THE OFFER!

Go get your blessings sis,

Your 'Post-Doc' self.

Impetus for my Study

Between 2013 and 2015, headlines in the media of Māori and Pasifika athletes such as “NRL player Suaia Matagi on long, hard road from jail cell” (Lane, 2014), “Polynesian athletes face stresses and strains in order to give back to families” (Napier, 2015), and “Tragic story of rising NRL star Mosese Fotuaika” (Cadzow, 2013) were disheartening. During that same period five promising Under 20s RL players with National Rugby League⁴ (NRL) contracts, tragically ended their lives; four being of Māori or Pasifika heritage. In relation to my study, for young Māori and Pasifika males

⁴ The NRL is a professional men's RL competition which comprises of the best male RL players in Australasia.

to get to a point where they were comfortable enough to express themselves to a trusted person within the professional environment was a positive find, especially given the impact that the suicides of four promising Māori and Pasifika U20s RL players had on the NRL community. Similarly, a recent study that examined the trends for suicide mortality over a 17-year period for Pasifika in NZ found that Pasifika males aged 15-24 had the highest rate of suicide (Tiatia-Seath, Lay-Yee, & Von Randow, 2017). Unfortunately, the statistics are quite bleak for Māori youth in NZ too (Shahtahamasebi & Cassidy, 2014). In designing my study, these unfortunate events steered my hīkoi towards exploring the mental processes of talented Māori and Pasifika athletes in understanding how to better equip them with life-skills to succeed both on and off the field. Furthermore, these headlines coupled with the aforementioned tragic statistics, and the personal experiences alluded to in ‘Letter to my Younger Self #1,’ emphasised the necessity for a study to focus on the needs of our young Māori and Pasifika athletes and to do so from within their worldviews.

In 2015, NZRL, in conjunction with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) presented me with such an opportunity. NZRL graciously offered me a scholarship to carry out research to explore best practices that contribute to optimising preparation and performance for players aged 15-20 on a high performance (HP) pathway. The demographic landscape and history of RL provided an exciting opportunity to explore TD, specifically with regards to psychosocial development, and within a Māori and Pasifika framework. Primarily, NZRL was keen to understand how to be more deliberate in implementing a holistic approach to TD. Therefore, I was tasked with designing a study that would enable me to investigate TD processes that could be used by NZRL to establish practices that facilitate the successful development of high performing junior RL players.

Letter to My Younger Self #2

To my 'PhD candidate' self,

First things first, CONGRATS for making the decision to pursue your PhD sis! You're in a primo position to work with your dream group of people – aspiring Māori and Pasifika athletes. You're gonna have great support in your supervisory team, and other colleagues at school. You're also gonna join a small HP team at NZRL and love learning from them about everything to do with HP sport. At NZRL, they will tell you that they're keen to have you explore best practices that can be implemented to strengthen their TD pathways and programmes to optimise player preparation and performance. Ask yourself – best practice for who? You will survey the names and faces of those who have been through the HP pathways and realise that at the players' level, the majority are Māori and Pasifika. Keep that in mind, sis.

As you start to formulate your research questions and the design of your study, you will feel conflicted by your desire to design a culturally relevant study that will be rigorous enough to demonstrate that you are the expert in your chosen topic of study. At the same time, you are mindful of the investment that NZRL has committed to for you, and therefore will expect to PROFIT from it. Just embrace the opportunity and go for it. You will feel like you don't know where to start and don't know anything. And the truth is – you're right! But it's ok. You know enough to get started.

The academic world is a world that you're familiar with, having completed your Masters in America. It is a very Eurocentric structured world and you've already had a small taste of the conditions that must be satisfied if you want to become a Doctor of Philosophy – the expert! Likewise, there are guidelines or conditions which must be satisfied if you're going to use the Māori and Pasifika framework. As an emerging researcher, you will eventually find the balance that is necessary to satisfy both worlds

without compromising the integrity of the study. Heavenly Father blessed us with a brain, and a heart, sis...so use BOTH! As you go through this hīkoi you will unconsciously keep reverting back to the Western way of seeing, doing, and writing. It's ok. Your support crew will call you out on it and help you to redirect your waka. Your study will evolve, so let yourself evolve as a researcher. The things you will go through along the way will keep you humble and help you to become an empathetic researcher. Becoming empathetic is vital to carrying out research with Indigenous communities. Most importantly, you will learn to "feel" the research. You may not understand what "feeling" the research looks like, but you will. Just stay patient and be curious. Stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo. Pace yourself – you got three years to tackle this!

Go get your blessings sis,

Your 'Post-doc' self.

Emergence of NZRL's Requested Topic

Viewed as the 'poor cousins' to rugby union, RL is historically a blue-collar sport (Borell, 2012). RL was developed as a breakaway from rugby union by the northern counties of England, considered the working-class area of England (Alder, 2015). Frustrated by the strict conditions implemented from the Rugby Football Union, the Northern Union was formed and the rival code RL was born (Borell, 2012). The first game of RL played in Aotearoa, New Zealand (hereafter referred to as Aotearoa) was in 1908 at Athletic Park in Wellington (Falcous, 2007). From there, other RL clubs were established and in 1910, New Zealand Rugby Football League, now known as NZRL, was established as the national governing body for RL (Alder, 2015; Coffey & Wood, 2008; Falcous, 2007). Embedded in NZRL is the HP unit who are responsible for developing and executing systems and processes that identify and develop exceptionally

talented RL players (Rees et al., 2016). Those who are invited into the HP sport environment through the age-groups are then offered various types of support (e.g. physical, game-skill, well-being and education workshops etc.) conducive to attaining success at the highest levels as a RL player (Abbott, Button, Pepping, & Collins, 2005; Abbott & Collins, 2004; Li, Wang, Pyun, & Martindale, 2015; Weissensteiner, 2017). Since being introduced in Aotearoa, RL has been well supported and represented by marginalised groups, like Māori and Pasifika communities (Alder, 2015). This support can be validated by the number of Māori and Pasifika players participating from the grassroots right through to the elite levels in Aotearoa (Coffey & Wood, 2008).

Since 2012, 61 of the 65 Kiwis (senior men's New Zealand RL team) were of Māori and/or Pasifika heritage. That translates to 94% of all players selected to represent Aotearoa in RL. More precisely, NZRL's 2017 national representative teams at the senior men's, women's (Kiwi Ferns) and under 20's (Junior Kiwis) levels further illustrates the contribution of our Māori or Pasifika communities to the game (Kiwis – 92%; Kiwi Ferns – 96%, and Junior Kiwis – 100%) (NZRL team lists, 2017). These statistics accentuate the impact Māori and Pasifika have on the development pool and talent pipeline for NZRL, thus highlighting the need to explore the perceptions specifically of Māori and Pasifika junior RL players. As RL is a high-intensity, collision sport, the predominance of Māori and Pasifika participating in the sport has been related to their physical prowess, (Erueti, 2015; Hawkes, 2018; Horton, 2014; Lakisa, Adair & Taylor, 2014), and therefore they are typically identified early-on based on physiological and anthropometric factors (Till, Scantlebury & Jones, 2017). The early identification may confirm to the young Māori and/or Pasifika that they are on the right 'professional' pathway, however, the current TID system exacerbates the assumption or stereotypes that the Māori and/or Pasifika athlete's success is attributed to their physical talent (Hokowhitu, 2003, 2008). Consequently, the young athlete may run the risk of under-developing necessary

psychosocial skills and knowledge that translate to success outside of RL (Hawkes, 2018). By utilising a collective cultural methodological framework, high performing junior RL players' perspectives were explored to gain insights regarding psychosocial development and those contributing factors that inform success, as well as the process of developing such determinants (Holt & Dunn, 2004; Mills, Butt, Maynard & Harwood, 2012; Woodcock et al., 2011).

Psychological characteristics have been found to be critical for athletes to develop and deploy in order to successfully transition through the development stages (Abbott & Collins, 2004). The development and use of psychosocial factors (psychological characteristics within a social environment), has been found to be the difference between those who merely reach the elite level and those who manage to maintain their position at the elite level (Larsen et al., 2014). An effective TD pathway then is one which facilitates a systematic approach to the development of critical psychological characteristics within a supportive environment, and appropriate to an athlete's stage of development (Larsen et al., 2014; MacNamara, Button & Collins, 2010b; MacNamara & Collins, 2013). This has been explored from various perspectives (i.e. player, coach, parents, and managers) and across a wide range of sports from the junior development to senior elite levels (Birrer & Morgan, 2010; Cook, Crust, Littlewood, Nesti & Allen-Collinson, 2014; Hodge, Pierce, Taylor & Button, 2012; Larsen et al., 2014; MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010a; van Rossum, 1996). Limited studies have been conducted in the context of RL and even fewer have explored psychosocial development in the context of RL players who have ancestral ties to Māori and Pasifika cultures. My study sought to address this gap in the literature. Participants in my study were all engaged in a HP sport environment, given that they were contracted to a professional RL organisation. They were part of an environment which housed the infrastructure conducive to supporting HP through specialist support, resources and

workshops (Larsen et al., 2014; Rees et al., 2016). Therefore, it seemed appropriate to explore players' perceptions of the key psychosocial determinants which they believed fostered successful TD towards the top-grade level in RL.

Pilot study. To help inform my study, I conducted a pilot study to explore current Aotearoa representative senior men RL players' and coaches' perceptions of psychosocial determinants of success. Ethical approval was sought and granted for the pilot study only on September 28th, 2015 (Appendix A). The key questions explored in the pilot study were: (a) what psychosocial determinants contribute to successful elite Māori and Pasifika RL players' development? (b) how do senior elite Māori and Pasifika RL players/coaches perceive these determinants are developed? Three players and two coaches from Aotearoa's senior men's RL team who were of Māori and/or Pasifika heritage (N = 5), were invited to participate in the preliminary study by NZRL, on my behalf. Participants were of Māori, Samoan and/or Cook Island descent; however, all were born in Aotearoa. Collectively, players and coaches had extensive experience at both the professional and international levels. Their combined playing and coaching experience totalled: 1172 first grade matches, 133 international tests, and 16 years of professional coaching. I was introduced to each participant separately via email, through an NZRL colleague. At that point the logistics of individual interviews were discussed and agreed to according to the needs of each participant, between me and the participant. Participant information sheets were emailed to each participant. On the day of the interview, the information sheets and consent forms were read through together to ensure each participant clearly understood their rights and responsibilities of engaging in the study. Questions were addressed prior to signing of the consent forms, which all participants agreed to sign at the time of the interview.

Five *kanohi-ki-te-kanohi* (*face-to-face*) semi-structured, one-time interviews were conducted by me over the course of four months. These were held at various

locations in the Auckland region that were convenient for each participant and lasted on average forty-five minutes. Interviews were guided by the principles that underpin Butler and Hardy's (1992) performance profiling technique (see Appendix B). This technique was developed using Kelly's (1991) personal construct psychology (PCP) as a theoretical framework. PCP encourages the researcher to delve into an individual's world as the individual seeks to reflect and interpret a sequence of events they experience in anticipation of upcoming events (Gucciardi & Gordon, 2009). Further discussion regarding the PPT will be given in my methods section (chapter three). For the pilot study, participants were invited to retrospectively assess their own development experience and provide insight regarding key determinants and strategies they perceived NZRL could employ to improve their HP TD framework. Interviews for the pilot study were guided using the talanoa method. To talanoa means to engage in a formal or informal conversation or exchange of ideas (Vaioleti, 2006), and this will be delved into in greater detail in the Methods section of the thesis (Chapter Three). The intention of using talanoa was to offer participants a platform that would allow them to explain the psychosocial phenomenon and experiences from their own sociocultural perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Due to the small number of interviews, I transcribed the audio-recordings and an analysis was conducted shortly thereafter.

To identify and understand participants perceived psychosocial constructs of success and development strategies, a thematic analysis was conducted. A thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). As a result, a thematic analysis provided a guide for me to organise the data as themes emerged, whilst being able to interpret the data using Kelly's (1991) PCP through te ao Māori. Key findings and recommendations from my pilot study (Appendix C) were then presented to members of NZRL's HP unit on Friday 18th March 2016 at the NZRL head office. Self-drive and balance were the two most

commonly identified determinants of success by all participants. Discipline, resilience, attitude and toughness were other determinants of success mentioned. These qualities could be supported by other studies that have investigated psychological determinants of success (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002; Hodge et al., 2012; MacNamara et al., 2010a). Answering research Question Two appeared to be a bit more challenging for participants as they had difficulty identifying strategies or processes that helped them to develop self-drive, balance or resilience. Rather, participants alluded to gradually developing the above determinants through life experience and or learning from the examples and life experiences of whānau members. These findings were reported back to NZRL and a collaborative discussion took place regarding the next step of my study with NZRL's HP group.

Engaging in a collaborative discussion was a crucial part of the study as it ensured that the study aligned with NZRL's strategic plan. Hence, a meeting was organised at the headquarters by the General Manager of HP at NZRL, and all members of NZRL's HP unit were invited to attend. First, I presented the findings back to the group and then I facilitated the collaborative discussion. Collectively, it was decided that the next step forward would be to explore current junior player's perceptions of psychosocial development. The HP unit wanted to gain insights directly from junior players who were currently on the pathway so as to capture their insights in real-time given their experience and perspective. This could then be used to inform how NZRL could provide more effective and appropriate support for those coming through the pathways. NZRL's HP unit ascertained that rather than assume what players needed, my study could provide a non-threatening platform for players to express themselves. Thus, a collective agreement was made between me and the members of NZRL's HP unit regarding the next step of our study, which was to explore perceptions of psychosocial development in high performing junior RL players of Māori and Pasifika heritage. I was very clear that a

Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika framework would again underpin the next study to allow the voices of those who participate to be heard and understood from their worldviews (Curtis, 2016; Naepi, 2015). It was important to be transparent and upfront with NZRL’s HP unit regarding this condition before continuing my hīkoi. Gratefully, NZRL’s HP unit was supportive of this motive to utilise a cultural framework. Before moving to introducing the principles that will guide the use of the study’s cultural framework, it is important now to locate my position as the researcher.

Locating My Voice within the Research Process

*Ko Maungaroa te maunga*⁵ *Ko Te Kuri te maunga*
*Ko Marokopa te awa*⁶ *Ko Waipaoa te awa*
*Ko Ngāti Maniapoto te iwi*⁷ *Ko Rongowhakaata te iwi*
*Ko Ngāti Te Kanaawa te hapū*⁸ *Ko Ngāti Maru te hapū*
No Tāmaki Makaurau ahau
Ko Sierra Keung tōku ingoa

The above pepehā⁹ acknowledges those sacred connections to the tribal lands and the surrounding environment within those tribal boundaries that informs my identity as Māori. I began with my father’s side where my whakapapa (*genealogy*) connects me to the land, surrounding environment, and tribal group located on the western border of the Waikato region of Aotearoa. On my mother’s side I have whakapapa to the land, surrounding environment, and tribal group located in the Gisborne regions of Aotearoa. I would be considered an urban Māori having been raised away from the tribal lands, surrounding environment and whānau (both the living and those who have passed on). Instead, I was raised in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland; the largest city in Aotearoa and

⁵ Mountain

⁶ River

⁷ Refers to an extended kinship group, tribe, nation, or people – often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory.

⁸ Refers to a subtribe – a section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society.

⁹ Refers to a tribal saying or proverb.

known as the largest Pasifika city in the world (Ioane & Tudor, 2017) because of the city's high concentration of Pasifika peoples (Statistics NZ, 2014).

Whilst my capacity to speak te reo Māori (*Māori language*) is limited, I participate in tikanga Māori¹⁰ with a little more comfort. Despite having had to navigate between the various worlds of being Māori, in an urbanised environment, away from the lands, mountains, rivers and people that connect me to my tūpuna (*ancestors, grandparents*), and essentially my identity as Māori, I acknowledge the strength and shoulders of my tūpuna upon whom I stand. It is their legacy whom I strive to carry on with humility and respect, as I seek to empower and advance the young Māori athlete and whānau. Furthermore, whilst I may not identify with nor have a 'blood' connection to Pasifika in the sense of the Western worldview, Pasifika whakapapa to Māori through Moana Nui a Kiwa, or the greater Oceania kinship connection (HRC, 2014).

In this light, I recognise the close connection that has been established with our Pasifika whānau, and acknowledge the diverse nature of the Pasifika population located in Aotearoa. Therefore, I locate my voice in the research process as an emerging Māori female researcher, using a collective Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika research framework to conduct the current study with aspiring Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL players. To guide my voice as an emerging Māori female researcher, I established a cultural advisory group (CAG) which comprised of persons who were of Māori and/or Pasifika descent. The individual role of each CAG member and purpose of the collective CAG as it relates to my study will be expanded upon in Chapter Three.

Western models and frameworks have dominated sport participation and TD literature, and with the rise and impact of Māori and Pasifika athletes in elite sport, there is a need to start incorporating culturally relevant frameworks (Keung, 2014; Panapa &

¹⁰ Refers to the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context.

Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006). The process of generating knowledge within a Western framework is specialised and tends to focus on individual qualities (Macfarlane, Glynn, Grace, Penetito & Bateman, 2008). Indigenous frameworks place emphasis on the relationships with people, respect for the information participants share, and the dissemination of findings back into the community being researched (Health Research Council of New Zealand [HRC], 2014; Smith, 1999). When studied from a Western perspective, Māori and Pasifika peoples are typically positioned as the ‘other’ (Smith & Reid, 2000). Thus, I intentionally and deliberately used Māori and Pasifika words throughout my study. Specifically, Māori and Pasifika words were translated into te reo Pākehā (*English language*) the first time they were used, and the Pākehā translation was italicised. In today’s society, Pākehā is a Māori-language term that refers to a person or people who are of non-Māori and non-Pasifika heritage (Randford, n.d.). When the first European settlers arrived in Aotearoa, Māori used the term Pākehā, not in a derogatory sense as many believe, but as a point of difference between them as the Indigenous people of the land and the ‘white person’ (Randford, n.d.). Whilst there are no clear and official definitions for the term Pākehā, the discourses that evolved since the first European settlers arrived in Aotearoa sheds light as to the evolution of Pākehā becoming the dominant group in Aotearoa. The impact of such evolution is demonstrated in the socio-political structures that typically underpin institutions such as sport, whereby Pākehā values, ontology, epistemology and methodology are prioritised as the norm. Consequently, my intentional and deliberate decision to use Māori and Pasifika words was done to emphasise: (a) the use of a Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika framework, and (b) Māori and Pasifika are the norm, not the ‘other’, in my study (Pipi et al., 2004). Given the shared values between Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika cultures (Curtis, 2016) and the importance of relationships, utilising the two worldviews in the same study was seen as an appropriate fit for my study (Airini et al., 2010; Naepi, 2015). The overarching

principles of tino rangatiratanga (*self-determination*), whanaungatanga (*relationships*) and aroha ki te tangata (*respect*) were key to ensuring that information was gathered and disseminated respectfully for all participants, both Māori and Pasifika.

Relationship of Māori and Pasifika in Aotearoa

Māori are tangata whenua or the Indigenous people of Aotearoa. As tangata whenua they are therefore granted rights and privileges that are validated by the Treaty of Waitangi¹¹ (Airini et al., 2010; Smith & Reid, 2000). From an academic standpoint, Kaupapa Māori research provided Māori autonomy to conduct research as Māori, for the benefit of Māori, and to do so without being subjected to a set of rules, philosophies or methods that do not adequately account for the world in which Māori operate, nor ascribe to (Smith, 1999; Smith, G., 2003).

Pasifika researchers in Aotearoa acknowledge Māori as tangata whenua and therefore respect the rights and privileges of the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa (Curtis, 2016; HRC, 2014). Many Pasifika migrate to Aotearoa in search of improved lifestyle through better educational and employment opportunities (Ward, & Masgoret, 2008). It appears however, that Pasifika in Aotearoa share similar socioeconomic experiences to Māori. For example, 55.6% of Pasifika and 40% of Māori live in the most deprived areas of Aotearoa compared to Europeans (11.2%) (Sorensen, Jensen, Rigamoto & Pritchard, 2015; Samu & Suaalii-Sauni, 2009). Pasifika also have the largest proportion with no educational qualifications and unemployment rates are consistently higher than the total population (Sorensen et al., 2015). These statistics are somewhat concerning and slightly ironic given that Pasifika peoples migrated to Aotearoa for employment and educational

¹¹ The Treaty of Waitangi, a founding document of Aotearoa, was signed in 1840 and British sovereignty over Aotearoa was declared. The agreement was made between and signed by the British Crown and Māori chiefs from around Aotearoa. There are two versions (Māori and Pākehā) and there are discrepancies in the meaning of words, and interpretation of the documents (New Zealand History, 2017).

opportunities (Ward & Masgoret, 2008). That said, the shared values and experiences of Māori and Pasifika coupled with the changing demographic landscape of Aotearoa, as well as the high percentage of Māori and Pasifika RL players in NZRL's system, provided a rationale to include both groups in the same study (Airini et al., 2010; Curtis, 2016). Thus, the relationship between Māori and Pasifika people in Aotearoa is one built on respect and connection. Curtis (2016) acknowledged that:

Māori and Pacific whakapapa connections provide a unique platform for engagement. We have been and continue to be, connected by our ancient and contemporary Polynesian linkages. This Indigenous connection of whakapapa and whanaungatanga provides an important context for Māori and Pacific research methodologies to operate alongside each other (p. 405).

In short, Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika research have common elements which can be utilised to develop and drive a study to empower both communities (Anae, et al., 2001; Curtis, 2016; Naepi, 2015). As a result, three overarching guiding principles for my research were instituted to facilitate congruency between the Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika methodological framework and processes.

Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika Research Principles

Tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga and aroha ki te tangata were the three overarching principles of my study. Tino rangatiratanga or *self-determination* indicates the needs and issues of the participants as both the focus and the outcome of this research. Whanaungatanga or *relationships*, are about developing family-like relationships with those that an individual engages and works with (Macfarlane et al., 2008); and aroha ki te tangata or *respect*, is about giving space to individuals to define the terms with which they will participate and contribute to the study (Pipi et al., 2004). Taken together, these principles ensured that all voices were heard and considered in determining the most appropriate outcome conducive to the Māori and Pasifika communities that the

participants have ties to. These principles and the subsequent cultural framework will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three.

Research Questions

Four key questions were developed to explore psychosocial development within the context of Aotearoa and specific to the HP RL environment. These questions are:

- 1) What psychosocial determinants do high performing junior rugby league players perceive contribute to successful senior elite rugby league players' development?
- 2) What are the perceived meanings of these determinants to players?
- 3) What are high performing junior rugby league players perceived levels of importance of psychosocial development?
- 4) What processes contribute to a player's psychosocial development in NZRL's High Performance pathway?

In addressing the above four questions my research will contribute to the strengthening of NZRL's HP TD structures by way of exploring the perceptions of Māori and Pasifika junior players. As reiterated in the presentation to NZRL's HP unit and during the collaborative discussion, NZRL's HP unit recognised that they must not treat Māori and Pasifika players differently; rather, Māori and Pasifika must be approached differently. By focusing on a specific group of participants currently engaged in a HP sport environment, a more relevant development process can be examined based on the present-day challenges of TD within a RL context, and in particular in Aotearoa. Hence the uniqueness of my study offers an opportunity to explore an often underutilised, but critical component of TD through a culturally responsive framework that resonates with the voices captured over the course of my study.

Operational Terms

In conducting this review of the literature, inconsistencies were prevalent when searching for studies which explored TD (Dohme, Backhouse, Piggott, & Morgan, 2017). It has been argued that inconsistent and ambiguous language is restricting the progress of TD literature (Dohme et al., 2017; Swann, Moran & Piggott, 2015). To identify talent is to recognise athletes with potential to become successful sportspeople. To develop talent is to provide a pathway, environment and resources, conducive to the process of becoming a successful sportsperson (MacNamara & Collins, 2013). Taken together, identifying and developing athletes for long-term success is a complex process. Ironically, talent identification (TID) and TD models often employ a unidimensional rather than multidimensional view to reflect the complexities of elite athlete development (Abbott & Collins, 2002, 2004). Most talent models tend to concentrate on physical performance rather than considering other factors, which may facilitate development and future success (Martindale, Collins, & Daubney, 2005). Before moving forward, there are two terms that must be clarified for my study. Firstly, the term ‘elite’ has been defined and used in varying degrees in the literature (Swann et al., 2015). In an attempt to understand what qualifies as being an elite level athlete, Swann et al. (2015) conducted an extensive literature review and found the following qualifiers: competing at international and/or national levels, the number of competitive playing or training years and/or competitive games played, professionalism, being engaged in TD programmes, competing at a regional level, objective sport/country measures (e.g. black belt in karate), and competing at the university level. The varying degrees of qualifiers adds to the complexity that TD already has and therefore in order to move forward, it is necessary to clearly establish the stage of development my study has focused on.

High performing. Within the NZRL context, members of the Kiwi and Junior Kiwi teams are considered New Zealand’s senior elite men’s team and junior elite men’s team respectively (N. Conlon, personal communication, May 20, 2016). All participants

in our study were contracted to a professional RL organisation at the time of the study and have been identified by NZRL as potential national representatives. However, most of the participants did not fit the definition of elite athlete within a NZRL context as stated above, given that none of the participants had yet reached the pinnacle of RL but were certainly on NZRL's radar at the time of the study. Therefore, to avoid adding confusion to the definition of 'elite,' I have opted to use the term 'high performing' to refer to a RL player who is 'developing' and on the pathway to becoming an elite RL player. The implication of the term 'high performing' is to prioritise talent development over winning, especially as the athletes in my study still have yet to matriculate into the senior levels. The term 'high performing' also builds upon the philosophical foundation of TD being a complex, non-linear process by considering those factors not related to the heavily favoured physiological and anthropometric factors of performance, concerning identifying and developing talent (Abbott et al., 2005; Abbott & Collins, 2004; Hill, MacNamara & Collins, 2015). More specifically, it has been argued that psychosocial determinants should be considered indicators of success in recruitment and selection processes (Cupples & O'Connor, 2011), which would then reinforce the notion that long-term, sustainable success in sport is a culmination of factors – hence, the complexities of TD. Therefore, high performing appears to offer a more accurate reflection of our study's sample group.

Psychosocial development. Another area of conceptual murkiness is with regards to athlete psychological development and well-being. The psychological aspect of athlete development has gained support as being a key contributor to the successful development of junior athletes (Gould & Carson, 2008; Hollings, Mallett, Hume, 2014; Holt & Dunn, 2004; MacNamara et al., 2010a, 2010b; Woodcock et al., 2011). As such, Dohme and colleagues (2017) found in their review of the TD literature that a plethora of terms have been used interchangeably such as psychological, psychosocial, mental skills,

and life skills amongst others. The term psychosocial considers the context and social environment that influences the athlete and offers a more holistic and fluid perspective of the determinants and skills that are critical to the TD process (Johnston, Harwood, & Minniti, 2013; Larsen, et al., 2012). More specifically, Larsen and his colleagues (2012) argue that “psychosocial skills are perceived as socially constructed, culturally contingent, and highly dependent on the specific environmental conditions” (p. 53). This validation aligns better with the cultural framework that underpins my study. Therefore, going forward this thesis will use the terms ‘high performing’ and ‘psychosocial’ as they fit more appropriately within the scope of my study.

Validating the Interjection of Māori and Pasifika words

Māori are the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa. Pasifika is the transliteration of Pacific and is a term used in Aotearoa to refer to individuals with Pacific heritage who now reside in Aotearoa (HRC, 2014; Naepi, 2015). The heterogeneity of the Pasifika grouping must be considered and has been acknowledged in my study. Given the heterogeneity, the term ‘Pasifika’ was used to enable space for ethnic-specific nuances to evolve in a pragmatic way (Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009). The presence of Māori and Pasifika athletes continues to increase in Aotearoa, especially in the sport of RL. In 2011, 36% of players in the NRL, which is the top professional league of RL in Australasia, were of Pasifika descent (Lakisa et al., 2014), and in 2012, that rose to 42% (Ng Shiu & Vagana, 2016). It is unclear if this statistic is inclusive of players with Māori heritage, however, it could be argued that an estimated 50% of NRL players are Māori and/or Pasifika given that it has been six years since the last demographic breakdown was reported. Therefore, it was important that both Māori and Pasifika were included in the same study because of its unique population, but also because of the major impact these communities have on the participation and growth rates in RL. Given the specific focus

on Māori and Pasifika, my thesis interjects Māori and Pasifika words if the Pākehā word does not adequately reflect the whole concept when viewed through a Māori and/or Pasifika lens. Pasifika researchers have recognised and respect the rights of Māori as tangata whenua (*people of the land*) here in Aotearoa (HRC, 2014). This respect and understanding provided the necessary justification for using primarily Māori constructs throughout this thesis. The consistency of the use of Māori language also facilitated an ease of reading and contributed to the overall flow of the thesis.

Chapter Summary

Chapter One has outlined the background and emergence of my study. It has established the rationale for conducting my study and informed the development of the research questions. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, this was a result of the pilot study that was conducted with a small group of players and coaches from the Aotearoa senior men's RL team. The results of the pilot study informed the development of a qualitative Indigenous approach (Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999) to explore the perceptions of Māori and Pasifika high performing junior RL players regarding psychosocial development, specifically from the psychological and social side of their lives and sport, in order to improve and strengthen NZRL's TD processes, and positively enhance the wellbeing for Māori and Pasifika. My overall approach is summed up by the whakataukī I used to introduce this chapter: "He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata". It is about understanding the players, including their whānau (*family*) and communities who participated in and contributed to my study in relation to their hīkoi as aspiring professional RL players. To truly understand the realities of TD within an Indigenous framework, it was imperative that my study be guided by valued principles from the Māori and Pasifika communities. In an effort to provide a scope for the targeted focus on Māori and/or Pasifika athletes, and to understand the realities of TD, it was

necessary to conduct a literature review. Therefore, Chapter Two draws upon the literature to identify the gaps in TD that could be addressed as a result of my study. Chapter Three discusses the methodological framework that underpins my study. The methods used (i.e. focus groups and talanoa) and the analysis process is also outlined in Chapter Three. To capitalise on the shared values between Māori and Pasifika, a series of focus group sessions were held over the course of the 2017 RL season. The use of focus groups will be delved into in more detail in Chapter Three but a primary reason of engaging in focus group settings was to help foster connections that could facilitate the exploration of player perceptions of psychosocial development in the context of HP sport. Furthermore, focus groups aligned more comfortably with a Māori and Pasifika research paradigm because it reflects the collectivist social, learning and sharing structure of both cultural groupings (Glynn, 2013; Vaioleti, 2013; Walker et al., 2006). As such, focus group sessions were guided by cultural principles that were implemented to support our desire for a theoretical, culturally responsive study.

Chapters Four (Under 20s (U20s) age group specific) and Six (Under 18s (U18s) age group specific) underscore the centrality of relationships for both Māori and Pasifika and are essentially an invitation to the reader to engage in a key cultural practice for Māori, that being, to whakawhanaungatanga (*building family-like relationships*) with the participants of my study. Despite having to adapt to the setting in which whakawhanaungatanga is being applied to, a PhD thesis, the intention is to give perspective and context to participants voices and whakaaro (*thoughts/opinions*) as it has been portrayed using the cultural method of talanoa. Chapters Five (U20s) and Seven (U18s) build upon the relational platform that was laid down to present the findings for each age-group. Embedded in both Chapters Five and Seven will be an age-specific discussion related to Questions One and Two of my study:

- 1) What psychosocial determinants do high performing junior rugby league players perceive contribute to successful senior elite rugby league players' development?
- 2) What are the perceived meanings of these determinants to players?

In Chapter Eight, key themes that were consistent across both age-groups are discussed in great detail, offering a cultural context to the meaning of psychosocial development overall and subsequently the process of psychosocial development. Hence, Chapter Eight addresses Questions Three and Four of my study:

- 3) What are high performing junior rugby league players' perceived levels of importance of psychosocial development?
- 4) What processes contribute to a player's psychosocial development in New Zealand Rugby League's High Performance pathway?

In the final chapter of my thesis an overview of my entire study is given as well as the contribution to theory and practical implications. The limitations of my study are then acknowledged followed by suggestions for future directions. A parting reflection to my 'PhD candidate self' will bring to a close the concluding chapter of my thesis and essentially, my PhD hīkoi.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Titiro whakamuri, kokiri whakamua
Look back and reflect so you can move forward

Chapter Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the athlete development research within a HP sport context. The psychosocial aspect of an athlete's development continues to be of great interest to academics and practitioners alike, as they unpack the complexities of athlete TD (MacNamara, 2011; MacNamara et al., 2010a, 2010b; Martindale et al., 2005). In particular, development from junior to senior elite levels has garnered traction in an effort to gain insight as to the key contributors to a successful transition (Hollings et al., 2014; Hayman, Borkoles, Taylor, Hemmings, & Polman, 2014; Larsen et al., 2014). The purpose of this review is to connect the TD process and the psychosocial development literature with Māori and Pasifika methodology and epistemology; in order to broaden the perspective on the development of Māori and Pasifika RL players.

This chapter begins by discussing TD and its evolution from a unidimensional model to more of a process that includes a myriad of interrelated elements and events, such as overcoming adversity and the role of social support. The review begins with the Eurocentric worldview of the psychosocial aspect of TD then builds towards the understanding of development and well-being as grounded in Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika epistemology, ontology and methodology. The concept of *te taha hinengaro* (*mental or emotional dimension of well-being*) will be further expounded upon in the methodology section (Chapter Three) to ensure that this concept is more appropriately understood within its holistic context. Therefore, this review of the literature will frame the study's rationale for using a collective cultural framework to better understand psychosocial development as it relates to talented Māori and Pasifika RL players who are integrated in a HP sport environment.

Talent Development in a High-Performance Sport Context

Researchers and practitioners interest in the development and implementation of TID and TD models have evolved as the competition at the highest levels of sport continues to intensify (Abbott & Collins, 2002; Bailey, Collins, Ford, MacNamara, Toms, & Pearce, 2010; Larsen et al., 2014; Martindale et al., 2005; Rees et al., 2016; Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams & Philippaerts, 2008). Talent has been referred to as “the potential for success in a specific domain” (Kerr & Stirling, 2017, p. 409), and therefore, to identify talent in the HP sport context is to recognise individuals with the potential to become successful sportspeople. As such, TID models are designed to predict future success that is unfortunately guided by a ‘snapshot’ of an athlete’s current performance which typically favours the anthropometric and physiological indicators of talent (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Martindale et al., 2005). To develop talent in a HP sport context then, is focused on providing the most suitable learning environment to optimise individuals’ athletic potential (Li et al., 2015; MacNamara & Collins, 2013). Taken together, identifying and developing athletes for long-term success is a complex process. Many TD models exist in the literature but ironically, most employ a unidimensional rather than multidimensional view to reflect the complexities of elite athlete development (Abbott & Collins, 2002, 2004; Bailey et al., 2010). Again, the physical development and performance tend to be privileged when TD models are implemented, with little consideration for other factors that may facilitate development and future success (Gulbin, Oldenziel, Weissentsteiner & Gagné, 2010; Martindale et al., 2005; Stafford, 2005). Put another way, Bailey and colleagues (2010) stated:

While ability can be seen as the building block or defining feature of talent, the process of talent development occurs through a period of structured learning – a process rather than a single event. Therefore, identification of potential must address both the 'ability to get there' as well as the 'ability to be there' (p.2).

As such, to develop talent is to provide a pathway, environment and resources, conducive to the process of becoming a successful sportsperson (MacNamara & Collins, 2013).

Hence, the purpose of this section is to gain an understanding of the evolution of TD in general, offering a context to the rationale for my study.

Models of Talent Development

A number of TD models have been developed over the years to optimise preparation and performance and help athletes realise their potential. Early researchers began discussing TD as models, whereby the individuals' level of talent was categorised. It began with Bloom's (1985) study which was innovative for its time as it sought to explore the process of developing talent. More specifically, Bloom's work sought to shed light on an optimal learning environment for success within the education domain. One hundred and twenty individuals who had excelled as musicians, artists, academics and Olympic swimmers were interviewed in Bloom's study. As a result, three stages of TD or essential milestones were identified by Bloom that influence optimal development and future success in their respective disciplines (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2001; Gibbons, 1998). These stages are referred to as: the initiation stage, the development stage and the mastery stage. Researchers have since adapted Bloom's model to better understand the stages of optimal development and future success in a sporting context.

Bloom's (1985) first stage of TD was referred to as the initiation phase. Within a sporting context, this can be characterised by children in their early years, exploring, having fun and developing an overall love for sport. During this phase, coaches and teachers focused on rewarding effort more than achieving an outcome. Bloom argued that those who had good experiences and enjoyed their discipline in their early years were motivated to continue to be involved in their chosen discipline (Bloom, 1985), and therefore progressed to the second phase, known as the development stage. During the development stage an individual begins to learn the technical and tactical intricacies of their sport which would lead to an increase in ones' commitment and dedication to the

chosen field (Gibbons, 1998). Parents' financial investments and moral support during the development phase also intensifies (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2001). The third and final stage in Bloom's model is known as the mastery stage. During this stage, athletes experience increased autonomy and the onus becomes theirs to ensure they do all that is necessary to excel (Abbott & Collins, 2004). Through each of these stages, social support was identified as critical to an individual's success, and it was recognised that the ideal type of support which parents and coaches should provide their athlete would evolve through each stage of TD (Bloom, 1985; Hodge et al., 2012). Although Bloom did not focus on sport specifically, there have been many references made to his work as it facilitates awareness and discussion around TD.

Since Bloom's (1985) study, scholars have continued to expound on the determinants of excellence with regards to TD (Balyi, 2001; Côté, 1999; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Gagné, 2000). A number of TD models have been developed over the years to optimise talent and help athletes to realise their potential. For example, Ericsson and colleagues developed the deliberate practice model in which they suggest that typically, individuals spend 10 years or 10,000 hours engaged in deliberate practice before they reach an expert status. Thus, deliberate practice is to engage in "relevant, effortful activities done with the specific goal of improving performance" (Coutinho, Mesquita & Fonseca, 2016, p. 279). Another model commonly referenced is Balyi's (2001) Long-term Athlete Development (LTAD) model. It was developed to optimise training, competition and recovery opportunities relevant to the growth milestones of an athlete's career (Balyi, 2001). There are seven stages in LTAD, and unlike Bloom's model, the phases or stages of TD are age-related: Active Start (0-6 years), FUNdamentals (6-9 years), Learn to Train (9-12 years), Train to Train (12-16 years), Train to Compete (16-23 years), Train to Win (19+ years) and Active for Life (any age). This model has been used extensively by National Sporting Organisations

especially in the UK and Canada, as the foundation to their participation and performance pathways (Bailey et al., 2010).

Similar to Bloom's (1985) findings, Côté (1999) acknowledged three distinct phases or stages to sport participation from early childhood to late adolescence. These phases were sampling, specialising and investment, and they constituted the Development Model of Sport Participation (DMSP; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2001). The first stage of development using the DMSP emphasises play over practice and that individuals should be encouraged to participate in a variety of sports for enjoyment (Côté, 1999). As individuals matured physically, cognitively and socially, they begin to transition into the specialising phase and therefore narrow their focus to one or two sports. During these years, there is a delicate balance between deliberate play, which is to engage in "intrinsically motivating activities that provide immediate gratification and are designed to maximise enjoyment" (Coutinho et al., 2016, p. 280) and deliberate practice to ensure the enjoyment factor still exists but, to also allow sport-specific skills to develop (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2001). The final stage is known as the investment stage, which is earmarked as individuals choose to invest their time and efforts towards becoming an elite athlete in a specific sport (Côté, 1999). During this time, practice takes precedence and the individual focuses on developing and fine-tuning sport-specific skills and strategies in preparation for competition (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2001).

As an extension of Côté's (1999) model, Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) found in their study of 10 Olympians and world champions who had excelled at the highest level of their sport, that there was an additional phase that successful athletes progressed to after the investment years. Because their participation succeeded on the world stage, athletes must learn to manage the pressure put on them by outside sources to continue to excel (e.g. win gold medals) at the elite level, therefore this phase was identified as the maintenance years (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). During this phase, elite athletes are

concerned about the quality of their training sessions as opposed to quantity, and the researchers found that athletes needed “to be innovative in attempts to stay motivated and also to avoid being “copied” by competitors” (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2001, p. 277). Hence, the addition of the fourth phase of development and the need to continue to challenge and stimulate athletes even more after they have tasted of victory.

The above-mentioned models present a structured outlook to TID and TD. The consequences of crafting age-related phases of development however, are the variances of physical and cognitive maturation (Rees et al., 2016). In the case of Māori and Pasifika RL players, they tend to mature physically at an earlier age compared to their European peers (Erueti, 2015). This early physical maturation is further reinforced by the unidimensional, linear process that is TD, which encourages young Māori and Pasifika RL players to inadvertently rely solely on their physical talents to progress through the TD pathway. Additionally, these models assume that all athletes will exhibit high levels of motivation and self-regulation to successfully matriculate through each stage (Elbe & Wikman, 2017), which thus overlooks those who dropout, be it voluntarily (e.g. burnout, boredom) or involuntarily (e.g. injury, dropped from the team/programme), as well as those who are late developers.

The current models of TD offer some systematic semblance of determinants however it has been argued that by implementing a unidimensional TD model, the risk of prematurely deselecting talented young athletes increases (Abbott & Collins, 2002). For example, it is common for junior athletes to be identified as talented, based on anthropometric, physiological and sport performance factors (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Gil, Ruiz, Irazusta, Gil, & Irazusta, 2007), yet it is unlikely these same athletes will be successful as senior athletes (Hollings et al., 2014; MacNamara, 2011; Stafford, 2005). MacNamara and Collins (2015) reinforced that “the pathway to excellence in sport is turbulent and the aspiring elite must negotiate a range of micro and macro transitions and

stages if they are to compete at the highest level” (p. 77). Despite being grounded in an education context, the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT; Gagné, 2000; Lloyd et al., 2015) is one framework that is reflective of MacNamara and Collins previous mentioned argument and has been utilised in a sport context.

The DMGT highlights TD as a non-linear, multidimensional and holistic process by examining the catalysts which contribute to, or hinder the transformation of an individual’s raw and natural ability (giftedness) into systematically developed skills (talent) (Gagné, 2000). As an individual engages in systematic learning, training and practice, it is argued that the development of an individual’s giftedness to talent will manifest itself (Gulbin et al., 2010; Mills et al., 2012). According to Gagné (2004), the developmental process is influenced by three types of catalysts: interpersonal (e.g. personal traits and self-management processes), environmental (e.g. specialised programmes and facilities, and social support networks) and chance. He suggested that the complexities of TD therefore are a result of a complex choreography of all three catalysts with the individual’s gift, which in turn influence an individual’s talent to flourish (Gagné, 2008). Hence, through this model, we begin to view TD as a process with interrelated elements that contribute to the development of talent.

This section has identified incongruency between TD models that have been deployed and the underpinning philosophy of TD. The essence of a TD model is to help a talented athlete develop and succeed at the highest level of their sport, but it has been readily acknowledged that to succeed at the highest level of ones’ respective sport is to have the capacity to manage and overcome the stresses and pressures that will transpire (Jones, Mahoney, & Gucciardi, 2014; Larsen et al., 2012; MacNamara & Collins, 2015). This has been further reinforced by MacNamara and Collins (2013) who stated that, “those athletes that achieve the greatest success consistently employ psychological skills that optimise learning and focus and enable them to successfully negotiate the inevitable

challenges of development” (p. 737). Hence, this supports the notion that TD is not a linear, stage/age-related process of development. Therefore, the essence of a TD model is to help a talented athlete develop and succeed at the highest level of their sport while accounting for the challenges and setbacks that will occur as one moves along the TD pathway from a junior to senior level. Developing key psychosocial competencies to overcome adversity and progress along the TD pathway is a key part of this complex process.

Psychosocial Determinants in a High Performance Sport Context

Presently, little is known regarding which psychosocial determinants facilitate the successful development of high performing junior athletes in the context of RL. As stated in the beginning of this thesis, psychosocial development refers to ones’ psychological development within a social environment (Johnston et al., 2013; Larsen et al., 2012). The HP sports setting is the social environment referred to in my study, and therefore the development of psychological determinants and skills are critical to progressing along the TD pathway as an athlete (Birrer & Morgan, 2010; Cook et al., 2014; Hodge et al., 2012; Larsen et al., 2014; MacNamara et al., 2010a; MacNamara & Collins, 2013; Smith, D., 2003; van Rossum, 1996). Previous studies have explored the perceptions of athletes and coaches from various sports such as: track-and-field (Durand-Bush, 2000; Hodge et al., 2012; Hollings et al., 2014), rugby union (Cupples & O’Connor, 2011; D’Urso, Petrosso, & Robazza, 2002), soccer (Cook et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2012), and wrestling (Pierce, Gould, Cowburn, & Driska, 2016) regarding psychosocial development and its impact on TD and performance. For example, using a retrospective qualitative approach, successful Olympians and world-class athletes identified self-confidence, motivation, creativity and perseverance as key determinants of success (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). Athletes with similar talent and success levels

in another study acknowledged attitude, determination, commitment, confidence, self-regulation of arousal, and the use of positive imagery and self-talk to aid focus and concentration during preparation and performance as key determinants and practices that informed their success (Gould et al., 2002). In the context of Olympians and world-class athletes who represented Aotearoa on the global stage, autonomy, discipline and leadership were identified as key contributors to success (Hodge et al., 2012).

To further quantify the impact of the psychological aspect of TD and performance, Gould and colleagues (2002) administered a number of psychological tests to complement the qualitative interviews they conducted with their athletes. Some of their findings support what has already been stated with additional determinants of success highlighted. Those being: the ability to cope with and control anxiety, mental toughness/resiliency, sports intelligence, competitiveness, hard work, ability to set and achieve goals, coachability, dispositional hope, optimism and adaptive perfectionism (Gould et al., 2002). The studies highlighted in this section have contributed to the well-established support for the positive effect that the development and deployment of psychosocial characteristics can have on TD and performance.

The aforementioned studies included sample groups that were similar in talent level (i.e. Olympians and world-class athletes). Therefore, the perceptions are contextualised by athletes who have already competed and succeeded at the highest level of their respective sports. The next point of discussion then is to understand what has been done to address the ‘how to’ develop and nurture the development of these characteristics, especially for those at the point of transition on the TD pathway from the junior to the senior levels.

Transition from junior elite to senior elite. The chances of a junior athlete making it at the senior elite levels are slim, and much less guaranteed (Gagne, 2004; Li et al., 2015; Mills et al., 2012; Stambulova, Pehrson & Olsson, 2017; Vaeyens et al.,

2008). As coaches play a major role in the development of junior athletes (Gould et al., 2002; Martindale et al., 2005; Woodcock et al., 2011), a number of studies have explored their perceptions of what it takes to successfully transition from the junior to the senior elite levels of sport (e.g. Cook et al., 2014; Hill et al., 2015; Mills et al., 2012). In the context of RL, Cupples and O'Connor (2011) explored the perceptions of junior elite level RL coaches regarding key performance indicators for junior elite players who sought to attain success at the senior elite level. Attitude, discipline, character, personality and learning ability were identified amongst other salient indicators of success (i.e. physiological and game skills) as pertinent for RL players to have, in order to successfully progress to the elite level. From the perspective of rugby union academy coaches, growth mindset, resilience, consistency, self-belief/confidence, self-awareness, and competitiveness are amongst other salient psychological characteristics as facilitators of success (Hill et al., 2015). These determinants can be supported by Mills and colleagues (2012) findings who interviewed a small group of professional development football (soccer) academy coaches in Europe. Specifically, coaches in this study highlighted the necessity for junior elite players to develop social and emotional competence before transitioning to the professional rank. Social competence related to a player being aware of their social environment and knowing how to use their interpersonal skills appropriately (Mills et al., 2012). Emotional competence related to self-regulation of arousal and athletes having the ability to leverage off past experiences to adapt to changing circumstances, suggesting that 'adversity' is an opportunity to learn and therefore build resilience. This finding can be further supported by Cook et al. (2014) who conducted interviews with the coaches' support staff of youth soccer players at an English Premier League Soccer Academy to explore their perception of mental toughness, and how to facilitate its development. They found that mental toughness was a culmination of competitiveness, mindset, resilience and personal responsibility (Cook et

al., 2014), which for the most part, aligns with the determinants of success that have previously been identified in this section. The development of mental toughness within the academy was stimulated through players being challenged to be independent and resourceful. However, it was acknowledged that relative to the physical, technical and tactical aspects of development, the psychological aspect (i.e. mental toughness), was not readily addressed (Cook et al., 2014).

Larsen and colleagues (2012) used an ecological approach in their study of Danish youth soccer academy players to investigate the development of those salient psychosocial skills from the player, coach and managers' perspectives. An ecological approach explores the development of people in relation to their environment and thereby does not separate out or study the person in isolation. Being integrated in a HP sport environment such as the youth soccer academy, would in theory be the most ideal setting to influence the psychosocial development of junior athletes. They argue that psychosocial skills are "socially constructed, culturally contingent and highly dependent on the specific environmental conditions" (Larsen et al., 2012, p. 53) when explored through the ecological approach. This notion attests to the fluidity of psychosocial development, adding further weight to the complexities that belie the TD process. To successfully transition from the junior to the senior professional level, motivation, self-awareness and the capacity to work hard were identified as key determinants and these were explicitly practiced and addressed within the academy (Larsen et al., 2012). These determinants can be supported by the perspectives of the senior elite athletes that have been previously mentioned (Gould et al., 2002; Hodge et al., 2012; MacNamara et al., 2010a). Additionally, managing performance and process outcomes (e.g. manage pressure, staying focused in the face of adversity to bounce back), general social skills and utilising team skills were identified as key skills that were indirectly addressed and practiced within the academy. The evidence suggests that athletes are transitioning to the

senior levels or professional ranks without an adequate psychosocial foundation. Relative to physical and game-skill development, this appears to be congruent with other discussions surrounding the psychosocial aspect of TD, being undervalued or underutilised in a practical sense, but highly sought after in a theoretical sense (Bruner, Munroe-Chandler, & Spink, 2008; Elbe & Wikman, 2017; Larsen et al., 2012).

Despite the significant contribution psychosocial development offers the TD process (both linear and non-linear) it continues to be an untapped resource for successful development (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Holt & Dunn, 2004; Rees et al., 2016; Vaeyens et al., 2008). It appears to be a component of development that junior athletes are unsure of how to develop. Their uncertainty is not helped by the fact that coaches and support staff appear unsure of how to develop and nurture psychosocial development (Cook et al., 2014; Martindale et al., 2005). MacNamara and Collins (2015) suggested that athletes have limited ability to transfer and apply psychosocial skills in a performance context when they are taught in isolation. In other words, it is critical that psychosocial skills are intentionally taught and developed within a performance context for athletes to optimise preparation and performance. Junior elite athletes traditionally have transitioned to a senior elite environment without having developed nor applied the necessary psychosocial skills to succeed at the senior level (Bruner, et al., 2008; Cook et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2012). This perhaps denotes a lack of understanding around how to intentionally teach, learn and develop psychosocial skills (e.g. goal setting, imagery, communication etc.) within a HP sport environment (Cook et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2012; MacNamara et al., 2010a; Martindale, Collins & Abraham, 2007).

The findings that have been highlighted in this section validate the impact that establishing a psychosocial foundation can have on athletes' successful development towards and the maintenance of an elite level status (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Birrer & Morgan, 2010; Holt & Dunn, 2004; Larsen et al., 2012; Larsen et al., 2014; MacNamara

et al., 2010a; Rees et al., 2016; van Rossum, 1996). From the perspective of successful senior elite athletes, they were able to retrospectively determine the skills and strategies they harnessed and deployed that ultimately led to success at the highest levels of their sport (Hodge et al., 2012; MacNamara et al., 2010a). For coaches of junior elite athletes, their perception of psychosocial development is one whereby they acknowledge the value of psychosocial development in attaining long-term success. However, they appear to have limited skills, knowledge or time to be able to invest in the psychosocial aspects of TD (Cook et al., 2014). From the perspective of those junior athletes on the cusp of the senior elite levels, the psychosocial aspect is key to realising their aspiration, but they are still limited in their knowledge and experience and therefore rely on their coaches and senior players to build their knowledge-base (Stambulova et al., 2017). These varying perspectives attest to the variances of which psychosocial determinants contribute to athlete development (Dohme et al., 2017) and the need to further investigate the psychosocial factors that facilitate the successful progression along the TD pathway in the context of junior RL players (Bruner, Erickson, McFadden & Côté, 2009; Martindale et al., 2005).

A synthesis of the literature has underscored the dearth of pragmatic cultural processes specific to the non-Western athlete. There is limited knowledge of sociocultural identifiers that can be associated with the sample groups of the above-mentioned studies besides the country, club or league that athletes or coaches performed for, as well as their age group. This may seem like an expendable thought, but for the non-Western athlete who may come from a collectivist culture, there may be other salient factors that contribute to ones' psychosocial development that may be suppressed in Western-based models. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research that explores this aspect of TD in the context of Māori and Pasifika, and the impact of having a psychosocial foundation for success can have on them as HP athletes. Exploring a specific socio-cultural demographic

provides an opportunity to better understand the processes or methods that could more appropriately help meet their transitional and developmental needs as Māori and Pasifika RL players (Gould et al., 2002; Martindale et al., 2005). Hence, the necessity to investigate psychosocial development within the HP sport setting as it relates to the Māori and Pasifika worldviews.

Māori and Pasifika in Rugby League

There are a high proportion of Māori and Pasifika individuals who play RL at both the participation level and professionally in Aotearoa (Lakisa et al., 2014). Based on the 2017 New Zealand Kiwis (senior elite men's) and New Zealand Junior Kiwis (junior elite men's U20s) teams, the story is telling given that 92% and 100% of the respective teams were of Māori and/or Pasifika descent. This is telling because Māori (15%) and Pasifika (7%) make up a small proportion of the total population in Aotearoa (Statistics NZ, 2014). The high visibility of Māori and Pasifika succeeding on the sporting stage may validate the rationale of many Māori and Pasifika males, who view sport as an opportunity to acquire social mobility and advancement (Erueti, 2015; Zakus & Horton, 2009). This is important to highlight as recent statistics indicate that Māori and Pasifika males rate poorly against key social indicators such as health and education, compared to any other ethnic grouping in Aotearoa (Statistics NZ, 2014). An unfortunate reality of this adverse outlook is the reinforcement of the ideology that young Māori and Pasifika males can only acquire social mobility and advancement within the sporting domain (Erueti, 2015; Marsters, 2017).

A conundrum that those working in the TD space are constantly faced with, is balancing player development with personal development. In theory, athletes who are embedded in development academies or integrated into a HP sport pathway/system would be on the verge of realising their aspiration to become a senior elite/professional

sportsperson (Cook et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2012). The emphasis at the development level should be on developing and honing their skills, inclusive of their psychosocial skillsets, more so than winning (Kerr & Stirling, 2017). It has been argued that the fundamental role of sports academies is to produce talented individuals and not talented teams (Mills et al., 2012). Hence, it is interesting to note the conundrum that seems to exist in the complex TD space.

In the context of the NRL, each club has a development system that feeds into their top-grade team. Although the main priority in the HP sport environment is to produce a talented RL player who could potentially transition to the top-grade team, the NRL also strives to produce well-rounded people by offering tertiary and vocational opportunities through various initiatives spearheaded by the NRL's Welfare and Education department (NRL/Rugby League Players Association [RLPA], 2013). Furthermore, those players in the NRL's U20s competition are mandated to be engaged in part-time education or work (equates to 24 hours a week) to be eligible to play. Additionally, all NRL clubs are mandated to ensure that club commitments do not interfere with the 24 hours of work or study that players must complete. The intent of these initiatives is to prepare players post-career transition; however, it has been suggested that Māori and Pasifika athletes are less likely to maximise such opportunities when compared with other ethnic groups (Ng Shiu & Vagana, 2016). This may be attributed to the success Māori and Pasifika athletes experience in the early stages of TD given their physical abilities (Hokowhitu, 2003, 2008); and is further compounded by the high representation and success of Māori and Pasifika at the senior elite level in Aotearoa, and the NRL. Hence, this portrayal of success could impact the singular focus that young Māori and Pasifika RL players develop and therefore do not take advantage of the resources offered to support players for their post-career transition. This is unfortunate given the increased risk for Māori and Pasifika youth in general, of unfavourable

outcomes such as educational underachievement (Gluckman & Hayne, 2011; Marsters, 2017).

The average NRL career spans roughly three to four years (NRL, 2012), and therefore the tertiary and vocational opportunities offered through the NRL affords Māori and Pasifika RL players a means to positively influence the trajectory of their life, post RL. On this basis, culturally relevant and pragmatic processes are necessary to encourage and empower Māori and Pasifika junior RL players to maximise their opportunities both on and off the field. In his qualitative study of young male Pasifika rugby union and RL players aged 16-24 years old, Marsters (2017) found that the lack of alternative interests or options away from sport was a risk factor for the mental well-being of this group of athletes. Additional risk factors that were highlighted were managing pressure from the whānau to fulfil their kinship obligations, issues related to their on-field performance (e.g. injury, non-selection, alcohol misuse), and the general stigma attached to mental illness. While Marsters' study focused on Pasifika athletes, the challenges of successfully navigating the HP sport environment are comparable with those athletes who identify as being Māori (Erueti, 2015). Based on these risk factors, it should be unsurprising as to the pressure young Māori and/or Pasifika males carry, as a result of being an aspiring professional RL player. Thus, the pressure a young, aspiring Māori and/or Pasifika RL player perceives to make it to the NRL to fulfil their whānau obligation and be the breadwinner for the whānau, church and community can take its toll on these young players (Hawkes, 2018; Napier, 2015; Panapa & Phillips, 2014). The expectation to contribute to the whānau is one of those cultural nuances that need to be considered when understanding that psychosocial development of Māori and/or Pasifika RL players. In general, research has shown that for Māori and Pasifika, whānau support, and religion can act as a buffer and mediate distress (Allen & Heppner, 2011; Allen & Smith, 2015). Furthermore, a strong cultural identity has been associated to desist from delinquent

behaviour among youth (Paterson, Tautolo, Iusitini, Taylor & Siegert, 2016). Therefore, the implications of not being able to secure a professional RL contract extends far beyond the lost opportunity for an individual to become financially stable and successful. For the Māori and/or Pasifika RL player it can translate into a lost opportunity for their whānau, community or church to become financially stable and successful as well (Ng Shiu & Vagana, 2016; Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013).

The timing and impact of injuries can also pose as a threat to the mental health and well-being of young Māori and/or Pasifika athletes, as it can exacerbate the pressure to recover promptly in order to resume playing so as to fulfil their financial obligation to their whānau (Horton, 2014; Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013). In recent times, this pressure has led to tragic endings such as suicide (Cadzow, 2013; Lane, 2013; Lutton, 2013). Five promising NRL-contracted junior RL players completed suicide with four being Māori or Pasifika, and as a result, a three-year study is currently being conducted to explore whether there is a connection between youth suicide and RL (Garry, 2017). In the context of the general population in Aotearoa, Pasifika male youth (aged 15-24) are more at-risk of suicide compared with any other group (Tiatia-Seath et al., 2017) but these disproportionate rates are comparable to Māori (Shahtahmasebi, & Cassidy, 2014). Additionally, both the Māori and Pasifika communities were found to have the highest rates of depression and anxiety in comparison to the general Aotearoa population (Lee, Duck, & Sibley, 2017). Despite these alarming conclusions, even more concerning was that Māori and Pasifika were less likely to be diagnosed compared with other ethnic groupings, and the Pasifika community is less likely to engage with the health system and therefore unlikely to be diagnosed (Lee et al., 2017). In the context of elite athletes, the aforementioned findings are compounded further by the pressures that Māori and Pasifika athletes perceive from the expectations they have to fulfil their kinship

obligations which may be further heightened as a result of an involuntarily hiatus from the sport (e.g. injury, non-selection) (Horton, 2014; Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013).

An additional concern with the TD process for aspiring RL players, is the increasing rate at which young Māori and Pasifika males are being recruited to Australia, with scouts attracting players as young as age 15 (J. Harawira, personal communication, March 18, 2015). Players are motivated by the hope of an increased chance to secure a professional contract, however, there is no guarantee this will come to fruition. There is also potential for professional sporting agents to capitalise on and exploit the early identification of talented Māori and Pasifika through contractual agreements that do not give them equitable value compared to players of other ethnic groups (Stewart-Withers, Sewabu, & Richardson, 2017a). In 2014, it was reported that 853 junior RL players aged 15-18 moved from Aotearoa to Australia with hopes of securing a professional contract, and according to NZRL's HP TD manager at the time, only 60 individuals were successful in securing a contract (Harvey, 2014). It was unclear how many of those 853 individuals were of Māori and/or Pasifika descent let alone those 60 individuals who successfully progressed on to the professional ranks. In spite of this, what then of the 93% of those players who were unsuccessful and were compelled to seek out an alternative career path and possibly without any support due to being in a new country? Even a small sense of cultural awareness would understand the impact that uprooting and relocating can have, especially for young Māori and/or Pasifika, who come from collectivist cultures where whānau is a core fundamental of their identity and well-being (Schinke et al., 2006). To this point, it is critical to include a lens that is considerate of those fundamental values that may be crucial to optimal development and performance of non-Western athletes. In doing so, the cultural expectations mentioned in this section can be accounted for in seeking to understand the contributing factors of psychosocial development with regards to Māori and/or Pasifika high performing RL players. To date there are a lack of studies

with pragmatic and culturally responsive strategies for Māori and Pasifika athletes within HP athlete development. Therefore, it is imperative that both Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika frameworks be integrated into the theoretical underpinnings of my study to inspire change for the Māori and Pasifika athlete community.

Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika Research in a High Performance Sport Context

The literature is dominated by studies using Western frameworks to better understand the development of Māori and Pasifika athletes (Keung, 2014; Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Zakus & Horton, 2009). The challenge for researchers to design studies which satisfy both Indigenous conditions and Western academic stipulations could be one reason for this limitation (Erueti, 2015). Those few studies which do use Kaupapa Māori or Pasifika frameworks have tended to explore the cultural identity and motivations of athletes in relation to their experience in the HP sport environment (e.g. Erueti, 2015; Erueti & Palmer, 2014; McCausland-Durie, 2007; Schaaf, 2006). For example, the cultural identity of young Māori female athletes was found to be the source of many pressure points in the context of the netball court (McCausland-Durie, 2007). Whilst the young athletes in McCausland-Durie's (2007) study excelled on the court, they were acutely aware of their identity as being Māori, and the stereotypical connotations or assumptions that are typically associated with being Māori. Consequently, cultural identity both facilitated and impeded the retention of young Māori women in netball (McCausland-Durie, 2007). Although this study focused on talented young Māori female athletes, their experiences could have implications for retaining talented young Māori and Pasifika male in other sporting codes. Schaaf (2006) explored the motivation for elite male Samoan¹² players participating in professional rugby by conducting semi-structured interviews as guided by important cultural principles (e.g. respect, love, honour) and

¹² An individual with ancestral ties to, and/or born in Samoa, an island nation in the South Pacific Ocean.

protocols (e.g. gain blessing of the elders to participate in research) of the Samoan and Tongan¹³ people. Whānau, education and religion were found to broadly contribute to participants drive to play rugby. Participants in Schaaf's study also highlighted that coaches would do well to develop an awareness of the cultural backgrounds of their players and therefore adapt their pedagogy accordingly.

Erueti (2015) used a Kaupapa Māori qualitative approach to explore and understand how Māori male and female athletes negotiate their identity when engaged in an 'elite' sporting culture and environment. Using pūrākau or personal stories, ten Māori athletes who had represented Aotearoa in their respective sports (be it an individual or team sport), shared their whakaaro. Erueti's study highlighted identity markers that participants perceived in relation to being Māori (e.g. genealogical ties, language etc.). Secondly, athletes highlighted that the integration of mātauranga Māori¹⁴ during their sporting events and competitions invoked feelings of pride and gave meaning to their Māori identity, as well as a sense of belonging. Finally, athletes spoke of the implications their social responsibilities (e.g. engaging in public events, media sessions) had on their perception of being Māori. Given the cultural complexities of this topic, usage of a Kaupapa Māori framework provided a safe and comfortable environment for participants in Erueti's study to express their whakaaro and needs as Māori athletes in a HP sport environment. Furthermore, a Kaupapa Māori approach evoked an emancipatory process whereby power was given to the Māori athletes who shared their whakaaro regarding their experience as Māori athletes, through a format that is considerate of the cultural nuances that were significant to the athlete as a Māori. In essence, Erueti's study expanded our knowledge as to how Māori athletes made sense of their cultural identity while negotiating their athletic identity and national identity on a public stage.

¹³ An individual with ties to, and/or born in Tonga, an island nation in the South Pacific Ocean.

¹⁴ Mātauranga Māori refers to Māori knowledge and cultural practices.

Building upon the theme of negotiating cultural identity and national identity, Hippolite and Bruce (2010) explored Māori individuals' experiences with racism in sport in Aotearoa. The perspectives of both male and females who have been engaged in their sport of choice either as an athlete, coach, administrator and parents who supported their children in the same sport were included to offer insight as to the frustrations of Māori within the realms of sport. Despite the significant contribution the Māori community has made to sport in Aotearoa, it was felt that the Eurocentric dominant sport governing bodies did not recognise, nor support national Māori sport teams (Hippolite & Bruce, 2010). Subsequently, the marginalisation of the Māori athlete in elite sport caused pain, hurt and frustration in being denied their right and privilege as tangata whenua to represent both their culture, people and country. In consideration of the underlying theme of racism in sport, Hokowhitu (2008) critiqued the motive for the introduction of Sports Academies in Aotearoa as it related to the Māori and Pasifika physical body. He questioned the notion of schools providing such a space as an alternative 'educational' pathway for Māori and Pasifika for the sake of the strongest rugby or RL team (Hokowhitu, 2008). Thus, reinforcing that success for Māori and Pasifika can only be found on the sporting field because their physical body is their only asset (Hokowhitu, 2003; Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013). Whilst the sporting arena offers Māori and Pasifika a space in which they can compete and succeed, these authors exploit the Eurocentric systems in contributing to the difficulties that Māori and Pasifika may experience in navigating two worlds. Similar experiences can be related to Indigenous athletes outside of the Aotearoa context.

Indigenous research in high performance sport. Indigenous athletes in Australia have been regarded highly for their sporting talents and success especially in RL, Australian Rules Football (AFL) and boxing (Hallinan, Bruce, & Coram, 1999; Nicholson, Hoye, & Gallant, 2011; Stronach, Adair & Taylor, 2014). Similar to Māori

and Pasifika, Aboriginal athletes in Australia have also been subjected to underlying racial tones that are masked by their natural physique being highlighted as the only reason for success in the sporting domain (Apoifis, Marlin, & Bennie, 2018; Godwell, 1997; Hallinan et al., 1999). Specific to the AFL context, Hallinan and colleagues (1999) found that Aboriginal athletes were overrepresented in certain playing positions that required specific skill-sets and body-type, and not necessarily positions that require the deployment of leadership skills and reasoning ability. Godwell (1997) conducted an exploratory study of male Aboriginal RL players who were at various points of their development and career (i.e. transition to professional status, current professional etc.) and found that identity affirmation developed with participation in RL. Participants also attributed their success in RL to the innate physical traits and talent that are typically associated with being Aboriginal. Whilst physical traits and talent are a necessary element of TD, this does beg to question whether these same athletes could associate success in RL with any other personal attributes. Regardless, Indigenous athletes readily viewed the professional sporting pathway as viable opportunity to help their whānau gain financial stability. The HP sport space offers athletes personal development resources (i.e. welfare, education, and career development) and support which could contribute to the Indigenous athletes' desire to improve social mobility once retired. However, research has found that Aboriginal athletes appear to self-stereotype and limit their future career options because they believe that the only arena where they will succeed is the sporting arena (Godwell, 1997; Stronach et al., 2014). Furthermore, the lack of cultural consideration inhibited the Aboriginal athletes from capitalising on the resources that were designed to enhance their personal development and overall well-being (Godwell, 1997; Stronach et al., 2014). Given that the above studies have focused on the male Aboriginal athlete's experience with HP sport, the female Aboriginal athletes' experience should also be considered due

to the professional sports pathways now available to them, especially in AFL, RL and rugby.

Aboriginal athletes in Canada also experience the paradox of being an Indigenous athlete in a mainstream Western system (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, Coholic, Enosse, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2014; Schinke et al., 2006; Schinke et al., 2007). For example, Blodgett et al., (2014) explored the acculturation challenges of Aboriginal athletes aged 14-26 who moved from the reserve¹⁵ to pursue a professional sporting career. Athletes found themselves caught in-between two worlds, as a result of a new place and culture which challenged and changed their cultural identity (Blodgett et al., 2014). Schinke and colleagues (2006) explored the experiences of elite Aboriginal male and female athletes from a range of sports and found some athletes felt the need to distance themselves from their cultural identity in order to be accepted in their new environment. The key to adapting to their new environment ironically, was found to be the development of relationships and social support (Schinke et al., 2006), which links back to a key cultural value for Aboriginal. Thus, reinforcing that a strong sense of cohesion and connection are pertinent to the way of life and overall well-being of Indigenous people (Durie, 1995; Godwell, 1997; Schinke et al, 2006).

The professional sporting arena offers the Māori, Pasifika or Aboriginal athlete a lucrative opportunity to improve their social mobility (inclusive of whānau); despite the marginalisation they can be subjected to, due to Eurocentric-dominated organisational structures and processes. The constant struggle to be recognised and celebrated fairly, and therefore rewarded the opportunity to represent their people (e.g. Māori, Aboriginal or Pasifika) as well as their nation (e.g. Aotearoa, Australia etc.) highlights the double-edged sword of being an Indigenous or Pasifika athlete (Erueti, 2015; McCausland-Durie, 2007;

¹⁵ **Canadian aboriginal reserves**, system of reserves that serve as physical and spiritual homelands for many of the [First Nations](#) (Indian) peoples of Canada. Because reserves are [tangible](#) representations of colonial governance, they are often the focal point of activism relating to [land](#) claims, resource management, cultural appropriation, socioeconomic conditions, self-governance, and cultural self-determination (McCue & Parrott, 2016).

Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013; Stronach et al., 2014). Hence, it is clear that Māori Pasifika and Aboriginal athletes need access to support persons, programmes and processes that acknowledge and celebrate their cultural identity and athlete identity (Nicholson et al., 2011; Stronach et al., 2014).

The studies in this section have broadened understanding around the cultural implications of being a male or female Māori and/or Pasifika athlete, with similarities drawn from experiences of Indigenous athletes internationally. Less understood, are the specific processes whereby athletes can harness the strengths of their cultural identity to navigate the Eurocentric dominated HP sport setting. As such, providing pragmatic applications of this knowledge would prove beneficial to the advancement of the respective athletes and their peoples (Smith, G., 2003; Vaoleti, 2013) which in turn could aid those who coach, manage and influence development and performance to embed more culturally responsive practices. To explore the psychosocial development and the process of development for Māori and Pasifika, there is a need for those practitioners and support persons who work in the HP space (e.g. coach, trainer, administrator, teammate etc.) to deepen their understanding of the fundamental cultural principles (inclusive of the cultural values, protocols and symbols) that influence and empower the Māori and/or Pasifika athlete (Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009). This deepened understanding could then inform evidence-based practices that are culturally-relevant and enhance the preparation and performance of the Māori and Pasifika athlete. This further strengthens our rationale for the use of a Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika framework by highlighting the impact using a culturally appropriate approach taken from a methodological, data collection and analysis vantage point.

Māori and Pasifika Health Concepts in the High Performance Sport Context

The majority of sport participation and TD research has been conducted outside of Aotearoa; most notably in North America (Schaaf, 2006). As such, less is known about the development of Māori and Pasifika athletes and even less about their psychosocial development. This is highlighted by the dearth of TD models and processes in the literature that include culturally appropriate TD assessments and processes for Māori and Pasifika RL players. Professional sports, like other mainstream industries, are heavily dominated by a Eurocentric power structure and culture (Airini et al., 2010; Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001; Panapa & Phillips, 2014), and Māori and Pasifika are expected to integrate into a system that does not typically reflect their cultural structure, values and beliefs (Panapa & Phillips, 2014). As the number of Māori and Pasifika playing RL at the professional level (NRL) has steadily risen in recent years (38% in 2014 to 42% in 2016) (Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Ng Shiu & Vagana, 2016), this oversight can no longer be tolerated. Huffer and Qalo (2004) articulated this conundrum best by stating:

Constructing a body of thought, much like building a Samoan fale (house), has significance in itself, but it must first and foremost be of use to the community it is designed for. It must provide shelter from the outside elements and bring comfort to those inside. It must not shut out the world but be able to invite the world in, on its own terms (p. 89).

In this light, Huffer and Qalo reinforce the notion of the necessity to design and implement a study that resonates with the people or communities which the findings will impact.

The health sector in Aotearoa is one sector that has predominantly taken the lead in utilising Māori and Pasifika epistemology, ontology and methodology to better understand and address the health, well-being and development for both communities based on key social indicators (Durie, 1985; HRC, 2014; Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust, 2016). Several models of holistic health and well-being have been developed within te ao Māori, to assist with improving Māori health, such as: Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994),

Te Wheke (Pere, 1991), and Te Pae Mahutonga (Durie 1999). Models developed within Pasifika worldview have also been adapted to assist with improving Pasifika health, such as: Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), Te Vaka (Kupa, 2009), and Fonua (Tu'itahi, 2007). For Māori and Pasifika, it is the imagery and sacredness that accompany the metaphorical motif of each model that is reflective of Māori and/or Pasifika persons' holistic view of health (Efi, 2003; Te Ava & Rubie-Davies, 2011). The metaphorical imagery of the models mentioned above, emphasise the socio-cultural context that support Māori and Pasifika ways of knowing and doing, thus including elements that are typically overlooked by Western models of health and well-being. Hence, the literal written translation for each of the previously mentioned models may not make sense nor convey a holistic meaning of health and well-being if translated into te reo Pākehā. Thus, the decision not to translate the aforementioned models into Pākehā rhetoric was deliberate, so as to not diminish the 'essence or sacredness' of the respective models and processes. Nonetheless, these Māori and Pasifika frameworks have contributed to the Māori and Pasifika health literature by utilising cultural values, processes and practices to more effectively enhance the overall health and well-being for their people and communities, inclusive of the psychosocial aspect.

It has been noted that “psychology, in its formal, disciplinary representation as a science, emerged from Western paradigms” (Macfarlane, Blampied & Macfarlane, 2011, p. 6), and as a result, there is no adequate Māori or Pasifika translation of psychosocial or psychological development (Efi, 2003). From a Pasifika perspective, the Ministry of Health [MoH] (2008) explained:

Pacific peoples view mental health as an intrinsic component of overall health. Pacific cultures do not have words that translate easily into 'mental illness', and mental health is considered to be inseparable from the overall wellbeing of the body, soul and spirit (p. 2).

Whilst this may be a Pasifika perspective, there is a shared sentiment with this holistic view of health and it is inappropriate to compartmentalise the various aspects of health

(Durie, 2004; McNeill, 2009). This thesis therefore, drew upon the pillars of health and well-being from Te Whare Tapa Wha (1994) and Fonofale (2001) in an effort to understand psychosocial development as it related to Māori and Pasifika respectively. The concept of the va (Wendt, 1996) adds cultural context as to the centrality of relationships. These models will be expanded upon in a full and proper context in Chapter Three (Research Design). For the purpose of this literature review, we introduce the construct te taha hinengaro as the concept whereby psychosocial development will be used (within the context of a holistic health model) to more appropriately make sense of participants sense-making in the HP sport setting. The Pasifika equivalent will also be introduced followed by the concept of the va to highlight the similar worldviews and the values that Māori and Pasifika share.

Te Whare Tapa Wha. Durie's (1994) term te taha hinengaro refers to the psychological and emotional aspect of health and well-being, and takes into consideration ones' thoughts, emotions and behaviour expressed in a holistic manner. There exists a belief that the mind and body are inseparable and therefore, communicating through the expression of emotions tends to be more powerful than the use of words. As such, ones' thoughts, feelings and emotions cannot be viewed in isolation of each other and also cannot be separated from the body or soul (Little et al., 2013). Furthermore, to understand te taha hinengaro more appropriately is to understand it as an interrelated element with te taha whānau (*family/social dimension of well-being*), te taha wairua (*spiritual dimension of well-being*), and te taha tinana (*physical dimension of well-being*). The Fonofale model shares the same aspects of well-being and is also considerate of any other contributing factors (e.g. age, gender, socioeconomic status etc.) as it relates to the health and well-being of Pasifika people.

Fonofale. To understand the mental and emotional dimension of well-being from a Pasifika perspective is to acknowledge the fundamental value or foundation for all

Pasifika which is 'aiga (*family*) (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). For Pasifika people the essence of 'aiga extends far beyond the Eurocentric nucleus definition, but it is upon this foundation whereby ones' physical, spiritual and mental well-being can be more appropriately addressed. Hence, similarly to Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) when considering mental well-being in the context of Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), is to consider the thoughts, feelings and the behaviours that are being expressed. Again, it is not necessarily the words spoken, but the actions and behaviours that speak volumes as to the mental well-being of a person.

The aforementioned holistic models of health emphasise that the mind, body and spirit are interconnected; therefore, a person is considered healthy when there is a balance between all the elements. For Māori and Pasifika, spirituality is a key element of health and well-being (Durie, 1985; Efi, 2003; Mark & Lyons, 2010; MoH, 2008; Pere, 1991) yet it is regularly omitted from Eurocentric-based health models (McNeill, 2009; Samu, Wheeler, Asiasiga, Dash, Robinson, Dunbar, & Suaalii-Sauni, 2011). "Spirituality is defined variously as existential reality, connectedness, and energy" (Mark & Lyons, 2010, p. 1753). Essentially, it is an unseen force of power or energy that manifests to help align the mind and body with the land and the heavens. From a Māori perspective, the spiritual aspect of health and well-being is inclusive of religious beliefs and practices but not necessarily equivalent in meaning with church-going or being associated with a religious denomination (Durie, 1985). Conversely, Pasifika are traditionally God-fearing people who actively engage in church-related activities and practices (Efi, 2003; Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013). In any case, it is clear that faith and spirituality are fundamental elements that should be given serious consideration as to the overall health and well-being of Māori and Pasifika (Durie, 2004; Efi, 2003; Mark & Lyons, 2010; McNeill, 2009; MoH, 2008; Pere, 1991; Samu et al., 2011). On this basis, to comprehend te taha hinengaro or mental well-being as it relates to Māori and Pasifika junior RL

players is to consider the effect of faith and spirituality on ones' thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are being expressed implicitly and explicitly. The Samoan concept of the va (Wendt, 1996) further explores this notion and adds cultural context to te taha hinengaro or the mental well-being dimension of health.

Concept of the va. For Pasifika peoples, relationships are fundamental to their way of being, and the va is the space that governs the relationship, be it in a physical, social or spiritual sense (Ioane & Tudor, 2017). Because of their collectivist worldview, Pasifika view themselves in relation to others, which influences the way they shape their identity, sense of well-being, consciousness and purpose in life (Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, & Bush, 2005). It is about the inter-connectedness of all living things and recognises boundaries and limits that are crucial to relationships. In other words, their sense of self exists only in relation to others. Hence, the va describes the physical space around and in between people, places and things (Ioane & Tudor, 2017) as well as the sacred space that relates to it (Mo'a, 2015). In other words, an understanding of the va is not limited to what we physically see in connecting with others, but rather the feeling we experience in the sacred space based on the principles of love, respect, humility and compassion (Ioane, 2017b). As such, the concept of the va, in conjunction with Te Whare Tapa Wha and Fonofale, highlights the fundamental difference between how Māori and Pasifika see and engage in the world relative to their European counterparts.

In this light, healthy thinking for Māori and Pasifika is centred upon relationships. Building upon this cultural notion, an individual is considered healthy if their first thoughts are about others. Additionally, they recognise the impact that their behaviour can have on others, sharing their emotions and feelings by action, and not necessarily through words (Durie, 1994; Rochford, 2004). On the contrary, a person who thinks of themselves, and prioritises their needs, disregarding the impact that this may have on the collective would be considered as unhealthy (Durie, 1994), thus, feeding back

into the holistic worldview of Māori and Pasifika where it is believed that all things in their elements (e.g. people, land, cosmos etc.) are interconnected (Samu et al., 2011; Smith, 1999). Hence, to determine what psychosocial characteristics facilitate the successful development and performance of Māori and/or Pasifika high performing RL player, is to be aware of, and comprehend the underpinning cultural values of the player, who also happens to be talented, and who represents more than themselves on the TD pathway as well as the RL field.

Becoming culturally competent or developing cultural competencies, particularly in the area of psychology or mental well-being for Māori and Pasifika, is an area which has been evolving. Cultural competency has been viewed as “the ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to the cultural needs of peoples of all cultures (Samu & Suaalii-Sauni, 2009, p. 120). Given psychology’s Western underpinnings, those practitioners who whakapapa to Māori and Pasifika culture have readily advocated for psychological assessments and processes to be adapted to more appropriately address the psychological health and well-being of Māori and Pasifika peoples (Durie, 2006; Ioane, 2017a; Little et al., 2013; Macfarlane et al., 2011; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009; Samu et al., 2011; Tamasese et al., 2005). The models mentioned above provide a reference point in viewing health using the Māori lens in Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994), or the Pasifika lens in the Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) and concept of the va (Wendt, 1996).

In relation to conducting clinical psychological assessments and visits, Macfarlane et al. (2011) explored the intersection of clinical knowledge and cultural knowledge and the impact of considering culture when working with Māori individuals and whānau. They challenged psychologists “to ‘listen to culture’ as well as to disciplinary knowledge (Macfarlane et al., 2011, p. 12) by encouraging clinicians (both Māori and non-Māori) to learn and expand their knowledge of te ao Māori as the starting

point to becoming culturally competent. Ioane (2017a) offered context to the intersection of clinical knowledge and cultural knowledge from a Pasifika perspective and specifically, a Samoan perspective, wherein the key to successful engagement with Pasifika youth and their 'aiga is to prioritise the relationship above all else. Health practitioners and scholars are clear in acknowledging that the two communities, Māori and Pasifika are heterogenous groups on their own (HRC, 2014; Little et al., 2013), and care should be taken when assessing both groups in the same forum. This will be further explored in Chapter Three (Research Design chapter) but it is important to recognise that it is the whakapapa connections between Māori and Pasifika and shared values (e.g. whānau, respect, reciprocity) that allow the two communities and cultural methodologies to co-exist (Curtis, 2016; Naepi, 2015).

The premise of both Māori and Pasifika research is to empower and advance the respective communities (Anae et al., 2001; Curtis, 2016), by using culturally responsive frameworks such as those previously mentioned. These significant cultural principles and practices, such as the centrality of relationships and spirituality, are traditionally unaccounted for. Hence, it has been determined that the Māori and Pasifika holistic models of health and well-being, in particular te taha hinengaro or the mental/emotional aspect of well-being, allows us to consider those beliefs, values, and principles that are significant to the Māori and/or Pasifika athlete to more appropriately make sense of psychosocial development. Based on the assertion of this section, this also means understanding that psychosocial development is more than just identifying each contributing characteristic as a standalone element as has been done in other Eurocentric-based studies. Rather, psychosocial development is better understood in the wider socio-cultural context. This is inclusive of both personal experience and the support persons that initiated the learning and deployment of those specific psychosocial determinants that were enacted in response to an event experienced on the TD pathway.

Overcoming Adversity along the Talent Development Pathway

The transition between childhood and adulthood is a difficult transition for adolescents to navigate on their own (Holt, 2008) without the added pressures that come with being an elite athlete. Junior elite athletes must juggle personal, academic and sporting commitments (Godber, 2012; Pelka & Kellmann, 2017; Putukian, 2016; Stambulova, Franck & Weibull, 2012). Inevitably, the demands and pressures increase as the junior athlete progresses along the TD pathway. Thus, it appears that the ability to respond to pressure and overcome adversity may be a key determinant of an athlete who succeeds on the developmental trajectory towards the senior elite level (Larsen et al., 2012; MacNamara & Collins, 2014).

Burnout, injury, non-selection, balancing training demands with personal demands, dealing with increased pressure or competition, and failure are some of the events or challenges which junior athletes may encounter and become overwhelmed by as they progress through the development system (Bruner et al., 2008; Gould et al., 2002; Hodge & Smith, 2014; Pelka & Kellmann, 2017; Petipas, Cornelius, Van Raalte & Jones, 2005). Managing the stress that ensues because of such challenges, has recently caused researchers to explore the psychological disposition of junior elite athletes (Frank, Nixdorf & Beckmann, 2017; Jowett, Hill, Hall, & Curran, 2013; Nixdorf, Frank & Beckmann, 2016; Putukian, 2016). Stress was found to be a predictor of burnout and depression for German junior elite athletes (Frank et al., 2017), and individual-sport athletes tended to show higher scores in depressive symptoms than team-sport athletes (Nixdorf et al., 2016). In her review of the mental health of college student-athletes in America, Putukian (2016) argued that an adverse factor of injuries can negatively impact ones' psychological strength as well as their physical strength, if not managed appropriately and lead to more serious issues such as depression. Little is known about the psychological disposition of Māori and Pasifika athletes; however, the media have

linked Māori and Pasifika athletes to depression and suicide (Hawkes, 2018; Marsters, 2017). Therefore, it is critical for young athletes to develop appropriate coping and psychological skills and strategies to help them manage the various milestones and adverse events that they will encounter, as they seek to transition to the senior elite level (Bruner et al., 2009; Hardcastle, Tye, Glassey & Hagger, 2015; Jones et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2012).

Adversity has been referred to as the stressors (i.e. physical or psychological) that may disrupt an individual's ability to function (Tamminen et al., 2013). The severity of an adverse event is subject to the meaning that athletes personally attach to the event. Tamminen et al. (2013) stated that "although some events (e.g. death of a teammate) are often appraised as more severe than others (e.g. injury), it is not the event per se that dictates the severity of adversity but rather individuals' appraisal of the event" (p. 29). Consequently, the inability to overcome these stressors can impact not only on an athlete's performance, but their overall development and well-being (Hodge & Smith, 2014; Weissensteiner, 2017). Despite differences in adversity, Tamminen and colleagues found that female elite athletes shared similar feelings of isolation, frustration, depression and questioning of their identity and ability. Those same athletes also recognised adversity as an ongoing and inevitable part of engaging in elite sport (Hodge & Smith, 2014; Tamminen et al., 2013). To further normalise the rocky pathway to the elite levels, Mills and colleagues (2012) found that "coaches felt it was imperative for young players [in their study, soccer players] to understand that adversity can facilitate development" (p. 1601). The implication of this statement is that junior athletes lack the knowledge, psychosocial skills or coping strategies to view adversity as an opportunity for growth. Therefore, this thought process should be addressed with caution in consideration of the juniors as it could be more harmful than helpful for an athlete's development (Collins & MacNamara, 2017).

Considering that the literature has clearly established the rocky nature of the TD pathway, especially as a junior athlete transitioning to the senior level, we move forward with caution and hope that coaches and other support staff have the knowledge and skill-set to promote a growth mindset. The acknowledgment of the TD process being a complex, dynamic, multifactorial process (Hill et al., 2015) is an ode to the evolution of the theoretical understanding of TD. Shifting the TD paradigm towards developing and implementing a more holistic process is a positive acknowledgement that encourages practitioners to move past the traditional reliance upon a solely physiological and anthropometric profiling and development system (Abbott et al., 2005; Abbott & Collins, 2004; Hill et al., 2015; Simonton, 1999). This paradigm shift also alludes to the idea that an athletes' development will include failure and setbacks on the road to success.

The Role of Social Support along the Talent Development Process

The physical and psychological rigours of elite sport can be challenging to navigate, especially for junior elite athletes (Bruner et al., 2008; Hollings et al., 2014; Stambulova et al., 2017). It has been argued that social support is a key resource for junior athletes to utilise in their transition experiences (Stambulova et al., 2017). It is typical for an athlete's social support network to evolve as they progress through the TD pathway towards becoming an elite sportsperson (Hodge et al., 2012). Parents, teammates, coaches and significant others (e.g. girlfriend, spouse) are some of the key people who an athlete will engage with and/or depend on for social support for various reasons (Bruner et al., 2008; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Martindale et al., 2005). For instance, a parent's initial role of support may include introducing their child to sport and providing financial support, and then evolve to providing more of an emotional and esteem support as their child progresses along the TD pathway (Côté, 1999; Hodge et al., 2012; Woodcock et al., 2011). Once at the elite levels, the support of teammates has been found

to be critical in helping athletes overcome adversity (e.g. injury, transition), performance accountability, and motivation (competitive support) (Bruner et al., 2008; Holt & Dunn, 2004). Bruner and colleagues (2008) found that teammates provided crucial emotional and esteem support for rookie ice hockey players in their transition into the senior elite league. Furthermore, teammates became their new whānau as they adjusted to life away from their nuclear whānau. Holt and Dunn (2004) found that for English and Canadian youth soccer players, their teammates offered emotional, informational and practical support; these roles were previously filled by parents, as they advanced their career. Another support person that has been identified as being a key figure in an athletes' development and performance is the coach (Gould et al., 2002; Stambulova et al., 2017; Woodcock et al., 2011).

Coaches offer psychosocial, tactical and technical support and are critical in helping athletes on their pursuit towards the senior elite level (Gould et al., 2002; Martindale et al., 2005; Stambulova et al., 2012; Woodcock et al., 2011). Coaches typically have a wealth of knowledge and experience which can help athletes recognise and develop those elements that are important for successful development (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014; Cupples & O'Connor, 2011). It has been acknowledged that the great coaches were those who were not defined by outcome (e.g. wins and losses), rather, the great coaches had the ability to leave long-lasting impressions on their athletes (Storm, Henriksen, Larsen, & Christensen, 2014). Evidently, the coach plays a pivotal role in assisting athletes to make the transition from one milestone or level to the next (Martindale et al., 2007; Stambulova et al., 2012). For those who coach athletes of Māori and/or Pasifika heritage, it has been argued that a monocultural or 'one-size fits all' coaching style is no longer conducive to successfully motivating their players of Māori and Pasifika heritage (Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006). Schaaf (2006) further states that "...basic understandings of a player's culture may give coaches insight for

optimising their performance” (p. 49), especially since it is more than likely that coaches in the context of the NRL and NZRL, will be of non-Māori and non-Pasifika heritage (Holland, 2012; Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013).

To link this back to the Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika concepts of health, the role of social support for Māori and Pasifika within a HP sport environment, is for the coach to be aware of the cultural nuances that may not seem relevant to optimising performance (i.e. allocating time for whanaungatanga), but for the Māori and/or Pasifika athlete it is a key vital part of their ability to view themselves as an athlete within the team and how they fit into the team (te taha whānau) which can positively enhance their confidence (te taha hinengaro) in their physical and game-skill development and performance (te taha tinana). Here again is an example of the gap between the varying worldviews that can contribute to our comprehension of psychosocial development as it relates to the role and responsibility of the coach to facilitate the development of their players. From a sport psychology perspective, Hodge, Heke and Sharp (2011) offered guidance as to effective approaches in consulting Indigenous athletes, in particular, Māori athletes. They recognised the necessity for a sport psychologist to develop an understanding of Indigenous worldviews and cultural practices, emphasising the foundational value of whānau within Māori culture. An understanding of the whānau gives insight as to learning approaches that could be utilised more effectively in consulting with Māori athletes such as: knowing one’s whakapapa and looking to the past to move forward (Hodge et al., 2011), as it relates to their development and performance. As whānau is a key organising principle for Māori and Pasifika (Edwards, McCreanor, & Moewaka-Barnes, 2007; Nahkid, 2009), the impact of social media on the role of support for the junior athlete is explored further.

Influence of social media on social support. With the advancement of technology, social media has significantly changed the current social landscape (Ahn,

2011; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Vaterlaus, Patten, Roche, & Young, 2015). Social media has extended the physical social milieus to a global network at the click of a button and the youth of today use this platform to interact in high volumes (Ahn, 2011; Steinfield, Ellison & Lampe, 2008). The literature has alluded to social media having a dual-effect on the well-being and development of young people, and young people today have been referred to as ‘digital natives’ given that they were born and/or raised in the age of digital technology (Sadhir, Stockburger & Omar, 2016). For example, social media provides a space for relationships to evolve and be maintained (Steinfield et al., 2008; Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006), has increased awareness and accessibility to food options and eating habits (Vaterlaus et al., 2015), and it has been argued that social media could both hinder and motivate young people to exercise (Vaterlaus et al., 2015). Despite the positive health benefits that can be related to the online world such as whakawhanaungatanga, the dual-effect of social media of establishing online connections is the increased exposure to cyberbullying and therefore an increase in mental health issues (Hamm, Newton, Chisholm & Sadhir et al., 2016). Regardless, social media is ingrained into the social fabric of today’s generation of youth (Ahn, 2011; Ellison et al., 2007). Furthermore, social media is a live database that youth turn to for social support and to be educated on various topics, such as health (Vaterlaus et al., 2015).

The danger of turning to social media for answers or insight to health-related issues is the chance that the source may be unreliable and effectively, so too the information associated with the source (Rutsaert, Regan, Pieniak, McConnon, Moss, Wall, & Verbeke, 2013; Vaterlaus et al., 2015). The sources being referred to were from pseudo-professionals and celebrities who can use their status and personal brand to ‘validate’ their ‘expertise’ (Rutsaert et al., 2013), further reinforcing the dual-effect of social media on the development and well-being of young people. In the context of the TD pathway and the role of social support as implicated by social media platforms, they

offer a tool for the attaining and sustaining of relationships, mostly with their peers but also with all other support persons mentioned, such as coach, parents and other whānau members beyond the physical spaces. Specific to Aotearoa, it has been found that males tend to use YouTube© and social media more for entertainment purposes (Pacheco & Melhuish, 2018). More research would need to be conducted regarding the impact of HP sports administrators, coaching staff and other support persons using online tools and social media platforms to strengthen connections or whanaungatanga with their players, especially junior development players, outside of the HP sport environment.

The transition from junior to senior elite sports can be difficult, especially if a support network is weak (Hollings et al., 2014). Athletes can experience high levels of stress and an increased sensitivity to social support as they aim to meet the expectations of significant others and fulfil their desires to successfully transition to senior levels (Stambulova et al., 2012). Athletes may also face difficulties embracing the values, behaviours and beliefs within a new environment that may contradict their personal, cultural or even religious values, behaviours and beliefs (Bruner et al., 2008; Keung, 2014; Lakisa et al., 2014). Little research has been done as to the complications when applied to Māori and Pasifika RL players seeking to transition from the junior to senior elite levels. According to Lakisa and colleagues (2014), it is extremely important for coaches and support staff to understand the belief systems and upbringing of Pasifika athletes. Furthermore, "...the cultural and familial motivations of [Pasifika RL players'] strategies to maximise income from sport may be misinterpreted by those who do not understand the importance of whānau, faith, and culture for Pasifika athletes (Lakisa et al., 2014, p. 356). Unfortunately, considering that whānau, faith and culture are motivating factors for Pasifika athletes to succeed, these same factors have been found to also exert immense pressure on these young athletes (Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006).

For Māori athletes, less is known about the factors that motivate them in a HP sport context; rather, studies tend to explore the cultural identity of Māori athletes relative to their lived experience in navigating the HP sport environment (Erueti, 2015; Erueti & Palmer, 2014). However, given that whānau is a fundamental cultural value for Māori, it would appear that the whānau and culture may influence the motivation of Māori athletes. Faith in God and spirituality appear to be practiced in the context of Māori protocols and customs which are clothed with significant meaning and connection to being Māori. For example, during competition, an athlete may carry a vial of water from the river with which they are connected which acts as a conduit for karakia (*prayer*), thus allowing the athlete to be connected to their whānau and their sacred and significant tribal lands no matter where sporting competitions are held (Erueti, 2015).

Consequently, existing TD models are underpinned by a Western philosophy and therefore cannot adequately account for cultural factors, such as those mentioned above, which may contribute to the development of a Māori and/or Pasifika athlete. The knowledge in this section has emphasised the need for a more robust holistic approach to TD that is inclusive of practical tools and resources that can be easily understood and implemented in managing adversity over the course of an athlete's sporting career (Vaeyens et al., 2008). In the case of my study, the robustness will be determined by the embedding of those cultural values that are significant to Māori and Pasifika. A fundamental value that has been identified in the literature for Māori and Pasifika peoples is that of whanaungatanga or familial relationships.

Synthesis and Implication

This literature review has highlighted the complexities of TD within a HP sport context and addresses issues which are prevalent in the transition from junior to senior elite levels. Additionally, due to the rise in social media networks, studies have explored

the social impact of such technological evolution and the resulting dual-effect on ones' development and well-being (O'Carroll, 2013; Steinfield et al., 2008). The importance of psychosocial development has been established as a critical component of TD but there is a lack of understanding of how to intentionally inform such development from both a coach and athlete perspective. Finally, there is still uncertainty around what the term psychosocial may look like or mean for Indigenous athletes as Western theories or models tend to negate the values that are significant to Indigenous Māori and Pasifika peoples (Schaaf, 2006). As a result, because of the cultural underpinnings of my study, it was determined that the word psychosocial would be the more appropriate term to use. More specifically, the term psychosocial encompasses the social, cultural and emotional factors as well as the psychological component that could contribute to ones' development as an athlete and individual (Johnston et al., 2013; Larsen et al., 2012).

Studies that explored the cultural nuances and struggles that Māori and Pasifika athletes may face in their development and sporting career, has evolved (Keung, 2014; Lakisa et al., 2014; Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006; Zakus & Horton, 2009). "In the globalised world of sport, understanding the cultures of various sports people is just one of the new challenges which coaches and management face" (Schaaf, 2006, p. 52) – such is the predicament with RL in New Zealand. With an increasing number of Māori and Pasifika playing both rugby codes, the challenge exists for coaches, trainers and other support staff to allocate time to understand and increase their awareness of the cultural nuances, struggles and motivating factors of their players (Schaaf, 2006). Fulfilling ones' obligation to give back and provide financial support to their whānau, faith and culture have been consistently found to be key motivating factors for Māori and Pasifika athletes (Keung, 2014; Zakus & Horton, 2009). Furthermore, learning to adjust to a new cultural milieu, a new coaching regime and possibly being away from whānau for the first time are struggles, which have consistently been acknowledged in the literature (Lakisa et al.,

2014; Panapa & Phillips, 2014). Whilst understanding that the cultural implications and motivations of Māori and Pasifika athletes are important, a lack of pragmatic application of this knowledge still remains. Therefore, the purpose of my study is to use a collective Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika framework to explore Māori and Pasifika junior RL players' perceptions of psychosocial development. Such knowledge would therefore facilitate culturally responsive strategies to more effectively identify and develop key behaviours, attitudes and skills that Māori and Pasifika athletes require to cope with the demands of HP sport.

Chapter Three: Research Design

“Cultural values shape Indigenous peoples in their ways of knowing and being, and represent the elements of a society that are valued for creating and sustaining community”

(Te Ava & Rubie-Davies, 2011, p. 119)

Chapter Introduction

This study adopted a qualitative Indigenous approach to explore Māori and Pasifika U20s and U18s high performing RL players' perceptions of psychosocial development. When conducting Indigenous research, there is no one specific method of choice. Rather, Indigenous methodology and methods are informed by the ethical protocols of the respective culture (Botha, 2011) and as such I focused on capturing the players' voice, as is protocol for Indigenous frameworks. Capturing the players' voices provided a rich perspective with regards to the realities of athlete development in an elite sporting environment as a Māori and/or Pasifika person. Thus, participants' perceptions were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis given its aim to give voice to the participants (Smith et al., 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2008), however, the analysis was guided by the collective te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview. As was done in Chapter One, two letters to my younger self have been integrated into this chapter as a way to (re)locate my voice throughout the whole research process. Validation for engaging in this reflexive process will be highlighted at a later stage of this chapter. To facilitate coherency, this chapter is separated into two sections: research methodology and research methods. Both sections will outline the structure of their respective section as it pertains to the overall research design chapter.

Research Methodology

This section presents an outline of the research paradigm and underpinning epistemological and ontological assumptions of my study that informed my position as

the researcher. When my position as the researcher has been established, the underpinning collective cultural framework of my study is then discussed beginning with the three overarching guiding principles of my study that were introduced in Chapter One. I next acknowledge the uniqueness of the Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika worldviews and provide a rationale for the collective cultural approach to achieve the objectives of my study. My methodological approach informed the methods used to gather the necessary information to address my study's objectives and the structure of my methods section will be outlined at the appropriate point of this chapter.

An Indigenous Paradigm

As an emerging researcher, finding balance between the Indigenous world and Western academic world without compromising the integrity of this study was an internal struggle that I grappled with throughout the whole research process. My internal battle was driven by my responsibility to meet three main requirements in conducting this research. Firstly, this study needed to be rigorous enough to fulfil the requirements for a doctoral level thesis and therefore defining and articulating the researcher's position is mandatory (Kovach, 2010). My epistemological and ontological views are posited throughout the thesis in the form of letters to myself as a 'pre-PhD' and 'PhD candidate' and these have in essence, cultivated my methodological framework. Second, the study needed to fulfil the needs of my scholarship funders and ultimately provide them with pragmatic implications. Lastly, and most importantly, there was a responsibility to ensure findings and knowledge which would benefit and empower the Māori and Pasifika RL players and their respective communities (HRC, 2014; Smith, 1999).

A paradigm encompasses concepts of ontology, epistemology, and methodology, and these underpinning beliefs influence the way data or knowledge is collected, analysed, interpreted and disseminated (Kovach, 2010). From an Indigenous

perspective these concepts are interrelated (Curtis, 2016), and it is the Indigenous ways of knowing, seeing and doing that have influenced the position I have assumed in this study. To this end, I have attempted to articulate my ontological and epistemological positions in this study.

Ontological and Epistemological Perspective

Ontology reflects the nature of social reality and therefore a set of beliefs are established regarding what is 'real' to society (Grant & Giddings, 2002). An Indigenous ontological stance often includes a spiritual realm being interconnected with the physical realm (Hart, 2010). For Indigenous people, the connection between all things above and below the land, between the living and the dead is very real, and likewise the people and all creations (i.e. the sea, land, mountain, rivers and sky) are interrelated (Hart, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Hence, communicating with those who have passed on, and the implications of how society takes care of, or neglects our environment, is a social reality for Indigenous peoples (Curtis, 2016). This ontological stance provides a cultural context surrounding the athletes' understanding of their lived reality as Māori and/or Pasifika high performing RL players.

Our epistemology questions what is real, and the validity of the sources our knowledge claims are drawn from (Curtis, 2016; Grant & Giddings, 2002). Hart (2010) argued that: "Indigenous epistemology is a fluid way of knowing derived from teachings transmitted from generation to generation by storytelling, where each story is alive with the nuances of the storyteller" (p. 8). For Māori, the oral tradition of pūrākau (*narrative story*), is a legitimate and valid source of knowledge that comprises epistemological constructs, philosophical thoughts, worldviews and cultural codes which contribute to who we are as Māori (Glasgow & Rameka, 2017; Lee, 2009). Pasifika also come from a

long line of orators and their history has predominantly been passed down through the generations through oral narratives as well (Glasgow & Rameka, 2017).

Talanoa is a method that has been acknowledged and used in the literature to gather and disseminate knowledge (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Vaioleti, 2013). Both pūrākau and talanoa are narrative methods that share similar epistemological and methodological roots that reflect the cultural contexts of the target group in this study. The pūrākau that are gathered and then shared can help connect the past with the future, the people with their environment and all of creation, and the individual with the story (Lee, 2009; Smith, 1999). This connection ties back to the Indigenous fundamental belief that knowledge is relational (Curtis, 2016), and the onus is on the researcher to maintain accountability for these connections (Hart, 2010; Kovach, 2010). Drawing upon the traditional oral narrative methodological approaches of gathering and dissemination of knowledge, the Pasifika method of talanoa was utilised as the essence of my reporting of the athletes' voices. The rationale for using talanoa will be addressed at a later stage of this chapter, but it is important to note that talanoa was chosen given its collective-oriented philosophical base. Embedded in this method is reciprocity and the expectation that if participants are to give of their time and stories to the researcher, then they expect the researcher to respect, honour and use the stories in an appropriate manner (Vaioleti, 2006), therefore accentuating the fundamental value of relationships. Therefore, reality is not just shaped by relationships, but for Indigenous people, relationships are our reality (Wilson, 2008).

Indigenous (Māori and Pasifika) Methodology

Research methodology is the process used to gather information about what is real, and it is impacted by ones' ontology and epistemology (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2008). When discussing Indigenous methodologies, relational

assumptions are the heart of their core epistemologies (Kovach, 2010). Such a perspective can be seen to be contrasting a non-Indigenous research paradigm where the relational is viewed as a potential bias to the research (Kovach, 2010). Another contrasting view is that Indigenous research tends to utilise cultural values, beliefs and protocols as integral to their methodology (Smith, 1999). Within an Indigenous paradigm, these values, beliefs and protocols are privileged and provide the necessary space for relational nuances to emerge (Kovach, 2015; Smith, 1999). Therefore, these underpinning beliefs validate the process and tools that have been chosen to understand the phenomena being explored in my study. Consequently, including both Māori and Pasifika in the same study necessitated a framework that respected the various worldviews.

Common values from Kaupapa Māori¹⁶ and Pasifika research were drawn from to better inform my study's methodological process. Specifically, Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) were the two frameworks used to help explore participants' lived experiences with psychosocial development as a high performing junior RL player. These frameworks will be discussed in-depth later in the chapter, but they are grounded in Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika knowledge, values and protocols to better assess the health and well-being of Māori and Pasifika peoples in a holistic manner (Anae, Moewaka-Barnes, McCreanor, & Watson, 2002; Samu et al., 2011). Before moving forward, it is important to recognise and understand the relationship between Māori and Pasifika in Aotearoa.

Overarching Guiding Principles

Tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga, and aroha ki te tangata are the three guiding principles of my study. It is important to recognise that while these are Māori

¹⁶ Research conducted with Māori philosophical underpinnings. This concept will be discussed further in the chapter under Kaupapa Māori Framework.

principles, they are shared cultural values with Pasifika, and are considered essential for both Māori and Pasifika approaches to research (Curtis, 2016; HRC, 2014; Naepi, 2015). For Indigenous people, their cultural values are more than just words. When comprehended in their native language, in the holistic context, those cultural values are living principles that are rich in meaning and purpose and guide the Indigenous way of being. Kovach (2015) further explained that “values that honour relationships are important for cultures that value the journey as much as the destination” (Kovach, 2015, p. 27). This study explored junior RL players hīkoi and aspirations to play RL at the highest level. Therefore, the intention of including guiding principles was to both inform and bring together the Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika approaches of this study.

Tino rangatiratanga. The first distinction of Kaupapa Māori research is the operationalisation of tino rangatiratanga (Bishop, 1995). According to Durie (1995) tino rangatiratanga “captures a sense of Māori ownership and active control over the future” (p. 16). In essence, tino rangatiratanga gives Māori the right to govern their own dominions, autonomy and independence (Bishop, 1995; Durie, 1995; Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker, Eketone, & Gibbs, 2006) and therefore the same rights should be acknowledged when conducting research with the Māori community. Accordingly, Māori individuals were part of a cultural advisory group and engaged in the research process from the beginning to end, including the data collection phase. Given the connection and respect between Māori and Pasifika in Aotearoa, the same opportunity was extended to Pasifika individuals too. The inclusion of cultural advisors was to ensure that the research design is respectful to the cultural principles, organisation and practices of both communities (HRC, 2014). This will be further discussed at a later stage of this chapter, but it is important to acknowledge that my cultural advisors were an integral part of this study and its aspiration to shift the paradigm to appreciate the view of psychosocial development from te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview.

At the heart of Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika research are the people; both frameworks were designed to empower or transform their people and communities (Airini et al., 2010; Naepi, 2015; Smith, 1999). Scholars have explicitly stated that Kaupapa Māori research must be driven by a Māori-centred agenda with the outcomes fixated on addressing the issues and needs of Māori (Bishop, 1995; Smith, 1999; Smith, G., 2003; Walker et al., 2006). In the context of this study, tino rangatiratanga encouraged the aspiring Māori RL players to take ownership of their development and career, inclusive of psychosocial development (Dobbs, 2015; Smith & Reid, 2000). Pasifika scholars have also been vocal and active in developing approaches grounded in the values and beliefs of Pasifika that focus on the needs and issues of their communities in a culturally responsive way (HRC, 2014; Ioane, 2017a). Therefore, tino rangatiratanga facilitated opportunities for participants to create a legacy, in hope of empowering the next generation to flourish as a Māori and/or Pasifika RL player and person.

Whanaungatanga. Whānau is the heart and foundation of all Māori culture and protocols (Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker et al., 2006). The whānau structure and network act as a model for how Kaupapa Māori research should be conducted and who should benefit from it (Bishop, 1995). Whānau is a concept not defined by ‘blood’ but rather establishing relationships and being connected as group or whanaungatanga. The process whereby whanaungatanga is developed and established is known as whakawhanaungatanga, and it is an integral piece of conducting Kaupapa Māori research (Bishop, 1995; Macfarlane et al., 2008; Smith, G., 2003). The main aim of whakawhanaungatanga is to create a safe, trusting and respectful environment thereby reducing the gap between the researcher and participants (Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker et al., 2006). The whakawhanaungatanga process involves identifying familial, social and geographical connections and participating in activities which could facilitate forming instant connections within the group. Thus, the principle of whanaungatanga promotes a

shared vision, collective responsibility and accountability for the research protocols and data (Macfarlane et al., 2008; Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker et al., 2006). This was an important concept to understand and adhere to for my study, as I unpacked participants' personal constructs from within their worldviews as Māori and/or Pasifika regarding psychosocial development and in the HP sport setting. Hence, understanding was generated by enlisting the support and expertise of my cultural advisory group members who could clarify or add cultural context to the participants' perceptions. This therefore held me accountable to acknowledging the nature of psychosocial development as it has been expressed in te ao Māori and the Pasifika context.

Aroha ki te tangata. The principle of aroha ki te tangata or having a respect for the people, encouraged me as the researcher to “allow people to define their own space and meet on their own terms” (Cram, McCreanor, Smith, Nairn, & Johnstone, 2006, p. 48). Hence, aroha ki te tangata was vital in ensuring both Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika frameworks were used rigorously for the benefit of the respective Māori and Pasifika participants and their communities (Naepi, 2015). First and foremost, this principle required me to be consciously aware of my responsibility to respect participants' views and protect their personal information (Moyle, 2014). The ‘Give Way Rule’ was a strategy that has been employed in previous studies to facilitate cross-cultural research involving Māori (Airini et al., 2010). The aim is to aid the collaborative approach and ensure that all views are taken into consideration and if cultural clarity is necessary then the segment of data in question “gives way” to the specific expert cultural advisor relative to the participant whom the data is associated with (Naepi, 2015). Therefore, it is anticipated that through this process there is rigour, legitimacy and relevance to the research and the participant's sense-making process is being understood with relation to their personal cultural background (Airini et al., 2010; Naepi, 2015). Given the unique and sensitive nature of my sample group (high performing athletes embedded in a

professional RL organisation), the ‘Give Way Rule’ strategy was used more as a reference point as to how I made sense of the data and my cultural advisory group were key to ensuring that what I had deduced was appropriately addressed within either te ao Māori or the Pasifika lens. Respect for participants’ personal worldviews meant acknowledging the various cultural worldviews that underpinned each participants’ whakaaro, in a collective Māori, and collective Pasifika sense, given the HP sport context they were engaged in. Thus, my cultural advisory group members were vital to this part of the process in offering cultural clarification ensuring that space was allowed for any cultural nuances to evolve that may have otherwise been overlooked or misunderstood through a Western lens.

Researchers have the responsibility to mediate any potential space and power imbalance between themselves and those who engage in their research (Pipi et al., 2004). In my study, the mediating effect came by way of the connections the researcher developed with key individuals who assisted in providing access to participants and resources (to be discussed later) (Cram et al., 2006; Pipi et al., 2004). Subsequently, the guiding principles of tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga and aroha ki te tangata facilitated an in-depth exploration and understanding of the participants’ personal construct with regards to psychosocial development as Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL player. Specifically, the guiding principles facilitated the co-existence of te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview in my study. The following sections will delve deeper into each of the Māori and Pasifika theoretical models and concepts that have been adapted for my study.

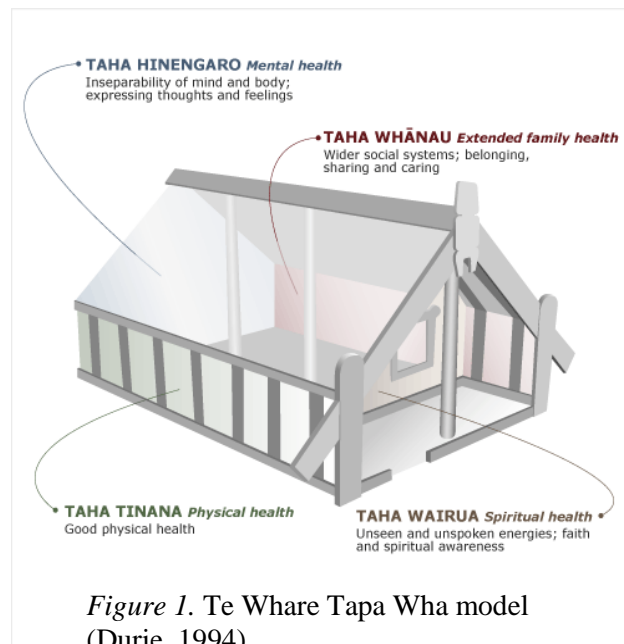
Kaupapa Māori Framework

As previously stated, Kaupapa Māori research is conducted by Māori, with Māori and for the benefit of Māori (Durie, 1994; Smith, 1999; Smith, G., 2003; Walker

et al., 2006). Within this framework, Māori are not viewed as the ‘other’ and therefore Māori epistemologies, ontology, methodologies, and practices become the norm (Kerr, Penney, Moewaka-Barnes & McCreanor, 2010). Māori have readily understood the value and importance of knowledge and more importantly, the necessity of disseminating knowledge for the betterment of their people (Cunningham, 2011). Māori researchers however, have had to compete in a Western society which has typically disregarded the value of their cultural paradigms of knowledge (Cram et al., 2006; Moyle, 2014). Thus, the Kaupapa Māori framework was developed to empower Māori (Smith, 1999) and ensure their views and contribution to research is respected and used for the advancement of Māori people, which was accomplished by utilising the study’s overarching guiding principles mentioned earlier. One area where Kaupapa Māori principles have influenced research is in Māori health (Smith & Reid, 2000).

Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) was chosen for my study because of its ability to unpack the complexities of Māori health and well-being in a way that resonates with Māori (Dobbs, 2015). There is a need for Māori to actively participate in developing health policies that can inform services that are culturally appropriate to their own people (Durie, 1995). This argument could also extend to the HP sport context whereby more engagement with Māori athletes, coaches and other support staff is necessary in order to develop and implement policies and processes that are conducive for enhancing both performance and well-being for Māori athletes. For example, policies and/or processes could be discussed and developed in collaboration with athletes to support the use of cultural practices that could be adapted and integrated into training and recovery processes to optimise practice and performance. As such, Te Whare Tapa Wha provides a framework whereby psychosocial development could be explored as it pertained to TD from within te ao Māori.

Te Whare Tapa Wha. Durie's (1994) Te Whare Tapa Wha model draws upon Māori philosophy towards health and well-being. Within te ao Māori, the cornerstones of



health and well-being are symbolically connected to the four walls that provide strength and allow a whare (*house*) to stand (McNeill, 2009). As demonstrated in Figure One, each wall of the whare represents an aspect of well-being. Namely, te taha tinana (*physical*), te taha hinengaro (*mental/emotional*), te taha

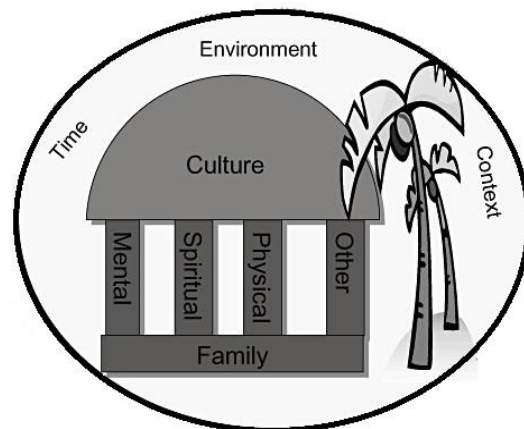
wairua (*spiritual*) and te taha whānau (*family/social*) (Durie, 1994). In te ao Māori, good health and well-being is attributed to having balance and harmony between all four aspects (McNeill, 2009). Taha wairua is an element of health and well-being that is often omitted from Western models despite the integral role of spirituality within te ao Māori. Therefore, by incorporating an Indigenous framework that facilitates Māori advancement and empowerment, as opposed to oft-used deficit frameworks, the idiosyncrasies of TD can be explored more appropriately according to the participants' cultural worldview (Curtis, 2016; Moyle, 2014). Given the connection between Māori and Pasifika, this same sentiment influenced the desire to include a Pasifika research framework to advance and empower Pasifika too.

Pasifika Framework

Pasifika researchers have developed theoretical models that represent Pasifika ontology, epistemology and methodology (McFall-McCaffery, 2010). Models have been developed with the intent to protect and advance Pasifika communities (Naepi, 2015).

Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) is one model of health and well-being with Pasifika underpinnings. The Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) model shares similar imagery with Durie's (1994) Te Whare Tapa Wha and therefore, was included in my collective cultural framework as it provided a platform whereby parallels could be drawn from both te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview based on shared symbols, values and experiences between the two communities.

Fonofale model. A Pasifika model of health commonly used by researchers and practitioners is Pulotu-Endemann's (2001) Fonofale. As illustrated in Figure Two, this framework was developed to better understand physical and psychological well-being through a Pasifika lens, especially within an Aotearoa context (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Given the heterogeneity of the South Pacific region, the framework



embraces the values and beliefs *Figure 2. Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001).* important to various Pasifika peoples (McFall-McCaffery, 2010; Mental Health Commission [MHC], 2001). To start, the fale (*house*) is encapsulated and impacted by its environment (e.g. rural, urban), time and context (e.g. HP sports), therefore advocating “the philosophy of holism continuity, and depicts in a Pacific way what is important to the cultural groups” (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001, p. 3). The four pou (*posts*) which hold up the fale are symbolic of the interconnected contributors to ones' health and well-being, those being the spiritual, physical, mental and other (e.g. demographic status) (MHC, 2001; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). These four pou are grounded by whānau, which is inclusive of the nuclear and extended whānau (Anae et al., 2002). The pou also connect the foundation to the roof, which is symbolic of the cultural values and beliefs that act as

ones' shelter for life (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). To capture the essence of relationships and the impact it can have on one's mental well-being, Samu and colleagues (2011) extended the Fonofale model by incorporating the important Samoan philosophy of 'va.'

Nurturing and maintaining the 'Va'. The incorporation of the va in the Fonofale model is shown below in Figure Three (Samu et al., 2011). "Vā is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things" (Wendt, 1996, para. 15).

The va is what governs the relationship between people, the environment, cosmos and Gods, and provides context and meaning to these relationships (Tuagalu, 2008; Wendt, 1996). Meanings can change as relationships and

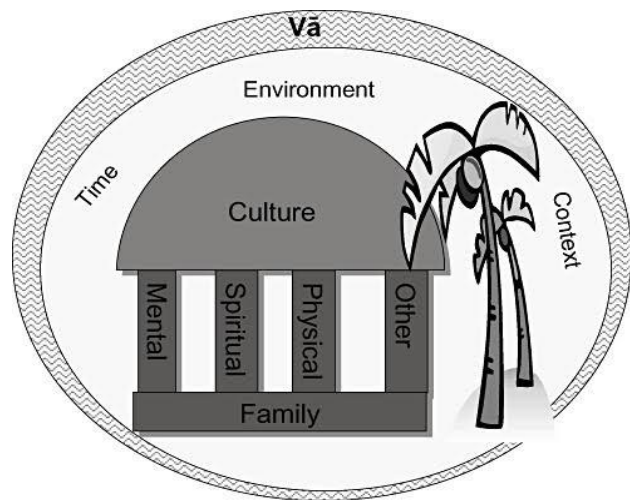


Figure 3. Fonofale model including the va (Samu et al., 2011).

the context change, resulting in the need to *teu le va* or *cherish, nurture and take care of the va* (Wendt, 1996). For example, wins and losses can influence the va inside a locker room, and therefore the meanings of team unity or team culture can change if the va or the space between the persons in the locker room are not properly managed. Incorporating the va in the Fonofale model emphasised the centrality of reciprocal relationships for Pasifika cultures, and therefore must be understood and considered as an important contributor to a person's health and well-being (Anae, 2010; Samu et al., 2011; Wendt, 1996).

For Samoan people, the self is viewed in relation to the collective group (Anae, 2010; Mo'a, 2015; Tamasese et al., 2005; Tuagalu, 2008). The Samoan self can only exist

in relation to other people, the environment and the cosmos, and the va is what informs and influences these connections (Mo'a, 2015; Tamasese et al., 2005). Whilst this is a Samoan concept, this may be applicable to other Pasifika nations. Critical to understanding the va, Mo'a (2015) further elaborates that the va "recognises: the person and others; the specific and the universal; participation and integration. It also acknowledges the shared inter-connectedness and sanctity of all living things; it recognises boundaries and limits as integral to relationships" (va, va-tapu and va-tapuia section, para. 9). Therefore, the Samoan identity is dependent on the collective and the collective well-being depends on the individual. Therein lie the fundamental differences between the Samoan relational-self and the Western individual-self. An understanding of this concept then offers insight as to the basis that informs the choices that Samoan athletes make as they deliberate over the impact their decisions will have on the collective welfare and well-being of the group. Hence, their intrinsic motivation is informed by extrinsic factors such as faith in God and whānau (Keung, 2014; Schaaf, 2006). Furthermore, as part of the collective group one assumes roles, responsibilities and obligations that contribute to strengthening the communal group (Samu et al., 2011). These roles are believed to be divinely designated and add meaning to one's identity (Tamasese et al., 2005). As one fulfils their responsibilities and obligations to the collective, the communal group reciprocates by supporting and strengthening the individual, therefore implicating their health and well-being (Samu et al., 2011).

From an education perspective, the concept of the va has been utilised to more appropriately view the process of academic achievement for Pasifika (Airini et al., 2010; Reynolds, 2016). An understanding of the va has helped to reframe the heavily influenced Eurocentric educational space by flipping the deficit-based paradigm to invoke a more culturally appropriate and transformational educational strategy for Pasifika students (Reynolds, 2016). For example, Airini and colleagues (2010) stipulated in their report to

the Ministry of Education in Aotearoa, that the notion of ‘Teu Le Va’ was an approach that could be used to inform Pasifika education success. Critical to this approach was the development of optimal, reciprocal relationships between researchers and policy-makers. In this instance, the Teu Le Va strategy puts the learner or the student, their ‘aiga and essentially the Pasifika community at the centre of the research process. The authors argue that it is not about the policy-maker or the researcher and their individual agenda, rather, it is about coming together in common purpose and goal, which was to facilitate Pasifika education success. In essence, Airini and colleagues state:

Teu le va provides an essential and significant contribution by highlighting the need for both parties to a relationship to ‘tidy up’ the physical, spiritual, cultural, social, psychological and tapu ‘spaces’ of human relationships in research praxis in order to maximise optimal outcomes for all stakeholders involved (p. 15).

Tying this back to the context of this study, the recognition and respect for Pasifika values and philosophies invoke a meaningful understanding of those contributing factors that are significant to the psychosocial development of those Pasifika RL players who engaged in this research. From a TD perspective, an awareness of the va may highlight strategies and learnings for coaches and management to more appropriately manage Indigenous Māori and Pasifika athletes. An explanation of both models in conjunction with the concept of the va, served to illuminate the epistemologies and ontologies of Māori and Pasifika, and therefore it is now useful to discuss how they were weaved together in my study.

Rationale for Collective Cultural Framework

Indigenous epistemology and ontology respects the interconnectedness between all aspects of an individual’s being (e.g. physical, spiritual, mental and emotional), and all living things on earth and the universe (Curtis, 2016; Lavallee, 2009). This way of knowing however, continues to be silenced by the dominant Western worldviews, which tends to challenge or misinterpret Indigenous ontology, epistemology and methodology (Botha, 2011; Jones, Ingham, Davies & Cram, 2010). Hence, a qualitative Indigenous

stance embraced the flexibility of employing multiple culturally responsive methods to understand participants' perceived realities of psychosocial development within a HP sport environment (Botha, 2011; Hart, 2010; Jones et al., 2010; Loppie, 2007; Smith, 1999; Vaioleti, 2006).

Despite the differences between and within the Māori and Pasifika communities, the fundamental core values such as whānau, relationships, respect and reciprocity permitted a general discussion about culture and cultural health beliefs with both communities (Anae et al., 2001; Glover, Nosa, Watson, & Paynter, 2010; Milne, 2005; Samu & Suaalii-Sauni, 2009; Walker et al., 2006). Another key value which enabled Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika frameworks to co-exist in this study was that they were developed to advance, empower and protect the respective Māori and Pasifika communities and their whānau (Bishop, 1995; Durie, 1994; Pere, 1991; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Thus, to advance, empower and protect these communities and their whānau, my research ensured participants' voices were heard and understood from within their worldview. The participants were viewed as the majority, and they were both the contributors and beneficiaries of the study (Curtis, 2016). As the researcher I had to allow the 'space' that is expected of Indigenous research, for participants to exercise their autonomy and articulate their opinions regarding psychosocial development relative to TD. In essence, I needed to 'teu le va' or nurture the spaces wherein this research was being conducted in order to more appropriately engage with the participants and cultural advisors of my study. As a result, the implementation of a Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika framework was necessary to account for the cultural nuances that typically get overlooked or even misinterpreted when Western theories and models are used (Harvey, 2002; Walker et al., 2006).

An in-depth review of the athlete development models was discussed in Chapter Two, which highlighted the lack of pragmatic development strategies or processes underpinned by an Indigenous framework. My study sought to address this gap by employing a culturally relevant methodological approach as presented below in Figure Four. Due to the specific target population of my study, the co-existence of te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview has been emphasised in Figure Four to support and facilitate the sense-making process of my participants perceptions of psychosocial development. The overarching principles of tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga and aroha ki te tangata respectfully guide the

discussion of psychosocial development as it relates to both te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview. The exploration and discussion of psychosocial development is drawn from the two models of health and well-being from each of the cultural worldviews by utilising the cultural construct of te taha

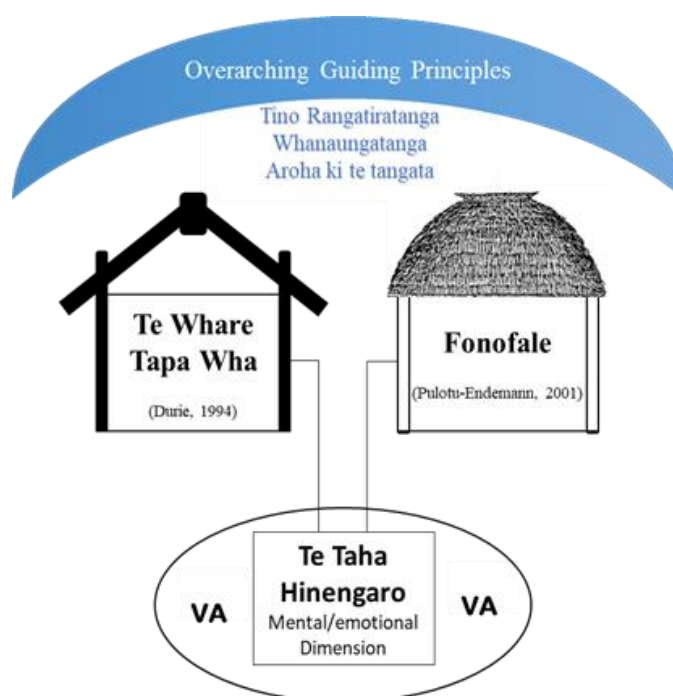


Figure 4. Visual summary of the methodological framework.

hinengaro or the mental/emotional dimension of well-being as highlighted in Figure Four. The va encapsulates te taha hinengaro and considers the sacred and secular dimensions of the relational spaces that exist within the HP sport environment, thereby adding cultural context to those external factors that may impact psychosocial development for the high performing Māori and/or Pasifika junior RL player. Hence, the Indigenous Māori and Pasifika approach utilised in my study facilitated a greater opportunity to stay true to the

study's purpose of being culturally responsive to Māori and Pasifika, through all elements of the research.

Methods

This section outlines chosen tools used in this study to gain knowledge. It aims to clarify my position in the research, as well as provide understanding and justification for the tools and processes implemented in this study. More specifically, the second section of this chapter acknowledges the ethical considerations of this study, methods used, and how the data was collected and analysed. In particular, the IPA process is discussed with attention given to how themes were deduced from the Pasifika method of Talanoa. The chapter concludes by establishing validity and trustworthiness and providing a rationale for using the Pasifika method of talanoa for presenting the findings, followed by an overall summary of the research design chapter.

Ethical Considerations

Two ethical applications were submitted to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC). The first ethics approval to conduct a pilot study was granted on September 28th, 2015 (refer to Appendix A), and the second ethics approval to conduct the main study was granted on October 12th, 2016 (Appendix D). All participant information sheets, consent forms, and confidentiality agreement forms used during the study are included in Appendix E. Focus group participants were provided with a participant information sheet prior to giving consent to engage in the study. A cultural advisory group (CAG) was formed and kanohi-ki-te-kanohi meetings were had with each CAG member. An in-depth description of the purpose of the CAG and each CAG member will be given at a later stage of this chapter. Once all ethics approvals were given, the recruitment process began.

Participant Recruitment and Selection Process

Since beginning my doctoral hīkoi in May 2015, much of my time was spent building relationships with key stakeholders. Before the year ended, significant leadership changes at NZRL occurred which directly impacted my ability to make any forward progress. Thus, I found myself having to forge new relationships with key NZRL stakeholder's mid-way through 2016 as vacant positions in the HP department began to be filled again. Towards the end of 2016, a key connection was made with "Terina"¹⁷ (pseudonym) through a colleague at NZRL. This relationship was integral to the progression of my study, as Terina became a strong advocate for my study. Through this relationship, meetings with key people within the professional RL organisation which Terina worked for were organised to ensure staff administrators were aware of, and supportive of my study. Approval was granted by administrators to recruit participants from within the professional RL organisation and spaces to conduct focus groups were offered: a conference room at the head offices and their resident home. As agreed upon, participants were recruited and selected on my behalf based on the criteria I gave to Terina and the professional RL organisation.

The criteria for selection of participants were that individuals had to be: (a) high performing junior RL player either at a professional RL club or on NZRL's TD pathway, (b) between the ages of 16-20 at the start of the study, and (c) of Māori and/or Pasifika heritage. Based on this criterion, potential participants were approached kanohi-ki-te-kanohi by a staff administrator at the professional RL organisation to engage in the study. This staff administrator's only involvement in the study was in the recruitment process. More specifically, the staff administrator had the initial chat with potential participants to inform them that they were being considered for participation in my study, and that Terina

¹⁷ Terina is a former employee of NZRL. Throughout the data collection period she worked in the football department for the professional RL organisation that participants were recruited from. Her role will be discussed in more detail under the Cultural Advisory Group section.

would be in contact with them with further details surrounding the study. It was at that point of the interaction where the handover process began, and Terina followed up with each potential participant via text and email to confirm their decision. It should be noted that pseudonyms have been used for all participants in this study, be it the high performing junior RL players, CAG members and any other support persons, so as to maintain confidentiality, as agreed upon.

Participant profiles. Table 1 provides a snapshot of the demographics of the study's participants. A more personal profile of each participant will be shared in Chapter's Four and Six where the reader can begin to make a small connection to each of the nine participants and gain a sense of the context that underpins the participants whakaaro in relation to the psychosocial aspect of TD.

Table 1. *Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Born in Aotearoa	Raised in Aotearoa	Occupation	Lived in resident home
P1	Māori / European	Yes	Yes	Manual labour	Yes
P2	Samoan	Yes	No	Full-time NRL	Yes
P3	Māori	Yes	Yes	Manual labour	Yes
P4	Māori / European	Yes	Yes	Construction	Yes, but moved out after session three
P5	Māori / Samoan	Yes	Yes	University student	No
P6	Māori / Samoan	Yes	Yes	High School student	No
P7	Cook Island Māori	No	No	High School student	No
P8	Tongan	Yes	Yes	Factory work	No
P9	Māori	Yes	Yes	High School student	Yes

In addition to the demographic breakdown highlighted in Table One; two participants were raised by a solo mother while the remainder of them were raised in homes with both a mother and father. P2 was the only Pasifika participant who could speak the language of their heritage which is reflective of the new generation of Aotearoa-born Pasifika (HRC, 2014). Of the Māori participants in my study, there were no participants who could competently converse in the language of their heritage. According to the 2013 Census records, approximately 21% of the Māori population can competently hold a conversation in te reo Māori, despite te reo Māori being one of the official languages of Aotearoa (Statistics NZ, 2014). It was worth noting where participants were born and raised, because as of 2013, 62.3% of those who identify as Pasifika, were born in Aotearoa (Statistics NZ, 2014). This statistic highlights the changing landscape of Aotearoa and the challenges researchers have to explore and account for (if necessary) of the implication of those peoples born and raised in the Pacific Islands versus Aotearoa. Therefore, the complexity of inter-ethnic relationships in Aotearoa validated the necessity to allow flexibility for both Māori and Pasifika frameworks to co-exist in this study to account for those relationships. Given the importance of nurturing ‘all’ relationships in Māori and Pasifika research (Anae et al., 2001; Curtis, 2016; HRC, 2014; Smith, 1999; Walker et al., 2006), my study was designed to engage with the same group of participants at pre-determined points of the 2017 RL season utilising multiple methods.

The design of this study was driven by the cultural values of Māori and Pasifika epistemologies and ontologies. Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika research is neither rigid nor static, rather it is ethical and informed by cultural values and aspirations (Botha, 2011; Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013; Harvey, 2002; HRC, 2014). It has been argued that values can be utilised as instruments to facilitate the sense-making process for individuals given that values are often derivatives of a traditional cultural belief system (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). Furthermore, it has been recognised that Māori

understanding, and knowledge-building should not be limited to just the Māori academia community (Dobbs, 2015; Eketone, 2008). This assertion justified the role in which the CAG played in this study given each member's engagement with the Māori and Pasifika communities in their various capacities. The guiding principles of this study then facilitated the multiple methods (to be discussed in-depth at a later stage of the chapter) which contributed to the data collection and analysis process.

Cultural Advisory Group

The main purpose for a CAG was to hold me accountable to conducting research which is respectful of Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika values and philosophies and thereby offer advice accordingly (HRC, 2014; Hudson, Milne, Reynolds, Russell, & Smith, 2010). Involving kaumātua¹⁸ or a well-respected leader in the community is central to conducting Kaupapa Māori research as they provide “guidance, protection, spiritual oversight and keep cultural practices in the forefront of research” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 336). For Pasifika, consultation is an important part of the research process to include and it has been argued that a diverse group of people with knowledge and experience relevant to the research should be invited to be part of the consultation group (HRC, 2014). Therefore, my CAG played an intricate part in this study by ensuring that I respected the knowledge, resources and processes that were shared with me over the course of the study.

CAG recruitment and selection process. The main criterion to be part of the CAG was that individuals had to be of Māori and/or Pasifika heritage. Individuals were then invited to be part of the CAG based on their experience working with Māori and Pasifika youth in the sport, policy development, academic and health disciplines. A final criterion was the individual's availability and ability to commit to the expectations of

¹⁸ Refers to an elder (male or female) – a person of status within the whānau.

being part of the CAG. Potential names were discussed with my supervisory group regarding who I could reach out to and invite to be part of our study's CAG. A snowball technique was then used to recruit CAG members based on the relationships I had built through my NZRL network (Jones, Ingham, Cram, Dean, & Davies, 2013). As I met with various individuals and discussed the purpose of my study and the expectations of being part of the CAG, names of other individuals were recommended to me for consideration. After the initial *kanohi-ki-te-kanohi* meeting, individuals verbally agreed to be part of the study. In the end, my CAG comprised of four individuals of Māori or Pasifika heritage and this group was considered paramount to the success of my study, given the collective knowledge and relationships which members had of the game, culture, and/or the communities of the participants (Anae et al., 2001; Milne, 2005).

CAG 1 was of Pasifika descent and was affiliated with the professional RL organisation which participants were contracted to. This member was part of the coaching and administrative staff and had direct contact with some of the participants. To mitigate the power imbalance, CAG 1's main contribution was as an advocate for the study and therefore became the bridge between myself and the professional RL organisation. Thus, CAG 1 was primarily involved in the initial stages of the study to secure the support of staff administrators of the professional RL organisation for my study. CAG 2 had strong Māori values and belief systems as well as RL coaching experience at the grassroots, community and elite levels in Aotearoa. CAG 3 played RL socially and has work experience in academia, specifically with Health Science students of Pasifika heritage. CAG 4 worked in a role which provides strategy and policy advice in a sport and Indigenous development context, offering a contemporary Māori development philosophical lens to the group.

Finally, Terina, who I introduced earlier, was my observer for each focus group session (this method is discussed later). Terina's role at the professional RL organisation

was two-fold. Her primary role was as in football operations (i.e. handling all logistics for players and staff). Terina's secondary role encompassed managing the professional RL organisation resident home with her husband. They will be referred to as the resident mentors from this point forward. Through the course of my study, they had roughly 10 junior RL players who were on-contract with the organisation who lived with them in the resident home as offered by the organisation. Of the ten players, only four resided in the house for the duration of the study. The resident mentors worked together to mentor and instil life skills in these players and therefore they were on hand to offer them additional support when needed, sometimes even after players moved out of the resident home.

While Terina was not part of my original CAG, as the data collection progressed she became an additional advisor and support person for me. Her role differed from the other CAG members. Terina took care of the logistics (i.e. recruitment, scheduling and following up with the participants to attend each session) and was integral in initiating the whanaungatanga process between myself and the participants as well as with staff administrators at the professional RL organisation. Terina's knowledge and experience with regards to RL operations and holistic athlete development and well-being, was invaluable to my study.

Each member of my CAG was supportive of the design and scope of my study. Logistically, it was not practical nor convenient to meet as a collective frequently. Therefore, we met twice as a group, once prior to the data collection phase of my study and, once at the end of the data collection phase. Individual kanohi-ki-te-kanohi meetings were held as needed and when convenient for CAG members. Emails were also sent periodically to the CAG group to keep them informed through the different stages of the study. Through the meetings and emails, CAG members questioned and clarified any concerns which arose and offered insight which could enhance the study throughout the entire research process.

The CAG provided guidance and advice regarding methods, facilitation techniques, and the analysis process, as well as questions I had that may have been Māori or Pasifika specific. CAG members also assisted with facilitating a sense of connectedness and development of relationships between myself and the participants both directly and indirectly (Cunningham, 2011; Milne, 2005). For example, some of the CAG members were involved with RL at both the community and elite levels. Thus, their knowledge of the RL environment at all levels helped raise awareness of what the participants may be experiencing on their pursuit towards a professional RL career from both a player and cultural standpoint. I felt the purpose of the CAG was met, as they held me accountable as a researcher causing me to continually reflect and realign my processes to ensure research practices were culturally appropriate and fit within the study's framework (HRC, 2014; Hudson et al., 2010; Huffer & Qalo, 2004). Therefore, my CAG was a significant element in my study in aiding validity, reliability and ensuring an ethical process was followed throughout the whole study.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are used to gather information from individuals regarding how they may think or feel about a particular issue (Krueger & Casey, 2014). In my study, focus groups encouraged participants to use their voice to share their perspective and experiences with regards to psychosocial development, from their own sociocultural perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Given the collectivist nature of Māori and Pasifika cultures, focus groups aligned more comfortably with a Māori and Pasifika research paradigm (Glynn, 2013; Vaioleti, 2013; Walker et al., 2006). Focus groups allowed for relational development and the opportunity to practice reciprocity as we (both the participants and I) learned about each other's hīkoi (Loppie, 2007). Two focus groups were established according to the specific age groups of interest. Five participants aged

18-20 engaged in the U20s focus group and four participants aged 16-18 engaged in the U18s focus group. These group sizes were in line with Krueger and Casey's (2000) suggested focus group size number, as they believed this size would contribute to enhancing the researcher's level of understanding (Bruner et al., 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Given the participants contractual obligations to their professional RL organisation, respecting the boundaries and time constraints of the participants and the organisation was of high importance to my research method (HRC, 2014; Hudson et al., 2010). Coaches' and administrators' concerns were addressed either personally or through CAG members, and assurance was given that involvement in the study would not detract participants from their commitments to the organisation. Subsequently, 45-minute sessions were agreed upon, to take place with each age-group in January, March, May, July and September 2017, at the designated spaces offered by the organisation. Terina coordinated the logistics of the focus group sessions and sent reminders to participants regarding session times via email and text. She also filled the role of observer, sitting in all focus group sessions except one. Terina provided feedback regarding the behaviour and engagement levels of the participants during the session, facilitation techniques and helped create a safe environment for the participants.

Location of focus group sessions. The professional RL organisation which participants were recruited from offered their space to conduct all focus group sessions. This invitation was readily accepted and further validated the organisation's trust in the researcher. The two spaces offered were their resident home and their head offices. All U20s sessions were conducted at the resident home that belonged to the professional RL organisation and this was also home to some of the study's participants. Likewise, their head offices were used to conduct all of the U18s focus group sessions. Spaces were chosen based on practicality and convenience for the participants in adding as little

disruption to their already busy schedules as RL players. The familiarity of these spaces also helped cultivate a safe environment for participants to engage in throughout the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Walker et al., 2006). The Pasifika method of Talanoa was used as the primary method to guide the discussions within the focus group setting.

Talanoa. Talanoa means to converse and engage freely (Vaioleti, 2006) and is commonly supported by Pasifika peoples (Robinson & Robinson, 2005). Talanoa aligns with processes carried out within their whānau, communities and church settings, and is a safe environment which promotes participation, inclusion and respect (Gordon, Sauni, & Tuagalu, 2013; Vaioleti, 2006). For Pasifika peoples, talanoa is a form of communication which can be traced back to their oratory traditions which these island nations practised as the primary means of disseminating knowledge (Vaioleti, 2013). Only recently has talanoa been accepted as a method within academia and has predominantly been utilised in the education discipline (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014). Talanoa has also been used in a sport management context (Stewart-Withers et al., 2017b). An implication of using talanoa was the opportunity to inform transformative experiences for Pasifika through sport by informing more policies and practices that are culturally responsive (Stewart-Withers et al., 2017b). In the leadership context, Paea (2016) also used talanoa to explore the perceptions of the Tongan women in her study which informed a more culturally appropriate, in-depth understanding of leadership practices in Aotearoa. These examples accentuate the growing desire for more culturally appropriate and inclusive processes to be considered as opposed to using the dominant Western methods to address the issues that impact non-Western people (Stewart-Withers, Sewabu & Richardson, 2017b). Hence, the prospect of informing a transformative development program for Māori and Pasifika on the TD pathway through talanoa further validates the decision to implement talanoa in my study. Given that this study includes both Māori and Pasifika, it is important to acknowledge that whilst

talanoa is a Pasifika method, it shares similar underpinning epistemological and methodological ties with the Māori method of pūrākau, as both cultures have strong oral narrative traditions (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Glasgow & Rameka, 2017; Lee, 2009, Vaioleti, 2013).

To conduct research using talanoa, there must be an element of reciprocity involved which helps to reduce the space between the researcher and their participants (Vaioleti, 2006). To extend the point of reciprocity, Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) emphasised that “talanoa research is undertaken with the understanding that it is a culturally and emotionally embedded reciprocal exchange between researcher and participants. It requires a deep, interpersonal relationship and emotional sharing between all parties involved” (p. 321). While there are no set ways to engage in talanoa, understanding the principles which are embedded in it, such as reciprocity, enabled me to engage in a meaningful research process (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014). Thus, talanoa is not guided by rules per se, but rather principles and protocols.

There are different levels or dimensions of talanoa within the context of research and one can move between the different levels throughout the research as guided by cultural principles (Fa’avae, Jones, & Manu’atu, 2016; Vaioleti, 2013). Vaioleti (2013) outlined these dimensions as:

- Talanoa vave (*quick or casual surface level verbal interaction between two or more people*).
- Talanoa faikava (*a focused discussion by males who share similar interests while drinking kava [traditional beverage from crushed kava root], thus reflective of a focus group setting*).
- Talanoa usu (*a deep and more intimate talanoa that uplifts individuals to a higher level of enlightenment, creating feelings of mālie [upliftedness] and māfana [inward warmth]*).

- Talanoa tevolo (*a spiritual talanoa, sharing of supernatural visitations, dreams or visions of people who have passed on*).
- Talanoa faka'eke'eke (*closest to the modern interview which involves asking direct and probing questions*).
- Pō talanoa (*conversations about everyday matters i.e. politics, church, children etc.*).
- Talanoa'i (*conversations involving high-level analysis and synthesis*).
- Tālanga (*a dialogical process similar to a debate regarding important issues that need to be addressed*).

Movement between the different talanoa dimensions is dependent on the relationship, context and purpose of the study (Fa'avae et al., 2016), and therefore talanoa offers the researcher fluidity and flexibility throughout their study.

In my study, an understanding of the va and teu le va was critical to loosening my grip on the facilitation reins and allowing talanoa to ensue. In other words, by recognising the relational space found within the focus group sessions and how to care for and nurture this relational space, participants were encouraged to share their stories from their own vantage point. “Talanoa’s non-linear and responsive approaches are qualities that may allow Talanoa research methodology to have universal appeal to Māori, Indigenous, oral tradition communities” (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 25). My role was simply to ‘open the door and invite them in,’ which activated the synergy between me and the participants within the va. Given the uncertainty of the participants’ receptiveness to the research process, it was decided that talanoa would be an appropriate method to use to effectively build relationships. Talanoa could cultivate an open, honest and safe environment for participants to engage in given the focus on Māori and Pasifika (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Vaioleti, 2013). Therefore, during each focus group session, the talanoa moved between the various dimensions throughout,

based on my ability to cultivate a safe environment and the resulting impact of such an approach manifested itself at the conclusion of focus group session five (see Letter #7).

It could be argued that talanoa has similarities to narrative research methods. The obvious difference between the cultural method and the Western method is the values and belief systems which the different worldviews are predicated from (Vaioleti, 2013). Through a Western narrative approach, cultural factors are contextualised through the process of the story. Through Indigenous narrative approaches however, cultural elements are at the forefront of the research and these elements allow researchers to understand what is appropriate and acceptable to study and gather information on (Vaioleti, 2006). With participants being high performing RL players with Māori and/or Pasifika heritage, the athlete development literature is scant of models or strategies with Indigenous foundations. A Western developed tool that is typically used to gather information on an athlete's performance is Butler and Hardy's (1992) performance profiling technique (PPT) (Appendix B). Given the lack of athlete development tools underpinned by Indigenous frameworks, the PPT (Butler & Hardy, 1992) was adapted initially for my study and implemented using talanoa.

Butler and Hardy's (1992) PPT shifts the process of athlete development from a solely 'coach prescribed' process to a more collaborative 'athlete-coach prescribed' process. Such technique encourages athletes or teams to work alongside their coach or other staff member to elicit the fundamental determinants of elite performance (Butler & Hardy, 1992). The purpose of the PPT is to help the athlete or team become self-aware of their performance and to set goals to improve (Butler & Hardy, 1992; Butler, Smith & Irwin, 1993; Dale & Wrisberg, 1996). For my study, the PPT (Butler & Hardy, 1992) was only used as a guide to elicit psychosocial determinants, and therefore the initial intention was that each focus group session would be guided by a different step of the PPT. Session One was dedicated to getting to know the participants and introducing the study to them.

Session Two was dedicated to understanding what the participants perceived it would take to become a great player mentally, and subsequently the participants would collaborate to develop a list of psychosocial determinants of success. In principle, this technique offered a means of facilitating an understanding of the way an athlete perceives their ability and preparation for performance and essentially, take ownership of their preparation and performance (Butler et al., 1993; Dale & Wrisberg, 1996). However, it was in my reflection of Session Two where I acknowledged that the prescribed opening questions, informed by the PPT (Butler & Hardy, 1992), were too restrictive and facilitated participants to think in isolation, rather than holistically (Durie, 1985) despite using talanoa to direct the dialogue. Inadvertently, the Western way of doing was still dominating and driving the study. As a result, talanoa was shifted to the forefront for the remaining sessions and utilised the guiding principles of my study (tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga, and aroha ki te tangata). This shift, or realignment of the method with the study's framework fostered empowerment and the participants began to contextualise te taha hinengaro within the context of their own personal hīkoi as a high performing junior RL player, and also as Māori and/or Pasifika.

Incorporating the Pasifika method of talanoa challenged me as a researcher to put the whakawhanaungatanga process at the forefront of the data collection process. I had to trust that participants would eventually feel comfortable enough to share their honest and authentic voices with me, and trust that I would reciprocate by sharing their voices with others in an honourable and respectful way (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Vaoleti, 2006). Implementing talanoa had its challenges, especially given the ambiguity of 'how to talanoa' in the literature (Fa'avae et al., 2016). However, the implication of privileging the cultural values and protocols that govern Indigenous research gave me an opportunity to become a more empathetic researcher, and therefore collect stories that included emotion, humour and rawness to illustrate the complexities of TD for these

participants (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Vaiuto, 2013). A self-reflexive journal was kept and caused me to critically reflect on and make sense of the stories that were collected throughout my study. My self-reflexive journal also chronicled my experience as an emerging Māori researcher. Furthermore, as a Māori female conducting research on behalf of NZRL, I acknowledge the inferences that come with my position from a socio-cultural-political view in my attempt to form ethical relationships with the participants (i.e. male adolescents) of my study. This was addressed by forming relationships with those persons whom the participants may already trust, which included having CAG 2 accompany me to a dinner with the potential participants as a support person for me and the study.

My Self-Reflexive Journals

Reflective practices are acceptable and encouraged in qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008). Reflexivity is an active, continuous process which facilitates engagement first and foremost within the researcher themselves, as well as between the researcher and their participants and the data (Berger, 2015). In other words, this process gave me space to embark on my own a sense-making hīkoi throughout my study. Hertz (1997) further stipulated that "a reflexive researcher does not simply report the facts of the research but also actively constructs interpretations, and then questions how those interpretations came about" (p. viii). Thus, a reflective process encouraged rigour and trustworthiness and afforded me an opportunity to acknowledge biases, values, beliefs, knowledge, personal experiences and my role with regards to my study (Berger, 2015; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Consequently, a reflexive journal was kept throughout all stages of the study and the contents of it were regularly analysed to facilitate transparency and integrity through the research process (Berger, 2015; Ortlipp, 2008).

My reflections included what I observed in the resident home, the interactions with and between the participants, conversations with my CAG and other support persons who were critical to keep me culturally accountable as well as my own personal development as a person and emerging researcher. From this process, thoughts were extrapolated from my journal and used to craft the letters whereby I talanoa with the younger version of myself, acting as a mentor to her, guiding her along the PhD hīkoi. These talanoa's have been embedded into the thesis to highlight my evolution as a researcher by (re)locating my position throughout the research process.

Letter to My Younger Self #3

To my 'PhD candidate' self,

The PhD life can be a real roller-coaster ride, physically, mentally and emotionally. But just like a roller-coaster, you're well supported and safe, right through to the end of the ride. Two months out from your PGR9 (confirmation of candidature) you will have to organise and lead a church camp for 60 young single adults (aged 18-30) from your congregation which will be scheduled for the week prior to your PGR9. You will be exhausted from camp, but Heavenly Father will bless you for your service and you will successfully defend your PGR9 four days after camp. You will be excited when you get the official OK to start collecting data because now the fun begins. Before you start your data collection, you will go to Australia for a quick reprieve to celebrate your Nan's 80th. While there, you'll reconnect with whānau who you haven't seen you since they relocated to Aussie¹⁹ when you were still at High School. Your cousin will ask you to come watch her boys train at a local academy that they attend and will introduce you to one of the founders. You will learn that the founder saw a gap in the community and wanted to help our young Māori and Pasifika athletes and their families become

¹⁹ Informal way of referring to Australia, or persons from Australia.

successful through physical activity. He will tell you that they live and work by three values at the academy: Faith, Family & Footy – in that order. It will be during that conversation, 18 months after you were officially accepted into the PhD program, where you will have your first ‘awakening’ moment (and this won’t be the last either). You will realise that your study is STILL being driven by a Western framework and that you need to flip the script. You will have designed your study with the intention of having the people at the heart of it, but the execution will not be there just yet. It should be Māori/Pasifika framework FIRST and everything else should fit into that.

The connection in Aussie will prove to be the catalyst for your evolution as a researcher. After wrestling with your internal battles, you will gain the support of your supervisory group to strip your study design back to the relational fundamentals of Māori and Pasifika culture, to truly capture the young men’s whakaaro and realities.

Your supervisory group will then challenge you to think about how your study is challenging the system. #CriticalThinkingCapOn. They will tell you to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. They will encourage you to back yourself. They will remind you that our tūpuna learned to navigate the world using all their senses. Their maps were written with the stars in the sky and the currents of the sea, and they respected the environment and elements that surrounded them. Because our tūpuna passed their knowledge on in oral form, we don’t have rows of physical bookshelves worth of written research. But that doesn’t make our way of seeing, knowing and doing any less credible. So, as you proceed, remember to keep the young men and their needs at the heart of the study. I know, easier said than done. But that’s the point...it CAN be done!

You want the young men to tell their stories. Encourage them to share their wisdom with you using similar mediums as their tūpuna. You can, because of the cultural framework you have chosen to ground this study in. This is only the beginning, sis. Your

study will continue to evolve, so learn to use all your senses to navigate your way, just as our tūpuna did. Stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don't be afraid to

challenge the status quo.

Go get your blessings, sis,

Your 'Post-doc' self

Data Collection Process

When discussing the protocols of Māori research, Hirini Mead (2003) suggested that “processes, procedures and consultation need to be correct so that in the end everyone who is connected with the research project is enriched, empowered, enlightened and glad to have been a part of it” (p. 318). The use of multiple methods fostered an organic relationship building process between the researcher and participants. It also facilitated a heightened awareness of the physical, mental and emotional hīkoi participants were engaged in, as aspiring professional RL players.

To gain a deep level understanding of participants' emic perspective it was necessary to invest time in building relationships with the participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Similarly, investing in building relationships is a critical process that a researcher must dedicate time to when conducting research with Indigenous communities (Macfarlane, 2013; Milne, 2005; Tu'itahi, 2007; Walker et al., 2006). Through trusting and respectful relationships, researchers facilitate organic opportunities to deepen their understanding of the phenomena being studied, as it has been expressed by the participants. Talanoa was used to guide this process as the principles which underpin this Pasifika method, fit with the guiding principles of my study. If applied appropriately, talanoa can nurture respectful relationships.

Talanoa can be both formal and informal and encompasses “a dynamic interaction of story-telling, debating, reflecting, gossiping, joking, sharing whānau’

genealogies, food and other necessities” (Otunuku, 2011, p. 45). The act of sharing a meal allowed for informal conversations to be engaged in, and therefore contributed to the development of relationships (Robinson & Robinson, 2005; Vaioleti, 2006). For example, the U20s sessions were conducted at the resident home where a few of the participants lived, and a meal was shared at every session. The act of sharing kai (*food*) aligned with the study’s guiding principles and effectively, Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika practice (HRC, 2014; Tipene-Matua, Phillips, Cram, Parsons, & Taupo, 2009). As the residents were contracted RL players, they followed a strict diet and Sunday night was the only night designated whereby they were allowed a treat, which came in the form of ice-cream. To respect the kaupapa of the resident home, I asked Terina what would be appropriate for me to contribute to the kai. She declined my offer to contribute to the kai and instead gave assurance that my personal investment and genuine desire to contribute to the development of the players (current and future) was my koha (*gift*). Consequently, to ease my discomfort of not contributing towards the kai I made it a point to help set and clear the tables, as well as do the dishes. A positive implication of this act was the opportunity for whanaungatanga, or another point of interaction that allowed me to cultivate a relationship (Tipene-Matua et al., 2009; Vaioleti, 2006).

On the contrary, the U18s group sessions were scheduled right before training and held at the head offices. Sharing kai with this group was logistically impossible. The impact of sharing kai became evident as the study progressed. The U20s participants were consistent in being present and steadily became comfortable engaging in the sessions each time we met, whereas the U18s participants slowly started to disengage entirely. Unsurprisingly, the one participant who was present for all focus group sessions lived at the resident home and therefore was present at the dinners I had there each time I went to the house to conduct the sessions for the U20s group. This evidence was captured through the researcher’s self-reflection process.

Prelude to Session One (December 2016). Prior to Session One, I was invited to Terina's home for dinner to meet with potential participants. CAG 2 also accompanied me to this dinner as he had a relationship with a few of the potential participants from the U20s and U18s group, as well as with Terina. This opportunity enabled me to informally begin the whanaungatanga process with participants as we shared kai (HRC, 2014; Tipene-Matua et al., 2009). I introduced myself, gave a brief overview of the study, and expressed my gratitude to the young men for allowing me to be with them. To support what I had shared, CAG 2 also expressed his thoughts on the potential value for the young men if they choose to engage in the study. Once we had spoken, a karakia on the food was given and the rest of the night was spent getting to know each other (CAG included), eating, and helping the young men with the dishes.

After the introductory evening, focus group sessions were conducted by age groups. The U20s focus groups were conducted on a Sunday night at the professional RL organisation's resident home, and the U18s focus groups were conducted the next day (Monday) at the professional RL organisation's head office. As the same format was used for each age group, the process for each focus group session is outlined once.

Session One (January 2017). A short whakawhanaungatanga activity was used to begin this session. This section of the session was kept light-hearted so as to encourage laughter, engagement and trust. The activity was followed up by reminding the participants of the purpose of the study and emphasising the value of their contribution towards enhancing TD structures and programmes for aspiring RL players from their respective communities and whānau (Dale & Wrisberg, 1996). Participant information sheets were then discussed and at that point participants officially gave their consent to engage in the study. The main goal of Session One, was to get to know the participants and for me to reciprocate. A second goal was to get an idea of their RL hīkoi. These goals fulfilled the key purpose of Session One, which was to build trust between myself and the

participants, and to create a safe environment for the young men to engage in each time we convened.

During the whakawhanaungatanga session, participants were asked to introduce themselves. Making connections (e.g. familial or social) is an important concept in Māori and Pasifika cultures as it helped to quickly establish rapport and started to bridge the gap between me and the participants (Dobbs, 2015; Macfarlane, 2013; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009; Moyle, 2014). I introduced myself first and then each participant was invited to follow suit. The remainder of the session was dedicated to understanding their RL hīkoi. Specifically, participants were asked to reflect on the following questions:

- Who is your favourite RL player and why?
- Who is your favourite coach and why?
- Can you recall your first experience playing RL or the first time you knew that you wanted to pursue RL as a career?

After Session One, it became apparent that building a relationship with the participants would be challenging as it would be eight weeks till our next session. After consulting with my CAG and supervisory group, it was decided to invite participants to keep a journal too. According to Kent (2012) “a journal provides an athlete with a place to set goals, reflect, grapple with issues, keep track of training ideas, and record results as well as plan, scheme, ponder, rant, question, draw, and rejoice” (p. 105). Therefore, a plan was implemented to introduce reflective journals to the participants at the end of Session Two and thereby invite them to keep a journal for the duration of the data collection phase.

Session Two (March 2017). A short whakawhanaungatanga activity was used to begin Session Two. This was a rhythmic activity that helped participants awaken and activate their minds and bodies and facilitate engagement during the session. The key

purpose of Session Two was to have participants identify and define key psychosocial determinants of a successful RL player. Participants were asked to think about this individually and were given the option to write their thoughts on paper before engaging in a group discussion. Specifically, participants were asked to consider a key question adopted from the PPT (Butler & Hardy, 1992): “What does it take mentally, to be a great RL player?” Once a list of psychosocial determinants was formulated, participants used the remainder of the session to collaborate and define the identified determinants of success.

Before finishing the session, I invited each participant to choose a journal. Participants were informed that the journals were theirs to keep and at the conclusion of the data collection process, if the participants permitted, the journals would become an artefact for analysis. Participants were told that they could use it in whatever way they felt comfortable because there is no one way to keep a journal (Kent, 2012) and there was no obligation for participants to use them. With permission from the participants, a text was sent each week with a question or quote to consider. All participants agreed and provided their contact details before leaving the session. The opportunity to keep a journal provided the researcher another avenue to connect with participants given the length of time between sessions (i.e. six to eight weeks). Participants were encouraged to bring their journals to the next session so that they would have some thoughts to contribute in the next sessions.

Letter to My Younger Self #4

To my ‘PhD candidate’ self

By the end of March 2017, you will have completed two out of five focus group sessions.

Your first round will go way better than expected. Your second round will be rough.

The young men will be riding their own emotional rollercoaster metaphorically

speaking and it will show. They will have been hyped in January as preseason kicks off and by March, everyone will be at different stages performance-wise, and they certainly will not have anticipated on kicking the season off with a string of losses. There you will be, sitting in the resident home with the 20s one day; and in the head offices with the 18s the next, attempting to connect with the young men given their disappointing start as a team. You will leave Session Two feeling deflated and frustrated because you didn't get what you wanted out of Session Two. Did you just hear what you just said? You didn't get what YOU wanted out of the session. Remember, it's not about you, it's about the young men and the story they want to tell you. Your supervisory group will help you sift through your frustrations and remind you to let the research flow by using methods and language that is familiar to the young men.

You will go away and reflect on the first two sessions and recognise that the reason why the energy in Session One was so great compared to Session Two was largely to do with your agenda. Session One was purely about whakawhanaungatanga. Establishing connections and learning of each boy's hīkoi! Conversely, Session Two was all about trying to identify and define the psychosocial determinants of success and you had planned to walk out of that session with a list of defined determinants. But remember, the young men are still trying to get to know you and assess your personal agenda. They may be conscious of what they say to you, and how it might impact their selection each week if gets back to coach and his coaching staff. All I can tell you, is that right now, you have to learn be patient. You will get a list of defined determinants...eventually.

The list won't be clear-cut and defined like you have read in the literature. You will have to consider the emotional rollercoaster these young men are on. How can they give you determinants of success when they haven't had any type of success this

season? You will talk with Terina beforehand and ask if there is anything that you should be aware of with the young men, like being dropped from the squad, girlfriends, or a failed exam (whether physical or academic). You will ask about any accomplishments the young men might have attained. You will realise that it is important to go in with a game plan but not to go in with a preconceived outcome. You will take note of their body language, their silence, the energy (or lack thereof) within the room. You will be reminded that Māori and Pasifika young men typically come from a culture where the respectful way is to wait to be called upon to speak. Don't mistake their silence for not wanting to connect and engage, or that they don't know what to say. They may be respectfully waiting for you to call upon them to be part of the conversation, or, they may be assessing whether the environment is safe for them to speak up, and that what they have to say will be validated. You will come to understand that as you put the young men and their needs at the heart of the study, the young men will start sharing things with the group that they haven't shared with others. This will lead them to unpack their current stresses and personal experiences, thereby offering you their perspective of psychosocial development. To get to this point though, you will need to heed the advice of your supervisory group to be patient and stay curious! You will find ways to connect with the young men and gain their trust. Stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo.

Go get your blessings, sis,

Your 'Post-doc' self

Session Three (May 2017). I started the session by writing the following quote on the board: “Life isn't a series of wins and losses; it's a series of wins and *lessons*” (Donnelly, 2016, p. 141). The key purpose of this session was to encourage the participants to start contextualising psychosocial development as it pertained to the

current environment they socialised in. Given the varying stages which all participants were at in their development and career, Session Three was used to draw out the lessons they had learned, or needed to learn, for their own development and performance. Participants were also asked if they wanted to share anything from their journals but all of them declined, even though some of them brought their journals to the session.

Session Four (July 2017). The key purpose of this session was to refine their list of psychosocial determinants and further contextualise psychosocial development. To begin this session, participants were asked to rank the determinants, which were deduced from the previous sessions transcripts, from most important to important. Participants did this individually on paper first. We then had a group discussion and participants collectively determined what would be the most important characteristic that a RL player needed to develop to be successful. This activity informed the next part of the session.

Given the oratory traditions of Māori and Pasifika peoples as a means to pass knowledge down from generation to generation (Robinson & Robinson, 2005; Tipene-Matua et al., 2009; Vaioleti, 2013), participants were invited to write a letter to their 13-year-old self, sibling or cousin. The fundamental principle of whānau within Māori and Pasifika (HRC, 2014; Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker et al., 2006) was drawn upon for this task to help participants to reflect on their experience as an aspiring RL player and share their knowledge in an autonomous and empowering way. The letter was informed by the top four most important determinants which they had determined as a group in the first part of the session. Participants were asked to reflect on their own hīkoi and share some wisdom with the younger self, sibling or cousin with regards to how and why they should develop these determinants.

Once participants completed their letters, they were invited to read them aloud in front of the group. Although shy at first, participants bantered and warged with each other, eventually agreeing to share their stories verbally. Listening to and watching

participants verbalise their letter was a powerful act that aligned with Indigenous epistemology and illustrated the power in their oratory traditions (Hart, 2010; Lee, 2009; Loppie, 2007; Robinson & Robinson, 2005; Tipene-Matua et al., 2009; Vaioleti, 2013). It also emphasised the importance of whanaungatanga and its role in research (Bishop, 1995; Macfarlane et al., 2008; Smith, G., 2003; Vaioleti, 2013). Participants were also able to share additional insight with the group based on how the story resonated with them. Participants were again asked if they wanted to share anything from their journals but again, all of them declined.

Session Five (September 2017). For the fifth and final session, both age-groups were invited to come together and share kai at the resident home. The session was used to thank the participants for their contribution to the study and a small koha was presented to each player as an expression of my gratitude. Participants were then given an opportunity to share any final thoughts.

At the completion of each focus group, audio-recordings of the session was transcribed verbatim and cross-checked by an outsourced transcription company. Transcriptions were then proofread and checked for accuracy by myself, being the primary researcher. While all the transcripts were originally loaded into NVivo version 11 as had been proposed, a manual analysis was decided upon. Each transcript was printed multiple times prior to analysing the data as I wanted to be able to touch and feel the data. Although this slowed the analysis process down quite considerably, it ultimately helped me become more acquainted with the data (Smith et al., 1999).

Data Analysis Process

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach was used to examine the data collected, as guided by Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) frameworks. In IPA, the analytical process is a double

hermeneutic or dual interpretation process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004). In other words, the IPA process first involved participants trying to make sense of their world and then researchers attempting to interpret their participants' sense-making process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) provided a guide for applying the IPA process and emphasised that the guidelines are flexible and should be applied appropriately to fulfil the study's objective. Hence, the following process was used:

1. Simultaneously read the transcripts and listened to the audio multiple times to become intimate with the data and to recall the atmosphere of the focus group session. Each session was listened to at least six times in order to conduct a group and individual level analysis of that session (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Duggleby, 2005).
2. Each reflection of the transcripts involved looking for anything of interest or significance, forming a list of exploratory comments.
3. Exploratory comments and insights compiled to develop clusters of meaning, making connections and looking for patterns, then transformed into preliminary themes.
4. Development of an interpretive account (i.e. letters using talanoa) by researcher for each age group.
5. Master list of superordinate and subordinate themes and connections established and interpreted using Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) – establish what is pertinent as per the key questions of the study, and also to te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview.
6. Letters re-read, deducing themes and cross-checking with the transcripts that all significant themes have been captured in the letters.

7. Validity check – Followed up with CAG as well as my secondary supervisor (who is of Samoan descent) to check themes and verify letters were culturally relevant and talanoa used appropriately.
8. Reflection by the researcher on the findings and their implications for further research.

Validity in Method and Establishing Trustworthiness

A strategy used to test the quality and rigour of qualitative research can be demonstrated through two key concepts: validity and trustworthiness (Edwards & Skinner, 2009). The purpose of my study was to understand psychosocial development relative to athlete development as perceived by Māori and Pasifika high performing junior RL players. Multiple engagements with participants over the course of the year meant that I had several opportunities to build respectful and reciprocal relationships using talanoa. As the study progressed, participants started to share their hīkoi, and their personal stories. Bishop (1995) argued that essentially, participants can “select, recollect, and reflect upon their stories within their own cultural context and language rather than the cultural context and language chosen by the researcher” (p. 78). The subjective nature of utilising talanoa to conduct focus group sessions meant that I had to be open and reliant on the participants’ thoughts, feelings and experiences, and respect what they chose to share with me (Erueti, 2015; Fa’avae et al., 2016). Whilst I am Māori, I am also a female researcher who conducted my study in collaboration with the HP unit at NZRL. As participants were young male adolescents with ties to both the Māori and Pasifika communities whanaungatanga was pertinent to the success of my study. Deliberately allocating time for whanaungatanga was helpful in demonstrating to the participants that I have come to learn from them, listening with all my senses, not just my ears, and that they can trust that the research process could have empowering implications for them

individually and collectively (Kovach, 2015; Otunuku, 2011). Some examples of how this was implemented were through shared kai prior to the U20s session and being explicit in each session about the participants' expertise as high performing junior athletes and the impact their insight will have on the future generations coming through the HP TD pathways.

Given my personal biases and epistemological and ontological stance as a Māori, my CAG played a critical role in establishing trustworthiness in my study by ensuring participants perceptions were appropriately understood according to the collective cultural lens of my study. Along with individual meetings I had with each CAG member during the time of my study, a two-hour consultation meeting was had with my CAG collectively (step seven of analysis process) shortly after the final focus group session. This was held at the workplace of one of the CAG members as it was a convenient location for all. Kai was provided, and the meeting was opened and closed with a karakia. It was necessary to have the final group consult, *kanohi-ki-te-kanohi*, to ensure protocols of the cultural framework were acknowledged and respected. Clarity was also sought regarding findings that may cause dissent within the communities involved in my study. Furthermore, the use of *talanoa*, a reciprocal, cultural method, promotes "mutual accountability, which adds to the trustworthiness and quality of the research" (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 26). Thus, in exchange for participants' time and knowledge the expectation is that the researcher will reciprocate by using the information with respect and honour, especially given the relationships that have been built throughout the study (Vaioleti, 2006).

A final component of my research was my responsibility to disseminate the findings back to the researched community (Fua, 2014; Harvey, 2002; HRC, 2014; Mead, 2003; Smith, 1999; Curtis, 2016). Participants entrusted me with personal information and experiences. Therefore, it was important to present the data in such a way that would

respect their realities and justify their experiences as Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL players, as well as protect their identities (Moyle, 2014; Vaioleti, 2006). To accomplish this, talanoa was used to tell their stories as it facilitated an organic emotional exchange. While we acknowledge that talanoa is a Pasifika method, it shares similar underpinning epistemological and methodological ties with the Māori method of pūrākau, representing both cultures strong oral narrative traditions (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Glasgow & Rameka, 2017; Lee, 2009, Vaioleti, 2013).

Presenting the Findings using Talanoa

The value of talanoa has already been established as a method for collecting data, and now it is necessary to validate using talanoa to present and critique the findings. Vaioleti (2013) stipulates that talanoa is “an activity used for creating and transferring knowledge” (p. 192) in a way that respected the participants’ sociocultural context as a Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL player. Understanding that talanoa is a two-way relationship-building process that is guided by principles such as respect, humility, love, compassion, generosity, being well-prepared and culturally versed (Fa’avae et al., 2016; Fua, 2014; Vaioleti, 2006), it is these same principles that were pertinent in the dissemination of the data. As participants were high performing RL players, these principles helped me to share their whakaaro, stories and aspirations with members of the HP environment, in a creative, raw and respectful way while still protecting their confidence to contribute their voice in my study. Vaioleti (2006) maintains that talanoa allows individuals to be the author of their own life story, inclusive of their issues, realities and aspirations. Further to this assertion, the concept of whakaaro has been used throughout the thesis to refer to the participants’ thoughts and opinions. As Māori and Pasifika view the world in a holistic and interconnected way, the concept of whakaaro in my study then considers those significant cultural values and beliefs that

may underpin their thoughts and opinions of the psychosocial development aspect of TD as a young of Māori and/or Pasifika male. I also acknowledge each young man who gifted me their thoughts and opinions and therefore there is a certain sense of responsibility on my part to ensure that their whakaaro is treated with care and shared with respect for the young man whose knowledge-base it originated from. Therefore, supported by my Indigenous ontological and epistemological positioning of my study, talanoa was used as a method whereby participants' whakaaro, stories, aspirations and knowledge were presented back to the HP RL community in the context of participants conversing with loved ones. Talanoa was also used to tell the authors' whakaaro, story, aspirations and knowledge in an attempt to highlight the necessity of becoming an empathetic researcher, which is an important feature of Indigenous research (Smith, 1999).

Chapter Summary

My study was designed to add transformative value to the development of Māori and Pasifika RL players, and essentially their whānau and communities (Airini et al., 2010; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Curtis, 2016; Naepi, 2015; Smith, 1999). The design of my study evolved as I gained critical knowledge and research experience and as a result, congruency between the methodological framework and methods chosen began to take effect. The guiding principles of my study facilitated the co-existence of a Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika framework and provided the catalyst for ensuring participants' voices were listened to and understood from their own worldviews. Participants' perceptions were captured through the use of focus group sessions that were facilitated by the Pasifika method of talanoa. To make sense of the participants sense-making process, Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), and the concept of the va (Wendt, 1996) were highlighted as the specific lens through which the IPA process was to be conducted. The adaptation of IPA enabled the analysis process to continue to

keep the needs of the participants at the heart of the research, an important characteristic of Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika research (Milne, 2005; Smith, 1999, 2015). Therefore, the methodological approach adopted in my study facilitates an opportunity to build a genuine understanding of how participants' make sense of psychosocial development through their lived reality as a Māori and/or Pasifika high performing RL player.

Chapter Four: Whakawhanaungatanga with the U20s

“...we should be engaging with them [Indigenous peoples], in their world, in terms of their language, cultural values, aspirations and preferred ways of thinking and acting”
(Glynn, 2013, p. 51).

Chapter Introduction

Establishing connections is an important practice in Māori and Pasifika cultures (HRC, 2014; Samu et al., 2011; Smith & Reid, 2008; Walker et al., 2006). In a traditional Māori or Pasifika setting, one would give a formal introduction, structured in a way whereby others can establish some type of connection; be it familial, geographical or social (Ioane, 2017b). Though this section does not follow the traditional Māori and Pasifika structure, the concept of connection is universal. As I used focus groups, it is important to give some background to the participants of the U20s age-group with an introduction of the U18s participants to follow the same format in Chapter Six. The intention of this chapter is to establish whanaungatanga between the participants and the

reader despite having provided a snapshot of the sample group in Chapter Three already. By adding substance to each participant’s story as an aspiring professional RL player, it is hoped that context is given to the participants’ sense-making of the psychosocial aspect of TD.

Participant One (P1)

P1 hails from the Northland region of Aotearoa (refer to Figure 5 for

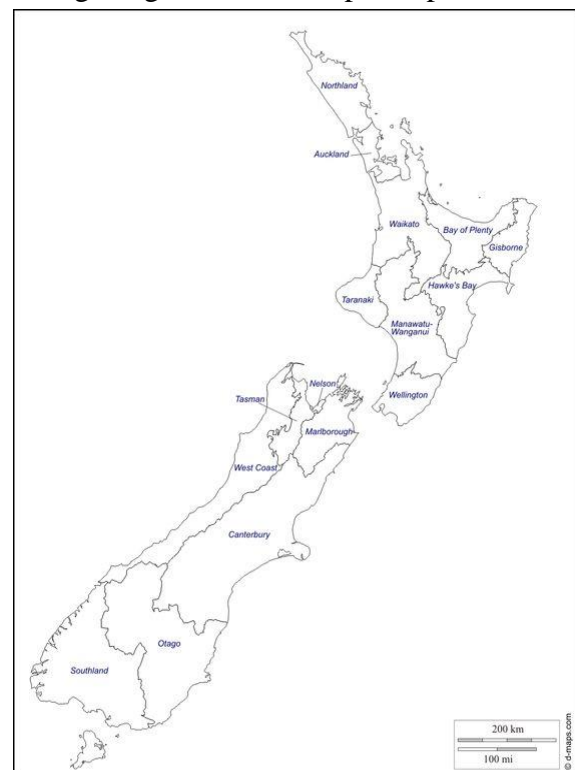


Figure 5. Map of Aotearoa (Free Maps, n.d.).

geographical context) and was invited to participate given his Māori heritage. P1 has a very close relationship with his mother as a result of being raised in a single parent situation. P1 expressed that his mother is very supportive of his aspirations; however, given that she does not reside in Aotearoa, he considered his partner to be his most significant source of support. P1 played rugby union until his final year of high school at which point he transitioned to RL. Upon reflection, P1 explained that:

It kinda just got to a stage with union where me and the coach at my school...had our differences and stuff, and it kind of strained my confidence a lot playing under him. I kinda just left there feeling no good or anything like that. Yeah it was just kinda like, I wanted a fresh start and so gave league a crack that year and yeah, haven't looked back ever since.

P1's hīkoi as a RL player has not been easy. However, he acknowledged the strength he has gained from his mentors who have helped him understand the importance of routine:

...the support of [mentor] and [mentor] and stuff and yeah, their knowledge like making sure that we make the most of it [this current RL opportunity] kinda really helped me and I think in the last three months I've probably grown more than what I have through that whole year probably before that...like the whole first year I played league I was real stagnant and then ever since I moved here (with his mentors) I've really grown a lot and learned a lot...and I'm in the position where I am still slowly gaining an inside edge so I'm definitely going on the right path being with [mentors].

Given his circumstance of being away from whānau, P1 has highlighted the impact that having a solid support network has had on his development. Also highlighted was the influence an unhealthy athlete-coach relationship can have on an athlete's playing ability and confidence.

Participant Two (P2)

P2 was born in Auckland but his parents decided to return to their home island paradise in the South Pacific and he was therefore raised in the islands. As such, P2 was invited to contribute to my study by way of his Pasifika whakapapa. P2's parents moved their whānau back to Aotearoa when he was a young teenager. P2 grew up playing rugby

union until he sustained a season-ending injury towards the later years of high school. He would remain side-lined for 12 months, and upon coming back from injury, P2 decided to try RL and recalled his first experience:

My first game was at [club grounds], against [club]. I was excited because this was my first game back from injury. Excited and scared at the same time. I was pretty lost aye at the start (group laughs). Excited but like, I didn't know anything about the game. But, when I started playing, I fell...I fell in love with it and I wanted more. So, I think for me, to do something different from rugby, straightaway, I fell in love with the game and wanted more, so from then on, its led me to where I am today.

While P2 fell in love with the game straightaway, his drive to succeed stemmed from his gratitude and love for his whānau:

Personally, like for myself, um and I come from a family who don't have much at all. Uh, I guess it hurt seeing your mum and dad get up early in the morning to just put food on the table for you guys and transitioning from [name of Pacific Island] to here [New Zealand] wasn't easy. I guess now that I'm here, I got this opportunity. I need to make the most of it...

The impact of P2's parents sacrifices have clearly informed his desires and motivation to maximise the opportunity he has of being embedded in a professional sporting environment.

Participant Three (P3)

P3 is a young Māori boy who thrived on the footy field. He was born and raised in a small town in the Northland region of Aotearoa. Sports played a major role in their collective whānau environment. The whānau was involved in rugby union on Saturdays and RL on Sundays until about two years ago when he decided to concentrate his efforts on his RL development and performance. When asked why, P3 expressed:

I just fell in love with league more. I don't really like rugby. I just played it cos it's sort of the same as league; kicking and stuff and run. But I just didn't like all the stops, the scrums and stuff. It's just way different to league. Yeah, nah, I can't play any other sports besides league. Don't really like anything else.

The above statement situates P3's passion for RL as a result of having been involved in sports from a young age and as supported by his whānau.

Participant Four (P4)

P4 was raised in a rural part of the Northland region of New Zealand from a young age. P4 was invited to be part of this research given his Māori whakapapa. When recalling his memories of playing RL he shared:

Oh yeah mine's pretty similar to P3's. I can't remember the first time I started playing down here [Auckland], when I was about 5...but then when I moved up north...there was no league around my area cos I was living like in the country out in the wop, and there was like only one rugby [union] team to play for and I ended up playing rugby [union] here...cos there was no league comp there for my age group. But once I started out at league again when I was 15, that's when I kind of decided that I wanted to play league. I still had to travel into town [at least 50 minutes one-way] to play for a team. But yeah, sort of like been dreaming to play league for years. I'm like the others, I don't really like rugby. I only played it because that was the only team in my area (laughs). Like, it was alright but as soon as there was a league team I could play for, I went straight back to league...

Distance did not appear to wane P4's love for RL. Time spent away from RL due to the lack of RL clubs in his area, proved to heighten his love for the game demonstrated by his quick shift back to RL at his first opportunity. Unfortunately, P4 suffered a season-ending injury during the course of the study. When asked 'why' he is rehabilitating as hard as he had been, his reply was simply "I love it [RL]". Again, the involuntary time off from the game due to injury appeared to further strengthen his love for RL and therefore impacted his motivation to get through the rehabilitation process as soon as possible.

Participant Five (P5)

P5 can whakapapa to both the Māori and Pasifika communities. He credited his parents for teaching him everything he knows and is grateful for the support his whānau has provided him in all his endeavours, especially in RL. His drive to succeed, whether on or off the RL field, is to repay his whānau for their support:

I love it [RL] but I think - for me, um, making probably this far I just like... I have a greater element of it. I was just, like I love the game but I want my parents to have a better life as well, than what they have at the moment.

P5 was the only participant who was also attending university. He had been dealing with injuries over the past couple of seasons and his injuries have informed his choice of study and career path post RL. As a result, P5 had a realistic understanding that RL will not last forever and was working just as hard on off-field pursuits to ensure that he will have the means to provide for his parents.

Chapter Summary

In sum, it was important to create space for the reader to gain a brief outlook on each participant's story and aspirations, to better appreciate their insights and contribution to my study. All participants expressed their love for RL and their desire to succeed in the professional sporting arena. To be passionate about RL, is to determine that RL is so important that it deserves considerable investment of one's time and energy (Chamorro, Torregrosa, Oliva, Calvo, & Leon, 2016; Vallerand, 2008). To extend this definition further to fit the cultural demographic of this would be to include the relational element. The participants' passion for RL was evident, especially in the context of the sport providing a viable career option, and for Pasifika participants in particular, this would translate into being able to fulfil familial obligations (Lakisa et al., 2014; Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006). For example, P2 and P5 had similar impressions that were highlighted earlier in this chapter:

Uh, I guess it hurt seeing your mum and dad to get up early in the morning to just put food on the table...I guess now that I'm here, I got this opportunity. I need to make the most of it... (P2)

I love the game but I want my parents to have a better life...than what they have at the moment (P5).

Hence, their desire to reciprocate the hard work, support and sacrifices of their parents was unsurprising, and is consistent with the findings in the literature (Keung, 2014; Lakisa, 2011).

Apart from P5, all participants lived in the professional RL organisation's resident home for at least part of the time when my study was conducted. Given the important role that whānau play in the lives of our participants, the resident home provided an opportunity to expand their support system and essentially build the necessary skillset, routine and knowledge-base conducive to the becoming of a professional RL player. Having established a connection between the reader and the participants, the findings will now be presented using the Pasifika method of talanoa.

Chapter Five: The U20s Whakaaro through Talanoa

“As well as the emotional and spiritual potentials of talanoa, it is also a mode of communication that is integral to the way in which many Pacific peoples learn, relate to each other, narrate and tell stories”
(Vaioleti, 2013, p. 193).

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present the U20s data in a compelling way; the same approach will be used in Chapter Seven with the U18s data. The most interesting and essential insights gained from the study are highlighted using the Pasifika method of talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006). As explained in Chapter Three, talanoa is a form of communication used to disseminate knowledge (Vaioleti, 2013). The findings will be presented as though a player is engaged in a talanoa with a close whānau member, highlighting the significance of whānau for Māori and Pasifika peoples (Ioane, 2017a; Walker et al., 2006). The chosen context for the presentation of the U20s data is a talanoa between a son and his father who has since passed on; this is the genuine backdrop of one of the U20s participants. There are two prongs to this backdrop. Firstly, the impact of whanaungatanga or familial relationships inclusive of non-kinship is important to the well-being and development of Māori and Pasifika youth (Edwards et al., 2007; Nakhid, 2009). Secondly, life after death is a very real concept for Indigenous peoples and therefore it is believed that those who have passed on are still very much present and connected to the living, and that is their reality (Hart, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Hence, the chosen context for the presentation of the findings for the U20s age-group was deemed a culturally relevant approach for presenting the findings. In consultation with my CAG, they were supportive of the context on the basis that the study was grounded upon the appropriate cultural principles that guide the Māori and Pasifika way of living in the same token that our tūpuna lived (CAG, personal communication, October 5, 2017). Given the Indigenous epistemological and ontological stance of my study, the underpinning cultural

values that guide this research satisfy the concerns of the CAG for using the chosen context for the presentation of the U20s findings.

Each talanoa will be prefaced with the event or time frame wherein the talanoa is taking place and therefore provide some context to the U20s participants whakaaro regarding the lived reality of being a Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL player. It is important that the reader views the next five talanoa as an ongoing dialogue that a son is having with his father, at different points of a RL season, which was played out between the months of January and September. It is not so much about knowing the specific time and place wherein each talanoa took place; rather, it is about locating a safe space and acknowledging the need for the U20s player to unpack, process and articulate his lived experience as a high performing junior RL player with someone he trusted. Presenting the findings in this way highlighted the psychological and emotional hīkoi a RL player may endure over the course of a season, and to do so through a culturally relevant medium (Glasgow & Rameka, 2017; Lee, 2009; Vaioleti, 2013). Additionally, the underpinning cultural framework of my study informed a holistic lens to help us understand and unpack what psychosocial development is, and the meaning it holds for participants. Therefore, this chapter will present the findings in the form of five talanoa's and it will conclude with a discussion of the key determinants of success that the U20s participants perceived to facilitate successful development. The discussion will address only the first two research questions:

- 1) What psychosocial determinants do high performing junior rugby league players' perceive contribute to successful senior elite rugby league players' development?
- 2) What are the perceived meanings of these determinants to players?

The last two research questions of my study will be addressed in Chapter Eight, where an overall discussion of the importance of psychosocial development within the HP sport environment and the process of psychosocial development will be outlined.

U20s Talanoa One

Talanoa one is situated during the pre-season. The U20s player (who will be known as D, and whose voice represents the U20s participants as a collective) at this point is assessing the possibility of finally securing a spot in the top team for his club.

Hey Dad,

It's me, D. I wish you were here so you could see me play. You will never know how grateful I am to you and mum for everything you've done for me, Sefa²⁰ and Teu²¹. I never thought in the back of my mind I'd be here today, in NZ, chasing my dream to play professional footy. As I've gotten older, I recognize the sacrifices you and mum made in moving us kids from the beautiful islands back to NZ because you wanted a better life for us and you knew NZ could give us that. It hasn't been easy trying to find my way without you, especially since Mum, Sefa and Teu live in Oz now. But I know things happen in life for a reason and I just need to have faith and trust the process.

Don't worry about Mum, I'm working real hard so I can take care of her. I'm one step closer to achieving my dream of being a professional footy player but I still have heaps of work to do to crack the top-grade side. Oh, before I forget, I have a girlfriend. I promise, she's not a distraction Dad. She actually helps me to stay focused on achieving my dream. She knows and loves league too and we have a pre-game routine which makes me feel a bit emotional but excited at the same time to get the job done. She always tells me to do my best and when I get out there, to focus on the footy.

Anyways, like I was saying, I have heaps of things I need to improve on before I secure a spot in the top-grade side and I'm getting there. A couple of things I've learned since being in the professional system is to focus on what I can control and make sure my

²⁰ Pseudonym to denote D's brother

²¹ Pseudonym to denote D's sister

preparation is on point. Speaking of preparation, I better get to bed. I've learned that getting a good amount of sleep is an important part of my preparation. Night, Dad.

Love D.

Parental sacrifice and the repayment of such sacrifice, as well as the influence of a significant other were key messages highlighted in talanoa one. Additionally, preparation (e.g. nutrition, rest and recovery) and routine were introduced as key determinants that can help one stay focused on attaining success.

U20s Talanoa Two

In talanoa two, D explains the realities of life in the professional RL system. Unfortunately, D did not secure a spot in the first-grade side, as he had hoped. But the opportunity is still well within reach given that he is still part of the professional RL club's development team.

Hey Dad,

It's been one of those weeks. You know, the kind where you wish you could start the week all over again. I've come to learn that the professional industry is pretty ruthless, aye. One week you're in the starting 13, the next week you've been dropped from the squad completely. It's so competitive this professional environment. I see the boys as my brothers but at the same time, we're all fighting for a spot and space is limited. But I guess that's footy. You have to go through ups and downs and understand that things aren't always gonna go your way, and I know I have to be resilient and push through the adversities somehow.

I know you know how shy I am. I don't open up a lot and I keep everything to myself. I only open up to people that I trust, like you and Mum. But I'm learning to trust

and open up, especially when times get tough. I've found strength and support from this couple who are die-hard league fans, and everyone calls them Aunty and Uncle. They've helped heaps of boys transition into the footy environment by teaching them to 'take care of the little things' and they help us boys prepare for life OFF the field as well as on the field.

When I first met them, I didn't say much, but Uncle would always come and ask me if I'm alright. I guess, over time, I just got that feeling and I knew I could start trusting Uncle and Aunty. No matter what I am going through in life, I know Aunty and Uncle will always be there for me. Their support means so much to me, especially since I'm away from Mum. I've learned over time, that opening up about what I'm going through is healthy for me and it releases the stress in my head. I've also learned from Uncle that if I want answers about how to improve my game, then I need to go directly to coach and ask him. But to be honest, no matter who I go to for feedback, Uncle seems to be the only person I can understand and who understands me when it comes to getting feedback on my game. Every time I talk with Uncle about my struggles whether on-field or off-field, I always leave our conversation feeling confident that I can achieve my dreams. Uncle always keeps it real and tells it straight. He tells me what I need to hear and does it in a way in which I know he's only trying to get the best out of me, even though I don't want to hear it. But I'm truly grateful for Aunty and Uncle always supporting me in my aspiration to become a professional footy player. I wish you could meet them Dad because I know you'd really like Aunty and Uncle. Oh, speaking of Uncle, I gotta go, he's calling me. Night, Dad.

Love D.

Key messages highlighted in this talanoa were: acknowledging and overcoming adverse experiences; the importance of having a strong support network and mentors that

can help him navigate the ruthless business of professional sports; and the implications of trust.

U20s Talanoa Three

At this point of the season, D still has not made the first-grade side. Yet, his hīkoi has been put into perspective as a result of his teammate's (one of the participants) unfortunate situation of not being able to get consistent playing time given his battle with a string of injuries over the past few seasons.

Hey Dad,

It's me again, D. I wanted to tell you about my uso²² Max²³. He's been injured heaps over the past couple years and we were chatting about how that's been for him and what's helped him get through it. He said it's been hard and tough, but it came down to two things for him: God and family. He told me that each injury made him stronger and that strength added to his testimony to which God placed in his life, to tell the world of His grace and compassion. He said that he keeps pushing himself because it's time to repay his family for the many sacrifices they have made for him, to be in the position he is in now.

I really respect my uso's perspective, aye. He's been able to see past his injuries and as a result, he knows what he wants to do in life after league. He's still going hard with his rehab to get back on the field, but he's also started uni this year to pursue his other 'Plan A' to make sure he's in a position to repay his family after league is done. As we finished chatting, Max said: "D, stay strong in your faith and be grateful and cherish every individual in your life. They are making you the person you are today".

²² Samoan translation for brother. Often used when referencing another person of the same gender as the individual using the term, and not necessarily blood related.

²³ Pseudonym for P5

After talking with the uso, I thought back to my childhood, growing up in the islands where we didn't have much and so everything we got we appreciated. I truly am grateful for you and cherish everything you taught me Dad. Man, I miss you Dad. You and Mum will always be my favourite coaches. You laid the foundation for me in life and I hope that I can make you proud. Please keep watching over me and especially Mum, Sefa and Teu. Night Dad.

Love D.

Key messages expounded upon in talanoa three were: the role of faith with regards to adversity, gratitude and fulfilling one's familial obligations.

U20s Talanoa Four

The long losing streak continues and therefore, key messages in talanoa four evolve as D processes what he has learned about the reality of becoming a professional RL player, and his understanding of psychosocial development through the personal adversity of a different teammate (another participant).

Hey Dad,

Guess what? Mum, Sefa and Teu are coming over for a visit to celebrate my birthday and watch me play. I'm so excited – I can't wait to hug Mum. The only thing that would make this celebration memorable would be having YOU here too! But I'll make sure Sefa saves you my slice of cake. I gotta watch what I eat these days aye. Can't let a piece of cake interfere with my routine and preparation as I work towards my dream. Speaking of routine and preparation, another brother of mine Wiremu²⁴, really got me

²⁴ Pseudonym for P1

thinking about the impact of sticking to routine and being prepared. He shared with me an experience he had earlier this year.

Wiremu told me that on a trip to Aussie he lost his mouthguard after the captain's run. If you know Wiremu, then you'll know that he's quite picky about having HIS mouth guard when he plays. Anyway, the next day was gameday and come game time, the bro still couldn't find his mouthguard and he didn't have a backup either. When Wiremu reflected back to that game, he said that because he didn't have his mouthguard, his normal pregame routine was stuffed up and as a result – he had an 'off' game. His off game led him to being dropped, and not just to the bench, but dropped completely from the squad and sent back to play club footy. When Wiremu looks back to that game and the series of events that followed, he realised that he had a bad attitude about the whole situation and was investing all his energy in negativity, continuously placing the blame on everyone else for his bad game and he said that he's struggled to get back into the squad ever since.

Crazy aye? Who would have thought something as small as a mouthguard, would be enough to trigger the series of events it did for my bro. So, yep – moral of the story, if I want to achieve my dream, I have to develop a positive attitude as well as get my preparation and routine right. I'm gonna start by passing on the birthday cake this time round. So, go ahead...Eat up, Dad! Night.

Love D.

The value of whānau was granted further exploration in talanoa four, as well as the importance of preparation. Attitude was introduced as another key determinant that participants deemed critical to success.

U20s Talanoa Five

This final talanoa is situated at the end of the season, whereby a full review of the season overall is outlined. This full review offers an indication of the participants' perception of the psychosocial aspect of TD as Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL players.

Hey Dad,

Another season done and dusted! To be honest, it was a real disappointing one for our team. I mean, we got some wins here and there but for some reason, we just couldn't string wins together. I reckon we had the talent to compete and we had a few games where we should have won but we just couldn't finish it. As the season wore on and the losses piled up, everyone's heads began to drop down and it was as if the boys were saying to each other: "Give up already – we're not gonna win". It got to the point where everyone felt like we had lost before the game even started, especially when we came up against a good team.

I was talking to some of the boys about it and when we compared ourselves to the good teams, we put it down to our team's attitude. Looking back, I can see it now. I would go in for training each day, aye, but you got that sense from all the boys that winning just didn't seem possible. You kind of just got used to losing. But when we'd play the good teams, you could tell that they were ... what am I trying to say? The good teams ... their desire to win and be competitive was so much higher than what we had. I don't know how to explain it, but it's like, we're not dissatisfied by losing. Does that make sense, Dad? Whereas with the good teams, they wanted it bad and they were hungry. They'd show it by playing hard throughout the whole 80 minutes whether they scored tries or missed a tackle. Whereas when we play, it's real patchy. If stuff doesn't go our

way, we're unable to play through it and get better, and then we drop our heads and start giving up.

But there's gotta come a time when someone says: "Enough is enough – I'm sick of losing!" We need leaders like Simon Mannering²⁵, you know, Mr Consistent. I don't think anyone would question the attitude he has. It seems like he's always 100%, every game and gives it everything. He's always setting the standard for the boys and I think when you have someone with that type of attitude, like Simon Mannering, it can be contagious. You see him working hard and being selfless and you don't ever want to disappoint someone like that – well that's how I see it.

At the end of the day there's 17 of us that take the field and everyone has to turn up. It's not fair for a couple to turn up and the rest to just go through the motions. Everyone has to contribute to the team. We've got to figure out how to connect with each other from the players to the coach and the rest of the team staff. We have to learn to trust each other. We have to learn to trust the coaches. But when coach says something from the start then doesn't stick to it and changes what he said, especially when time gets tough, it makes it hard for us to buy into what he's saying. The inconsistency kinda kills the culture to be honest. I know that coach has a job and that's to win. But honestly, I just wish coach could understand that – "Yes! ... I'm an athlete", but I'm also human too. We all deal with things differently, and no two injuries are the same and so understanding that players might be dealing with the effects of an injury not just physically, but maybe mentally.

Anyways Dad, I better go and get my washing done. If I don't, I'm gonna have no clothes for training tomorrow and I definitely don't wanna be getting punished by coach for being late because I was waiting for my clothes to finish drying. Gotta stay on

²⁵ A current professional RL player who has played in the NRL for 13 years, which is well above the average career span of 3-4 years for an NRL player (National Rugby League, 2012).

top of these little things off the field, aye Dad, so that I'm ready to focus on my job on the field. Ok – night, Dad.

Love D.

Key messages highlighted in this talanoa were: attitude, relationships, the implications of trust and preparation. Furthermore, there is a sense of disappointment and frustration that underlies the key messages touched upon in this talanoa, accentuating the mental and emotional toll of dealing with a losing season, a shared adversity experienced by all the participants. These key messages, as well as those from the previous talanoa's, will now be discussed in-depth.

U20s Perceived Determinants of Success

The first two questions were to identify and define the psychosocial determinants of success within a RL context, as perceived by the participants. There were variances in which psychosocial determinants were important. The participants' varying opinions were based on life experiences and the strength of each person's value systems. Therefore, the participant's personal experiences provided the context that was needed to make sense of their thought processes regarding psychosocial development. Despite the participants experiencing a variety of adverse events individually, a consensus was eventually achieved by all the participants during focus group session four regarding the most important psychosocial determinants that foster success. As a result, the remainder of this section will address the first question of my study, which was:

- 1) What psychosocial determinants do high performing junior rugby league players' perceive contribute to successful senior elite rugby league players' development?
- 2) What are the perceived meanings of these determinants to players?

Sacrifice. Two types of sacrifices were alluded to by the participants. Those were personal and familial sacrifice. The participants highlighted nutritional choices, doing extra workouts or the people they chose to surround themselves with as examples of personal sacrifices that needed to be made en route to a professional RL career:

Probably, sacrificing time...to focus more on what I want to do like training wise and that. I'd be hanging out with my friends so sacrificing those times for personal training instead of going out (P2).

You just gotta sacrifice to make it...[like] drinking [alcohol] or something and oh... (big sigh) ah living away from family (P3).

...if you don't make those sacrifices it would be pretty hard to move forward [towards the professional level of RL] (P4).

Broadly speaking, participants perceived sacrifice as being able to make appropriate decisions that inform positive ramifications on ones' development and performance. This definition is extended when the Pasifika perspective of sacrifice has been accounted for.

Pasifika participants were more adept to acknowledge the familial sacrifices first and foremost:

My parents sacrificed...if they didn't sacrifice and move over to New Zealand, I wouldn't be where I am today...and then me realizing that the decision that they made would benefit us kids if we grab it with both hands and stay on the right path (P2).

Our parents sacrificed a lot for us...I guess they want us to have a better life than what they had...they sacrifice their time, their sleep to ensure that myself and my brothers have a house to live under and clothes on our back (P5).

The familial sacrifices offered Pasifika participants in particular, a greater perspective of the opportunity to be engaged in a HP sport environment. In further discussion with my CAG regarding Pasifika being more adept to acknowledge the sacrifices of their parents, they suggest that Māori are at a point now that this generation are reaping the rewards of the sacrifices that have been made by the previous generations to have access to full immersion Māori schools, entertainment, and media outlets of which Māori youth may not necessarily appreciate the sacrifices of their tūpuna. For Pasifika youth however, they may have seen first-hand the struggles that their parents have gone through to get to

Aotearoa and provide their children with opportunities that they may not have had growing up, or are still English illiterate and still trying to assimilate without losing their identity and culture (CAG personal communication, October 5, 2017). On this basis, becoming a professional RL player for the Pasifika athlete in particular is much bigger than the individual who is on the HP pathway. As Pasifika participants in this age-group were of Samoan heritage, their sense-making of sacrifice can be supported by their cultural worldview (Tamasese et al., 2005) being that they view self in relation to the collective group (Anae, 2010).

At this stage and age of development, participants had greater understanding and appreciation for the work and support parents dedicated to the welfare, development and success of their children. The desire to give back not only fuels a players' intrinsic motivation, but if successful, the professional pathway provides a way to fulfil familial obligations (Lakisa et al., 2014; Schaaf, 2006). While this may be a positive characteristic, the dual effect of the participant's genuine desire to repay their parents and whānau may inadvertently derail one's development (Hill et al., 2015). Specifically, the pressure to fulfil such obligations can negatively impact the mental welfare and performance of Māori and Pasifika athletes (Marsters, 2017). Put in another way, it is the potentiality of an athlete's desire to fulfil kinship obligations which has morphed into perceived pressure to fulfil their obligations. This necessitates the development of pragmatic skills and coping strategies to address this double-edged sword that has unfortunately led to fatal consequences for one too many junior elite RL players (Lane, 2013; Lutton, 2013). In my study, participants did not articulate the feelings of the same pressures that have been found from other studies (Lakisa et al., 2014; Marsters, 2017). However, this may not necessarily be the case as participants matriculate along the TD pathway. Therefore, a Pasifika perspective expands the aforementioned definition of sacrifice being able to

make appropriate decisions that inform positive ramifications on ones' development, performance, and collective well-being.

Attitude. Participants determined attitude to be an important characteristic that can facilitate success as it helps one to keep pushing himself past his limits to reach his goal of becoming a professional RL player. P5 acknowledged this by stating that: *“Without the right attitude, if you don't have the right attitude you probably won't make, oh you won't make it [to the NRL] and you'll probably take short cuts” (P5)*. This finding is consistent with what coaches of elite youth RL players believe that attitude is a key initial indicator for them to determine which development players have the capacity to progress to the elite level (Cupples & O'Connor, 2011). Gould and colleagues (2010) found in their study of Olympic athletes that adverse experiences in a HP sports environment offered a teaching moment for athletes to develop attitudes conducive to psychosocial development. In our current study, attitude appeared to be more consistent with ones' mindset and their capability to perform as a RL player. For example, a player with a positive attitude may view feedback as an opportunity to improve. Conversely, a poor attitude may view feedback as a personal attack and therefore perceive everyone else as being the problem for the execution of a bad performance:

...another lesson I learned from that was probably like when you get sent back to club and stuff and things don't go your way, probably not to dwell on it too much and complain about it because I think probably at the start, I was kind of just like sulking about it and just like you know in my head I was just angry and like lots of different things and different people and just thinking like, it's their fault and that this is bullshit and this wrong and this right. Rather than like, really concentrating on something that I should be doing to get back and getting myself looked at it again (LAUGHS). I didn't even realise that til maybe like a couple of weeks ago and I'm just tryna like get my attitude back on track and just really trying to dig in and do what I can to get back in [the team]and stay there but yeah (P1).

Participants also acknowledged that one's attitude could be seen and felt by the way individuals carried themselves, reacted or coped with various situations. In other words, one's positive or poor attitude can influence others that occupy the same space

and effectively impact their attitude towards the task at hand. Participants whakaaro was informed by the effects of dealing with a losing season:

I don't think anyone would question the attitude that he [Simon Mannering] has. He's always setting the standard for the boys and I think when you have someone with that type of attitude like Simon Mannering, it can be contagious (U20s Talanoa 5).

I reckon it's like a culture of - it's just attitude. I reckon when I was there, like sort of what P4 was saying, it's going in there [RL club] every day, being around the people and like winning just didn't seem like it was a possibility sort of thing. Like, you kind of just got used to losing (P1).

I think like our attitude is different from the [other teams in the NRL] because we didn't want it as much because you can tell by the way we play on the field (P3).

Furthermore, attitude was also associated with body language and provided an indication of ones' ability, or inability, to push through mentally and emotionally trying times. The experience of a losing season was one example used to highlight this point in talanoa five where participants described the sight of their teammates dropping their heads and losing confidence in their capabilities before the game started.

In sum, findings suggest that attitude can positively and negatively impact the development and performance in a HP sport environment. One participant summed up attitude as: *"You want something – go get it. Be hungry and if you're hungry, eat everything in your way" (P1)*. Given the roller-coaster journey that can be experienced on the TD, one's attitude can dictate the outcome of their hīkoi and thereby inspire others to continue their pursuit towards a professional RL career accepting the highs and lows of the pursuit.

Resilience. Exhibiting resilience is a characteristic that has been consistently associated with successful progression along the TD pathway (Gould et al., 2002; Holt & Dunn, 2004; MacNamara & Collins, 2015; Mills et al., 2012). At this stage, participants recognized that individuals should expect to encounter challenges and more importantly, learn to overcome them as they progress along the TD pathway. P1 expressed: *"I just*

think like at the end of the day, I don't think anyone can make it to the NRL without facing challenges and I think it's about like how you bounce back from it". This perception of resiliency is consistent with what other studies understood of the term such as “the ability to use coping strategies to overcome obstacles” (Holt & Dunn, 2004, p. 199; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Gould et al., 2002). In addition to coping with setbacks, keeping a positive outlook was also a component of resilience (Mills et al., 2012):

I think it's like in this industry, just gotta have an understanding that you should know what's going to happen, or what's not going to happen. But I guess, to be able to stay positive just push away the stuff that will get you down and just focus on the little things that can help you stay positive that you can win that can make you better (P2).

You have to go through ups and downs in footy. It's not always gonna go your way...but you gotta keep thinking that you're going to stay there and be aware of it, yeah (P4).

Just knowing that there will be hardship along the road but staying true to yourself and knowing that everything will work out in the end (P5).

Taken altogether then, P1's operationalisation appears to sum up the sentiments of the collective regarding what resilience is by referring to it as “*being able to overcome an adverse range of tribulations and come back stronger with a 'never say die' attitude*”. This operational term ties back to the above-mentioned characteristic of attitude and implies that players strive to do everything they can to not allow the challenge or setback to consume them, but rather to see the silver lining and draw strength from it.

Resilience for our Pasifika participants in particular, also included faith and whānau. Participants identified as being Christian, although they did not actively attend a church for various reasons. They attributed their faith in God as being critical for overcoming challenges and finding meaning or purpose in their life calling:

Each injury you receive makes you stronger and adds to your testimony – a testimony to which God has placed in your life to tell the world of His grace and compassion (P5).

Pasifika participants were cognisant of the fact that RL was a means to the greater goal for them, which was to be able to provide for and care for their parents. This attitude is

reflective of their cultural values that appeared to be an innate part of their identity and respective behaviour and thought processes (Samu et al., 2011; Tamasese et al., 2005). On this basis, the definition of resilience could be extended to being able to overcome an adverse range of tribulations, through faith and whānau, to come back stronger with a ‘never say die’ attitude.

Preparation and routine. The implication of preparation and routines were consistently discussed by participants as being key determinants of success. In analysing the participants’ reasoning and experience, preparation included setting a weekly plan inclusive of school and work commitments, training sessions, video analysis, game-day, laundry day, and free-time. Because of this weekly plan, the participants settled into a routine that allowed them to take care of the “*little things*”. The participants initially made no connection to the impact it can have on their development as a RL player. Things such as keeping a tidy room and doing the laundry may seem like mundane tasks, however the participants acknowledged that:

being in a routine, being tidy and just sticking to it day in and day out, you get used to it aye...makes it easier I think (P1).

I guess getting into routine, going to bed early, and you know eating the right amount of food and getting used to training as well. Yeah, I guess that’s what got me to where I am (P2).

The implications of good preparation allowed participants to have a clear mind and positive attitude during training sessions and game-day performance. Mental or psychological preparation has been broadly referred to as any practices, strategies or processes that an athlete engages in to prepare ones’ self for sports involvement (Gould & Maynard, 2009) and therefore would include the above-mentioned physical routine of the participants. Being mentally prepared has been identified in the literature as the key to successfully transitioning from the junior elite to the senior elite level and thereafter (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Vaeyens et al., 2008). Hence, the participants’ recognition of

establishing good habits as a critical component of long-term success is aligned with that which has been suggested in the literature.

On the other hand, being ill-prepared was detrimental to participants decision-making and effectively their performance. Since being in a HP sport environment, participants acknowledged that preparation and routine helped to balance the demands of being a high performing RL player. Those who lived in the resident home credited the constant support of the resident home mentors for helping them understand the importance of preparation and routine. More importantly, participants did not just learn about preparation and routine, but they were in an environment where preparation and routine could be put into practice. Thus, reaffirming the invaluable contribution, a relational component makes to the learning, comprehension and development of critical skills and determinants for Māori and Pasifika.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the U20s perspective using talanoa. The first objective of my study was to identify those key psychosocial determinants of success as perceived by the participants. Specific to the U20s collective, sacrifice, attitude, resilience and preparation/routine were identified as instrumental determinants that should be developed to facilitate successful progression on the TD pathway. The second question of my study asked the participants to define the above-mentioned determinants. To more appropriately understand the participants' perception of each determinant, it was imperative to acknowledge the context in which the learning or the implementation of such a determinant took place. For example, the definition of sacrifice was better understood in observing or acknowledging the sacrifices parents made for their children. Attitude was better understood when framed by the experience of being dropped from the team, or the example of a senior RL player. To build resilience is to do so through one's

social support system and their faith. Finally, the notions of preparation and routine were more readily appreciated as players matured and recognised that optimal performance can hinge on the small adjustments such as adequate sleep, nutrition or ensuring their chores are done well in advance of training or game-day.

The above mentioned psychosocial determinants can be supported by multiple studies (Cupples & O'Connor, 2011; Gould et al., 2002; Holt & Dunn, 2004; MacNamara & Collins, 2015). These studies acknowledge the difference between those who reach the elite level versus those who do not, and can be related to the psychosocial aspect of TD. Once at the elite level, it is this same psychosocial aspect of TD that can be the difference between those who maintain an elite status versus those who do not (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Cupples & O'Connor, 2011; Rees et al., 2016; Sheard, 2009). For developing Māori and Pasifika RL players who envision a career in professional sports as the only option to improve social mobility (Erueti, 2015; Zakus & Horton, 2009), there is a need for systems and programmes to take more innovative approaches and allocate time for players to develop a psychosocial foundation. Not just talk about psychosocial development but to practice it, and have it become a natural part of TD like physical and game-skill development. Knowing that the development of psychosocial skills are socially constructed and in the context of this study, highly dependent on the HP RL environment (Larsen et al., 2012), there needs to be an awareness around how and under what conditions these determinants develop, given the varying stages of development, and ones' experience within a HP sport environment (Holland, Woodcock, Cumming, & Duda, 2010; Pierce et al., 2016). Findings presented in this chapter suggest that to gain any sort of traction with psychosocial development, the establishment of trusting relationships is pivotal to the development and maintenance of those key determinants of sacrifice, attitude, resilience and preparation/routine. The process of establishing trusting relationships will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Six: Whakawhanaungatanga with the U18s

*“Whanaungatanga is a process that engenders collective responsibility amongst Māori for each other’s well-being, especially through a commitment to sharing knowledge freely among members of a group”
(Macfarlane, 2013, p. 143).*

Chapter Introduction

This chapter follows the same format and uses the same validation as used in Chapter Four with the U20s age-group. For ease of reading, the U18s whakawhanaungatanga and presentation of findings were kept separate, given that two different age-groups were included in my study. For Māori and Pasifika cultures it is important to establish connections first and foremost (HRC, 2014; Samu et al., 2011; Smith & Reid, 2008; Walker et al., 2006). Part of their identity as a Māori and Pasifika person is to locate where they are from and it is upon this basis that connections can begin to form resulting in more respectful and genuine interaction between people (Ioane, 2017b). These connections may be familial, geographical or social (Ioane & Tudor, 2017), and while this chapter does not follow the traditional Māori and Pasifika whakawhanaungatanga structure or process, the concept of connection is universal.

The intention of this chapter is to establish whanaungatanga between the participants and the reader by building upon the snapshot of the sample group that has already been provided in Chapter Three (refer to Table 1). More specifically, this chapter offers an opportunity to establish whanaungatanga between the reader and the participants by highlighting the narratives that have shaped participants aspirations towards becoming a professional RL player. It is hoped that the additional substance surrounding each participants’ personal hīkoi as an aspiring professional RL player will contextualise their whakaaro of psychosocial development as a Māori and/or Pasifika athlete, within a HP sport environment.

Participant Six (P6)

P6 was raised in a small town in the Waikato region of New Zealand with ties to both the Māori and Pasifika communities. P6 shared his ultimate dream was to “*become a good person and [professional] footy player*”. When asked to reflect on why he aspired to be a professional RL player he responded:

I guess it got to a stage where I thought "What am I good at in life?" and education really wasn't my thing. I was getting all the bad grades at school for educational stuff, so I guess when I saw the RL players and the flash cars they were driving and what they can do with...oh what RL can do for you, I guess you get the extra drive just to try be like one of them and do something that you love doing...yeah, there's nothing else that's like fun for me. It's probably just footy, not anything else.

P6's response suggests that RL is his only option to increase his social mobility once he completes his high school education, which is not uncommon for male Māori and Pasifika to think (Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006).

Participant Seven (P7)

P7 was the only participant who was born and raised outside of Aotearoa and was invited to engage in my study given that he can whakapapa to both the Māori and Pasifika communities. RL has played a major role in P7's life and continues to be a priority for him. When asked to reflect on when he knew RL was what he wanted to pursue professionally he explained:

Oh yeah for me, I've just always wanted to play RL, picked it up from my Dad cos he used to play League, I used to just, I just wanted to be like him. Like, cos he lived the life [laughs] and um, yeah, that's why I wanted to play League.

P7's father was a professional RL player himself and therefore his exposure to the realities of a professional sportsperson has greatly influenced his aspirations and passions.

Participant Eight (P8)

P8 was the only U18s participant who played other sports before investing in RL. P8 is a first generation, Aotearoa born Pasifika, who was raised in South Auckland. He was introduced to RL in his early adolescent years by cousins and school friends who all played for the same club. When asked how his love for the game has grown since his first game P8 replied:

I just kept on playing league every Saturday and kept on playing league the next year and the year after that and then I got...I love the game. Like even though I like playing other sports but like I just see League as an option that I'm better at than all of the other sports.

When asked what keeps him motivated and helps him overcome challenges P8 quickly acknowledged his parents:

Probably just thinking about what pushes you, what drives you like or what you're doing it for or who you're doing it for, like your parents and stuff. And probably just they've been there for you so you want to give something in return and try and make them proud.

P8's intrinsic motivation influenced by extrinsic factors is reflective of his cultural values and worldview.

Participant Nine (P9)

P9 is a young Māori boy who was born and raised in the Northland region of Aotearoa. P9 grew up with a rugby ball in hand and has known from a very young age that he wants to be a professional RL player. When P9 was asked to reflect on what motivated him, especially on days when he did not want to train, he mentioned his whānau. Specifically, he said “*being away from them and oh, I don't see [them] that much but they also like, whenever I don't feel like it I think of them and do it for them and stuff*”.

P9's response highlights how much he valued his whānau. His whānau were very much involved as his father has always been his coach. As a result of this P9 always

played up a level to be in the same team as his older brother, and they have both been very influential on his growth as a RL player. P9's mother provided the logistical and emotional support which has enabled him to focus on playing RL. Now that P9 had moved away from the only support system he has known, his whānau appears to have become an external reference point that he uses to fuel his intrinsic motivation to optimise preparation and performance in his pursuit to the senior elite levels.

Chapter Summary

It was important to create space for the reader to gain a brief outlook on each U18 participant's story and aspirations, to better appreciate their insights and contribution to my study. A challenge faced with this age-group however was the inconsistent attendance of the participants. In sum, P7 attended the first session only, P6 attended sessions one and two and P8 attended sessions one, two and three. With the exception of P8, all U18s participants were still in high school and this could explain the consistent drop-off rate of participation. For example, participants may have been dependent on others regarding transportation. Another reason may be associated with their singular focus on playing RL and therefore, engaging in a study about the psychosocial aspect of TD may not appear to add value to their chances of securing a place in the senior elite team. Therefore, the opportunities to form any sort of connection with the participants was significantly impacted, and therefore difficult to capture their RL hīkoi in depth. Despite this, significant themes evolved from the focus group sessions, and these will be presented in the next chapter using the Pasifika method of talanoa.

Chapter Seven: The U18s Whakaaro through Talanoa

Te tapuae o mua, mō muri
Footsteps of the past, informing the future

Chapter Introduction

The U18 participants' perspectives are presented collectively in the context of a player conversing with their younger cousin, who aspires to be in the same position as his older cousin. The cultural context for creating a dialogue between the U18s player and his cousin is reminiscent of a tuakana/teina (*older brother/young brother*) relationship (Edwards et al., 2007; Farruggia, Bullen, Solomon, Collins & Dunphy, 2011; Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010). The collectivist system that Māori and Pasifika communities associate with relies on all persons to contribute to the well-being of the group. As such, Pasifika youth are taught to show respect to their elders or persons of authority (Ioane, 2017a), and traditionally, older siblings or cousins fulfilled the roles of teaching their younger siblings or cousins in varied capacities for Māori (Farruggia et al., 2011). Hence, the context of the U18s findings draws upon this system of learning and development. The purpose for using talanoa as the method to present the findings was to illustrate the aspirational hīkoi of a young Māori and Pasifika athlete towards their ultimate dream of playing top-grade RL by drawing upon the cultural values that are significant to Māori and Pasifika peoples (Vaioleti, 2013). Each talanoa has been crafted using verbatim quotes from the transcripts.

Following the same format as was used in Chapter Five, each talanoa will be prefaced with the event or time frame wherein the talanoa is taking place. Similarly, the aim of each preface is to situate the U18s participants' whakaaro regarding the lived reality of being a Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL player. It is important that the reader consider the next four talanoa as if it were an ongoing dialogue that the older cousin is having with his younger cousin, at different points of a RL season, which

played out between the months of January and September. As a result, the findings will be presented first in the form of the four talanoa's. At the conclusion of the fourth talanoa, a discussion of the key determinants of success that the U18s participants' perceived contributed to successful development, will be had. The purpose of the discussion is to address the first two questions of my study as it pertained to the U18s age-group. Those questions were:

- 1) What psychosocial determinants do high performing junior rugby league players' perceive contribute to successful senior elite rugby league players' development?
- 2) What are the perceived meanings of these determinants to players?

Hence, the discussion will expound upon those key psychosocial determinants that participants perceived to be crucial to the successful development of a RL player. The last two questions of my study will be addressed in Chapter Eight, where an overall discussion of the importance of the psychosocial development within HP sport environment, and the process of psychosocial development will be outlined.

U18s Talanoa One

Talanoa one begins with the U18s player reaching out to his younger cousin; affectionately referred to as 'lil cuzzy'. This reflection takes place in the early part of the season with the U18s player putting into context the current position he is in and understanding the reality of engaging in a professional RL development programme.

Dear lil cuzzy,

Even though I'm only a couple years ahead of you, I'm gonna give you some tips that I think might help you. I know how hard you've been working to get an opportunity to be signed to a professional footy development programme like me. Keep it up, cuz.

Coaches like guys who work hard, are dedicated and who can make those hard decisions where you may need to make sacrifices in order to elevate your game and essentially, team performance. Focus on your footy and revolve yourself around good influences. All your mates might think you're the black sheep of the school because you're on your own buzz training at the gym at 12am, while everyone else is out partying and drinking. Separate yourself from those people and just keep your focus.

Even though I'm signed and am in the development system here, it doesn't mean that I've cracked it, bro. I have to keep pushing myself especially when I'm just too tired to keep going, but I want to make the team so I have to keep working hard and trust that the results will follow. There's no room for becoming complacent up here, you know what I mean, cuz? It's still early days in the season but I've already learned so much and just trying to take it all in and just stay patient too because I'm still in High School so that means I still gotta go to class and fit all that stuff in at the same time.

Oh, one last thing – watch what you post on social media, bro. Be sensible with it. Better yet, turn your phone off and get some sleep. You can watch Benji²⁶ do his mean step on YouTube© another time, and you can Facebook© your girlfriend and the boys later. Sleep takes priority! It's important for recovery.

Chea, cuz!

Key messages that were highlighted in this talanoa were the need to develop attributes and habits such as: dedication, work ethic, sacrifice, establishing a good circle of influences, trusting in the process of development, and the implications of social media.

²⁶ Benji Marshall is a prominent professional RL player who is of Māori descent and has played for the New Zealand Kiwis at the international level and currently plays for the West Tigers in the NRL. He was also a role-model for one U18s participant.

U18s Talanoa Two

The responsibility that the U18s player takes upon himself to act as a mentor for his little cousin follows the typical structure of learning and development for Māori and Pasifika peoples (Edwards et al., 2007; Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010). Embedded in the tuakana/teina relationship are reciprocal roles and responsibilities that contribute to the functioning of whānau (Edwards et al., 2007; Farruggia et al., 2011). More specifically, the tuakana/teina relationship is about two persons of different age levels or experience, sharing knowledge for the purpose of learning and growth (Mead, 2003; Ware & Walsh-Tapiata, 2010). Hence, the context of this talanoa is such that the U18s player is divulging his recently gained knowledge and experience of being in a professional RL environment albeit in the development academy and despite having only a couple of years on his younger cousin. An in-depth description of the key determinants of success will be given as perceived by the U18's age-group.

Dear lil cuzzy,

I heard Dad has been pushing you hard and making you play up a grade with the big bro. How's that been going? You've probably been getting smashed because you're so little. But it's ok. Take the hit, get back up and keep going, cuz! You might be small physically but your confidence will make you bigger. All that smashing and Dad's growling's will be worth it. You'll be grateful for everything Dad is doing for you right now.

But seriously, bro, all jokes aside, do you remember the last time I wrote? I mentioned a few words such as sacrifice and dedication. I hear those words all the time around here and another one that gets thrown around a lot is being selfless. I'm gonna do my best to break them down for you so that you're not like me when you get here, and don't know what they mean, bro. First...

Sacrifice: Here's an example to help explain sacrifice – lay off the alcohol because it does no good for you. It can make you who you're not and if you're drunk, you'll start fights and that will ruin your career just like that! If you're finding it hard to make that sacrifice, think of everything mum and dad have done for you. They pay for everything; Mum cooks and cleans, Dad coaches you. They take you to trainings and games. They push you even though sometimes you don't want to go to training and try to make excuses for why you don't want to go. Your parents will always be there and support you. Now that I'm living away from home, I recognise the sacrifices my parents have made for me. Simply put, learn now, while you're at home, to appreciate all the work Mum and Dad do to make sure you have everything you need. Laying off the alcohol is one example of a sacrifice that you can make to help you achieve your dreams. Think about what you're putting into your body and mind. If it's hurting you more than helping you, then make the sacrifice and cut it.

Selfless: Remember this name – Simon Mannering. Look him up, YouTube© him, do whatever it takes to learn about him. He always thinks about others and doesn't make any selfish decisions. For example, he would never leave his brother hanging on defense because he was too tired or couldn't be bothered moving up with the line of defense. Nah – he would never do that, because that's not how he operates. He just works for the team and that's what it means to be selfless. Follow his lead because he's been in the game for ages. RL is a team game, cuz. Everyone has a role to play on the team, so you can't afford to be selfish because you won't succeed if you choose to leave your brothers hanging, especially when the times gets tough, not only tough on yourself, but everyone, so you just got to support the brothers around you. Basically, my cuz, to be selfless is to think about others and find ways to support the brothers.

Dedication: To be honest, I'm still learning what this word means but this is the best I could come up with. Ok, so I know school is not your most favourite place to be.

I'll be honest, it isn't mine either. But you gotta go to class and do your assignments, cuz. Even when you're here playing in the development system, you gotta go to class otherwise coach isn't gonna play you. Honest. There's this 'no work or study, no play' rule for anyone in the junior development system. Coach pulled me up earlier this season because I wasn't going to class and he dropped me till I could show him I was dedicated off the field as much as I am on the field. So you can hate school all you want or think you're no good at school but if you plan on coming through the professional pathway early, then be prepared to go to school or work before going to training. To "live the life" that you think the professional players live, you've got to dedicate yourself now. Being dedicated includes being prepared, always showing up to training and always doing the little extra stuff like away from training sessions, getting proper rest and recovery, having the right food to eat, stretching. Dedicate yourself to getting your body right and your mind right. And don't forget, coach expects you to be dedicated off the field, just as much as you need to be on the field.

If you don't get anything else from what I just shared, cuz, at least remember this: "Work hard in silence. Let your success be your noise!"

Chea, cuz!

Key determinants that were highlighted in this talanoa were sacrifice, selflessness and dedication. Participants perceived meanings were more appropriately understood within the context of a personal experience or through the example of RL players with a wealth of experience.

U18s Talanoa Three

The mental and emotional drain spurred on by a long losing streak has informed the collective whakaaro of talanoa three.

Dear lil cuzzy,

Yeah, it's been pretty tough up here this season and its worn me down you know – with everything, trying to work, go to school and also train and be ready for game day. But I've found that sometimes when I had those days where I was feeling like, down, I'll just hit up some of the boys to see if they want to go have lunch or ask if they are keen to come to the gym and do a workout with me so we can catch up on what everybody is up to. It's always good to catch up with the boys, aye and have a laugh because it helps me to balance out my life. I'm not complaining, aye, cos I'm loving being here. It's just – I never thought it would be this hard. But this is what I gotta do if I want to crack the NRL squad and live the dream!

Speaking of living the dream, here's what I want you to work on next. I want you to find an adult mentor, not Mum, not Dad. No – someone outside our family. Like for me, it was my club coach I had when I was growing up at home. Coach was always there for me. He always gave me feedback and would even take me for extra trainings. Even now, he's still there for me. He'll come pick me up and we'll just catch up about life in general. I know I can ask him any question to do with footy stuff and life. Sometimes he'll growl me but I don't get mad because it helps me to re-focus and I know what I have to do to get where I want to be. So find you a mentor. Someone that you can trust, who is open, available and who can give you honest feedback. Having a solid support system is key when you get here because and Mum and Dad aren't here to do everything for you anymore.

Sweet – keep working hard, cuz. I gotta go do some extras now.

Chea cuz!

The value of a support network or whānau and whanaungatanga was highlighted in this talanoa. Key messages that were expounded upon were: the qualities and behaviours of supportive mentors and friends outside of the HP sport environment. Additionally, this social network appeared to mediate the struggles and stress of being a high performing junior athlete.

U18s Talanoa Four

The final talanoa highlights team culture as the U18s player recounts the feeling of finally securing a win. The implication of the team securing its first win half-way through the season offered a contrasting impact on individual development and performance, and collective development and performance, based on wins and losses.

Dear lil cuzzy,

We finally got our first win of the season! YUSS! We played as a team and stuck to the structure that coach set up for us and we just clicked. All the boys are happy as, aye. Hopefully we can keep up the same attitude we had on the weekend and build on it. I think everyone finally got sick of losing, aye.

I remember this one game earlier this season where we were losing and some of the boys started getting angry and swearing at each other. In the locker room at the half, coach told us to brush off the first half and connect for the second half. But the boys still didn't talk. It was so hard playing in that game because everyone was down and we didn't want to say anything to the boys that weren't talking because they were already so angry. But if I could have said something, I would have reminded the boys "We're all one team, so if someone goes down, we have to pick each other up, instead of making them feel down because the whole team is picking up the negative vibes and we can't work as a team". But last week, last week was different, aye. Like, everyone was just picking each

other up, even after a mistake. Everyone was encouraging each other and telling boys to brush off the mistake and keep playing because we got their back.

So why am I telling you this? Well I guess I want to make sure that you're always there for your brothers whether you win or lose. Find ways to bond with your teammates off the field because I think when everyone bonds together off the field, everyone will bond the same way on the field, and everyone will know that we have each other's backs – win or lose!

Chea, cuz!

Key messages that were interwoven through this final talanoa explored psychosocial development via the impact of whanaungatanga and energy on both the individual player and the team as a collective. These key messages, as well as those from the previous talanoa's will now be discussed in-depth.

U18s Perceived Determinants of Success

The first two questions of my study were to identify and define the psychosocial determinants of success within a RL context, as perceived by the participants. Sacrifice, selflessness, dedication, and surrounding oneself with good influences were perceived as the most important determinants that should be developed. Participants made sense of each determinant using examples from a RL game situation, or highlighted role-models who exemplified these determinants.

Sacrifice. Participants discussed sacrifice by reflecting on the things or experiences they chose to forgo in the hopes of positively affecting their RL development and performance. One personal sacrifice used as an example was choosing to forgo parties or a drinking session with the boys due to the harmful effects it can have on ones' body. Along with the physical harm, participants acknowledged the negative impact an alcohol-

fueled session can have on their decision-making capabilities and the possible consequences career-wise:

It [alcohol] can make you who you're not. Like if you're drunk you'll start fights and stuff, and that will just ruin your career just like that (P9).

It was unclear whether the sacrifice was the alcohol itself, or if participants felt the sacrifice was the social aspect of drinking, but the example of sacrifice for an U18 player is consistent with the literature (Cook et al., 2014). Irrespective of the answer, participants were cognisant of the fact that the physical sacrifices they made at this stage could pay dividends in the long-term, to achieve their dream.

Social support, especially familial support, is an important aspect that is accentuated within the cultural framework of my study (Durie, 1994; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Hence, for one Pasifika participant, forgoing whānau functions that typically ran late into the night, could cause a dilemma, especially if it coincided with game day or training:

Facilitator: *Are there things that you've sacrificed in order to be here [development academy], personally?*

P8: *Probably just um, hanging out with your family and stuff. Like, later on at night and stuff and you have to get some rest for training...and you have to get that good rest because it's part of recovery as well.*

Within a HP sport environment, one learns how essential it is to follow proper rest and recovery protocols. Doing so offers ones' mind and body adequate time to heal and thereby perform at full capacity for the next training session or game-day. Given most of the participants paid homage to their parents for the sacrifices that were made to play RL and supported the progress of their children through the pathways (Holt & Dunn, 2004; Hodge et al., 2012) it appears that honouring that sacrifice may implicate the decision-making process. The sacrifice then becomes a case for the athlete to take ownership of their decisions, inclusive of being aware of all their options and consequences. Pasifika players especially, may feel conflicted in their capabilities to meet the expectations from their whānau and from their sport. Therefore, sacrifice appears to be having an

understanding and willingness to make those difficult decisions that can help one to improve their skills, capabilities and circumstances towards achieving their goal.

Having to choose between sport and whānau exacerbates the already difficult decisions that Pasifika participants must make given the implications on the collective as well as the individual. The same may be true for Māori given the shared collectivist values and beliefs, however, the Māori participants in my study did not bring up any examples that demonstrated the conflict of interest from whānau and sport. From a Pasifika perspective then, it is important to understand that when one makes the sacrifices necessary to succeed on the RL field, they do so on behalf of the whānau, community and collective group (Schaaf, 2006).

Selfless. One NRL player was consistently referred to by participants as an exemplar of selflessness. Given his longevity in the game, they believed that he always worked hard for the team, and he always put his teammates first. From their perspective, this was the epitome of being selfless – to put the team before oneself. They believed that this player never made selfish decisions on the field or decisions that could lead to negative ramifications for his teammates:

just probably like on defense and like the line is moving up and you're like the only one who's hanging back and you're not moving up with it...he'd be the one leading the line (P9).

Selflessness has not been featured regularly in the literature as a determinant of success, but this may be an indication of the collective lens that the participants see through and therefore the prioritising of the needs of the collective is consistent with the literature (Allen & Smith, 2015; Smith, 1999; Wendt, 1996). Given that RL is a team sport, being selfless implied being willing to contribute wherever necessary for the greater good of the team. From a cultural standpoint, the collectivist worldview places a strong emphasis on the collective rather than the individual persons. The strength of the collective was impacted when individuals contributed to the development and well-being of the whānau

and wider community by fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations within the collective (Allen & Smith, 2015; Macfarlane et al., 2008; Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker et al., 2006). In this respect then, being selfless is consistent with the principles and values that underpin te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview.

Dedication. Participants perceived dedication as being focused on their ultimate goal. They did everything necessary to show those in charge of players' development and performance, their level of commitment to the goal. Dedication has also been found to be associated with the capacity to make good decisions (Holland et al., 2010). Some examples of decisions participants had to make over the course of the season were: going to class versus skipping it; participating in Polyfest²⁷ for the last time versus focusing on RL; going out to drink and party with the boys versus going to the gym; having a girlfriend versus not having a girlfriend. These were real situations that participants used to illustrate what dedication meant to them. Ultimately it came down to participants rationalising what would help, not hurt their chances of achieving their goal to become a professional RL player.

One participant in this age group ended his relationship with his girlfriend as she became a distraction, another participant gave up the opportunity to participate in his last year of Polyfest to focus on his future, which he believed to be RL. Hence, dedication was perceived to be a determinant for success, as it strengthened resolve to stay focused and committed to achieving their goals. While participants understood dedication within the context of RL, they were still learning to transfer that same level of dedication in other areas of their life, such as in a high school classroom. It should be noted that one participant could not define nor describe what dedication meant to him other than he just knew it was important. This may validate why participants had difficulties trying to define

²⁷ The largest Polynesian festival in the world. Polyfest is an annual High School dance event that takes place in New Zealand whereby schools can enter groups to participate in both competitive and non-competitive brackets.

the determinants outside of the RL context. My study echoes the sentiments found in the literature for more exposure to and inclusion of a deliberate and systematic approach to psychosocial development, given its importance to a players' development and success (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Birrer & Morgan, 2010; Rees et al., 2016; Smith, D., 2003; Vaeyens et al., 2008).

Network of good influences. Former coaches were examples of adult mentors that participants would likely turn to for support. As a result of these relationships, the participants began to realise that there was more to becoming a professional RL player than training and game-day. Given that the participants' awareness of the intricacies of professionalism was in its infancy, they relied on adult mentors to steer them in the right direction, or sought advice from them as to how to work through challenges they may be going through both RL-related or life in general:

I know I can ask him any question to do with footy stuff and life. Sometimes he'll growl me but I don't get mad because it helps me to re-focus and know what I have to do to get where I want to be (U18s Talanoa 3).

The literature is clear in suggesting the influential role coaches have on the technical and tactical development of their athletes (Camiré et al., 2014; Gould et al., 2002; Martindale, 2005). In the case of my study, the magnitude of a coach's influence was dependent on the relationship the participant fostered with their coach. Honesty, transparency and availability were important determinants that participants perceived their former coaches (now mentors) exhibited, and which contributed to the development of a connection based on trust. A culmination of these determinants allowed a relationship to flourish and therefore provided a template for establishing new relationships as participants transitioned into new environments. From a cultural perspective where whānau is not defined by blood, the essence of developing a network of good influences is fundamental to an individual's development and well-being and their capacity to contribute to the collective.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the U18s perspective using talanoa. The first objective of my study was to identify those key psychosocial determinants of success; the four most important psychosocial determinants of success as perceived by the participants. Specific to the U18s collective, sacrifice, selflessness, dedication and having a network of good influences were identified as instrumental determinants that should be developed to facilitate successful progression on the TD pathway. Participants defined each characteristic to the best of their abilities and knowledge. Given their limited knowledge and experience outside of RL, participants primarily defined each characteristic by describing the actions or attributes of role-model RL players or mentors. This finding may have implications on the coaching methods and communication styles of those who work with Māori and Pasifika junior RL players. Finally, it was clear that participants were focused on getting their physical and game-skill development up to the level required for selection at the U20s level and therefore, dedicating time to other aspects of TD did not appear to be a priority for U18s participants. This is not surprising as it reflects the priority that physical and game-skill development is typically afforded by many TID and TD models. Additionally, the participants' limited experience being engaged in a professional sports organisation may have influenced their view on prioritising their physical and game-skill development. As such, there exists a need to intentionally create space or experiences for participants to develop an awareness of the implications of psychosocial development within a HP sport context.

Chapter Eight: Overall Discussion of Participants' Whakaaro

“If you seriously want better outcomes for Pacific young people and their families, then policy settings that influence them need to be congruent with this world. You need to be drawing upon the strengths, understandings and meanings of this world”
(Efi, 2003, p. 62).

Chapter Introduction

To ensure the needs of both the Māori and Pasifika participants remain central to the discussion, Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994), Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) and the concept of the va (Wendt, 1996) are used to critique and synthesise the findings. A discussion specific to the perceived psychosocial determinants of success has already taken place in the previous chapters for the respective age groups. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to use the study's cultural framework to address the remaining two questions (number three and four) of my study. Those questions are:

- 3) What are high performing junior rugby league players' perceived levels of importance of psychosocial development?
- 4) What processes contribute to a player's psychosocial development in New Zealand Rugby League's High Performance pathway?

The chapter begins with a critique of the conflicting worldviews to justify the unconventional yet necessary approach used in my study. This rationale sets the platform for intentionally privileging the worldviews of the demographic (Māori and Pasifika) in focus. Interspersed throughout this chapter is my whakaaro in the form of letters to my PhD candidate self as has been done in previous chapters of this thesis. These letters contribute to the critique of the research process, and they highlight my hīkoi towards becoming an empathetic researcher, which is an integral element of Indigenous research (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Smith, 1999). Whilst I do not wish to give the impression that I know what it is like to be a high performing RL player, I draw upon the process of attaining a PhD as it contextualised the challenges that I have faced in

navigating the Eurocentric academic world as an emerging female Māori researcher. Hence my capacity to empathise with the participants' lived reality of having to successfully navigate two worlds; precisely the Eurocentric HP sports world as a Māori and/or Pasifika RL player. The letters to my PhD candidate self were drawn from my self-reflexive journals that were kept over the course of the study as a reference point of trustworthiness and rigour, insofar as qualitative research is concerned (Berger, 2015; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The remainder of the chapter will be dedicated to making sense of the participants' perception of the importance and process of psychosocial development using the elements of Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994), Fonofale (Durie, 1994), and the concept of the va (Wendt, 1996). To my knowledge, my study is the first to utilise Māori and Pasifika frameworks to explore high performing Māori and Pasifika junior RL players' perceptions of the psychosocial aspect of TD.

Letter to My Younger Self #5

To my 'PhD candidate' self

“Life isn't a series of wins and losses, life is series of wins and LESSONS” (Donnelly, 2016). By the beginning of June 2017, you will have finished round three of data collection and it will be a solid experience. The young men will have just got their first win of the season and collectively, they will be pretty pumped emotionally.

You, on the other hand, you will be feeling pretty beat up emotionally and for the first time in your life, you will really know what stress feels like. So much will be going on in your family, with your close mates and at church, that physically and mentally, you will be pulled in so many directions, and it will affect your ability to think, to focus and to write anything coherently. You will have many days where you will sit at your laptop physically but mentally, you will be checked out. Ride it out, sis, because the sun will

shine. During this time, you will have a couple of opportunities to travel overseas, to be with family and thankfully, clear your mind. It's amazing what a good holiday can do for you. A chance to get away from the books, disconnect from technology, and connect with people – people you love – for real! Enjoy the wins...Embrace the lessons!

You will realise that you need to get back to your spiritual roots because you cannot finish this study without giving service to the Lord. It is He that makes up the difference, but you have to do your part first. As you chat with your supervisory group, you will come to the realization that this (for lack of a better term) 'crap' period was necessary for you to experience. You will have a small glimpse as to the impact that a clouded mind and dealing with off-field pressures can have on performance. This is what I meant about letting yourself evolve as a researcher. You will get there, sis, you just need to keep reminding yourself why and for who you're doing this for. As always, stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo.

Go get your blessings, sis,

Your 'Post-doc' self

Conflicting Worldviews

Eurocentric TD models and theories have been established and are predominantly used to outline the process to achieving excellence for any athlete of any sport. The Theory of Deliberate Practice (Ericsson et al., 1993), LTAD (Balyi, 2001) and the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP) (Côté, 1999) are examples of such models and these have been elaborated on in Chapter Two. The aforementioned models provide a clear road map for athletes striving for greatness and emphasise the importance of deliberately dedicating time and effort to nurturing ones' physical and game-skill development. Whilst the key objective of these models is to identify and

develop world-class winners on the sporting stage, the fact still remains that these TD models are designed for the individual athlete and considers their needs and concerns at an individual level. By substituting Western lenses for an Indigenous pair of lenses it becomes clear that key factors important to Indigenous peoples, tend to be omitted. Specifically, there is a lack of consideration given to the cultural values that are significant to Māori and Pasifika; such as whānau-like relationships and spirituality (Durie, 1994; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001; Smith, G., 2003; Tuagalu, 2008). This further validates my internal struggle as an emerging researcher to explore and unpack participants' perceptions using a culturally responsive approach (see Letter #3). In essence, the scarcity of models or frameworks in the TD literature grounded in Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika epistemology and ontology has been clearly identified and highlighted in previous chapters. Given the epistemological and ontological lens, it was necessary to reflect on and critique the existing TD models and adapt accordingly to fit the needs and questions of my study.

Despite best intentions, the principles from the Western-based tool were used inadvertently as the primary drivers of my study with elements of the Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika frameworks injected. In hindsight, it should have been the other way around (refer to Letter #2 and #3). This has been the crux of my internal struggle that has persisted throughout the study. To truly understand the values that impact and inform the development and performance of Māori and Pasifika RL players, then it is necessary to consider and embrace the Indigenous Māori and Pasifika ontological and epistemological underpinnings from which those beliefs and values are derived (Efi, 2003; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009). Given this realisation over the course of this hīkoi, it is important to further explore this internal struggle.

Privileging te ao Māori and Pasifika Worldview

The ultimate goal of Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika research is to empower and advance the respective peoples and their communities (HRC, 2014; Naepi, 2015; Smith, 1999). Despite the significant contribution the Māori or Pasifika communities give to the game of RL (Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Ng Shiu & Vagana, 2016), there still remains a gap in the understanding of what psychosocial development means from a Māori or Pasifika perspective. This has a compounding effect on the tools, processes and practices that are employed by coaches and support staff to effectively aid the psychosocial development of Māori and/or Pasifika athletes in particular. At present, the current TD models used to identify and develop talent are traditionally grounded in Western epistemology and ontology and are consequently implemented with non-Western communities. Because of this dilemma, Butler and Hardy's (1992) PPT was used as a reference point purely from the TD perspective due to its collaborative design. The PPT (Butler & Hardy, 1992) was adapted to inform the questions and process of the pilot study, whose findings informed the design of the main study. In short, the tool is designed to empower the athlete by encouraging them to take ownership of their development and career by shifting the TD process from being coach-prescribed to athlete-coach prescribed (Butler et al., 1993; Dale & Wrisberg, 1996). Whilst the goals of PPT are similar to Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika research, the principles and process used to achieve the goal differ. The point of difference resides in the individual versus collectivist approach to TD which is reflective of the respective worldviews that both types of research are grounded in (Durie, 1985; Glynn, 2013).

In the context of my study, this was evident when singular, compartmentalised questions were asked of the participants in order to identify and define each psychosocial characteristic of success (e.g. "What does [perceived psychosocial characteristic] mean to you? What does [perceived psychosocial characteristic] look like to you?"). As

participants were young athletes who have yet to transition to the senior elite level, it is possible that they had little self-awareness of psychosocial components that facilitate success (Luft & Ingham, 1955). Additionally, the format of this question caused indifference for those from collectivist cultures like Māori and Pasifika. Their holistic worldview informs the way they view 'self' and especially for Pasifika peoples, they view the 'self' in relation to others (Mo'a, 2015; Tamasese et al., 2005). The findings of my study emphasise this point of difference when the determinants of success evolved from an age-group list (see Chapters Five and Seven), to a foundation of collective values (e.g. relationships, trust and energy), which will be further discussed later in this chapter. Therefore, it was important to prioritise the integration of cultural methods that could assist with reframing the focus group question in order to more appropriately examine participants' sense-making process using their cultural lens.

Focus groups were viewed as the most appropriate context with which to facilitate a dialogue with the participants, as it drew upon the collectivist structure that is embedded within Indigenous communities (Glynn, 2013; Vaoleti, 2006; Walker et al., 2006). The study's guiding principles of tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga and aroha ki te tangata helped to create a safe environment wherein the focus groups could operate. The strength of these guiding principles to the facilitation of focus groups are further substantiated by the collective Pasifika lens wherein the ability to form relationships hinges on principles such as: respect, humility, love, harmony and compassion (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Ioane & Tudor, 2017; Mo'a, 2015). An understanding of the guiding principles and the value of integrating cultural processes was critical to mitigating potentiality of some voices being drowned out by the dominant voices of the group. Hence, whakawhanaungatanga was a key cultural process that contributed to the creation of a safe and comfortable setting for participants to engage in.

One example of whakawhanaungatanga was the invitation from the resident mentors to share kai with the potential participants at the resident home on a night prior to the first scheduled focus group session. Although not an official focus group session, the opportunity to begin to whakawhanaungatanga with the participants earlier was a welcomed opportunity and it highlighted the strength of whanaungatanga I had forged so far with the resident mentors. Evidently, the dinner invitation highlighted the resident mentors perceived value of the study for the development of the participants, future Māori and Pasifika RL players, and the game of RL in Aotearoa in general. Another example of prioritising whakawhanaungatanga can be found in Session One. During this session, the research questions were not even addressed, rather, the whole session was dedicated to whakawhanaungatanga. Specifically, time was invested in listening to, and learning of, each other's hīkoi and aspirations and as a result, a safe space was allowed for reciprocal connections to be made with everyone who was invited to participate in their respective age-group. Key to successful facilitation hinged on my ability to establish reciprocal relationships, as informed by the overarching guiding principles coupled with important Pasifika principles of respect, humility, love and compassion. As such, whakawhanaungatanga was critical to the success of my study (Macfarlane et al., 2008; Smith, G., 2003).

Māori and Pasifika do not readily engage in research settings, possibly due to constantly being taken from as the 'researched' with little reciprocity shown from the 'researcher' (Tupuola, 1994; Walker et al., 2006). Conscious of this notion, and the fact that I was an unknown figure to the participants, my cultural awareness assisted me in securing an opportunity to whakawhanaungatanga in the first place. This was coupled with the relationships I had begun to establish with the people who the participants were familiar with. Hence, as the facilitator, it was my duty to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to share their whakaaro and essentially their hīkoi as an aspiring professional

RL player. This meant being aware of behaviours that may be derived from cultural values and practices, for example waiting for an invitation to speak, which is gained from the common values of respect and reciprocity (Pipi et al., 2004; Samu & Suaalii-Sauni, 2009). The cultural method of talanoa was used to guide discussion as it afforded opportunities for reciprocal relationships to evolve (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Vaioleti, 2006).

Talanoa was discussed in depth in Chapter Three (Research Design). In this chapter I discuss the implications of the talanoa method from a facilitator's perspective in the context of my study. As the facilitator, it was helpful to be aware of those subtle yet significant cultural practices such as (but not limited to): waiting for an invitation to sit at the table or to speak, waiting for everyone else to speak before having a turn, or not wanting to offer a differing opinion as it may be viewed as disrespectful. These behaviours could easily be misinterpreted as being disrespectful or disengaged, however within the sociocultural context of the participants these behaviours reflect the exact opposite (Ioane & Tudor, 2017). As a result, such behaviours required one to respond with respect, humility and compassion, therefore challenging the facilitator to prioritise the needs of the participants over their needs to ask the prescribed interview questions when using talanoa. By doing so, movement between the various dimensions of talanoa from a superficial relationship (talanoa vave) to a more authentic and intimate relationship (pō talanoa) starts to take place (see Letter #4). In short, my ability as a facilitator to consider the above behaviours impacted on the level of engagement and reciprocity that occurred within the group, and effectively their level of comfort to share their whakaaro regarding psychosocial development (Pipi et al., 2004).

Dependent on the age-group and the setting where the focus group sessions took place, various practices were integrated to facilitate my capacity to talanoa and essentially, my capacity to transition from talanoa vave to pō talanoa. With the U20s for example, the act of sharing kai and helping with the dishes was feasible and appropriate

to engage in due to logistical purposes. A karakia (later adapted to a gratitude circle) was offered before we ate to acknowledge the opportunity to be together, inclusive of the focus group session. For both age-groups, short energiser games were used at the beginning of focus group sessions one and two, as a way to create a safe, fun environment. These games also fostered interaction between me as the facilitator and the participants, and between the participants themselves. A final example is found at the conclusion of each session. It was important to acknowledge each participant for their time and presence during the session, so as to validate their critical role to enhancing current TD practices and processes used by NZRL:

End of U20s Session Four: Cool. Man, you guys have shared some really great stuff and I actually almost cried in a couple of those [stories] (laughs). But yeah, I really do appreciate everything that you've contributed to this because like I said, it's going to be [used] for some great things moving forward.

End of U18s Session Two: Thank you boys for being here, I appreciate it. Enjoy your training. I hope you're ready for it!

As such, rather than being guided by a script with definitive questions and outcomes, the interactions in talanoa were guided by the overarching guiding principles, as well as those cultural values that are important to Pasifika (e.g. respect, humility, compassion, security, harmony, love) (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Ioane & Tudor, 2017; Mo'a 2015). Thus, the ability to form reciprocal connections with the participants, and the participants with each other, allowed for those who were less confident to draw upon the strength and example of others in the group to share their whakaaro in a non-threatening environment small group setting (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Loppie, 2007). The use of focus groups offered an opportunity to engage in a format that is reflective of their collective worldviews. Choosing to use talanoa to guide the focus groups fostered flexibility in gathering information but more importantly, talanoa fostered relationships (Fa'avae et al., 2016). Therefore, focus groups were deemed the most appropriate forum to gather information

for my research, as it allowed for human connections to be made and strengthened using a culturally relevant approach such as talanoa.

Everything in te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview is connected and therefore, the operationalisation of the varying determinants of success could take on different meanings based on the context or setting with which participants associated to their learning. As such, enabling participants to contextualise those perceived determinants of success within a setting that was familiar to them, and people that were familiar to them, meant that participants drew from their gained knowledge, developed relationships with others, experience, and observations of why a particular determinant resonated with them as a high performing RL player (MacFarlane et al., 2008). Privileging te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview, participants' sense-making process was just as important, if not more significant than the results itself (Kovach, 2015), as it allowed space for significant cultural values to evolve.

Values are deep-rooted beliefs that pertain to what an individual deems as important, and they inform the way one thinks and acts (Cherrington, 2010; Gorinski, & Fraser, 2006). Values are learned primarily through experience rather than through specific instruction (Fa'alau, 2016). This rationale is reflective of the participants' sense-making process, wherein, they were better able to articulate their perceptions through personal experiences (typically an adverse experience), which then highlighted the values and elements that contribute to the psychosocial aspect of TD in HP sports (Harmsworth & Awatere, 2013). In the case of my study, the value of whanaungatanga was emphasised, be it with other persons or a higher power; as it was fundamental to the development of a psychosocial foundation. This relational theme was consistent for both age-groups and findings suggest that relationships are prerequisite to successful learning and development (Gorinski, & Fraser, 2006), as a high performing RL player. It was through their relationships with others that participants were able to make sense of their

challenges. Findings here suggested that participants' relationships offered a reference point for the process of establishing a psychosocial foundation for success for Māori and Pasifika high performing RL players. Put another way, participants relied on specific support persons to guide them through the struggles they may have been experiencing and because of their relationship, were more adept at listening and implementing their advice. Hence, in addressing the participants' perceived levels of importance of psychosocial development, it was not in the way in which Butler and Hardy (1992) do so by ranking each characteristic on a Likert scale. Rather, findings indicated that participants perceived levels of importance regarding psychosocial development was more appropriately measured against the importance of establishing relationships built on trust and the acknowledgement of an unspoken energy that could be felt from persons or from a spiritual realm.

At this point, the chapter now turns its attention to the process of developing the psychosocial aspect of development within the HP sport setting. This is discussed through the holistic lens of my study by integrating the elements of Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Specifically, the psychosocial process is explored through the construct of te taha hinengaro (*mental/emotional dimension of well-being*), as influenced by, and interconnected with, te taha whānau (*family/social dimension of well-being*) and te taha wairua (*spiritual dimension of well-being*). The concept of the va is also integrated to further elucidate the cultural context of psychosocial development as it related to the HP sport environment. Therefore, this chapter uses an unconventional approach to address the questions of my study, but only to those using a lens that differs to the nature and population of my study's target group.

Letter to My Younger Self #6

To my 'PhD candidate' self,

Round four of data collection will be done by August 2017 and just like that, you'll only have one more hit-out²⁸ with the young men. In your reflections on the first half of the year, you will see how you have evolved as a researcher who has learned to embrace the art of facilitating using Talanoa. You will notice changes of energy, brotherhood and sincerity from the young men as they try to make sense of their personal experiences, given the complexities that culminate TD and HP sports. You will see that the connection between the young men themselves will have strengthened since the first focus group session as the bantering between them starts to show. You will think back to when you asked Terina about the possibility of having dinner before the 20s session so that you don't stand in the way of five hungry, developing athletes. You will acknowledge the impact that change had on your ability to connect with the young men. This difference will be evident in your relationship, or lack of relationship, with those who do not live in the resident home. You will notice the difference in reasoning and sense-making between the 18s and 20s, yet, there will be consistent themes and experiences that start to emerge across both age-groups. You will realise that the young men can feel things and can feel when they've let others and themselves down. They can feel when they've played crap, they can feel when they've played great. Take note of how the young men describe the environments they find themselves in, the people they work with to address their struggles and strive to understand the effect those environments and those people have on them. It may be in those descriptions where you may find the golden nugget to understanding their perceptions of psychosocial development. You're almost there, sis! Stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo.

Go get your blessings, sis,

Your 'Post-doc' self

²⁸ Refers to having one more focus group session with the participants of this study.

Te Taha Hinengaro in High Performance Sport

As has been established in the introduction of this thesis, an understanding of the psychosocial aspect of TD is to explore the impact of the HP sport environment on the athlete's psychological development (Larsen et al., 2014). The evidence in the literature ascertains that the more successful athletes exhibit high levels of psychological skills and motivational orientations (Cook et al., 2010; Gould et al., 2002; Holt & Dunn, 2004; MacNamara et al., 2010a; Rees et al. 2016). The psychosocial determinants of success identified were: sacrifice, attitude, resilience and mental toughness for the U20s (Chapter Five), and sacrifice, selflessness, dedication and a solid support network for the U18s (Chapter Seven); these have been discussed at large in their respective age-group chapters. The majority of these determinants were consistent with the findings from other studies that focused on the perceptions of the coaches of elite youth athletes in their respective sports (Cook et al., 2014; Cupples & O'Connor, 2011; Mills et al., 2012). Interestingly, sacrifice was found to be the most important determinant of success by both age-groups in the current study.

In a HP sport context, to sacrifice is to understand that to pursue sporting excellence one must be willing to give up other activities in order to concentrate on deliberate training and performance (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; MacNamara et al., 2010a). Based on the Western understanding, an athlete would be considered unhealthy or mentally unfit given the sole focus on the athlete's needs. Consequently, the above-mentioned definition would read incomplete when looked through a Māori and Pasifika lens; further accentuating the contrast between the traditionally Eurocentric worldview of the current HP sport system with that of the Māori/Pasifika athlete. By taking a step back and assessing the meaning of sacrifice from the broader, holistic perspective that frames my study (Durie, 1994; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001; Wendt, 1996), an extension of the above definition would include the persons and purpose for which the sacrifice is being made.

Furthermore, the sacrifices that have been made by others that afforded participants the opportunity to be engaged in a HP sport environment are also considered. Hence, sacrifices are likely to be based on the consideration of the needs and well-being of the group which further validates the pursuit of excellence as a collective pursuit (Schaaf, 2006).

Whilst the participants identified specific psychosocial determinants that they perceived to be critical for success, they appeared to be less certain as to how to operationalise the perceived determinants, and much less, the process with which to develop such determinants. For example, developing the right attitude was considered to be an important determinant of success, but articulating the process whereby participants developed the right type of attitude for succeeding as a RL player was more difficult:

...without the right attitude, if you don't have the right attitude you probably won't make, oh you won't make it [to the NRL] and you'll probably take short cuts (P5).

Hopefully we can keep up the same attitude we had on the weekend and build on it. I think everyone finally got sick of losing, aye (U18s Talanoa Four).

Part of the uncertainty may have been attributed to my initial isolated approach (see Letter #3), despite the underpinning cultural methodological framework. Another rationale may have been fear of providing the wrong answer and therefore becoming embarrassed in front of their peers (see Letter #4). As the study evolved and realigned with Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika principles, it became evident that it was necessary to take a step back as a facilitator and allow the participants to articulate their perceptions of psychosocial development in its entirety, as a high performing RL player. Essentially, this adjustment is merely reflective of consciously removing the Western lens and replacing them with the Māori and Pasifika lens. Through this “act”, a better comprehension of what the psychosocial aspect of TD is, and the process of establishing a psychosocial (te taha hinengaro) foundation for success in the TD space can be expressed. In the case of my study, participants acknowledged that adversity is to be expected and their understanding

of te taha hinengaro was more appropriately understood in the context of an adverse experience, as demonstrated by the talanoa's in Chapters Five and Seven.

Contextualising te taha hinengaro through adversity. It is well understood that the pathway to elite level success is complex and follows a non-linear trajectory (Hill et al., 2015; Rees et al., 2016), thus implying that setbacks and challenges are just as much a part of the TD process as success (Hodge & Smith, 2014; Tamminen et al., 2013). Adverse experiences that were alluded to in the talanoa's, such as being dropped to the bench, getting injured, weathering a losing season, or being sent to another team, were acknowledged by participants as part of their TD process (Gould et al., 2002; Hodge & Smith, 2014; Mills et al., 2012; Tamminen et al., 2013):

Coach pulled me up earlier this season because I wasn't going to class and he dropped me till I could show him I was dedicated off the field as much as I am on the field (U18s Talanoa 2).

I'm pretty thing²⁹ about having my mouthguard when I play, and I didn't have it [my mouthguard] – oh like I had it – then I lost it when we did our captains run and then like, I didn't have one before the game and I didn't get one sorted out and I just had a real off game, aye, and I got sent back to club [a lower grade team] the next week (P1).

As participants were retrospectively unpacking the challenges they had experienced, it appeared that my study may have been the first time where they had the opportunity to reflect on the experience *and* verbalise the process they went through, or were still going through, to acknowledge the effect it had on their development and performance. Indeed, this opportunity is supported by the literature whereby adversity has been found to have positive implications on the development and growth of athletes (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Hodge & Smith, 2014; Larsen et al., 2012; Tamminen et al., 2013):

I don't know, just like, different adversities, like previously I wasn't probably expecting to have as many adversities as I did [this season], but just like knowing that, when you just react in the right way towards life, it actually like ends up working out better in your favour and stuff and like, you come out a better person because of what you've been doing sort of thing (P1).

²⁹ The same as saying "I'm pretty picky, particular, finicky etc." A phrase like this is often used when a person cannot find the English equivalent to articulate their thoughts.

You have to go through up and downs in footy. It's not always gonna go your way (P4).

There is a fine line however, as too much or too little stress as a result of the specific challenge could reverse the trajectory of one's growth and development (Collins & MacNamara, 2017). In the case of Pasifika athletes especially, the stress of not being able to contribute to the well-being of one's 'aiga and fulfil their obligations, may be one of those instances where a downward trajectory may evolve as a result of too much stress from adverse experiences (Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006). In particular, if the Pasifika or Māori athlete cannot be there for others (e.g. 'aiga/whānau, teammates), then they are not being true to themselves, and the cycle of psychological distress continues.

In my study, there were instances of personal and collective adversity that impacted the participants' perceptions of the psychosocial aspect of TD. Although participants were aware that adversity was part of the process, it was evident that they invested little time in developing psychosocial skills and strategies, suggesting that the current well-being resources do not resonate with, or address the participants' issues appropriately. Alternatively, staff members themselves may not understand the value of the psychosocial aspect of TD, or they may lack the knowledge and skills regarding how to embed psychosocial development opportunities in their sessions. More than likely however, resources would have been developed using Western-based philosophies, and therefore, the delivery of psychosocial skills and strategies to players likely followed the same philosophical format. It is this latter assertion that has been the driving force for my study. As such, the cultural synthesis continues in an effort to highlight psychosocial processes that are culturally responsive to Māori and Pasifika high performing junior RL players being able to successfully navigate the TD pathway to the professional ranks. The concept of the va presents a unique philosophical perspective that can enhance the way psychosocial development is approached in the HP sport environment.

The Va in High Performance Sport

The va considers the social and spiritual connections between people (Ioane & Tudor, 2017; Mo'a, 2015; Tamasese et al., 2005). For Samoans in particular, the concept of the va is vital to being aware of the ways in which people relate to each other and their surroundings (Tuagalu, 2008). The va is what gives context and meaning to relationships (Wendt, 1996). Meanings can change as the context changes (e.g. on-field versus weight room versus trainers table versus on the road in the hotel room etc.), therefore influencing the relationship. Once the va has been identified, or once these relational spaces have been identified, there is a necessity to *teu le va*, or take care of the space that people interact in to allow relationships to flourish (Ioane & Tudor, 2017). As participants in my study were embedded in a professional RL environment, they were constantly surrounded by persons and processes that demanded nothing short of excellence. The pressure to perform was indicated by the participants' description of the HP sport environment:

I guess especially considering the industry that we're in, it's like pretty ruthless. Like, it can be pretty quick for them [coaches, selectors, administrators] to decide exactly who they want sort of thing (P1).

It's so competitive this professional environment. I see the boys as my brothers but at the same time, we're all fighting for a spot and space is limited (U20s Talanoa 2).

Based on these descriptions, the realities of becoming a professional RL player can be unforgiving and the paradox of two 'brothers' competing for the same spot goes against a core fundamental for Māori and Pasifika peoples. To think about oneself and get gain over another individual in the same collective group does not align with those key governing principles of respect, love, compassion, and humility that are key to the nurturing and maintenance of the va for Pasifika, or whanaungatanga for Māori. Hence, it is an underlining cultural conflict that participants face in navigating the philosophical

divide as a Māori and/or Pasifika trying to ‘make it’ in a Eurocentric-dominant HP sports world which has been found in other studies (Lakisa et al., 2014; Panapa & Phillips, 2014). As such, understanding how to cherish or take care of these relationships is essential for communal cultures such as Māori and Pasifika who place higher value on the collective more so than the individual person (Wendt, 1996). For example, this may be as simple as coaches and selectors adjusting their approach to how they inform their players of selection or non-selection for the upcoming game. If the coaching staff are considerate of the cultural principles of their Māori and Pasifika players their delivery of team selection may suggest that players would be addressed away from their teammates and one-on-one, so as to respect and show compassion for the player, acknowledging his efforts and the external pressures he may be under to support his whānau but also to not cause embarrassment in front of his peers. Effectively, at the centre of this approach are the needs of the player. In delivering the news, it would be appropriate to briefly address the person before addressing the RL player. Furthermore, it may be appropriate for the coach to highlight areas of strengths and also areas of improvement to aid the optimisation of preparation in the upcoming week. This approach would do well to nurture and maintain the va and would demonstrate to the player that their coach cares for them and wants the best for his players, which for Māori and Pasifika, includes wanting the best for their families as well.

Given that RL is a team sport, an understanding of the va can help players better appreciate their role and responsibility on the team which could then offer a player a more positive outlook and effectively contribute to the success of the collective (Samu et al., 2011). As players execute their roles and responsibilities, the collective gains from it and in turn can take better care of the individuals within the group (Mills et al., 2012). Conversely, when individuals are unable to meet their obligations, it can negatively impact on the cohesiveness of the unit and in the context of my study, contribute to a

losing season. For the participants, it was the inconsistent enforcement of accountability, inconsistent messaging and lack of trust within the team environment as a whole.

I think it's just – when they [coaches] say something from the start then you just stick to it like...instead of like when time gets tough they sort of like change and like...yeah, they have their favourites like – I don't really know what the words for it, cos it's a hard thing to say (P2).

Oh I don't disagree with P2, aye, like, I reckon if coach says something from the start then like um, or like he says, yeah certain things – but then like he contradicts himself throughout the year then like it makes it kinda hard to buy-in to what they're saying. And I think like – the inconsistency kinda kills the culture a little bit and not everyone's treated differently and like, yeah (P1).

The necessity for coaching support staff to be aware of how to nurture the va within a HP sport context and the impact its having on the team environment was inevitably highlighted. Hence, a coach who displays contradictory behaviour negatively implicates the development and performance which was highlighted by guiding the team to a losing season. This is a prime example of the implication of not taking care of the va.

Another example that can be drawn upon whereby the sacred relational space was not being acknowledged nor respected was highlighted by P5, who stated:

...well I think just you know understanding for some people that you know um-yeah, just like, we're just not all the – even though we're athletes we're not all the same...and we deal with things differently and our injuries are different. They're not trying to just bring us into just one whole group to stay in if we have this injury and to realise that if it really affects us then – it's something, there's obviously something quite wrong. It's not just like – sort of affects us or like...oh cos it, affects everyone in a different way, maybe not physically but maybe mentally, or maybe not mentally but physically.

The holistic view of health for Māori and Pasifika sees the mind, body and spirit as being inseparable and therefore the effects of dealing with a physical injury or being dropped to the bench extends far beyond the physical surface of reduced playing time. The lack of care and consideration for the well-being and recovery process of the injured player is an indication of the va being stymied. More important and telling than the coach's words, is their behaviour and actions towards the injured player. In other words what is important to the player is not necessarily what coach says, but the actions that follow his words. By

not taking the time to listen to their players and presuming that two athletes with the same injury should then bounce back with the same rehabilitation process within the same time frame, the coach or the support staff has effectively shown little interest in the player and their situation. An awareness and understanding of the va would indicate that the injured player relies on the support of their coach and the support staff to successfully progress through the physical rehabilitation process which is also inclusive of their mental and spiritual needs. As such, the concept of the va and teu le va offers a perspective on a more appropriate process to optimising preparation and effectively performance for Māori and/or Pasifika high performing RL players. In other words, it is necessary for the player to trust the person who is in charge of their rehabilitation process and essentially the TD process, further validating the strong relational theme that evolved in my study.

By relating the va to the HP sports setting, the establishment and nurturing of relationships becomes a fundamental piece of work that should be considered when assisting Māori and Pasifika athletes thereby enacting a more holistic approach to TD. As participants move between the different spaces that are associated with the HP sport environment, (e.g. the field, to the locker room, to the team huddle, to the physical trainer's room to the mental skills trainer's office etc.), the concept of the va can help give meaning to the relationships in these various spaces. Hence, by creating awareness and understanding of the va, the roles of those in charge of the TD pathway process can be reconceptualised as they relate to the player as well as the relationship with the game of RL. Considering that five out of nine participants lived in the resident home for a portion or duration of the study, this presented a unique opportunity to illustrate the implications that may stem from an understanding of the va. Furthermore, the example of the resident home also offers insight as to the value of teu le va as it relates to the development of high performing junior RL players.

The Va of the Resident Home

The resident home offered participants open-access to resources, one-to-one mentoring, a possible support network and a structure conducive to athlete development. Resident mentors were responsible for the day-to-day operations of the home and approached their role in a holistic manner, helping high performing RL players develop on and off the field:

They've helped heaps of boys' transition into the footy environment teaching them to take care of the little things, and they help us boys prepare for life off the field as well as on the field (P2).

I was able to make the most of the help as well and just realising like how much, like how fortunate we are to have so much resources and stuff here. Especially the support of like [resident mentors] ... I've probably grown more than what I have through that whole year before (P1).

The resident mentors had multiple opportunities to whakawhanaungatanga with the residents and respected their responsibility to nurture the va (Mo'a, 2015; Samu et al., 2011). One approach to nurturing the va was that all residents were required to come together for a sit-down kai each night if they were home. Prior to eating, a karakia would be offered by one of the residents to give thanks for the kai. The practice of sharing kai and expressing gratitude aligned with the cultural values and practices that the participants whakapapa to (Robinson & Robinson, 2005; Smith, 1999; Tipene-Matua et al., 2014). Interestingly, halfway through the study, Terina shared with me that all members of the resident home determined that in lieu of offering a karakia for the kai, each resident would share one thing they were grateful for, with everyone at the table. Given that I would eat with the group before we transitioned to the focus group session, I was invited to be part of their modified approach to karakia. Examples of gratitude that were shared outwardly by the residents were for: the food they were about to eat, living in the resident home, the resident mentors, and the opportunity to play on the weekend. Because of the diversity of the residents in terms of ethnicity and religion, this change encouraged a more inclusive practice whilst still being able to offer gratitude to a Higher

Being, which was important to some of the residents, and the resident mentors. Through this practice, the participants actively learned what the ‘right foods’ were, portion sizes, and hydration for optimal development. More importantly, there was a deliberate and intentional allocation of time set aside each night for resident mentors to strengthen reciprocal relationships, and indirectly assess the needs of each resident.

The resident mentors were mindful of their responsibility to stimulate an environment that could positively impact the development process for those players in the resident home. Preparation and routine were key strategies that the participants learned to implement in the resident home. Preparation and routine included the participants planning out their weekly schedule inclusive of work, school, training and game-day commitments:

Not too bad [first week of school]. Pretty full on though. But yeah, figure it's just getting used to, gotta get that right routine in and it should be all goods...yeah gotta get it all sussed, aye just so that it doesn't get on top of me (P5).

Examples of physical preparation included eating the right food, staying hydrated, getting adequate rest, doing recovery and doing personal training, were examples of physical preparation. Additionally, participants in the resident home were required to help with household chores, do their own laundry and were expected to keep a tidy room:

I guess getting into routine, going to bed early, and you know eating the right amount of food and getting used to training as well. Yeah, I guess that's what got me to where I am (P2).

...I haven't been in here [resident home] long but for me, I've learned heaps. Just about diets, doing my washing, making my bed. I didn't never used to do that (P3).

All participants, both residents and non-residents, acknowledged that doing things that prepared the body for game-day was important for long-term success. Those who lived in the resident home however, were in an ideal situation whereby they had access to nutritional meals, their own beds and for some, their own bedrooms. Residents also had

the support of resident mentors who regularly encouraged them to practice being prepared by establishing personal routines and leveraging off the support system within the home.

The house protocols mentioned in this section can be tied back to the pillars of health found in Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). In essence, a sense of belonging or whanaungatanga (te taha whānau) was created as residents learned to respect each other's space and property. The shared responsibility of taking care of the resident home was integral to enhancing the collective well-being of the resident home, which in turn strengthened relationships between the residents themselves and also with the resident mentors. Coming together for kai and engaging in an adapted version of prayer (te taha wairua) exemplified respect for the values and beliefs of those present in the resident home. This same holistic approach could also pay dividends in the HP sport environment that all participants engaged in daily, if implemented appropriately. These practices and protocols may seem insignificant, or even irrelevant, in the whole scheme of TD. But the interactions and house protocols that emanated within the va, appeared to have significant ramifications for both the participants and resident mentors. Through the consistent effort of the resident mentors to teu le va, the U20s participants in particular, began to make connections and transfer their learnings from the resident home to the field. In essence, the va is not tangible, rather, it is the feelings that permeate the resident home as a result of the resident mentors consistently showing care and interest in the players under their watch through their words, actions and feelings (Ioane, 2017b). As a result, players recognised the benefits of "taking care of the little things" such as laundry, dishes, keeping a tidy room, in order to have a clear and focused mind to approach training and game-day. Therefore, it would seem more beneficial to develop more generalised and transferrable skills, like preparation and routine, that instil confidence in one's ability to overcome adversity and

succeed in any environment, whether that would include RL or not (Collins & MacNamara, 2017).

This section has highlighted the importance of the psychosocial aspects of TD as perceived by the participants and utilised the concept of the va to inform understanding regarding the strong relational theme that evolved from the findings. The next section continues to discuss participants sense-making of psychosocial development through the cultural concept of te taha hinengaro. The discussion is shaped by the acknowledgement of the interrelating elements of te taha whānau or the fundamental principle of relationships as being vital to the process of developing a psychosocial foundation for success in HP sports.

Letter to My Younger Self #7

To my 'PhD candidate' self,

You will reach the end of 2017 and be thinking – what a year! You will have finished your last round of focus group sessions in September 2017, which really will be used as a gratitude session. You will tie everything together for the young men by helping them understand the importance of knowing their 'WHY'. Why do they do the things that they have chosen to do. You will then open the floor for the young men to share any last words with you that they would like NZRL to know. To your surprise, you will have one boy who will muster up the courage to share. The other boys will laugh and banter a little with him aka "Master Courage", but you will remind the young men that this is a safe space where everyone's voice is valued, and you will encourage "Master Courage" to proceed. His voice will be validated by the other young men and even though we can all smell dinner cooking in the background, the young men will feed off "Master Courage" and expand on his final thoughts.

You will thank the young men for their honesty over the past year and for making the effort to come to the sessions. As a token of your appreciation, you will give the young men a koha, and for the first time ever, all the young men will not only explicitly say thank you, but they will come up to you, one by one, and embrace you. A major breakthrough and a moment whereby you will be wishing that you could have more time with the young men to dig deeper and truly understand and unpack their whakaaro and their lived reality as young Māori and/or Pasifika males who also happen to be high performing junior RL players. Hei aha – that’s the nature of research! Stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don’t be afraid to challenge the status quo.

Go get your blessings, sis,

Your ‘Post-doc’ self

Te Taha Whānau in High Performance Sport

The definition of whānau transcends the traditional Western nuclear family within the framework of my study to include those relationships that one develops with people in various settings (Durie, 1994; Milne, 2005; Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). For participants in my study, whanaungatanga with others appeared to underpin every aspect of their aspirations, development and performance. In addition to parental support, the influence of girlfriends who were also elite athletes in their respective sports (U20s specifically), and the implications of social media on the support network (U18s specifically), were a couple of interesting findings that emerged in my study. These findings were unique to their specified age-group and considered worthy of further discussion given the view that my study appreciates of whānau. Specifically, whānau is not confined to, or defined by blood (Bishop, 1995; Macfarlane et al., 2008). The above-mentioned support persons had received less attention in the TD

literature. Nonetheless, they appear to have influenced the participants' whakaaro of the psychosocial aspect in relation to optimal development and performance.

Parental support. The support that participants received from their parents had been paramount to securing the opportunity to develop in a HP sport environment. The literature expounded upon the evolving role of parental support as their children progressed along the TD pathway (Côté, 1999; Gould et al., 2002; Woodcock et al., 2011), and this is reflected in experiences that the participants had along their developmental hīkoi.

...just when I was little they'd pay for heaps (laughs) when I played league and stuff. It costs heaps (laughs) (P3).

...they are big supporters. They keep me honest. Because it's been quite a rough start for the year for me, they are just always there for me because of my health, so yeah (P5).

...my Dad has been my coach for all my years...whenever he coached me, he just like you know when coaches have their sons on their teams he makes them captains and stuff, so like he was actually pretty hard on me. He'll like always growl me and stuff. So yeah, it helped me a lot...but I know he's just treating me like everyone else on the field when it comes to the team (P9).

As highlighted above, prior to receiving a contract from a professional RL organisation, participants whānau filled administrative, coaching, financial and emotional roles of support.

In the context of Māori and Pasifika RL players, it seems that the fundamental principle of whānau offered the participants a base from which they used to expand their support network. As participants were already integrated into a professional environment, albeit in the development system, the pressure to fulfil familial obligation would presumably ensue. Unlike other studies however, participants did not indicate the shifting of whānau support to pressure from whānau to fulfil familial obligations (Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006). Rather, participants spoke of the sacrifices that have been made by key support persons and it was those sacrifices which imbued their passion to repay those people (typically parents) and make something great of their lives. The desire

to repay those sacrifices aligned with the findings of other studies that explored Māori and Pasifika athlete development (Keung, 2014; Lakisa et al., 2014; Schaaf, 2006; Zakus & Horton, 2009). The participants' recognition of parental sacrifices offered them their first example of key determinants of success:

Our parents have sacrificed a lot for us. Yeah they work endless hours to ensure that we...I guess they want us to have a better life than what they had and they don't want us to go through what they went through growing up as a child (P5).

I never thought in the back of my mind I'd be here today...with the [RL club]. I always thought that I'm gonna be there in [Pacific island] the rest of my life, but my parents wanted a better...wanted the best for us and over here is more opportunities. At the time I never realised but now as I've gotten a little bit older I think about what they talked about and yeah, I realise that now (P2).

If you're finding it hard to make that sacrifice, think of everything Mum and Dad have done for you. They pay for everything – Mum cooks and cleans; Dad coaches you. They take you to trainings and games. They push you even though sometimes you don't want to go to training and try to make excuses for why you don't want to go. Your parents will always be there and support you. Now that I'm living away from home, I recognize the sacrifices my parents have made for me (U18s Talanoa 2).

Parents were cited to have worked hard to create opportunities and to provide for their children to play RL; whether that meant working long hours, volunteering to coach their teams or filling the role of taxi driver. Hence, participants desire to repay those sacrifices, and then acknowledge sacrifice as a personal construct for success was not surprising. Regardless of the fine line that has been highlighted in the literature between whānau support and the perceived pressure from whānau for elite Māori and Pasifika athletes (Horton, 2014; Panapa & Phillips, 2014; Schaaf, 2006; Zakus & Horton, 2009), there is still validity in considering whānau as a fundamental contributor to te taha hinengaro.

It is difficult to deduce why the participants in my study had not yet had their support from their whānau crossover to pressure. It could be associated to most of the sample group having a stable whānau support network and therefore participants were not pressured nor expected to be the breadwinner at this stage of their development. Additionally, the resident home was reflective of a stable whānau support network despite

residents living away from their parents and therefore, the participants who lived in the resident home had access to various support programmes, inclusive of supportive resident mentors. This finding could also be associated to the nature of a focus group session and therefore participants may not have felt comfortable enough to speak about familial pressure in front of their peers. Finally, the majority of the sample group are born and largely raised in Aotearoa. Therefore, they live in bi-cultural, diasporic communities whereby their traditional values, practices and protocols conflict with the dominant Pākehā culture of Aotearoa (Ioane, 2017a). Regardless, whānau and whanaungatanga were highlighted by the participants as a vital factor to successful progression along the TD pathway.

While whānau may not necessarily hold the keys to participants' game-skill development, they do influence the participants' intrinsic motivations (Côté, 1999; Hodge et al., 2012; Keung, 2014). From an Indigenous Māori and Pasifika worldview, any pursuit that one embarks on, such as becoming a professional RL player, is not an individual pursuit, but a collective pursuit (Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013; Samu et al., 2011). Therefore, the strength and power that the participants gained from whānau support was evident when the participants struggled to be intrinsically motivated to get up for training or complete other tasks associated with their development and performance. For example, even if players do not have the energy or motivation to get up for training, they did so at the persistence and support of their parents:

[My family supports] by just being at my games and just buying food...um, they're always pushing me to come to training, not being lazy and stuff (P8).

They [parents] never miss a game even if they live up north [of Auckland], they come down every weekend pretty much...even if just to watch club games. Their support like, it's crazy. It does heaps for me...it helps me focus more knowing that they put all that effort to support me and makes me try harder (P4).

I guess, some of us are away from our families and when you're feeling down, just think about your family and how hard they've worked to get you to where you are (P2).

As such, whānau played key roles for both U18s and U20s participants, important in helping players to stay focused and committed to the goal at hand. The vital role of whānau support insofar as moral and emotional support was concerned, did not appear to diminish even if the participants moved away from home.

Now that the participants were embedded in a HP sport environment, the administrative and coaching responsibilities transferred to those persons housed within the HP sport environment or close peers. This was consistent with the literature whereby the roles of support evolved as an athlete progresses along the TD pathway (Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Holt & Dunn, 2004). The literature highlighted that coaches play a major role in facilitating the successful development of their athletes (Camiré et al., 2014; Gould et al., 2002; Martindale et al., 2005; Woodcock et al., 2011), as well as teammates (Bruner et al., 2008; Holt & Dunn, 2004). However, less is known regarding the impact of girlfriends who are elite athletes as well the implications of social media on the successful development of athletes. Relating these unique findings to the fundamental value of whānau, the organising principle and structure of whānau (Edwards et al., 2007; Macfarlane, 2013; Nahkid, 2009), can impact the way Māori and Pasifika athletes view the HP sport environment and thereby approach the TD pathway. Additionally, there are principles and values that are associated with whanaungatanga or whānau-like relationships that essentially inform the type of support persons that athletes may welcome into their support network. Through whanaungatanga "...connections, obligations and responsibilities between people are strengthened" (Macfarlane, 2013, p. 143), which therefore promotes a shared vision and responsibility for the collective development and well-being (Macfarlane et al., 2008; Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker et al., 2006). As such, the fundamental learnings transferred from the whānau structure to the HP sport whānau structure validated the need to highlight the impact of those unique support persons or processes unique to my study.

Girlfriends who are elite athletes. The coaches of elite youth athletes have argued that girlfriends were a distraction and negatively influence someone who is on the TD as a junior athlete (Mills et al., 2012). The impact of being in a relationship was discussed more at length with the U20s. The U20s participants whose girlfriends were elite athletes themselves appeared to positively influence their development and performance. Having someone who could relate to the rigours and demands of a HP setting equated to a level of mutual respect, competition and understanding that ensued in the relationship. The moral and emotional support that participants received from their girlfriends was validated by the shared experiences of dealing with performance slumps, injuries, and balancing on and off-field commitments:

...we [participant and his girlfriend] have a pre-game routine which makes me feel a bit emotional but excited at the same time to get the job done. She always tells me to do my best and when I get out there, to focus on the footy (P2).

I just look at my girlfriend as family...I reckon just her support. Like she doesn't know the game very well. She doesn't know positions and like how league works, but she kind of supports me more in terms of the decisions I make off the field. You know she's just really good at like eating healthy...needing to be on time for work...little things like that...when we're training and stuff, just seeing how she pushes herself keeps me going...and we're pretty competitive and so when she trains hardout and stuff I try train harder [laughs]. Nah it's good cos like, we were both put in the same position and like we're both on the grind. She kinda understands that and we both support each other and help each other out in that aspect of things and then like...just from a whole general sporting perspective she's got a pretty good understanding of it (P1).

The participants' elite athlete girlfriends offered moral and emotional support, by way of challenging and motivating them as needed. They understood the importance of creating and adhering to a routine, and the physical and mental preparation required at the elite level. Furthermore, because the girlfriends were elite athletes themselves, there appeared to be a higher standard and knowledge of accountability. Their own experience as elite athletes allowed them to make the connections between the development of good habits and decision-making skills off the field to their development and performance on the field. Given their relational view of self (Anae, 2010; Tuagalu, 2008), the participants

appeared to leverage off their girlfriends' level of dedication and work ethic that they put in towards their own sporting pursuits, therefore giving the participants an opportunity to visualise how to approach their development and performance. As a result, having a partner who is also engaged in a HP sport environment has shown positive implications for the U20s participants' capacity to cope with the demands of being on the TD pathway. At the U18s level, social media appeared to play a key role in their everyday life.

Implications of social media on support network. Social media is a platform designed to connect people and it is a commonplace where the youth of today congregate (Ahn, 2011). This finding was relevant more so at the U18s level where the participants highlighted the impact of social media on the social fabric of their generation, and acknowledged the need to use the platform wisely:

...yeah, social media plays a big role in like society and all the teenagers I guess...I guess just learning when to use it and when not to use it...and just being sensible with instead of staying up late as (P6).

Spending countless hours engaging with others via social media may impact one's physical and psychological well-being and development due to the lack of sleep or unsolicited advice (Ahn, 2011; Ellison et al., 2007). In my study where the participants highlighted sleep as an important part of preparation for training sessions and game day, deciding to disconnect could pay large dividends for the athletes in sustaining development and success.

The participants also highlighted having a network of good influences. The implication of trying to separate oneself from those who engage in behaviour not conducive to the participants' goals can become blurred territory when one is constantly connected online and in particular, via social media. In other words, there were no barriers for the participants to access moral and emotional support from their peers in real-time through social media. Hence using social media appeared to be another platform or opportunity for support persons to connect with athletes for moral and emotional support

and to ensure that players are receiving information conducive to well-informed and educated decision-making. More research should be conducted to explore the implications of social media on an athlete's development and performance, and in particular, high performing junior athletes.

U18s participants also used social media to indirectly connect with their role-models. This was also an unintended finding but an important one to consider nonetheless, given that today's adolescents have been referred to as 'digital natives' (Sadhira et al., 2016). Referring to today's adolescents, 'digital natives' evolved because they have been born and raised with technology being readily available and are otherwise unaware of a life without online and social media platforms. Through online and social media platforms individuals can learn about their role-models hīkoi, aspirations and essentially, develop a sense of a connection with them despite having never formally met nor engaged with them, as highlighted by P6:

I played RL by watching their (NRL role-models) careers and how they went through stuff and um, watching documentaries on YouTube©.

The relational value of YouTube© meant that participants did not necessarily have to wait for a fan day or game day to get a glimpse of their role-models, let alone learn intimate details of their life-story. Additionally, YouTube© provided the participants an opportunity to develop game-skill knowledge and thereby learn the intricacies of RL from their favourite players:

...ah yeah my favourite RL player is Benji Marshall. I looked up to him 'cause he was a Māori, same as me...played the same position. Nah yeah I used to watch his clips on YouTube© [because] he's done stuff that other people couldn't do like back passes (pauses), he'd help set up like freaky tries (group laughs) ...nah yeah, he made it look normal too (P9).

Through YouTube© and other social media platforms, participants were inspired by and resonated with those players that came from similar cultural backgrounds and could succeed at the highest levels of RL. In this light, social media can expand an athletes' support network to include their role-models. For those elite or professional sporting

organisations who have a TD pathway programme embedded in their system, this may present an opportunity for the senior players to engage with and inspire the junior players to continue with their pursuit. Using the online platform, content could be delivered to junior players that cross all aspects of TD. Although a key emphasis should be focused on stories that illustrate senior players' capability to manage stress and overcome adversity, this therefore reinforces the realities of becoming a professional sportsperson but through a medium and from persons whom junior players, such as the U18s participants, resonate with. More research is needed however, to explore the relationship between individuals and role-models through social media, what the nature or purpose the relationship would be, and most importantly, the impact such a relationship may have on TD.

In a high-pressure environment such as HP sport where feelings of isolation can occur as a result of adverse events, it is the quality of human relationships that can counterbalance such emotions and negative experiences (Lakisa et al., 2014). The adverse experiences that participants were dealing with personally (e.g. injury, non-selection) and collectively (e.g. a losing season) during the course of my study were not uncommon challenges to those identified in previous studies of high performing and elite level athletes (Bruner et al., 2008; Hollings et al., 2014; Pelka & Kellmann, 2017; Petipas et al., 2005). However, what continues to be overlooked by other models of TD, is the critical value of te taha whānau, or the establishment of key relationships, in addressing participants' negative experiences relative to te taha hinengaro or their emotional and psychological well-being. The opportunity to engage kanohi-ki-te-kanohi and with shared kai is a valued practice for Māori and Pasifika (HRC, 2014; Robinson & Robinson, 2005; Tipene-Matua et al., 2009), however, the technological advances available today allow for instant connection. As a result, the online relational space is certainly worth considering as a possible space that could facilitate whanaungatanga between athletes and

their support network, as they learn to manage the pressures and stresses that are associated with the HP TD pathway.

To summarise, this section has acknowledged the participants' awareness of needing to have the right people around them to support their pursuit early in their career, which mirrors that which has been found in the literature (Bruner et al., 2008; MacNamara & Collins, 2013; Martindale et al., 2005). The discussion that has taken place in this chapter has emphasised the importance of whānau for Māori and Pasifika as it relates to the participants' development, performance and overall health and well-being. Compared with other studies, findings in this current study did not highlight any perceived pressure from whānau as it has in other studies. Rather the opposite was found, and participants were motivated by the support and sacrifices their whānau had made for them to pursue their dream of becoming a professional RL player. Based on the findings of the current study, it is this fundamental value of relationships (te taha whānau) that has informed the development of a psychosocial foundation (te taha hinengaro) for success which will be further discussed in the next section.

Establishing the Foundation of Te Taha Hinengaro through Te Taha Whānau

In order to attain excellence, the participants must learn how to manage the demands of being a high performing junior RL player in a professional environment (Larsen et al., 2012). Being in a HP sport environment, they have access to several resources and 'certified' support persons to give them the best opportunity to succeed as a RL player (Mills et al., 2012; Kerr & Stirling, 2017). However, it was the participants' support network that offered them an outlet to unpack their stresses despite having access to specialist support staff and resources:

But to be honest, no matter who I go to for feedback, uncle seems to be only person I can understand and who understands me when it comes to getting feedback on my game. Every time I talk with Uncle about my struggles, whether on-field or off-field, I always leave our conversations feeling confident that I can

achieve my dreams. Uncle always keeps it real and tells it straight. He tells me what I need to hear and does it in a way in which I know he's only trying to get the best out of me, even though I don't want to hear it (U20s Talanoa 3).

Ng Shiu and Vagana (2016) highlighted that Pasifika were the least likely to utilise the services offered by the NRL. The discrepancy between the specialist support persons' and participants' support network appeared to boil down to a lack of relationship and ability to connect. Put another way, despite having access to resources and specialist staff whose roles are to address the personal welfare of athletes, the absence of fundamental cultural values essentially diminished the positive impact that these resources and specialist support persons could have on Māori and Pasifika participants. Therefore, findings suggested that trust was critical to the stability of this relational foundation, as it was the conduit whereby knowledge and energy could be transmitted between the participant and others to establish a connection.

Trust. Participants struggled to define trust; rather, they reflected on personal experiences to make sense of what trust looked and felt like. Both positive and negative experiences that participants have had with others such as coaches, mentors and teammates have shaped their view of trust:

Related to a former youth club coach: Coach was always there for me. He always gave me feedback and would even take me for extra trainings. Even now, he's still there for me. He'll come pick me up and we'll just catch up about life in general. I know I can ask him any question to do with footy stuff and life. Sometimes he'll growl me but I don't get mad because it helps me to re-focus and I know what I have to do to get where I want to be. So find you a mentor. Someone that you can trust, who is open, available and who can give you honest feedback (U18s Talanoa 3).

Based on the experience with a HP Junior RL coach: I think sometimes what they say, is what they do. So if they say they will do something for you then, and they come through and do it then. I think that's one way of trusting, a person (P5).

General statement: No matter what goes through your life, they'll always be there for you no matter what (P2).

Based on these examples, participants viewed trust as being consistent in word, actions and accountability. In an attempt to further define trust, P2 described it as “you just know”

and “you get that feeling”. Those two statements may appear subjective and abstract, but for Indigenous peoples communicating through emotions and feelings is just as valuable to them if not more than communicating using words (Durie, 1994). Therefore, the implication of P2’s statement is a fair assessment because Pasifika connect first with their hearts (Fitisemanu, 2015), and that resonates with the Indigenous worldview that has a spiritual overtone to it (Hart, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous peoples’ belief that all things are interconnected (i.e. people, environment, cosmos etc.) suggests that an investment of time and space is necessary to find and make connections, be it familial, social, or geographical (Curtis, 2016; Samu et al., 2011; Smith, 1999; Wendt, 1996). The influence a coach can have on an athlete’s successful progression has already been established in the TD literature (Camiré et al., 2014; Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999; Martindale et al., 2007; Stambulova et al., 2012). In the case of my study, trust may be an important mediating factor that is not regularly considered in TD models. This further validates the necessity for more culturally responsive TD models that acknowledge significant cultural values, principles and practices as critical indicators of success for Māori and Pasifika.

The practical, informational and game-skill knowledge that underpins an athlete’s successful progression has regularly been discussed as critical types of support that a coach can offer to those under their tutelage (Gould et al., 2002; Martindale et al., 2005; Woodcock et al., 2011). Whilst these are key to succeeding in sport, even more important for Māori and Pasifika is being able to trust and connect with their coach. Findings from my study offer evidence that an absence of trust significantly decreased the coach’s ability to connect with their players and therefore, the coach had limited opportunities to effectively help their player successfully navigate their way through each adverse experience. Even a basic understanding, awareness or consideration for culture

would be a major step towards the building of trust (Schaaf, 2006). This notion can be supported by a successful rugby coach whose player base was predominantly Pasifika:

Generally, the approach to coaching a white player and a brown player is different-especially when it comes to motivating them... Really it's just a matter of time, letting them get to know you and trust you...once you have that then you can begin to be a little direct (Schaaf, 2006, p. 43).

Like the other aspects of TD, establishing a psychosocial foundation for success is achieved over time. But once trust has been earned, it may be the pivotal edge that turns a losing situation into a win. Further to this, the development of trust could cultivate a transformative HP environment wherein the athlete becomes intrinsically motivated to prepare and perform to the best of their ability, alongside their coach and teammates, and thereby take pride in being able to represent their team, whānau and community. Thus, the findings suggest that relationships (as understood through te taha whānau and the concept of the va) and trust should be considered fundamental to establishment of te taha hinengaro for Māori and Pasifika athletes. To build upon the notion of trust, a recurring phrase that emerged from the data was to 'trust the process.'

Trust the process. It is widely acknowledged that the TD pathway is a complex process that involves a myriad of people, resources and time to transform a talented athlete into a successful elite athlete (Li et al., 2015; MacNamara & Collins, 2013). The process to become a professional RL player was no less complex for the participants in my study. Thus, to trust the process was to trust that the desired results will be achieved, according to the time and effort put into executing the plans that were employed by the coaching staff, and any other stakeholders involved:

"Oh (sigh), think just trust what we're doing and keep training it. Like on Saturday we finally got a win and so I reckon the boys will be more confident. I know that came from sticking to the game plan" (P3).

To trust the process also meant that participants had to trust in their ability to make the right decision for their TD, and therefore accept responsibility for those decisions. Although the process changed at various times along the TD pathway for each participant

due to reaching a milestone, or an adverse event, the same resolve still applied to trust the process:

“I think when going out to a game, knowing that the preparation’s been right, and you feel that you are doing training throughout the week so that what you do in the game, it should come up automatically into your head, when you get into that [high-pressure] situation. Just trusting that you’ve done everything right. Talk yourself through that moment, which helps you make the right decision” (P2).

The participants suggested that the TD process include good preparation and establish a routine conducive to succeeding on the TD pathway, as well as being surrounded by the right people who supported the lifestyle and habits of a high performing athlete. Researchers have acknowledged the higher standards or expectations that are associated with transitioning from the junior levels to the senior levels of sports (Mills et al., 2012; Stambulova et al., 2012), and therefore, participants recognition of having the right people that can assist them in sticking to their routines can be supported.

In an effort to gain more understanding around the notion of trusting the process within a HP sport context, a World Champion and well-respected Pasifika elite athlete who has sustained a high-level of success in their sport for about 20 years offered this simple yet profound statement that: *“In order to trust the process you have to trust the person in charge of the process”* (personal communication, September 27, 2017). The persons referred to include anyone that has power or influence on the trajectory of an athlete’s development and potential sporting career. Within the context of my study and at this stage of the participants’ development, the coaching staff and the resident mentor were persons that could be viewed as influential to the participants’ development process.

Trust the person in charge of the process. The notion of developing trust for the person in charge of the TD process aligns with the core fundamental of whānau for Māori and Pasifika and highlights the respect for authority or those who have the knowledge-base (HRC, 2014; Ioane, 2017a; Winitana, 2012). The elite athlete elaborated that without trust, an athlete’s output can be negatively impacted because they do not buy-

in to the process that those in charge have set in place. Therefore, trust implicated the type of energy that permeated through the team which then influenced the way the participants approached the game, trainings, each other and their coach. This finding was consistent with other studies that examined Pasifika RL players experiences in the NRL where feelings of isolation and dislocation developed given the absence of familiar cultural values (Lakisa et al., 2014; Panapa & Phillips, 2014). Given the centrality of relationships for Māori and Pasifika, trust can go a long way to ensuring that the reciprocal relationship in a HP sport context can be beneficial for both parties involved and effectively, the collective.

Research has highlighted the pivotal role coaches have in the development of athletes, especially in their transition from the junior to senior level (Gould et al., 2002; Martindale et al., 2005). For some participants, there was a lack of trust between them and their coaches:

But when coach says something from the start then doesn't stick to it and changes what he said, especially when time gets tough, it makes it hard for us to buy into what he's saying. The inconsistency kinda kills the culture to be honest (U20s Talanoa 5).

This distrust directly impacted their ability to commit to the structures or regimes that coach prescribed for their team, and it also diminished player confidence in any feedback that coach gives to the players. Coaches are in a position of authority and therefore their position of power and authority is associated with a level of respect whereby their knowledge as a coach should not be challenged (Ioane, 2017a). This is a view generally held by Pasifika youth, but similar principles and values are shared by Māori youth (Edwards et al., 2007). When viewed in the context of the va it recognises that the va invokes respect, compassion, security, harmony and love. Therefore, a coach who sends mixed-messages then stifles the va which has the potential to devalue their position of influence authority, they therefore lose respect and honour from their players and essentially stall team performance, as it did for the participants in my study. The catalyst

for P1's flip from rugby union to RL stemmed from his strained relationship with his coach that effectively decreased his confidence and passion for the game:

It kinda just got to a stage with union where me and the coach at my school...had our differences and stuff, and it kind of strained my confidence a lot playing under him. I kinda just left there feeling no good or anything like that (P1).

The above example underscored the impact a coach can have on a player's psychosocial development and ability to perform. Knowing the coach plays a vital role in the process of TD, it appears that a coach's inability to resonate and connect with their players can contribute to the downward trajectory spoken of earlier:

Um, I think um personally from my experience this year, um like...[pause]...like for the coaches like, from the start like coaches, you have to stay true yourself no matter what. Like they say, if they say something from the start like an honest – like no matter how tough it is they should always be true to themselves then – instead of like when time gets tough they change...it sort of like affects some of the players trust (P2).

Consequently, the inability to establish a connection with their coach, or commit to the coach's game plan can negatively impact players executing the plan on game-day. For the player, the ramification of a lack of connection with the coach or commitment to the game-plan could lead to a bad performance and possibly result in being demoted to the bench or from the squad completely. The resulting negative string of events could possibly translate to participants losing out on an opportunity to showcase their talent in the hopes of securing a senior level professional contract. For Pasifika participants in particular, the implication of each lost opportunity appeared to hold more weight given their strong desires to fulfil their kinship obligations (Marsters, 2017; Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013), coupled with the notion that their personal success as well as failure, reflects the success or failure of their 'aiga (Schaaf, 2006). Therefore, the implication of not being able to form a relationship with the coach not only impacts the players well-being and development, but also whānau well-being and development. Conversely, the resident mentor was a person whom the U20s participants trusted, and was connected to their development process, in a coach support role.

The resident mentor's ability to reach out to the boys and take an interest in them as the whole person and not just a player was the key to earning the players' trust. Participants respected their RL nous and life experiences and through their actions, participants knew that the resident mentor was genuinely interested in their development, performance and whānau both on and off the field:

The support we have from especially [resident mentor]. Always catch up with them and talk about everything that has been going around in our lives (P2).

I guess with someone like [resident mentor], with him, you know he supports you because he wants to get the best out of you and you know you can go to him with struggles that you're going through with life and just like, it all helps you, and he knows you like that and also knows the game as well...cause he [resident mentor] knows a lot more about life and it's hard to figure it out by myself kind of thing (P1).

As a result, participants felt safe approaching him with their struggles, both on and off-field. The relationship with the resident mentor offered participants the emotional and moral support they needed to be able to openly process and address the stresses and struggles that come with being embedded in a HP sport environment. Additionally, the resident mentor also offered game-skill support and would run film sessions with participants to aid their physical, technical and tactical development, which was an added bonus given that there did not appear to be an established connection with the coach:

Nah I think because I tried to talk to the head coaches about it [areas of improvement], but sometimes when I talk with him I feel like he answers the question but it's not really like the answers that I'm looking for, and like...cos I think because with [resident mentor], we have a good relationship...so we have a good idea of what he's thinking and I think [resident mentor] is always conveying the message a bit better than the coach (P1).

It has been well-established that for Māori and Pasifika, the forging of quality relationships is of utmost importance (Anae et al., 2002; MacFarlane et al., 2008; Samu & Suaalii-Sauni, 2009; Smith, G., 2003). Typically, for Māori and Pasifika athletes' positive connections with others have been perceived as a key element of achieving a balanced and happy life (Marsters, 2017). Thus, the absence of such connections can lead to negative ramifications both on and off the field. Furthermore, it may not have

necessarily been what mentors or other support persons may have said, but rather, the behaviours exhibited that contribute to the participants' confidence and capability to overcome adverse experiences (Rochford, 2004). Hence, when connections were made with others, it seemed to have made a positive impact on the participants' confidence, their ability to cope with adversity and enhance the athlete's commitment to their development and performance:

...talking to [resident mentor], he gave me a lot of confidence in myself and telling me that, if I wanna play there [in his preferred position], I need to go talk to the head coach for example because he's the one that makes the call at the end of the day (P2).

I guess with someone like [resident mentor], with him, you know he supports you because he wants to get the best out of you and you know you can go to him with struggles that you're going through with life and just like, it all helps and [he] knows you like that and, also knows the game as well (P1).

If I'm ever feeling down I can just talk to them [close mates] and they just ask how you are doing and stuff and just always catch up...go for lunch and stuff and catch up (P8).

Developing trust was an on-going process that required an environment that was conducive to nurturing it, led by people whose expressed behaviour personified trust. It required an acknowledgment of the intersecting cultural systems and beliefs that has traditionally caused friction between people due to a lack of awareness or understanding, and thereby can inhibit progress. Lakisa and colleagues (2014) argued that "while sport demands Pasifika bodies, and families and kin rely on athletic performance, the players soul and personal welfare can seem abandoned" (p. 359). Thus, a solid relational foundation (te taha whānau) based on trust, is critical to addressing this sense of abandonment that Māori and Pasifika RL players may experience and better manage the metaphorical weight of expectations they bear. The resulting energy (te taha wairua) that ensued from the establishment of trusting relationships, implicated the participants' capacity to push through adverse situations, further reinforcing the relational foundation of te taha hinengaro.

Reinforcing the Foundation of Te Taha Hinengaro through Te Taha Wairua

For Māori, te taha wairua relates to having a spiritual awareness of ones' individual, and collective, identity and heritage, offering purpose and meaning to life. Pasifika peoples are also traditionally God-fearing people, and church-related activities and practices are vital to the well-being of Pasifika communities (Rodriguez & McDonald, 2013). Faith and spirituality offer Māori and Pasifika communities a well of power and strength that can be drawn from both individually and collectively (Erueti, 2015; Lakisa et al., 2014; Schaaf, 2006). Interestingly, no religious-based aspects were discussed by the participants of Māori descent in my study. In this light, spirituality may have taken on a different meaning given the secularised society that Māori youth find themselves in today (CAG member, personal communication, October 5, 2017). This may be attributed to the bi-cultural society that Māori youth in Aotearoa are being raised in, and especially for urban Māori youth who are influenced by heavily dominant Pākehā culture and ideals. Whilst the Māori participants of my study were not affiliated with any religious denomination, participants did allude to an energy or synergy based on their assertion of the need to connect with their teammates, coach's game plan, or the process of TD itself, in order to succeed:

I would go in for training each day, aye, but you got that sense from all the boys that winning just didn't seem possible (U20s Talanoa Five).

...if you have a strong leadership crew who always like, you can tell they give everything in every game sort of thing and I guess it would kind of resonate through the rest of the boys but yeah (P1).

These statements verify the centrality of relationships for Māori and insinuate the energy that is generated by others and the impact it can have on their mindset and essentially their performance. Drawing upon Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994), te taha wairua (or the spiritual dimension) relates to the unspoken/unseen energy (e.g. a sense or feeling) offering the participants in my study meaning, direction and purpose to their pursuit of becoming a professional RL player. Hence, one may question the meaning and

relationship between faith, spirituality and religiosity for young Māori, and in particular, young urban Māori. Therefore, more research should be conducted to assess whether faith and spirituality is still a critical marker of health and well-being for Māori youth of today's society.

The U20s participants who were Pasifika identified as being Christians but did not regularly attend church. P2 expressed that he had not yet found a church here in Aotearoa since moving from his Pacific Island nation, effectively leaving behind the church congregation of which he was a member. Finding local congregations or connecting new players with other religious people in the club, may be something for support persons to take into consideration to enhance the spiritual aspect of TD for their Pasifika players. Essentially, if attending church is important to the Pasifika player, and the support person is able to assist in finding a congregation for the player, that act would

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Figure 6. Toa Samoa and Mate Ma'a Tonga in post-match prayer circle during 2017 RLWC (Rowland, 2017).

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Figure 7. Fiji Bati leads post-match prayer circle with USA Tomahawks during 2017 RLWC (AAP Photos, 2017).

gain the trust and respect from the Pasifika player to the support person because of the love, compassion and humility shown to him (Ioane, 2017b; Mo'a, 2015).

Pasifika participants cited that their faith and belief in God is what gave them strength and perspective in dealing with adversity (Allen & Smith, 2015), and therefore suggested that this was an important contributing element of TD for them. Examples from the 2017 Rugby League World Cup (RLWC) (see Figures 6 and 7) demonstrated the role that faith in

God still has for Pasifika athletes and therefore provides support for the findings of my

study. Public displays of post-match prayer circles that included both teams were prominent, with a player from the Pasifika team taking the lead. These prayer circles appeared to be a representation of the cultural values that govern Pasifika cultures, despite the secularisation of spirituality in modern society. The practice of prayer and the positive implications of religious beliefs on achieving success as an elite RL player is supported by the literature (Lakisa et al., 2014). Though teams had just battled it out on the field for 80 minutes, the prayer circle highlighted the mutual respect between the players themselves, between the opponents, between the players, and their supporters and families, as well as between the players and the Higher Being, who has allowed them to represent their nation, communities and families as an elite RL player. These examples accentuated the common thread of faith and spirituality for Pasifika which transcends any competition or sport, as well as the inherent value of reciprocity. In my study, the participants did not disclose specific religious practices or protocols that they included in their routines, preparation or recovery processes. However, further research should seek out those practices or protocols that are important to junior Pasifika RL players to ensure that space and time is provided for their spiritual well-being as it pertained to their TD and performance.

Understanding the meaning and interaction of the spiritual realm relative to te taha hinengaro has evolved through the use of cultural concepts such as te taha wairua, and the va (highlighted earlier in this chapter). Ultimately, the implications of a transcendent power or synergy (te taha wairua) between persons (te taha whānau) within the HP sport environment, was considered to be a contributing element to the process of developing and reinforcing te taha hinengaro. Therefore, it is upon these three elements that the participants perceived to contribute to a player's psychosocial development as they engage in a HP sport environment.

Chapter Summary

Research questions three and four were addressed in this chapter. Specifically, these questions were:

- 3) What are high performing junior rugby league players' perceived levels of importance of psychosocial development?
- 4) What processes contribute to a player's psychosocial development in NZRL's High Performance pathway?

Relationships or *whanaungatanga* were at the heart of participants' perception of psychosocial development and were foundational to psychosocial development within a HP sport setting (Gorinski, & Fraser, 2006). The acknowledgement of relationships continues to be consistent with previous research of Māori and Pasifika (Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker et al., 2006), and the implications of developing trusting relationships in my study informed the process of psychosocial development and well-being. To give and gain trust was to demonstrate consistency between words and behaviours and holding all persons accountable to the same standards. Upon this basis, trust provided the anchor for a genuine relationship to evolve and flourish long-term. Hence, the value of having the right people that players can connect with cannot be emphasised enough when addressing the psychosocial welfare of their players (Anae, 2010; Ioane, 2017b; Smith & Reid, 2000; Walker et al., 2006).

An understanding of the *va* provided cultural context and meaning to the relationships that developed within the HP sport space as it related to TD and performance. As such, engaging in practices and protocols that facilitated connection, be it between persons or of a spiritual realm, or the environment (e.g. training gym), or land (e.g. the rugby field) was key to nurturing and maintain the *va*. Developing an awareness of the various relational spaces within the HP environment can influence how a coach or other HP support persons may manage the feelings, emotions and behaviours that

emanate as a result of personal and collective adversity. For example, the va inside the locker room at half-time can be influenced by the individual and team performance of the first-half. Consequently, the meaning of team unity or team culture can change if the relational space between the players in the locker room is not properly managed before taking the field for the second half of the game. Ultimately, the underpinning framework of my study emphasised the principles of relationships, trust and energy as critical to the process of psychosocial development which informed the individual player and the collective team's capacity to overcome adversity.

Overall, participants perceived psychosocial development to be an important aspect of TD and important to long-term success within a HP sport environment. However, it was an area that was often neglected by participants, or they were unaware of practical strategies that could be implemented in their personal training regime as priority was given to their physical and game skill development. More important than identifying and defining the specific determinants of success however, was the value of establishing trusting relationships and the resulting energy and synergies that evolved within the va to inform the psychosocial aspect of TD. As such, this discussion has highlighted the gaps that remain in TD as a result of the mainstream perspectives.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Mā te rongo, ka mōhio; Mā te mōhio, ka mārama;
Mā te mārama, ka mātau; Mā te mātau, ka ora.

*Through resonance comes cognisance; through cognisance comes understanding;
through understanding comes knowledge; through knowledge comes life and wellbeing.*

Chapter Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to contextualise psychosocial development within a HP sport context using an Indigenous Māori and Pasifika framework. In particular, nine Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL players' perceptions were explored and their whakaaro has been collected and presented using a culturally responsive approach, as guided by the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of my study. Included in my final chapter is an overview of the research, which will be presented in both written and visual format, emphasising my key findings as they relate to the four research questions. Contributions to theory and implications are then discussed, followed by an acknowledgement of my study's limitations and suggestions for future research opportunities. Three more letters to my younger self are integrated in this chapter with the third and final letter signalling the finale of this chapter and effectively, my PhD hīkoi.

Letter to My Younger Self #8

To my 'PhD candidate' self,

February 2018 will roll around and you will be feeling a little relieved knowing that you've got your first draft completed. You start anticipating your thesis to be bleeding red with edits galore. Because of your academic experience in America you prefer to see red on your paper now and not later as it speeds up the process and challenges you to continually dig deeper and to keep that #CriticalThinkingCap on! As you go through your edits, you will be thinking about the implications of your research. Thoughts such as: the significant value for the "qualified" mental skills trainer, sport psychologist or

welfare officer to broaden their office space beyond the four walls that typically define 'their' space. You will find that the young men are unsure of how to express themselves because those defined spaces either intimidate the young men or, they have no connection to those spaces. The latter is probably a fairer assumption. Further to that, you will be thinking about the significant value for the "qualified" mental skills trainer, sport psychologist in being able to broaden their practices which currently guide their approach. The question that you will keep asking yourself is, what is best practice for the psychosocial development of Māori and Pasifika?

Best practice includes listening with heart and not just with ears. To see with heart and not just eyes. Most importantly, to respond with heart and not just our mouths. For us, for the young men, words that are uttered from the mouth are merely dead weight when backed by contradictory behaviour. That's where the feeling comes in to play that you will hear the young men talk about as they describe trust, and the interconnectedness of te taha wairua and te taha whānau as it relates to taha hinengaro. Anyway, sis, you're almost there. Keep at it. Stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo.

Go get your blessings, sis,

Your 'Post-doc' self

Overview of the Research

The original vision for my study was to provide an explicit and pragmatic psychosocial development pathway that would parallel that of the physical, technical and tactical standards of excellence that are typically prioritised. The intention was to create a scaffolding process of specific, and clearly defined psychosocial determinants of

success for Māori and Pasifika RL players engaged on the HP TD pathway, and as a result, key questions were crafted to aid the realisation of my original vision.

An initial question in my study was to identify specific psychosocial determinants that participants perceived to foster success in a HP sport setting. This research question was addressed by deconstructing the talanoa's presented for each age-group in Chapters Five (U20s perceptions) and Seven (U18s perceptions). Specifically, *sacrifice, attitude, resilience and preparation/routine* were perceived by the U20s age-group as instrumental to the successful progression along the TD pathway. At the U18s level, *sacrifice, selfless, dedication and having a network of good influences* were perceived as contributors to successful development.

A subsequent question I strived to achieve in my study was to operationalise the perceived determinants of success. To address this research question, the aforementioned determinants were expounded upon in their respective age-group chapters (i.e. Chapters Five and Seven) in order to extrapolate the perceived meanings of each determinant. During this process however, it became evident that the participants' sense-making process of each determinant was better informed when contextualised by personal, typically adverse, experience. Each participant was on their own personal hīkoi as a high performing junior RL player and therefore, each had personal and collective experiences that shaped their perceptions regarding the identification and operationalisation of each determinant of success. Furthermore, the participants' comprehension of psychosocial development was better understood in relation to others. As a consequence, the vision of an explicit and pragmatic psychosocial development pathway was no longer feasible because fundamentally, there was a gap between the mainstream understanding of psychosocial development and the Indigenous perspective. To fully appreciate the participants' perceived meanings, we need to appreciate the whole context (i.e. personal/collective experience) whereby the specific determinants were located. In this

light, the establishment of reciprocal relationships were found to be fundamental to psychosocial development and pre-requisite to the development of specific determinants of success.

To bring together participants whakaaro, a visual overview of my entire study (see Figure Eight), is presented. Highlighted in the visual is the importance of the psychosocial aspect of TD (a key research question), and the process of psychosocial development (my final question in this thesis).

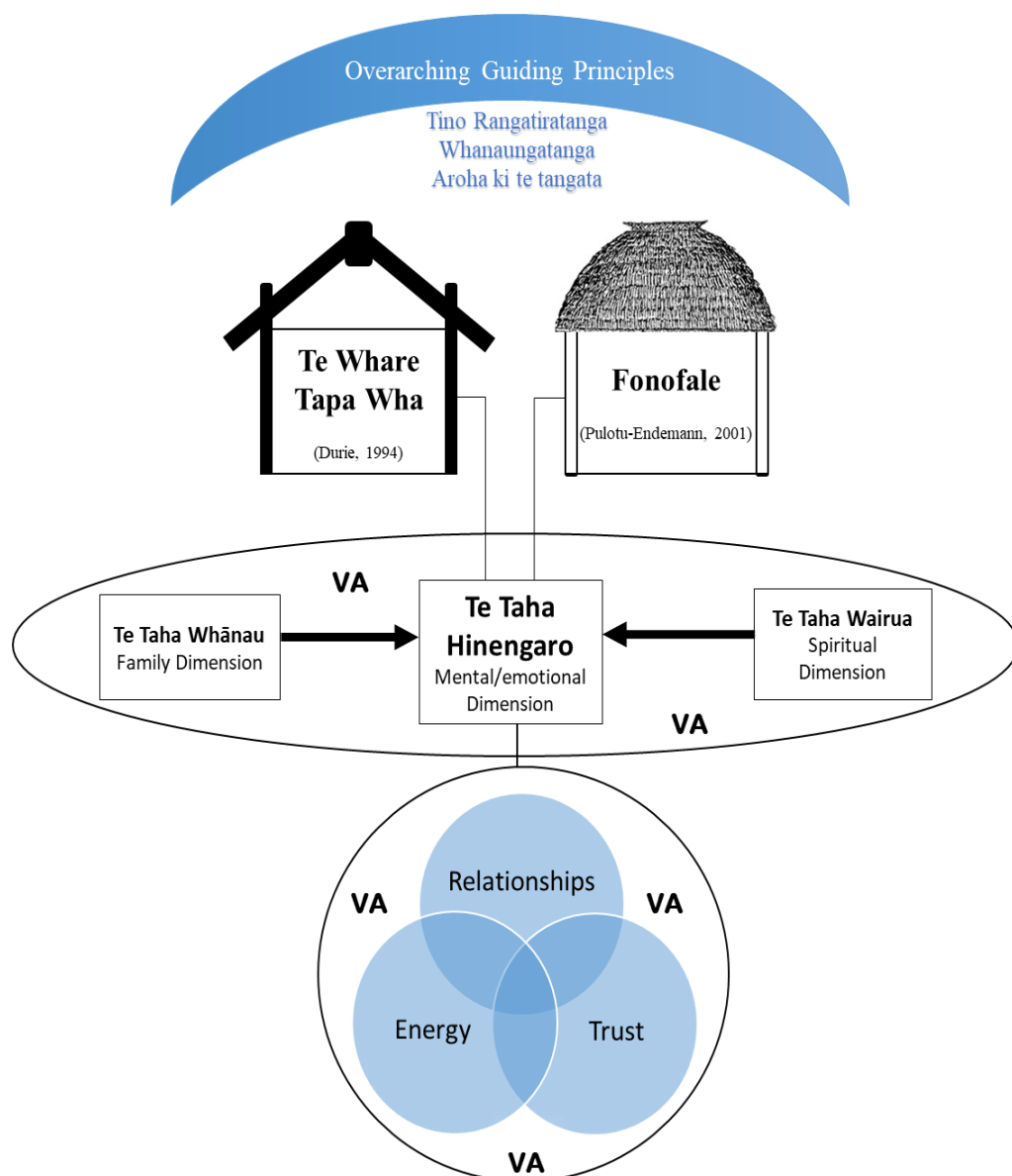


Figure 8. Visual overview of entire study.

Figure Eight builds upon the visual summary of my methodological framework (see Figure Four) that was presented and discussed in Chapter Three; by accentuating those

significant cultural factors that were drawn from the participants' sense-making process to inform a more culturally relevant understanding of psychosocial development. The middle section of the diagram draws upon the holistic models of health and well-being with te taha whānau and te taha wairua depicted as vital contributing elements of te taha hinengaro, and encapsulated by the va. Te taha whānau acknowledges the strength derived from ones' social support group, be it from parents, siblings, peers, teammates or mentors. For the Māori and/or Pasifika athlete, their whānau or 'aiga offers a sense of belonging, identity and purpose, similar to that which can be found in a RL team. Taken together, te taha whānau highlights the importance and value that being connected to others can have on the psychosocial aspect of TD for the high performing junior RL player. Te taha wairua alludes to the unspoken energy that ensues as a result of a spiritual connection with a Higher Being, or with the land/environment and people that surrounds the high performing junior RL player. The interaction between te taha whānau and te taha wairua with te taha hinengaro or the mental and emotional aspects of being a high performing junior RL player informed the current understanding of psychosocial development which is illustrated in the bottom section of the diagram as interconnected circles. The encapsulation of the va adds cultural context to the interaction of te taha whānau and te taha wairua with te taha hinengaro and accentuates the relational spaces that implicate psychosocial development in the HP sport environment. The three interconnected circles of relationships, trust and energy underscore the centrality of relationships which participants perceived to be fundamental to psychosocial development, and therefore requisite to the understanding and development of specific psychosocial determinants that facilitate success.

Reflecting on the notion of talent and the purpose of HP TD pathways, my findings suggest that for Māori and Pasifika to optimise preparation and performance in the HP sport space, it is important to first, acknowledge and emphasise optimal

relationships within the va or those relational spaces (Airini et al., 2010). From a TD perspective, an awareness of the va may highlight strategies and learnings for coaches and management to more appropriately support, empower and enable Indigenous Māori and Pasifika athletes. Through understanding the va, one becomes aware of the various spaces within the HP sport environment that athletes engage in (e.g. on-field, trainers table, weight room, locker room, coach's office etc.) and the purposes and protocols, both secular and sacred that inform each space. This knowledge and understanding can shed light on an athlete's approach to connecting, or forging relationships with other persons (e.g. teammates, trainers, coach, manager, mental skills trainer etc.) which can lead to optimal development and performance.

As highlighted in Figure Eight, relationships, trust and energy are pivotal to the nurturing and maintenance of the various relational spaces within the HP sport setting (e.g. the field, locker room, trainers table, resident home). The notion of *teu le va* emphasises the various relational spaces between the athletes, coaches and other coaching staff within the HP sport environment. Given the centrality of relationships for Māori and Pasifika, trust impacted the strength of reciprocal relationship which then influenced the type of energy that ensues as a result of nurturing and maintaining the va. The element of trust also extended wider to the overall HP sport environment as participants developed trust in the HP sport processes and practices that were being implemented in relation to optimising their development and performance as an aspiring RL player. Conversely, when the va, or the relational space is stifled or disturbed, so too is the interaction between *te taha whānau* and *te taha wairua* with *te taha hinengaro*. In essence, psychosocial development is stalled and effectively an athlete's overall development and performance can be frustrated due to a lack of trust and connection with the tools, process and practices being implemented in the HP sport environment. The negative energy can also stymie the overall team environment and therefore frustrate the collective development and

performance, as was the case for the team (inclusive of the wider development academy) that my participants were part of throughout the data collection period.

Inevitably, the pathway towards the senior elite or professional status as a RL player is complex, and expectant of adversity. However, for the Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL player, it is an investment they are willing to make at this stage of their life because if successful, such pathways can lead to great rewards for them individually, but more importantly, for their whānau. Therefore, my findings defined the term psychosocial as the interconnectedness of relationships, trust, and energy. By utilising a methodological approach more reflective of the targeted demographic, the interconnectedness of te taha whānau and te taha wairua can be appreciated as critical to te taha hinengaro as encapsulated by the va, thereby activating a residual effect on players overall TD and performance.

Letter to My Younger Self #9

To my 'PhD candidate' self,

There will come a point in the latter stage of your PhD hīkoi where you acknowledge the confidence the young men have in their sporting ability. However, you're conscious of the fact that the young men (inclusive of their whānau) need a wider perspective of the reality to becoming a professional sportsperson. The young men understand that RL will not last forever but they want to have a good crack at it because they truly believe they are part of the small percentage who will "make it". You wonder, why do they have such high beliefs in their chance to "make it"? Is it because they see a lot of people who come from the same background or upbringing as them, playing in the NRL? Is it because they believe that RL, or sports in general, is all they are capable of excelling in, and as a result, it presents the best chance of being able to fulfil their (financial) obligation to their whānau or 'aiga? Is it because they have the capacity to

cope with the physicality of the job and they enjoy being able to run it straight? Or – is it because of the social connections that are forged in those HP spaces?

Whatever the case is, we as researchers, influencers and facilitators of change, need to think about how to respectfully challenge the narrative and help our young men realise that the skills that they learn and apply on the RL field are transferrable to other 'fields' in life. On the flipside, I guess there is some education that needs to be developed for, and delivered to the future employers and bosses of the young men, to ensure that they are being supported appropriately post-RL. At the end of the day, we want the young men to succeed no matter which 'field' they decide to suit up for. Because if the young men succeed, their whānau and 'aiga succeed. And I know for you, sis, that is your main concern. So, don't forget to check-in with yourself regularly and ask yourself this question: "What are you going to do with all this new knowledge that the young men have gifted you with?" It's a critical element of Indigenous research that is continuously overlooked, and a key reason why Indigenous and other ethnic minorities are tired of being asked to participate in research. They give their all, but they do not see, let alone feel anything in return for the knowledge which they will impart to you as the researcher. Don't forget that they have entrusted you with their whakaaro and their aspirations.

Keep at it, sis! You're coming up to your 'last set of six' as far as your PhD hīkoi is concerned. Just breathe. Scan the field. Assess your options. Hit the gap and go! As you head up the field, look for your supporting "teammates" to get you across the line. Stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo.

Go get your blessings, sis,

Your 'Post-doc' self

Contribution to Theory

My study explored high performing Māori and/or Pasifika junior RL players' perceptions of psychosocial development using a collective cultural framework that reflected participants' Māori and/or Pasifika heritage. As a result, several key contributions to the TD literature and knowledge-base are highlighted.

- Firstly, the methodological approach used to explore psychosocial development is the most significant contribution to the TD literature. Traditionally, studies have explored the psychosocial aspect of TD using tools, processes and frameworks underpinned by Western theories (e.g. Birrer & Morgan, 2010; Cook et al., 2014; MacNamara et al., 2010a; MacNamara & Collins, 2013; van Rossum, 1996). The predominance of Eurocentric frameworks, tools and processes used to broaden understanding and inform the development of the psychosocial aspect of TD results in the non-Western high performing junior athlete having to adapt to processes that may not appropriately support their development and performance. Whereas this thesis has privileged an Indigenous epistemological, ontological and methodological stance, resulting in the emergence of a more culturally relevant understanding of psychosocial development. On this basis, it was the interconnectedness of relationships, trust and energy that evolved as being the key factors that constituted the psychosocial aspect of TD for the non-Western (Māori and Pasifika) high performing junior athlete.
- Secondly, previous studies that have explored the psychosocial aspect of TD have largely been conducted in the North American or European context. My study contributes to theory by considering a specific socio-cultural group outside of North America and Europe and utilises a framework reflective to the shared philosophical beliefs and values. Current TD models and processes were examined and found to be absent of cultural values. This has implicated TD

processes used in Aotearoa, with Māori and Pasifika athletes. In essence, the intentional and deliberate use of an Indigenous Māori and Pasifika framework was justified to better understand the majority of my study who were participating in a HP sport programme in Aotearoa. Because of the dearth culturally relevant TD frameworks or models, there is limited support in the academic literature as to what informs the successful development of Māori and Pasifika RL players from the high performing junior levels to the senior elite, professional level.

- Thirdly, considering the high concentration of Māori and Pasifika involved in RL at all levels (i.e. grassroots – senior elite) in Aotearoa, my study brought together two heterogenous groups and essentially two separate, yet similar worldviews (refer to Figure 7). As a result, the methods used to gather and disseminate information were also resonant of my study sample and facilitated opportunities that acknowledged the guiding principles of my study (i.e. tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga and aroha ki te tangata). Furthermore, through the implementation of talanoa, significant cultural values to Pasifika (i.e. love, compassion, humility) were acknowledged, and added further validation of using a collective Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika framework. My rationale for this approach has been discussed at length but the resulting findings accentuate the necessity to utilise a framework that is more reflective of the sample group.
- Fourth, the key findings of relationships, trust and energy (see Figure 7) are just as significant as the methodological approach. To my knowledge, no prior research has explored nor defined psychosocial development utilising a collective Māori and Pasifika perspective. Because of te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldview the interaction between significant cultural values, as depicted in Figure Eight, evolved and were accounted for, thus resulting in the interconnectedness of relationships, trust and energy as foundational to the

psychosocial aspect of TD. Essentially, my findings can be used to more appropriately broaden understanding and implicate the design of culturally relevant processes embedded in a HP sport programme to optimise the preparation and performance of the Māori and/or Pasifika high performing junior RL players.

- Fifth, my study was designed to consider the whakaaro on the psychosocial aspect of TD from junior players (U20s and U18s) who were currently on a HP pathway but had not yet made the transition to the senior level. Previously, the identifying and defining of specific psychosocial determinants have been assessed retrospectively by successful senior athletes and/or coaches of junior elite and senior elite teams/HP academy programmes. They were assessing psychosocial development in real-time as the participants were each on their own TD hīkoi. Therefore, they were learning to manage the stresses and pressures of being involved in a HP TD programme throughout the course of this study. As such, my study contributes to theory by acknowledging tools or processes, such as social media for instance, that may implicate the psychosocial aspect of TD.
- Sixth, the qualitative design of my study fosters multiple opportunities to engage with my participants at various points of the RL season. Building upon the previous point, this highlighted the complexities of being a high performing junior RL player, as well as a young Māori and/or Pasifika person, as it relates to becoming a professional RL player. As a result, participants had multiple opportunities to refine their whakaaro over the course of a season, based on their experience(s) and performance(s) to-date.
- Seventh, the Pasifika method of talanoa was used to shape the participants' and author's whakaaro that were presented in this thesis. The cultural context for the presentation of the U18s and U20s findings, as well as my self-reflexivity process as the researcher were set around key relationships that foster learning (i.e.

tuakana/teina, parent/child) for Māori and Pasifika people (Ioane, 2017a; Farruggia et al., 2011). This allowed for cultural nuances to evolve and underscored the fundamental value of whānau/’aiga or family, for Māori and Pasifika people.

- Finally, my study contributes new knowledge to the TD literature by unpacking the construct ‘psychosocial’ through an Indigenous lens. As it has been established in the literature and earlier in this thesis, the term psychosocial refers to ones’ psychological development within a social environment (Larsen et al., 2014; Woodcock et al., 2011). Indigenous understanding is greater when things are placed in the wider context (Durie, 1985). Given the target demographic of my study and the limited academic literature regarding the psychosocial development of the non-Western athlete, I was faced with a dilemma whether to refer to the Pākehā construct (psychosocial) or the Māori construct (te taha hinengaro) in my thesis. As a result, my dilemma was discussed in-depth with my CAG who advised:

My view is that this piece of work is about bringing people to an understanding, aye. And so if they [non-Māori person] don’t understand the [Māori] words, then they’re not likely to come to that understanding...and so we need more bicultural expressions, and to be in one language or the other [e.g. Māori or Pākehā], at this point is too far...So to be understood I think is the key thing. You know, to be influencing (CAG 4, personal communication, April 4th, 2018).

Hence, the decision was made not to use the Māori construct (te taha hinengaro) throughout the whole thesis to refer to psychosocial development as it did not seem appropriate to pull such a construct out of its original context of health and well-being. Instead, the Pākehā construct (psychosocial) has been used throughout the thesis and then unpacked through the holistic cultural lens. Whilst I was intentional and deliberate about integrating Māori and Pasifika words throughout my thesis, it was just as important that the use of Māori and Pasifika words did

not deter from the flow, and central ideas of the thesis. The more critical element of my study was however, that te ao Māori and the Pasifika worldviews were privileged in the assessment of the psychosocial aspect of TD so as to address the gaps that remain because of the predominant use of Eurocentric frameworks.

Culturally Responsive Implications for the Practitioner

My study is unique as it is the only one to capture the whakaaro of Māori and/or Pasifika junior athletes, in real-time, highlighting the realities of engaging in HP sport and the TD pathway, specifically in RL. As such, I present the following key practical learnings and implications that evolved from my study and could be of use for practitioners who engage with Māori and/or Pasifika athletes.

- *An understanding of the va in the HP sport environment* would enhance the practitioner's ability to connect with their athletes. Essentially, the va can relate to the space the practitioner is working with an athlete be it on the field, in the weight room, on the trainers' table, in the locker room, on the bus etc. By consciously maintaining and nurturing the va, the practitioner can maintain and nurture the relationship between themselves and the athlete. It is important for the practitioner to utilise all their senses, especially that of the heart, when seeking to implement programmes and goals for the Māori and/or Pasifika athlete. Hence, to consider the va in various spaces that are HP related is to focus on the maintaining and nurturing of a reciprocal relationship between the practitioner (e.g. coach, administrator, manager, trainer etc.) and the athlete to positively influence the development, performance and overall well-being of the athlete.

- *An understanding that contradictory words and behaviour can stifle the va* builds upon the previous point. Trust was a key finding of my study and therefore, it is important for the practitioner to understand that when their actions contradict their words, the va has been stifled. Essentially, the relationship with the athlete has been marred and this can negatively impact an athlete's development, performance and overall well-being. In a team sport environment such as RL, such a contradiction could cause a ripple effect and impact the team's development, performance and overall cohesion that is necessary to succeed.
- *Dedicating time and space wherein athletes can practise and develop psychosocial aspects of TD.* Just as athletes have time set aside to practise and develop the physical (e.g. gym/weights, cardio, nutrition, sleep etc.), technical (e.g. kicking sessions) and tactical (e.g. team training sessions, video analysis) aspects of their game, psychosocial training is an aspect that tends to be overlooked within personal training regimes of athletes, especially at the junior levels. Organisations or clubs may do well to offer a space near the weight room or locker room that allows athletes to pray, read inspirational quotes, scripture, or simply express gratitude, safely and respectfully. Spaces that are typically used to facilitate workshops may consider how the layout of the room and furniture influences/encourages athletes to critically think, reflect and engage in conversation. Essentially, this practical implication speaks to the need for the Māori and/or Pasifika athlete to be consciously supported in all areas of TD, especially the psychosocial aspect.
- *Focusing on the cultural values that guide Māori and/or Pasifika athletes, as they are challenged when they engage in the Eurocentric HP*

sport environment. Values such as (but not limited to): whanaungatanga, aroha ki te tangata, love and humility can be difficult for the Māori and Pasifika athlete to uphold because of the competitive nature of becoming a professional athlete. Furthermore, faith and/or spirituality are key elements that are typically overlooked in a Western world despite the significant role it plays in strengthening cultural identity, and overall health and well-being for Māori and Pasifika. Given the high concentration of Māori and Pasifika involved in the TD RL programmes in Aotearoa, practitioners may consider incorporating cultural aspects and knowledge into their training camps/sessions. For example, when utilising the natural earth environment for a fitness session, a portion of that session could be dedicated to learning about the whakapapa, or significance of the sand dunes, hill or beach that the athletes may be training at. It is likely that the Māori and Pasifika athlete may not directly whakapapa or connect with the specific sand dune, hill, beach or its surrounding area. However, this act can serve as a reminder for the Māori and Pasifika athlete of who they are, where they come from, and who they represent, as they continue along the TD pathway. This example highlights the multiple purposes that can be served by utilising the natural land resources to carry out a training session, primarily designed to address the physical aspect of TD.

- *Using Talanoa as a method, and understanding the concept of whakaaro to more effectively connect with and engage with Pasifika and/or Māori athletes*. Fundamentally, the principles of talanoa in conjunction with the overarching guiding principles of tino rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga and aroha ki te tangata, put the needs of the athlete at the heart of the

session plan (i.e. training session, recovery session, one-on-one mental skills session). When the needs of the athlete are prioritised above the practitioner's needs, the athletes may begin to open and share their whakaaro, aspirations' and story more freely with the practitioner. This method requires the practitioner to reciprocate and share their whakaaro, aspirations' and story freely too, with the understanding that the athlete will respect the talanoa that has taken place. The concept of whakaaro as it has been used in my study, requires the practitioner think more broadly and consider the needs of the athlete in a holistic manner, rather than as an itemised checklist that views each need as independent of each other. An understanding of the interconnectedness value and belief system that underpins Māori and Pasifika's may give insight as to the underlying needs and issues of the athlete. Therefore, the practitioner is more appropriately situated to help their athlete in a meaningful way, which ultimately means, they are helping the athletes' family and community.

- *Practitioners consider meeting the athlete in the athlete's space.* The power and authority that is defined by the walls of the practitioner's space (e.g. coach's office, sport psychologist's office, administrator's office etc.) can impact the Māori and/or Pasifika athlete's decision to seek out assistance voluntarily. Given the centrality of relationships for Māori and Pasifika, practitioners could consider stepping outside of 'their' space, and into a space where the athlete is comfortable and is familiar with. To link back to the previous points about the va, and talanoa, it is important for the practitioner to acknowledge that their initial conversations should focus on connecting with the athlete. The focus on the athlete may mean that the practitioner may not complete or

address any of their agenda items but what it does mean is that a relationship has been nurtured, trust reinforced and provide an opportunity for further engagement with the athlete. Long-term, there is a potential for the practitioner/athlete relationship to reach a point where the athlete will voluntarily seek out the practitioner's help and do so, in the practitioner's space.

- *Acknowledging that adversity is part of TD and the HP sport environment.* Participants' learnings came from reflecting on the adversity they had experienced and overcome. Hence, practitioners could integrate opportunities that stimulate adversity but should do so with great caution. Key to retaining the lessons from the adverse experience was evident in participants' critical reflection, as facilitated through talanoa. Such evidence highlights a learning strategy that practitioners could utilise to help junior athletes develop a strong psychosocial foundation and apply their acquired psychosocial skills in a pragmatic and safe way.

In summary, based on my findings, current RL psychosocial tools and processes used do not readily align with the epistemological, ontological or methodological stances of Māori and Pasifika. The current psychosocial tools and processes used in the HP sport environment are largely informed and underpinned by Western philosophy which overlook key cultural values such as whanaungatanga, and faith/spirituality. Consequently, there is limited scope for practitioners to identify and address the issues of Māori and Pasifika athletes to whom they offer support. My study has validated utilising culturally responsive tools and processes in being able to draw out the struggles, successes, and overall experiences of the participants. My findings demonstrated that it would not have been possible without investing time to the developing and cultivating of

reciprocal relationships with the participants, CAG members, and all other support persons involved in my study (i.e. nurturing and maintaining the va). Even more pertinent to the success was being able to connect with the various persons in their spaces that were familiar to them, as invited, and at their convenience. This approach may not suit the structure nor workload of a support person working in HP sports (i.e. mental skills trainer, sport psychologist, welfare and education manager), and certainly does not match the current approaches whereby athletes are required to go to the practitioner and meet in their space when assistance is needed. In addition, athletes are typically required to complete standardised questionnaires or surveys regarding their development, well-being and future aspirations, and therefore do not need get a chance to elaborate nor critically reflect. The demographic base of RL, particularly in Aotearoa, validates the need for more culturally responsive tools and processes to be developed and implemented (like those suggested above), as it relates to the psychosocial development of Māori and Pasifika athletes engaged in HP sport. A consideration of the va, using talanoa to guide discussion and reflection, as well as considering the holistic premise of an athlete's thoughts and opinions through the concept of whakaaro, offers implications for coaches, mental skills trainers, welfare and education officers who work with Māori and Pasifika athletes to inform more culturally responsive approaches in their own dealings and practices (see Letter #9). Talanoa places the emphasis on cultivating a relationship first and foremost, and as a result, the use of talanoa in a HP sport environment could enhance Māori and Pasifika athletes' confidence in utilising resources allocated to focus on their psychosocial well-being both on and off the field. Ultimately, tools and processes that are reflective of the epistemological, ontological and methodological stances of Māori and Pasifika have a greater capacity to empower and advance the development, performance and well-being of Māori and Pasifika athletes, and more importantly, their respective communities.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

As with other research, my study was influenced by limitations that should be acknowledged. In acknowledging the limitations of my study, future research opportunities evolved. Hence, in this section, the study's limitations and future research opportunities have been stipulated concomitantly:

- Firstly, the unique sample group means that the findings cannot be generalised to all junior athletes or senior athletes alike. Both groupings are not homogenous, and therefore further studies should consider exploring Māori and Pasifika independently. Even still, researchers should break down each grouping even further because of the heterogeneity within each standalone Māori and Pasifika grouping (e.g. place of birth and residence, Pacific Island, iwi/hapū/village, urban and rural etc.). In addition, this sample group only included the male perspective. With the development of professional sporting avenues for female, there is a need to explore the whakaaro of young Māori and young Pasifika female athletes regarding their perceptions of the psychosocial aspect of TD.
- Currently, there is only one professional RL organisation in Aotearoa that competes in the NRL competition. Consequently, recruitment of the participants was limited to one club. Extending this research to include junior RL players from all professional clubs in the NRL may implicate the findings given that players typically relocate from Aotearoa to a whole new socio-cultural environment in Australia.
- The inconsistent attendance of the U18s participants may have impacted my capacity to capture their whakaaro in its entirety, despite implementing strategies to try to mitigate the lack of engagement between each focus group session. This inconsistency did however underline the impact of whanaungatanga, and therefore

validated the need to utilise strategies and processes that are culturally relevant to those whom programmes and processes are designed for.

- The study was conducted over the course of one season only and participants were in the beginning stages of their RL development and on the cusp of transitioning from the junior elite to the senior elite level of RL in Aotearoa. Therefore, a longitudinal study of this same group may be helpful to unpack the implications of familial sacrifice on TD and performance over various transitions, milestones and adverse events.
- Only the players' perceptions were captured in my study and as a result, there were no opportunities to compare and contrast, or triangulate players' perceptions with that of the coaches' and support persons (e.g. NRL club's welfare and education officers, mental skills trainer) perceptions of psychosocial development within a HP sport environment as it relates to optimising preparation and performance. Hence, there is another opportunity for further research to be conducted.
- Lastly, from a cultural standpoint, the challenge with conducting research within a high-pressure environment such as the HP sport environment is that performance-related factors tend to be highly prioritised (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Martindale et al., 2005). However, in order to positively influence the development and performance of Māori and Pasifika athletes who are engaged in a HP sport environment, there is a need to educate practitioners, coaches, and other administrators on the importance and value of whanaungatanga for Māori and Pasifika RL players, and faith in God for Pasifika. Hence, more research should be conducted to assess whether faith and spirituality is still a critical marker of health and well-being for Māori youth of today's society. Additionally, my Pasifika participants expressed that their faith in God helps them to overcome

challenges but did not disclose specific religious practices or protocols that they included in their routines, preparation or recovery processes. As such, further research should seek out those practices or protocols that are important to junior Pasifika RL players to ensure that space and time is provided for their spiritual well-being as it pertained to their TD and performance.

Concluding Thoughts

A comprehensive examination of psychosocial development within the context of HP sport was conducted in Chapter Two. The psychosocial aspect of TD has been widely discussed to be the difference-maker between potential and world-class winner (Cook et al., 2010; Gould et al., 2002; Holt & Dunn, 2004; MacNamara et al., 2010a; Rees et al. 2016). Many determinants have been identified as being critical determinants of success, but the research stops short of articulating strategies of psychosocial development. It is harder to quantify sacrifice, attitude and resilience than it is to measure speed, strength and accuracy. Consequently, the psychosocial aspect is more or less an ad-hoc piece of TD due to its largely subjective nature. In addition, the psychosocial aspect of TD appears too difficult or time-consuming to address, even without considering cultural nuances, and may be viewed outside the scope of one's job description as a coach or other support persons who influence TD.

The holistic models of health and well-being that have been adopted in my study are supported and brought together by the overarching guiding principles, as alluded to in Figure Four and again in Figure Eight. The philosophical underpinnings of Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) offer a pragmatic view on the psychosocial aspect of TD, which is further elucidated through the concept of the va. For the young Māori and Pasifika RL player, reciprocal relationships are key to successfully navigating the complexities of the HP TD pathway. As illustrated in Figure

Eight, the optimal relationship in the context of my study is one that is anchored by trust and emanates an unspoken energy that is conducive to enhancing an individuals' capacity to unpack, process and overcome the mentally and emotionally trying times that a high performing junior RL player encounters along the HP TD pathway. Therefore, to optimise the preparation and performance of Māori and Pasifika high performing junior RL players there is a necessity to nurture and maintain the va. Specifically, there is a need to integrate practices throughout the TD process that facilitate opportunities to establish trusting connections (te taha whānau) that stimulates and supports an energy (te taha wairua) conducive to the reinforcement of te taha hinengaro within the HP sport setting.

Letter to My Younger Self #10

To my 'PhD candidate' self,

As you reflect on your findings, you will see how the strong relational theme in your study has parallels in your own life. Simply put, you won't just seek to make sense of your findings through the literature, but you will consider all the knowledge you will gain because of your environment and the people that you will associate with, during this final leg of your hīkoi. For the final leg of your hīkoi you will find yourself in a new city, full of arts, history, culture, sports, music, religion and politics, and they intertwine and intersect at every corner of the city. You will draw strength from the intentional collision of thoughts, worldviews and practices in the city as you put the finishing touches on your thesis and share with the world your contribution to the TD literature. As such, you will come to realise that what the young men need is a "space" within the HP space. A communal space where cultural and sporting connections are consciously uplifted. A space where players can talanoa safely with each other, with their coaches, and with other support staff. A space where the values of whanaungatanga and trust can flourish.

You will get the sense that the young men know that they can go to the offices of those ‘qualified’ to help them, but their perception of ‘qualified’ may not necessarily be rated according to degrees and certificates. Instead, the young men will perceive ‘qualified’ to mean someone who holds a ‘degree’ of trust, who is open, honest, and available. As you listen closely, you’ll realise that these words won’t just be adjectives, but they will be verbs! This list of verbs will be key to the young men’s psychosocial development let alone their overall development. You will acknowledge that for these young men, the energy or vibes that are generated from those trusting relationships they have developed, will enhance their capabilities to make better decisions that facilitate success as a footy player both on and off the field. This will be a massive contribution to the field. Keep asking yourself, sis – what are the young men trying to tell you, and effectively those in charge of their development process? The young men need you to get the conversation going, and then keep the conversation going. More importantly, they need you to make sure that everyone will hear THEIR voices.

I share with you an extended version of the whakataukī I opened this thesis with:

Hutia te rito o te harakeke. Kei hea te komako, e ko? Ki mai ki ahau, he aha te mea nui o te ao? Maku e ki atu He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

Pluck the heart from the flax bush – where will the bellbird be? Ask me, what is the most important thing in the world? I will reply, it is people, it is people, it is people.

The success of your research hinges upon how well you take care of the people around you, inclusive of their whakaaro they have shared with you. These young men are our future. They deserve to be heard. Without them, there will be no more ‘talent pool’ to select from. Go well and treat them and their stories with respect and compassion. Share their stories with respect and compassion. As long as you keep the young men’s

needs and aspirations at the centre of everything you do, we will succeed. Finally, I know I always say it, but it's important to me that you remember this. Stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo.

Go get your blessings, sis,

Your 'Post-doc' self

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Appendix A: Pilot Study Ethics Approval Letter



AUTEK Secretariat

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28 September 2015

Sarah-Kate Millar
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Sarah-Kate

Re Ethics Application: **15/313 A retrospective examination of the psychosocial development of elite New Zealand Rugby League players.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEK).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 28 September 2018.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEK:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 28 September 2018;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 28 September 2018 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEK is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEK approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEK grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,



Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Sierns Keung siernskeung@gmail.com

Appendix B: Performance Profiling Technique (Butler & Hardy, 1992)

An adaptation of Butler and Hardy's (1992) performance profiling technique (PPT) was used initially to inform the pilot study and the current study. The PPT was used solely to elicit players' perspectives regarding the psychosocial constructs of success which could inform a psychosocial development pathway for NZRL. First, the athlete is asked to consider the qualities of success that an elite athlete of their sport may possess. On a scale of one – ten (see figure nine), the athlete is then asked to rate themselves on each quality twice: where they are now and then where they would like to be. It was these specific principles that I used to guide the development of my pilot and current study.

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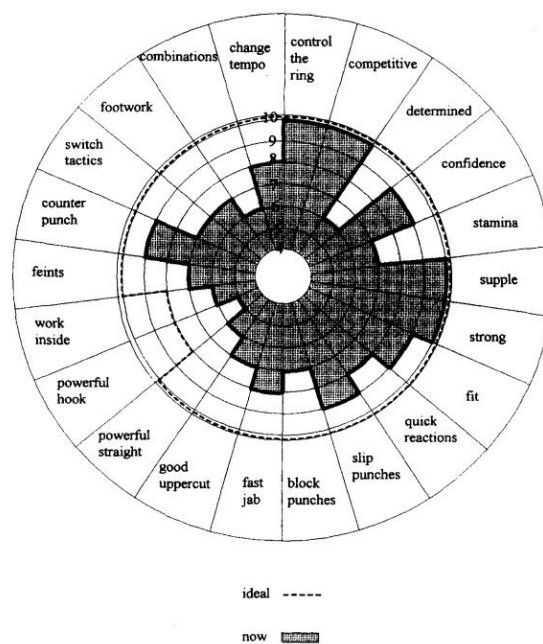


Figure 9. An example of an athletes' completed performance profile (Butler et al., 1993).

Appendix C: Pilot Study Key Findings and Recommendations

Question One Key Outcomes

Question one of my pilot study sought to identify what participants perceived were key psychosocial characteristics that contributed to success at the senior elite levels of RL. Table one offers a snapshot of the perceived characteristics of success. Internal drive and balance were the two characteristics that were highlighted by all participants as a key facilitator of success, and this finding can be supported by the literature (Hodge et al., 2012; MacNamara et al., 2010a; MacNamara, 2011).

Table 2. *Perceived Characteristics of Success*

Characteristic	Evidence
Internal drive/ Determination/ Self-drive	<p><i>Willing and committed to learn and adjust your game</i></p> <p><i>Have your own drive to improve</i></p> <p><i>At the end of the day, it's whether you want to do it or not</i></p> <p><i>A real drive for wanting that goal</i></p> <p><i>Take ownership of the fact that they are going to play or perform at a high level, and the difference between a good game and a bad game is minimal</i></p> <p><i>Puts the effort into doing everything he possibly can to make himself as good as he can</i></p>
Balance	<p><i>Having other interests and friends that are not attached to League and having that family time</i></p> <p><i>I'm (name of player) the league player...but you know what, I'm (name of the player) and I play League...you're not just saying that you're a League player. (Don't let League define you)</i></p> <p><i>You can't have too much work and not enough leisure and ya can't have too much leisure and not enough work</i></p> <p><i>I had an on and off switch</i></p>
Discipline	<p><i>Discipline as in ya know you're on time, in our ball skills ya know not dropping any (rugby) balls</i></p>

Resilience	<i>The ability to keep producing, constantly deliver at a high standard under pressure</i>
Attitude	<i>I got knocked back so many times. Just keep pushing forward, never say die attitude</i> <i>There's a fortitude in their work, they're on time, they ask questions, every session they're at they're looking to get better</i> <i>They just want to get better every time they're here</i>
Humility	<i>Humbleness doesn't mean that you're not confident</i> <i>Putting everyone else first</i> <i>Everyone's equal</i>
Toughness	<i>The ability to rebound from disappointment, turn up, push through physical pain, lead from the front, grab people around them and make them feel good and not shut themselves out. The ability to talk truth and follow through with it</i>

When selecting a team, it was acknowledged by participating coaches that talent gets their attention. Character development however is generally the difference between players who make it and those who can maintain that success over a long period of time. In other words, talent is important however, it is only one part of the selection puzzle.

“...when selecting the team, it's not only on talent...we also want to know is the person going to fit in with our beliefs and our values” (Coach participant 1)

“I'm going to pick teams on...vibration and...energy, so that regardless who we have there, you know, whether player A is more talented than player B, if I think player B has more positive vibration, more positive energy with the whole group, then, I'm going to pick player B” (Coach participant 3)

Question Two Key Outcomes

Understanding how senior elite Māori and Pasifika rugby league players/coaches perceive the aforementioned characteristics was left largely unanswered and this lack of knowledge by itself warrants further exploration. Participants were unable to identify specific experiences where they were taught how to develop the aforementioned characteristics. Instead, participants acknowledged that they developed characteristics

through experience, family members and over time. For example, one coach participant believed that the boys developed discipline by attending and completing their university, tertiary or trade courses and this transferred onto the field. A player participant discussed the impact of older players and how he would observe their behaviour, work ethic and skills (e.g. *(name of senior player)* for his training ethics), and then strive to emulate them. Furthermore, participants raised challenges that implied the notion that Māori and Pasifika did not want to be treated differently rather they needed to be approached differently. As a result, more research should be conducted to understand the learning processes which are conducive to the effective development of Māori and Pasifika rugby league players.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the pilot study, the following recommendations were made to NZRL for further research.

- Exploration of how the identified psychosocial characteristics from question one can be intentionally developed in a HP environment.
- Develop a mentorship programme (e.g. Tuakana/Teina).
- Development of a psychosocial characteristics standards of excellence pathway.
- Exploration of the impact of a social support for players engaged on a HP pathway.
- Determine what is “Te Iwi Kiwi” Talent Development Pathway.

These recommendations provided the platform that initiated the discussion during the think-tank session that was held with NZRL’s HP unit on Friday 18th March 2016. The outcome of the discussion informed the development of the current study.

Appendix D: Main Study Ethics Approval Letter



AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology
 D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
 T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
 E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

12 October 2016

Sarah Kate Millar
 Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Sarah Kate

Re Ethics Application: 16/325 Te pou hinengaro o 'Te hwi Kīwi': High performance junior rugby league players' and coaches' perceptions of psychosocial development

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved in stages for three years until 12 October 2019.

This approval is for the focus group stage of the research only. Full information about the questionnaire stage of the research needs to be provided to and approved by AUTEC before the data collection for that stage commences.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 12 October 2019;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 12 October 2019 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

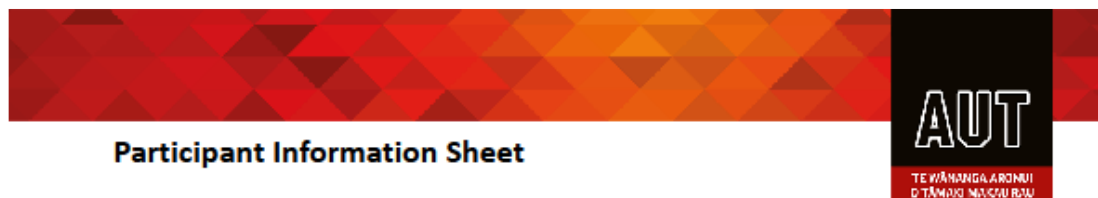
To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
 Executive Secretary
 Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Sierra Keung, sierrakeung@gmail.com; Lynn Kidman

Appendix E: Information Sheet, Consent Form and Evidence of Consultation



Participant Information Sheet

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Date Information Sheet Produced:

7 October 2016

Project Title

Te pou hinengaro o 'Te Iwi Kiwi': High performance junior rugby league players' and coaches' perceptions of psychosocial development.

An Invitation

You have been invited, as a junior elite rugby league player to participate in a research project. This project is being undertaken by Sierra Keung, a PhD candidate from the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences. Sierra is supported by New Zealand Rugby League (NZRL) to carry out this project and both Sierra and NZRL are keen to positively impact athlete development. Your involvement in this study will be engaging in a series of focus group sessions lasting 45 minutes each. Quotes from these sessions may be made part of the final research report. Under no circumstances will your responses, name or identifying characteristics be included in this report.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage of the study from November 1st 2016, without adverse consequences.

What is the purpose of this research?

Sierra is undertaking this research for her PhD thesis at AUT-University. She anticipates that the results will have far-reaching benefit for the rugby league community, especially with regards to talent development in high performance. Sierra hopes to publish the findings at conferences and in academic and professional journals.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been invited to participate in this research, as you are a junior elite rugby league player who has been recommended by allied New Zealand Rugby League (NZRL) staff. Given your involvement in an elite rugby league program, your expertise as a junior elite rugby league player is vital to the development of a more effective and efficient talent development pathway.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to:

- Sign a participation consent form.
- Engage in a focus group at NZRL League House, or appointed convenient location.
- It is anticipated that the focus group will last 50-60 minutes. The focus groups will be audio-recorded and notes will be taken, with the permission of the participant.
- Data collected from the interview will be used only for the purpose of research and will be kept confidential by Sierra Keung.
- Focus groups will be transcribed verbatim.



What are the discomforts and risks?

Any discomfort or risk is unlikely. However, the focus groups will require participants to reflect on their past and current psychosocial development as a rugby league player.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

You will not be required to answer any questions that cause discomfort, and are free to withdraw at any time. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of discussion and amend or withdraw comments.

What are the benefits?

By taking part, you will help to increase knowledge of the psychosocial development of rugby league players. In particular, it is hoped that a culturally sensitive model will be presented to NZRL and wider audiences interested in athlete development and well-being. This also will help the researcher to obtain her PhD.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your personal details will be kept confidential through the duration of this study. Specifically, your name or identifying characteristics will not be included in any reports or data recorded from this study. Quotes from this focus group session may be made part of the final research report. Under no circumstances will your responses, name or identifying characteristics be included with those excerpts. If you have any concerns in this regard, we can provide examples where this has been done previously. As the primary researcher, Sierra will be held to the same level of confidentiality to protect your identity and responses.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no monetary costs involved in the participation of this research. It is expected that participation in this research will require no more than 50-60 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You are requested to consider and respond to this invitation within one week. You are welcome to ask any questions that you may have; please direct them to Sierra (contact details below).

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes – an executive summary will be sent via email if requested.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor.

Name: Sarah-Kate Millar
 Email: sarahkate.millar@aut.ac.nz
 Phone: 09 921 999 ext 7667

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Name: Sierra Keung; Email: sierrakeung@gmail.com; Phone: 021 086 29197

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Name: Sarah-Kate Millar
 Email: sarahkate.millar@aut.ac.nz; Phone: 09 921 999 ext 7667

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEK Reference number *type the reference number*.

AUTTE KĀHANGA ARĀHUI
O TAMAKAU MAKAU RAU

Consent Form

Project title: *Te pou hinengaro o 'Te Iwi Kiwi': High performance junior rugby league players' and coaches' perceptions of psychosocial development.*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Sarah-Kate Millar*

Researcher: *Sierra Keung*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 7 October 2016.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group. As a result, I agree to keep this information confidential.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature:

Date:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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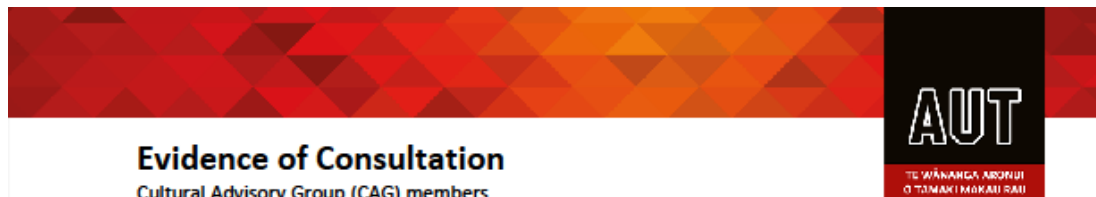
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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 12 October 2016 AUTEK Reference number 16/325.

Note: *The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*



Evidence of Consultation

Cultural Advisory Group (CAG) members

Project Title: Te pou hinengaro o 'Te Iwi Kiwi': High performance junior rugby league players' and coaches' perceptions of psychosocial development.

Researcher: Sierra Keung, 021 0862 9197 sierrakeung@gmail.com
PhD Supervisor: Dr Sarah-Kate Millar, 921 9999 ext 7667 skmillar@aut.ac.nz

With whom as the consultation taken place with?

CAG 1, CAG 2, CAG 3, CAG 4

What has been discussed?

The primary researcher has discussed the scope and procedures of the current study with each of the CAG members (i.e. purpose of the study, expectations, timeframes, interview process, methods, sampling, accessibility to potential participants etc.) as well as the ultimate outcome and benefits of the study for NZRL.

Given the specific socio-cultural demographic of the study (Maori and Pasifika elite rugby league players), the main purpose of having a CAG is to hold the researcher accountable to conducting research which is respectful of Kaupapa Māori and Pasifika values and philosophies.