Junctures
The Journal for Thematic Dialogue

26: gender

November 2026

https://doi.org/10.34074/junc.26014

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CREATING SPACE: INDIGENOUS, QUEER, AND GENDERED CONVERSATIONS IN CREATIVE PRACTICE, ARTS-BASED, AND MAHI TOI RESEARCH METHODS

Published by Otago Polytechnic Press. Otago Polytechnic Ltd is a subsidiary of Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology.

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ABSTRACT

As we seek theory and methods to begin to articulate identities of Indigenous queerness and gender diversity, a space of absence and potential unfolds before us. Indigeneity, queerness and particularly gender diversity are repeatedly positioned at the margins of research. This marginality is multiplied when considered in its intersections. We, as theorists, invert space to re-orient these marginalities at the centre, drawing on a combination of arts-based, mahi toi and creative research practices as a pathway for Indigenous, queer and gender diverse research. The potential embodied in this practice is explored through the metaphor of a waka journey. This begins with the origin point, exploring the literature that informs and shapes our approaches to research methods. We identify the motivations and origins of our PhD theses, the allure of arts-based methodologies in pursuing these projects and mahi toi as the ultimate descriptor of the artistic and creative methods we both are drawn into. Next, we gaze across the moana, which articulates the methodological and theoretical tensions we navigate and that shape our respective research approaches. Gliding through the moana, we navigate research on our waka, which articulates the vessels of our research and reveals our specific methods. We end with our landing point. Engaging the circularity of Indigenous epistemologies, we establish a new origin.[1] This reflects the journeys we undertake as theorists and develops pathways for future voyages. These phases of movement weave our narrative, asserting that creative practice is one avenue through which we can re-orient research to hold Indigenous, queer, trans and gender-diverse stories of identity, being and belonging.

THE FORM OF CONVERSATION

This article unfolds as a relational work as the two of us reflect on the creative mahi toi research methods we utilised in our PhD theses. Ahinata Kaitai-Mullane (she/her) is a queer Kāi Tahu scholar whose thesis was focused on Kāi Tahu wāhine and gender-diverse stories of identity and belonging.[2] Maia Berryman-Kamp (they/she/ia) descends from Te Puku o Te Ika a Māui. Their thesis explored how irahuhua connect to tā moko and kiritoi as markers of culture.[3]

We speak into this paper with two distinct layers of voices; our collective academic voice (e.g. "we explore …") and our individual discussant voices 'in conversation' (e.g. "my rakahau …"). This allows us to develop a coherent story of our journeys through creative practice methods, layered with our individual narratives and reflections. Both layers reflect a first-person voice—individual (I) and collective (we)—that embodies the value that both Queer theory and Indigenous theory place upon the critical orientation of self in research.[4] Use of both 'we' and 'I' is the first action we take as authors to disrupt the marginalisation of Indigi-Queer theory and identity in research. Established in the work of *tebrakunna* country and Emma Lee, "referent points of 'I' and 'you' are powerful tools of Western privilege: the 'you' is a space of Othering and occupying the margins (Said 1978), while to be an 'I' expresses faculty and demands a place for voice."[5] It is in resistance to this Othering that we claim our first-person voices.

Claiming authentic first-person voices is complicated by our tribal mita (dialects). While Maia is from Te Arawa, and therefore standardised forms of te reo Māori generally reflect their mita, Ahinata is Kāi Tahu. Kāi Tahu mita diverges significantly from other te reo Māori mita, including the most commonly cited difference where 'ng' becomes 'k' (e.g. 'wānanga' becomes 'wānaka').[6] Ahinata retains this mita in her individual first-person voice, but we utilise a standardised mita for our collective voice. To support you to navigate through these differing mita, we supply a glossary with both translations and dialectical variations at the end.

Our layered individual and collective voices draw on the stylistic choices Shawn Wilson makes in his 2008 book *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. While he is the sole author, he addresses the reader in three styles: academically; as members of his community through writing to his sons; and in the voices of collaborators, re-positioning these individual 'interviews' in conversation with each other.[7] These threads are visually cued through the style of text. This mirrors the way that we re-construct our research in conversation with one another. We utilise conventions of dialogue—signalled by single spacing, indentation and the attribution of our individual voices, MAIA and AHINATA—to develop reflective understandings of shared connections and differences in the use of arts-based research methods in our PhD rangahau. The convention of conversation, with multiple voices, allows for dynamic, cross-disciplinary and reflective engagement in questions of how creative practice methods emerge as Indigenous and Queer research praxis.

THE ORIGIN POINT

We are supposed to be our own storytellers,
songmakers, earth painters, trauma breakers,
with roots so long and strong they grip
the fingers of Papatūānuku like newborn
baby hands, never letting go.
—Jessica Hinerangi[8]

Research often commences (and rarely continues) in a straightforward manner. As researchers, we begin the process by identifying what we want to research, then exploring what has been done already. Here, we map our engagement with these two processes, engaging the questions and literature that constitute our grounding and therefore our point of origin. Together we find arts-based, and later mahi toi, methods as an origin point to set sail from.

Way back at the beginning, what did you want to research?

AHINATA: My rangahau is Kāi Tahu centred. It looked to build upon Kāi Tahu stories of identity to understand how we, as wāhine and gender diverse Kāi Tahu, learn, care for and grow into our identities. The purpose of this project was threefold: to assert a place within our communities for diverse embodiments of Kāi Tahu identities; to understand the layered factors that shape our understandings of our selves; and to identify enablers and barriers that impact wāhine and gender diverse Kāi Tahu to be ourselves in our diversity. This project, therefore, required a vessel that all Kāi Tahu could hop aboard, express ourselves through and belong in. This search for the tools to build an appropriate waka eventually led me to creative practice.

MAIA: As with a lot of research into belonging and identity, I was drawn into the topic of Māori gender diversity based on personal experience. I've always been fascinated with how the way we look alters how we are treated, and the visual shorthands people use to build identity without speech. Gender, in particular, is something deeply visual, where we can pull together a few visual symbols and craft a man or a woman. The logic of these assemblages always seemed to escape me, as I routinely found myself the exception to the rule of gender. I was too tall and broad to comfortably be seen as a woman, but too soft to be seen as a man. Being mixed race also meant I was routinely faced with opposing notions of gender—the sports shirts and sweatpants that marked me as a tomboy in the Pākehā world were just normal clothing in te ao Māori, while the long hair which was normal in te ao Māori was an unquestionable sign of girlhood in the Pākehā world. I lived in this little liminal zone for as long as I could, darting between genders and between cultures. This was largely inconsequential as a child, but as I grew up, gender started to bear down on me.

In Māori spaces, I started to be asked the question: when 'are you getting your moko kauae?' I always shrugged it off, not knowing what was uncomfortable about it. Then I realised—I had never been asked if I would consider a mataora. They had read me as a woman and assumed I would be marked accordingly. For someone who had escaped gender, all of a sudden it was staring me in the face.

> I started to think about what would happen if I was marked, how a moko kanohi might look for someone who didn't want to be seen as a woman and whether I would feel like a fraud to wear those markings. No one had spoken to gender-diverse Māori about our take on the matter. My thesis therefore explored how irahuhua connect to tā moko and skin marking and what this says about gender and belonging.

The two of us first converged in our interest in doing research with Māori and queer identity at the centre. Ahinata did this through an iwi-specific Kāi Tahu lens focused on wāhine and gender-diverse stories of identity. Maia was more specific in their focus on irahuhua identities, while engaging a larger scope through Māori from diverse hapū and iwi backgrounds. Dual foci of queerness—specifically in relation to gender—and Indigeneity paved our way toward mahi toi methods.

Coming To Creative Practice as Method

Arts-based methods are a relatively self-explanatory concept: research methods based in the production of art. Unlike textual analysis where art is the object of study, arts-based methods are a form of research in which the means of inquiry are also the mode of inquiry, "congruent with a sociomaterial, performative perspective."[9] These methods are often transdisciplinary and appear across virtually every artistic medium.[10] Central to arts-based methods is the shift from passive to active research. The physicality of the work requires sustained presence by the creator; a constant reminder that one is in the act of producing and thus researching.[11] Arts-based methods include situations where "the story behind the production process of the artefact is presented, alongside the artefact (image) itself and the narrative of its interpretation, drawing on the voices of creator, researcher and audience" to create a holistic story of the 'data' gathered.[12] Put simply, arts-based methods embody a way of doing research which is shaped by the practice of art.

Arts-based methods are deeply contextual and tend to meet research participants in a medium that they are either familiar with or wish to explore.[13] This is particularly critical in Queer and gendered research, where disparate communities of Queer people can be connected by a visual and symbolic language such as flags, specific flowers, handkerchiefs and carabiners, fashion or aesthetics.[14] The familiarity of arts-based methods can result in an "extraordinary process of civil, participatory collaboration that joins the researcher with the researched in an ongoing moral dialogue,"[15] enabling connection, agency and transformation.[16]

Arts-based methods produce knowledge and elicit information, but they also assist us to re-examine existing knowledge, offering different perspectives.[17] They open up an "ethic of imagination [which] connects our stories to the present, allowing creative and active engagement in reimagining, reinterpreting, and revitalising our knowledge in our current context."[18] Arts-based methods record what is experienced, offering ways to understand and interpret it through avenues that are often considered fringe or suspect.[19] To re-imagine through art challenges epistemological norms in colonial environments, encouraging new relationships to knowledge outside of written replication. Art invites the manipulation and shaping of our epistemic world physically and theoretically.

So, what led you to creative practice research methods?

AHINATA: Creativity feels sometimes like it's in my blood—in my whakapapa. Creating has always been a part of my life. My hākui is a weaver; she made kete, as well as jewellery from muka and pāua when I was a kid. My auntie was an artist; she painted, and collaged, and made the best birthday cards. I grew up making costumes and putiputi, painting, drawing, sewing and moulding things into being. As a teenager, I found my voice on stage, through theatre, poetry and, later, in my early 20s, through cabaret and drag. Having conversations, and telling stories, throughout my life has always involved doing together and doing creatively.

Jumping forward, I started my first degree doing theatre studies and ended it doing gender studies. At this point, my understanding of theory and methodology drew on post-structuralism and was firmly grounded in Western research practice: thirty-plus participants, interview style inquiries and thematic coding for analysis. It was not until my Master's and an abrupt challenge to my worldview, through the scholarship of Audre Lorde[20]—begging the question: have I been using colonial tools this whole time?—and a sudden immersion in Indigenous research paradigms, through Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Shawn Wilson, Ngahuia Murphy and Michelle Erai's works, that I returned to considering the ways of knowing, doing and being that thrived in my childhood.[21]

MAIA: Almost the opposite to Ahinata, arts have never been a major part of my life. They held fascination, but I never imagined they would be a research method or something that could be more than just a signifier of some deeper truth. I'm largely a words person, the more analytic, strict and calculating the better. I planned that my rangahau would fall in line with this, so I sought out ways to make discursive work resonate with communities. At the beginning of my thesis, I sat in on a two-day seminar led by Caroline Lenette on Participatory Action Research (PAR). In PAR, participants don't just engage with outcomes but with research development as well.[22] I started to think about what an irahuhua research method could look like if it were to be *participatory*, not just 'inclusive.' Of course, the immediate participatory method fitting Māori research is wānanga. Arguably the most common Māori qualitative research method, wānanga allows a more democratic research process as there is "emphasis on the needs, priorities, and knowledge base of the collective which forms a central value of wānanga as a culturally grounded and empowering research methodology."[23] I felt this was a natural end point for me; staying in the realm of the unchanging written word. However, Brad Coombes pushes Māori research to explore "more experimentation with performative and generative approaches to participatory action" rather than staying solely in a space of wānanga.[24] I looked for a way to honour the research focus and the participants, ensuring that those who had historically been excluded from the written record would be able to speak. For gender-diverse Māori who have long been stopped from speaking in Māori spaces, tying in wānanga to other methods can provide multiple pathways to participation. In a study of the art of tā moko and the knowledge it holds, art as a site of knowledge production within the research itself made sense. Creative practice could challenge how we see 'voice' and 'speech' in research and allow those without the confidence to speak to still be seen.

From our divergent starting points and experiences, we both began to understand arts-based research as a possibility for carrying our rangahau and our stories. As we took a good look around and at our origin point, we sought to establish materials that already exist on our shores, and which could be drawn upon to pull our waka into being.

Māori Musings on Art and Research

In all its varied forms—from movements to stories to objects—art lies at the base of many Indigenous societies and is a key tool for exploring how we come to be and live in the world.[25] However, coming up against colonial systems, Indigenous knowledges—particularly those which involve artistic practices—are often marginalised and disrespected.[26] One of the issues with legitimacy is that Indigenous knowledge pools are "diverse and must be learned in the similar diverse and meaningful ways that the people have learned it for it to have continuing vitality and meaning."[27] Creative practice methods expand the confines of research, restore legitimacy to Indigenous epistemic traditions, foster inter-generational relationships, and transmit knowledge into our communities.[28] In artistic practice, we connect across oceans, the embodied practice of art-making is tied fundamentally with knowledge creation and research.

In a Māori environment, art is often translated as 'toi'. Intentionally broad, toi encapsulates all of the elements of art including fine and performance art, visual art, soundscapes, and is both a noun and a verb.[29] Toi is derived from within and outside of word and/or image, where the lines between fine and performance art are blurred. Toi is a way in which the ethereal comes to be known, if only for a moment. Ahinata Kaitai-Mullane crafts a definition where "[m]ahi toi is the process and product of transformation: an idea, a story, a concept is translated through creativity into something that others can experience … made sensorial through doing: through the conduit of takata and our bodies."[30] Toi is not dependent on the end result (often categorised into a specific form such as painting, film, soundscape or fashion item), but on the process of creation. Toi is the art, the knowledge and the production of knowledge all in one, or—as both Jani Wilson and Tangaroa Paora frame it—the link between the physical and conceptual.[31]

Deidre Brown, Ngarino Ellis and Jonathan Mane-Wheoki explain that "'toi' is a word that encompasses both art and knowledge,"[32] while both Kathie Irwin and Aileen Moreton-Robinson indicate that for Indigenous women the lines between arts, healing, knowledge and politics are blurred—if they are present at all.[33] Kahurangi Rora Waititi explicitly recognises that toi refers to "communication platforms our ancestors developed to disseminate knowledge, hold our histories, and to entertain and convey lessons and teachings."[34] The hidden, obscured, fleeting and contextual sit at the core of toi, and taking these practices seriously reveals similarly temporal knowledge. Toi not only provides the material containing knowledge but also provides the tools with which to *do* both the knowing and recording. Arts-based, creative practice methods grounded specifically in mahi toi constitute our shared origin point: creative practice as an invitation to nurture the gathering and production of knowledge.

Tensions In the Ground

While mahi toi methods constitute a natural origin point for the two of us, they are not without tensions. Choosing embodied creative practice to navigate through research

is, as established, deeply Indigenous. It is also rife with resistance from institutions and theorists whose epistemological grounding covets 'rational' and 'measurable' research. Rejection of creative practice methods in Indigenous knowledge production is deeply gendered, as colonisation "prioritised which knowledge was important and they did not consider Māori women's knowledge valid."[35] Ereni Pūtere argues that Te Whare Pora (the traditional institution of weaving) and Te Whare Wānaka/Wānanga (of knowledge deliberation) were equally weighted twins.[36] She notes that while these whare was aligned to the feminine and masculine respectively, neither was entirely restrictive and the totalising associations were introduced with colonisation. Colonial ethnographers recognised Te Whare Wānaka as a 'primitive' yet familiar masculine symposium style of knowledge sharing grounded in debate, and imposed a hierarchy of value, restricting mahi toi to arts, not as a twin in the production of knowledge.[37] In museums and cabinets of curiosity, the metadata of raranga focuses on function, instead of provenance and form, further reducing its place as a holder of knowledge.[38] Mana Wāhine theorists continually challenge this rejection of feminised arts as forms of knowledge production.[39] Raranga, in particular, is deployed as a specifically Māori research method, with practitioners weaving the raranga throughout their *process* of research, instead of limiting it to text to be 'read' or an elicitation method.[40] Mahi toi methods in Indigenous gendered research directly connect to themes of misogyny and patriarchy, the rejection of certain forms of knowledge and labour in favour of others and the impact of colonisation on gender relations and knowledge production. We both were confronted by mechanisms of patriarchal, misogynistic and deeply colonial epistemologies in our exploration of research methods. Our works resist these confines, like the Mana Wāhine and Queer theorists that proceed us.

Another tension that emerges is temporal; between the impetus to fossilise culture and artistic practice in the pre-colonial past and adapt to the realities of the present. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and colleagues[44] describe a contested process where the bone, stone and wood uhi used to grant tā moko were replaced by metal implements that allowed for swifter work, but at a disconnect from traditional materials.[41] Christine Rogers[45] stitches together her identity, narrative and arts practice through the art of her Ngāi Tahu and Pākehā grandmother Elizabeth Arnett (née Leader), tying Māori imagery down with European technique and materials.[42] Here, she grapples with feeling 'Māori enough' to use 'traditional' art forms, due to her own upbringing within differing worlds. Ellis and Robertson chart the troubled relationship Māori have with photography as a medium, which has been used to exploit but has also produced treasured images and the desire for the camera to be considered part of the Māori artistic family.[43] Many gender-diverse Māori writers deploy photoelicitation, portraiture and collage works to explore being gender-diverse and Māori, connecting the old and new, Māori and non-Māori worlds.[44] Questions of 'authentic practice' abound here, alongside questions of 'authentic knowledge.' Tāwhanga Mary-Legs Nopera argues that the use of contemporary media formats brings toi into the modern world, while simultaneously rejecting modernity's ownership of the image of Indigenous peoples.[45] Arts-based methods in Māori research can allow us to re/claim and re/craft our own artistic legacies, embracing the tools that are part of our presents and futures, if not parts of our pasts. They encourage us to question what is considered traditional, how culture and knowledge develop and how far to go when setting down the lines between Indigenous and colonial.

Through grounding in creative practice and mahi toi, as well as navigation of tensions and challenges to arts as research theory and practice, we both came to carve out distinct old/new ways of integrating creativity, theory, and praxis.

The Moana

> *I am standing before ocean with tūmanako and a dream.*
> —Eartha Davis[46]

As we leave the shores of the known in pursuit of something more, we move into the ocean. In the metaphor underpinning the article, we position knowledge as a vast sea. For Jo Smith, the sea "is an intellectual and imaginary space, inspired by 'the real' and embedded in specific locations, a concept that stresses connectedness across space and time, and a concept that draws one into a relationship with others, without privileging a single view point."[47] When out in the moana, the coastline falls out of view and the mountains vanish into nothingness. The sea merges with the horizon to form an encapsulating sphere above and below the voyager, an ocean which is "uncontainable and pays no respect to territoriality."[48] Our origin point gives us information on what to expect when undertaking research and primes us as much as possible. Once in the field, however, researchers constantly adapt and change, entering into a liminal state.

There are endless research models and methods which already exist, why did, or didn't, you pick these up?

AHINATA: The question of how to *do* the research actually did begin for me with looking at past ways of doing, though extended back beyond what is classified as 'research methods.' I began with an ongoing reflexive question: how would my tīpuna—my ancestors—do this? This is the question that grounded the project and shaped the theory, methodology, methods and practices that brought the project into being. Seeking to *do*, inspired by your tīpuna, is how Kim McBreen defines tikaka.[49] It is this connection—this inspiration—that paved the way toward creative practice as research method, but which also led me away from other theorists' pre-established methods.

Temporal connection to ancestors, and to ancestral knowledge, is a cornerstone of an Indigenous research paradigm. This is reflected not only in theory that is coveted by the academy but also in creative expressions of Indigenous lived realities.[50] Poet Tayi Tibble asserts "my ancestors ride wit me";[51] playwright Cindy Diver draws her ancestor Pātahi into dialogue with a fictional modern day descendant, Elizabeth;[52] artist Xoë Hall brings the atua we descend from crashing into our built urban environments.[53] In the absence of an existing Kāi Tahu, Queer, creative research method, I constructed one in relationship with the knowledge, experiences and stories of my tīpuna. Thus, the question of how to *do* this research was answered by tīpuna—by an Indigenous research paradigm that connects us temporally through action to the creative and embodied practices of tīpuna.

This focus on Kāi Tahu tīpuna knowledge and practices positioned a mōkihi as the ideal vessel to carry to stories of whanauka, both metaphorically and tangibly. Mōkihi are traditional Kāi Tahu vessels that are canoe-like in shape and made most frequently—and effectively—from raupō.[54] The raupō is dried and latched in

bundles to make a very buoyant vessel, which was utilised extensively by Kāi Tahu to both cross and traverse downriver during seasonal food gathering.[55] Mōkihi are practical, easy to make, un-gendered and noa (unrestricted) creations that represent the everyday knowledge of our ancestors. This made them the ideal creative practice for Kāi Tahu research.

MAIA: When coming to terms with the fact that research about art could be done through art, I turned back to my home discipline of Cultural Anthropology. As an Indigenous anthropologist, this was not a fun reflection. Tā moko and other Pasifika tattoo traditions have long been a favourite topic for non-Indigenous anthropologists to ogle at and possess.[56] As Puawai Cairns writes: "much has been made by Pākehā researchers about tā moko as a dying art of a dying race."[57] Certainly, anthropology has a troubling colonial legacy,[58] but there has been movement in the discipline away from exploitative research practices. Part of this has been re-assessing the tools of research. Key here is visual ethnography, a specific style of recording human activity through visual imagery which hones in on an individual's way of moving through the world, challenging who and what is being looked at.[59] It is deeply critical of the ethnographer's controlling lens, and has shifted the aim of ethnography from documenting Other cultures, to telling stories with them.[60] However, the gap between the empowering theory of ethnography and the practice in Indigenous communities is often vast. To use a method so tightly bound to anthropology, a discipline which still holds connotations of extraction, empire and death for Indigenous peoples, felt like repeating the same patterns but with a Māori twist. While promising, the idea of purely visual ethnography was counter to the primary ethics of the research—community voice and development. As such, I knew that I would need to create a method in-between ethnography and art, wānanga and participant observation.

Drawing on the knowledge established in our origin point, we both surveyed the moana with a view to adaptation and the ability to occupy plural and between spaces as central.

Epistemic Liminality

As we situate ourselves as Indigi-Queer researchers engaged in mahi toi, not only do we adapt to the waves breaking on the moana, we also embrace the liminality of our journeys. Liminality has often sat at the heart of work to do with how people move through the world and change their belonging and place in society.[61] The liminal is not a rejection of form and structure; rather, it is a purposeful and temporary abandonment of it. Just as the moana appears to be an empty mass of space which extends on all sides but actually contains millions of interactions and observable points, liminality offers new possibilities for production of knowledge and understanding if one is able to keep one's head and avoid getting swallowed.

Much work has been done to explore how the liminal can be a site of potential instead of rejection in Indigenous works. Gloria Anzaldúa defines liminal spaces as borderlands, spaces of transition and in-betweenness, a metaphorical bridge and resting point.[62] Ross Hemera observes this liminal in-betweenness as a wātea, and concludes it is a challenge that "has been handed down to me from my ancestors: 'this is something for you to use Ross, as an artist, go and use it, do something with it, do something with that

space.'"[63] The prefix wā carries multiple 'in-between' meanings of time, season, space, depth and truth, and the emptiness becomes a potential to follow any one of these meanings. Seuta'afili Patrick Thomsen and Joshua Iosefo-Williams identify that across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa emerges a similar idea of vā, a "third space of in-between."[64] Garrick Cooper actualises "shifting the geography of reason" and moves knowledge into the epistemic wilderness outside of institutional structures and Eurocentric scaffolds.[65] There is a legacy of liminality as a form of in-between nothingness in Queer feminist theory as well. Susan Stryker in particular has pushed the idea that trans-identity is a sort of "being and becoming that emerges from a nothingness that nevertheless teems with lively potentials."[66] Karen Barad reinforces Stryker through their work in quantum physics, noting that "the quantum vacuum is more like an ongoing questioning of the nature of emptiness than anything like a lack. The ongoing questioning of itself (and itself and it and self) is what generates, or rather is, the structure of nothingness."[67] Here, the nothingness and the process of self-birth within the chaos are key terms when exploring trans identity. For method and research production, exploring the structure, form and quality of nothingness opens up areas of inquiry which had previously been considered empty.

Mahi toi methods are critical when exploring the liminal, the vā, the wātea, the wilderness or the rich potential embodied in nothingness. These sites of careful and purposeful knowledge production and recognition—where the rules and limitations of traditional epistemic practice fall away and new knowledges can come to the fore—are deeply productive if one is able to navigate them. If arts-based methods are just thrown together, however, and "unsuitably trained outsiders" are "allowed too much freedom … we need to take into account the costs in both human-physical and spiritual terms."[68] Throughout our conversation, we emphasise that each of us chose our methods carefully, taking into account the journey we were undertaking, the participants we would bring with us and the purpose of the voyage. Drawing from the grounding of our origin point, it is clear that arts-based methods can be supportive or primary. They can elicit knowledge or create it. We know that the layered realities of being queer, gender diverse and Indigenous culminate in our scholarly positioning in a moana of betweenness: of epistemic wilderness and productive nothingness; at borderlands and in liminality. Navigation of this moana requires a waka, a vessel.

Our Waka

> *My ancestors knew the exact distance between the stars*
> *and still had the desire to risk it all anyway. Voyaging*
> *to the horizon where this world meets the next, feeling*
> *for the boundary, and pushing the sky out even further.*
> —Tayi Tibble[69]

We steer through this epistemic moana on vessels crafted with the materials gifted by the origin point. The connection between the origin point and the waka never fades, as it is the enduring bind of whakapapa and mauri: "[a] waka's mauri is the totality of all the elements, actions, attitudes and processes that go into it, not only when it was built, but every after."[70] Waka have long been markers of Māori epistemic practice and ability, with complex navigational systems charting their ways across the largest body of water on the planet.[71] We begin with a description of the waka we used to journey

through our theses, focusing on the waka in action. This embodies how we come to navigate research and what mahi toi methods we used to chart through the epistemic moana and into the unknown.

Navigating the Moana

How did your mahi toi research methods play out?

AHINATA: So, my methods played out as a wānaka on one of my marae. This spatially and culturally situated us in a Kāi Tahu locality. We gathered as a group of wāhine and gender-diverse Kāi Tahu to collectively create and reflect on our stories of gender, queerness, Kāi Tahu identity and belonging. At the wānaka, creative practice unfolded in two distinct layers: creating individual visual responses to discussion and weaving them all together into a mōkihi. This embodies elements of both creative expression as research methodology and resurgence of Indigenous knowledges and practices.

You may find yourself asking: what do I mean by visual responses? By design, because of the fluidity and flexibility in how this creative practice occurred, it is difficult to articulate. I brought with me dried corn husks as canvases—taking the place of raupō which would usually be the material for making mōkihi,[72] but were seasonally unavailable—and a range of art supplies such as paint, paint pens, markers, chalk and oil pastels. Following whakawhanaukataka, the materials were laid out and I explained that we would use the corn husks to create as we talked. It was made clear that the creations whanauka made with these supplies would be brought together into a singular mōkihi, and that I would not analyse what was created. This affirmed that there was no pressure for these creations to be 'masterpieces' and situated this creative practice as part of the process of discussion, rather than as an object for analysis or extraction. Whanauka worked at different paces and with preference for different mediums and styles, some creating literal depictions reflecting the discussion, some using words, some creating patterns and colours. At the end of this process, whanauka were given the opportunity to go around and talk about what they had depicted and highlight key parts of the discussion that really resonated with them. This process integrated creativity as a foundational element of doing together, rather than as a supplementary addition. It also highlighted the rakatirataka (self-determination) and mana (authority, power, prestige) of whanauka to determine their stories and creations, minimising feelings of shyness and pressure to create in specific ways or for specific audiences.

The next layer of creative practice is the actual construction of a mōkihi. After a break for kai and giving a chance for the artworks to dry, we began to work toward creating a single mōkihi from our collective creative contributions. Mōkihi making thus functioned as a process of data generation and a reciprocal exchange of knowledge. Creating together facilitated conversations, and whanauka left with new knowledge on how to make a mōkihi. This relates to Indigenous knowledge resurgence—which is explored specifically in relation to Kāi Tahu by Kerri Cleaver—and to mahi toi as research practice in the way that Hinekura Smith utilises it.[73] Indigenous resurgence has developed as a significant strand of Indigenous theory,

practice, activism and resistance. Hōkūlani K. Aikau[79] explains that "at the core of Indigenous resurgence is re-establishing and re-enforcing the relationships among people, place, and practices."[74] In the ongoing process of combatting colonialism in our communities, resurgence asks for more than decolonisation—more than the centring of colonialism in our identities and actions. Resurgence asks us to consider, when we peel back the layered colonialism that is suffocating us, what then? Moana Jackson addresses this question with an 'ethic of restoration'; working to restore Māori self-determination and ways of knowing, doing, and being.[75] Gina Starblanket elaborates on the connection between resurgence and restoration: "[It refers] to the course of action geared towards the revitalization of our traditional lifeways … contribut[ing] to the restoration of our ability to practice the relationships with people, places and practices that were disrupted through colonialism."[76] Making mōkihi is a practice that almost reached extinction; was almost lost to our communities, with only one whanaunga carrying that knowledge. In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to revitalise it as a practice, though it remains knowledge not many Kāi Tahu possess.[77] To both teach and learn mōkihi making is to engage collectively in an act of Kāi Tahu resurgence.

In this second layer of the creative practice of the wānaka, the focus of doing was less engaged in creative expression, and more grounded in the resurgence and sharing of tīpuna knowledge. To learn how to make a mōkihi is not expressive of individuality, but rather focuses on bringing together individual visual responses into a collective bound by our ancestral knowledge. Betasamosake Simpson explains that "'Indigenous theory' is lived, not just discussed and actualised in the intellectual realm."[78] Making a mōkihi collectively as a research method answered this challenge, offering whanauka an opportunity to *live* identity at the same time as discussing it; to embody and articulate together.

MAIA: Building on experimentative PAR and a desire for an irahuhua-specific method, I combined wānanga with participant observation, autoethnography and two mahi toi methods. The first was a conventional arts-based method: bodymapping. The second was more distinct and a direct response to the limitations of undertaking research in a tika way: tattooing-as-method. Instead of seeing one method as supplementary to another, they became equally load-bearing strands in which participants could connect to the research when and how they wanted.

At the heart of research to do with gender, and research to do with tā moko, lies the body. It became clear early in the research process that very few people had actually asked Māori how we conceptualise our bodies. Instead, literature assumed that we saw the physical body the same way that other cultures did.[79] Due to the scarcity of work on Māori gender diversity, how irahuhua conceptualised our bodies was even lighter, essentially existing in a handful of theses and tied into broader takatāpui studies, which included cisgender Māori. As such, I knew that I wanted to address the question of the body. Where the body has been a subject of discussion in Māori-led research, it has often been approached through physical art and representative metaphor, as opposed to wānanga and dialogue based on recognition of the immediacy and lived reality of

the body.[80] Arts-based methods to do with the body (and gender specifically) often reference the method of bodymapping. Bodymapping has its roots in research to do with women's reproductive rights and identity across cultures, allowing holistic understandings of the body and the ability to represent more than is visible to the human eye, where women created representations of their bodies through paper and pen.[81] Bodymaps "have the capacity to represent symbolically the ways in which interactions with others and cultural meanings are inscribed and performed through the body."[82]

In the thesis research, the prompt given to generate the bodymaps was simple: 'How do YOU be YOU if you cannot use words?' The bodymaps generated for the thesis ranged in appearance from traditional outlines of the body to three-dimensional paper pou, which represented the carvings in wharenui, and drawings of marae and trees. The bodymaps revealed the complexity of ways in which irahuhua conceptualised their bodies and the way that the visual markers of identity fold into each other. They were catalysts for conversation and connection, and allowed participants to take control of what was being seen and recorded in the research.

For the second mahi toi method, I essentially built something new. The catalyst for using these methods came from a suspicion of the way research had been done so far. As such, I started to look at how research could not only produce benefits but be beneficial in and of itself. How could the process of creating data support participants? Part of the benefit of research comes from knowing the specifics of those being researched with. In the case of irahuhua, most had tattoos, loved to be tattooed and wanted more Māori tattoos. Though I never thought it would get past the ethics committee, I took a shot in the dark: let me pay for participants to be tattooed; let me be tattooed; and then let me put these together to understand how Māori artists build Māori designs for gender-diverse Māori. Incredibly, the ethics committee accepted the method, and I was booking in for two takatāpui artists to tattoo myself and my participants with designs made for us and by us. The data collection at these instances was rich, and participants were given the option for an experience that only the research could facilitate. Some of them have gone on to build up those pieces, either following the specific style or taking them as the starting point of full sleeves. Others built connections through being tattooed together, and the artists were able to communicate with themselves and participants in an environment they controlled. They spoke through their art, and all I had to do was organise the visual into the written.

We ended up defining not only new knowledge, but also new art. From the thesis sprung the term 'kiritoi,' a 'by Māori for Māori' art form grounded in our tikanga, but not as strict as tā moko. I admit that I underestimated how profound this element of the research would be, given that it partly came up as a way to skirt around limiting 'koha' policies that universities require. Māori tattoo, whether that be tā moko or kiritoi, relies on complex information systems based in whakapapa and can be used to signal one's family, status or life story. Markings contain knowledge, bodies are equally loaded as sites of knowledge production and practitioners take on roles varying from healers to epistemic authorities and

spiritual protectors for both the bearer and the art form. Combining both mahi toi methods provided a deeper connection to participants and knowledge than a distanced, 'objective' approach ever could.

The Landing Point

At the start there is nothing but black sand
except it is wider than we can know,
deeper than we can feel.
In fact, we are not yet a we,
but are within it,
the pulse of potential.
—Ruby Solly[83]

Each voyage is circular. Just as Matawhaorua waka was rebuilt into Ngātokimatawhaorua for a new generation to sail along the routes of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa to Aotearoa, every landing point becomes an origin point. The knowledge we fish from the epistemic moana is woven into the waka that leave on their own journeys. The technical elements, tried and tested out in the moana, are either picked up or discarded for something more effective. Some waka never land, but settle to the floor of the moana and turn into something more—a journey completed, an outcome reached.

To close this journey, and to pave the way for future queer, gender diverse, Māori, and Indigenous scholars, activists, artists and theorists, we leave you with reflections that may become a new beginning:

AHINATA: Time spent with my whanauka at our wānaka filled me with hope, and the strongest sense of belonging. That was the first thing I wanted to make sure my research did: create a space of belonging for Kāi Tahu in our diversity, as queer, gender-diverse, trans, with various experiences and connections; a space to *be* and belong as Kāi Tahu.

MAIA: Despite recognition of toi as knowledge, the use of mahi toi *methods* in Māori research is rare. Many adherents of Kaupapa Māori favour dialogue as the principal form of knowledge creation.[84] Though I still hold a soft spot for wānanga, and the allure of the theoretical pulls me into endless readings about affect theory, mahi toi methods have become one of the foremost methods in my arsenal. Tattooing, a practice often stigmatised and belittled, reduced to stereotypes or psychosocial phenomena, offers real value for future research if we are willing to lean into it and literally put our bodies on the line for our work.

Throughout our theses, we considered the ways that research exists in its own little world. Linda Tuhiwai Smith talks—to paraphrase a little—about the resistance embedded in our communities to researchers sucking us dry of our stories.[85] These stories, then, are frequently reproduced in purposefully exclusive and complex language and hidden behind journals' paywalls. Our works look at the way that we can do research that flows stories back into our communities and in ways that matter to our people, not just as reports or academic articles. This is one of the greatest offerings mahi toi methods gift to researchers; toi whose form holds depth, meaning and theory, by, and for, our people.

Hamley et al. "leave behind a trail for other (LGBTIQ+) Indigenous researchers to map their own creative pathways in research. This speaks to a form of research that transcends the binarism between scholars and communities and instead implicates us within shared research practices of hope and care."[86] From when we began planning this paper, one of the resounding reflections that has stuck is the idea of deepening the paths for future Indigi-Queer researchers, not as an abstract concept but as people we know who are beginning research journeys of their own. We found ourselves in epistemic wilderness—traversing vast oceans—and found pathways and comfort there, but we also have hope that through this work we can construct origin points that prove to be tools for those who follow us.

the stomach gurgles
for some real ass community
a million hers across the age
rip up the boards of this rundown stage
explode out across te moana nui a kiwa
till we right ourselves back to
islander
tangata
atua
—essa may ranapiri[87]

GLOSSARY

Te Reo Māori	Kāi Tahu mita	Translation
Irahuhua		Gender-diverse Māori
Kai		Food/s
Kete		Basket/s
Kiritoi		Skin marking/s
Koha		Gift/reciprocal offering
Māmā	Hākui	Mother/s
Mana		Power/authority/prestige
Mana Wāhine		A theoretical and artistic movement recognising the power and authority of Māori women, challenging cisheteropatriarchy.
Marae		Marae function as our gathering places. A marae is a complex made of a number of aspects, usually a wharenui/meeting house, a wharekai/place for eating, outdoor space, and often other aspects such as an urupā/burial grounds.
Mataora		Masculine face marking
Mauri		Lifeforce
Mita		Dialect
Moana		Ocean/s
	Mōkihi	A Kāi Tahu vessel
Moko kanohi		Face marking/s
Moko kauae		Feminine chin/lip marking/s
Muka		Fibre from inside harakeke/flax plants
Noa		Unrestricted
Pākehā		Non-Māori; usually referring to those of European descent
Pāua		Abalone
Pou		Post/s/pillar/s
Putiputi		Flower/s
Rangahau	Rakahau	Research/pursuit
Raranga	Raraka	Weaving
Raupō		Bulrush
Tā moko		Ancestral skin marking/s
Takatāpui		A broad Queer Māori identity
Te Reo Māori		Māori language
Tika		To be right/correct
Tikanga	Tikaka	Process and procedure that governs the right way of doing things
Toi / Mahi toi		Art/s
Tupuna / Tūpuna	Tipuna / Tīpuna	Ancestor / Ancestors
Wāhine		Women/feminine gendered identity
Waka		Vessel/s
Wānanga	Wānaka	A collective gathering to discuss and/or do together
Whakapapa		Genealogical connections which link us to our ancestors and atua
Whānau		Family; the smallest political and economic unit of Māori society
Whanaunga	Whanauka	Relations

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Maia Berryman-Kamp (they/she/ia) descends from Te Puku o te Ika a Māui, through the waka Te Arawa, Mātaatua, and Tainui. Berryman-Kamp's PhD thesis through Victoria University of Wellington focuses on irahuhua (gender-diverse Māori) relationships to tā moko and embodiment politics, and they have published in the fields of Māori gender history and Queer theory. They also research Indigenous women's health responses to HIV and AIDS, LGBTQ+ Māori political landscapes, and Indigi-Queer methodological expansions.

Acknowledgement: Funding: This research was supported by a combination of scholarships awarded by Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, the Māori Education Trust, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, and Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga.

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