

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL OF
SUPERVISED GRADUATE/POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECTS**

The purpose of this form is to give the School of Education Ethics Committee sufficient information to make an informed judgment about the ethics of your application

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Program of study: PhD

Department/centre/unit: Sport and Leisure Studies and Policy, Culture and Social Studies

Principal supervisor: Professor Douglas Booth

Co-supervisor: Professor Sue Middleton

Current qualifications: BSpLS (Hons), BEd (PE), Dip. Tchng.

Current employment: Lecturer, Sport and Leisure Studies, The University of Waikato

Title of project: Pasifika students: Education, class, culture and ethnicity in New Zealand

Interest in topic

Before working at the university, I taught secondary health and physical education for seven years in South Auckland. During this time, I was involved in numerous professional development programmes and pedagogical initiatives aimed at improving educational opportunities and outcomes for students at low-decile ‘multicultural’ schools. I was increasingly concerned with the low achievement of students, the high truancy rates, and the failure of schools to enable young people, especially those from Maori and Pasifika backgrounds, to continue their schooling into higher education. As a teacher, I attempted to implement curriculum documents in health and physical education through programmes I believed were relevant and meaningful to young people and also helped them to think about

issues such as equality in society. I hoped that our programmes helped students relate their experiences to wider social contexts. For my Honours degree, I researched Maori and Pasifika students' perspectives of their educational experiences in one school and used the post-colonial theory of hybridity to analyse the data. I wish to expand on this small project during my PhD research by critically examining complex factors influencing Pasifika students' identities and perspectives.

Other personnel:

Advisory teams (whom I will request input from)

- ❖ School Advisory Team – To be formed from members of the senior management and board of trustees.
- ❖ Student advisory group – to be formed from senior students involved in the research.
- ❖ SOE Pasifika research group.

1. Details of the Project

In order to explore Pasifika students' understandings and knowledges about schooling, identity, class and ethnicity, I aim to spend 2-3 days a week in one South Auckland school during terms one and two of 2007. During this time I will conduct conversations with students and teachers, experience school life and spend time in classrooms. Not being able to observe all classes or speak with all students, I have chosen senior health and physical education students as the main focus, for two reasons: i) because large numbers of students in this school choose to study health and physical education, indeed more students than any other senior subject bar English, and ii) because the national curriculum policy in this subject is recognised internationally as being 'socio-cultural' in orientation (Penney & Harris, 2004) with aims aligned to social justice and equity (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Specific aims:

- ❖ To gain insight into students' perceptions of their educational experiences with specific reference to cultured, ethnic, gendered and other identities.
- ❖ To theorise these individual (and group) understandings by contextualising their voices in the social, political, and historical landscape affecting their communities and selves.

a) Research questions

The aims above frame the principal and subsequent research questions, viz.:

- How do students view their identities?
- What social, historical and political influences impact on their identities?
- How are students' identities classed, gendered and racialised?
- How do schooling experiences relate to identities?
- In what ways do identities impact on schooling experiences and success?
- How does learning in health and physical education relate to student identities?

b) Justification

Educational researchers in New Zealand interested in low socio-economic groups and Maori and Pasifika students tend to focus on either class (for example, Nash, 1993) or ethnicity and culture (for example, Bishop & Glynn, 1999; MacFarlane, 2004) or consider both separately (for example, Adams, Clark, Codd, O'Neill, Openshaw & Waitere Ang, 2000; Coxon, Jenkins, Marshall & Massey, 1994). Conversely, initiatives in schools seeking to address the statistical underachievement of these groups, and directed predominantly by the Ministry of Education, are largely pedagogical and interventionist (for example see Hill & Hawk 1998, 2000, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2002). While the above and other related research is certainly worthwhile, students' ideas and voices are underrepresented in this work, as are in-depth ethnographic descriptions of the schooling experiences of Pasifika students. The complex identities of these young people (including a range of perspectives related to class, ethnicity, culture and gender) are not generally considered in relation to educational 'success' and achievement statistics. While the perspectives of individuals are in themselves compelling, these alone are of little use either in understanding or addressing the phenomenon of underachievement. The voices of these students do not exist independent of wider social trends and indeed these particular students can be (and are) constructed as historically 'disadvantaged' and 'underserved' socio-economically. Their voices, therefore, need to be aligned to explanations and critique of this 'disadvantage', to the experiences of other ethnic groups, and to the cultural and political circumstances that influence their communities and social circumstances.

This broader understanding of students' experiences requires a contextualisation of their voices within the wider political, social, and historical landscape. To allow me to do this, I have chosen to use 'critical ethnography' as my method. A 'critical' approach can mean a wide range of things but in this context I use Thomas' (1993) definition of critical ethnography as "conventional ethnography with a political purpose". It allows me to collect data using techniques traditionally developed by ethnographers, such as interviews, observations, and immersion in the field of study, with the purpose of understanding the experiences of people in that setting. But it also requires data to be referenced to wider sociological trends such as migration, community resources, the rights of minority and ethnic groups, and cultural and gender issues (Madison, 2005). Critical ethnography enables me to gather locally contextualised data and then to theorise this information in relation to wider trends in society and education and thus explore how Pasifika students' identities and attitudes to schooling (and ultimately, their schooling success) are framed by wider social and political circumstances.

c) Procedure for recruiting participants and obtaining informed consent

The proposed site of study for this critical ethnography is a co-educational state school in South Auckland. The school has a decile one socio-economic ranking and comprises approximately one thousand students, almost all of whom are from Maori and Pasifika backgrounds. I have maintained close links with the school after teaching there for four years between 2000 and 2003. The school principal has indicated her support of this project and of the research aims. After gaining ethical approval, I plan to meet with the Senior Management team and The Board of Trustees, explain the intentions and required involvement of all parties and seek formal agreement to participate in this research. I will negotiate access with the senior management and Board of Trustees through a letter (attached) with information sheets (attached) and by requesting to attend a Board meeting to discuss the intentions and implications of this research (including ethical concerns and issues as outlined in this proposal and others that arise in the course of further planning) as well as to answer questions and concerns. While the broad aims of my research will remain as stated I will also negotiate with the school about what they want to find out from the research and how it can be of benefit to the school. These conversations will continue to frame the research.

After gaining formal written consent from the board and the senior management team I will meet with the Health and Physical Education Head of Department and present information to teachers in his department. Again, all ethical issues, questions and concerns will be discussed. Those teaching senior health and physical education classes will be most involved, but other staff in the department will also be invited to contribute to the research conversations. I will seek student permission by speaking to each senior class individually and explaining the implications of involvement in the research. Initially, I will seek a general agreement from classroom teachers and students to allow me to be in their classes and record my perceptions. All students from senior (year 12 and 13) health and physical education classes will be offered the opportunity to be involved in the after school (or lunchtime) research conversations also. Students and staff involved will be asked to provide written consent of their involvement (forms attached). Students will be encouraged to discuss their involvement with a staff member or caregiver if they have any concerns.

d) Procedures in which research participants will be involved

There are two main situations in which participants will be involved. The first involves students and teachers of senior health and PE in ‘**classroom interactions**’, wherein I will attend health and PE classes a few times a week for one term, interact with the lesson and record my thoughts and experiences. The second is **dialogical conversations** which will involve these same students and teachers as well as others in the school, as detailed below.

Classroom interactions

Although the conversations (detailed below) will create most of the data in this ethnography, I will also spend time in classrooms interacting with students and with lesson content. These interactions will allow me to experience classroom environments, contextualise students’ ideas, and will also provide reference points for later conversations. I have called these ‘classroom interactions’ instead of ‘observations’ because I believe that a certain distance is required when ‘observing’ others. In the classroom my experiences and interactions with students and teachers will form the data and while I in no way intend to disrupt lessons I will affect students’ responses by my presence in the class and do not assume a ‘fly on the wall’ status. In her classroom ethnography, Jones (1991) discusses the impossibility of attempting to see or ‘capture’ all that happens in any classroom:

Before I went into the classroom I knew that what is 'going on' there could not be captured by the researcher simply watching and taking notes from a corner of the room. For a start, you had to be literally looking over someone's shoulder to be sure about what they were doing... I could not simply capture 'the reality' of the classroom...all that happened had multiple meanings depending on who was looking. (p. 23)

What I will see and take notes about in classrooms will be a product of my interactions with students and what I see and hear. My attention will be focused mainly on listening to and making notes on students' conversations and reactions to lesson content, especially when these relate directly to the topics of this ethnography. I will be listening, therefore, especially for students' comments related to ethnicity, culture, equity and gender. In health and physical education classes, relevant units may include topics such as gender and body image, drugs and alcohol, sexuality, issues in sport (such as racism, violence, discrimination and stereotyping) and equity (of community resources, health care, access to physical activity). During classes covering such content I will be especially attuned to student discussions and reactions to ideas presented. I will seek permission in advance from students and teachers to video some classes addressing such topics (permission forms attached).

Dialogical conversations

"One of the truisms of ethnographic research is that the research itself will change you"
(Brooke & Hogg, 2004, p. 115)

Conversations between people are a normal part of everyday life and an integral part of forming and maintaining relationships. Although a common and widely used ethnographic tool, in this research project I am avoiding 'interviews', replacing these with 'conversations'. Although this may seem like a qualitative feint, a different word for essentially the same practice, conversations are distinct from interviews in several ways. Unlike an 'interview', which has about it a degree of falsity and formality, regardless of how informal it is claimed to be (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), a conversation is a much freer exchange. Conversations

can, like interviews, have internal hierarchies, a specific purpose and are subject to hegemonic relationships and cultural normativities. Unlike interviews, however, conversations are produced through two people talking, not one asking questions and another answering. Questions are, of course, a key conversational tool, but fundamentally different in a conversation both in nature and direction. Questions in a conversation are reciprocal and both questions and answers form the data. Conversations are a more comfortable and familiar way of communicating than interviews. Young peoples' experiences of interviews are often based on tense situations associated with 'trouble', such as parental questioning and police inquiries, for this reason the interview is perhaps not the best method to use (Eder & Fingerson, 2002). Interviews also exacerbate power relationships because no matter how ostensibly informal the interview is, the researcher is still interrogating the interviewee and the discomfort and cultural inappropriateness of this situation is difficult to overcome. As Oaks (1981) suggests, interviewing about issues of power with unequal participants, by definition, reinforces rather than challenges power relations. Researchers' attempts to stay neutral and disinterested are problematic, disallowing real human contact and empathy to develop. Disinterested interviewing is unethical because it is false and does not allow real human connection. The intentions of disinterested interviews do not stretch beyond collecting knowledge from the participant and do not encourage the forming of knowledge through a partnership.

Accordingly, in this ethnography I will not be using interviews in any traditional sense but instead will use 'dialogical conversations' (Freire, 1972). This approach relies on the building of strong relationships and open conversations where opinions and ideas can be challenged in a safe way and individuals listened to and respected. Dialogical conversations are not completely free spaces, but are conversations focused on power and equity with the intention of learning. The topics can be negotiated and the tenor of the conversation is able to flow in different directions around the theme. There is no compulsion to speak individually and the interview method is largely avoided by using different pedagogies to empower involvement and contribution. These dialogical conversations will also have a dialectical nature (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). By setting up positional opposites, contentious issues, and evoking conversations and opinions dialectically, power relations can both be explored and questioned. Dialogical conversations will take place in the following ways:

Lunchtime sessions

All senior students of health and PE will be invited to participate in lunchtime sessions to contribute to recorded conversations. These will be available twice a week for all of term 1 (10 weeks). Students who attend these sessions will also have the opportunity to participate in individual recorded conversations to expand on ideas from the group conversations. Teachers of senior classes will be invited to contribute to 2-3 group conversations and/or individual conversations. During these lunchtime sessions, conversations will be centred around students' ideas and I will use some stimulus materials to prompt ideas and get students talking. These materials will include content related to ethnicity, class, culture, gender, and educational opportunity. Students may be asked their opinion about statements such as "everyone in New Zealand can succeed in school" and conversation will result from discussion prompted by this statement. Video and newspaper reports may be used, including news reports discussing Pasifika peoples or popular programmes such as "bro town" which raise issues of ethnicity, gender and cultural difference in New Zealand. Students will be encouraged to offer their own ideas and responses to these texts and offer their own experiences to the conversations.

Note: The atmosphere of these sessions will not be like that of a classroom. Students will be under no compulsion to participate in the conversations and can arrive and leave from sessions when they choose, attending several or just a few. My role will be one of facilitation and I will not make any attempt to control behaviour or discipline students. As the weeks progress, I will encourage students to take responsibility for facilitating sessions, contributing to topic ideas and bringing stimulus materials. Student talk will make up the bulk of the data collected from these sessions but written and visual materials will also be kept and related to the data. The different topics chosen for each session will be published in advance and given to students. Individual conversations will follow up on topics discussed in groups and may also utilise stimulus materials where appropriate. There will obviously be a greater opportunity during individual conversations for personal stories and prolonged explanations of individual ideas and opinions.

Summary of people and involvement:

| Participants | Involvements |
|---|--|
| Teachers and students of senior PE and Health classes | 1. Classroom interactions 2-3 times a week, where I will be present in classes, interact with students, teachers and lesson content and take notes. |
| | 2. Classes specifically addressing ‘issues’ relevant to the study (as discussed above) may be recorded with permission. |
| | 3. Those who choose to will participate in planned and recorded group dialogical conversations after school or at lunchtime. These will include two meetings a week for about 10 weeks for students and 2-3 total conversations for teachers. |
| | 4 Those who choose to will participate in recorded individual dialogical conversations, 1-2 hours each. |
| The principal and senior management team | Will be asked to be involved in one (or more if required) recorded dialogical conversations about school-wide approaches to equity, achievement, identity and other issues raised by students as a result of the conversations. Senior management may also be approached to answer questions and provide policy documents in a casual way. |

e) Procedures for handling information and materials produced in the course of the research

All data generated as a result of this study will be processed by me and stored securely in my office at the university and archived in accordance with university policy. These data will be discussed and sighted only by myself, my supervisors, and the participants during the collection and analysis phase of the research. All names, including the name of the school, will be changed and every effort made to ensure individuals are not identifiable in the final thesis and in subsequent publications and presentations related to the study.

2. Ethical Issues

There are a large number of ethical considerations in this study. Madison (2005) states that “critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain”. She defines ‘ethical responsibility’ as “a

compelling sense of duty and commitment based on moral principles of human freedom and well-being, and hence a compassion for the suffering of living beings” (Madison, 2005, p.5 her emphasis). Several educational researchers have raised concern about the potential for research with indigenous and other ethnic groups to contribute to marginality, oppression and misappropriation of knowledge especially when conducted by those of the dominant culture (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999), as is the case in this project. The ethical implications of this research project are, therefore, significant and require careful, detailed, reflective and on-going consideration. With these serious considerations in mind, I believe this research can add to understandings about Pasifika students’ perspectives rather than contribute to marginality. I have outlined below what I consider to be the major ethical concerns thus far. Of course, as the research progresses, other issues will arise and on-going consideration and reflection will be required.

a) Access to participants

I have an established relationship with this school due to my past role as a teacher and head of department and have continuing friendships and professional relationships with some of the staff at the school. Preliminary conversations with senior management about general access to the school and my ideas about the study have been positive and the principal has indicated that she would be interested in looking at this study further. As discussed above, I aim to spend considerable time at the end of this year negotiating the procedures of this research with the school board, senior management team and the health and PE department, as well as with the students involved. A collaborative and negotiated approach will be taken so that the school community, board of trustees and students can have some input into the direction of the research. Although I have an outlined research framework, this will be adjusted as I interact with members of this school and, more importantly, in line with Pasifika epistemologies and appropriate cultural protocols (Anae et al, 2001) which I will seek advice on from ‘experts’. To this end, I aim to seek guidance by forming partnerships with three key groups:

1. The first group will consist of 3-4 people who are currently members of the school board of trustees and local community

2. The second group will be a small group of students (volunteers made up from those who regularly attend the research conversations). I will ask for their input into topics and feedback previous sessions.
3. Third, I will request support and input from the School of Education Pasifika research group, especially concerning methodological and epistemological content.

b) Informed consent

Formal, written consent will be sought from all those involved in the research, including teachers, students, the board of trustees and the senior management. Information will be distributed to the senior management, board of trustees and the health and PE department (see attached information sheets). Meetings will be held with these groups to discuss the project and clarify the aims and procedures. I will talk to senior classes of health and PE, give them information (see attached student information sheets) and invite them to be part of the research. Written consent (see attached) will be obtained from each student in these senior classes for classroom interactions, and for some lessons to be videoed. Information and updates will be given during classes and students will have the opportunity to ask questions of me and of their teachers about the research. Students who opt into the lunchtime sessions do not have to commit to attending all sessions but can choose which sessions are of interest. I will attend a whole staff meeting and explain the research to all staff in the school and spend time in department meetings with the teachers of the senior classes involved. Any student who specifically requests not to be involved in classroom observations will be excluded from all data that contributes to the final write up. Classes in which those students are present will not be videoed. Teachers of senior classes who do not want to be involved will be excluded from classroom interactions. Their students will still be able to attend the lunchtime sessions.

c) Confidentiality

The group conversations will not be entirely confidential but will not be discussed with anyone outside those present. These conversations will be held in a classroom so that it is not possible for others to hear the discussion. Students and teachers will be reminded of their responsibility to respect the views of all present and not discuss any personal information discussed within the group with others not present. Individual conversations will be

confidential between myself and the participant but their views, thoughts and expressions will be shared as a part of the research data (although they will not be identified by name). The school name will be changed and all efforts made to ensure the identity of the school and participants remains anonymous. This is not completely possible because of my past involvement in this school and the reflexive nature of my research, including, my own experiences as a teacher at the school. Readers of the research who know me personally may be able to ascertain which school was involved but will not be able to identify individuals. Teacher and student names will be changed and inclusion of specific details which may make them identifiable will be avoided in the thesis and subsequent publications and presentations.

The details of teacher conversations will not be shared with other staff or with students, and student conversations will not be shared with teachers or with those not present. At the start of each group session, guidelines of confidentiality will be negotiated and agreed to with the group present so that students agree to share only what they feel comfortable with and all agree to keep opinions and shared personal information confidential. Participants will also be reminded of the public nature of the area used for conversations and reminded that personal information may be better expressed in individual research conversations where confidentiality is certain. A potential risk involves students discussing teachers, other students or others in the community during these conversations. Students will be strongly encouraged when giving examples involving people to not include names. I will have to monitor this in an on-going way and always remind students about the importance of respecting others' feelings while contributing openly and honestly to conversations.

d) Potential harm to participants

My presence in the classroom and during other research conversations raises a range of ethical dilemmas. While not seeking to resolve these completely, I will discuss these issues, the possibilities for harm, and the effects on this research. Unlike some interpretive ethnographers who encourage researchers not to disturb the setting so as to gain a more 'naturalist' account, critical ethnographers concede that the researcher's presence will always affect the environment and that objectivity is not possible. Accepting this, the researcher always has a responsibility to act ethically (Madison, 2005). For example, in witnessing harassment or violence, any human being has a responsibility to step in, regardless of the

subsequent effects on the research. All schools are at times environments where conflict, arguments, and sometimes violence, happen. I am likely to witness incidences of this kind and may have to make an ethical decision as to whether to intervene. While it is not possible to predict all potential situations, I have organised my discussion of the potential for harm into the following categories. I will outline these and then discuss strategies for harm minimisation.

Teachers

During classroom interactions teachers may feel pressured, insecure and self-conscious because of my past role as head of department, my current role as university lecturer and my national profile in physical education. If they believe I am checking on or evaluating their teaching they may feel stressed and insecure. Time spent in group conversations may cause tensions and stress in relation to their other work and life commitments affecting their work, achievements, and personal lives in negative ways. They may resent my position in the school and the ‘freedom’ I have to build relationships with students without the burden of enforcing disciplinary measures. They may feel concerned that the conversations with students will include personal judgments of teachers and their work, subject content yet to be covered in classes, or information and values contradictory to their own and those of the school. There is potential for students to begin to question teachers about the topics discussed during the planned conversations about power, equity and identity; this could cause disruptions in classes or conflict between teachers and students.

The teachers potentially involved in the classroom interactions are from a diverse range of backgrounds including Cook Islands, Indian, Maori, and Palagi. Teachers may question my position as a Palagi and the cultural appropriateness of my role in this research.

Because teaching is a deeply personal and emotional job, discussion involving teachers’ ideas, feelings and experiences during the research, as well as my presence in the school, may result in them feeling inadequate and vulnerable. Topics may be discussed during the research which participants do not want to be part of the research or to be published. During the conversations the participants may become upset, they may require support and further help with examining issues that arise for them and their experiences in teaching.

Students

My presence in the classroom may cause discomfort if students feel disrupted, distracted, self-conscious or ‘observed’. Students may feel pressured to be involved in this research, taking time away from other commitments such as family, sporting, and cultural involvements. They may perceive that it is advantageous to be involved in these conversations academically for their achievement in health and PE but be unable to attend all or any sessions. Because of the informal nature of discussion, students may feel unsafe to express opinions and might disagree with the topics discussed, finding them inappropriate or culturally offensive. They may feel conflicted if conversations include viewpoints which contradict their personal, family, or cultural values (cultural issues are discussed in more depth in section k).

Classroom Interactions

I have focused on the following questions that may arise during time spent in classrooms:

- Should I step in if there is a problem between students in the class, such as a fight?
- Should I assist the teacher with the lesson if they are in need?
- Should I agree to supervise the class if the teacher is called away unexpectedly?
- Should I help students with their work if they are having difficulty?
- Where do I position myself in the classroom so as not to disrupt students, make them feel threatened, or cause problems for the teacher?
- Do I agree to relieve classes if the school is short of staff (as decile one schools invariably are)?
- How do my decisions affect the research and my relationships with students and staff?

All of these questions will require decisions to be made according to the environment of the classroom and the changing nature of class dynamics as well as my own ethical judgment. Because the classroom is irrevocably altered by my presence and the research is, therefore, created by the dynamic between myself and others in the school, every decision I make will affect the research. My approach will be to aim to “address processes of unfairness or injustice” (Madison, 2005) and therefore to help where I can, while remaining committed to my role in the school (that of a researcher). If dangerous situations occur, such as those

involving violence or bullying, lack of action will result in harm and is unethical. I will try to avoid relieving classes and stepping definitively into a teacher role. If students view me as a teacher (and likely to implement disciplinary measures) then they may be less likely to want to be involved in the research or to divulge their personal feelings because of the consequential risk. Conversely, if I do not help in the school (as a teacher) the teachers may view me with disdain and see my lack of willingness as laziness or superiority.

Disclosure

There may be ethical issues associated with students disclosing personal experiences related to such topics as crime, abuse and violence, cultural understandings, racism and beliefs and values. This may place me, other students and teachers, and the students themselves in a position of power or vulnerability. Student or teacher disclosures relating to harm may require ethical decisions in relation to confidentiality. I will need to be able to access appropriate support and advice about any issues that arise. It may be unsafe for students and teachers to share their perspectives and experiences, some of which will include personal issues associated with topics in health and physical education, such as the body, food, outdoor education, sexuality, feelings and interpersonal skills. Discussions about students' lives can often become deeply personal and conversations may result which the participant does not want to be part of the research or to be published. It may be unsafe for students to discuss certain personal perspectives or issues. During the conversations the participants may become upset or need further support.

The school

There is a risk for the school and community in being involved in this research. The school's reputation and community support (and, therefore, roll) rely largely on community perception about 'quality education' and achievement. The pressure the school has felt in recent years to perform, despite problems of poverty, is exacerbated by new schools opening in the area. If the findings of this research include negative judgments of the school and teachers the effects on the school and community could be significant, especially if community members doubt the schools' ability to provide the best possible education for their young people. The research focus on equity, power and identity makes this an important concern, as my analysis may raise internal issues related to student dis/empowerment.

Members of the school community

Other teachers may resent my presence in the school because I will not ostensibly be contributing to teaching in the school. This is a particular issue in low decile schools which are often short staffed and lacking in relievers.

Policy

A policy analysis of curriculum documents and school policy will inform this study. This policy analysis will also focus on issues relating to power and equity, how policy and practice interrelate in terms of classroom and school cultures and whether policies recognize and address issues of equity in schooling. This may be threatening for the school and staff if they perceive I am making judgments about the quality of their policies and the fairness of related procedures. My experiences in this school and knowledge of this setting will mitigate teachers' worries about this and other issues low-decile schools face.

Strategies for addressing ethical concerns

I have grouped my strategies under the following headings. Many of these strategies relate to and address issues from several of the categories above.

Relationships

Building trusting and lasting relationships with research participants is imperative so that the research does not contribute to negative power relationships. Writers such as Fine (1994, 2000) and Madison (2005) argue that human relationships are the key to addressing equity and that building equitable and mutually respectful relationships is not only ethical but makes for better, more human, research. Building trusting, reciprocal and caring human relationships is, therefore, integral to the cause and purpose of critical ethnography. Open and collaborative relationships will be an integral part of this research project. Although I already have a strong relationship with the school in general and, in particular, certain staff members, I will consult in an on-going way with the staff and students involved directly and indirectly in the research as well as those in the advisory groups. This is no easy or quick process and is especially challenging in a school setting where power relationships and hierarchies are entrenched in broader educational structures. At this school, however, some traditionalist

approaches to schooling hierarchies are already actively questioned and new approaches are sought. The school does not, for example, run detentions and tries to avoid punishing students for behaviours or 'rule breaking' without finding out the reasons underlying the students' choices. Form teachers and deans spend a lot of time talking with students, visiting and phoning families, and trying to solve problems through discussion and negotiation rather than unrelated punishments. While it would be naïve to suggest that behaviourism is avoided (when so many of our social epistemologies are built upon its assumptions) this school does genuinely try to resolve problems through restorative and consultative approaches. In my experience, students and staff in this school are accustomed to less-hierarchical, more open relationships with students and with each other than in some more traditional schools. Nevertheless, schooling imposes power relationships that are difficult to address.

The difficult and effortful work of forming relationships will be central to the success of this ethnography. My own experience suggests that student culture at this school is one of simultaneous openness and distrust towards new comers. Students have a reputation for 'testing teachers out', giving them a difficult time when they first arrive. Having experienced this myself, I know that trust comes through sustained interaction, allowing students to question, and by creating points of connection by sharing personal information and feelings in an honest way. Anae et al (2001) indicate that Pasifika values such as respect, reciprocity and service must frame the building of relationships and my interactions with students will be the building blocks of this ethnography. To this end, I hope this research will also provide students (and teachers) with opportunities to reflect on and further develop their learning (explained below).

Relationships with teachers will be of equal importance. I will begin discussions with teachers at the end of 2006 so that teachers are familiar with the research before the beginning of 2007 when they will be busy organising the new school year. I will spend time in classrooms sporadically at first and then more consistently, so that both teachers and students will become accustomed to my presence and the research will become normalized. This will also ensure that I base the discussion of my classroom experience on more than just a few incidences. I will clearly communicate to teachers that my research focus is the students' experiences and voices, not their teaching abilities, curriculum knowledge or

management choices.

The conversations I have with teachers and students in the classroom will be conducted with great care so as not to disrupt the learning environment or cause problems for the teacher. I will aim to interact with students in constructive ways centred around learning while in the classroom.

Consultation and support

Students are the central focus of this research and their ideas, actions, feedback and collaborative voices will greatly influence the direction and nature of this research project. While building trusting relationships with students in class time and around the school at intervals and lunchtimes, students will be informally and formally consulted about this research project and the direction it takes. Although I will have the benefit of advice from the other advisory groups mentioned, students will also be key collaborators. Students will be consulted about how this research may be of benefit to them and the best ways to seek their ideas in a safe and accessible cultural environment. The methods outlined earlier will be used and feedback sought from students about what is most appropriate and engaging. The approach and design will be flexible.

During lunchtime sessions, I will make links where possible and appropriate to classroom topics previously covered in health and PE classes. I will discuss the possibility of this with teachers.

As well as working to build strong relationships with teachers, I will maintain awareness of their feelings and attitudes to the research and, specifically, the classroom interactions in an on-going way. If I perceive that teachers are becoming frustrated I will focus on other classes for a while and allow them to have break. I will keep in close contact with the school guidance counsellor so that she is aware of the topics of discussion, in case students or teachers seek her support after sessions. I will remind participants during the conversations that they can contact the counsellor for further support, especially when sessions involve discussion of difficult and/or personal issues.

Guidelines

At the beginning of each discussion, guidelines will be negotiated with all involved in the research. These guidelines will apply to both group and individual conversations and, although these will be negotiated at the time, I will ensure the guidelines include issues such as respect, cultural values, disclosure, personal choice about participation, the right to withdraw, to not answer, listening to others, and confidentiality. I will write up these guidelines and reiterate them at the beginning of each session. Research conversations will be carefully facilitated to ensure, where possible, that people are heard and a respectful and open environment is maintained.

Enhancing learning

One approach I will discuss with staff and students will be structuring some of the research conversations with students around their learning in health and physical education and thus providing opportunities for students to enhance knowledge, engage in reflection about health and physical education experiences, and to share understandings with other students about concepts and perspectives. Being involved in the sessions may help students to further build on, define and apply their knowledge and learning from classes in another context. This may be of help to them in developing skills, knowledge and understandings in health and physical education and may help their development and achievement in this subject. Similarly, I will discuss with teachers how this research may benefit them through shared resources, discussion of ideas about theory and practice and, if appropriate, conversations about planning and curriculum.

Use of the school name/ identifiably

The nature of the thesis may make it easy for readers to identify the school because of the location, specific information about the context and community, and my previous involvement. As noted above, this could be damaging for the school's reputation if findings are unflattering. I will discuss and negotiate this issue in an ongoing way with the school's Principal and Board of Trustees to minimise harm to the school and ensure any 'negative' findings are handled sensitively and appropriately, while maintaining the authenticity of the findings.

This issue will be discussed in my initial meetings with the Principal and Board and will be revisited throughout the study, especially during the ‘writing up’ phases after it is clear what the findings will be.

Communicating findings

I need to take great care in communicating research findings by emphasising students’ perceptions and the wider importance of the research vis a vis Pasifika education from a critical/political viewpoint, rather than focusing on specific school processes. The school and students’ identities will also be kept as anonymous as possible. Communication and publication of findings in local communities will be negotiated with the Principal to ensure minimal negative effects. The school will be able to use findings to reflect on, celebrate, and enhance practice if they want to and I will offer to report findings back to the staff if the school management agree.

My contribution

While I feel that relieving classes in the school may affect the outcomes of the research in negative ways as discussed above, I will seek other ways to contribute to the school by volunteering on camps and coaching a sports team while I am at the school, as well as working closely with teachers if they request help with programmes.

e) Participants’ right to decline to participate and right to withdraw

i) Indicate what activities you require participants to do in your study

ii) Indicate how much participants’ time will be required

| Participant | Activities | Time |
|---|--|--|
| School principal and senior management team | Individual and/or group recorded conversations | Approx 1 hour (with follow-up if needed) |
| Teachers of senior classes | Classroom interactions | Approx 10 hours |
| | Classroom interactions - videoed | Approx 1-2 hours (if any) |
| | Recorded dialogical conversations with | Approx 2-3 hours |

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------|
| | other teachers | |
| | Individual dialogical conversations | Approx 2-3 hours |
| Other P.E department staff | Recorded dialogical conversations with other teachers (only if they specifically want to be involved) | Approx 2-3 hours |
| Students in senior health and PE classes | Classroom interactions | Approx 10 hours |
| Students from senior classes who opt into lunchtime sessions | Recorded group dialogical conversations | Approx 10 sessions |
| Students from after-school sessions who opt into individual conversations | Recorded individual dialogical conversations | Approx 2 hours |

If teachers of senior classes do not want to participate in the study then their classroom interactions will be withdrawn but students from their classes will still be able to participate in the after-school sessions. Students will be invited but not coerced into attending the sessions. They can choose whether to attend all sessions or only a few, and can attend for all or part of a session. Though it will be beneficial for students to be involved in the after-school sessions their school work will not be disadvantaged by not attending. Any student present in the after-school sessions will be able to participate in individual research conversations also but, again, there will be no compulsion to do so. Students and teachers can withdraw from the study at any time prior to 30th March 2007. If they wish to withdraw completely at that point then data relating to their contributions to conversations and classroom interactions will not be used in the study. Students and teachers can withdraw anytime up until the end of the data collection from participating further in the study (due to time constraints or other reasons) but still have previous materials included in the study. If they wish to withdraw they can tell me in person or in writing, or talk to the school principal or any teacher of health and physical education.

f) Arrangements for participants to receive information

As discussed above, the senior management, the board, and the staff in the health and PE department will receive all information and letters requesting involvement. Meetings will be conducted with all groups to explain further and answer questions and concerns. All students and staff involved in senior health and physical education classes will receive information, letters and consent forms in advance. I will then request to talk with each class and explain, clarify and answer questions before asking for consent. Information and 'report-backs' to staff and students will occur frequently. There will be ample time during the research process and my time in the school for staff and students to informally ask questions and clarify intentions. Topics for discussion in the after-school sessions will be published and given to students in advance so they can choose which sessions to attend. I will request formal time during staff meetings for discussion about concerns and to report back on what has happened so far. I will report back to classes every 2-3 weeks. The school will receive a completed copy of my thesis and updates about what is happening with this information.

g) Use of the information

The primary use of this research will be my PhD thesis but data will also be used for conference presentations and academic articles. These purposes are all detailed on the consent forms. Of primary importance will be maintaining the anonymity of the school and all research participants.

Conflicts of interest

Past Experience

Because I worked at this school as a staff member and head of department from 1999 – 2003, there are a number of ethical issues related to existing relationships between myself and staff members. I will detail these, and my strategies for minimization of harm, under the following headings:

Relationships with staff

As a past staff member, teacher and head of department (from 1999 – 2003) I am known to the staff and some of the students. This poses an ethical dilemma because there are existing power relationships between myself and the staff in the health and physical education department. This power relationship may be magnified by my position as a researcher,

university lecturer and prominent member of the board of Physical Education New Zealand. During my time at the school I employed some of the current staff in the department, including the HOD, who as a result may feel threatened and unsure about the work he is doing, and may feel that I am judging it in some way. Other staff in the department may feel this also.

Friendships

The current deputy principal and principal are both personal friends of mine. This will affect my interactions with them and with other staff.

Students

Although I will be new to most students, there is a possibility I will be known to some of the students involved in the research and may have taught a few of them. This means that an existing teacher-student power relationship will exist; as a result, students may not feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and feelings about the subjects, especially as they know that I am a physical education teacher. If they have had negative experiences in physical education they may be unwilling to share these.

Strategies

The above conflicts of interest will need to be engaged with in an on-going reflective way. My personal friendships with the senior management will mean that I am trusted and will have access to school documents and information that a lesser-known person may not. I will need to treat this trust with care, value the school and the positive work members of the community are doing, and act with integrity and honesty throughout the process. I will access and use only information that is relevant to the study and will maintain open dialogue with the principal about how information will be used.

My relationships with teachers in the department will hopefully be mitigated by the time I have spent away from the school (3 years). During this time the department will have changed and the current HOD will have gained confidence in the role. Nevertheless, I will endeavour to build trusting relationships while, again, emphasizing that this research is primarily concerned with student perspectives.

h) Procedure for resolution of disputes

If disputes occur, I will first contact the school principal to make sure she is aware of what is happening. I will also involve my supervisors, Doug Booth and Sue Middleton, and seek advice and guidance on how to proceed. The advisory groups will also be useful, especially if issues are of a cultural nature.

i) Other ethical concerns relevant to the research

Nil

k) Cultural and Social considerations

Building partnerships

A central issue I continue to grapple with in deciding to undertake this research is the vast differences between my own background and those of the students. I am Palagi, and my upbringing in the South Island was fairly mono-cultural, catholic, and rural. My parents are from upper working class and lower middle class backgrounds. These students' backgrounds are vastly different from my own. Largely working class, many are beneficiaries and all are from New Zealand born or immigrant families with strong links to the Pacific Islands. Their experiences of ethnicity, culture, family, poverty and racism differ from my own. I feel a strong affinity to these students, having taught in their communities for seven years and having learnt a great deal from them, while also indirectly experiencing the challenges of their social conditions. In order to ensure the appropriateness of my research, the partnerships discussed earlier will be integral to this research and will challenge and provide me with critique. These planned partnerships, and others that are formed during the research, will help to guide me and inform my research as well as challenging my perspectives and ensuring that culturally inappropriate practices and Eurocentric epistemologies are avoided.

Culture and representation

Because my own ethnicity is different to those of the participants there may be cultural issues and potential for harm during the research process. Individual students and teachers may feel

unsafe and uncomfortable during interviews and conversations if I, or others, unknowingly offend by ignoring valued cultural practices. There is a danger of centralising my own cultural norms and assumptions, causing discomfort and misunderstanding. Because this study is focussed primarily on the perspectives of Pasifika students, it may be viewed by other students to value Pasifika knowledges over the knowledges of other ethnic groups in the school. On-going consideration of representation and ideology will be important. Much consideration will be given to issues of student voice and the best ways to represent student perspectives (as different from my own) during the data collection, analysis, and writing stages (Horner, 2004; Kirsch, 1997; Kirsch & Richie, 1995).

3. Legal Issues

a) Copyright

The ownership of the research document will include all parties as per the University of Waikato guidelines. This includes the participants, myself and my supervision panel, and the University of Waikato. All of these parties will be acknowledged accordingly.

b) Ownership of data or materials produced

As per the University of Waikato guidelines, Participants will own the raw data and I will own the interpretation and findings.

c) Any other legal issue relevant to the research

Nil

d) Place in which the research will be conducted:

██████ College, █████, Auckland

e) Has this application in whole or part previously been declined or approved by another ethics committee?

No

f) For research to be undertaken at other facilities under the control of another ethics committee, has an application also been made to that committee?

N/A

g) Is any of this work being used in a thesis to be submitted for a degree at the University of Waikato?

Yes, PhD thesis.

h) Further conditions.

Nil

4. Research Timetable

a) Proposed date of commencement of data collection

20th January 2007

b) Expected date of completion of data collection

July 2007

5. Applicant Agreement

I agree

a) to ensure that the above-mentioned procedures concerning the ethical conduct of this project will be followed by all those involved in the collection and handling of data.

b) in the event of this application being approved, the researcher agrees to inform the SOE Ethics Committee of any change subsequently proposed.

c) to submit for approval any amendments made to the research procedures outlined in this application which affect the ethical appraisal of the project.

Signature of applicant: Date:

d) that this application has been developed with my supervision and has my support. I have checked that all the information requested in the checklist below is included

e) I agree to support the student to follow the above mentioned procedures concerning the ethical conduct of this project.

Signature of supervisor: Date:

6. **Check List**

Before sending this form to the SOE Ethics Committee Administrator please ensure that you have completed the following and attached these as appendices:

- ☐ Letter(s) to: participants, e.g. children, caregivers, principal, BOT, teachers.
 - ☐ Information sheet, introductory letter for each type of participant
 - ☐ Consent form(s) for each type of participant
 - ☐ Questionnaire/survey questions/interview questions
 - ☐ Reference list
 - ☐ *Every page of your ethics application form has been numbered*
-

Please return 5 copies of your completed application to Sue Bradley at the School of Education by the following dates in 2006:

1 February, 1 March, 5 April, 3 May, 7 June, 5 July, 2 August, 6 September, 4 October, 1 November, 6 December

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Appendix

1. Letter to the Board of Trustees, information and consent
2. Letter to teachers, information and consent
3. Letter to students, information and consent