

Research Summary

A short form summary of Takatāpui Beyond Marginalisation: Exploring Māori Gender, Identity and Performance.

Tangaroa Ihaia Pirihongi Paora

Keywords: Gender identity; Irarere; Performance; Takatāpui tāne

In this practice-led thesis the researcher adopted a critically iterative approach where “research questions were initially exploratory and reflective, serving to create an internal dialogue between the practitioner and the making” (Tavares & Ings, 2018, p. 20). The initiating question underpinning the thesis asked:

How might an artistic reconsideration of gender role differentiation give a unique voice to takatāpui tāne identity?¹

The research sought to illuminate an experiential context, then generate visual and performance artifacts where the principle of irarere within gender identity and sexual orientation, might find a purposeful place to stand within te ao Māori.²

Emanating from a Kaupapa Māori³ paradigm the study employed the methodological metaphor of Te Whare Rangahau – a research space that is populated with methods including karakia, kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) interviewing, iterative experimentation, pakiwaitara (poetic inquiry), photography, and choreography. In the thesis, Te Whare Rangahau integrated a number of features from Pouwhare’s (2020) Pūrākau framework for practice-led artistic inquiry; specifically his observation that in much artistic Māori research, through mahi (*practice*) and heuristic inquiry, the researcher may draw sustenance from both the realm of Te Kura Huna (what is unseen, genealogical, esoteric or tacit), and Te Kura Tūrama – (what is explicit and seen). Together these realms provide the project with nutrients (Figure 1).

Significantly, when artistic practice is conceived as occurring inside Te Whare Rangahau, the researcher is protected by a whare (building) that may be understood as a cultural shelter and ideological manifestation of te ao Māori.

¹ The Tiwhanawhana Trust (2017, para. 1) defines takatāpui as Māori “individuals who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or part of the rainbow community.” Within this, *takatāpui tāne* are Māori individuals who identify as men, may manifest *irarere*, and often define their gender and sexual orientation in physical, spiritual and genealogical terms.

² *Irarere* describes gender fluidity or the ability one has to move between expressions of masculinity and femininity. The word has a lexicographical listing in Moorfield’s (2021), Te Aka: Online Māori Dictionary.

³ The paradigm is a Māori framework informed by a Māori worldview, knowledge, beliefs and values.

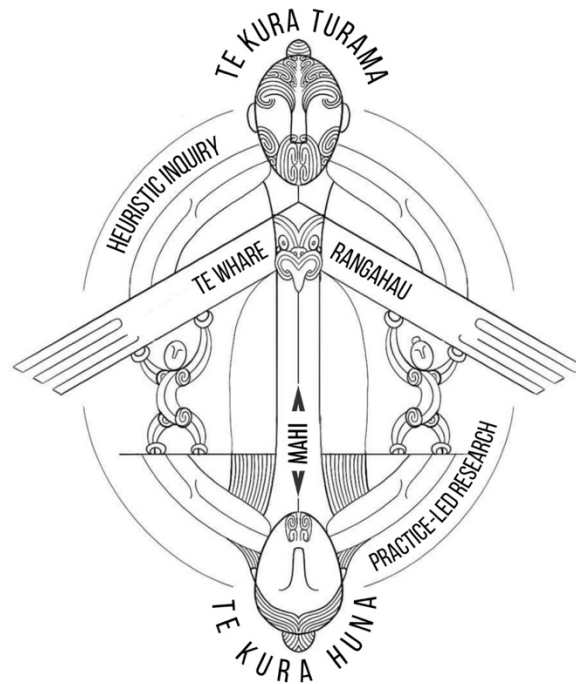


Figure 1 Detail of the thesis' research design illustrating the dynamic relationship between Te Kura Huna and Te Kura Turama. © Tangaroa Paora.

Drawing on interviews with takatāpui tane, the study exhumed knowledge about identity and examined how this has been expressed through performance. The research was motivated by the researcher's identity as a takatāpui tāne who manifests irarere. In the thesis, this embodiment was synthesised with external data to create a live performance and a published book that integrated poetry and portraiture. The live performance combined oratory and kapa haka that were presented inside a Whare Takatāpui.⁴ In this space takatāpui tāne were conceived as poupou⁵ and agents who express the dignity of being Māori and queer.

The significance of the thesis lay in its potential to address questions of identity that have social and political relevance for LGBTQ+ individuals and communities, and to conceptually and artistically enrich distinctively Māori forms of performative expression.

⁴ This is a conceptual development of te Whare Tapere, the traditional Māori performance space.

⁵ The poupou are considered pillars that stand erect within a whare and maintain its structure. In this study poupou represent individuals who maintain the Whare Takatāpui as a safe space for all takatāpui Māori.

References

- Irarere, (2021). Te Aka: Online Māori Dictionary.
<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=irarere>
- Pihama, L., Cram, F., & Walker, S. (2002). Creating methodological space: A literature review of Kaupapa Maori research. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 26(1).
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Fiona-Cram/publication/234647374_Creating_Methodological_Space_A_Literature_Review_of_Kaupapa_Maori_Research/links/5c354a6692851c22a366072d/Creating-Methodological-Space-A-Literature-Review-of-Kaupapa-Maori-Research.pdf
- Pouwhare, R. (2020). Ngā Pūrākau mō Māui: mai te patuero, te pakokitanga me te whakapēpē ki te kōrero pono, ki te whaihua whaitake, mē ngā honotanga. *The Māui Narratives: From Bowdlerisation, Dislocation and Infantilisation to Veracity, Relevance and Connection*. [Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology].
Tuwhera, <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/13307>
- Tiwhanawhana Trust (2017). Takatāpui – A resource hub. <https://takatapui.nz/definition-of-takatapui#takatapui-meaning>
- Tavares, T. & Ings, W. (2018). Navigating artistic inquiry in a creative-production thesis: the narrative and illustrative potentials of realismo maravilhoso. *Journal of Art, Design and Technology [DAT]*, 3(2), 9-42.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333073607_Transitando_pela_investigacao_artistica_em_uma_tese_de_producao_criativa

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the thesis' supervisors, Professor Welby Ings, Professor Hinematau McNeill and advisor Dr Marcos Steagall.

Biography

Tangaroa is of Muriwhenua descent. He holds a Master's degree in Māori Development (First Class Hons) and his PhD is due for submission in August 2023. His research is primarily concerned with gender role differentiation and its impact on forms of Māori performance. Between 2020-2023 he was co-president of Tītahi ki Tua (the AUT Māori Students Association), Ahakoā Te Aha, and the Auckland Pride Māori Advisory Board. He is currently employed as a lecturer in Māori studies, teaching language and development.