

# **The Craft of Creative Practice Doctoral Supervision: Invigorating a Field Through Shared Experiences.**

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## **Abstract**

Creative Practice doctoral education and supervision are fields in constant flux, since they require the flexibility to engage with organic and symbiotic processes, and complex systems of inquiry. As interdisciplinary educators working across the fields of media and communications studies, cultural studies, art and design, the authors reflect upon supervision experiences to generate insight into current creative practice doctoral education modes and approaches within the academy. These experiences provide tangible examples of the flexible supervision framework developed by the authors as a means to improve the doctoral experience for their students. By sharing the process by which this framework has developed, this paper offers a conceptual take on creative practice doctoral supervision, acknowledging a need for more engaged discussions and exploration of creative practice research and supervision approaches. The authors offer insights about the role supervisors can play in crafting methodology, catalysing innovation, and supporting students as they navigate institutional processes and support structures (or the lack of). We argue that it is necessary to form a flexible and adaptable framework to support and sustain nuanced modes of creative practice doctoral supervision and research design. Drawing on our experiences of doctoral supervision and articulating complementary pedagogical approaches, we offer a flexible supervision framework that provides an adaptable toolbox for supervisors of creative practice doctoral research, and incorporates the idea of thinking through making. Moreover, our supervisory experiences have led us to explore ways to enable supervisors to collaborate with doctoral students in carving or weaving methodologies.

## **Introduction**

The introduction of creative practice and arts-based modes of researching represent an active determination to develop disciplinary-relevant methods, rather than be curtailed by conventional social-science methodologies that are well ingrained in the academy. Creative practice doctoral education and supervision are fields in constant change, requiring flexible and innovative approaches to supervision and research design. The quest for self-determination, representation and expression of arts practice drives students and academic supervisors to search for nuanced and expanded modes of doing and disseminating research in the arts (Knowles and Cole, 2002). This scenario poses challenges to supervisors who draw from singular models and need to navigate more malleable and responsive supervision to creative practice projects. While observing this need, we locate a lack of clear guidelines, discussions and sharing of creative practice doctoral supervision approaches. The fluid and exploratory nature of creative practice doctoral research requires more pedagogical flexibility. This article seeks to address some of these issues, proposing a flexible creative practice supervision framework where supervisors can draw from different pedagogies to custom build appropriate supervision pathways. As both creative practitioners and scholars, we share our experiences of creative practice doctoral supervision, reflecting on past and present experiences to bring insight into the practice of doctoral supervision. As interdisciplinary educators working across

the fields of media, communication studies, cultural studies, art and design in Aotearoa New Zealand, we draw upon our supervision experiences to discuss, articulate and shed light on current creative practice in the academy (Allpress *et al.*, 2012a; Butt, 2017; Hill, 2022; Rashid, 2021). With over two decades experience across the University and Polytechnic education sectors in Aotearoa New Zealand, we build upon diverse learning and supervision experiences. Our interest in creative practice modes of teaching, learning, and researching underpins our growing interest in supervision.

Creative practice and practice-led post graduate qualifications are in increasing demand, and have become an important part of Universities' offerings in response to global changes in how knowledge is produced in the academy (Allpress *et al.*, 2012a). This shift aligns with recent initiatives to develop novel approaches to academic research, and growing connections between creative industries and Universities. As observed by Allpress *et al.* (2012a), these developments are particularly apparent in the fields of design, architecture, and fine art, as well as creative and digital technologies. These developments are accompanied by an interdisciplinary shift, particularly in the arts, where creative academics are now seeking collaborations with colleagues from different disciplines in order to generate more nuanced research insights and outputs (Alvarez-Jimenez *et al.*, 2023; Kershaw, Miller, *et al.*, 2011). These factors make for a stimulating research terrain in which creative practitioners and doctoral supervisors build interdisciplinary relationships that generate innovative methodologies to fit distinctive creative practice research approaches.

Despite these general trends, in Aotearoa New Zealand creative practice doctoral research is relatively established in the academy, although there is a need for more insightful and critical discussions as well as structural and institutional support. Tensions between conventional academic research and creative practice research in the academy are not new and have been extensively examined and discussed (Butt, 2017; Duxbury *et al.*, 2008; Markauskaite *et al.*, 2010; Varnelis, 2007). Considering this uneven context in which creative practice research has emerged, this article draws on selected experiences of doctoral supervision to offer insights about the role supervisors can play in crafting methodology, catalysing innovation, and supporting students. We offer specific examples to address an *expressed* desire by supervisors of creative practice research to learn from the diverse experiences of other supervisors in the field. As reported by Jillian Hamilton and Sue Carson (2015):

*An overwhelming majority of experienced, as well as new, supervisors in our study expressed interest in the idea of using 'real' exemplars as case studies... Such exemplars of good practices, they pointed out, should not be cast as a model or standardised template, but should be presented as a collection—a field of possibilities—that might be adapted to suit the supervisor's own context and situation (1358).*

We were not participants of Hamilton and Carson's study, in which numerous supervisors of creative practice research were interviewed in Australia. However, we agree with their finding that 'real' exemplars as case studies might best be offered as a field of possibilities for potential to be adapted and built upon by other supervisors. Contrary to Hamilton and Carson's study, our aim was not to conduct a pedagogical research project, field work and analysis towards academic findings as basis for this article. Instead, our intention here is to offer specific examples derived from our own supervisory experiences.

The idea of creative practice research as an act of thinking through making (Duxbury *et al.*, 2008) is fundamental to this paper as it sets the grounds for the location of creative practice at the core of the research environment. In addition, we draw from aspects of connected learning (Nussbaum-Beach and Hall, 2012) and peer learning (Boud and Lee, 2005) pedagogies to articulate frameworks present in our doctoral supervision experiences. Part of our approach is to encourage students to develop methodological models based on the premises of *making*, with the intention that this will guide both supervision and research design. As doctoral supervisors, we prompt students to carve their own methods of research, and to build uniquely shaped methodological models to address complex research questions (Leavy, 2014). For example, we encouraged one of our doctoral students to submit artwork to the end of 2023 students group art exhibition to instigate initial research and methodological developments. We will discuss this further in the doctoral supervision experiences section below.

## **Pedagogical approaches and creative practice doctoral supervision.**

Creative practice research has intrinsic and foundational connections with qualitative modes of academic inquiry (Knowles and Cole, 2002). Paired with distinctive art practices, researchers can extend the application of conventional qualitative methods, while innovating methodologies that are appropriately grounded in the arts, and which lead to the discovery of new modes of representation and expression. The early days of creative practice research date back to the 1990s, emerging along with groundbreaking works by a number of scholars including Elliot Eisner (1993), Susan Finley and Gary Knowles (1995), to name a few. These authors and many others provided early articulations and advocacy of alternative qualitative research methods based on art practice, at times combined with more conventional ethnographic or analytical methodologies (Ellis and Bochner, 1996).

This article was spawned by our observations on the lack of support systems for those engaged in the supervision of creative practice research. While there are helpful models to support specific supervisory approaches, there has been little reflection on how these might work together to form a flexible framework. We have also observed a lack of pedagogical scholarship specifically addressing creative practice supervision processes and guidelines, and a need for more conversations, support and development to ensure that creative practice research is understood by those involved in confirming doctoral research. In this article we intersect different approaches to creative practice supervision, stitching them together to form a flexible and adaptable framework that underpins our own ways of working with doctoral students. We combine aspects of the ‘master and apprentice’ approach with the *Tuakana-Teina* model, intersected with ‘peer’ and ‘connected learning’ pedagogical models. We offer these as an educational ‘toolbox’ and flexible framework for creative practice supervision.

The master and apprentice approach (Webster, 2005) to creative practice supervision may be considered a common starting point and standard practice in arts-based research. This consists of expert criticism and shaping of student’s (apprentice) art practice. This model is well ingrained in arts education, particularly fine-arts, design, and architecture, where it consists of regular one-on-one meetings and critique sessions. Despite its iterative value, the model has hierarchical implications and drawbacks, and there is a pressing need for more horizontal supervisor-student relationships (Harrison and Grant, 2015) or ‘peer learning’ as proposed by David Boud and Alison Lee (2005). Peer learning proposes a more community-based way of learning where students are involved in building a learning ecology alongside peers, experts, academic staff and creative practitioners (Boud and Lee, 2005).

The peer-learning model shares some similarities with the Māori method of learning and mentoring known as *Tuakana-Teina*, meaning ‘elder-younger’. The term implies a particular type of reciprocal relationship between an elder sibling and younger sibling within a community, whereby each plays a role in the learning and teaching process. As explained by Kaapua Smith (2007):

While the *Tuakana* generally takes the lead, the key issue in this relationship is that both *Tuakana* and *Teina* are teacher and learner. The *Teina* learns new knowledge from the more experienced *Tuakana*; however, the knowledge of the *Tuakana* is reinforced and strengthened by assisting the *Teina*... While some supervisors may look at their role as purely that of teacher and giver of knowledge (what can I teach this student?), other supervisors may view themselves in this paradigm of teacher/learner (what do I need to learn from this student in order to teach this student?) (p.2).

While the latter viewpoint outlined here describes a key facet of our supervisory approach, we note the necessity to be agile and prepared to pivot the supervisory relationship in accordance to cultural awareness, and to the stage of the research. The *tuakana – teina* relationship is forged on a particular type of “consultative reciprocity”, which can mean alternating the sharing of knowledge. As a supervisor, this means being attuned to circumstances where it may be culturally appropriate to contribute your knowledge “tentatively”, to “leave space for peer engagement”, and to take a step back to allow the student to lead (Crocket *et al*, 2015, p.72).

The *Tuakana-Teina* model provides a non-hierarchical approach to leading and learning, which enables the student to be the driver of their creative practice research, when and where appropriate. While this approach can foster a student’s autonomy and self-responsibility, it is particularly important in cases where the creative practice is embedded in the indigenous knowledge of the student. Although this model is particularly well-suited to intercultural supervision teams and specific types of creative practice, it is consistent with peer learning processes and the relocation of the student as an active *practitioner* in the student-supervisor environment.

In parallel with these models, we draw from aspects of the master and apprentice model, such as the value of punctual constructive critique sessions to help shape students’ art practices. Since there is no one-size-fits-all approach, we believe the challenge relies on being able to locate the student’s needs and expectations and absorb these into the supervision approach. One way to locate these needs is to approach doctoral supervision in relation to the idea of thinking through making, and to understand creative practice as a mode of inquiry, as explained by academic researchers Lesley Duxbury and Elizabeth Grieson (2008):

*in closer proximity with what it means to think through making and all that is involved in sustained forms of creative practice — questioning, reviewing, reflecting, analysing, performing, speculating, relating, remembering, critiquing, constructing and ultimately further questioning. These are sustainable forms of scholarship and enquiry in the academy; they are ways of legitimating affective understandings and perceptions, ways of exposing not only aesthetic but also epistemological and*

*ontological understandings. We are talking here about the process of creating in a way that reveals something more than self-perpetuation. It is a process of bringing forth awareness or appearances through the work of art (p.7)*

Similarly, Patricia Leavy (2014), a creative practice activist, believes that “arts-based researchers are not “discovering” new research tools, they are *carving* them” (p. 3). Leavy proposes a relationship between *shape* and the forms of academic work, and how the form *shapes* the content. Leavy argues that arts-based researchers “see and build in different shapes” (p. 3). Leavy’s position aligns with the notion of connected learning, placing the student as an active *practitioner* in the learning process, and able to conduct ‘hands-on’ independent learning in collaboration with supervisors (Nussbaum-Beach and Hall, 2012). This relocates the student as an innovative thinker equipped with arts methods to carve unique methodological models.

These fundamental positions inform our supervision approaches, guiding students through their practices and using the actual creative practice as a pillar for uniquely carved methodological models. The connected learning and peer learning approaches are intersected with the idea of thinking through making, to form a supervision framework. We discuss these ideas further in the next section and bring examples to illustrate the ways we put into practice these supervision approaches.

## **Research design and methodology**

In this section we present, articulate, and discuss our methods of engaging with doctoral supervision. Exploring three distinctive experiences, we reflect on the student experience of creative practice doctoral research, followed by our experiences as doctoral supervisors of creative practice students. We offer insightful commentary on these experiences, while acknowledging practical limitations of our supervision approaches, including the originality of the overall research design and methodologies discussed. Having located a need for more nuanced models of creative practice doctoral supervision supported by ongoing dialogue, collegiality and discussions, this section aims to address some of these needs.

### *Rodrigo Hill’s Doctoral student experience*

To begin, I start sharing some of my experiences as a creative practice doctoral student, in order to bring an insider perspective into the discussions. I have a background in creative practice research (photography and fine art), operating at the intersection of lens based and documentary practices. The following reflects upon my creative practice PhD journey as a student from 2016 to 2019. Throughout the last decade, and despite the upwards trend in creative practice research in Aotearoa New Zealand, PhDs with creative practice are still undergoing a slow progression in terms of enrolment numbers and institutional / structural processes. In 2016, I was one of a very small cohort of students doing PhD with creative practice components at my university. Broadly, however, there has been a steady increase in PhDs in the Creative Arts fields. According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2024), the number of students completing PhDs in Creative Arts rose from twenty in 2008 to sixty-five in 2021. This is a difficult number to read in relation to creative practice PhDs, as it may or may not cover creative practice degrees. The higher number of students completing PhDs in Creative Arts fields reflects the growing interest in the arts in Aotearoa New Zealand and the

need for more insightful pedagogical discussions, which include consideration of how universities are responding to these trends.

During my PhD project I worked with my supervisors to carve a methodological model based on photography and revolving practices such as photographic post-production and digital enhancements, editing, selecting and curating imagery towards final collections compiled as exhibition or photography publications. This approach propelled me to go beyond the act of photographing images alone and expanding this into a complete iterative methodology. This covered four different stages or creative milestones, marking specific periods of photography practice, creative decisions and output of a final collection of images as a response to research questions and topic. In this context, my photography practice included my attempt to *carve* a set of research methods, pursuing a methodological model that informed my research frameworks and outputs. In addition, I was pursuing a model that incorporated a range of elements from my photography practice. This model integrated conceptual ideas, the affordances of different kinds of photographic apparatuses and processes, production stages as well as my own aesthetic sensibilities to construct my images. In this way, my photography practice incorporated a complex set of strategies. So clearly photography practice was positioned at the centre of the research environment, and from it sprang key research methods and modes of inquiry. This position is helpful to sustain the idea of ‘practice at core’ or practice as an integral part of the research and in different stages and levels of the research process.

My supervisors helped me to develop a research design based on photography practice, moving away from conventional fieldwork research approaches such as participant observation and interviews. Consequently, my photography practice and overall methodology were liberated from these approaches, and advanced into a territory where artistic expression prevailed through a project of loose but purposeful field approach-encounters. The predictability and constraints of conventional fieldwork and analytical research methods (Ellis and Bochner, 1996; Ingold, 2014), in this instance, went against the unpredictability of creative practice methods. Doctoral supervision here, enters into a territory of stimulating creative uncertainties, relying mostly on the students’ creative practice to advance research milestones. This position aligns with Lesley Duxbury’s (Allpress *et al.*, 2012b) take on doctoral supervision often being ‘hands-on, and hands-off’ and far away from a one size fits all approach. During the PhD project, my supervisors were ‘hands-on’ to actively guide me, helping me realise the value of creative practice and how it could fit with my research topic and design. From this point on the supervision went ‘hands-off’ in the sense of letting the practice shape the research, and photography be the leading method of inquiry and artistic expression.

### *Doctoral supervision experiences*

In this section we share two recent doctoral supervision experiences with creative practice PhD students. Both students are creative practitioners working across interdisciplinary fields. Our goal is not to present these supervision experiences as models of ideal approaches that might be standardised. On the contrary, we aim to share these to generate discussions into the practice of doctoral supervision, highlighting aspects we consider important and insightful. We offer these as contributions to the field of creative practice doctoral supervision.

#### *Doctoral supervision experience 1*

The first experience covers our supervision developments working with an international student looking at the intersection of epistolary production, art practice, human geography and online / videobooks as a curatorial platform. The student started the PhD project in July 2023. In the university we are based, the general process for PhDs is to start the projects by completing a comprehensive proposal to be presented to a panel of academics. Once the proposed project and ethics applications are approved, PhD candidates have their enrolments confirmed and are entitled to officially start their research and field work.

The confirmation period is usually dedicated to reading, annotating, and writing the proposal document, a process that can take six to nine months. Typically, students take around six months to complete this stage. This is applicable to both conventional and creative practice PhD and usually there are no creative stages or making of artefacts during this time frame.

Moving away from these conventions, during the confirmation period we encouraged the student to work on a creative prototype that would be included in the 2023 students' art exhibition at the University gallery. As a result of our regular supervision meetings, the student engaged with relevant literature and started designing the research methodology based on the art practice of remediation. Defining 'remediation' as "the representation of one medium in another", Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000) use this term to describe the process by which new media attain cultural distinctiveness by paying homage to, and refashioning earlier media (p.45). In this case, the doctoral student experiments with digital media as a means to remediate the hand written letters of children.

During this period the student explored relevant literature and ideas, while testing and making artefacts for an installation featured in our end of year students' exhibition. This process was extremely helpful and innovative, as it allowed the student to make sense of preliminary ideas through the act of testing and making of artefacts. This research project involves inviting school children living in Aotearoa New Zealand to write handwritten letters about the place in which they live. After collection, the letters are remediated and compiled into a videobook to be presented as an online resource. The prototype created during the confirmation stage simulated the process and provided the student an initial creative platform to test creative ideas, reflect, and incorporate these into the proposal document. The supervision approach consisted of encouraging and inviting the student to engage in creative practice from day one of the research, intersecting as ideas developed into the making of artefacts. This proved to be a useful approach, moving away from the conventional reading, annotating and writing of proposal drafts. Instead, the student engaged in art making from the outset, combined, supported and underpinned by developing ideas in an overlapping two-way route between practice and theory.

In addition, the processes and approaches described above opened portals for organic developments of a methodological model based on the art practice of remediation. Like our doctoral student's case in which photography was central to the research, the student was supported to carve a unique methodological model. This model was based on the premises and processes connected to remediation and the curation and compilation of a videobook. To break this down, the student structured the research design in different methodological stages, covering the collection of materials (letters from children), triage or selection of letters, remediation stage (important in terms of creative developments and making of artefacts). The final stage involved the curation and compilation of remediated letters into a videobook, to be displayed on an online platform.

As described by Duxbury earlier, we supervisors were ‘hands-on’ during the crucial stage of guiding and supporting the student’s practice, helping structure and design of a methodological model. This happened during a series of supervision meetings during the first three-to five months of the PhD project. While we were ‘hands-off’ during the making stage, we offered punctual feedback to support aesthetic and conceptual developments. This approach to supervision drew from connected learning approaches and consisted of inviting the student to engage in creative practice from the outset, testing preliminary ideas, building from previous work, and working with the students’ established art practice. These were then expanded, critiqued, and structured into a tentative methodological model. From this stage, the student expanded creative strategies, departing from a creative prototype that addressed developing ideas and research questions.

As introduced earlier, the confirmation stage is an important milestone in one’s PhD research journey, offering reassurance, feedback and formal academic approval by a panel. This confirms the academic rigour and ethical positioning of the research to be conducted. The confirmation session covers a twenty-minute project presentation, within the parameters of regular academic conference presentations. This is followed by questions from the panel and general discussions that can take up to two hours. The final approval is conferred at the end of the session and covers a debrief between supervisor and academic panel. The PhD project presented can be either approved with no revisions, or with revisions. It can also be recommended to be formatted as a Masters project or rarely not recommended at all.

In our experience of supervising doctoral students engaged in creative practice research, we have observed a rigidity of standardised processes, such as confirmation of enrolment, and application for ethics approval. For instance, in relation to experience 1, the University Ethics Committee did not appear to be aware of the discovery-based rationale for the non-hypothetical and experimental aspects of Creative Practice Research. As the student stepped through these processes, we observed an assumption by committee members that the research would involve the collection, analysis and synthesis of data, along with an expectation that data collection methods would need to equate with those conventionally used in the social sciences. These expectations were apparent by the standard questions included in the application template used for gaining ethical approval. This signals the need for more comprehensive understandings of creative practice research in academic settings and the inclusion of innovative approaches, and a need for developing processes and structures to support students and their methodological positions.

Frustratingly for this candidate, a similar lack of understanding of Creative Practice Research was apparent in the confirmation process. We found that the interdisciplinary nature and methodological complexity of the study imposed challenges to the confirmation panel even though all key research points were explained by the student. This shows the lack of structural processes to naturally absorb creative practice methodologies into formal institutional criteria and expectations. While the student did their best to respond to questions, we supervisors needed to facilitate processes and clarify further the discovery-based nature of creative practice research, including the appropriateness of the interdisciplinary methodology of the project in question. This situation highlights the need for tertiary institutions to reflect on the processes in place for confirmation and ethical approval of PhD supervision, as well as the need for “distributed leadership” in the field of post graduate degree supervision. In reporting the results of their study into creative practice doctoral supervision, Hamilton and Carson (2015) describe distributed leadership as a model that is:

... expanded beyond simply the recognition of the expertise of leaders at all strata of the institution. We realised that distributed leadership provides an opportunity to enable a broad-based and networked system, in which innovators and early adopters can share a wealth of tacit knowledge and provide models, advice and support to others within communities of practice (1362-1363).

As observed, our supervisory experience supports this call for a networked system in which early innovators can share insightful knowledge in a non-hierarchical way. We believe there is clearly a need for academic institutions to review their systems, and to provide targeted support to those students and supervisors within communities of practice.

### *Doctoral supervision experience 2*

While it has been our experience that creative practice can serve as the key driver of the research, and the instigator of theoretical enquiry, this is not always the case and there are examples in which practice plays a significant role, although not necessarily at the forefront of the research. One pertinent example shows how creative practice can be situated, not only after theoretical enquiry and empirical interviews, but in the final stages of PhD research. In this case, the PhD student had intended to engage in creative practice research from the start of the project, but had delayed this part of the research until they were clear about the purpose for undertaking creative practice, along with the rationale for employing a particular art practice. Being Māori and strongly connected to their *whanau* (extended family and ancestral lineage), the candidate's research was framed by *Mātauranga Māori* (knowledge based in a Māori world view). Such an approach underlines the importance of *whakapapa*, a concept that values the preservation and transmission of ancestral knowledge as a means of instilling the wellbeing of present and future generations (Rameka, 2018). This conceptual basis guided the candidate to prioritise interviews with members of their *iwi* (tribe) who were practicing artists. It was through these interviews that the student was able to learn how ancestral stories were passed down through *toi tuku iho* (arts practice and process). As the project progressed, it became clear that *toi tuku iho* was not only the practice of many of the interviewees, but also the primary methodology of the research.

Throughout the interview stage of this project, the student remained uncertain about the purpose of including a creative practice research dimension.. It was only during the analysis and synthesis of the interview material that the rationale for undertaking a creative project was realised, which was to explore first-hand, the artistic process of knowledge transmission that had been articulated by the interviewees. Rather than being the initial driver of the research, the creative practice component was a response to the interviews that had been conducted; taking the form of a digital video that experimented with the artistic practice of transmitting ancestral stories to *tamariki* (children), the creative process instilled in the children the significance of their ancestors in relation to their ancestral place. The process of making this video was “used as a tool of inquiry to expand and delve into the key themes that were generated” through the interview process, along with the literature review (unnamed PhD Thesis, 2023: p.163). The making of this video was a form of discovery through creative practice, since it was not only a means of responding to (and testing) the interviewees’ statements about *toi tuku iho* as practice and process, but also a way for the researcher to discover for themselves, how this practice could operate – passing ancestral stories onto their children through their creative use of digital media. This delayed process of working out the

purpose and form of creative practice was an organic process for the researcher – one that was not planned in the initial stages of their project, but instead became an intuitive, and secondary response to the primary methodology.

This case study provides a tangible example of the conceptual argument for the process of carving a methodological approach. In this case, the student took inspiration from Hinekura Smith's theorization of '*Whatuora*' – the concept of weaving "'New" Indigenous Research Methodology from "Old" Indigenous Weaving Practice" (Smith, 2019, p. 1). Such an approach exemplifies the importance of the *Tuakana-Teina* model, where supervisors enable students the space to carve (or weave) their own methodology. Such an approach demands the restraint and flexibility that is necessary to allow creative practice to function as a core driver *or* as a means of responding to, testing, or expanding, another methodology. This case study also shows how a malleable and non-hierarchical approach toward the supervision of creative practice research enables and supports discovery, particularly if students are not constrained by rigid expectations or conventional models.

### *Findings*

Since this paper is not based on a conventional data collection and analysis research approaches, we do not have explicit findings but more insightful thoughts to share.

1. The development of a creative practice doctoral supervision framework can combine facets of several models. While doing so, we have found it useful to base our approach on the ideas of thinking through making, and locating practice, either at the core of the research, or in response to findings of prior research.. In some cases, it can be appropriate to encourage a practice-based approach throughout the research timeline, or even from the outset of the project. This can provide a foundation for the carving of unique and novel methodological approaches based on established creative practice. From this point we aim to support students to structure and expand practical approaches, and to test and push boundaries through a series of iterative stages. While generating useful creative milestones, such an iterative process can, is capable of moving the research and creative approaches forward into compelling outputs or artefacts.
2. Students undertaking creative practice research may require extensive supervisory support to navigate institutional processes, and to help them to achieve confirmation, scholarship applications, and ethics approval, particularly when faced with a lack of knowledge or understanding about creative practice research. Since this lack has been observed in leadership structures and institutional systems, there is a need for 'distributed leadership', along with interdisciplinary and non-hierarchical dialogue within, and across, academic institutions.
3. Our supervisory experiences have led us to argue for the importance of enabling doctoral students to apply a craft approach in carving or weaving their own methodologies.

While these are distinct insights, collectively our experiences and observations suggest that creative practice doctoral supervision is a challenging yet rewarding role, and one that could be better understood and supported by academic institutions. It is also a space of significant

innovation within the overall field of postgraduate supervision. While there is a need for more opportunities to share such innovation, there are also practical implications which need to be addressed.

### *Practical implications – a Flexible Framework for Creative Practice Supervision*

Although this is not a research paper but more a conceptual exploration of creative practice doctoral supervision approaches, we note the following practical implications as part of our reflections. The ‘practice at core’ approach to supervision may offer some limitations as it relies mostly on creative practice developments to generate initial research movements. The student, if not fully engaged in making, has the risk of slowing down or compromising the progression of the project. In parallel, some art practices may not be sufficient to generate meaningful research insights and may or may not be appropriately paired with more traditional models such as participant observations and interviews. On the other hand, the idea of engaging with creative practice from the outset is useful to students that have very strong and developed art practices. As we discovered with supervision experience number 1, this can be a stimulating route to establish the fertile overlapping terrain between theory and practice

Our discussion of supervision experience number 2 underlines the importance of remaining openminded and non-hierarchical when supervising students who are also engaging with indigenous methodologies. This experience casts light onto the creative volatility of this space in which indigenous students are supported to weave together various approaches toward creative practice. This experience has reminded us that immense innovation can emerge from a student who is given the creative space to carve their own methodology. Having said this, a ‘hands-off’ stage of supervision may not work for every student, so supervisors need to be attuned in order to adjust approaches accordingly, and be prepared to pivot as the project progresses.

There is no guidebook for doing (or supervising) creative practice research, and we are not offering one. Doing so may constrain the possibilities for forging innovative methodological tools and supervisory practices. What we *are* offering here is a flexible framework that may be useful for educators who are encountering the uncertain terrain that goes with supervising creative practice research. For those engaged in supervising interdisciplinary research, the suitability of this framework lies in its malleability, which makes it ideal for supporting agile supervision practices that can respond to the unpredictability of creative practice research.

Rather than advocating for one correct or sustained approach, our framework draws on the strengths of several existing supervision models, which supervisors can navigate to suit the creative and cultural context of the student and their research. (*Tuakana-Teina*, peer-learning, Master-Apprentice, etc).

### **Concluding thoughts**

Recognising the exploratory and fluid nature of creative practice research, this paper offers a flexible framework that enables supervisors to draw from and adapt complementary pedagogical tools through different stages of the doctoral project. While this framework supports supervisors to respond with agility and creativity as the project develops, this in turn

provides an environment where students can drive the research with confidence and eventual autonomy.

In addition to offering a flexible framework, this paper invites further discussions, reflections and sharing of creative practice doctoral supervision as a means to invigorate the field of supervision and, consequently improve students' research journeys. Since creative practice doctoral education is a field in constant flux, this unpredictability can generate challenges for supervisors, students and universities. To generate insightful and critical discussions we shared three doctoral supervision experiences as exemplars of our responsive and creative approaches toward supervision.. Moving away from quantitative data gathering approaches enabled us to focus on reflective and critical commentary, while exploring key concepts, such as the idea of thinking through making as a basis for both supervision and methodological approaches.

As a result of critically reflecting on our supervision experiences, we are able to ascertain the value of creative practice at different stages during the completion of a doctoral project. As many universities in Aotearoa New Zealand are in the process of developing more comprehensive institutional processes, we argue for extensive supervisory support to help students as they navigate various scenarios and milestones. This extends to supporting students and their creative practices, relocating the student as an active *practitioner* in the process, and enabling them to carve unique methodological models.

Drawing from aspects of 'connected learning' (Nussbaum-Beach and Hall, 2012), 'peer learning' (Boud and Lee, 2005), and the *Tuakana-Teina* model we are able to articulate a supervision framework intersected by the ideas of learning through non-hierarchical collaboration and thinking through making (Duxbury *et al.*, 2008). While we have explored the conceptual elements of this framework, the flexibility of the framework can only be grasped by engaging with the tangible examples of our supervision experiences. Thus, demonstrating that the sharing of supervision experiences is essential to fulfil the need for more critical and insightful discussions, thereby invigorating the field of creative practice doctoral supervision.

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