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Mana Takatāpui:
Self-determination for queer rangatahi Māori

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Arts [Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies]
at
The University of Waikato
by
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2023

Abstract

Here is a Master's thesis crafted with, by, and for Rangatahi Takatāpui. It represents a labour of love for the community to which I belong, and seeks to generate understanding about the factors that enable LGBTQI+ Māori youth to embody and enact Tino Rangatiratanga. Principles of Kaupapa Māori Theory provide a paradigm through which this research is conducted, with particular attention paid to the Indigenous Research Agenda. Importantly, this rangahau seeks to offer an alternative to the conventions of hegemonic empirical academia by centering the voices and lived experiences of those who have historically been subjected to the dehumanising objectification of western research practices.

Through the methodological approach of wānanga, and within a Tikanga Māori framework of Āta, or cultural safety, twelve Rangatahi Takatāpui participated in a two day workshop at Te Kohinga Mārama Marae. Over the course of both days, co-researchers shared personal testimonies about their experiences navigating the world as Queer Indigenous peoples, as well as the dreams and aspirations they have for collective self-determination. These accounts ultimately inform the narrative storying employed to convey the key findings of this research, which are described as Mana Tuakiri (identity), Mana Hapori (belonging), Mana Moemoeā (vision), and Mana Wero (challenges).

To make sense of the findings presented in this rangahau, a model is developed which takes inspiration from Te Takarangi, the double spiral motif common in both Toi Māori and Te Tai Ao. Utilising the cyclical and intersecting patterns of Te Takarangi, the four main themes of this research are explored through a progressive layering of personal, interpersonal, and societal relationships in order to provide insight into how best Rangatahi Takatāpui can be supported to enact Tino Rangatiratanga. Ultimately, this research present nine key factors to be addressed and implemented in order to achieve this aspiration, including a call for conscientisation (both the self and the collective), resourcing and support, the removal of barriers to access, community intersectional reflexivity, space for collective Indigenous dreaming, and an ongoing commitment to Te Tiriti justice.

Mihimihi

From the bottom of my heart, thank you to everybody who supported, tolerated, and celebrated me for the duration of this research project. No matter how lost in the chaos of writing I felt, somebody always came along to tell me I could do it, and for that I am eternally grateful.

To Tyler, you created space and time for me to dream. Thank you.

To my supervisor, Waikaremoana Waitoki, I am so grateful for your belief in me and this kaupapa. E mihi ana ki a koe, e hoa.

To my co-researchers, without whom this rangahau would not be possible. You are the true creators of this thesis. Ngā mihi maioha ki a koutou!

Alejandra (Alé) (Ngai Tāmanuhiri, Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou)

Cassidy (Ngāti Unu, Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Makahori, Ngāti Kinohaku, Ngāti Mahuta, Te Māhurehure)

Cee (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu ki Whaingaroa)

Essa (Ngāti Wehi Wehi, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga)

Hannah (Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki, Rongowhakaata, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri, Scotland)

Maraea (Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Te Whakatōhea, Ngāpuhi)

Mo (Ngāti Pīkiao, Ngāti Porou)

Moon (Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Tukorehe)

Nia (Pare Waikato, Waikato Tainui, Ngāti Tai, Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Apakura, Ngāti Māhanga, Ngāti Te Wehi, Ngāti Tamaoho, Ngāti Tamainupō, Ngāti Wairere, Ngāti Whāwhākia)

Pounamu (Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Pūkenga)

Te Waimarie (Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Kuku)

Dedication

Ki tāku ngākau, ko Jem Huia Atlas Horton.
E kore koe e ngaro, he kākano koe i ruia mai i Rangiatea

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Glossary of Select Terms

Translations not included in this glossary can be found at <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

Ako Māori	The principle of incorporating culturally preferred pedagogy
Āta	To inform and guide understandings of respectfulness in relationships towards wellbeing
He Whakaaro Takarangi	The thesis discussion conceptualised as the intersecting convolutions of both existing knowledge and new ideas
Kaupapa Māori	Māori approach, Māori customary practice, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical worldview, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society
Kaupapa whānau	Chosen family, who may share a common purpose, goal, or identity
Mana	Inherent prestige, authority, influence, importance or status
Ngā taonga / kōrero tuku iho	Treasures / oral histories and stories handed down
Orokohanga	Origin, origin story, beginning, creation
Pūrākau	Didactic and creative narratives which describe and explain something's origins
Pūrākau Whakaaro	The findings section of this thesis, presented in narrative
Rangatahi	Younger generation (a relational term that is subjective and contextual)
Takatāpui	LGBTQIA+ person of Māori descent
Tapu	Sacred, under the protection of Ngā Atua (Māori divine supernatural beings)
Te Papa Tuatahi	The first layer of five within this thesis' conception of a literature review
Tino Rangatiratanga	Self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy
Wānanga	Place and/or space for knowledge generation and critical discussion
Whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, to place in layers, to recite in proper order
Whakapapa whānau	Assigned/biological family
Whakawhiti kōrero	Reciprocal exchange of ideas through conversation held in a circle

He Pūrākau Orokohanga || The Beginning

Te Kore

Unlimited potential

Electric | Anticipation

Te Pō

Perpetual night

Closeness | Intimacy

Te Ao Mārama

The world of light

Knowing | Being

He pūrākau orokohanga, passed down from the lips of our tūpuna to the ears of our mokopuna. It is an ancient history that has been spoken many times, in many ways. And so it will continue. Such is the nature of all things, which come into being through whakapapa. This is the version that has been given to me. Tihei mauri ora!

It began before time and place, when all things were potential. Like the moment immediately before a sneeze - the sharp inhalation; tightness of the chest; an instance of anticipation suspended in seemingly perpetual time. But electric and alive, too, with the knowledge of what immediately follows. A rush of breath exiting the body. Te Kore. Ko Ia koe. Fluid, unrestrained, genderless (Barlow, 2015, p. 55).

Following this was Te Pō, when all things were consumed in darkness. Like the phases of our earthly night, there were many layers of The Pō. Te Pō-nui; Te Pō-roa; Te Pō-uriuri; Te Pō-kerekere. And so it continued, a rhythmic pulsation through the closeness of pitch black. Within the perpetual night our primordial parents, Papatūānuku and Ranginui, lay in a tight embrace of love. Between them were their celestial offspring, Ngā Atua, held in the warmth of

their pressing bodies. Our pūrākau speak of many children, sometimes hundreds. All male. In a desire to understand what is beyond human comprehension we have personified them as “sons”. Though their true form cannot be understood in the binary - a construct imposed upon us by the patriarchal doctrine of colonisation (Campbell, 2019). The mauri of the Atua is limitless, and embodies the essence of all living things. And so, these countless divine beings came into existence in the night; beyond gender, beyond sex, and beyond human. Takatāpui made manifest in the gods.

From flesh-pressed dark

To flesh-pressed dark

in the pūrākau about our beginning the detail that the atua were all
 sons were all men is something that keeps cropping up
 and whether or not we have pākehā ears to thank for that
 interpretation or if the darkness between Papa and Rangi
 was a sausage party
 there isn't any straight explanation for this

Excerpt from ‘takatāpui v: te pō’ in [takatāpui]¹ by Essa May Ranapiri, 2021.

Aeons passed. What seemed an eternity. And suddenly, during the slow shifting of bodies, a momentary glimpse of light flashed beneath the armpit of Ranginui. Thus was planted a seed in the minds of the children of Papa and Rangi. The night began to turn - Te Po-tahuri-mai-ki-taiao - and a new dawn was building momentum. Negotiations between the immortal siblings were held, at times with great tumult, between the bellies of their parents. Though it was in the moments of close and intimate talk, with hushed tones and knowing looks, that the seed began to grow. He noho tata pu - a sacred conclave; a wānanga of the Atua (Rangihuna & Kopua, 2014). The tender embrace was now becoming a claustrophobic grip, and all but a small few, including Whiro Te Tipua (who found comfort in the darkness) and

¹ This poem was written as part of a zine collection printed and given as koha to co-researchers of the wānanaga component of this thesis.

Tāwhirimātea (for in his gusty form, he was able to move more freely than the others) agreed on the need for change, but not its method. Ultimately, it fell to Tāne Nui a Rangi to coordinate the separation of his parents. Using the trunk of his legs to push against the sky, with his back firmly rooted upon the earth, Tāne tore Papatūānuku and Ranginui apart, and by doing so welcomed Te Ao Mārama - the world of light. It was cold, however, and the bitter frost held at bay by Papa and Rangi rushed in, pricking the skin like shards of galactic ice. Tāne called to his siblings for help, as the unrelenting grip their parents was too great for him to hold alone. Tu Pai staked the Earth from the Sky, while Tūmatakaka and Tūmataunga fashioned a toki with which to hack at the interlocked arms of their parents, finally severing them apart. The blue-red blood of Ranginui runs still over the Earth, pigmenting both the soil and the sky. A constant reminder of the brutality committed and sacrifice made for the cold hard light of day.

Our Atua exist in perpetuity. Their deeds are limitless, and number far greater than the days of a human life. Tāne, from whom we derive, was not only the bringer of light, but the giver of breath, too. For it was with the guidance of his mother that he went to Kurawaka and formed Hineahuone from kōkōwai - sacred red clay - breathing life into her through the pressing of noses. From Hineahuone came the first human, Hinetītama, our antecedent ancestress. From her whare tangata all people descend, and, for the transgression of her father, Tāne, she receives them again at the end of their lives as Hinenuitepō. Through every generation of Te Ao Mārama, we move deeper into the whakapapa of Tangata Whenua. We are the mokopuna of Hinetītama, of Hineahuone, of Tāne, of Papatūānuku, and as such, we are people of the land. It is for this reason that tikanga dictates we return our placenta to the Earth after birth - an acknowledgement of that from which we came. It is also why in Te Reo Māori the word for both placenta and land is one in the same. Whenua. This profound relationship between people and the land means we treat all living things with respect and love, as we would our whanaunga. They are our older siblings by descent from Tāne. Our pūrākau tell us that we are a strand of harakeke woven through the whakapapa of our relationships. These relationships are not conditional upon what can be gained personally, but exist by virtue of interconnectedness.

Such is the nature of all things, which come into being through whakapapa.

Ko Wai?: From What Waters Do I Descend?

‘Ko wai koe?’ Perhaps the quintessential Māori question. Who are you? From where do you descend? What land, what mountain, what *waters*? A poignant point of inquiry. For most, our physical existence begins in the *whare tangata*. We grow and form in a liquid cocoon, floating in the ambient waters of our first home, suspended and nurtured by the amniotic fluid of the womb. The human body is composed of up to 73 percent water (Roland, 2019) - like Papatūānuku, our primordial mother, we are more water than flesh. In Te Ao Māori, it is customary for us to introduce ourselves by way of *pepeha*, beginning with an acknowledgment of the land and water from which our ancestors came. *Nō reira, ko wai au?* So, then, who am I?

Ka tangi te Tītī, ka tangi te Kākā, ka tangi hoki ahau.

Tihei mauri ora!

Ki te taha o tōku māmā

Ko Te Hokianga nui a Kupe te moana

Ko Kapowai, ko Pukenui, ko Whakarongoroa ngā maunga

Ko Waikare, ko Waitangi, ko Utakura ngā awa

Ko Ngātokimatawhaorua tōku waka

He uri au nō Te Whare Tapu o Ngāpuhi

Ko Te Kapotai, ko Te Popoto ōku hapū

Ko Waikare, ko Rawhitiroa (Te Ahuahu), Ko Rangatahi ōku marae

Ko Walker tōku ignoa whānau

Ko Catherine tōku māmā

Ki te taha o tōku pāpā

Ko Irish Sea te moana

Ko Lugnaquilla te maunga

Ko Avoca te awa

Ko Lough Dan te roto

Ko Wicklow tōku rohe

Ko Arklow tōku pā
Ko Doyle tōku clan
Ko Shayne tōku pāpā

Ko Benjamin ahau
He tamariki mokopuna, he pāpā, he kaiako, he kaituhi hoki ahau
He Takatāpui au.

On my father's side, we whakapapa most strongly to our Irish heritage, though we have English ancestry too. Apparently my surname, Doyle, is the 9th most common in Ireland (Murphy, 2015). I have never set foot on Irish soil, though the bones of my ancestors lie embraced by that land, and so I feel an intrinsic connection to it, ā-wairua - on a spiritual level. Our ancestral mountain is Lugnaquilla, and the river is Avoca. They both preside over Wicklow, the county of my ancestors, and Arklow, our village. On my mother's side we also whakapapa to the British Isles, though this time to Scotland, which is where my mother's maiden name, Walker, comes from. Through her mother, my nana, we are Māori. My Pacific Island tūpuna arrived on this land, Aotearoa, 29 generations ago aboard the waka Ngātokimatawhaorua. They settled here upon the sacred and fertile lands of Te Tai Tokerau. They built pā, māra kai, and kāinga. They travelled, they settled, they traded, they innovated, and they developed a distinct identity, culture, and dialect of Te Reo Māori; Te Mita o Ngāpuhi. The pepeha above outlines this whakapapa, listing our ancestral moana, maunga, awa, and roto.

I am made up of all of my ancestors, and all of the lands they came from. It is an irony not lost on me, then, that my ancestors are both the colonised and the colonisers, the Indigenous and the invaders. My friend - a history teacher who is also Irish - once reminded me that our Gaelic and Norse-Gael ancestors faced persecution and deprivation in a similar manner to my tūpuna Māori, all at the hands of the British Crown. I am the product of colonisation. I exist in the hyphen, the in-between. I am both Māori and Pākehā. Not part one, part the other, but both simultaneously. It sometimes feels messy and complicated, like I need to pick one or justify the other, but in reality, it is a fact of whakapapa. We are capable of holding multiple truths simultaneously. Nō Māori ahau. Nō Pākehā ahau.

My childhood was spent with waves lapping at my feet. They came from the north, east, and south. The western coast was a little further away, though that's where my ancestors first landed, further north in Hokianga. I grew up in Whangaparaoa, a peninsula around 40 kms north of Auckland city. As a child, it never felt like a part of New Zealand's largest city, firmly disconnected by a wide belt of farmland and hills. Over time the urban mess has sprawled out, spilling north towards what was once a seaside village. My great grandfather built a bach on the same road I grew up on many decades earlier, under the shade of an ancestral pōhutukawa. Mum remembers visiting as a child; a quieter, simpler time then. Even when I was young, on our way to primary school my older brothers and I would cut behind St Francis of Assisi church, through a field of horses, to get to class. The horses have been replaced by rows of houses now, each one a mirror of their neighbour.

Whangaparaoa still doesn't really feel like a part of the Auckland 'super-city', but it definitely feels more suburban. I'll never forget riding my bicycle along the northern motorway the day before it opened to traffic. Prior to its construction, the peninsula was accessed by city-dwellers via winding rural roads which bent to fit the contours of the land, avoiding paddocks of cows and sheep, and patches of forest, both native and introduced. That motorway was perhaps one of the main catalysts of change. It cut down travel times, and cut through the land in deep, straight lacerations. The beaches remain, though. The northern coast with golden-white sand, flat, sweeping bays, grassy parks with old Norfolk Pines and picnic tables. The southern coast, more shaded, rough, deep rock pools teeming with tiny life, heavy pōhutukawa trees clawing down the creamy cliffs that lead to pebble shores. The eastern coast, the tip of the peninsular, a regional park, a mix of north and south, but with spanning panoramic views out to the islands of the Hauraki Gulf. I remember picnics with my grandparents there, family barbecues, being chased by peacocks, and searching for pūrātoke down by the waterfalls at night.

Growing up, I recall a distinct inability to simultaneously manage the multiple facets of my identity. This was most apparent in my queer and Māori identities, or rather, the performance of my het-cis and Pākehā identities. I actively fought the confusion I had around my gender and

sexuality - a struggle of suppression. It was constantly at the forefront of my mind, and apparently at the forefront of the minds of those I encountered, as I was constantly berated about it. It was exhausting and all consuming. My identity as Māori, on the other hand, took a back seat. Given that I pass as Pākehā, and come from a middle class family, my experience as Māori was practically unrecognised by both the community I grew up in and, as such, myself. I did not feel a pressing urgency to defend my Māori-ness, as it was rarely called into question. Not because people took for granted that I am Māori, but the opposite. This made me very uncomfortable with situations that forced me to confront my Māoritanga, as I felt that I did not, and should not belong. At senior prizegiving, a teacher asked me if I'd like to sing a waiata in front of the school. This came about because I was enrolled as 'having Māori descent', and my cohort had a distinct lack of 'good' Māori students. I declined the request, and can still recall the feeling of deep whakamā that I experienced in that moment, for being exposed as, what I considered, a fraud. Not that I was not Māori, but that I knew very little about my own whakapapa and identity.

Another example of my internalised shame manifested in the way I spoke about and regarded my oldest brother's success in learning Te Reo Māori, the Māori language. He was the only living person in my family to formally learn te Reo, and was awarded a university scholarship for doing so. I outwardly regarded him as a try-hard and questioned his motivations. I regarded his effort to learn our whakapapa and share his journey of self-discovery as performative and superficial. But deep down, I felt jealous and ashamed. Jealous that he was making an effort to publicly acknowledge his whakapapa Māori, and ashamed that I was not doing the same. Then, at university, I enrolled myself as a Māori student. I don't remember what my rationale was for doing so. Other than it being on my personal record, it made little difference to my daily life while studying. At the start of my honours year, I walked into the faculty office to speak to my supervisor, and saw my name and face stuck to the wall of the office under the banner "Congratulations to our top Māori graduate of 2012!" That old feeling of exposure and shame overwhelmed me, and before rushing out of the office, I quietly took my identity off the wall and dropped it in the bin.

These moments of confrontation throughout my childhood were formative, but relatively minor compared to the battle I had with my queerness (a topic that is addressed by co-researchers in *kōrero* at our research *wānanga*). This struggle I experienced over my *Māoritanga* was undoubtedly deeply unsettling and reinforced notions of blood quantum, colourism, and a dualistic ‘us or them’ identity binary. However, I spent very little time actively considering this layer of my identity - being *Māori* - which I now understand is largely thanks to the privilege I have been afforded in life due to the colour of my skin. My *whakapapa*-disconnect caused personal *mamae* and added to the legacy of intergenerational disconnect within my *whānau*, but it was softened by my white privilege, and it should be stated upfront that my ability to exist in the world as a *Pākehā* person granted me privileges that I still experience and benefit from to this day. After postgraduate study, I became a high school teacher, started my own family with my partner, and moved to *Kirikiroa* Hamilton, where I find myself today. Although I have known for as long as I can remember, on both accounts, it wasn’t until I left university that I began to fully come into my *Māori* and queer identities. Though, at that stage I still treated them as separate. It wasn’t until relatively recently that I first heard the term that wove those two parts of myself together as one; *Takatāpui*. To be *Māori and LGBTQI+*. Not two isolated aspects of my identity, like being right handed and a vegetarian, but a synthesis of my gender, sexuality, and *whakapapa*. A way of understanding my queerness as informed by, and intrinsic to, my own *Māoritanga*.

Chapter 1

Whakapapa Kōrero || Literature Review

“In knowing something’s whakapapa, the layers that make it up, you can come to know how it came to be, how it relates to the rest of existence, and how it will come to exist in the future” (Burgess, et al., 2021).

Takatāpuitanga, the lived experience and quality of being Takatāpui, has many layers. The two most obvious of these are a simultaneous identity as both Māori and LGBTQ+. A notion of intersections within Takatāpui identities is, in itself, complicated. For Māori, it is unnatural to separate out aspects of a person's self, as though they exist in isolation from one another. To view these aspects as intersecting suggests that they can come together at one time, and at another have no overlap or influence on the other. As in the epistemologies of many Indigenous peoples, Māori believe that all things are inherently related (Kimmerer, 2013; Mika, 2021; Pierotti, 2010; Smith, 2021). We express this, for example, through pepeha which acknowledge our interconnectedness with the natural environment (such as our ancestral mountains and rivers), the waka, iwi, hapū and marae from which we descend, and the whānau to which we belong. These aspects of our identity are deeply related, and therefore exist in constant conversation with one another. For Takatāpui, this way of understanding the universe means that our sexuality and gender is also unable to be disentangled from our identity as Māori; our Māoritanga. It is for this reason that I visualise Takatāpuitanga as a layered whakapapa, rather than as intersectional. As, while Takatāpui is an intersectional identity in its theoretical sense, in reality, the strands of our identity do not simply intersect, they are woven in layers. In short, our identity as Māori wholly informs our queerness.

Whakapapa is foundational to our entire world view as Māori (Pihama, 2017; Pitman, 2012). Conceptually, it is often associated with the English term genealogy. However, this is a limited translation, as in the English there is a primary emphasis on cis-heteronormative nuclear family values. In Te Ao Māori, the notion of whakapapa is expansive and fluid. Firstly, there is no criteria that dictates only human or genetic ancestry. This is seen most powerfully in the way

we acknowledge Ngā Atua, especially Papatūānuku and Ranginui, as our tūpuna, and the taiao as our tuakana. Secondly, whakapapa holds a much more relational understanding of whānau than in the Pākehā equivalent. Within a Maori worldview, the concept of whānau includes people who might not necessarily be related through birth or union, but rather, by virtue of their importance in one's life. Thirdly, whakapapa has less interest in a linear transmission of time than genealogy. While there is certainly a generational progression in the lives of people, the concept of time and space is not concrete (Mahuika, 2019). One of our whakataukī describes the way we perceive passing through time as moving backwards into the future - *kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua*. Because of this, there is little expectation for formal titles to denote the distance of a person to their relative. Second-cousin, great-aunt, step-sibling, and niece-in-law are, therefore, superfluous terms from a Māori world view. These relationships will often simply be acknowledged and treated as whānau - be that cousin, aunty, sibling, or niece - and certainly with little interest in a prefix denoting distance or authenticity. For these reasons, whakapapa is understood as a guiding principle in Te Ao Māori that shapes our interactions with all things, living and inanimate, as we acknowledge that nothing exists in isolation, but is a product of its whakapapa.

All things can be understood through whakapapa, “there is a genealogy for every word, thought, object, mineral, place and person” (Mahuika, 2019, p. 1). If we are to hold true that all things belong to a whakapapa, it follows then that there is a whakapapa of Takatāpui identities and narratives. The lived experiences of this whakapapa reach back as far as our most ancient tūpuna. So far, in fact, that we find ourselves at the very beginning, in Te Kore - the genderless, fluid, potential from which all things descend. Takatāpui belong to this narrative, we are woven stands of the whakapapa. In fact, through reclamation, restoration, and representation projects, members of our own community have extinguished any doubt of our perpetual existence (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007a, 2007b). Papahou, waka huia, pūrākau, mōteatea, and waiata all confirm this fact, displaying a memory of our Takatāpui narratives from a not-so-distant past.

The transmission of these narratives, however, has been violently disrupted by a period of sustained colonisation since the arrival of Pākehā on the shores of Tūranganui-a-Kiwa in 1769 (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007b; Kerekere, 2017; Mikaere, 2019; Smith, 2012). It is only in recent

decades, since the 1980s, that work has been done to recentre Takatāpui as a real, active, and historical component of Te Ao Māori. The reemergence of this kaupapa marks the beginning of a contemporary whakapapa Takatāpuitanga. The first intensive effort since the beginning of colonisation on these lands. Like the generational descent of ancestry, passed through the relational bonds of whānau, hapū, and iwi, the germination of this new era of whakaaro has blossomed through a process of whakapapa kōrero. Unlike the pace of human genealogy, however, the generational layers of thought and discourse about Takatāpui have unfolded, and continue to do so, at such momentum that those who nurtured the seeds of dialogue in their early stages are still contributing to the conversation, now as tuakana and kaumātua, in its continued life and growth.

At the heart of this whakapapa is a group of rangatira who have acted as leading voices within the kōrero. For the purpose of this rangahau, they represent each generation of the whakapapa, not according to a criteria of age or status, but in relation to the chronology of ideas they have contributed which has strengthened, diversified, and kept this kaupapa vital. The names of these rangatira Takatāpui are listed below, so that they may be read in a way that follows the layered conceptualisation of this whakapapa. Certainly, these rangatira are not lone bastions of thought who acted in solitude, and there are many others who contributed to this kōrero in invaluable ways. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou e rangatira mā - I acknowledge and am grateful to each and every one of them.

I have chosen to include this particular group of rangatira because at the time of publication, their work was, and in a number of cases still is, unique and progressive. It is significant that all consequent research done with, by, or for Takatāpui acknowledges the foundational work done by these rangatira. They present voices and perspectives that had previously not been heard or considered beyond the intimate conversations held within our own community. In each generation of this whakapapa Takatāpuitanga, the dialogue continues in a way that adds, rather than reacts to the kaupapa, much like the phases of Te Orokohanga, which morph and grow rather than replace what came before them. In this sense, it is a ‘yes, and...’ strengths based approach to academia, rather than the critical nature of the western tradition. There is no desire here to find holes or disprove anything, simply to allow the kōrero to grow and

change in the manner of a living thing. It is our right and honour as the next generation of Takatāpui to continue this kōrero in a way that is mana enhancing for those who came before us, and for those who are emerging as our rangatira of the future.

Ngā Rangatira o te Whakapapa Takatāpuitanga:

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku
(Te Arawa, Tūhoe, Waikato)

Jessica Hutchings
(Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Huirapa, Gujarati)

Clive Aspin
(Ngāti Maru, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Tamaterā)

Leonie Pihama (Honour Project Aotearoa)
(Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Māhanga, Ngā Māhanga ā Tairi)

Tāwhanga Nopera (Counting Ourselves)
(Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Wahiao, Tuhourangi, Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Ngāti Tarawhai, Ngāti Whaoa, Ngāti Amaru, Ngāi Tawake)

Elizabeth Kerekere
(Ngāti Oneone, Te Aitanga a Mahaki, Whānau a Kai, Rongowhakaata, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri)

Me ngā Rangatahi Takatāpui katoa

Te Papa Tuatahi: Decolonising Ngā Taonga Tuku Iho

The first generation of contemporary whakapapa Takatāpuitanga focused not only on the preservation of living accounts, but also on the restoration of taonga which depict and embody the spirit and lives of Takatāpui ancestors, a small number of which have miraculously survived the pillaging of missionary and colonial forces. In addition to the physical taonga which have been brought to light, there is work being done to decolonise pūrākau and waiata - our stories and lyrical compositions - so that we might rediscover the historical narratives of Takatāpui protagonists and their relationships. Our rangatira for this generation is Dr Ngāhuia Te Awekotuku.

Te Awekotuku's 1991 treatise, *Mana Wahine*, speaks not only of the dignity and mana of women, but that of te ira wahine too - irrespective of binary gender assignment. Unlike the literature of the western academy which came before her - and continues to this day - Te Awekotuku looks to naturalise same sex and queer relationships within Te Ao Māori, both historically and contemporarily. Prior to the imposition of cis-heteronormative Christian values under the colonial project, Takatāpui experiences were an accepted and public aspect of daily life (Kerekere, 2017; Kutea, 2021; Laurie & Evans, 2005; Te Awekotuku, 2018). Te Awekotuku works to evidence this fact through the presentation of ngā taonga tuku iho in the forms of whakairo carving, pūrākau narratives, and mōteatea compositions. These taonga were largely destroyed or stolen and hidden away in dusty archives by missionaries and colonial forces (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007a; King, 2003). However, Te Awekotuku presents to us a precious collection which reveals the unequivocal way our Takatāpui ancestors existed and were depicted, sometimes without any attempt at graphic subtlety, in the times before Pākehā contact.

In the tradition of ngā kōrero tuku iho, our tūpuna passed pūrākau down to us as sensory treasures. Not only were they told to be heard, but to be imagined and seen, felt, embodied, and learned. These living gifts change and morph over time and place in response to the needs of each particular context. They are not simply stories - in the limiting sense of the English word - and they are certainly not myths. Pūrākau embody the essence of life. Mauri. They embrace the knowledge and teachings of generations who came before, and contain lessons for our future. For

these reasons, it is not an artistic liberty, or a rewriting of the past, for contemporary Māori to add to this rich and ever-expanding tradition. It is a natural process, and is the right of all Māori to tell our own pūrākau from our own context and our own experience. In *Ruahine* (2003) Te Awekotuku reclaims pūrākau from the colonial patriarchy and reimagines them as Takatāpui narratives. In *Whakatāne* (2003, p. 51) she unbinds Wairaka from the binary characteristics of her earlier representations. I have heard her supplication “kia Whakatāne au i ahau” reduced to an indication of her uncharacteristically masculine, and therefore un-womanly, strength. As though women are incapable of brawn. There have also been allusions to her magical transformations in the face of disaster as a desperate necessity in the absence of any men-folk. These limited interpretations of Wairaka’s identity and experience play into the cis-heteronormative expectations of gender and sexuality. They still operate within a binary construct. In Te Awekotuku’s pūrākau, Wairaka is given new depth and texture. She is freed from the western dichotomy of ‘man’ or ‘woman’, and exists in a state of greater fluidity and autonomy, perhaps, even, neutrality. Te Awekotuku’s telling brings to the surface what was lying dormant for so long. This version of Wairaka was always there in previous pūrākau, latent potential, never fully actualised in her Mana Takatāpui. Te Awekotuku has simply breathed new life into the narrative.

We see this breath extended in two more pūrākau from *Ruahine* (2003); *Hinemoa* and *Huritini*. For the titular wahine who carry the narrative of these stories, a new layer to their identity is uncovered. Beyond the proposition that Tūtānekai and Tiki were hoa Takatāpui - an understanding that has been acknowledged and explored by several Māori thinkers (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007b; Kerekere, 2017; Laurence, 2020) - Te Awekotuku also acknowledges a queerness in Hinemoa’s gender expression. At one point in the narrative, Te Awekotuku describes an interaction Hinemoa has with Tiki, Tūtānekai’s hoa Takatāpui, while she lies in a warm pool on the shore of Mokoia, having just swam across the lake. “Her body had warmed. Her throat felt silky, open. She breathed in. He was passing her pool again. Imitating her father’s arms-training voice, she growled, ‘Boy! Over here. I’m thirsty!’ ... She thanked her ancestors for her husky, mannish tones” (Te Awekotuku, 2003, p. 116). This instance of gender play represents Te Awekotuku’s exploration of Hinemoa as a woman able and ready to move beyond the gender binary. She is intentional about this, and embraces her own fluidity. Perhaps Hinemoa is simply

utilising her knowledge of the romance between Tiki and Tūtānekai to her advantage - a way to escape from the patriarchal dominance of her father. Regardless, this telling of Hinemoa and Tūnānekai is more than just your average binary, cis-heteronormative romance. It is layered and complex, just like the gender expressions and sexualities of its characters.

In *Huritini*, we are gifted a pūrākau that demystifies the physicality of homosexual romance between two wahine. Te Awekotuku does not shy away from the passion and prowess that our tūpuna knew and expressed. Despite the best efforts of missionaries, we are able to look back and confidently say that, yes, our ancestors took pride in their romantic and sexual abilities. They were not ashamed, rather, “for Māori, in the world that existed before Tasman, Cook, and the arrival of outsiders, I believe there was a really robust and vigorous, and intense exploration of sexualities and an acceptance of them” (Te Awekotuku, 2018, 18:25).

We see this celebration of sexualities in the mahi toi of our tūpuna. Taonga, such as papahou and waka huia, were adorned with sumptuous images of erotic scenes. These beautiful treasures were not exclusively heterosexual or monogamous in nature, but contain representations of polyamorous and homoerotic romance. Te Awekotuku describes them as delicate, beautiful, graphic, extraordinary, and important (Te Awekotuku, 2018). On one fabulously intricate papahou, held by the British Museum, the kaiwhakairo has revealed a scene of intense physical intimacy. Eight tāne are sensuously entangled, performing various acts of pleasure on one another. This is a celebratory and pornographic object. Another taonga whakairo, held by the Auckland Museum, depicts two wahine engaged in the act of oral sex. Te Awekotuku observes that “one has her tongue, which is serpentine and long and sinewy, penetrating the vulva of the other female figure, who is kind of splayed and entwined, and it is an incredibly beautiful image” (Te Awekotuku, 2018, 24:20). It is obvious that, judging by these precious objects, not only did Takatāpui exist in pre-colonial Aotearoa, but our tūpuna were also not interested in suppressing or hiding this aspect of our culture and society. In fact, these taonga do the opposite. They are an exclamation of sexuality, pride and aroha.

If the taonga whakairo that we have received from our tūpuna are a visual expression of Takatāpuitanga, then mōteatea are like an audio equivalent. Te Awekotuku notes the creative

freedom shown by our ancestors in this domain. “Within traditional Māori narratives, the chant record, the genealogical narratives, the beautiful waiata koroua and mōteatea that were collected by people like Apirana Ngata and Pei Te Hurinui Jones and others, you see a real fluidity in the lyrics, in the composition, in their various acts described” (Te Awekotuku, 2018, 20:50). Attempts to censor the language and messaging of these pre-colonial waiata, however, resulted in a period of exclusively heteronormative misrepresentation. The missionising effect of colonisation meant that not only Pākehā, but also some of our own kaumatua, intentionally swapped out lyrics in order to ‘clean them up’ (Te Awekotuku, 2018). Te Awekotuku has been able to rectify the spirit of these compositions by reinstating their original words, and as such, their Takatāpui essence. One example of this is “a lament for a beautiful young man - I aitia e te wahine e te tangata - who was enjoyed sexually by both women and men. And what Apirana Ngata did with that particular song is he changed the word “aitia” which means basically penetrative sex, and he said “awhitia” which means hug” (Te Awekotuku, 2018, 22:20). It is crucial here to recognise the context in which our kaumatua, such as Apirana Ngata, modified these lyrics. The overwhelming weight of colonial hegemony and the manipulative power missionaries had over our tūpuna, especially during the 19th and early 20th centuries, meant that in order for these waiata to be recorded and preserved, aspects seen as distasteful to the western gaze had to be omitted. In my view, this was not an attack on, or malicious erasure of Takatāpui by our kaumatua, but a painful decision that was made out of necessity, in order to protect what could be saved under the watchful eye of colonial cis-hetero supremacy. The clues left by our tūpuna have meant that now, a century on from the important mahi Apirana Ngata did to record our mōteatea, Te Awekotuku is able to “uncover the true spirit of these taonga. “They are a living record, and they’re utterly fabulous”! (Te Awekotuku, 2018, 22:45).

Te Papa Tuarua: Indigenising Takatāpui Wellness

As well as the decolonising project of reclaiming our historical narrative that Te Awekotuku represents, important focus has been given to the process of decolonising Takatāpui experiences of hauora. This generation of the whakapapa can be expressed in two strands. One is represented by our rangatira Dr Clive Aspin and Dr Jessica Hutchings, who edited an

unprecedented collection of writing by contemporary Takatāpui figures, *Sexuality and the stories of Indigenous people* (2007b). These pūrākau span a myriad of stylistic and narrative types, but connect on a common kaupapa: the sharing of personal experiences by, about, and for Takatāpui. The other strand of this generation came to fruition more than a decade after the first, and represents a new dimension. Until the publication of the *Counting Ourselves* (Veale et al., 2019) and *Honour Project Aotearoa* (Pihama et al., 2020) reports, data used to inform healthcare policy and practices were broadly heteronormative, and were noticeably void of Takatāpui experiences. In fact, western medical practices have long pathologised homosexuality.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), used by mental health clinicians (psychiatrists and clinical psychologists), classified homosexuality as a mental illness until 1987 (Ruffalo, 2019), and although this is no longer the case the ramifications of it have had a continued effect on attitudes and understandings of diverse gender, sexuality, and sex characteristics in a medical context to this day (Pihama et al., 2020). The *Counting Ourselves* and *Honour Project Aotearoa* reports have sought to give voice to the experiences of trans and non-binary people, and in the case of the *Honour Project Aotearoa*, more specifically that of Takatāpui, with a view to inform health and wellbeing outcomes based on research for and by our own community. These reports act to counter the destructive narrative of some western medical practices, such as ‘conversion therapy’, which have systematically put LGBTQI+ people in harm's way. Like the work of Aspin and Hutchings, the *Honour Project Aotearoa* utilises a kaupapa Māori approach to representation; pūrākau. This methodology enables Takatāpui experiences to be expressed and represented in a culturally authentic way while also producing meaningful survey data that informs real world health outcomes, and would otherwise be filtered through an empirical, western medical lens.

In the work of Aspin and Hutchings (2007b), its methodology acknowledges the barriers and inequalities faced by LGBTQI+ Māori, but also seeks to give voice to the positive experiences of Takatāpui in what can be an otherwise hostile environment. Sharing personal hauora journeys can help to shape the systems and experiences Takatāpui face moving into the future. The holistic nature of an Ao Māori approach takes into account the wellness of not only the physical body, but also the mind, relationships, spirituality, identity, and environmental

connections of the person. Te toto o te tangata he kai, te oranga o te tangata, he whenua, he one one - While food provides the blood in our veins, our health is drawn from the land and soils. The wellness of a people, then, is dependent on the wellness of the land. We are, after all, Tangata Whenua.

An aspiration of the pūrākau presented through the work of Aspin and Hutchings also acts as a collection of contemporary stories, ones that present Takatāpui in present day contexts. These help to expand the narrative of our whakapapa to include the complex situations and experiences we find ourselves in today. This widening of the scope of recorded stories increases representation and allows us to not only imagine but also see our community existing in the world. Visibility matters. This kete of contemporary pūrākau help to equip a new generation of Takatāpui to navigate through matters of identity and expression, coming out, whānau relations, experiences on the marae, the struggles and successes of working life, sex and relationships, politics, trauma and healing, and experiences of living with HIV/AIDS. It is the work of our emerging Takatāpui leaders to continue adding their own pūrākau to this collection. In doing so, we can strive to share an abundance of diverse narratives, hopefully to the extent that pūrākau Takatāpui are so prolific and accessible they are no longer considered a rarity.

As pūrākau Takatāpui proliferate, new focus is being given to another kind of health narrative, or the lack thereof. It is widely understood that within a western medical and policy framework, data is used to drive and justify decision making. For this reason, we have long suffered an omission of trans and non-binary people from conversations, let alone consideration, about health and wellbeing in Aotearoa. Critical underfunding, misrepresentation, exclusion, abuse, violence, and blatant outlawing of LGBTQI+ communities historically has meant that the outcomes we experience today are disproportionately negative compared to our cis-gender, heterosexual whānau (McBreen, 2019; Pihama, 2019). In light of this, the *Counting Ourselves* report (Veale et al., 2019) marks a new direction in the conversation. As a survey, it seeks to synthesise the experiences and voices of trans and non-binary New Zealanders. It also looks to provide data that can be used to inform future decisions and practices around health and wellbeing in a more inclusive way. 1,178 trans and non-binary people from all over Aotearoa

participated in the project, and represent a diverse range of ages, cultural backgrounds, and experiences.

As a resource, *Counting Ourselves* presents an extensive collection of findings that sheds light on the painful reality of our experiences as LGBTQI+. It also contributes to an expansion of public information and the diversification and inclusivity of health and wellbeing practices in our country. These findings are summarised in 13 contexts, each including the personal stories of research participants as well as statistical data drawn out from the survey results. The way these two forms of information come together creates a conversation woven with both the relational and living qualities of pūrākau Māori and the quantitative approach traditionally used to justify decisions and funding in the western health system. From these findings, the project team has provided 8 recommendations for the future in order to better support trans and non-binary people towards health and wellness. These recommendations are inclusive of contexts which span healthcare services, education, social justice and public safety, violence prevention, and representation and leadership from within the trans and non-binary community. They have been summarised by the report as follows:

1. Create clear pathways for gender-affirming healthcare, including training, resources and culturally appropriate services
2. Ensure health services respect gender diversity
3. Improve trans and non-binary people's mental health and wellbeing, as a named priority in mental health and addiction policies
4. Support schools to be safe and inclusive for trans and non-binary students
5. Better protect trans and non-binary people from discrimination
6. Protect trans and non-binary people from violence, as a priority in sexual and domestic violence work
7. Simplify processes for trans and non-binary people to have accurate health records and identification documents
8. Support health and wellbeing initiatives led by trans and non-binary communities.

It is heartening to see the intentional inclusion of Māori voices in the *Counting Ourselves* report. Of the 1,178 participants, one in seven were Māori, representing 14% of the total group, while on the research project team of seven, Dr Tāwhanga Nopera and Sam Guy represented Tangata Whenua. Not only is *Counting Ourselves* “the first comprehensive national survey of the health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa” (J. Veale, 2019, p. iv), but by extension, is also the first of its kind to include Māori perspectives and experiences.

If the conversation of Māori trans and non-binary health outcomes were held at a table, the *Counting Ourselves* report represents the addition of new seats in the room. This inclusion is significant, as it shows a movement towards representation and advocacy by - as opposed to about - Tangata Whenua. I’ve heard the expression ‘nothing about us, without us’ used frequently in this type of context. By genuinely attempting to engage in a bicultural approach, the *Counting Ourselves* report demonstrates the potential of kaupapa Māori research - done *with* Māori - in a hauora Takatāpui context. In *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012), Linda Tuhiwai Smith dedicates an entire section to the subject of “Research by Māori” (p. 186). She writes that “when Indigenous people become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms” (p. 196). This notion is more than collaboration, it is “research by Māori, for Māori and with Māori. It is very different, in my mind, from other forms of research in which Maori may participate, but over which we have no conceptual, design, methodological or interpretative control” (Pihama et al., 2015, p. 48). Poipoiā te kākano, kia puawai - nurture the seed and it will blossom. And so, in the spirit of this whakataukī, the kaupapa Māori potential held by *Counting Ourselves* was made manifest in a report published in 2020 by a group of Takatāpui, Māori LGBTQI+, and Two Spirit researchers; the *Honour Project Aotearoa* (Pihama et al., 2020).

“Indigenous communities have struggled since colonisation to be able to exercise what is viewed as a fundamental right, that is to represent ourselves” (Smith, 2012, p. 151). The representation of ourselves, by ourselves, is a decolonising project that works to re-story the narrative being perpetuated by hegemonic western discourse. Historically such discourse has taken the approach that, for Takatāpui, we either simply did not exist - a total erasure of our

being, our tūpuna, and our stories - or that our sinful existence was a problem for Pākehā to fix (Te Awekotuku, 2018). For Takatāpui to reclaim the narrative and unburden our community of this corrosive misrepresentation is an Indigenisation of our mātauranga about sexualities, gender expressions and identities, and more broadly the values and beliefs held by our tūpuna in the generations that came before us.

The *Honour Project Aotearoa* is one such act of decolonisation and reclamation. It is the first ever nationwide “multi-methods project to investigate understandings of wellbeing within the Takatāpui community” (Pihama et al., 2020, p. 6). It is an example of our Takatāpui whānau researching, participating, and representing ourselves. In it, Takatāpui voices share their own stories of identity and hauora through digital storytelling and pūrakau, interviews, and surveys developed carefully within a kaupapa Māori framework. The lived experiences of participants are not reduced simply to numbers and data, but are represented in a way that protects and enhances the mana of individual participants, and of our community at large. This is not a sterile, positivist, so-called “objective” medical report, but a living taonga imbued with the mauri and aroha of mana Takatāpui. Importantly, the *Honour Project Aotearoa* highlights the experiences Takatāpui face in regards to health and wellbeing outcomes in this country, and elicits information about the aspirations of our community for the future. A media release (11.30am, 4 November 2020) from the research team summarises that Takatāpui and Māori LGBTQ+ participants in the survey called for:

1. Strong advocacy (influence health policy and services);
2. Well-resourced, welcoming and non-discriminatory health services;
3. Mātauranga Māori-based health information and resources;
4. An end to racism, homophobia, transphobia and misogyny;
5. Supportive whānau (whakapapa whānau and kaupapa whānau), and friends;
6. To know who you are (whakapapa, whenua and whānau);
7. Somewhere to call ‘home’, enough income, to feel safe, and to have a future;
8. Networks - online and face-to-face;
9. Good role models.

These details help to provide authentic insight into the lived realities of Takatāpui people, and returns control of the narrative to whom it belongs. This report has the potential to inform national policy and legislation, as it presents both structural and social recommendations based on a weaving of knowledge from pūrākau, interviews, and surveys. A seat at the old table is no longer our objective, that proverb has been flipped. Takatāpui have built our own table now, our own whare, our own kōrero. We have the capacity to make decisions for, with, and by ourselves. We have planted the seeds and nurtured them, and we will continue to do so. We are ready, now, to blossom. Poipoiā te kākano, kia puāwai.

Te Papa Tuatoru: Digital Resistance And Indigeneity

Our tūpuna found countless innovative ways to transmit knowledge and ideas. Through the lyrical and aesthetic designs of our ancestors, Te Awekotuku shines a light on this rich heritage during the first generation of our whakapapa Takatāpuitanga. These traditional ways continue to be expressed in a variety of living and changing forms. Among them are toi, haka, waiata, toikupu, karakia, kōrero, and wānanga. One source of these taonga is our whānau Takatāpui who have found ways to embrace this creative practice as an embodiment of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination). This work is crucial to the collective knowledge of our community, and in recent times, great strides have been taken by Takatāpui to carve out space in the mainstream consciousness for this type of thought expression. Dynamic representations of identity, belonging, struggle and “survivance” (Smith, 2012, p. 146) generated by Takatāpui today, add to the life of ngā taonga tuku iho. They honour this great tradition, and ensure that the stories given to our mokopuna fully represent the mana of Takatāpui. Radical change is afoot, however, and as our reality shifts, so too do the āhua of our taonga. We have entered Te Ao Hurihuri, and in it are a generation of emerging rangatira, shaping and giving life to the future of our whakapapa Takatāpuitanga.

Since the end of the 20th century a reality transfer, of sorts, has infiltrated the human experience. This new version of reality is more than parallel or alternate, it is a digital multiverse which has brought about an unprecedented creation, storage, and dissemination of ideas and data.

The lived experience is no longer total, or at least in the ‘flesh and blood, walk the Earth’ tradition. Instead, our lives are bound in innumerable ways to this non-physical space, this hyper-reality: the internet. To me, a relatively tech-literate millennial even, the internet often seems an unruly beast, totally beyond the capabilities of human control, let alone comprehension. There are undoubtedly many experts on the internet - those who create content, analyse behaviours, monitor channels, and build software. Most expert of all, however, are possibly our rangatahi - digital natives, born into an existence of ubiquitous information technology. A new era of humans who will never experience a world disentangled from the internet. Even when access is a barrier, which it is for many (Rice et al., 2016), these young people still cannot escape the pervasive influence held by the digital multiverse over our lived reality.

This presents an obvious risk. The manipulation of the internet for sinister and inhumane means is brought to light on a daily basis (Tour et al., 2021). We need look no further than the threats of violence towards Māori, especially wāhine, for speaking up against white supremacy by alt-right bloggers, or the live-streaming of horrendous xenophobic acts of murderous terrorism in Aotearoa (Waitoki, 2019). Such visible examples, witnessed by the public at-large, are sadly only the tip of the proverbial iceberg (Rice et al., 2016; Waitoa et al., 2015). The many tendrils of the dark web run deep, and we simply do not know the true extent of its size or influence.

There is another side to this frightening reality, however. A universal network of justice seekers and change makers. They are our creatives, communicators, connectors, and challengers of the colonial neoliberal agenda. They are champions of their communities, illuminating pockets of resistance and hope, and building bridges over troll-infested (live)streams. The internet can be a dangerous place, especially for queer, trans, black, brown, and Indigenous people of colour (QTBBIPOC, often shortened to POC) (Rice et al., 2016), but through digital interconnectedness and resistance, these communities work to build safe spaces that are resilient and thriving. Certain aspects of digital reality provide opportunities for expression that might not otherwise be safe in the context of our physical world. Features such as identity performance and affirmation, language and image sovereignty (which is a complex and unresolved notion), and instantaneous

universal connectivity can be utilised to protect and activate Indigenous peoples and movements (Duarte, 2017; Rice et al., 2016).

In the context of Aotearoa specifically, Waitoa, Scheyvens, and Warren (2015) highlight how “social media aligns with tikanga Māori (values/customs) through tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and whanaungatanga (relationships/networks)” (p. 45). This is exemplified by contemporary kaupapa Māori land occupation and reclamation movements such as Protect Ihumātao, Protect Pūtiki, and Protect Pukeiāhua which all adopt both bricks-and-mortar and social media strategies “that destabilise colonial power and hopefully, decolonise” (Duarte, 2017, p. 1). Presently, there is a contemporary surge of rangatahi Takatāpui who utilise social media platforms in such a way. This generation of our whakapapa Takatāpuitanga combines elements of social-justice advocacy with creativity to Indigenise the evolving digital landscape. We see this in the generative practice of creators such as Dr Tāwhanga Nopera, Essa May Ranapiri, Jayden Rurawhe and Paris Elwood, Alesha Ahdar, Dbldbl (Liam Dargaville), and Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho. They seek to de-centre western narratives of sex, gender, and sexuality while Indigenising the representation of LGBTQI+ Māori as culturally grounded in our mana Takatāpuitanga.

Resistance to the doctrine of oppression is not new for Māori. It reaches back much further than our current digital era; further than the invasion of the British, the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) and He Whakaputanga (1835); and further still than the steady permeation of Christian missionaries throughout this land. For as long as our sovereignty has been challenged, there has been resolute resistance. Such resolve has come to be embodied in a famous whakataukāki of Ngāti Maniapoto rangatira, Rewi Maniapoto. Upon the rolling fertile lands stretching between the Puniu and Mangaohoi rivers, amidst the onslaught of colonial troops at Ōrākau Pā in 1864 - during the Crown’s invasion of the Waikato - Maniapoto replied to a British invitation to surrender with the words “e hoa, ka whawhai tonu mātou. Āke! Āke! Āke!” - Friend, we will fight on forever, and ever, and ever! (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2019). This prophetic vision has yet been undone, for the relentless tide of colonisation draws in still, saturating Māori in wave after wave of structural, social, and spiritual oppression. All the while, against it has stood the tireless resistance of Tangata Whenua.

And so it continues today with Rangatahi Māori emerging as new leaders of the resistance, challenging the eurocentric status quo of an imported socio-political and economic ideology imposed upon our land and peoples. Amongst their calls for justice are the voices of Takatāpui. In the history of Indigenous resistance in Aotearoa, never before have such a number of LGBTQI+ Māori acted so visibly or vocally. This cannot be attributed to a lack of will or desire, but to the incredible marginalisation Takatāpui have experienced under a colonial regime seeking to destabilise the woven harmony of Te Ao Māori. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) describes the imposition of western patriarchy onto Māori as having “a destructive effect on indigenous gender relations that reached out across all spheres of indigenous society” (p. 152).

Colonisation enforced a gender binary that simply was not compatible with the Māori world view (Mikaere, 2017, 2019; Pihama, 2020a, 2020b). This strategy - a form of ‘divide and conquer’ - used power as a tool of “seduction” (Cavino, 2019) to coerce tāne, while stifling the roles and freedoms otherwise exercised by wāhine. Even in its very framing, the limiting parameters of this colonial tactic express gender as an oppositional binary. By extension, then, any expressions of identity - be that gender or sexuality - beyond the limitations of these patriarchal confines face the threat of violence and rejection from the colonisers and by those of our whānau whom they have indoctrinated (Mikaere, 2017; Wilcox, 2020). The implications of this social disordering are still felt today, with gender based violence perpetuated within Māori communities as a direct result of colonial trauma (Cavino, 2016; Pihama et al., 2020). Cis-heteronormativity has long been a by-product of the patriarchy, and further acts to suppress and obscure expressions of Takatāpuitanga. It is with the weight of this historical and present-day reality pressing down firmly upon the shoulders of rangatahi Takatāpui that we have begun to participate more visibly than ever in the decolonial effort.

From the peripheral extremes of an already marginalised community, Takatāpui are reclaiming space at the centre of Māori resistance. The internet has perpetuated this resurgence exponentially, allowing decolonial activities to take on new lives and forms. To expand on some of the Indigenous projects expressed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021), sovereignty over our data and digital footprint are being *claimed* [1]; our *stories* [3] are now being told on social media; efforts to *Indigenise* [6] space in the non-physical multiverse are underway; our arts, language,

and cultural practices are being *revitalised and regenerated* [8] via multimedia; we are *connecting* [9], *writing* [10], *networking* [19], and *representing* [12] ourselves online as well as *kanohi kitea*; Indigenised *visions* [14] of the future can be expressed widely and instantaneously, while the internet enables structural *democratisation* [18] for our people; digital platforms and technologies expand our *creative* [22] and *knowledge sharing* [25] potential; *Indigenous economies* [35] are virtualized for efficiency and reach; and the project to *refresh Indigenous collectives* [34] is embracing a generation of online activists. These new dimensions act to strengthen and progress the cause of decolonisation. By traversing the digital-physical sphere, Rangatahi Takatāpui activate spaces from both within and without, utilising the lessons of past generations to innovate and grow our resistance discourse.

Te Papa Tuawhā: Mana Wāhine, Mana Takatāpui

Our ancestral rivers traverse both place and time. Adorning Papatūānuku like tā moko - glistening, still-wet - they pass indiscriminately over iwi and hapū boundaries and through generations of whakapapa. They connect us to the Earth, to each other, to the past and to the future. They connect us to ourselves. Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au. In such a way, the generations of our whakapapa Takatāpuitanga are nurtured and connected by powerful streams of thought. Mana Wahine is one such stream, flowing through the intergenerational discourse of Takatāpui survivance. It is a response to the disordering of our social relationships as Māori caused by colonisation. A trauma which undermines the mana of our collective identities, roles, and relationships, and seeks to implant the western notion of individuality and the nuclear family.

Some parallels can be drawn between Mana Wahine and western Feminist theories, such as a resistance to patriarchal hegemony and the recognition of the inalienable rights of all people (though this frequently fails to be acknowledged by many western feminists who are routinely criticised for centring the experiences of affluent cis-white women at the expense of LGBTQI+, black, brown, Indigenous, disabled, sex worker, and low income people). However, too great an attempt to portray womens' liberation struggles in the West as tantamount to Mana Wahine theory is both reductive and misdirected. Contemporary Feminism, in fact, owes a great debt to

Black and Indigenous womens' empowerment efforts. The wisdom and tradition of these culturally grounded movements seek balance not between arbitrary categories of binary sex, but of the entire universe - with humans positioned within a great and complete web of interdependence. This is "more-than-human" in the words of Dr Carl Mika (2021, p. 13), as it encompasses all things human and non-human, seen and unseen - a tinana, a wairua, a hinengaro, a taiao.

In the context of Aotearoa, Mana Wahine theory recognises an "urgent need to rebalance" (Pihama, 2019) and seeks to redress "oppressive colonising views and practices" (Pihama, 2019) which continue to harm not only Māori, but all people. In the patriarchal system, power is threatened by and violent towards anything that offers an alternative to cis-heteromascularity. Not only are women a target, but all people who do not conform to the strict parameters of this oppressive binary doctrine. Takatāpui have suffered the blunt end of this attack, not only transgressing the binary notion of masculinity, but threatening the stability of a western paradigm which presupposes a static and two dimensional notion of gender and sexuality. For the patriarchy, Takatāpui represent a reality equally as threatening as the feminine power of cis-women. We are framed as traitors to the cause of hegemonic cis-heteromascularity supremacy.

Mana Wahine theory is a framework which serves to decolonise the relationships and identities of our people outside of this vice-grip. It is a pathway to reimagining society beyond a binary, a hierarchy, or a competition for the right to exist freely. It sheds light on the trauma inflicted on our people and identities, and helps to explain the colonial origin of the toxic patriarchy we have seen normalised in many parts of te Ao Māori. Leonie Pihama, a rangatira of this decolonial project, recognises that "there are things that have become a kind of underlying understanding that are really not ours, they come from somewhere else. We have to weed it out" (Pihama, 2020a). Through the lens of Mana Wahine theory the world is relational and interconnected, and the mana of all people is recognised, irrespective of socially constructed categories of sex, gender, and sexuality.

The narrative of the demure and domestic woman has been concocted by western patriarchy as a way of exercising paternal control. The superimposition of this expectation onto

wāhine Māori, most especially by Christian missionaries, saw a distortion of gendered relations for our people. Ani Mikaere counters this colonial fallacy by uncovering the “potent energy” of feminine sexuality embraced by our tūpuna (Mikaere, 2017, p. 47), and by seeking a restoration of te tapu o ngā wāhine. Mikaere uses pūrākau to propel this rebalancing. These historical narratives reveal not only the inherent dignity with which wāhine were regarded, but also the very real power, both socio-politically and sexually, they exercised. “Whakapohane, or deliberate exposure by a woman of her genitals” (Mikaere, 2017, p. 49) is one such example, and gave wāhine the authority to silence a man’s whaikōrero on the marae if they regarded it as contemptible. “It is a graphic way of reminding men of the ultimate supremacy of female strength” (Mikaere, 2017, p. 49), who hold the power to create life and, as was the case for Maui, death. By unpacking the systematic obscuration of feminine sexuality imposed upon wāhine Māori by Victorian social standards, Mikaere (2017) invites a broader critique of what it means to be sexual, relational, romantic and autonomous beings outside of this misogynistic colonial mode.

Thus, Mana Wahine is also a mode by which Takatāpui can decolonise our own experiences of sexuality and gender. Te Awēkotuku explores this notion through her pūrākua in Ruahine (2003) and the histories she recounts in Mana Wahine Māori (1991). Te Awēkotuku describes the colonial patriarchy as “crusading heterosexism” (1991, p. 37), and notes the disproportionate discrimination experienced by wāhine Takatāpui, and by extension, those Takatāpui who transgress archetypal cis-heteromascularity. Importantly, Leonie Pihama highlights the work done by “Māori women’s collectives that have been active in challenging sexism, homophobia, transphobia, cultural appropriation and racism” (2020, p. 356). She includes Takatāpui within Mana Wahine theory as a matter of fact, rather than as a retrospective or supplementary addition, and observes that in addition to Pākehā, “Māori men must reflect on, and challenge, their historical and contemporary compliance with white patriarchy... [which continues] to have damaging consequences for many Takatāpui (Māori LGBTIQ) whānau members” (2020, p. 360).

Most likely the greatest instigator of racial inequity in this country, and a system built to serve the white patriarchy, is the settler colonial government. This has been seen most obviously

in the creation of laws which seek to extinguish Māori customs, traditions, language, identity, relationships, rights, and lives - such as the Native Lands Act 1862, the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863, the Native Schools Act 1867, the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907, the Maori Affairs Act 1953, and the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004. By virtue of the hierarchy espoused by western patriarchy, both wāhine Māori and Takatāpui have consistently faced active discrimination and violence at the hands of the state. It is note-worthy then, that some of the greatest queer rights law-reform and social-justice advocates within the parliamentary system have been Takatāpui wāhine Māori, such as Georgina Beyer, Louisa Wall, and Dr Elizabeth Kerekere.

The ongoing political struggle of LGBTQI+ people for recognition and equality in Aotearoa has only gained significant ground since the late 1980s. It was not until relatively recently that homosexuality ceased to be a criminal offence (Homosexual Law Reform Bill, 1986), and discrimination based on sexual orientation was considered acceptable in the eyes of the law until 1993 (Human Rights Act, 1993). In 1995, Takatāpui politician Georgina Beyer (Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Porou) became the world's first openly trans mayor, and in 1999 was elected to parliament with the Labour Party, again making history as the world's first transgender Member of Parliament (MP). Still, same-sex marriage was not legal until 2013 (Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013), and it is only due to the Private Member's Bill of another Takatāpui wahine MP, Louisa Wall (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngati Hineuru, Waikato Tainui), that this came to fruition.

While writing this thesis, another struggle for LGBTQI+ rights has been taking place. As of 1st September 2021, it was still legal in Aotearoa to practise 'conversion therapy' - "which involves attempts to change a person's sexual or gender orientation" through both psychological and physical interventions (Johnsen, 2021). This is despite being labelled "false and wholly unscientific" by the United Nations in its call to ban 'conversion therapy' globally (United Nations, 2020), as well as a national campaign led by both the Conversion Therapy Action Group and The Green Party of Aotearoa which saw a petition with nearly 160,000 signatures presented to Parliament in 2021, demanding a ban on 'conversion therapy' in New Zealand. This petition was launched by Green Party MP Dr Elizabeth Kerekere, another Takatāpui wahine

Māori who, once again, is working on the front line to dismantle the political and legal structures which continue to exclude and harm Takatāpui. During her maiden speech in Parliament, Dr Elizabeth Kerekere made a striking statement. One that had never been heard before in the House. “Takatāpui rights are a Treaty issue” (Kerekere, 2021). This simple statement succinctly articulates both the legitimate importance and urgency of Takatāpui rights in a Te Tiriti-centric Aotearoa.

The stigmatisation and erasure of Takatāpui from Te Ao Māori post-colonisation is a result of the Crown’s failure to uphold its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, most specifically under Article Two. If Māori were truly granted the right to self-determination - to the undisturbed chieftainship of our lands, communities, and treasure - then Takatāpui would never be in this position; rediscovering, reclaiming, and revitalising what was taken away from us. Tino Rangatiratanga should be understood to include the right for Māori to identify, express, and live freely as ourselves, as was the case before the introduction of colonial values. That is, to live freely as Takatāpui.

Te Papa Tuarima: Takatāpui Rights Are A Treaty Issue

At times, I have been made to feel as though my tūpuna betrayed their fellow Māori. In signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi, it has been said to me, they chose the side of the coloniser, and enabled the suffocating imposition of British imperialism upon our people. I have heard my ancestors described as colluders, naive, and self-interested for ‘agreeing’ to the conditions of the Treaty. I have heard our Reo weaponized against them, calling them kūpapa - traitors. Of course, this is an over-simplified framing of history, and a gross misrepresentation of the foresight and diplomacy of my tūpuna. Te Tiriti o Waitangi was not the catalyst for European arrival in Aotearoa. That ship had sailed, or rather landed, long before then. Neither was it an invitation for colonisation. On the contrary, in many ways it was a mechanism to stymie the rupture in society caused by the lawlessness of mainly British, and some European, sealers, whalers, and traders in Aotearoa (Elkington et al., 2020; King, 2003). Our rangatira invited the Crown to effectively ‘sort out’ their own people as a means of establishing peace and maintaining order, but to do so

without interference to the sovereignty of iwi, hapū, and whānau Māori (King, 2003; Walker, 2004).

In 1835, five years prior to the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a critical document was signed by 24 rangatira Māori, and in 1836 was formally acknowledged by the British Crown. He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni - The Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand - confirmed the sovereignty of Mana Whenua in Aotearoa, and helped to facilitate a direction towards separate but equal coexistence between Māori and Pākehā (Jackson, 2017; Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2020). The Reo Māori version of this document went on to eventually gather the support of several iwi around Te Ika a Maui (the North Island), including rangatira from Te Rarawa, Waikato Tainui, Ngāti Hauā, and Ngāti Kahungunu. On the 6th of February, 1840, the British monarch entered into an agreement with the independent confederation it had recognised several years earlier, Te Whakaminenga (the United Tribes of New Zealand) (Jackson, 2017) by signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In doing so, the Crown knowingly acknowledged the sovereignty of Māori over this place, as was required by the structural conditions of a treaty between two states. This whirlwind decade of history, between 1830 and 1840, ultimately laid the foundations which would help to shape the state of race relations in Aotearoa in the years since.

Significantly, this period also marks a formal commencement to the forceful imposition of a western cishetero-patriarchal paradigm onto Māori. This framework not only violently grated against Indigenous social dynamics - between people - but also sought to displace the sacred relationship Tangata Whenua shared with all things, including our ancestors, our customs, our knowledge, and our land. Since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840, there has been an endless onslaught of breaches to this contract by the Crown (Elkington et al., 2020; Kerekere, 2021; Smith, 2021). These breaches and their effects continue to this day, the ongoing Waitangi Tribunal process is testament to this. Extensive analyses of the abuses, breaches, and implications of Te Tiriti have been carried out by both Māori and Pākehā. As such, it is not my intention to explore this complex and continuing struggle, though it is undeniably a central aspect to any research done in the context of Aotearoa. What is important to note for the sake of this research, however, is the crucial importance of the term ‘tino rangatiratanga’ for Tangata

Whenua in the Reo Māori versions of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) and He Whakaputanga (1835). This term is one which has been interpreted, negotiated, and translated, often superficially and erroneously, since it first became clear there was a discrepancy between the understanding of this concept by Māori and Pākehā who signed Te Tiriti.

As with many concepts in Te Ao Māori there is no simple or tidy translation of ‘tino rangatiratanga’. It is a concept shaped by the worldview of its holder, and for Māori this was very different to Te Ao Pākehā. It has, however, become most commonly understood to mean “self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government, domination, rule, control, power.” (Moorfield, 2021). In this sense, if we are to understand the authority guaranteed to Māori over lands, people and treasures by the words used in the Te Reo Māori version of these documents, then the term ‘tino rangatiratanga’ acknowledges that Māori never ceded sovereignty, and, consequently, any act which undermined the aforementioned self-determination which was guaranteed is a breach of these documents; both He Whakaputanga (1845) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) (Waitangi Tribunal, 2014). In light of this, we are able to better understand the words of Dr Elizabeth Kerekere, that “Takatāpui rights are a Treaty issue” (Kerekere, 2021). Our rights as LGBTQI+ Māori continue to be impinged upon as a result of colonisation and the actions of the Crown, from the imposition of Judeo-Christian values which explicitly sought to convert and disappear our Takatāpui ancestors, to the failure of successive governments to do more than publishing statistics which acknowledge - and as yet do nothing to significantly address - that Māori, and most exasperatingly, LGBTQI+ Rangatahi Māori, are continuously overrepresented in every negative statistic in this country, and often the world (Veale, et al., 2019; Pihama, et al., 2020).

Takatāpui are, and always have been, part of the whānau (Kerekere, 2017). The intergenerational disconnect and loss of ancestral knowledge and values experienced by Māori is a result of colonisation. Therefore, through decolonisation and reclamation - or Indigenisation - we have the potential to restore and envision Māori futures that include Takatāpui as not only tika and pono, but tapu in the same way Dr Ani Mikaere describes te tapu o ngā wāhine (2017). In the context of research, esteemed Kaupapa Māori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith expresses the vital importance of sovereignty in the decolonial effort. She suggests that proponents must

always establish a directionality towards self-determination, regardless of the location or direction from which they proceed (Smith, 2012). If this focus is not central to the kaupapa, then it begs the question, for whom and what is it done, if not our people - past, present, and future? The same is true for the decolonisation of gender, sexuality and sex identities. As such, this goal is a matter of both decolonisation and tino rangatiratanga, both of which are intrinsically connected. Takatāpui are guaranteed a right to self-determination under Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and as such, “Takatāpui rights” including the right to self-determination “are a Treaty issue” (Kerekere, 2021).

Chapter 2

He Aha Ngā Kaupapa, He Aha Ngā Kawa || Who, Why, What, How?

In her PhD, Dr Elizabeth Kerekere (2017) used three sections to outline the theories, methodologies, and methods of her rangahau. She titled this section ‘Mahia te Mahi: The why, the who & the what’. This is a helpful structure and I have loosely employed it here, though I have added a fourth subtitle - ‘how’ - in order to address methods in a way that is more distinguished from methodologies (the ‘what’). At the beginning of this thesis, I chose to open with a pūrākau orokohanga, followed by a section titled ‘Ko Wai? From What Waters Do I descend?’. The ‘who’, in this instance, is positioned at the start so that I can begin with whakawhanaungatanga and the question ‘ko wai au?’ This is done in order to build familiarity, understanding, and trust between myself and you, the reader. Below I continue to address the ‘who’ by defining the community this research is for, with, and by.

Nga Āhuahanga: Defining Ourselves

Takatāpui

Takatāpui is a Māori word from ancient times. It survives through our oral histories, perhaps most famously so in the romantic pūrākau of Hinemoa, Tutanekai and Tiki (Te Awekotuku, 2003). During the vast majority of the 20th century, the term was understood to mean ‘an intimate companion of the same sex’ (Aspin, 2007b; Kerekere, 2017; Te Awekōtuku, 2005). However, many Māori scholars have uncovered deeper connotations to the word - pertaining to gender, sex, and sexuality - which had previously been intentionally obscured by the conservative heteronormative values introduced by colonisation (Kerekere, 2017; McBreen, 2012; Pihama et al., 2020; Te Awekotuku, 2018). Kerekere (2018) offers a succinct contemporary definition of the term Takatāpui, stating that:

We have reclaimed it to refer to all Māori who identify with diverse genders, sexes, sexualities, and with diverse sex characteristics. And who may identify as Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Gender Diverse, Non Binary, and all manner of other identities, so that it's an inclusive term. (16:20)

Takatāpui is an identity that encompasses many ways of being queer. There is no attempt to contain the definition so that it pertains to a specific category of the LGBTQI+ community. Rather, it is a comprehensive term which looks to cast a wide net, so as to be inclusive of all queer identities. In that sense, it could be considered an umbrella term. A Takatāpui person might, for example, be considered within a western framework to be Bi, Gay, Lesbian, Acesexual, Pansexual, Trans, Non-binary, Intersex, all or none of these, and more. This does not change the identity by which that person needs to identify; they are simply Takatāpui. Moreover, unlike western sexuality, gender, and sex, cultural identity is central to Takatāpuitanga. To identify as Takatāpui is an automatic indication of someone's whakapapa Māori. One need not state "I am Māori *and* I am Takatāpui", as the former is implied by the latter. Many Indigenous cultures recognise this interconnection between queerness and cultural identity. Our whānau throughout Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa have their own diverse terms, such as Māhū in Hawaii and Tahiti, Vaka Sa Lewa Lewa in Fiji, Palopa in Papua New Guinea, Fa'afafine in Samoa, Akava'ine in the Cook Islands, Fakaleitī and Leitī in Tonga, Fakafifine in Niue, and Pinapinaaine in Kiribati and Tuvalu just to name a few (Le Va, 2021; Te Awekotuku, 1991; Weedon, 2019). Today, it is becoming more common to use the acronym MVPFAFF+ to describe this group of queer Indigenous identities across the Pacific. A point of important distinction from the western term LGBTQI+, however, is the intrinsic relationship this term has with Indigeneity and cultural ways of being, which is true too for Takatāpui.

With a definition of, by, and for ourselves that is simultaneously clear, succinct, and inclusive, it becomes possible to ensure that Takatāpui are positioned front and centre in decolonisation efforts. L. Smith (2012) explains how, when we (re)claim Māori names and identities, our existence is able to expand beyond survival to include Indigenous projects she describes as reclamation, resistance, representation and celebration (pp. 144 - 162). Importantly, Alok Vaid-Menon, a "gender non-conforming writer, performer, public speaker" (Vaid-Menon, 2020), also points out that Trans and Non-binary people should be centred in resistance discourse and movements because of the realities and knowledge we bring by virtue of our lived

experience, and to counter the ongoing exclusion and oppression we face by society at large. The same can be said for disabled people, sex workers, racial minorities, the homeless, and other marginalised and minority communities, whose voices and views are often overlooked and ignored, even in so-called progressive movements. This is true too for Takatāpui in the decolonisation of Aotearoa today. If the voices of the most marginalised members of a community are not being amplified and taken seriously, then inequality can never be truly addressed (L. Smith, 2012).

Rangatahi

The word rangatahi is generally accepted to mean “youth” or “younger generation” (Moorfield, 2021, n.p.). However, it is a difficult concept to define in absolute terms. In 1991, I was one of 59,913 people born in Aotearoa New Zealand, a number that has stayed roughly consistent for the last 30 years (Stats NZ, 2021). In 2018, census data revealed that the total population of our nation was 4,699,755, of which 1,950,398 were under the age of 30 (Stats NZ, 2018). This figure represents 41.5% of the general population.² A considerable group, who would often likely be referred to as *young*. There are, however, varying interpretations of what qualifies a person as such. According to most relevant government ministries, young people are considered those between the ages of 12 and 24 (The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2021; The Ministry of Health, 2021; The Ministry of Youth Development, 2021). The Ministry of Justice (2021), however, uses the age range of 15 to 29 to categorise young people, while YouthLaw Aotearoa (2021) does not adopt a lower age limit at all, considering “anyone aged under 25” (para. 1) to be a young person. In general, though, it appears that Pākehā institutions tend to regard those under the age of 30 as young. The same cannot be said from a Māori world view.

I am a rangatahi. To my tamaiti who is three this might seem optimistic, but to my parents and grandparents, it is a given. Despite Moorfield’s (2021) definition above, which is notably limited by the need to reframe a Māori concept in Pākehā terms, there is no quantitative

² 58.6% of the Māori population (775,836 in 2018) are under the age of 30, making up 9.7% of the total population of Aotearoa New Zealand. 23.3% of the total population under the age of 30 are Māori (Stats NZ, 2018).

measure of what makes a person a rangatahi. Instead, it is relational. This means it is dependent on context, rather than merely age. Kukutai and Webber (2017) state that “In examining the parameters of Maori identity, it is clear that there is no absolute, definitive meaning regarding what it means to be Maori” (p. 82). Therefore, by extension, identities *within* Māori-dom - such as Takatāpui or rangatahi - also retain this fluid and multifaceted dimensionality. Whether or not a person is considered a rangatahi, then, might be contingent on a range of particular scenarios - generational difference, status or role, stage in life, knowledge or expertise - and can change according to the time, place, and people involved. For example, in a room full of Kaumātua a person in their 50s might be considered a rangatahi due to their comparative youthfulness, while in a high school setting, students are referred to as rangatahi in relation to their teachers. This more fluid and circumstantial understanding of youthfulness - to be a rangatahi - presents an opportunity to be inclusive and adaptable in a way not dissimilar to the term Takatāpui. Instead of using the blunt measurement of age alone, a person’s unique experience and situation is taken into consideration by the Māori understanding.

The more poignant question, then, may not be ‘what is the definition of rangatahi?’ but ‘why use rangatahi as a context?’

He Aha Ai?: Why Rangatahi Takatāpui? Why Sovereignty?

“Take care of our children. Take care of what they hear, take care of what they see, take care of what they feel. For how the children grow, so will the shape of Aotearoa.”

This famous whakatauākī by Dame Whina Cooper (n.d.) perfectly represents the treasured status of ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi i Te Ao Māori. They are a tangible manifestation of whakapapa, and represent the hope we hold for the future survival of our people, our language, and our culture. It also reflects a core value of this research, which looks to take care of what our rangatahi hear, see, and feel in a genuine and culturally located way. However, the voice of young people has a long history of exclusion in the West, especially from those wielding power, such as government ministries and their institutions (education, health,

housing, social development, etc.) (Berryman & Eley, 2018; Chalmers, 2019). Kidman (2014) notes this history in New Zealand, stating that in an educational setting, “Māori youth were talked about by the adults around them, often in rather despairing terms” (p. 207). In schools, the term ‘student voice’ is used as a signal that the views and interests of young people are being sought and acted upon in earnest. In my 8 years experience as a teacher I have seen this done with good intention, but with varying degrees of success, most especially at a teacher-to-student - *kanohi ki te kanohi* - level. However, I have rarely witnessed what I would consider to be meaningful engagement with ‘student voice’ at a school-wide or governance level that results in positive decision making or change.

Gathering, listening, and, importantly, responding to ‘student voice’ is an urgent and necessary objective, not only in education, but in every facet of society (Berryman & Eley, 2018; Kidman, 2014). Most educators intuitively know that by centering the voices and aspirations of students and their *whānau* - most especially *rangatahi* Māori - outcomes are improved, not only educationally, but emotionally, socially and culturally too (Berryman & Eley, 2018; Bishop et al., 2009; Chalmers, 2019). Ancestral knowledge reiterates this point. There are endless proverbs and quotes from around the world expressing the value of the next generation. “*Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi*” is a *whakataukī* which embodies the belief that there comes a time when one generation must graciously allow the next to take the reins of leadership. Kukutai and Webber (2017) understand it to mean that “once the old fishing net is worn, it is put aside to make way for the new fishing net” (p. 82). If we are to adhere to the ethos of ‘nothing about us without us’, then this is especially true with regards to the wellbeing of *rangatahi* Māori (Bishop et al., 2009; Berryman & Eley, 2018).

In light of the continued need for *rangatahi* Māori voices to be amplified, I have chosen to use this demographic, in particular those who identify as *Takatāpui*, as a key parameter for the scope of this *rangahau*. That is not to say that the experiences and views of *Takatāpui* who do not identify as *rangatahi* are unimportant. They most definitely are. Rather, it is to give particular attention to a group - within an already marginalised community - who are consistently excluded from expressing ideas and making decisions in spaces that hold power and influence (Berryman & Eley, 2018). Presumably, this is because of a western notion that numerical age is somehow

tethered to an inherent value or ability to make valuable contributions to society at large. Or put differently, that younger generations lack a right to sovereignty over their lives and the things that impact them. If this were not the case, I would argue that rangatahi would have far greater influence in societal decision making. Rangatahi are also an important community to focus on in this rangahau, as there is still a paucity of youth-specific research done by, with, and for rangatahi Takatāpui. While the *Honour Project Aotearoa* (Pihama et al., 2020) survey includes rangatahi voice, in both data and pūrākau forms, the work done in that kaupapa has a specific focus on experiences of health and wellbeing in particular for Takatāpui. Because it is the first of its kind, it is also necessarily broad in participatory scope, and thus its focus on rangatahi is only a small, but important, aspect of the larger picture it presents.

As the relatively young field of Kaupapa Māori research continues to grow and strengthen, there is a need to seek out and add new contexts or layers to the knowledge base. This is partly in order to address a historically narrow western view of what is encompassed by “knowledge” in academia, but also in order to formulate and express the wisdom and aspirations of our people in a way that can compete with, and work to undo the harms caused by colonisation (Ruru & Nikora, 2021). Because of our rigorous exclusion from the position of researcher, and conversely because of our subjugation as objects of investigation - done not by, with, or for us, but *to* us by western researchers - there are many areas of Kaupapa Māori research yet to be addressed in depth (or at all) on our own terms, and by our own people (L. Smith, 2012). Mana Takatāpui is one such area of study. The few research surveys, articles, books, creative endeavours and theses that have been produced on the topic (Ahdar, 2021; Aspin & Hutchings, 2007a, 2007b; Chalmers, 2019; Kerekere, 2017; Laurence, 2020; Nopera, 2017; Pihama et al., 2020; Ranapiri, forthcoming; Te Awekotuku, 1991, 2003, 2005) are fundamental to the field, and they have done important and difficult work to break new ground. Each source is a taonga, presenting different and unique aspects of Takatāpui identity, experiences, and thought. This rangahau is intended to be a focused and novel contribution to the burgeoning field of Takatāpui thought in the realm of Kaupapa Māori research. It aims to work simultaneously as a repository for ideas and stories shared by rangatahi Takatāpui, and a tool to help our iwi, hapū, and whānau to fully embrace our Takatāpui whānau as a vital part of Te Ao Māori, especially in our fight to decolonise notions of gender, sex, and sexuality.

Efforts to decolonise are commonly driven by the principle of Tino Rangatiratanga. Though this concept is not new, it has had a colourful history of both use and (mis)interpretation. Perhaps most famously, the term “tino rangatiratanga” was adopted in Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) as an equivalent for the English words “undisturbed possession” when referring to the authority reserved by Māori over our lands, people, and treasures. This is now widely accepted as an erroneous translation, which would have been more accurately embodied by the English term sovereignty. As it so happens, the term sovereignty does appear in the English text, but was also mistranslated in the Reo Māori version of The Treaty of Waitangi as “kawanatanga”, which, according to The Waitangi Tribunal (2016), “was a transliteration of the word 'governance'” (para. 10). These terms had a very different connotation to one another, especially as “Māori understanding of [kawanatanga] came from familiar use in the New Testament of the Bible (when referring to the likes of Pontius Pilate), and from their knowledge of the role of the Governor of New South Wales, whom they referred to as 'Kawana'” (para. 10). Despite the ongoing misunderstanding of the term Tino Rangatiratanga, primarily by Pākehā, contemporary Kaupapa Māori researchers have generally reached a consensus in regards to how we understand this concept in the context of the decolonial project in Aotearoa New Zealand. L. Smith (2012) adopts the English notion of self-determination or sovereignty as equivalent to the Reo Māori term. These are perhaps the most widely accepted translations. Jackson (2020) describes an aspect of the journey to be self-determining as “the reclaiming of the right of Indigenous peoples to once again govern themselves in their own lands” (p. 135) but importantly, he adds that, moreover, it seeks to “whaka-tika or to make right even the most egregious wrong, and to then whaka-papa, or build new relationships ... to draw upon the same land- and tikanga-centred way of ordering society that was envisaged in Te Tiriti” (p. 149).

Unlike the hyper-individualistic mentality of western society, in its drive for personal success and productivity in a capitalist structure, Tino Rangatiratanga is centred on collective rights and freedoms. The autonomy of the individual to act freely is, in fact, superfluous in this context. Mika (2021) theorises that “if the world is indeed interconnected through whakapapa, then the human self has never acted from their own agency” (p. 12). That Māori, as a collective, are inherently connected not only to one another, but to the Earth and the universe - to creation

itself - through whakapapa, sits in direct conflict with the notion of the sovereign individual. Tino Rangatiratanga, then, should be considered in the context of our right as Māori to self-determine as a peoples, for the benefit of not only ourselves, or our immediate family, but for all Māori, those who have gone before and who will come after, and for our primordial Earth Mother, Papatūānuku, and all of her descendants (Bishop, 1999, 2012; Mika, 2021; L. Smith, 2012) . By understanding the nature of our existence as woven together with all things through whakapapa, then we can understand how, as Takatāpui, we rely on a collective reclamation of our identities as Māori, not only as individuals or even as a community of LGBTQI+ Māori. Sovereignty for Takatāpui is conditional on the sovereignty of all Māori to be free of the cishetero-masculine patriarchy forced upon us by colonisation. Therefore, this research seeks to better understand what Tino Rangatiratanga, or self-determination, looks and feels like for Rangatahi Takatāpui today, within the broader context of sovereignty for all Māori, and what might be done to progress this aspiration for the collective good.

He Aha Te Kaupapa Nei? He Kaupapa Māori: Theory, Principles, Methodology

The foundation upon which this rangahau is envisioned, crafted, and carried out is Kaupapa Māori theory. This provides an approach to research which takes for granted a culturally located epistemology, meaning a Māori way of being is centred and called upon, rather than neutralised. It has been described widely as research done for, with, and by Māori, as a counter narrative to the mainstream tradition of research done by Pākehā to Māori (Bishop, 1999; Moyle, 2014; Ross, 2020; L. Smith, 2012, 2015; G. H. Smith, 1997, 2003). This theory was developed during the 1980s in the context of the Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori education movements, but has rapidly evolved as a means of addressing the vast inequalities and misrepresentations perpetuated by western academic hegemony (Bishop, 2012; G. H. Smith, 2003). As G. H. Smith (2003) articulates, this theory becomes transformative for Māori when applied at sites of struggle. That is, Kaupapa Māori theory must be able to translate into a practical tool for the advancement of the decolonial agenda “because the `status quo' for most Indigenous contexts is not working well and needs to be improved” (G. H. Smith, 2003, p. 5).

Wai`anae Hawaiian scholar Poka Laenui (2000) posits that, in a colonised reality, dreaming is a powerful act of resistance - a way of imagining what *could be* in the face of what is. In order to dream, we must concurrently uncover our own realms of possibility through critical consciousness-raising, or the act of “conscientisation” (G. H. Smith, 2003). Kaupapa Māori researchers understand the political and emancipatory potential of an Indigenous theory which confronts and de-centres the priorities of colonial institutions, both from within (decolonising the mind) and from without (Bishop, 1999; Pihama, 2001; L. Smith, 2012; G. H. Smith, 2003). In doing so, it seeks to redistribute power to Māori in order for us to define not only our research priorities, but ourselves. L. Smith (2015) aptly states that “if we can not control the definition we can not control the meanings and the theories which lie behind those meanings” (p. 47).

A model which articulates how Kaupapa Māori theory can be enacted is the Indigenous Research Agenda presented by L. Smith (2012, p. 121) (Figure 1). Crucially, it suggests that Kaupapa Māori research must adopt a directionality towards self-determination, or Tino Rangatiratanga. For this model, L. Smith uses the metaphor of ocean tides. Visually I am reminded of the ripples caused by a stone dropped into the still water of a river. Instead of pulsing outwards, though, the concentric rings draw inwards, as though flowing towards the epicentre. This inward movement represents a journey across different tides, or “states of being through which indigenous communities are moving” (L. Smith, 2012, p. 121). The stages these tides represent are survival, recovery, development, and ultimately, the central goal of self-determination. This is fundamental to Kaupapa Māori theory, and provides a shared vision for Indigenous researchers to collectively work towards. The direction these efforts - or agendas - take are varied and many, because research done by, with, and for Māori communities necessarily take on many forms (L. Smith, 2012). As such, understanding the interconnectedness of these approaches helps to strengthen our efforts to reclaim authority from the dominant colonial paradigm. That is, to achieve Tino Rangatiratanga.

Figure 1. *The Indigenous Research Agenda*



Note. From *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2nd ed., p. 121), by L. Smith, 2012, Zed Books. Copyright 2012 by L. Smith.

Movement in the Indigenous Research Agenda model is not linear. For Māori, time spirals simultaneously inwards and outwards - a perpetual conversation between the multitude of generations (Burgess et al., 2021). A singular moment can be collapsed into the folds of whakapapa, making our present reality a point of convergence in which our ancestors and our descendants meet (Jackson, 2015). Ka mua, ka muri - walking backwards into the future. Though there are clearly defined aspects of the Indigenous Research Agenda, their relevance and application are fluid, morphing according to context and need. For example, one research project may prioritise collective intergenerational healing for a particular iwi, hapū, or whānau, while another seeks transformational change in education through a process of structural decolonisation and community mobilisation (L. Smith, 2012). The journey of these projects are different, but the destination of sovereignty is shared. The direction this rangahau takes is also not singular, though two approaches consistently remain in the fore - decolonisation and transformation - while the others ebb and flow depending on context.

These pathways to Tino Rangatiratanga act as complementary to one another, with the *decolonisation* of Māori LGBTQIA+ identities and relationships working parallel to the *transformation* of how we as Takatāpui, as well as our whānau, hapū, and iwi understand the position - and representation - of Takatāpui within Te Ao Māori. For both of these aspects, there is a strong emphasis on social and collective change. For example, in order to fully actualise Tino Rangatiratanga - or self-determination - it is clear that more work must be done to strip back colonial notions of sex, gender, and sexuality in order to re-Indigenise our identities as LGBTQIA+ Māori. This agenda is already in motion through the tides of survival, recovery and development - we need only look at the creative expressions being brought forth by ringatoi Takatāpui (Adhar, 2021; Campbell, 2019; Nopera, 2017; Ranapiri, forthcoming). However, in order to reach identity sovereignty, our non-Takatāpui whānau must also be brought on this decolonisation journey. They too must rediscover new-old ways of expressing identity beyond the binary matrix imposed upon us by colonisation. Kiddle (2020) proposes that “colonisation sucks for everyone” (p. 83). This statement frames decolonisation as not only good for Māori, but for Pākehā and Tauīwi too. The same can be said in the context of our colonised notion of gender, sex, and sexuality. We must seek and activate social and collective change in order to experience liberation in our own diverse and decolonised identities.

If Kaupapa Māori theory provides the foundation of this research, and the Indigenous Research Agenda is a model for its design, then Kaupapa Māori principles provide the framework by which this rangahau is constructed. Kaupapa Māori theorists have developed a range of guiding principles which act to inform and guide praxis. Unlike the conventions of traditional western academia which serve to perpetuate generations of Eurocentrism and cis-hetero patriarchy, Kaupapa Māori principles underpin a range of Indigenous methodologies which resist the antagonism of institutionalised academic disciplines, and seek to offer an alternative to the “settler colonial ideologies that continue to damage and disrupt the knowledge systems of our people” (Burgess et al., 2021, p. 59). By its nature as a holistic and interconnected approach to research, all principles of Kaupapa Māori theory are relevant to this rangahau, and offer a tool with which to understand and strengthen the methodological approaches that have been employed.

Through their symbiotic relationships these principles shape the essence of this research as a whole, rather than limit it to a strictly contained discipline in the western academic sense. Initially, six principles were developed by G. H. Smith (1990) as “the crucial change factors in Kaupapa Māori praxis” (2003, p. 8), and have subsequently been expanded and built upon by Māori academics such as L. T. Smith (2012), Leonie Pihama (2001), Taina Pohatu (2005), Russell Bishop (2005), and many others. Five key Kaupapa Māori principles have, however, emerged as the pou rangahau or primary pillars which maintain the integrity of this research project, while acting as conduits for the application of Kaupapa Māori theory as research methods. These five principles are Tino Rangatiratanga, Taonga Tuku Iho, Whānau, Ako Māori, and Āta, which have been defined in Table 1.

At times throughout this rangahau, two, and occasionally three Kaupapa Māori principles have been brought together within the wider sphere of one of these five pou rangahau. This is a reflection of the inherent connectedness and fluidity of these principles, which are able to adapt as they are contextualised. For example, Pihama (2001) articulates the principle of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as core to Kaupapa Māori theory. While it is integral in its own right, the principle of Te Tiriti has been most relevant to this rangahau - and in particular the focus on Rangatahi

Takatāpui - in the context of Tino Rangatiratanga - “the principle of self-determination or relative autonomy” (G. H. Smith, 2003, p. 8), which converges with another of G. H. Smith’s (2003) six principles, Kaupapa, or the “principle of a shared and collective vision” (p. 10). Kaupapa Māori Theory in praxis can be expressed in research as the methods that are employed, and the rationale for doing so. The pou rangahau principles of Tino Rangatiratanga, Taonga Tuku Iho, Whānau, Ako Māori, and Āta help to locate each method broadly within Kaupapa Māori theory, while also providing more specific guidance for practical, culturally safe applications. Kaupapa Māori principles, therefore, act as conduits, or vessels, through which theoretical and methodological frameworks are made manifest as methods.

Table 1. *Pou Rangahau: 5 Key Kaupapa Māori Principles for This Rangahau*

Principle	Definition	Relevant concepts & methods
Tino Rangatiratanga	“The principle of Self-determination or Relative Autonomy”	- Te Tiriti o Waitangi & He Whakaputanga - Kaupapa - Mana Wāhine/Mana Tāne/Mana Takatāpui - Identity
Taonga Tuku Iho	“The principle of validating and legitimating cultural aspirations and identity”	- Tikanga & Te Reo - Mātauranga - Tūpuna - Pūrākau - Identity
Whānau	“The principle of incorporating cultural structures which emphasise the ‘collective’ rather than the ‘individual’ such as the notion of the extended family”	- Whakapapa & Identity - Whakawhanaungatanga - Collective responsibility - Reciprocity - Accountability
Āta	“To inform and guide understandings of respectfulness in relationships towards wellbeing”	- Mana - Aroha - Ethics - Relational accountability
Ako Māori	“The principle of incorporating culturally preferred pedagogy”	- Tikanga - Tuakana-teina - Marae - Wānanga / hui - Whakawhiti Kōrero

Note. Adapted from Pihama, 2001; Pohatu 2005; G. H. Smith, 1990, 2001; L. Smith, 2015.

Ngā Toki Tūpuna: Our Ancestor's Tools: Research Methods

Speaking on the tyranny of patriarchy Audre Lorde said “The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house” (Lorde, 2003). Hers is a call for radical intersectionality. A call for the relinquishment of exclusionary Eurocentric feminism which benefits white cis-heterosexual comfort at the expense of true emancipation from the patriarchy for black, queer, and poor women. I would proffer that this is true too for Takatāpui, trans, non-binary, gender diverse, Indigenous, disabled, and colonised peoples. Jackson (2001, as cited in Elkington et al., 2020) describes decolonisation as a process of dismantling one house in order to build another. Kaupapa Māori theory and its methodologies provide the foundation and the framework to do this in a way that honours a cultural way of being and knowing, what we understand as Mātauranga Māori (Ruru & Nikora, 2021). The tools we use in this process of dismantling and reclamation are equally as important as the destination, the proverbial ‘end product’. The master’s tools were designed and used to build colonial institutions, and to maintain the power and control that was obtained as a result. Therefore, we must not resort to the tools of the master, but those of our ancestors. Ngā toki tūpuna. These are the methods employed in the construction of this rangahau.

Te Mana o Te Reo Māori me ngā Whaikōrero

For the purpose of this thesis, Māori words in the main will not be italicised as though they are "foreign" - they are not. Te Reo Rangatira is the original language of this land and of my Māori ancestors. It is natural and normal; the very essence of the word Māori. Conversely, like Doig (2020), I have made the conscious decision not to translate every Māori word into English. Nuanced concepts that cannot be easily translated will be explained in greater detail within the body of this thesis, however, the expectation to translate and explain my ancestral language, the Indigenous language of Aotearoa from where I write, is a seemingly small but pointed act of colonial oppression. Therefore, I will leave most words to be looked up and translated at the reader's discretion, “if it helps, you can have www.maoridictionary.co.nz open in a browser as you read” (Doig, 2020, p. 22).

In a similar vein, I have adopted a practice of citation as resistance, citation as reclamation, and citation as affirmation. Burgess et al. (2021), describes the impetus for this approach as “a refusal to recirculate settler colonial ideologies” (p. 57). It is a practice that Ahmed (2016) describes as creating “citational paths” which are alternatives to the eurocentric and patriarchal gullies carved by the dominant discourse (p. 148). By centering the voices of Māori and Indigenous peoples we also acknowledge the understanding that all things are connected through whakapapa, beginning with the red sands of our earth mother Papatūānuku and the star strewn cloak of our sky father Ranginui, it is possible to trace our ideas through an intergenerational transferral of thought. Māori should not, and need not seek academic validation from the hegemonic western institution in order to justify or legitimise the ancestral knowledge we hold true. We understand this Indigenous way of knowing and being as Mātauranga Māori. By prioritising kaupapa Māori and other Indigenous teachings in my referencing practice I seek to reinforce the place of Indigenous research and theorising as an established and legitimate knowledge base. This is simultaneously a recognition of the fertility of Indigenous knowledge and an alternative approach, perhaps even a clap-back, to what has typically been regarded by academia as ‘scientific’ or ‘canon’ in the eyes of Eurocentric standards (Ruru & Nikora, 2021; L. Smith, 2012).

This practice embodies the spirit of Kaupapa Māori Theory, and in particular speaks to the principles of Tino Rangatiratanga, Taonga Tuku Iho, and Ako Māori (see Table 1). By standing in the mana of our own mātauranga, and by continuing to carve space for Indigenous ideas to germinate, blossom, and proliferate, recognition is given to the spirality of all things - the ideas of those who came before live on into the lives of those who come next.

Whakapapa Literature Review

In accordance with a Mātauranga Māori understanding of whakapapa, a narrative literature review - which I have chosen to refer to as a ‘whakapapa kōrero’ - has been undertaken to shed light on the layers of thinking and discussion by kaimahi Takatāpui. To avoid a shallow

and superficial survey of these sources, an intentionally limited range of artefacts have been explored in a more meaningful way than would be possible with a more broad-sweeping review. This allows for a respectful interaction with each source, which are treated like taonga - treasures - carrying the mauri of its creators with them. Like layers of whakapapa, the literature review in this rangahau takes an approach which recognises the relationships woven through and between each artefact. For example, where possible, literature with a common kaupapa has been discussed together, while work that builds upon the ideas of earlier thinking is addressed in sequence so as to show the way in which it has developed. This results in a semi-chronological structure, though it is not strictly linear, with recurring strands of discourse emerging throughout.

A literature review does not need to be adversarial. We should not be seeking to pick apart, discredit, or invalidate alternative or earlier ideas (Wilson, 2008, p. 57). This competitive and mana-trampling practice exists within the ‘us/them’ or ‘winners/losers’ binary of western academia, within which mana-enhancing relationships are not prioritised or praised. An Indigenous literature review should not silo and schism the interconnectedness of our thinking, as is the practice in western structures. Science need not be separate from spirituality, nor art from medicine. To attempt to unravel these strands of knowledge is to deconstruct the kete which hold our ancestral ways of being. We know through the concept of tangata whenuatanga that we are connected to all things, and especially to the land - from which we came. In this way too, all knowledge is connected.

To extend further on the notion of whakapapa, and due to its relational nature, the creators of each taonga in the whakapapa kōrero have been referred to as ‘Rangatira’. For Māori, this title indicates one’s status as “revered ... chiefly, noble, [and] esteemed” (Moorfield, 2021, n.p.). It is not, however, an attempt to pedestal these particular authors as superior to those who have not been included, but rather as a means of acknowledging their work as central to the kaupapa of Mana Takatāpuitanga in that all other work done within this field refers back to the kōrero produced by these Rangatira. It also acts to pay respect to the often break-through, and therefore challenging work done by these thinkers as a result of it being both novel and confronting. This phenomenon of confrontation is not exclusively limited to the Eurocentric sensitivities of academia, but extends to our own whānau, who may not yet have had the chance

to address the colonised nature of our sexuality, gender, and sex identities as Māori, and the subsequent marginalisation of Takatāpui as a result. The Rangatira in this whakapapa literature review have done difficult work. They have facilitated challenging conversations and spoken truths that carry both personal and intergenerational trauma. L. Smith (2012) describes it as “the Empire writes back” (p. 37), an act of Indigenous resistance and reclamation that challenges the colonial norms which have acted to suppress and erase our identities as Takatāpui. These acts are what make each kaimahi Takatāpui in this whakapapa a Rangatira.

Āta Ethical Accountability

Research is inherently subjective. Our unique lived experiences and identities are inextricably linked to the lens through which we view the world, and therefore by extension, our research (L. Smith, 2012; Tiakiwai, 2015). To claim pure objectivity is a signal of western academic arrogance - that we can somehow remove our beliefs and values, our preconceptions and prejudices, for the sake of research. Turning it off like a light switch. Colonial, racial, and patriarchal bias (both covert and overt) is ubiquitous in research done *on* Indigenous peoples *by* western practitioners, and has been thoroughly investigated by the likes of Bishop, 1998; Grande, 2014; Kanuha, 2000; Menzies, 2001; and L. Smith, 2015. The notion of intrinsic subjectivity is especially important for Indigenous researchers. We have something at stake - our whānau, our identity, our language, our history, our tamariki mokopuna, our past, present, and future. In this regard, Kaupapa Māori theorists emphasise the need for transformational and emancipatory praxis (L. Smith, 2015; G. H. Smith, 2003). It is imperative that research has “the potential to positively make a difference – to move indigenous people to a better existence” (G. H. Smith, 2003, p. 5).

As a Critical Indigenous Pedagogy (CIP), Kaupapa Māori research is fundamentally political and moral (Denzin & Lincoln, 2014). This social justice consciousness acts as a counter narrative to western research which claims innate objectivity, but in reality has been used as a tool for colonisation, a method of Indigenous oppression, and a means of justifying racist policy, violence, and murder (Bishop, 1998; Grande, 2014; Kanuha, 2000; Menzies, 2001; L. Smith,

2012, p. xi). In order for research to embody a Kaupapa Māori approach, recognition must be given to the primacy of Tino Rangatiratanga at every level of the journey (L. Smith, 2012). It is not simply a matter of adopting (or appropriating) Te Reo Māori me ona Tikanga within the research methods and methodologies, or focusing on solving so-called ‘problems’ for Māori, nor is it sufficient to rely on our insider status as Māori researchers (Bishop, 1999; L. Smith, 2012). To assume that the presence of these things qualifies research as Kaupapa Māori is at best superficial and tokenistic, and at worst harmful to our community. In order to undertake authentic Kaupapa Māori research that enables transformation, emancipation, and self-determination, a commitment to mātauranga Māori as the default way of knowing and being is imperative, from ethical considerations and the aspirations of the research, to the way it is developed, undertaken, and presented.

Because Kaupapa Māori research is by nature subjective, and therefore personal and relational, ethical considerations are based on values such as aroha, mana, whanaungatanga, and tauutuutu. Wilson (2008) describes this ethical paradigm as Relational Accountability, which centres the responsibility of the researcher to ‘do right’ by the individuals and communities they work with. He states that “In essence this means that the methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)” (Wilson, 2008, p. 99). Pohatu (2013) articulates the notion of Relational Accountability within a Kaupapa Māori epistemology as āta. The nature of āta is understood through five elements and thirteen principles. These aim to “inform and guide understandings of respectfulness in relationships towards wellbeing” and have been presented within the context of the workplace, but are directly applicable to a range of relational situations, including research (Pohatu, 2013, p. 15). Of particular interest to my rangahau are Pohatu’s explicit inclusion of the need to ensure a “quality space of time (wā) and place (wāhi)” as well as “negotiating boundaries” and “creating and holding safe space” (2013, p. 15). The enactment of these aspects of āta are contingent on tauutuutu, or reciprocity, which ensures a power imbalance is avoided between researcher and participant, as is often the case in contemporary western research practices (L. Smith, 2012).

Parallels can be drawn here to the Pūrākau of creation, Te Orokohanga, which I have described in the opening of my Whakapapa Kōrero. The meeting in which the children of Papa and Rangi negotiated their parents separation can be understood as noho tata pu - which I characterise as a sacred conclave or divine wānanga. Much like in this meeting of the gods, wā and wāhi are required by Kaupapa Māori research in order to ensure important tikanga are observed. For example, whakawhanaungatanga should be respectfully and authentically enacted, which means our linear notion of time must be suspended to an extent which allows the process to be performed in its entirety.

It is also paramount that this time-place phenomenon occurs within safe boundaries which serve to protect and enhance the mana of all involved. Furthermore, the significance of time and place (or space) is especially important given the continued colonisation of Indigenous understandings which do not seek to separate one from the other (L. Smith, 2012, p. 53). We see this most clearly in the emphasis Māori, and in fact many Indigenous cultures, place on event-based time, which includes implicit consideration of the place in which it occurs, rather than Greenwich mean time. Pōwhiri occur, depending on the tikanga of the hosting Iwi, at a time dictated by the rising and setting of the sun, and conclude only once tikanga have been appropriately conducted. According to western constructs, event-based time is deemed incompatible with the scheduled, compartmentalised, and strictly linear notion of minutes, hours, days, months, and years which hold society at large hostage to the relentless ticking of the clock (L. Smith, 2012).

Āta guides our ethical decisions alongside our cultural practices and values as Māori. In this way, Kaupapa Māori research and ethics are simultaneously intuitive and intentional. Intuitive in that the decisions I make regarding methods come naturally, and fit easily within my own world views and values. For instance, I do not feel conflicted by decisions such as including karakia, mihi whakatau, wānanga, kai hākari, or waiata in this research process. Intentional in that by including these tikanga I actively resist the hegemonic and anti-Indigenous practices of western research. To draw on the principle of āta further, as well as the other Kaupapa Māori methods included in Table 1, I have made the explicit decision to adopt a less hierarchical relationship structure, and as such ‘participants’ will take on the more agentic role of

‘co-researcher’ (Wilson, 2008). This is an intentional reframing of the relationship between myself as the principal researcher, and the co-researchers I work alongside. It denotes the equal status of people, ideas, and kōrero in the group, and honours the mana of co-researchers and their contributions to this rangahau. This decision also recognises the trauma associated with the abuse of power and trust exercised by researchers over Indigenous peoples deemed ‘participants’ historically, and seeks to reposition the relationship in order to ensure the holistic safety of all involved - ā wairua, ā tinana, ā hinengaro.

Āta As Praxis

The co-research group for this research comprised people who identify as Rangatahi Takatāpui and creatives. I did not qualify these self-identified characteristics by asking for “proof” of legitimacy, as this would further act to reinforce the inequitable power dynamic of a researcher-participant relationship. Rather, a high trust model was adopted for co-researchers in order to recognise their innate mana and tino rangatiratanga, which is explicitly linked to the notion of taonga tuku iho - “the principal of validating and legitimating cultural aspirations and identity” (G. H. Smith, 2003, p. 8). As G. H. Smith describes, in relation to Kura Kaupapa Māori, “‘to be Māori’ is taken for granted; there is little need to justify one’s identity, as is the case in most other ‘mainstream’ educational settings” (p. 8-9). This is acutely relevant in the context of a person’s Māoritanga, or identity as Māori, and their whakapapa within research. Globally, there is an ongoing effort by Indigenous peoples to undo the harms and misconceptions of debunked western ‘blood quantum’ theories. This requires the constant negotiation of erasive and culturally disenfranchising mechanics which attempt to simultaneously either assimilate or segregate ‘natives’ into western binaries defined by unscientific notions of blood fractions and dilution, skin colour, and facial features as qualifiers of a person’s cultural legitimacy (Edwards, 2020; Kauanui, 2020). For this reason, no “proof” of Māoritanga was requested of co-researchers in this rangahau, rather that they simply identify as Māori, or as having Māori whakapapa.

The ethics of consent are also highly relevant to Kaupapa Māori research. L. Smith (2012) neatly summarises the relational, rather than contractual, nature of consent with Indigenous peoples in research:

“Consent is not so much given for a project or specific set of questions, but for a person, for their credibility. Consent indicates trust and the assumption is that the trust will not only be reciprocated but constantly negotiated - a dynamic relationship rather than a static decision” (p. 137).

In line with the legal and ethical expectations of the university, approval was granted by the University of Waikato’s Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies ethics committee. This, however, simply ensures that the institutional expectations have been met. Cognisance of the fact that an application for ethical approval does not necessarily reflect the actuality of ethical research is important. It is a static and bureaucratic token, rather than an ongoing, relational commitment enacted by those involved. I gave primacy instead to the consent of my co-researchers both ‘in the moment’, so to speak, and in the future. At every stage in the rangahau process an open and transparent dialogue of consent has been maintained, including at the beginning of each day, each activity, and each conversation, making it possible for co-researchers to adjust, confirm, withdraw or clarify their consent in any given situation and at any given time. This extends beyond the wānanga itself - the period regarded by researchers traditionally as “data collection” - meaning that co-researchers are empowered to negotiate consent if and when it feels appropriate to do so, rather than just as a signature on a piece of paper at the beginning of the process, as is customary in western research.

To further embody the principle of āta, voice recordings of kōrero during the wānanga were only used when it was deemed appropriate by the group collectively. As is expected with an ethic of relational accountability, there were also opportunities for co-researchers to adjust their consent, or create boundaries particular to their comfort and needs. Accordingly, any quotes, interviews, pūrākau, kōrero and histories that are used in this thesis were returned to co-researchers for scrutiny and amendment as a means of my authorship being held accountable, and so that mana of ideas and words remains with those who shared them. It is also important to note that, given the vulnerability and stigmatisation of our community, there may have been co-researchers who were not out as Takatāpui to whānau and friends at the time of this research.

Therefore it was not safe to request consent from whānau or guardians. As such, all co-researchers were over the age of 16, as is the legal age of autonomous consent to take part in research within the academic institution. While this created a limitation on the inclusion of those under the age of 16, I judged it to be a necessary parameter in order to ensure the safety of those who took part. Furthermore, co-researchers who did not feel safe, comfortable or ready to openly identify as Takatāpui, they were given the opportunity to use a pseudonym of their choice, as well as control over the pronouns used to identify them, and any Iwi or Hapū affiliations they wished to have included.

Ahakoā he iti, he pounamu. In the instance of this research group, it is the quality of relationships, rather than the quantity of co-researchers that takes precedence. An effort to keep our research group relatively small reflects my desire to build genuine relationships with each other through whakawhanaungatanga. This was especially important given the limited amount of time we had kanohi ki te kanohi - two days for our wānanga. Therefore, a maximum of twelve and minimum of six rangatahi Takatāpui were invited to engage in co-research, along with two additional Takatāpui workshop facilitators. This was coordinated on a first-come, first-served basis, with the opportunity for co-researchers to be added to a waitlist if the maximum capacity was met. This also ensured that those who initially missed the chance to take part were given the opportunity to join in the event that a co-researcher withdrew from the wānanga.

In order to ensure that a range of Rangatahi Takatāpui were given the chance to respond to my call for co-researchers, a number of methods were adopted in an attempt to reach people outside of Kirikiriroa Hamilton. These methods included online pamphleting via Instagram (Figure 2), posters around the University of Waikato campus, and in local cafes and retailers (especially those that are active in establishing queer-safe environments), via word of mouth, and through queer networks with an online presence such as Rainbow Youth, InsideOut Kōaro, and Hamilton Pride. Substantial barriers did exist, however, for those who wished to take part from further afield. Travel and accommodation had to be arranged by co-researchers themselves, as there were very limited funds available to cover the costs of such expenses. A learning I have taken from this situation is that in future kaupapa I would make a greater effort to secure funding, via grants or fund raising, in order to support those who require it.

By utilising social media as a platform for connection, I am able to reach rangatahi that may not have otherwise engaged in this rangahau by virtue of place and time. The cut through provided by this method is both instantaneous and wide reaching. It empowers rangatahi to partake in Kaupapa Māori research on a platform that is familiar and engaging, and which intentionally positions them as holding authority, given their status and expertise as digital natives. Community reach is greater than the notion of those who simply engaged ā-tinana. The mauri of those who see the call and give thought; who pass on the message to those who might need it; who promote it with their platform and voice; and who offer spirit and love to the cause, all contributed to both the sense of strong community support and the living mauri of this kaupapa.

Figure 2. *Wānanga Rangatahi Takatāpui Instagram Promotion*



@JEMS_PA

DETAILS

Participants need to:

- Whakapapa Māori
- Identify as Takatāpui
- Be aged between 16 and 30
- Have a creative practice (this is open to your own interpretation!)
- Be able to commit to and attend 2 x one-day wānanga in person in Kirikiriroa Hamilton
- Be available 6th and 7th August, 2021

If you are interested in this kaupapa,
KŌRERO MAI!

wananga.takatapui@gmail.com
@jems_pa


 THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
 Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Note. Double plate promotion used on Instagram and a printed poster for this research wānanga.

Wānanga Rangatahi Takatāpui

The life force of this rangahau is contained most essentially in the research wānanga. It is a form of noho tata pu - the sacred ritual of connection and sharing that nurtures community activation (Rangihuna & Kopua, 2014). In this research, all that comes before and all that comes after the wānanga is whakapapa, and can be understood as part of the interwoven strands and layers of the research journey. Based on the Pou Rangahau identified in Table 1, Kaupapa Māori Principles shape and guide the design of the wānanga, which will take place over two consecutive days at Te Kohinga Mārama Marae on campus at the University of Waikato. This

site has been selected intentionally as a space to safely hold kōrero which might require the cultural guardianship of our ancestral practices, our tikanga. Not only is a marae protected by the lores of these traditions, but of our tūpuna also.

The whakapapa contained in our whareniui act as a portal to the cosmological histories of our ancestors. The social construct of linear time is collapsed and rewoven into spiralling tendrils, weaving in and out of one another as we gain access to worlds, in a single instance, that have come before and will come after. Moreover, the whare is an embodiment of the Atua, between the planes of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, the body of the whare holds appropriate space for wānanga that pertain to the creation of our universe - past, present and future - and therefore to ourselves as Takatāpui (University of Auckland, 1988). Conversations of such weight and significance, that are attached not only to joy and the mundane, but to trauma and mamae too, should be held in spaces that can contain such depth of thought and feeling. Consideration was given to alternative sites for the wānanga, though none were as appropriate as the whare. Schools, cafes, and public halls did not fit the needs of this event, which required a space containing a mauri matching that of the kaupapa and of those who were a part of it. These alternative venues also hold the potential to trigger painful memories for Rangatahi Takatāpui who experienced trauma in similar spaces. To wānanga inside the whare, though, is to be held tenderly in the womb-like embrace of our tūpuna whaea as we kōrero (Kawharu, 2010).

So that a sense of intimacy was maintained, I aimed to have approximately 6-12 people involved in the two day wānanga, including both co-researchers and workshop facilitators (of which there were two, both also Takatāpui). This number allowed for genuine whakawhanaungatanga to take place, rather than the tokenistic and often meaningless recitation of names and fun facts that too often characterise the beginning of such gatherings, and which misappropriate the term. A friend of mine once said to me about one such experience “this isn’t whakawhanaungatanga, it’s an icebreaker”. A smaller group also lends itself more naturally to whakawhiti kōrero as a full cohort, rather than having to split up into smaller groups. In this way dialogue could flow between co-researchers unencumbered, without awkward and disruptive prompts or restraints which would hinder the flow and quality of thought and kōrero. Too few people involved, however, would also potentially have caused difficulty in group discussions, as

there could have been an absence of the varied perspectives or experiences needed to facilitate a well rounded and critical conversation.

Representation is crucial. Because Takatāpui are not a monolith, but rather include a diverse range of genders and sexualities (Kerekere, 2018), room for a broad scope of identities is necessary in order to give voice to the variety of Takatāpui experiences, such as trans, non binary, cis, intersex, gay, bi, pan, ace, aro, and the many other feathers of our rainbow korowai. For the more structured dialogue in this wānanga, the First Nations talking circle method outlined by Shawn Wilson (2008), Opaskwayak Cree, and Jeffrey Paul Ansloos (2017), Fisher River Cree, was adapted as an Indigenous way of sharing and building upon ideas from a strengths based approach. In these talking circles, or whakawhiti kōrero, we took turns to share our views and experiences on a given topic. A tohu kōrero (a broken branch from the marae garden) was passed around to identify the kaikōrero, and the circle was rotated through more than once in order to give kaikōrero an opportunity to reply, build upon, enquire into or expand upon our thinking.

The importance of kanohi ki te kanohi can not be understated for this wānanga. ‘Face-to-face’ is a physical embodiment of the Kaupapa Māori principles of Āta, Whānau, and Ako Māori (see Table 1). To be present in the company of others, to show face and be seen, is crucial to the enactment and reciprocity of whanaungatanga and aroha. Our people have engaged in hui and wānanga for a great variety of kaupapa over centuries because the physicality of sharing space is understood to be a key component of forging, maintaining and strengthening bonds. We can look to the tikanga of pōwhiri to see a clear example of how our willingness to come together as a people is central to the social, political, and spiritual fabric of Māoritanga.

In light of Covid, there is an added layer of complication to this tradition of gathering. We have had to adapt our tikanga in order to keep whānau safe, utilising digital technology in order to approximate the physicality of wānanga and hui. This has not always been easy, or equivalent, but in order to maintain whakapapa and protect the lives of those in our communities who are most vulnerable - especially kaumātua, mokopuna, and those who have underlying health conditions - we have had to make do. As such, a digital wānanga was available as an

alternative to meeting ā-tinana. Though gathering on our devices is not the same as meeting in person, we have become so accustomed to this way of sharing (digital) space that it was a viable alternative if the circumstances had required it, such as in the context of a new or growing outbreak of the virus. Health and safety guidelines provided by the University of Waikato - both in light of Covid and in general terms - were also utilised alongside common sense to ensure that best-practice was followed, and our legal obligation to keep others safe while participating in this wānanga was met.

Prior to the wānanga itself, I made contact with co-researchers via email in order to supply practical details about the agenda for both days. I also used the first email as a way to begin to introduce myself, so that those taking part felt a level of familiarity with me prior to meeting kanohi ki te kanohi. This was also an opportunity to share ideas. Links to resources which helped to prepare co-researchers to engage in kōrero on particular topics were added to the end of emails as optional material (such as youtube videos, articles, websites, and podcasts). This is what is commonly referred to in education as flipped learning and ensures that learners are given the opportunity to engage with content and ideas prior to an educational experience, so that active learning can be accelerated (Hamden et al., 2013). In my experience as a teacher, this practice has led to greater participant engagement and deeper level thinking, as time has been allowed for ideas to be formed and gone over in the days and weeks that precede the conversation. Additionally, the last email I sent to co-researchers before the wānanga contained information and guidance on what to expect for the whakatau on day one, and some basic tikanga for at the marae. The inclusion of these details was important, as it acknowledged that rangatahi Māori are not necessarily automatically confident in the tikanga of marae simply by virtue of their whakapapa. Many Māori feel varying levels of comfort with the tikanga of marae due to a variety of valid reasons.

In my own case, as a Rangatahi I was plagued by apprehension when faced with the prospect of participating in pōwhiri. I was not brought up in an environment that enforced tikanga Māori in my daily life, and I did not regularly visit marae or participate in its associated kawa. This led to my fear of ‘messaging up’ or looking foolish, and more over a fear of disappointing my community and my tūpuna. Paralysing fear, in turn, perpetuated the

disconnection I was facing. For Māori who experience isolation from their whakapapa and their whenua, intergenerational trauma and systemic deprivation is almost always inevitably at the root (Elkington et al., 2020). For this reason, it was important to provide guidance to my co-researchers on simple details that can oftentimes represent enormous barriers to engagement in the tikanga of Te Ao Māori, from what to wear and where to gather, to which waiata to practise and what bathrooms are available at the marae (which for gender non conforming and trans people is a constant consideration in the world at large). In short, I assert that to assume all co-researchers are confident in the tikanga of marae is both a privileged position to hold, and contributes to the perpetuation of exclusion and disenfranchisement for Rangatahi who should be supported in gaining confidence and access to tikanga which is their birthright.

My professional background as a secondary school teacher in Aotearoa guided the design of this research wānanga. In particular, the pedagogical and philosophical implications of Kaupapa Māori Theory (see Table 1) as a critical pedagogy informed both the underlying values and practical components of the wānanga plan. In order to design opportunities across both days to share and learn that were simultaneously intentional and responsive to individual needs and conversations, the wānanga plan contained flexibility in its use of guiding topics (kaupapa) and activity ideas (workshops and reflections). This provided direction and structure without being overly controlled or pre-determined in the minutiae of details or expected outcomes. For example, rather than prescribing set questions to be answered by co-researchers, ideas and topics of conversation that are open-ended were identified, allowing for multiple interpretations and responses to unfold.

On this dialectic approach, Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) reflects, stating that he “didn’t have a set of prepared questions. In retrospect, I’m glad I didn’t. We all simply discussed what we were interested in and what we were doing our research on” (p. 129). Furthermore, the structure of each day was built around relational and whānau-centric tikanga that respond to the needs of daily life, such as wā kai, karakia, and wā whakatā. This helped to ensure that, as much as possible, a natural flow was achieved, rather than a potentially prescriptive and impersonal experience for co-researchers. As part of the aim for transparency and inclusion, co-researchers were provided with a wātaka for both days of the wānanga (see Table 2). This plan was made

available at the outset of the wānanga, and indicates the structure and direction of each day. It was, however, also framed as a living and flexible document, with adaptations welcomed from co-researchers as the days, and each activity, progressed. Workshops were also facilitated on both days by members of the Takatāpui community. These were included as important opportunities to experience new learning in different mediums. The Kaiako for both workshops were invited to respond to a particular kaupapa, but were welcome to interpret and develop an activity that suited their interests and abilities. The Kaupapa Māori principles of Ako Māori and Taonga Tuku Iho (see Table 1) are embodied in this approach, as the intention of our wānanga was not exclusively quantitative data collection, but also community building, collective sharing and dreaming, reciprocal learning, and the transmission and preservation of mātauranga Māori, which has been - and will continue to be - passed down intergenerationally.

Wānanga has been described to me as a multitude of things, from the sacred to the secular, the metaphorical to the acutely physical. In reality, it is all of these things and so much more. Wānanga is not a fixed or singular concept, and it is experienced by people differently in different contexts and times. On one hand, wānanga can be used to describe the nature of a particular event - an educational gathering perhaps - and on the other, it suggests the pursuit of knowledge from a particular pedagogical and epistemological framework, what we know as Mātauranga Māori. My own concept of wānanga is unresolved. In fact, it is constantly evolving. Imagine a multidimensional place, both physical and intangible. A place where we can step across a threshold - literal and metaphorical - in body, mind, or spirit. A place where we exist on planes of time and space which are at once converging and separating with the pulsations of thought and whakapapa. This is a site of reiterative transformation and ancient perpetuity. Not an impossible contradiction, but a place where all things are possible both instantaneously and over the long lives of spiralling generations. In this place, we are afforded the opportunity to meet our ancestors and our descendants, and oftentimes, we are confronted with ourselves. It is a place to investigate ideas critically and engage in discourse that challenges what is taken for granted. At the same time, we are invited to sit silently as observers and receptacles of knowledge that transcends the language of our tongues, but is communicated to us instinctually, ā-wairua, via the coursing of blood through our veins and the dreams of our tūpuna. This place, for me, is wānanga.

Table 2. Wānanga Day Plan

Wānanga Tuatahi (Day 1)		Wānanga Tuarua (Day 2)	
Location:	Te Kohinga Mārama Marae (University of Waikato - Hillcrest Rd)		Location:
Date & Time:	Friday 6th August, 9:00am - 4:00pm Saturday 7th August, 9:00am - 4:00pm		Date & Time:
9:00am	Mihi Whakatau	Karakia timatanga / waiata	9am
9:30am - 10:30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whakawhanaungatanga Tikanga for the wānanga Co-researcher's rights Questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whakawhanaungatanga: Whakawhiti kōrero: reflection on yesterday 	9:30am - 10:30am
10:30am - 11:30am	Workshop 1 with Essa May Ranapiri <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaupapa: Takatāpuitanga and creative expression 	<i>Wā kai</i>	10:30am - 11:00am
11:30 - 11:45pm	<i>Wā kai</i>	Workshop 2 with Alé Whakataka Jensen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaupapa: Exploring re-imaginings of our pūrākau through rākau and taonga pūoro. 	11:00am - 12:00pm
11:45am - 1:00pm	Whakawhiti Kōrero <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaupapa: Rangatahi takatāpui as an identity AND Tino Rangatiratanga as a concept and as a lived experience 	Whakawhiti Kōrero <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaupapa: Experiences and narratives as members of the takatāpui community AND Creativity as a way to express identity and autonomy 	12:00pm - 1:30pm
1:00pm - 1:30pm	Personal reflection on kōrero	<i>Wā kai</i>	1:30pm - 2:00pm
1:30pm - 2:00pm	<i>Wā kai</i>	Personal Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaupapa: What is being done, and can be done even better, to support rangatahi takatāpui to be self-determining 	2:00pm - 3:00pm
2:00pm - 3:00pm	Creative Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaupapa: Creativity as a way to express identity and autonomy as takatāpui 	Whakawhiti Kōrero <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaupapa: our ideas / debrief 	3:00pm - 3:30pm
3:00pm - 3:45pm	Whakawhiti Kōrero <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaupapa: Present your collage 	Mihi	3:30pm - 3:45pm
3:45pm - 4:00pm	Karakia whakamutunga	Karakia whakamutunga / waiata	3:45pm - 4:00pm

Despite all of its layered, intricate, nuanced dimensions, at the core of wānanga is a clear dedication to sharing knowledge in a way that is innately Māori. Mead (2003) described the nature of traditional wānanga as taking place in “a sacred house. All who participated in teaching and learning were covered by the tapu of the institution and of learning. Knowledge was tapu” (p. 310). In contemporary Kaupapa Māori educational theory, wānanga has been acknowledged for its transformational potential, and by the way in which it draws on something greater than intellect alone. “Wānanga is a safe space, one where decisions and pathways are determined through participation and engagement of all, with heart and head” (Kia Eke Panuku, 2015). In a settler colonial state, wānanga is also a site of resistance. It is an act of refusal to concede to the dominant concepts of teaching and learning, or research, which are upheld by western institutions. It is a continuation of the whakapapa our ancestors belong to, those who lived and died on these lands before the arrival of the Crown and Christianity. As a wānanga Takatāpui, the subversion intensifies, and we are taken back to Te Kore, to where our Tūpuna Takatāpui began. Space is not necessarily being created, but reactivated. Takatāpui have, after all, been here “mai rā anō” (Te Awekotuku, 2018, 28.30).

Chapter 3

Pūrākau Whakaaro || Findings

On a Friday morning in early August, we slowly assembled outside Te Kohinga Mārama Marae at the University of Waikato. The mahau of Te Ao Hurihuri lay in shadow, which led my mind to the observation that this whare faces the setting sun. Some of us were strangers to one another, some acquaintances, or ‘mutuals’ online, many of us though were drawn to the kaupapa by its call, rather than due to social obligations or existing friendships. A number of us were not waewae tapu, so the kawa of the marae dictated that we did not need to perform a pōwhiri for our rōpū. Instead, we were able to run a more informal whakatau in order to safely open the space for our group and our wānanga. There were twelve of us, blowing humid cumulus into the frozen air through rigid pursed lips, our conversations clipped by the frost pinching at our lungs and our toes. The relative silence wasn’t awkward, rather it felt like that quiet moment at the top of a breath. A pregnant pause. The feeling of collective anticipation for the exhalation that would shortly follow.

Our Kaikaranga, Alejandra (ira/ia/they), responded to the call of the whare with the voice of taonga puoro as we moved in unison to step beneath the maihe. Inside the womb of the whare, we sat in a circle on the floor while karakia whakahorohoro were recited. The intentions of our wānanga were expressed into the space, and the tikanga that would keep us protected outlined. To close the whakatau, Alejandra (Alé), who was also a co-researcher and kaiāwhina for the wānanga, offered a karakia composed in honour of Mana Takatāpui. It is transcribed below so that - if you wish - you are able to recite it out loud too before continuing your journey into the story of this wānanga. Let this karakia resound in you, so that you are held in the mana of this kōrero, and so that you too might connect more strongly to the mauri of the whakaaro shared between the twelve of us, the co-researchers of this kaupapa.

Mana Tuakiri
Mana Whakapapa
Mana Takatāpui e

Ahuahu mai, Ahuahu atu
Kia tau ai te mauri
I roto i a koe

Ko Hinetītama koe
Ko Hinenuitepō koe
Koia rā ko te whakaahuatanga

Mana Māreikura
Mana Whatukura
Mana Takatāpui e

Rere mai Nuku, rere mai Rangi
Ka tau whakatau hā e
Uhi, wero tau mai te mahana

Haumi e
Hui e
Tāiki e!

What This Section Is and Is Not: Pūrākau & Collaborative Storying

The intention of this section of my thesis is not to relay the events of our wānanga verbatim. Nor is it to describe the minute particulars of every workshop and every artefact produced. In this account I endeavour to capture the essence of our kōrero in a way that communicates the core learnings from our time together. Our ancestors employed pūrākau as a way of telling stories with “humour and gossip and creativity” while simultaneously preserving and transmitting the treasured teachings of our beliefs, customs, and cultures (Smith, 2012, p. 146). Lee (2005) reminds us that while pūrākau are often regarded for their creative flourish, they should not be “considered as sheer fictional accounts, invented imaginings or mere talk” but are in fact “central in the connecting, nurturing, sustaining and flourishing of our people” (pp. 7 - 8).

Bishop (1996) also describes the pūrākau method as collaborative storying which L. Smith (2012) asserts is a means by which Indigenous Peoples are able to retain control, rather than falling prey to the dehumanising objectification of scientific observation. I will weave together our conversations and reflections in as gentle and honest a way as possible. I will describe the ahua - the shape - of the thoughts that we shared and built together. As co-researchers, we agreed at every stage of the wānanga to be genuine and forthright in our words, but we did so with the understanding that they were not necessarily going to be used as lifeless data bites, disembodied from the context of the wānanga itself, but instead were to be understood within the broader story told by our collective voice. In this way, when quotes and descriptions of conversation are retold here, they should be understood as strands working together to weave the narrative of our learnings as a whole.

Ngā Kaupapa - Topics of Discussion

Prior to our wānanga, five topics of discussion - the kaupapa for our workshops and whakawhiti kōrero - were identified and shared with each co-researcher. These topics aimed to provide guidance and clarity to the course of the wānanga, but were framed in a way that invited

our discourse to branch and blossom naturally and without restraint. Some of the kaupapa were addressed individually, some were paired, and others occurred organically throughout the course of each day. Equally, these topics were not restricted exclusively to moments of formal dialogue, but were also expressed through creative workshops and individual reflection and meditation. For example, one topic was used as the inspiration for a clay modelling activity, while another resulted in the composition of a piece of collaborative poetry. Some kaupapa were also recurring, demonstrating just how interconnected the many aspects of our identity and our experiences are.

The kaupapa for both days of the wānanga were as follows:

1. Rangatahi Takatāpui as an identity
2. Experiences and narratives as members of the Takatāpui community
3. Creativity as a way to express identity and autonomy as Takatāpui
4. Tino Rangatiratanga as a concept and as a lived experience
5. What is being done, and can be done even better, to support rangatahi Takatāpui to be self-determining

So that these kaupapa were distributed throughout the wānanga, they were tagged to particular parts of each day. This was mostly an attempt to ensure each topic was included in the day plan for reference (Table 2), rather than a strict indication of when each topic would be addressed.

Themes

Through an investigation of our five kaupapa, the group of co-researchers produced a large body of thought. To record these ideas and conversations, several collection methods were adopted, and due to the size of the collection, they are not presented within this thesis in full. Instead, the voice recordings, waiata, notes, reflections, brainstorming, photographs, clay sculptures, collages, poetry, and videos were taken with the dual intention of being returned to co-researchers, and to aid in the composition of this narrative. These artefacts are taonga, representing the treasures that were created through the process of wānanga, and as such should be treated with respect and care. By reviewing these taonga, and through reflection and analysis,

four themes have emerged as distinct learnings from this rangahau (Table 3). I have labelled them Mana Tuakiri (Identity), Mana Hapori (Belonging), Mana Moemoeā (Vision), and Mana Wero (Challenges). Note that the English word following each theme is a loose association, as a form of reference, rather than a direct translation. This is to acknowledge that dissonance in perspectives between Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā can impact understandings.

Though these themes are addressed here in stages, their interconnectedness cannot be understated. They are distinct as concepts in their own right. Moreover, each of these themes is both informed by and influential of the other. In essence, they exist in dialogue with one another, rather than in contrast or isolation. In regards to their tone, or rather the conventional interpretation of tone we project onto them, there is a clear sense of optimism in three of the themes, and an undeniable *mamae* in the other. However, all four themes contain the potential for hope and for loss, for transformation and for exclusion. These themes are more nuanced than what they might first appear. In order to locate the themes within the broader conversation of Decolonisation, and because they share a common objective of Tino Ranratiranga for Indigenous Peoples, they have been considered in relation to L. Smith's (2012) Indigenous Research Agenda (Figure 1) and Laenui's (2000) Phases of Decolonisation, both of which informed the methodology of this rangahau.

Table 3. *Themes From This Rangahau*

Themes	Phases of the Indigenous Research Agenda (L. Smith, 2012)	Phases of Decolonisation (Laenui, 2000)
<i>Mana Tuakiri</i> Identity	Decolonisation Transformation	Rediscovery & Recovery Dreaming Commitment
<i>Mana Hapori</i> Belonging	Mobilisation Decolonisation Healing Transformation	Rediscovery Action
<i>Mana Moemoeā</i> Vision	Mobilisation Transformation Decolonisation Healing	Recovery Mourning Dreaming Commitment Action
<i>Mana Wero</i> Challenges	Transformation Healing Mobilisation	Recovery Mourning Commitment Action

Ko wai au?

The stanza above is a collection of excerpts from a larger kuputoi composed by all twelve co-researchers from our wānanga. We collaborated on this piece in our first workshop, led by Essa (they/them/ia), responding to the questions “what does Takatāpui look like?” and “what does Takatāpui say?” Our responses, scrawled on small scraps of paper, were then placed, dropped, and strewn at random across a long piece of brown butcher's roll. The visual result was Dada-esque, a little like Jean (Hans) Arp's *Untitled (Collage with Squares Arranged according to the Laws of Chance)* (1917). The poetic result was an insight into the lived experiences of Rangatahi Takatāpui: raw, emotive, thoughtful, at times melancholic and at others light-hearted. The excerpts above have been drawn out in particular for their self-reflective quality. They speak to the struggles and triumphs of identity, belonging, internal conflict, pain, pleasure, and ultimately a desire for surety in one's own self.

Throughout the kuputoi workshop in particular, and in the whakawhiti kōrero that followed, our discussions circulated around both our intuitive identity - what could be considered as ā-wāirua - and our interpersonal experiences - ā-whānau - as Rangatahi Takatāpui. Much like First Nations talking circles, described by Wilson (2008) and Ansloos (2017), the whakawhiti kōrero in our wānanga took on a ceremonial quality. The tikanga of these sessions were specifically set in order to safely open space up for challenging and, at times, immensely personal dialogue. For that reason the mana of these kōrero remain with those who were present, meaning that what is shared here is only done so with the explicit permission of co-researchers.

While we engaged in dialogue, a very strong thread began to emerge and weave itself throughout the kōrero. Co-researchers spoke about how much of our identity as Takatāpui is bound to our own internal journey of self acceptance and Mana Tuakiri - a knowledge and belief in the power of who we are in every aspect of ourselves. At one point in our whakawhiti kōrero, when we were discussing what it means to identify as Takatāpui in the context of Tino Rangatiratanga, Nia (she/her/they) said “*I am my own future. As Takatāpui I can embrace it or not, I don't need everyone else to say that I exist, because I do.*” The importance of internalised affirmations was echoed by Te Waimarie (they/them/ia) who added that by “*finding that home*

within yourself, you can never lose who you are. And finding who you are within your own identity can be one of the most freeing things in your life. To have yourself and love yourself, and to fight for your love.”

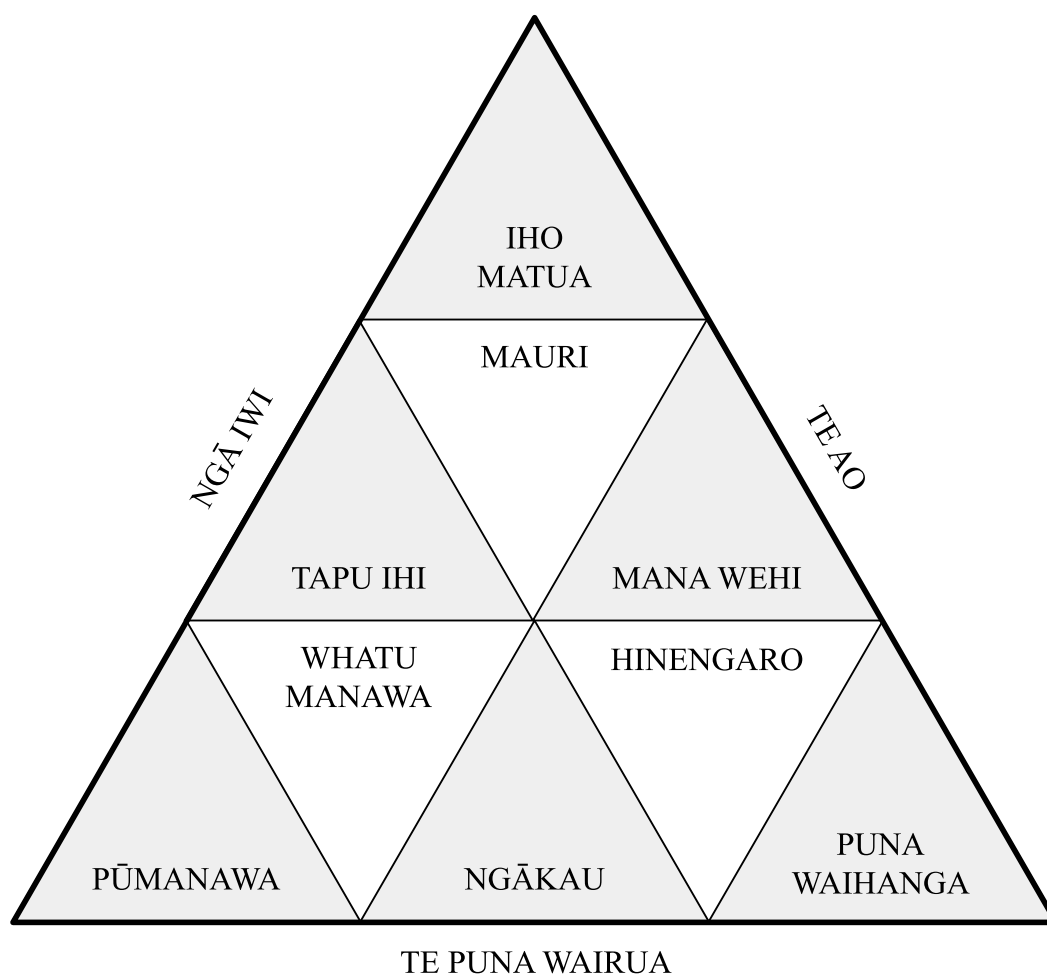
In a similar vein Hannah (she/her) wrote in our kuputoi “*I bear witness to myself and come alive*”, and when I asked her how this manifested itself in her lived experience, she said that “*through the process of getting to know myself and who I am, and accepting that, I found this puna, this pool of love for myself and for other people to give.*” The rōpū agreed with this sentiment, adding anecdotal stories of experiences that we have faced in our continuing journey of self-discovery. Cassidy (he/him) brought up the way in which this strength of identity is not a singular destination or a linear path, but something that is complex and changing, and as such, requires ongoing self-awareness. One of his lines from our collective poem was “*ngā āhuatanga, nō roto*” which he explained as “*the essence, or the multitudes that come from within, that are inherently there... it’s about, I guess, realising them, acknowledging them.*”

Hearing this, I reflected on what parts of myself I am yet to embrace. I have at times sensed new or untapped aspects of my own identity that I find unexpected or even intimidating. They are like karanga from within - my own and those of my ancestors - calling forward a truer form of myself. My ability to listen to these calls, though, is so dependent on enormous variables; personal, relational, environmental, spiritual. But hearing my co-researcher’s positive narratives of internal confidence and self-expression made me wonder what enabled such radical love and acceptance, what Quicy called “*A home within my own heart.*” Indeed there is an undeniable sense that a security in our identity as Takatāpui must come from within, and that to achieve Tino Rangatiratanga of our identity there is a need for autonomy to imagine, claim, and express who we are and how we identify. It was described in our kōrero as an “*awakening*”, a “*belief*”, a “*knowing*”, an “*understanding*”, and an “*embrace*”.

But in the context of whakapapa, and with a grounding in the knowledge that all things are connected, the notion of the internal journey of acceptance and self love can not stand on its own. There is more to Mana Tuakiri than the self alone. In a workshop on the second day of our wānanga, Alé used mahi rākau (referred to as cuisenaire rods in western education) to

demonstrate Te Tuakiri o Te Tangata (Figure 3), a model of theory they were taught in the Te Ataarangi philosophy of Te Reo Māori education, and which was developed by Dame Kāterina Te Heikōkō Mataira in conjunction with Te Aho Matua o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori (1997). Alé explained to our rōpū how Mataira (1989) utilised the multiple elements of Te Tuakiri o te Tangata to express the complexity and interdependent nature of identity, which is represented by the geometric sections of a niho taniwha tukutuku panel. Importantly, as Takatāpui, and more generally as Māori, who we are as individuals is intrinsically linked to who we are spiritually and collectively, as a people and as a whānau.

Figure 3. *Te Tuakiri o Te Tangata*



Note. Adapted from Mataira, 1989.

Ko wai tātou?

Identity is a central component of self determination. When Rangatahi Takatāpui can determine who we are and how we exist and interact within our relationships, whānau, communities, and the world, we assert an authority which acts to resist the labels and constraints that are imposed upon us by others. These constraints, such as the cis-heteronormative nuclear norms of dominant society, attempt to confine our expression as Takatāpui within the limitations of other people’s perceived understanding of what is possible or acceptable. Our identity as Takatāpui is, in itself, a resistance to the current ‘status quo’ as determined by the standards of a settler-colonial patriarchal society.

While certain aspects of the LGBTQ+ community have been deemed tolerable, or even fashionable, due to the efforts of historical and ongoing activism and the resulting shifts in social attitude - such as marriage equality (Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013) and the commercialisation of mainstream pride events - there is still a sense that the acceptance of Queer communities by (cis)het society at large is determined by our relative palatability, and currently there are particular demographics of the Queer community who have been granted mainstream acceptance and privilege that others lack (see ‘Mana Wero: Challenges from Within’ section below for details). However, in order to be truly sovereign, and to exist without needing to satisfy the acceptability politics of cis-heteronormativity, we must *all* be able to live free from oppression. In reality, Takatāpui, Trans, Nonbinary, Intersex, Pansexual, Disabled, Indigenous and many other intersecting identities within the LGBTQ+ community do not experience this basic human right. In our whakawhiti kōrero, Cee (they/them/ia) challenged Queer Pākehā to reflect on these intersections, “*Imagine being gay and then also colonised.*”

Through the process of wānanga, my co-researchers and I discussed how, in many ways, Mana Tuakiri begins from within, as a process of defining our own narratives and identities. It requires what G. H. Smith (2003) describes as a “conscientisation” of the self and others in order to recognise the reality of our oppression and our fight against it. However, it is not the freedom of the individual alone that will achieve Tino Rangatiratanga, but that of the collective. Co-researchers discussed how by being able to locate our identities within a context of shared

experiences, we can build connections with those who affirm and support Takatāpui notions of self. In the reflective kōrero held on day two of our wānanga, Cassidy reflected on the liberating effect of collectivity when he said “*we’re in a space where we can just be*”. It is a sense of shared identity, rather than the individual, that enables true self-determination and Mana Tuakiri. Thus, the second thread of whakaaro emerged in our wānanga, closely interwoven with the notion of personal identity. The question “ko wai tātou?” asks “who are *we*?” because, like a woven basket, without the cohesion and contribution of each strand of harakeke, the raranga will not take shape. In fact, it will fall apart. Understanding this, my curiosity turned towards the question “who are we as Takatāpui, and what does Mana Tuakiri mean collectively, as a shared identity?” Our responses began to emerge upon consideration of the word Takatāpui itself.

During one kōrero, my co-researchers and I shared the ways by which we came to understand and express our identities as Takatāpui. I can not remember the first time I heard the term Takatāpui. However, I can distinctly recall the *feeling* I had when I first understood my own relationship to the term, and to the community it represents. A sense of tau; a sense of whanaungatanga. For others in our group, the memory of first hearing the word is a defining moment in the expression of their Mana Tuakiri. Te Waimarie described the moment as a revelation of belonging:

“when I first learnt what Takatāpui was, and I had it explained to me, I kind of had that gender euphoria within myself, that kind of ‘oh fuck, finally, something I can actually relate to’, something that is who I am in my being. Not just all those western terms and labels, and everything. It was the first thing I actually could identify with, and it was just a nice feeling”.

The word itself was, to Te Waimarie, like a homecoming, and a way by which they could begin to reconcile what they understood inside themselves intuitively with an identity that was recognised and shared outwardly by a community of Queer Māori people. Essa related to Te Waimarie’s experience, telling our group:

“I was at another gathering and there was this kuia, and she was Takatāpui. She was talking about the word, and it was the first time I had heard a kupu and understood what the tōhuto was doing in it. *Takatāpui*. And so, yeah, It was like a moment where I felt closer to Te Ao Māori and to my Queerness.”

This special memory of intergenerational connection exemplifies the importance of shared identity and fraternity for Takatāpui people. It is a means by which our elders can educate and care for the next generation - which calls to mind the expression ‘if you can see it, you can be it’. The importance of nurturing these connections within the collective whānau Takatāpui, is that through them our identities are strengthened and affirmed. This memory shared by Essa also illustrates how for Māori, our language is intrinsically connected to our sense of self and belonging, and this is no less true for Takatāpui. E tika ana te kōrero i o tātou tūpuna, it is just as our ancestors said: ko taku reo taku ohooho, ko taku reo taku mapihi mauria, my language is my awakening, my language is the window to my soul.

Reflecting on this myself, before hearing the word Takatāpui I hadn’t connected strongly to any singular label or identity within the LGBTQ+ lexicon. Over the years I have used Bi, Pan and Queer interchangeably to describe my sexuality, and Non-binary, Gender Queer, and Fluid to describe my gender. Never have I felt particularly tethered to any one of them, they simply act as best-fit labels depending on the context I find myself in, never quite capturing the essence of who I know myself to be. Takatāpui changed this experience for me. The fact that the word Takatāpui recognises the mana of our cultural identity and our whakapapa as Māori is something that has no equivalent in western notions of gender, sex, and sexuality.

Takatāpui denotes our belonging to a whānau that reaches beyond the realm of the living, beyond the realm of the present day. There is a sense of infinity in understanding our own identity as a confluence of past and future generations in the present. Essa expressed this idea when they wrote in our poetry workshop “*We have existed from day dot. Deal with it*” explaining, to the agreement of our group, that “*there’s a real comfort from that realisation, you know, that we’ve always been here*”. Te Awekotuku (2018) confirmed this with her assertion that “we have been here, we have enjoyed different types of sexualities, mai rā anō. Forever” (28:30).

As Takatāpui, we belong to a whakapapa that reaches back through aeons, back before human life, to the time of creation, to a time before time - Te Kore. During the wānanga our kōrero continued to intuitively return to this belief. Nia reassured us that despite dissenting voices that attempt to erase or deny our Mana Takatāpuitanga, “*you can be Takatāpui - because*

that's all you were - before the western ideologies came along and told us we weren't, but we were." This sparked an energetic discussion on pūrākau Māori, and the ways we are once again recognising Queer Māori narratives which have for a long time been hidden, repressed or manipulated to fit the Christian virtues and colonial sentiments of New Zealand during the 19th and 20th centuries (Kerekere, 2017; Te Awekotuku, 2018). We spoke about iwi and hapū stories of Hinemoa, Tutanekai and Tiki - which our rangatira Kerekere (2017) and Te Awekotuku (2003) have shed light on - and about Wairaka, an ancestor from the Mātaatua waka, a descendant of whom was present at the wānanga. Maraea (any pronouns) reflected on these narratives, saying that *"if we look, if we look deep enough into the pūrākau of where we're from we could probably find more examples like the story of Wairaka."* Our pūrākau Takatāpui are there, ready for new life to be breathed into them. They are evidence of our long and proud history, and help to keep our knowledge of Whakapapa Takatāpui alive.

Collective identity, then, is not limited to a community of those physically around us, but is rooted in a relationality with our tūpuna and our uri, with the land and ngā Atua Māori. In our collaborative kuputoi, Maraea wrote *"I am the reflection of my ancestors' perceptions. I am no mistake. I am strong like my maunga, and fluid like my awa"*. When this phrase was read out loud, there was visceral agreement from the rōpū. Essa captured my feelings on it particularly well when they said *"there is a freedom in knowing that the atua have our back."* Through our wānanga, my co-researchers and I were able to establish that our Mana Tuakiri as Takatāpui must recognise how our identity is tied intrinsically to our whakapapa and our community, and that in understanding this we are strengthened in our sense of self.

Mana Hapori: Belonging

Ngā āhuetanga nō roto

There is a call in the water that I can feel in my skin, warm and wet

*Friends piled up on a mattress dragged into the lounge watching RuPaul's Drag Race
even tho' it's problematic*

I am made up of every perspective of myself, every snap and click that brings me into place makes me beautiful

I am the reflection of my ancestors' perception

- Excerpts from *Mana Takatāpui*, a poem collaboratively composed by co-researchers of this rangahau (2021).

The communality of Takatāpuitanga reflects the cohesion and unity made manifest through a collectivist understanding of Tino Rangatiratanga. By recognising the duality of Mana Tuakiri as both innate in each of us, and as a shared notion of identity, the core belief in ourselves as totally interconnected with the world around us - living and nonliving - is distinguished from the dominant western concept of individualism. In the physical realm, the dual aspects of Mana Tuakiri for Rangatahi Takatāpui - the internal surety of one's sense of self, and the intersocial recognition of collective identity - are expressed as a deep desire for tangible belonging amongst peers. The reason Mana Hapori, belonging, is a significant theme for this rangahau is that co-researchers expressed its centrality to an improvement in the quality of life for Rangatahi Takatāpui. However, for many in our whānau Takatāpui, the ability to physically access community is often hampered by barriers such as safety, socio-economic opportunity, and geography (in that Takatāpui, as a population, are simply more sparsely distributed). Conversely, members of more dominant social communities do not necessarily feel these barriers as acutely, due to privileges afforded them, such as time, funding, access, and safety, and thus are less likely to recognise the need for change.

Ultimately, co-researchers discussed a desire for belonging in two main contexts: amongst peers, and within communities. In the first instance, our kōrero circulated around a lack of regular opportunities for Takatāpui people, specifically, to come together (outside of events targeted broadly towards all LGBTQI+ people, which didn't necessarily ensure cultural safety, or that many Takatāpui people would even attend). This issue is significantly magnified outside of large urban centres. In the second instance, my co-researchers and I explored the importance of acceptance and support from within established relationships and communities, such as whānau, marae, hapū, iwi, peer groups, and schools. Belonging within communities, in this sense, is

particular to environments and people which are not necessarily themselves Takatāpui, but that contribute significantly to an individual's socio-relational experiences.

Amongst Peers

Ki te kotahi te kākaho, ka whati; ki te kāpuia, e kore e whati!

When a reed stands alone it is vulnerable, but a group of reeds together is unbreakable!

This whakataukī speaks to the belief in coming together as a people. It is a way that our ancestors remind us of how important the aspirations and needs of the collective is, over the desires of the individual. On our own, we are like a lone reed, brittle and easily broken, but gathered closely, even in the strongest winds we will stand resolute. There is of course a metaphorical inference in this proverb - of unity towards a shared goal - but there is a physical connotation too, which affirms the innate human desire for belonging amongst our peers, of proximity and closeness.

A positive sense of identity is affirmed and enhanced as Takatāpui, most especially for Rangatahi, when we recognise ourselves in those around us, and are able to build meaningful relationships with others who identify as we do, and experience the world in ways we can relate to. Often, for LGBTQI+ people, this community is considered a chosen whānau - a kinship group who provide the care, affection, and guidance usually attributed to the cisheteronormative nuclear family unit. This is especially true for, but not limited to, those who lack the acceptance or support of their assigned families. The *Honour Project Aotearoa* (Pihama et al., 2020) defines these different familial relationships as “kaupapa whānau” and “whakapapa whānau”, respectively (p. 89).

The second day of our research wānanga began with a reflection on the day prior. Inside Te Ao Hurihuri, underneath waituhi kōwhaiwhai and the fluorescent orange rods of old gas ceiling heaters, we came together in a circle. Some of us huddled under blankets to keep warm, some of us lay reclining, and some sat cross legged. All of us, though, shared the same sense of

contentment in each other's company, having quickly established a relaxed and safe familiarity the day before through the unifying processes of whakawhanaungatanga, whakawhiti kōrero, and mahi toi. Essa began our reflective whakawhiti kōrero, *“I just want to reiterate how much of a privilege it is to be here with you all, and how at home I feel”* ia said.

The word privilege is striking here. That our ability to be in each other's presence felt like a privilege - something special and unique afforded to us - is illustrative of the fact that we are rarely given the opportunity simply to gather and co-exist. The sad irony of this is that it is exactly the opposite of privilege that makes it feel thus. It is, in fact, deprivation and oppression. Nia reiterated this point when she replied *“here we are talking as Takatāpui freely, when 50 years ago, this probably never would have happened. So, these Māoritanga and Ao Māori [kaupapa] are so much better for us as a people.”* Herein lies an important lesson about Takatāpui experiences of LGBTQI+ events. Unless they are designed and coordinated with, by and for Takatāpui, they run the risk of catering only to the needs of dominant Queer identities, which in Aotearoa tends to be that of white cis gay men. There is a need for Takatāpui-centric kaupapa, alongside and complementary to those for Queer Pākehā communities.

“You know, this is our space” said Cass *“where we can just be.”* When he said this, I thought of the many times I have adjusted myself, checked the way I was acting and talking, trying to hide or minimise certain aspects of my queerness, effectively code-switching in order to feel safe and accepted. This experience is not something exclusively experienced at the interface of queer and straight culture. It is also felt laterally, within the LGBTQI+ community itself. It is not often possible to, as Cass said, *“just be”* Takatāpui. The need for education and visibility around unique identities within the Queer landscape runs complimentary to the need for opportunities for Takatāpui (and other marginalised queer identities) to safely share space and voice with one another, in order to connect, affirm, and dream together. Hannah spoke about this in her kōrero, when she shared *“I think that’s what I was reflecting on, that space. Where I feel like for the first time, I was able to explore my identity in a much more meaningful, witnessed way.”*

A significant difference, perhaps, between collective Mana Tuakiri (identity) and Mana Hapori (belonging) amongst peers is what Hannah described as being witnessed. In Kaupapa Māori theory, this method is described as Kānohi Kitea - the seen face (Smith, 2012, p. 124). The process by which trust is gained and maintained by showing up in-person, and which “allows the people in the community to use all their senses as complementary sources of information” (Cram & Pipi, 2000, p. 14). There is an intangible spiritual power, a wairua, in the simple tangible act of being in the physical presence of others, especially those to whom we can closely relate. “*You know, I’ve always been like yeah I’m Takatāpui and proud*” reflected Hannah. “*I have gay friends, but to be here with other Takatāpui and talking about what that means to us, and therefore what it means to me, is actually something special that I’ve realised I haven’t explored all that much.*”

Maraea agreed, sharing that “*until yesterday I’ve never really been in a Takatāpui space.*” At this point, our group lamented the inaccessibility of the very few Takatāpui specific kaupapa that do exist. Maraea had not simply avoided Takatāpui spaces, rather they did not have access to them. Living outside of a major urban centre means that very few local (or even regional) opportunities to experience Takatāpui community, ā-tinana, exist. Additionally, for community members outside of the immediate area, access to events in places like Tāmaki Makaurau or Te Whanganui-a-Tara is limited due to prohibitive socio-economic obstacles and sheer geographic distance. Even in places where opportunities do arise, they are still painfully few and far between. Thus, the desire Rangatahi Takatāpui have for Mana Hapori - belonging amongst peers - is immense. Conversely, so is its power. Nia identified this when she said “*belonging is Tino Rangatiratanga.*” In the framework of Smith’s (2012) Indigenous Research Agenda (Figure 1), our ability to come together (and therefore belong) for, with, and as Takatāpui represents a multi-directional journey towards self determination, one which has the capacity to mobilise, decolonise, transform, and heal our community (Smith, 2012). Cee expressed this at the end of our reflective whakawhiti kōrero when they said:

“I struggle with being vulnerable, but it hits different to be and to practise vulnerability in a space where it’s wanted and it’s respected and it’s protected. So e mihi ana ki a koutou for holding that space for one another and for, āe, allowing me to be here.”

Within Communities

E kore au e ngaro, he kākano ahau i ruia mai i Rangiātea.

I will never be lost, I am a seed scattered from Rangiātea.

As Māori our ontological grounding in the power of whakapapa as a force of not only creation, but of knowledge generation, social cohesion, and sense-making, instils in us an intrinsic belief in our own sense of belonging. We are mokopuna of the gods, of Papatūānuku and Ranginui, of the soil beneath our feet. We are seeds scattered from Rangiātea, the descendants of voyagers who navigated Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa in waka, bringing us to this land. And like the infinite life cycle of a seed sown, nurtured, grown, and scattered, our whakapapa ensures that we will never be lost, that we belong to our ancestors and to our descendants. We belong to our whakapapa, our whānau, our people, and to the land itself. In a whakawhiti kōrero about creative expression, Pounamu (they/them) described how their mahi toi is an acknowledgment of this whakapapa, and our security within it. *“I just really like reimagining my tīpuna and our Atua as people that I would hang out with”* they said, *“and like making them feel like they’re gonna be someone that I would be friends with.”*

Affirmation of our place within the whakapapa into which our lives are woven enables Rangatahi Takatāpui to experience a greater sense of belonging. Co-researchers described how Mana Hapori is enhanced when relational networks that exist beyond the realm of our chosen families are able to offer acceptance and love that is not conditional on our gender or sexuality expressions. Research from the *Honour Project Aotearoa* shows that “being accepted, in particular by whānau, being happy, being grounded are all noted as being at the centre of wellbeing for takatāpui” (Pihama et al., 2020, p. 34).

For a number of Rangatahi Takatāpui, however, the world outside of our trusted circles can be a hostile and unpredictable place. The signals we receive - overtly or otherwise - from assigned family members or from people within our social communities (be that in public, at school, or on the marae) indicate to us how safe it might be if we reveal our Takatāpui identities. Kerekere (2011) acknowledges this in her 2nd Asia Pacific Outgames keynote speech, “we know

that from the research, from our experience in the community, that not all Māori are accepted by their family. We still know of young people being kicked out of their home when they come out.” The harmful impacts of experiences like this was reiterated by participants in the *Honour Project Aotearoa* (Pihama et al., 2020), who talked about “the pain of being separated and the prospect of isolation from whānau” and that “such situations create a deep sense of sorrow and worry” (p. 35).

However, when our broader communities - those to whom we are connected outside of our chosen LGBTQI+ family - demonstrate a commitment to their relationships with us, not in spite of, but with an appreciation for our Takatāpuitanga, our sense of Mana Hapori is strengthened and our wellbeing and safety is enhanced. During the final whakawhiti kōrero of wānanga day one, Te Waimarie recalled one such experience at school, where a teacher reacted with enthusiasm to a piece of work which explored their sexuality, “*my English teacher, she was so cool, she let me submit it for my creative writing and I got an excellence on it... so I was like, hell yeah she gets it, she’s cool.*” The importance of acceptance from our communities was reinforced by Cass when he described the way his whakapapa whānau both implicitly and explicitly embrace his identity. “*From korero that I’ve been passed down, and from my personal experiences, my whānau is accepting and encapsulates and acknowledges my identity as Takatāpui.*” He also described an intergenerational experience which enhanced his feeling of belonging,

“I mean even at home, one of the nannies is like, oh so do you have a girlfriend, and I was like, no, and straight away she was like well do you have a boyfriend, and I was like no, and she was like, well how am I gonna get more mokos?”

Historically, the existence and integration of Takatāpui into daily life was an unremarkable fact of pre-colonial Māori society (Te Awēkotuku, 2005). Nia recalled this fact during our kōrero:

“In Māori society there were clearly Tāne and Wāhine roles, and then there were Takatāpui with their roles in society as well. There’s stories that Takatāpui were the enlightened ones. Some were priests and priestesses, teaching and looking after children. Some hung back with the whānau when the men went out to war, and some were strong enough to go and fight. Takatāpui held something different for knowing both worlds, they had different mindsets. But it’s colonisation that has taken that away.”

Countless Māori researchers and historians have recounted the systematic and violent erasure of homosexuality from Indigenous communities by Christian missionaries and colonial forces (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007a, 2007b; Hamley et al., 2021; Laurence, 2020; Pihama et al., 2020; Te Awekotuku, 2018). Consequently, the imposition of Victorian morals onto Iwi Māori led to the near extinction of intergenerationally transmitted narratives outside of the scope of Christian cisheteronormativity (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007b). In response to this process of erasure, Kerekere (2018) frames the actions of our ancestors as a tikanga of protection. She says:

“When our whānau saw discrimination, and of course the laws and all the things that came with the misogyny, homophobia, transphobia of the colonisers, a lot of our whānau had no problem, and so they just hid it, and just kept quiet about it. And so I often say that sometimes over generations, over decades, over a century, they forgot why they kept it quiet. But I believe it was to protect” (36:00).

The assertion of Takatāpui identities, and therefore the unlearning of colonial narratives, is described by Pihama et al. (2020) as a process of recovery and reclamation (p. 23). The journey itself requires a conscientising effort for not only LGBTQI+ Māori, but for our communities and allies too. The importance of this work was encapsulated by a reflection Cass shared with our group, *“there should be that hope that our Māori world is the accepting space, first and foremost, where we can be realised in our full and truest form.”* To this point, Cee responded with a note of optimism,

“In Parliament, Rawiri Waititi spoke about how the disgusting practices of conversion therapy have no place in Aotearoa. Pounamu and I were talking this morning about how now is the first time we feel truly represented in parliament, and that’s sad, but also, you know, better late than never.”

The kōrero shared by co-researchers during our wānanga exemplifies the ways in which Mana Hapori (belonging), both amongst our peers and within communities has the potential to validate who we are as Takatāpui within the fabric of Te Ao Māori, in turn enhancing our wellbeing. This process enables Takatāpui to focus less on strategies for survival, and more on the power of dreaming, and the possibility for transformation. Cee asserted, *“it’s on us to forge better, stronger futures for our mokopuna.”*

Mana Moemoeā: Vision

E Rongo ana au

Waiporoporo vision, proof of another world true ways of being

Ahead of me, a better land

Whakahokia

Ko tēnei te wā, te wā wāteatanga

Living for those that couldn't

Tūpuna envisioned present, forging futures now

In inevitability

There is infinite freedom

- Excerpts from *Mana Takatāpui*, a poem collaboratively composed by co-researchers of this rangahau (2021).

At the onset of colonisation, Indigenous peoples are forced into a struggle for survival (Smith, 2012, p. 111). The fight is against a system of violent structures that act to reinforce an imperial agenda for power and control. The solution, co-researchers suggest, is an alternative agenda - systems and structures outside of the colonial paradigm. While Indigenous peoples are totally occupied by the urgent and all consuming need for survival, our ability to recover, develop, and thrive is diminished. However, it is our ability to dream which enables Indigenous peoples to move beyond the struggle for survival. Dreaming offers a glimpse into the future, the past, and the possibilities of the present. According to my co-researchers, Mana Moemoeā - the power to dream and to have vision, to see an alternative to the present reality and to act on that vision - is a key expression of Tino Rangatiratanga for Rangatahi Takatāpui.

In one whakawhiti kōrero during our wānanga, co-researchers were asked to reflect on 'creativity as a way to express identity and autonomy as Takatāpui'. Overwhelmingly, responses to this topic were centred on the motivations and mechanics of activism, and the ways in which creativity - in its many manifestations - acts as a conduit, tool, or vessel for Indigenous sovereignty. Here, creativity is understood broadly as ways in which the alternative realities we dream of and have vision for are made manifest. Co-researchers spoke of and regarded creativity as not only traditional and contemporary artistic practices, but also as research, academia,

community organisation and advocacy, political agitation, education, and cultural and spiritual ways of being and doing. Woven throughout the kōrero from each co-researcher was an emphasis on the power of having a vision for change, and how this is contingent upon our ability to dream first, and act second.

Dream First

Laenui (2000) describes dreaming as the paramount component of his phases of decolonisation (p. 4). In his theorising, Laenui expands the definition of dreaming beyond the realm of sleep or of the individual. It encapsulates the ways in which Indigenous Peoples can collectively access worlds of knowledge and understanding alternative to that of the dominant social paradigm. These worlds hold the visions of tūpuna, past, present and future, and contain imaginings from both the conscious and subconscious. Through the process of dreaming we create new realities. Through the process of dreaming we enact Tino Rangatiratanga.

*“Throughout the pain I’ve found,
A plane that, despite all the chaos, it keeps me sane.
It’s where I see my dreams as a reality,
Where I’m living happy,
And I’m living free.”*

Te Waimarie’s poem speaks to the power of dreams to break free of the colonial cishetronormative reality within which we are forced to exist. Their words describe how, through a vision for something different, we might construct a blueprint for a Queer Indigenous reality. Te Waimarie speaks of this alternative as a place of freedom and joy, in contrast to the trauma of the present. Following on from Te Waimarie’s poem, Hannah reflected on how, crucially, a vision for decolonisation needs to be fully actualised, *“I think when we talk about Tino Rangatiratanga, we need to acknowledge that we can’t do it partially.”* Our rōpū discussed how this is currently the case in a political context, whereby a transferral of (limited) responsibility is usually only offered by the Crown to Māori - explicitly or otherwise - on condition of the maintenance of the

existing settler colonial structures. In these scenarios, the relationship remains imbalanced and paternalistic. Maraea described it as “*Indigenous sovereignty within a Pākehā’s perspective... It’s like Indigenous sovereignty on a leash.*” Laenui (2000) proffers that in order to enact change, Indigenous dreaming must be given unlimited time and space. “It must be allowed to run its full course. If the dreaming is cut short by any action plan or program designed to create a remedy meeting the perception of the issue at a premature stage, the result can prove disastrous” (p. 7).

As Tāngata Whenua, our existence as descendants of the Earth Mother is intrinsically tethered to the wellbeing of the land. Ka ora te whenua, ka ora te tangata - when the land is well, the people are well. However, since the onset of unfair land trading between Māori and Pākehā, and the invasion and theft of our ancestral homelands by the Crown as raupatu, or confiscation, throughout the 19th century, the wellbeing of the whenua - and therefore of Māori - has been continually eroded. By one estimate, in the year 2000 Māori held as little as just over 4% of the total land area of the North Island, and by as early as 1865, 99% of the South Island was no longer under Māori custodianship (The Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). Co-researchers spoke about this with pain and anger, while also passionately describing the vision held by Māori for the return and remediation of our lands. This is, perhaps, the most vivid and urgent dream, and one which is long held, collectively, by Māori and Indigenous Peoples universally. Pounamu described how this aspect of Mana Moemoeā resounds for them in one word, “*whakahokia!*” - to give back or return. A dream for Indigenous sovereignty is inseparable from the dream that Indigenous lands are returned to Mana Whenua.

In our whakawhiti kōrero, Nia asked Pounamu about their dream of whakahokia te whenua, “*is that a big mamae for you? The whole land issue?*” Pounamu responded “*yeah I think it is for all of us, it has affected everything.*” In a tone of solemn agreement, Nia replied “*like self determination.*” For Rangatahi Takatāpui, our identity is inherently reflected in the environment around us. Our whakapapa descends from Te Kore, the genderless void, from which the Earth, Papatūānuku, was created. Cee noted this when they said “*our gender, our expression and our understanding of ourselves is fluid and ever changing, like the awa.*” However, if the land is not well, we are not well. Later on in the discussion, Cee shared their whakaaro on a piece of art they

had been sculpting with modelled clay during our kōrero. The object represented their vision of our ancestral lands under the guardianship of Māori. It is a vision of what could be:

“To me, Tino Rangatiratanga means everything. Maunga untouched, our Tūpuna heads not caved in by diggers. And if you imagine that this is sand [pointing to a section of the model], imagine our whānau are here getting pipi and riding their hoiho and running in and running out of the water. Unpolluted waters, safe to swim in. Not having to check fuckin’ safeswim.nz to see if I can go have a kaukau, you know? And if you imagine beneath this, beneath this moana is bountiful kaimoana. Taken and collected for the right reasons, not commercially. Everything following the proper practices of kaitiakitanga.”

Kaitiakitanga, the quality of being a guardian; an act of care and reverence, which, when applied in the context of a human-environment relationship, denotes a position of subservience on the part of the teina - on the part of us. In a western capitalist paradigm, the notion of land-as-resource stands in contrast to the Māori belief in land-as-ancestor. Co-researchers described how it is our responsibility as teina, then, to protect and to respect the environment - the realm of our Atua tūpuna, such as Papatūānuku, Tāne, Rongo, Tangaroa, Hinemoana, and Haumia. The Indigenous cry for land back is long standing, and is a kaupapa much greater than simply the physical return of land, though that is key. Land back means a reassertion of mana over culturally significant and ancestral sites. Pounamu described it as “*a dream for everything back - land, culture, language, tinana - and if you’re not gonna give it back, I’m just gonna take it.*” It is a vision already being achieved by Māori, first as radical dreaming, and second through transformational action.

Act second

Through dreaming, Indigenous peoples that have experienced colonisation create pathways towards alternative realities that exist beyond the confines of oppression. The ability of Māori to envision Tino Rangatiratanga, for, with, and as ourselves is an example of this. As Pounamu said, “*if you’re not gonna give it [the land] back, I’m just gonna take it.*” What is apparent from the kōrero shared by co-researchers throughout our wānanga is that Rangatahi

Takatāupi are taking action right now in order to actualise the dreams of our people for Tino Rangatiratanga. They are not asking, they are acting. Within every example of Mana Moemoeā - the power to dream and to have vision, to see an alternative to the present reality and to act on that vision - shared throughout our whakawhiti kōrero is the belief that creativity is an enabling force in the actualisation of Indigenous dreaming. In short, Rangatahi Takatāpui channel dreams through acts of creation in order to realise self determination.

In a dichotomous struggle between Indigenous sovereignty and colonial oppression, expressions of resistance, defiance, and change to the dominant settler colonial paradigm equate to forms of activism. Co-researchers in our wānanga took time to share and describe their own acts of creativity, and explained how these embody the spirit and force of anti-colonial activism. Hannah is a climate activist and environmental kaitiaki based in the Waikato. Her work with environmental and community organisations in Kirikiriroa is one avenue she uses to enact an Indigenous vision of climate justice. *“Something that’s really important in my life is my activism. I’m a climate activist, that’s really important to me”* she said during a whakawhiti kōrero about creative sovereignty. *“I express my creativity through my activism and you know, being creative in the way that I see our future, and trying to work towards that ... constantly striving to reach a new space, a new potential, a higher potential.”*

Hannah’s vision for the protection and regeneration of Te Taiao is rooted in a collective dream for Tangata Whenua to enact kaitiakitanga over our ancestral lands. Essentially, climate justice is about land back *and* self determination. One can not be achieved without the other. Cass also spoke about the inherent connection Māori have to the land, and our responsibility as guardians to it. He described how through mahi māra, he and his whānau care for the land, and in return how the land cares for them. *“That’s me enacting Tino Rangatiratanga, to ensure that at the end of the day whānau can come home to a warm house and they’re fed. Or anyone who comes in our door”* he said, while showing us a clay model he built of the māra kai at his kainga. Kai sovereignty is an excellent example of the way in which Indigenous dreaming - and its subsequent actions - have the capacity to progress multiple decolonial projects simultaneously.

Beyond the crucial outcome of providing sustenance for whānau and hapori, kai sovereignty gives rise to the possibilities of Indigenous economies, environmental guardianship, the maintenance and proliferation of mātauranga Māori across generations, and opportunities for healing through commune with the land. In the context of L. Smith's (2012) model (Figure 1), the vision which Hannah and Cass express for land back is able to be understood as Transformative, in that it offers an alternative reality to the one currently being constructed and perpetuated by the neo-colonial status quo; Healing, in its essence as an act of reciprocal care between the land and us, its descendants; and Mobilising, in that the vision calls forth a movement for resistance and change, and unites us towards a common goal as a community and as a people.

Some co-researchers spoke specifically about decolonial projects they undertake in order to bring to life a dream for Tino Rangatiratanga as Takatāpui. The decolonisation of both ourselves and the society within which we exist has been identified as a pedagogy of conscientisation (G. H. Smith, 2003). Nia shared her experience of the need for this from a Takatāpui perspective, specifically in the context of whānau and marae. *“Some of my whānau still seem to be in that western ideology of seeing Takatāpui as wrong, so they still don't embrace it. I don't know if that's gonna be another hurdle for us, to educate our own whānau.”*

As Takatāpui we are faced with the dual need for the conscientisation of both non-Māori society, and (as a direct result of missionary and colonising forces) our own whānau. Co-researchers discussed how this type of activism within our own communities can feel more difficult than in society at large because of a fear of rejection and isolation from the relationships we would usually expect to trust. In LGBTQI+ spaces, the effects of racialised homophobia were described by our group as a colonial repercussion. Cass criticised the way that Queer 'safe spaces' often only feel safe upon certain conditions.

“Pakeha spaces, or really spaces where discrimination happens - not that it doesn't happen in other spaces like on our marae - but when it comes to me speaking about myself as Takatāpui, I feel it is in other rainbow spaces where we need to affirm our place or put a pou in the ground.”

Education, or conscientisation, is an urgent project for Takatāpui, then, if we hope to achieve a dream of Tino Rangāriatanga as, by, with, and for Māori.

Another form of educational decolonisation is in the context of research and academia. This thesis is one such example. The pervasive power of a cisheteronormative western hegemony in what is considered by dominant society to be ‘legitimate’ research and thought production, means that Takatāpui do not receive fair representation or advocacy. Cass spoke about how he uses his creative abilities as a writer and researcher to advocate for and execute change within the system. *“I express my identity as Takatāpui within my creativity, I really reflect on my current situation as a post-grad student studying Health Sciences”* he shared, *“through my writing - particularly in regards to positionality - I really draw on my own lived experience as Māori, as Takatāpui, to address the discrimination.”* But Cass’s actions also equate to the transformation of reality for others within that space, a dismantling and reconstructing of sorts. *“I find myself advocating and calling out shit that I see within researching spaces,”* he said in one whakawhiti kōrero. *“I guess creating and articulating my words and drawing on the kupu of our whānau; of the disabled community; of wāhine, to fight, really. That’s how I see myself realising my Takatāpuitanga and realising the aspirations of our Mātua Tūpuna.”*

The fight that Cass describes is an important aspect of Indigenous resistance and liberation. It is not always a physical or literal fight. It occurs on many fields, including in the streets and upon the land as protests and occupations; in the lyrics of music, poetry and writing; in art; in online social media platforms; and in the spaces we create for gathering, sharing, truth telling, and mobilising.

“I’ve got a lot to say. Some of it good, some of it angry, most of it true, and the way that I channel that is through music” Cee shared with our group of co-researchers during a mahi toi workshop. Their band, Hagseed, is an intersectional feminist punx trio based in Tāmaki Makaurau which uses its platform to both call out and criticise institutions of oppression, and amplify Kaupapa Māori and Intersectional movements and issues. Hagseed’s sound is raw and noisy, with a strong element of cathartic release, which compliments the messages promoted in

their lyrics and performance. Cee described their creative process, which also demonstrates their desire to cause discomfort for “*The Man*”.

“So, I play bass and yell sometimes in the band... my creative process is just kind of, whatever I’m mad about I will just turn into some kupu and then listen back and take parts of it that I’m like, ‘Okay, I could turn that into a lyric’ or ‘That would be a powerful thing to say or yell on stage’ ... so that’s one of my creative expressions and outlets.”

For Cee, the subversive quality of lyrical composition enables them to explore what the dominant social paradigm would consider controversial and difficult topics. Using their musical creativity as a vehicle to channel expressions of Indigenous pain - as well as rage - allows audiences to engage in a form of collective catharsis. The interventional quality of creative expression is immense. Alongside the aesthetic and creative qualities of Hagseed and Cee’s work, there is a highly critical social commentary. It is, in itself, a potent form of conscientisation. This is true also for other Rangathi Takatāpui creatives, who utilise their platforms to disrupt mainstream beliefs with decolonial dreams and actions.

Maraea uses TikTok and Instagram as a space to stimulate political discourse in a similar vein to Cee’s music. The autonomous potentiality of Te Ao Matihiko - the digital world - means that Rangatahi Takatāpui are able to find a community and a voice with which to explore radical notions of Tino Rangatiratanga that might otherwise, in the physical world, be ignored, isolated, or labelled as aggressive by a Eurocentric colonial worldview. Maraea understands their activism, however, as a form of creative expression, rather than violent revolution. “*My main points of creativity would be my activism on TikTok.*” An example of this is the way in which Maraea entwines their decolonial messages, which in a very real way are educating and conscientising participants, with their aesthetic and humorous sensibilities. “*Another big part of my creativity and expression is my makeup, as you can see,*” Marae shared.

One aspect of their online activism is the generation of dialogue amongst audience members regarding shared Indigenous commune with the land. “*Having a relationship with the land, and being connected to the land is one of the most important things to Indigenous peoples.... we know if we look after the land, the land will look after us.*” Their voice and message is direct and clear, creating a counter narrative to that of most young Pākehā content

creators. In addition to this is the power of Maraea’s activism to create interventions in the aesthetic and cis-heteronormative norms of an otherwise standardised Eurocentric space. By simply existing and taking up space with their content enables Marae to centre a Queer racialised aesthetic that is not considered mainstream by the western gaze. By existing and speaking *as* and *with* Indigenous youth - and specifically Rangatahi Takatāpui - Maraea activates the potential to dream, to be, and to act as an interconnected digital community.

We see this also in the creative practice of Pounamu, who adopts a visual language in order to disrupt the social status quo and generate critical discourse. Their mahi toi acts to re-centre an indigenous perspective and voice in both digital and physical landscapes. They describe their work as *“trying to break down a narrative. We still have the ‘dusky maiden’ type stuff, and so I want to depict predominantly rangatahi Māori, that are femme and queer in the ways that they actually look and in the ways that I’ve seen them.”* The reach of Pounamu’s art online means that it has affected tangible change in the representation of Māori and LGBTQI+ peoples. Their illustrations have been featured across a range of media outlets in Aotearoa, and centre the experiences and relationships of Rangatahi Takatāpui. This is translated into Te Ao Kikokiko through their large-scale public murals across Kirikiriroa. Here, Pounamu has physically altered the built environment - which is an intrinsically oppressive space from many minority communities due to the ableist, capitalist, patriarchal, colonial design it prioritises. Pounamu’s murals celebrate fat, queer, femme bodies, confronting viewers publically with a perspective which is otherwise excluded in our urban streetscapes. In doing so, Pounamu disrupts not only the narratives and aesthetics of mainstream art, but also of the tangible world we occupy.

The examples shared by co-researchers in our wānanga bring to life the way in which Rangatahi Takatāpui are actively pursuing the dismantling of what is considered ‘normal’. By adopting a multifaceted approach to conscientisation both online and in-life, subversive interventions such as music, social media content, digital art, and street murals work to bring to life a reality that exists within the dreams and visions of our whānau Takatāpui.

Mana Wero: Challenges

You withheld my freedom from me, punished me for reaching out...

Who am I?

Am I not enough?

Is my skin and bones not enough?

Will you miss me If you don't know me?

What does it matter?

Who am I?

- Excerpts from *Mana Takatāpui*, a poem collaboratively composed by co-researchers of this rangahau (2021).

The stanza above asks “Who am I?” It invokes a return to the question we began with at the start of this thematic chapter. Through re-reading, reflecting on, and writing about the words of my co-researchers I realised that revisiting this question is important. Not necessarily because it has been left unanswered, but because there is another aspect of this question that features very strongly throughout our wānanga, and which I have not yet acknowledged in a meaningful way in my writing. I initially gave this theme the tentative heading ‘Mana Mamae - Trauma’ knowing intuitively that it did not feel ‘right’, or honour the spirit of the thoughts and stories it gave title to.

Trauma is an experience, not an identity. Co-researchers in this rangahau also invariably described it, ultimately, as the result of other people's actions and beliefs. Importantly, the word trauma does not fit with the transformative potentiality of our three other themes. Unlike identity, belonging, and vision, trauma is not something inherent in us as Takatāpui, nor is it something we seek as a community in order to achieve Tino Rangatiratanga. However, ‘Mana Mamae - Trauma’ was a working title - one I knew I would come back to and revise. Resultantly, ‘Mana Wero - Challenges’ is where I have landed with the title of this theme, after speaking to some of my co-researchers and considering their astute advice around the connotations and limitations of the original heading.

I have also positioned this theme after the first three on purpose, as it stands somewhat distinct in its nature. I also did not want to position it first, for strengths-led and mana-enhancing reasons. The intention of including this theme at all is to acknowledge the full spectrum of experiences we have as Takatāpui. As such, it is important to give voice to the reality of our lives and to highlight the challenges we continue to face as a marginalised community. Here is a presentation, albeit brief, of some of the barriers and obstacles we face as LGBTQI+ Māori, and how these challenges have affected our wellbeing. In spite of this, Rangatahi Takatāpui continue to aspire to and achieve self-determination on personal, collective, spiritual, creative, intellectual and intergenerational levels, many of which have already been discussed across the three previous themes.

In a general sense, the challenges co-researchers described in our wānanga and through their artistic creations tended to reside in one of two broad categories. Challenges from *within* our relationships and communities, and challenges from *without* - that is, outside of the close bonds we already regard as trusted, safe, intimate or integral to an authentic sense of self (for example, strangers on the street, hostile work or educational environments, or religious institutions that express derogatory or harmful rhetoric). The framing of challenges faced by Rangatahi Takatāpui as from *within* and from *without* should also be considered in conversation with the notion of belonging addressed in my description of the theme ‘Mana Tuakiri - Belonging’. Obstacles presented from *within* our relationships and communities can be understood as those Rangatahi Takatāpui face within the distinctions described by Pihama et al. as both “whakapapa whānau” and “kauapapa whānau” (2020, p. 89). Challenges from *without*, therefore, can be categorised as ones presented outside of those covered by the aforementioned definition, and also tend to be a product of systemic and institutional constructs, rather than interpersonal relationships.

Challenges from Within

An important aspect of the challenges co-researchers described from within relationships and spaces of trust is that they were often not perceived as insurmountable. In our whakawhiti

kōrero, there was a recognition that the obstacles faced by Rangatahi Takatāpui in contexts such as whānau, the marae, and close social groups were often worth working through and transforming in order to restore a mutually beneficial relationship. In other words, they were worth ‘fighting for’. This was brought to light on the second day of our wānanga during a kōrero which centred on the kaupapa ‘experiences and narratives as members of the Takatāpui community’. Primarily, co-researchers expressed a deep, and oftentimes altruistic, empathy for those who presented such challenges.

Nia shared a challenging experience of acceptance on her marae,

“Takatāpui isn’t really rejected - my family have a lot of Takatāpui - but it’s as if you are not gonna be *as* Māori, or *as* whānau as the rest of them. You’re like second class in your own whānau... my whānau still seem to be in that western ideology of seeing Takatāpui as morally wrong, so they just don’t embrace it.”

Despite this experience of isolation and erasure, Nia expressed a desire not to give up on her whānau, “*and you still want to include them, even if they just won’t budge.*” This commitment to whānau in the face of an obstacle as immense as potentially unreciprocated acceptance and unconditional love was reiterated by Cass. He acknowledged that even though in his personal experience the whānau is a welcoming place to belong as Takatāpui, not all rangatahi are afforded that safety or approval. Cass shared, “*my experience with my whānau is accepting and encapsulates and acknowledges my identity as Takatāpui*” noting, however, that “*discrimination does still happen in other paces, like on some marae.*” His hope for the dismantling and transformation of colonised cis-heteronormative views held by our own whānau is unrelenting. He demonstrates how the challenges we face as Rangatahi Takatāpui from within are bound to a sense of potential to whakatika, holding fast to a belief in our whānau, hapū, and iwi to re-Indigenise what it means to be queer and Māori; that it is in fact Māori to be queer. “*There should be that hope that our Māori world is the accepting space, first and foremost, where we can be realised in our full and truest form.*”

Another form of wero expressed by co-researchers are those faced by Rangatahi Takatāpui within the broader LGBTQI+ community. Those who exist at the centre of intersecting identities experience oppression more acutely than those who do not (Pihama et al., 2020). Put in

another way, Rangatahi Takatāpui are vulnerable to not only the scrutiny, discrimination, and violence of being queer, but also potentially of being visibly Māori, colonised, young, gender non-conforming, trans, poor, disabled, and any number of other compounding layers of oppression. One co-researcher privately expressed an experience they had with a previous romantic partner which exemplifies this reality. They did not wish to be named in this instance, but felt it was important to testify to the racism they faced in an intimate relationship, describing their Pākehā partner as “*dismissive of my identity as Takatāpui, assuming that their experience of being Queer was the same as mine. It was like they didn't want to accept that they have privilege as a white person in the Queer community.*” This experience was reiterated by Cee during a kōrero that was had shortly after morning tea on day two of our wānanga. They expressed a sentiment vehemently shared by co-researchers, who confirmed Cee's observations.

“I find it really frustrating in Queer spaces that are predominantly Pākehā... I feel like a lot of Pākehā and white Queers in general, because of the fact that in their world they are looked down on, its almost like this unspoken thing of being like, I definitely and completely understand [what it's like to be Takatāpui] because I am a gay, and its like, that's not the same. Imagine being gay and then also colonised!”

A feeling of frustration over false equivalence and cultural misunderstanding within the LGBTQI+ community was further recognised by Cass, who explained how “*in Pakeha spaces, or really spaces where discrimination happens... when it comes to me speaking about myself as Takatāpui, I feel it is in other rainbow spaces where we need to affirm our space or put a pou in the ground.*” The obstacle for Rangatahi Takatāpui is particularly painful in this instance because as Queer people our activism and resultant gains are most often led by - and equally, experiences of violence and trauma are directed towards - Indigenous, racialised, and Trans members of our community. In other words, those who experience the greatest intersection of identities, and therefore oppression, are also those being affected most acutely by lateral violence within the LGBTQI+ community.

Challenges from Without

What makes challenges from *without* distinct from those from *within* is that they exist outside of the realm of whānau, in its broadest sense. If challenges from *within* are framed as those which Rangatahi Takatāpui perceive as important to transform in order to enhance and mutually benefit those involved, then challenges from *without* can be understood as those that are worth overcoming in order to remove barriers for Rangatahi Takatāpui to enact Tino Rangatiratanga. Importantly, in both cases the wero is perceived as not insurmountable. The structural nature of challenges from *without* means that co-researcher described them in less relational terms, rather speaking about them more frequently as systemic issues that need to be overcome at a societal level. Challenges that were discussed include specific institutional shortcomings, such as a lack of safety within schools, workplaces, and religions, as well as threats experienced more generally in the public sphere, where co-researchers recounted instances of social exclusion, hostility, and outright abuse.

During our whakawhiti kōrero, a number of co-researchers described how, as an institution, schools are overwhelmingly a hostile environment for Rangatahi Takatāpui. Hannah described an acute feeling of anxious self-awareness at school, associated with and intensified by a toxic culture of homophobia and racism perpetuated by both students and staff. *“There starts to be this self-consciousness that you absorb throughout your life, and that’s why high school can be so awful because you feel so awkward and self-conscious and aware of yourself all of the time.”* Te Waimarie agreed that school could be a threatening place, physically and emotionally, but also described how instances of relational safety with particular teachers or students could create small ruptures in that otherwise exclusionary environment, *“my English teacher, she was so cool... I was like, ‘Hell yeah she gets it’.”* During our kōrero, I also shared my own experiences of homophobia at school, which involved being called slurs and physically assaulted on a regular, almost daily, basis. However, because I am white - and therefore am afforded immense social privilege - and also not perceived by most people as Māori, I often witnessed racism (as both a student and a secondary school teacher) in spaces where perpetrators thought they were free to express racist and derogatory views in the absence of any visibly Māori people. This was an experience called into consciousness by Nia, who talked about the inability to escape the intersections of racism, misogyny, transphobia and homophobia as a racialised Takatāpui person. Speaking about her lived experience, Nia shared that:

“When you are in the world, you are not afforded the same kind of opportunities as other people... growing up people would be like ‘why are you guys picking watercress?’ That’s just us, that’s our Māoriness. But then you go to school and you’ve got, you know, boil-up for lunch and they’re like ‘ew’.”

For Nia, something as uncontentious as completing a mundane task like harvesting watercress or eating lunch at school is an othering experience as a Takatāpui person existing in a society socialised to a western worldview. She described the challenge thus:

“In all the universes I live in, there isn’t common respect for me as a human being. Walking down the street, I get yelled at from a car when I walk down the street. I’m a point of difference in the community just by looking different, acting differently, sounding different. you are not respected in your whole being and that’s really sad.”

Like school, the workplace can be a minefield of challenges from *without*. In fact, entering the workforce in the first instance can be an immense challenge for Rangatahi Takatāpui. Nia spoke about the “*lack of opportunities for work and income*” experienced by our whānau Takatāpui, and even once this obstacle is overcome, co-researchers described inhospitable workplaces which seemed to overlook discriminatory behaviour. Speaking about workplace efforts to enhance staff wellbeing, Hannah said that “*in one of my workplaces, never has anyone mentioned the Rainbow community and their wellbeing - my wellbeing - and those sorts of things. Never mind, Takatāpui!*” while Nia described an example of bullying, “*This one lady called me a taka - a tucker - when I was at work. She was like, you’re just a taka and I was like, what did you call me?*” Without safe and equitable work opportunities and environments, Rangatahi Takatāpui are forced to navigate obstacles never experienced, and perhaps even unimaginable to most cis-heterosexual Pākehā, all while attempting to earn a living. This wero is not only a matter of financial security or workplace safety - though those things are incredibly important - but is, at its core, a matter of self determination, or a lack thereof. While Takatāpui are forced to confront the reality of discrimination at work, those who are exempt from such challenges are afforded the freedom to exist without personal scrutiny, and therefore can focus on the task at hand.

Co-researchers also specifically described the challenges they faced from religious organisations, communities, or values. This is a complex aspect of challenges from *without*, as for many people religion provides a sense of security and identity that feels compatible with the parameters described for challenges from *within*. However, religion is, at a social and structural level, an institution, and therefore is considered within the context of other such organisations. While there is individual and communal relationality within religions, these instances can be considered as distinct from my consideration here of religion as a larger socio-structural phenomenon. It is also worth noting that the experiences described by co-researchers all relate to Christianity, and thus I am only able to outline challenges discussed from within this particular religious context. During a whakawhiti kōrero that centred on the nature of community and belonging, Te Waimarie spoke about how amongst friends, they noticed that “*there is a lot of religious trauma around Queer identities and Queer people.*” Because of this, they have become attuned to a need for awareness and sensitivity in creating safe, decolonised Queer spaces.

“In our queer spaces that we hold, when we do a karakia for example, we just make sure it’s not religion based. We really have to be quite cautious of that [religious trauma] and what we include when decolonising our spaces, making sure it’s still accepting of as many people as we can, but as safe as possible.”

The pervasive nature of Christian values amongst whānau Māori was also discussed, highlighting how in many instances our community might not be aware of what Nia described as “*westernised Māori standards*”, or in other words, colonised metrics of understanding the world. For Rangatahi Takatāpui, this can be a hostile and uncomfortable - sometimes even dangerous - environment to grow up in. Nia spoke about her whānau and their religious family values:

Yeah, we are a religious family. God is all about passiveness, so you know, they [family] will judge you, but they won’t fight you or kill you about it. They will judge you on the fact that you are different, but the explanations that you have - they don’t respect that. They think you are literally forcing yourself, who you are, on them, and that’s probably western culture... you know, being gay is wrong, and all that kind of stuff.

As noted in the Whakapapa Kōrero chapter of this thesis, another major challenge faced by many Rangatahi Takatāpui is the inhumane practice of ‘conversion therapy’ perpetrated by some churches. Co-researchers shared their personal stories of abuse from within religious

environments, oftentimes describing them as something they felt at the time was either ‘normal’ or that they ‘deserved’, but have since recognised for what it was. Because of the sensitive nature of the kōrero co-researchers had, and the ongoing process of recovery faced by survivors, no specific details of the conversation will be included in this thesis. The testimonies offered by co-researchers were given in trust and under the protection of our wānanga, and as such they will remain private. Below, however, is an excerpt from a poem composed by our co-researcher Mo (they/she), which speaks to the heart of both the mamae and the hope embodied by Rangatahi Takatāpui in the face of this particular wero.

*I am as I sit, still a Noble Savage
 But as they force Christ down our throats and men in our beds
 We sang we fought we lived
 Karanga echoes through our blood
 River flowing
 And as I cry, it's shared
 As I bleed, it's returned
 As karakia that flows through the land
 A connection to my whakapapa
 Through the whenua that was ripped from under our feet.
 My existence
 The proof we survived
 We the Noble Savages still breathe.*

Though these are but a few examples of the challenges faced by Rangatahi Takatāpui, they exemplify the nature of our lived experiences. Trauma is not a defining aspect of Takatāpui identity, but it is disproportionately endured by LGBTQI+ Māori, and as such shapes the way we exist in the world and the way we perceive ourselves and others. Both challenges from *within* and *without* were described by co-researchers as worth overcoming, for their potential to learn from and improve the lives of Rangatahi Takatāpui, and in order to actualise Tino Rangatiratanga for Māori collectively. The way in which these challenges are understood by co-researchers - of the Mana which can come from the Wero - means that there is always a hope for something

better, something transformational. It is this circumspect optimism which guides the aspirations of Rangatahi Takatāpui. That while we may carry a shadow of what has been with us always, we face the light of the sun, not in ignorance or denial, but so that our faces may be bathed in the warmth of potentiality.

Hurihia tō aroaro ki te rā tukuna tō ātārangi kia taka ki muri ki a koe
Turn your face to the sun and the shadows fall behind you

Chapter 4

He Whakaaro Takarangi || Discussion In Spirality

He aha te kai a te Rangatira? He kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero!

What is the food of the leader? It is knowledge, it is communication!

The motivation for this research is a need to better understand what factors enable Rangatahi Takatāpui to express Tino Rangatiratanga. Importantly, Kaupapa Māori research must also demonstrate “the potential to positively make a difference – to move indigenous people to a better existence” (G. H. Smith, 2003, p. 5). For that reason, a key aspiration of this rangahau is to provide practical insight about how best to enable our community to not only survive, but to thrive. Through the methods of wānanga, kōrero, and mahi toi, co-researchers have been able to achieve G. H. Smith’s criteria by describing some of the conditions which enable LGBTQI+ Māori to embody, express, and live Tino Rangatiratanga, such as a health sense of identity, belonging, and hope for the future. These enabling factors were found to be intuitive and broadly applicable, providing pathways towards self-determination not only for Rangatahi Takatāpui, but for our wider whānau, hapū, and iwi.

In the last chapter, four main themes were presented as findings from this research: Mana Tuakiri, Mana Hapori, Mana Moemoeā, and Mana Wero. Within each of these themes a duality emerged, providing two aspects apiece. It is crucial to note that this duality is not a mutually exclusive binary. Instead, it is a duality which layers two connected but distinct ways of understanding each of the four themes. For ‘Mana Tuakiri: Identity’, both an innate sense of oneself and a collective notion of what it means to exist within an infinite whakapapa shows how, for Rangatahi Takatāpui, what it means to be ‘me’ is inherently connected to what it means to be ‘us’ - ko au ko tātou, ko tātou ko au. The theme ‘Mana Hapori: Belonging’ utilises a notion of “kaupapa whānau” and “whakapapa whānau” as described by Pihama et al. (2020, p. 89) to distinguish the nature of how co-researchers perceive and experience a sense of belonging both amongst peers (kaupapa) and within communities (whakapapa). In the third theme, ‘Mana Moemoeā: Vision’, an ability to dream, to plan, and to see potential for transformational social

change is described as a decolonial project in and of itself. It fundamentally precedes the second aspect of this theme, which is to act. In the many forms of action co-researchers describe, the dreams of Indigenous peoples are expressed and enacted as portals to alternative, decolonial realities. The final theme described in the previous chapter takes a slightly different form from those before it. ‘Mana Wero: Challenges’ speaks to the obstacles faced by Rangatahi Takatāpui, and the ways in which these experiences shape how we move through the world. Co-researchers reflect on two primary forms of challenge, those from within (interpersonal) and those from without (structural). While these challenges represent a painful reality faced by many Queer Indigenous peoples, they also reveal an innate desire from co-researchers to both whakatika and whakamana the difficult spaces and relationships Rangatahi Takatāpui encounter within their lives.

Figure 4. *Te Takarangi*

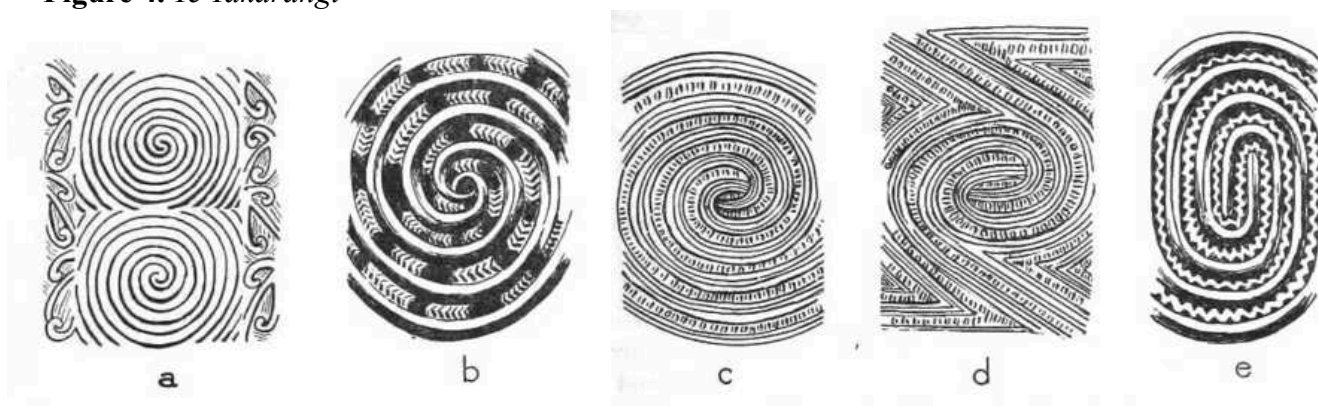


Fig. 92. Double spirals, after Anaha.
a, pīkorauru; b, takarangi; c, rauru; d, maui; e, whakaironui.

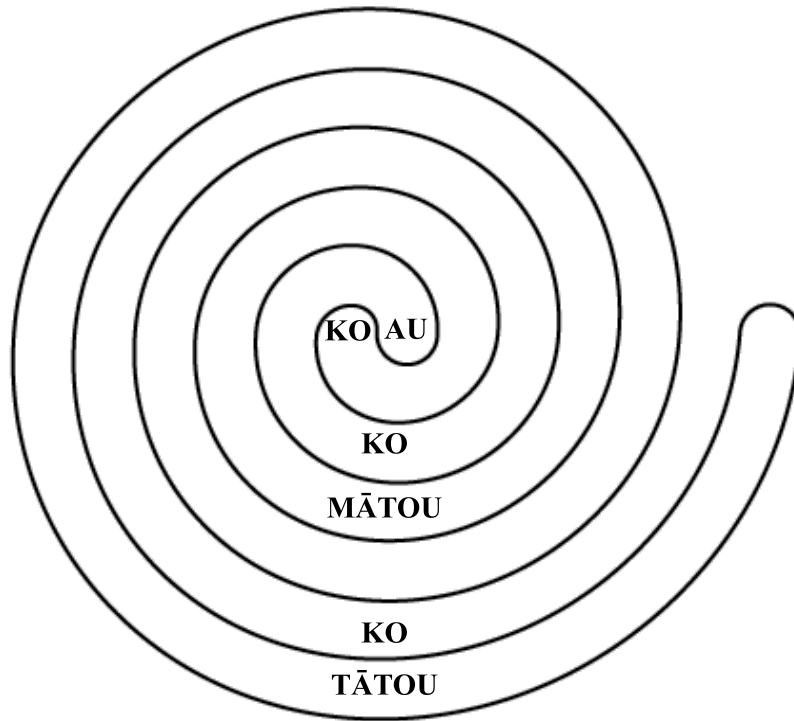
Note. From *The Coming of the Māori* (p. 315), by Te Rangi Hīroa, 1949, Whitcombe and Tombs.

In this chapter, I have conceptualised the conventions of a thesis discussion as *He Whakaaro Takarangi* - the intersecting convolutions of both existing knowledge and the ideas presented in this rangahau. By drawing on both literature from the Whakapapa Kōrero (Chapter 1) and findings from the Pūrākau Whakaaro (Chapter 3) to make sense of these ideas, the shape and nature of self-determination for Rangatahi Takatāpui, as described by co-researchers, starts

to take shape. Te Takarangi - or the double spiral pattern - is an important and common emblem in Te Ao Māori, not only in art but in concept too (Figure 4). Te Rangi Hīroa - Sir Peter Buck (Ngāti Mutunga) - described Te Takarangi as “the peak of Māori curvilinear motifs” (Buck, 1949, p. 315). It is often adopted in whakairo (for example on pare, maihi, pou, and waka taua) and in tā moko (especially in mataora and pūhoro) as a symbol of creation, whakapapa, knowledge, and the connection between Te Ao Wairua and Te Ao Mārama (Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi, 2020). In the context of a thesis discussion, Te Takarangi helps to demonstrate how knowledge and ideas are not linear or isolated, but rather can be understood as interconnected and relational. The double spiral also provides a visual aid through which themes can be considered within an infinite cycle of inward and outward motion. As a model for this discussion (Figure 5) the centre of the motif becomes a representation of *oneself*, ‘Ko Au’, which in this case is the Rangatahi Takatāpui. Spiralling outwards from the centre allows the discussion to move into a space defined as ‘Ko Mātou’ - meaning *us*; the chosen community we belong to as Rangatahi Takatāpui. At the outer edge of the double spiral we have moved through the greatest number of convolutions, culminating in a realm titled ‘Ko Tātou’. That is, *everyone*; as a society, as a people, and as a total.

It is useful also to return to L. Smith’s (2012) model referred to earlier in this thesis (Chapter 2, Figure 1), the Indigenous Research Agenda (p. 121). I proffer that it, along with the Phases of Decolonisation presented by Laenui (2000) (Table 3), provides fertile supplementary layers within which the convolutions of He Whakaaro Takarangi can interact. Furthermore, the terms adopted by L. Smith and Laenui enable this discussion to find common ground (and language) within the whakapapa of decolonial Indigenous projects. Below, we start He Whakaaro Takarangi at its centre: ‘Ko Au’. This is not because the self is somehow supreme or better suited as a place to begin - there is no beginning or end to Te Takarangi - but so as to acknowledge the importance of reflexivity in the process of conscientisation (G. H. Smith, 2003). It also aligns with the fact that in Chapter 3 the first theme described - Mana Tuakiri: Identity - holds close association with the self, both as an innate and a shared phenomenon.

Figure 5. *He Whakaaro Takarangi Discussion Model*



Note. Each of the three realms, or sections, of this model provides a lens through which the four themes presented in this research can be viewed, including the aspects of their dualities.

Ko Au: Oneself

How Rangatahi Takatāpui define ourselves, our identity, our sense of belonging, our aspirations, and our experiences is central to our expressions of Tino Rangatiratanga. The findings of this rangahau have clearly presented that a healthy and secure sense of identity is not only important in terms of the ability it provides Queer Māori youth to define oneself, but also so that we may define our position within the fabric of our collective identity as Māori.

When discussing Takatāpuitanga, co-researchers expressed an awareness of the inherent mana that enables them to stand proudly in their identity. The power of this intrinsic belief is essential to the ability of Rangatahi to resist the pressures of cisheteronormative society to either

conform or disappear. The oppressive powers of colonisation have long sought to erase queerness from Indigenous cultures, regarding it as hedonistic and uncivilised due to the alternative it provides to the hegemony of a Christian patriarchal nuclear family structure (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007b; Kerekere, 2017; Mikaere, 2019; Pihama, 2019; L. Smith, 2012; Te Awekotuku, 2018). It is therefore an act of incredible decolonial resistance for Rangatahi Takatāpui to assert Mana Tuakiri, and one which aligns with the aspirations of L. Smith's (2012) Indigenous Projects to claim and revitalise cultural ways of being, not only outwardly, but also from within. Part of the effort to re-Indigenise our sexual and gender identities must include a process of conscientisation, which G. H. Smith (2003) suggests is critical to the successful assertion of Tino Rangatiratanga. Without addressing the anti-Indigenous structures of colonisation that have been internalised intergenerationally, attempts to dismantle external systems of oppression will be fraught and ultimately futile. We can not address the issues of Settler Colonialism with 'solutions' generated by or solely from within the system itself, "decolonisation cannot occur within the systems and institutions which colonisation has established" (Jackson, 2020).

The importance of understanding our existence and identity as a valid aspect of Te Ao Māori is also intrinsic to the Indigenisation of Māori sexualities and genders. Te Awekotuku (2018) asserts that Takatāpui have been a fact of Māori social fabric "mai rā anō" - forever (28:30). This existence, however, has faced a process of both erasure (as a result of the colonial agenda) and dormancy (as a means of protection by whānau Māori), meaning that generationally our stories and knowledge of Takatāpuitanga has become more difficult to access. As Kerekere (2018) states,

"a lot of our whānau had no problem, and so they just hid it, and just kept quiet about it. And so I often say that sometimes over generations, over decades, over a century, they forgot why they kept it quiet. But I believe it was to protect" (36:00).

Precolonial Māori sexualities and genders are not lost however. Through a process of narrative and knowledge reclamation an unbroken whakapapa of Takatāpui identities is evident. The power of this whakapapa is immense, providing Rangatahi Takatāpui a place to stand with the knowledge that theirs is an identity planted securely in the expansive embrace of our past, present and future as Māori.

With an inherent belief in oneself as a source of mana, and with the affirmative knowledge that comes with being secure in the whakapapa of Māori society since before European contact, Rangatahi Takatāpui are also afforded space to dream. According to the Phases of Decolonisation presented by Laenui (2000), the act of Indigenous dreaming is the ultimate in efforts to dismantle the structures of oppression natural to a colonial reality. Dreams are not considered here as the act of an individual, but that of the collective. It is a liminal space of potentiality, unrestricted by the realities of the world around us. For this reason, when Indigenous peoples dream, we are free to recreate the world beyond the limitations of a system constructed with the intention to subdue Tangata Whenua. In order to access the capacity to dream freely, a secure sense of identity is highly advantageous. This is not from an ego-centric or individualistic perspective, but from the perspective that dreaming, as an Indigenous act, is relational, and thus those engaging in it are best situated to engage - or colloquially 'turn up' - from a position which honours their authentic and unencumbered Mana Tuakiri.

Ko Mātou: Us

Spiralling outward from the centre of He Whakaaro Takarangi (Figure 5), and through a journey of deepening understanding layered cumulatively through each rotation of the double spiral, we enter a realm of the model titled 'Ko Mātou'. As stated earlier, it is imperative that this section is not treated as separate to or isolated from those that come before or after it. The model is circular and unending, and as such the realms within it are closely connected and informed by one another. It is with this understanding that 'Ko Mātou: Us' should be considered as a reciprocal and expansive pathway both to and from 'Ko Au: Oneself'.

With an awareness of the mana that is inherent in oneself as Rangatahi Takatāpui, comes a greater realisation of the position and potentiality of our place within the wider community to which we belong, and to which we whakapapa. As individuals, we are empowered through a secure inner sense of self. This is, however, a symbiotic phenomenon that relies on the relational nature of our collective identity as Takatāpui. Collectively, LGBTQI+ Māori find security and

belonging in the company of those we consider as chosen family, or kaupapa whānau (Pihama et al., 2020). In recognising ourselves in those around us, and in finding a community to regard as whānau, Rangatahi Takatāpui are empowered to challenge cis-heteronormative colonial structures which seek to undermine disempowered Indigenous individuals, but are less powerful against the many. As Burgess et al. (2021) suggests, by knowing our place within such a whakapapa, we are able to better understand ourselves, and how we fit into the cosmos. This sense of interdependence and belonging is exemplified by what is described in this research as Mana Hapori. When Rangatahi Takatāpui show up for themselves they are able to show up for others, be that through community building, activism, creativity, or decolonial projects, all of which are expressions of Tino Rangatiratanga. It is, therefore, a mutually beneficial and simultaneous process, both for *oneself* and for *us*, the collective.

The power of Mana Hapori is in what co-researchers describe as the ability to “just be” while in the safety and comfort of those we share values, beliefs, and ultimately identities with. This ability to exist without the anxiety and pressures of societal norms provides a respite which Rangatahi Takatāpui need in order to experience a regenerative state of calm which is otherwise hard to access while navigating the cis-heteronormative standards of a settler colonial social reality. It is apparent that these spaces and experiences of communality must be actively created and maintained as a necessary tool of decolonial sovereignty. Such a project would embody the Kaupapa Māori principles of Whānau, Ako Māori, Āta, Taonga Tuku Iho, and ultimately Tino Rangatiratanga, and align with the indigenising aspirations L. Smith (2012) lays out to mobilise, heal, decolonise, and transform the realities of Rangatahi Takatāpui.

It is well known that LGBTQI+ people disproportionately experience social rejection and acts of violence, a reality Māori are not immune to (Mikaere, 2017; Wilcox, 2020). By finding a network of “kaupapa whānau” (Pihama et al., 2020, p. 89), it becomes possible to experience the benefits associated with a secure place of acceptance that is usually expected, but sometimes not experienced, from our “whakapapa whānau”, or assigned family (Pihama et al., 2020; Kerekere, 2018). Access to these relationships is imperative for the actualisation of Mana Hapori - belonging - for Rangatahi Takatāpui.

Along with a desire for belonging amongst peers, this research illustrates a need for intersectional criticality within the LGBTQI+ community. Due to the mechanisms of colonisation, which are bound to the objectives of patriarchal, capitalist, and missionising agenda, compounding privileges exist within the Queer community which act to reinforce the inequitable distribution of power and resources away from minorities, and towards those within the LGBTQI+ umbrella who are afforded existing privileges. For this reason, there is an urgent need to recenter the voices and experiences of Indigenous Peoples (as well as other minority rainbow groups) within the discourse of LGBTQI+ justice.

L. Smith (2012) talks about the othering that occurs for people who exist at the margins of our already marginalised communities, be that via racialisation, gender, or sexuality. The same is true within the Queer community. One example brought to light in this research is the inaccessibility, both literally and perceived, of many LGBTQI+ events and opportunities in Aotearoa. Co-researchers described experiences of gate-keeping, exclusion, cultural unsafety, tokenism, and ignorance at Rainbow events which do not seek to engage in a meaningful relationship with Māori, resulting in ostracising experiences for Rangatahi Takatāpui. As such, there is a clear need for greater intersectionality in the planning, organisation, and execution of ‘community events’, and a commitment from non-Māori allies within the LGBTQI+ community to engage in a meaningful commitment to Kaupapa Māori and Te Tiriti partnership principles. Furthermore, those with power and privilege have a responsibility to ensure resources must be available to Māori to create spaces for community kaupapa that are, at every level, for, with, and by Tangata Whenua and Takatāpui.

He Whakaaro Takarangi positions ‘Ko Mātou’ as ‘Us’: the chosen collective that make up our community. The composition of ‘Us’, however, is eclectic and broad, allowing for diversity and fluidity within the weave of our protective cloak. Takatāpui is, after all, an expansive and inclusive term (Kerekere, 2018). This principle should also be applied to members of the community from diverse geographic loci. Further to the socially exclusionary reality of many ‘mainstream community events’ for Rangatahi Takatāpui, those members of our kaupapa whānau who reside regionally often face a dearth of opportunities to connect and participate ā-tinana due to the largely urban focus of Queer-centric, and even Takatāpui-centric, events.

There is an urgent need, then, to mobilise resources for Takatāpui who are geographically isolated from opportunities to connect, resisting the urge to cater to a specifically urban population of the community based on sheer size, rather than on potential need. Efforts must remain focused at all times on the primacy of Indigenous sovereignty in its collectivist essence.

Tino Rangatiratanga is not an individualistic notion, it is a belief in the right of Māori to be self-determining, not only in practical terms, but in a holistic way which recognises our oneness with each other and the universe. In a political sense, Jackson (2020) describes its form as “recognising the interdependence of relationships, while preserving the independence of each iwi and hapū”. It must not, therefore, be used as a tool to perpetuate a narrative of self-interest. When space is created for Takatāpui it needs to be accessible to all by means of resourcing, frequency, and distribution of opportunity. Resultantly, through symbiosis, the ability to connect, participate, and enjoy the safety of collective Takatāpuitanga - Ko Mātou - enhances the esteem and security Rangatahi seek from within - Ko Au. We are connected and reliant on each other in our aspirations for Tino Rangatiratanga, not least with our chosen community.

Ko Tātou: Everyone

Ka haere tonu te huri! Spiralling further through the multidirectional helix of He Whakaaro Takarangi, the aggregate realms of concentric volutions feed into and out from one another, ‘Ko Au’ to ‘Ko Mātou’, and back. ‘Ko Mātou’ to ‘Ko Tātou’, and back. Each layer of this discussion amasses a new lens through which to make meaning of the findings. Ka haere tonu te huri!

The reciprocal relationship between an innate sense of oneself - Mana Tuakiri - and a collective sense of belonging amongst peers - Mana Hapori - acts to mutually enhance the resilience of both. The strength of this interconnection is fundamental to the aspirations of Rangatahi Takatāpui to embody and enact Tino Rangatiratanga in society at large, that is, beyond the relative comfort and safety of our chosen communities: ‘Ko Tātou’. Acceptance by cis-heteronormative society, however, is not essential to the validity of Takatāpui identities, nor

is it a primary goal of Kaupapa Māori praxis (G. H. Smith, 1997, 2003). In fact, acceptance by hegemonic power does not enable fundamental change, usually it is a mere offer of tolerance upon condition of subordination or assimilation (Jackson, 2020). It does, however, serve as a point of progress in the course of self-determination described by co-researchers; not necessarily an end-goal, but a movement in the right direction. The reality is that, ultimately, social change to embrace a decolonised notion of gender, sex, and sexuality is in fact mutually beneficial (Kiddle, 2020). Not only will it deconstruct oppressive beliefs about Takatāpui, but it will liberate cisgendered and heterosexual people - both Māori and non-Māori alike - from reductive and strictly enforced expectations of how to act and exist in the world. These beliefs currently limit all people's creative expressions of identity and reinforce harmful binaries that perpetuate violence to both oneself and to others.

Our whakapapa whānau are not immune to proliferating these unsafe standards, with many co-researchers describing how at home, on the marae, and in other Māori spaces they occasionally face, at best, exclusionary or hostile practises (e.g. binary wharepaku, gendered language, a general lack of acceptance) and at worst homophobic and transphobic actions and beliefs (all of which are ultimately a result of misionising and colonial values imposed upon Māori and transmitted intergenerationally). It is not necessarily acceptance that is required, but a collective conscientisation of the history, structure and limitations of contemporary cis-heteronormative standards, so as to see them for what they are, and to embrace the possibility of something better.

Beyond the relational spheres of oneself, whakapapa whānau, and kaupapa whānau there are a number of important contexts which co-researchers define as predominantly influential on their capacity to enact Tino Rangatiratanga, and therefore the measure of their wellbeing. Institutional structures such as education, healthcare, and employment provide existing systems within which to enact a process of change at a societal level. For the most part, these institutions - in their present state - are systemically and operationally mechanisms of colonial violence. They perpetuate harmful patriarchal and capitalist standards which reinforce inequalities between Māori and non-Māori peoples. We need only look at health, education, incarceration and employment statistics to see this (Berryman & Eley, 2018; Chalmers, 2019; Pihama et al., 2020).

However, these structures also aim to provide a function which in theory is broadly valued by society. Whether through transformational change or total structural dismantling, these institutions have the potential to experience a process of decolonisation and therefore to serve the needs of Indigenous peoples.

What must be recognised is the power these systems, and the people within them, have to positively influence the lived experiences of Rangatahi Takatāpui. This is especially true when we are made to feel seen, heard, and valued, which requires practitioners, their organisations, and the systems that train and hold them accountable to recognise Queer Indigenous peoples' existence, needs, and rights. This cannot be left to chance, it must be a formally and actively sought reality. Ultimately, however, outcomes for Rangatahi Takatāpui within these social institutions, and for Māori in general, will see the greatest transformation through a process of systemic Indigenisation from the ground up. This means a total transferral of sovereignty from the government back to Tangata Whenua, in order to exercise the authority to be self-determining as, with, by, and for Māori.

Achieving the ability for LGBTQI+ Māori to express Tino Rangatiratanga within society - Ko Tātou - is essential for the safety and empowerment of Rangatahi Takatāpui identities as well as the liberation of all people from historical cisheteronormative social constructs. Importantly, it also enables our community to redirect efforts away from fighting for our right to exist and towards other imminent challenges faced by humanity, such as the climate crisis and the widening gap between rich and poor (Feng, 2022; Kiddle, 2020). Rangatahi Takatāpui offer a unique and unconventional perspective in these matters due to our particular lived experiences and the challenges we have navigated and learnt to overcome. Perhaps most importantly, Queer Indigenous youth are capable of accessing a dream world beyond the reach of those limited by the repressive vice-grip of patriarchal colonial standards (Laenui, 2000).

Dreaming is a liberating act of decolonisation. It is, as Jackson (2020) would describe, a pathway to “restoration” (p. 149). Dreaming offers the potential to envision possibilities for the world that are not limited by reality. It is a space which provides intuitive insight - tūpuna knowledge - into how things could be done differently, and which honours the notion of

whakapapa in locating our role as an important and interconnected thread within the continuous weave of past, present and future. The ability of Rangatahi Takatāpui to freely dream and offer solutions to critical global challenges is enhanced when we are afforded what is rightfully ours; a collective capacity to enact Tino Rangatiratanga - to define ourselves, our experiences, and our place in society.

Dr Elizabeth Kerekere of The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand stated in her maiden speech at Parliament (2021) that “Takatāpui rights are a Treaty issue”. By virtue of whakapapa, Takatāpui are Māori, and therefore should be afforded the protections promised within the document widely considered fundamental to the governance of Aotearoa as a bicultural nation, Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This has not been the case, as is outlined by the evidence drawn upon throughout this thesis regarding the effects of colonisation on Queer Māori identities since the arrival of Europeans to this land (Kerekere, 2017; McBreen, 2012; Pihama et al., 2020; Ross, 2020; Te Awekotuku, 2018). Despite this, Takatāpui have, and will continue to remain a steadfast identity within Te Ao Māori. It is, however, a responsibility of the Crown, and those it represents, to uphold the declaration made in the Treaty to recognise and protect the sovereignty of Māori over our taonga, which from a Māori worldview includes our identities and cultural ways of being:

Ko te Kuini o Ingarani ka wakarite ka wakaae ki nga Rangatira ki nga hapu – ki nga tangata katoa o Nu Tirani te tino rangatiratanga o o ratou wenua o ratou kainga me o ratou taonga katoa (Te Tiriti o Waitangi, 1840).

As such, the empowerment of Rangatahi Takatāpui to enact Tino Rangatiratanga can also be understood as a right promised by the Crown at the signing of Te Tiriti. Beyond the need for societal transformation at an interpersonal and structural level, this means there is also a political responsibility of the government of New Zealand to fulfil this promise to protect. The significance of this fact is that the Crown can be held accountable to its lack of action in this regard, and should be expected not only to make reparations, but also to transition authority over the resources currently held by the government to Māori, and most specifically Takatāpui, in order to rectify its Treaty shortcomings.

Through the He Whakaaro Takarangi lens of ‘Ko Tātou’, it is apparent that a priority at every relational level (personal, interpersonal, societal, and institutional) should be to empower Rangatahi Takatāpui to achieve and express Tino Rangatiratanga. This responsibility is not only for the sake of our own community, but for that of society so that it may thrive, of our whakapapa so that it may survive, and of the land - our primordial ancestor - so that it may be restored and cared for in the manner it is deserving of.

Chapter 5

Whakakapi || Now What?

Through the journey of meaning-making provided by He Whakaaro Takarangi, several points can be identified as key to enabling Rangatahi Takatāpui expressions of Tino Rangatiratanga. They are taken from the discussion above, and presented here as a concise list. The points below are ordered in accordance with the progressive realms of He Whakaaro Takarangi, and do not necessarily reflect a hierarchy of importance. They are also by no means finite, and simply aim to summarise and further clarify the meaning that has been taken from the previous chapters.

Ko Ahau: Oneself

1. Rangatahi Takatāpui should be supported to have a belief in their Mana Tuakiri, including a knowledge and security of their place within the greater whakapapa of their identity.
2. A sense of confidence and peace within oneself is beneficial to the ability of Rangatahi Takatāpui to participate in Indigenous dreaming, which is a collective act of sovereignty. Participation is critical to oneself because dreaming has the potential to both heal and connect Takatāpui people with one another both spiritually and socially.
3. The process of conscientisation must be made accessible to Rangatahi Takatāpui in order to achieve a critical understanding of their experiences as Queer Indigenous people, and what can be done to Indigenise their own sense of self.

Ko Mātou: Us

1. The whakapapa of Takatāpuitanga is intrinsic to a collective sense of identity. This is because Mana Hapori is strengthened through relational bonds, meaning that not only do Rangatahi Takatāpui need to understand their belonging at an intellectual level, but must be able to access it in reality too, by way of community.

2. It is essential for kaupapa whānau to be reflexive and critical about intersectional issues. Lateral violence towards minority groups can and does occur within the Queer community, and as such, those afforded the greatest privileges - such as white, able-bodied, cisgender, economically secure people - should be held accountable to this in a safe and constructive way.
3. Barriers to access should be removed for Rangatahi Takatāpui who experience geographic isolation from large urban centres where community events typically take place. This can be done by resourcing more events and community spaces regionally, and by funding participation (transport, accommodation, food, registration fees, etc.) for Rangatahi Takatāpui outside of those locations, as well as building connections in order to establish a more secure relational support network.

Ko Tātou: Everyone

1. Rangatahi Takatāpui should not require social acceptance in order for their existence to be valid. However, the decolonisation of gender, sex, and sexuality enables them to live more freely and safely as themselves, and is actually beneficial for all members of society, not just LGBTQI+ Māori people.
2. When Takatāpui are safe from the intersecting violence of homophobia, transphobia, and racism, as well as all other forms of oppression that are experienced in a capitalist, colonial, patriarchal, ableist society, their focus can shift to addressing urgent challenges faced by all people (e.g. climate change and poverty). Rangatahi Takatāpui can offer a unique perspective and set of skills, as a result of their lived experiences. This is exemplified by the Indigenous ability to dream of radically different possibilities and solutions to those offered by hegemonic powers.
3. The institutions which govern New Zealand have a responsibility to the bi-cultural partnership envisioned and promised in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Within this is a commitment to protect the sovereignty of Māori over our taonga (which in Te Ao Māori is an expansive concept which includes our whakapapa, our tamariki, our language, our whenua, our tikanga, and our identities). A commitment to this promise means a commitment by the government to ensure that Rangatahi Takatāpui are afforded the same

ability to be self-determining as all other people in this land, be that politically, socially, interpersonally, or inwardly.

Ngā Whirikoka Me Ngā Kōpiri: Strengths And Limitations

Kia Kaha Kaupapa Māori

This research has centred the voices, needs, and safety of the community it serves throughout and beyond its duration. This is an intrinsic aspect of Kaupapa Māori theory, which seeks to provide an Indigenous alternative to Eurocentric research practices. As such, no decision has been made singularly by me as the researcher. In fact, participants in this rangahau are all regarded as co-researchers and as such of equal importance and authority. This has resulted in collaborative decision making, and opportunities for community members to provide guidance and feedback. Even when theoretical or administrative details which did not require community input arose, a collectivist sense of responsibility meant that what was chosen as the appropriate pathway forward was not what felt easiest or most comfortable but what aligns most closely with the values and kaupapa of this methodology. Relational accountability, in this respect, extended not only to the physical community of Rangatahi Takatāpui who were present ā-tinana, but to our broader whānau, as well as the whakapapa to which we belong. We are responsible to those who came before and those who will come after.

The wānanga method employed in this rangahau exemplifies the success of Kaupapa Māori theory in praxis. Not only was the method physically and culturally safe, but the components which made up the tikanga of the wānanga has meant that the relationships formed between co-researchers continue to thrive today as kaupapa whānau bonds. This was achieved through intuitively Māori protocols such as whanaungatanga, wānanga, kōrero, kai, karakia, and waiata, which set up the space for rich research conversations to take place. Further to these tikanga, the methods that were engaged, such as whakawhiti kōrero, mahi toi, and pūrākau felt natural and unencumbered for co-researchers, which meant that collaborative conversations around research topics were able to flow with ease. The wānanga method employed here, in

itself, in fact acts as an example of what the research findings suggest; that a safe place to belong amongst peers is critical to the empowerment of Rangatahi Takatāpui to be self-determining.

Practically, this research offers a successful template for future Kaupapa Maori researchers to employ. It is both thorough and flexible in its design, meaning that it can be easily adapted to suit a range of context for Indigenous projects in Aotearoa. In fact, as a result of the success and transferability of this wānanga format, funding has been allocated from Te Puni Kōkiri and Burnet Foundation Aotearoa to support a series of wānanga which replicate this model of practice in order to build and support Takatāpui networks across the Waikato. Since completion of the initial research wānanga, two such community events have successfully taken place, and a third has been funded for later in 2022.

Limitations are a Fact of Life

From the outset of this research, my positionality has been made transparent. While I am Takatāpui Māori, and identify as gender queer / non-binary, I am also afforded immense social privileges due to the whiteness of my skin and by being cisgender-passing, which more racialised Māori, Takatāpui and Trans people do not experience. This limits my ability to represent the experiences of more marginalised people from our community, but which I have attempted to remediate through the inclusion of a diverse group of co-researchers. This scope of this research has also been limited to Rangatahi Takatāpui, which means that those below the age of 16 have been excluded, as well as people who do not identify as Rangatahi (though this term has been defined here as a relational and contextual identity). This has been done in order to maintain a focused and manageable research topic, but does also highlight the need for a greater range and number of rangahau which cater to the needs of the broader Takatāpui community, across the spectrum of ages and experiences.

Practically, this research was also affected by the disruption of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Though all of the components of this research, such as the wānanga, were able to take place in person, serious considerations around peoples health and safety had to be addressed in

light of the public health risk associated with social gatherings. The psychological impact of Covid-19 on researchers was also apparent, with many expressing feelings of isolation and anxiety which potentially impacted the way in which they participated and contributed to this research, though that is difficult to measure.

Poroporoaki: Final Words

It feels appropriate to conclude with the complete poem co-researchers composed during our wānanga in 2021, and which has been scattered as excerpts throughout this rangahau. The words it contains speak about experiences of joy and pain, community and isolation, acceptance and rejection, and most profoundly, the mana that comes from knowing the place of belonging that Rangatahi Takatāpui have within the infinity of whakapapa. It also importantly serves as a reminder of the people that this research is for, by and with, as is natural in a Kaupapa Māori paradigm. As a thesis, I set out to articulate the factors which enable LGBTQI+ Māori youth to express Tino Rangatiratanga, and the ways in which they do this. Something that I did not anticipate would come from this rangahau, however, is the intensely personal journey it has taken me on, and which is reflected on frequently in a question returned to throughout this thesis. Ko wai au, ko wai tātou?

Mana Takatāpui

You withheld my freedom from me, punished me for reaching out...

Who am I?

Am I not enough?

Is my skin and bones not enough?

Will you miss me If you don't know me?

What does it matter?

Who am I?

E Rongo ana au

Waiporoporo vision, proof of another world true ways of being

Ahead of me, a better land

Whakahokia

Ko tēnei te wā, te wā wāteatanga

Living for those that couldn't

Tūpuna envisioned present, forging futures now

In inevitability

There is infinite freedom

Ngā āhuetanga nō roto

There is a call in the water that I can feel in my skin, warm and wet

Friends piled up on a mattress dragged into the lounge watching RuPaul's Drag

Race even tho' it's problematic

*I am made up of every perspective of myself, every snap and click that brings me into
place makes me beautiful*

I am the reflection of my ancestors' perception

A home within my own heart that is unchanging and warm

Dwelling in the flame which incinerates the facades of perception

Ko ahau

The love I have. Am I to share it? Or can I keep it all for myself?

Why am I to give, why am I to care? Because I am nothing and everything.

and yet I was my own freedom all along.

"You are a mokopuna of the atua, you could break plates and they'd still love you."

It does not speak

For I do not require explanation.

I am no mistake, I am strong like my maunga and fluid like my awa.

I bear witness to myself and come alive.

A wave of heat in my puku.

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