

Socio-cultural factors associated with food security and physical activity for Māori and Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand

Recently completed qualitative research by the Pacific Section, Māori Section and the Social Policy Research Unit of the Family Centre has shed light on the socio-cultural factors associated with food security and physical activity for Māori and Pacific people.

The Pacific research used the *fa'afaletui* methodology to identify and investigate Pacific-based meanings of food and physical activity, the social practices associated with them, and the relationship between these factors and Pacific conceptions of wellbeing and the well self.

A key finding was that physical activity in the Pacific nations is linked to the production of wealth and increased family prosperity, and that this perception did not match the contemporary health promotion message that physical activity is closely associated with improving and maintaining health and wellbeing.

The Pacific research identified a disconnection between meanings, practices, and forms of capital in New Zealand, and those originating in the affluent subsistence economic and socio-cultural milieu of the Pacific. This disconnection, coupled with socioeconomic and political factors, can lessen the effectiveness of traditional restraints and restrictions on food consumption in the New Zealand context. While these material bases, or forms of capital do not exist in New Zealand for Pacific people, the symbolic significance of many non-material forms and types of capital that originate in the Pacific nations such as churches, continue to provide a basis for culturally based initiatives to counter the cultural dislocation.

Examples of such non-material forms of capital, or social and cultural capital, are found in various Pacific based institutions in New Zealand and the people who lead and belong to them. Pacific churches have become core institutions of inclusion, gathering and belonging. In recent years, the churches have become locations for Pacific community programmes on wellbeing, health and physical activity. The research identified the churches as leaders of programmes and practices of wellbeing, healthy eating and physical activity.

New *aiga*-like formations for Pacific people in New Zealand are growing in churches, workplaces, and sports clubs, in flatting or living situations and sometimes within neighbourhoods. Pacific people take into these new formations their understandings of their roles, responsibilities, rights and entitlements as well as their values and the ethics of *aiga*. These reciprocal roles include ensuring the physical and spiritual wellbeing of *aiga* which is inclusive of physical activity and food security. As such these formations can be recruited to provide and support interventions and programmes to enhance wellbeing, food security and levels of physical activity for Pacific people in New Zealand.

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Key words:

- Pacific, Māori, socio-cultural, *fa'afaletui*, food security, physical activity

Aims of this research:

- To analyse the socio-cultural factors associated with food security and physical activity for Māori and Pacific people.

Key facts:

- Physical activity in the Pacific nations is perceived to be closely linked to the production of wealth and increased family prosperity
- Research identified a disconnection between meanings, practices, and forms of capital in New Zealand, and those originating in the affluent subsistence economic and socio-cultural milieu of the Pacific
- This disconnection, coupled with socioeconomic and political factors, can lessen the effectiveness of traditional restraints and restrictions on food consumption in the New Zealand context

