TIKANGA-INFORMED CONSIDERATIONS FOR MĀORI GENDER DIVERSITY

Maia Berryman-Kamp*

Abstract

Māori research is increasingly recognising the diversity of Māori, and no area displays this internal variation more than academic considerations of Māori gender diversity and takatāpui, which are slowly but significantly rising. While researchers have focused significantly on unearthing the diversity and realities of Māori sexuality, gender diversity has been largely overlooked. This research proposes that there is a tikanga-informed basis for current Māori expressions of gender diversity and explores the early imposition of colonial gender roles onto Māori, the principles that informed gender diversity and fluidity for Māori before these colonial roles, and the traditional narratives that may have gender diversity woven into them. By collating a series of considerations regarding Māori gender diversity, this research lays a foundation for future researchers in this area to build from, and opens up new considerations of how tikanga and gender are connected to one another in modern Māori cultures.

Keywords

gender diversity, narrative, oral traditions, takatāpui

Introduction

Gender diversity is a field of study that is often overlooked in Kaupapa Māori research, but it is one that has significant ramifications for Māori. The term *gender diversity* is somewhat new linguistically, and this youthfulness is often used to suggest that it has no historic grounds. This somewhat short-sighted approach is pushed back against by many Queer and feminist theorists, who argue that the youthfulness of a term does not translate to the youthfulness of a practice (Butler, 2006; CRASSH Cambridge, 2019; Halberstam, 2005; Sedgwick, 1993) and that gender diversity is one of a long line of terms that indicate a deviance from binary male/female practices. In this

understanding of gender, the binary is that of masculine and feminine, not male and female. The former signifies a continuum of sorts, where people are placed varyingly between the two, while the latter is often seen as a set of distinct identities that influence political rights, medical practice and personal abilities. Whether it is the anthropological term of the third sex (Lang & Kuhnle, 2008) or the medicalised transsexual (Amin, 2022), the phenomenon of people's bodies falling out of what is considered a gendered norm has existed across times, cultures and environments. The term gender diversity was chosen in this article because it is the broadest, not requiring any form of transition or reference to male or female, and working across

*   Te Arawa me Mataatua. PhD Candidate, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.
    Email: maia.berrryman-kamp@vuw.ac.nz

both Pākehā and Māori cultural contexts. It is intentionally vague, revealing the loose nature of gender as a whole. It is this malleability that makes the term most appropriate since I argue that the fluid nature of tikanga aligns well with an approach to gender that favours adaptability and contextual consideration.

A term notably absent from the bulk of the article is *takatāpui*, deriving from the pūrākau of the love between Te Arawa ancestor Tutanekai and his manservant, Tiki. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Lee Smith rediscovered the term in the 1970s and brought it into the academic world as evidence of complex sexual relationships concerning gender (Kerekere, 2017), and it has since taken dominance as the prominent term for LGBTQ+ Māori (Murray, 2003; University of Otago, Wellington, 2020). Takatāpui can be considered a backwards reclamation of a term that has been picked up in the face of colonisation to encompass a legitimate identity grounded in oral tradition and historic narratives. This universal moniker has not come without criticism, as Mcbreen labels the term an "alternative to heteropatriarchal Māori identity and community" (as cited in Green & Pihama, 2023, p. 68) that seeks to apply an "old" term to a "new" way of being. It derives from a term adjacent to a homosexual relationship and has been overwhelmingly used by theorists of sexuality. Gender diversity seems to be incorporated only as an afterthought.

The term gender diversity, and its seeming uptake in the past 30–40 years, does not represent a new idea but speaks instead to a particular Western cultural climate that favours individual identification and Foucault's (1980) observation that "the phenomenon of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals" (p. 55)—as power becomes more individualised, the body, and thus the sex, becomes a key site for power negotiations. Foucault's understanding of power and bodies has been of interest not just to Queer theorists but also to Indigenous ones, as seen with Gillon (2020) and Moreton-Robinson (2011), who picked up Foucault's notion of biopower and applied it to Indigenous sovereignty and policing, and the abandonment of many Indigenous peoples. The connection between the increased interest in policing gender—and the corresponding awareness of gender diversity—and controlling Indigenous bodies has yet to receive much critical attention. Emphasis on Indigenous gender diversity overwhelmingly focuses on health and wellbeing outputs (Green & Pihama, 2023),

rather than the political and cultural impacts of the issue. It is in light of this political and cultural relevance that I use the English phrase gender diversity to ensure it is clear that my focus is on gender and its somewhat restrictive and contested place in contemporary Māori culture.

Uses of oral tradition

This research focuses on the re/interpretation of written texts, pūrākau and recorded customs as theoretical challenges to social principles. Narratives, often deemed myths, immediately invoke notions of falsehood or abstractions divorced from reality, but rather than turning away from these associations, this research looks at "myths [as] a rich blend of fact, fiction and the fantastical, religion, philosophy and history" (Ihimaera, 2020, p. 14). They are not just stories of the fantastic meant to entertain children; nor are they the dismissed quirks of an inferior race, as theorised by early European settlers (Simmonds, 2009). Myths embody the known world of peoples and allow them to communicate that knowledge across generations (Marsden, 2003) in the form of theories and ethical guides that inform the structure of societies (Stewart, 2020). The immense complexity of these myths is a nod to the significance of story and imagination, where expectations are challenged and boundaries pushed "by the ancient seers and sages to encapsulate and condense into easily assimilable forms their view of the World" (Marsden, 2003, p. 56).

It is nearly impossible to distinguish these myths from more agreed-upon history or tear apart the metaphors from the "facts" of a situation (Ihimaera, 2020); indeed, the myths themselves are often the history and the facts. Moving towards legitimising forms of knowledge that do not fit in the positivist tradition is key to Kaupapa Māori and decolonial thought. An ancient karakia recites the tale of Tāne retrieving the three kete of knowledge—knowledge of the divine (characterised by darkness), knowledge of the material (characterised by light, scientific and seen) and knowledge of the metaphysical (characterised by constant pursuit, since the metaphysical cannot be "proven")—and gifting them to humankind. For Cooper (2012), rather than attempting to translate these into a verifiable form of knowledge, it is better to simply allow them to be "questionable" and without any set purpose, and focus instead on the connection between them and the ways of questioning that they provoke. Simmonds (2009) reinforces the idea of esoteric and spiritual knowledge as being core to a Māori epistemic framework, though she assigns

gender to this form of knowledge, thus reiterating the problematic polarity of male = reason, female = nature (Ortner, 1972). This research presents narrative as a valid epistemic resource, not attempting to find some "real" meaning that invalidates these as fantastical. It also aims to avoid the common issue of teleological presentism within historic writing (Armitage, 2020), where Māori narratives have modern terms placed onto them that impose boundaries on what cultural language is spoken. Kerekere (2017) favours the term takatāpui explicitly because it avoids bringing in English terms and their associated values, though such broad framing has been criticised, as is outlined above.

It is also critical to note that this research derives from various gaps and folds in existing Mana Wāhine theory. Theorists such as Pihama, Simmonds and Smith have been referenced extensively, but this is not a devoutly Mana Wāhine work, since Kerekere (2017) pushed against the cisnormative slant in the field that places wāhine as one of two, equal options for Māori gender (Simmonds, 2011; Smith, 2012). Mana Wāhine, a groundbreaking shift away from patriarchal Māori theory, has relied heavily on essentialist narratives of women as te whare tangata (August, 2004; Mikaere, 2011; Simmonds, 2011), capable of birthing and deriving divine power from menstruation and vaginal imagery, including the consistent reference to Hinenuitepō. While this asserts a legitimate place for femininity within te ao Māori, Yates Smith (as cited in Pihama, Tuhiwai Smith, Simmonds, Seed-Pihama, & Gabel, 2019) argues that this emphasis on power deriving from fertility denigrates femininity and reduces it to reproductive use alone, sidelining young women, old women, infertile women or trans women who cannot menstruate. In light of the tensions within Mana Wāhine, this research draws on the critical gender considerations raised, but emphasises gender diversity at its core.

The internalisation of colonisation

While there are examples of Māori gender diversity in traditional narratives, such as Taranga's masculine topknot (Ihimaera, 2020) and first contact events (Cooper, as cited in Te Awekotuku, 1991), they are recorded less frequently than examples of non-heterosexuality and even less than instances of strict gender binaries. Although this could be read as proof that gender diversity is a colonial import, the legacies and aims of colonisation may provide a different perspective. Stewart (2020) argues that the intention of the British Empire towards the end of their global tirade was not the physical

extermination of Māori bodies, as it may have been for earlier colonisation efforts, but rather the cultural and philosophical assimilation of Māori. Given that "colonisation led to the eradication of vital information about the expression of Māori sexuality in historical times" (Hutchings & Aspin, 2007, p. 4), a similar eradication is likely for gender expression because of its significance for the structure of a society (Pihama, 2021). The fluidity of gender that is evident in legendary myths was translated out of the more grounded ancestral stories and whakapapa lines to prime Māori for the translator's colonial and theological contexts (S. Mitchell, 2018; Smith, 2012). The adaptation of these tikanga can be traced to an epistemic history in which only the patriarchal and assimilable parts of tradition were kept; they were then taught to and reiterated by Māori who had urbanised and had little access to their own culture, and absorbed as traditional practice because it occurred close to pre-contact (Pihama, as cited in Pihama, Tuhiwai Smith, Simmonds, Seed-Pihama, & Gabel, 2019).

Colonisation, with its impact on the acceptance of sexual and gender diversity, has led to a seeming rupture within broader Māori society between those embracing takatāpuitanga as a self-determining reclamation of diversity and more conservative Māori holding steadfast to tikanga developed in the face of colonisation (Hines, 2007; Hutchings & Aspin, 2007; Smith, 2012). The imposition of European common law to Aotearoa "convert[ed] what was a mere physical fact into a legal right" (Mill, 2019, p. 13), making physiology rigidly gendered and consequential. The framing of our traditional narratives shifted from appreciation of the diverse and complex "to embed[ding] dominant western misogynistic constructions of gender as a means by which to continue an intentional assault on the roles and status of Māori women" (Pihama, 2021, p. 355). Over the years, the further integration of Māori into colonial societies cemented the view that masculinity was superior to femininity (Halberstam, 1998) and became part of the new "Māori normal" (Irwin, as cited in Pihama, Tuhiwai Smith, Simmonds, Seed-Pihama, Gabel, & Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa, 2019; Simmonds, 2011). This view served to tighten colonial hold on Aotearoa because Māori family structure was intimately tied to the Māori political structure (Hoskins, as cited in Bell et al., 2017; Mead, 2016). Because of the centrality of whānau in Māori organisation, attacks on the family unit were considered more useful than economic sanctions as a means of assimilating Māori.

Even without the more insidious motive of

preparing Māori for a cultural and philosophical extinction, there lies the possibility that early contact settlers were simply unable to comprehend the realities of a Māori gender environment. That gender for Māori was not solely biological and may not have impeded upon their social mobility as much as it did in European contexts (Mill, 2019) may have led to these early accounts simply referring to gender-diverse behaviour as baffling outliers rather than visible indicators of a broader social trend (Kerekere, 2017; Mikaere, 2011). Lang and Kuhnle (2008) also raise the idea that short-term changes in assumed natural gender order have been recorded extensively, but the practice of long-term living has not been; for example, Cooper (as cited in Te Awekotuku, 1991) only noted the existence of "transfemmes" Māori once it was revealed they possessed physiology that did not seem to connect to their gender presentation. The gradual changing of these traditions subtly worked its way into many Māori psyches and "Māori have adopted this binary model of gender and married it with tradition" (Blank, as cited in Hutchings & Aspin, 2007, p. 107). The notion of internalising and replicating dominating mindsets has been handled extensively in literature across the social sciences (Bourdieu, 1984; Fanon, 2004; Freire, 2017; S. Mitchell, 2018) as a tool for surviving oppressive regimes, and Māori had to comply with settler Pākehā or face severe consequences (Taiwanga, as cited in Caselberg, 1975; Ross, as cited in Elkington et al., 2020).

That many takatāpui are often pushed out of Māori spaces by limiting tikanga or religious interference means they are less likely to possess qualities that grant Māori authority, such as language (Murray, 2003), whakapapa recognition (McBreen, as cited in Green & Pihama, 2023) and knowledge of tikanga (Mead, 2016). This further legitimises the conservative Māori voice as the "authentic", and despite infrequent acknowledgement of gender diversity as "part of recognized traditions—and not a colonial import—concession [does] not guarantee that the conversation [is] welcome" (Kēhaulani Kauanui, as cited in Barker, 2017, p. 50). Because of this infiltration of colonial values, it is not surprising that many theorists have stressed the importance of scrutinising current traditional practices for the influence of colonisation (Mitchell, 2018; Green, Te Wao & Laurence, as cited in Green & Pihama, 2023; S. Mitchell, 2018; Te Awekotuku, 1991).

The fluid position of gender in te ao Māori

This research is not a dismissal of all precolonial Māori traditions regarding gender but rather a question of paying "careful attention to what is maintained, what is amended, and what is discarded" (Maclean, as cited in Barnes & Tse, 2022, p. 116). Māori certainly had practices that can be seen to align to gender, such as karanga or whakairo, but the implication that these were concrete roles determined by physiology and indicative of an individual's nature, worth and potential does not hold up under close inspection of the realities of precolonial Māori life (Maclean, as cited in Barnes & Tse, 2022; K. Mitchell & Olsen-Reeder, 2021). Stewart (2020) argues that some Māori derive gender from either the godly realm of Ranginui, for boys, or the earthly realm of Papatūānuku, for girls. It is the balance of these two essences that determines gender at birth. Some coastal tribes regarded north and east winds as feminine, and south and west as masculine—the gender of the child being determined by the winds they were born under (Heuer, 1969). The use of oriori before birth could outline a child's place in the community according to ancestral deeds, environmental signs and current context (Gloyne, 2023; Waka Huia, 2011), regardless of the physiology revealed at their birth. This brief exploration of pre-birth rituals shows that gender was not based on physiology, and instead, a greater emphasis was held on status and ideas of ira.

Philosopher Carl Mika has highlighted the significance of essence for Māori selfhood by arguing that "ira has the capacity to undermine the firm foundation that Western terms and their concepts—such as sex, science, and gender—ask for" (as cited in Green & Pihama, 2023, p. 53). Applying a word that has the translation of essence to gender will send up red flags for any proponent of performativity theory, which stresses a form of gender entirely externally influenced and outside the self (Butler, 2006; Sedgwick, 1993), but Mika (2015) pushes against the notion that essence must be something stagnant and eternal, instead offering the idea that "ira suggests that the self becomes what it is" (103). Non-Māori trans theorists have keyed into this idea as well. Barad (2015) draws on quantum physics, stating that "nature emerges from a self-birthed womb fashioned out of a raging nothingness" (p. 393). Stryker has a similar idea, highlighting the value of a "being and becoming that emerges from a nothingness that nevertheless teems with lively potentials" (CRASSH Cambridge, 2019, 34:09). Ira, a concept grounded seemingly in essentialist thought that

humans have a predetermined gender, complicates the assumptions underpinning both performativity and essentialism—humans are not locked into a specific path but are not captains of their own destiny either. This is most demonstrated in one term that the takatāpui community is gradually growing to recognise—*irakore*—loosely translated to "non-binary". Kore derives from Te Kore, the pure state of generative capacity from which everything derives that occupied the space before the beginning of the universe, "the realm between non-being and being; that is, the realm of potential being" (Marsden, as cited in King, 1975, p. 216), and the genderless realm that created te ara uwha through the feminine Māhorahoranuiarangi in contrast to the masculine Te Mangu (Ihimaera, 2020). The essence of a being, an unfixing ira, is connected to the notion of a state of constant transformation characterised only by its "nothingness", to provide a term for a gender that does not fit well into labels but does have some definitive background.

While contemporary Māori societies see gender as "as a first and foremost deciding factor for labour distinction" (K. Mitchell & Olsen-Reeder, 2021, p. 87), there is evidence that prior to European contact, Māori saw other qualities, such as descent lines, aptitude, necessity and education, as influential in the place of an individual in their community, and "merely possessing the required physiology did not in any case constitute a *right* [emphasis in original] to certain roles and practices; at most, perhaps, physiology could be said to confer the right to earn the right" (Maclean, as cited in Barnes & Tse, 2022, p. 119). Gender can then be seen as being based in appropriate labour allocation and a non-fixed self-identity that may operate within broader structures (Besnier, as cited in Herdt, 1994; Sedgwick.1993; S. Mitchell, 2018), in which all people have maleness and femaleness but "masculinity and femininity do not map easily onto male and female bodies" (Moore, 2007, p. 13). Either way, far more important for the distribution of labour was often the intricacies of tikanga and the role of whakapapa.

The idea of a Māori labour–gender hierarchy is disproved throughout Aotearoa by an inspection of descent lines, since "if one accepts that a male was always at the apex of the whakapapa, then it follows that a hapū or tribe should be the name of a man" (Mahuika, as cited in King, 1975, p. 92). That there are hapū across the country named after women, with their narratives handed down through that whakapapa, proves the significance of women and femininity in precolonial Māori

society. Ngāti Kea/Ngāti Tuara is named after two prominent ancestors, Kearoa, the wife of Ngātoroirangi, and Tuara, the daughter of Ika. The hapū descends from a union of these two lines in Te Rangiwahitu and Te Uira, but it was Kearoa and Tuara whose mana was deemed high enough for them to become eponymous ancestors—not the respective men in their life. Aptitude and whakapapa lines have routinely been seen to trump gender when determining leadership:

> Metge says "women are frequently recognised as kaumātua" in their own right among the East Coast tribes. Buck says "in rare instances, a female ariki, such as the famous Hinematioro of Ngāti Porou, was raised to queenly pomp and power by her peoples". And Best notes "it occasionally happened that a well-born woman attained a high position in a tribe, owing to special qualities of mind and heart". (Mahuika, as cited in King, 1975, p. 91)

This chronicling of prominent women extends into the examples of Hinepare, who was given the same share of territory as her brothers; Hinerupe, whose sisters forfeited their territory on the basis of her greater ability; and the language of succession in Ngāti Porou, which is used without gendered connotation (Mahuika, as cited in King, 1975). It is thus obvious that while physiology may have played a role in assigning certain status, it was not the definitive or central characteristic it is today. Women were historically able to place themselves, and be placed, in positions of total authority, dismantling the misogynistic, colonial idea that that was only the domain of men. It is thus possible that gender-diverse Māori would also be able to place themselves, and be placed, in communities outside of the "typical" order.

Tapu, noa and mana

Tasks in precolonial Māori society were given tikanga in order to maintain certain propriety in honour of Gods. While this tikanga covered all aspects of life, such as keeping the preparation of food distinct from places of karakia or learning, it was—and often still is—most visible in its gendered iteration, including the women's karanga of tūpāpaku onto the marae to acknowledge Hinenuitepō (K. Mitchell & Olsen-Reeder, 2021). Hinenuitepō, as a feminine deity, was most appropriately served by a woman's karanga—but K. Mitchell and Olsen-Reeder (2021) ask "if it was the nature of tapu involved in a task that was a pivotal determinate for our tīpuna, and not gender" (p. 88). The nature of this tapu was contextual,

since tangata whakatāne/whakawāhine "were accepted without stigma. They played their roles openly and with the support of their communities" (Mead, 2016, p. 192), participating in tasks that aligned to their levels of tapu and noa and the propriety of their worship, such as weaving and combat. The connection between gender and tapu/noa is certainly visible, but not as direct as it has been made out in retellings after colonisation (Heuer, 1969).

The connection between femininity and noa is undeniable in traditional Māori social order because ruahine routinely used their inner thighs to restore the noa of food and men (Higgins, 2004), though the imposition of sexual darkness can be seen to derive from Christian notions of the "unsanitary" and solely female connotations of menstrual cycles (Jones, 2021; Maclean, as cited in Barnes & Tse, 2022). The people who have the greatest alignment to noa—those who menstruate, cook or practise black magic—are routinely dismissed on contemporary marae, seen as necessary yet inferior vessels of a corrupting power, despite its complementary status to tapu. Many feminist scholars (Madden, 1997) have argued against this common misogynistic view that female mana articulated through noa is negative and male mana articulated through tapu is positive (Marsden, as cited in King, 1975). Noa is not the inferior or destructive reverse to tapu, but the freeing counterweight to the heavy restriction that some states of tapu imply. Restoring the respect of noa restores a Māori way of conceptualising gender that does not favour masculinity, but understands balance.

The most tapu rank in precolonial Māori society was that of the tohunga, a revered expert chosen by the Gods to uphold knowledge from the celestial realm who trained in intensive whare wānanga isolated from the rest of the community (Mildon, 2011). In these whare wānanga, "male students were most often dedicated to the God of War and of human affairs, Tūmatauenga. Most often female students were dedicated to the Goddess of the Moon, Hineteiwaiwa" (Mead, 2016, p. 246). The whare wānanga was seemingly open on the basis of dedication and connection to deities—though they were often gendered, it was not always the case (Mead, 2016). If an individual studied under a deity that their gender prohibited, the relevant God could refuse to pass on the requisite knowledge to move past novice status (Reed, 2002). Thus, the existence of female tohunga shows that there were openings for various genders under the whare wānanga, provided the student had the ability to maintain the correct tapu and mana (Mildon, 2011).

Indicative, not definitive: Myth and narrative

A fluid approach to gender can also be seen throughout many precolonial Māori myths, such as the planting of the kūmara, in which "Makareti states that 'no woman could take part, for fear of polluting the tapu, which would be a great insult to Rongo'" (Madden, 1997, p. 61). The kūmara was considered to be under the domain of Rongomatāne, a masculine deity, and therefore, women were supposedly not allowed to plant them because of their connection to noa. Such tikanga comes from Makareti's Te Arawa context, but was "broken" by a prominent ancestor at the very arrival of Māori to Aotearoa. Whakaotirangi is credited to both the Tainui and Te Arawa waka as being the keeper of the kūmara seeds, a direct descendant from Panitinikau, the mother of the kūmara and partner of Rongomatāne (Reed, 2002). It was her mana and ability to maintain the integrity of the seeds that kept them safe as the waka moved across the Pacific Ocean, and when the tribe eventually settled, she oversaw the kūmara gardens at Pākarikari, one of the first major gardens in Aotearoa (Ihimaera, 2020). Not only did she take part in the planting regardless of "polluting the tapu", she oversaw it and has been remembered favourably for it.

The change of tikanga to allow Whakaotirangi to excel in her field, and keep her people fed on the long voyage from Hawaiki, emphasises this article's main point. While gender was a factor to consider—if Whakaotirangi possessed no other traits to increase her suitability for the role the task may have gone to someone more masculine and therefore connected to Rongomatāne—it was not the *most important* factor. Her skill, lineage and the necessity of the action overpowered her femininity and led to her success in the action. The idea of a mortal overcoming their own humane limitations in times of need is not a one-off in Māori oratory, and another ancestral narrative—privileging the perspective of the author's own Ngāti Awa, though it is worth noting that Te Whakatōhea argue that Muriwai is the protagonist—involves Wairaka, daughter of the prominent Mataatua waka captain Toroa.

The narrative most often cited is Te Awekotuku's 1991 retelling. When the Mataatua waka landed near Kaputerangi Pā, Toroa and the other men had left to secure their landing with a war party, but a great tide sprang up and dragged Mataatua to the

nearby rocks (Te Awekotuku, 1991). The women on board were restrained by tikanga that regarded waka as the tapu domain of the masculine, so Wairaka leapt up and cried, "Me whakatāne au i ahau/I will become a man", and steered the waka to safety (Te Awekotuku, 1991). Rather than reading the narrative as a definitive, eternal statement that says Wairaka is a trans man, which falls in line with Western ideals of gender transitioning (Halberstam, 1998), applying Māori notions of justice and punishment opens up a new perspective. Takatakahi, divine punishments, were not something that was brushed aside by precolonial Māori society, or indeed the Gods whose mana was challenged by such actions (Marsden, as cited in King, 1975). Punishments for takatakahi were severe, since "the price for not complying with Māori customary practice was death" (Ihimaera, 2020, p. 219). Challenging gendered conventions of tapu and noa in this way, often considered unthinkable in contemporary Māori contexts, was clearly considered passable in terms of the Gods, given that no party involved seemed to receive any divine punishment. In this iteration of the narrative, it is clear that the tikanga of gender bowed quickly to necessity, and Wairaka was left in solitude and her bloodline passed through her son, who was raised instead by his father (Bach et al., 2011).

Perhaps Wairaka's cry of masculinity was not a literal transition from binary female to binary male, since there is no record that she continued life as a man and many have taken her future relationship with Muriwai as a distinctly feminine love between a masculine woman and feminine woman (Bach et al., 2011; Elleray, 1999; Te Awekotuku, 1991). Instead, the moment she was "made man" was a temporary transition along the continuum of masculine and feminine, tapu and noa, tipping her into the side of masculine but not to become a male. Because tapu is often considered a means for people "to 'tap into' the mana necessary for overcoming usual human limitation" (Madden, 1997, p. 58), Wairaka's action may be read as a human "tapping into" a more masculine incarnation of her own mana, moving from a state of noa linked to her active menstruation (Ihimaera, 2020) into the state of tapu required to overcome the imitation of her physiology and perform the masculine task.

The place of gender diversity

Research and discourse surrounding Māori gender relations is increasingly urgent. Māori men receive disproportionately high levels of police attention (Brittain & Tuffin, 2017), and trans Māori women, particularly those in sex work, have highlighted the rampant physical violence, employment discrimination and frequent refusal of accommodations they face in their daily lives (Beyer, as cited in Casey, 2023; Escaravage, 2016). Young, Queer Māori have some of the country's highest rates of suicidality, self-harm and mental illness (Dudley, 2021; University of Otago, Wellington, 2020). The "issue" of the rights of women to speak on marae has been a topic of heated debate, and Irwin points out that if the issue of whaikorero is limited to one of pure sexism, without consideration of tikanga, "Māori culture and society, by association, are also identified as sexist" (as cited in Pihama, Tuhiwai Smith, Simmonds, Seed-Pihama, Gabel, & Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa et al., 2019, p. 72). Tensions around gender, Māoritanga and their influence on one another abound, and it is clearly bubbling to the surface across many modern Māori landscapes. As hormone replacement therapy, gender-affirming care and social transitioning become more accessible as well (Green & Pihama, 2023; Oliphant, 2021), there is increased participation of gender-diverse and takatāpui people within Māori spaces, such as the Matatini-level rōpū Angitū. New perspectives on how gender functions and changes within our communities are needed, and if these new perspectives are grounded in ancestral principles, then it is an obvious foundation for looking to the future of Māori gender acceptance.

Across Indigenous and decolonial political theory, the notion of horizontal violence, through which marginalised people, connected by shared violent histories and experiences, have a unique power to harm others in their communities (Freire, 2017; Kerekere, 2017; Lorde, 2019; O'Sullivan, 2021), is central. Horizontal violence is enacted as manifestations of internalised discrimination, unconscious appeals to the oppressor or to maintain any semblance of power that a marginalised population may have. This violence has led to a situation in which takatāpui people's "ability to live as their preferred gender relied on whānau recognition and acceptance which was not always forthcoming" (Kerekere, 2017, p. 102). The denial and discrimination of these Māori leads to a violent disconnect from Māori society that damages the mana and spirit of both the individual and their wider community, actively pushing many Māori away from efforts to revitalise our culture, language and relationship to land.

By challenging other Māori on the basis of their gender identity rather than the colonial

order, in which "the dimension of fluidity, so much a part of Māori tradition, was denied them" (Te Awekotuku, 1991, p. 102), Māori self-determination as a whole is held back. The denial of Māori gender fluidity is ultimately linked to the denial of a full Māori world, despite the insistence by many misogynist Māori that issues of gender identity are distractions from the ultimate goal of sovereignty (Simmonds, 2011). By abusing Indigenous gender diversity and choosing to uphold colonial ideologies, the colonial machine is able to perpetuate itself without needing a Pākehā insert because "it is in the interest of the oppressor to weaken the oppressed still further, to isolate them, to create and deepen rifts among them" (Freire, 2017, p. 114). Internal division between Māori who consider gender diversity a colonial import and those who consider gender diversity a recognised part of tradition and tikanga only serves to strengthen colonisation's grip on Aotearoa.

Audre Lorde (2019) makes clear that re-acceptance of gender diversity is a key step on the road towards decolonising any worldview because "by creating another whole structure that touches every aspect of our existence, at the same time we are resisting" (p. 95). Though her work centres on her own Black context, she applies broad analysis for any marginalised community that has been denied the ability to consider social structures in their own terms. Moving beyond imposed models of gender with a restoration of Indigenous gender models means a concrete shift away from the prescribed thinking of colonial regimes and towards thinking derived in Indigenous power. If "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful enquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 2017, p. 45), then it is necessary for Māori to confront head on the supposed cornerstones of our traditions, challenge them and rejoin the process of perpetual inquiry that so characterised our ancestors. In order to be seen as an independent social structure, self-determining of our own pathways and engagements with the world, a return to the fluidity and dynamism that characterised our ancestors is required.

Tikanga must be allowed to do as it has always done and respond to circumstance, rather than being condemned to a stagnant, historic set of laws that cannot be broken or bent. Moving away from this ability to adapt to the world around us "has a negative impact on the present. Knowledge of whakapapa creates strength and conviction—if takatāpui were accepted by our tūpuna, so they

should be accepted today" (Kerekere, 2017, p. 143). Concrete assertions that "women are X and men are Y and that is the Māori way" do not have a place in Indigenous struggles for sovereignty and a restoration of traditional roles and rights, and puts the individual, a human influenced by their own desires, upbringing and biases, above tikanga passed through generations and endorsed by mana and tapu.

Conclusion

Gender diversity is an often neglected area of exploration within Kaupapa Māori research, yet it holds profound implications for the Māori community. By embedding rigid gender ideologies into Māori traditions, we inadvertently weave a colonial agenda within our own cultural fabric. This research has endeavoured to begin filling a significant gap in Māori gender literature by exploring narratives and structures originating before the disruptive influence of colonisation and European ideals. From an understanding of the reasons for the invisibility of Māori gender diversity, to various examples of how gender has been negotiated within different Māori groups and times, this research shows that physiological gender binaries may not be as solid as they appear. Ultimately, this research argues that understanding and embracing gender diversity is not only beneficial for gender-diverse and trans Māori but for the entire Māori community. It signifies a departure from colonial ideologies and a reaffirmation of our own cultural norms, pushing us forward by casting our eyes back.

Glossary

ariki	leader
hapū	internal tribal unit
Hinenuitepō	Goddess of death
ira	soul, spirit, essence
irakore	non-binary
karakia	prayer; chant and incantation
karanga	ritual call
kaumātua	elder
Kaupapa Māori	Māori based topic/event/ enterprise run by Māori for Māori
kete	basket made of flax strips
kūmara	sweet potato
Māhorahoranuiarangi	daughter with infinite capacity

mana	inherent authority of spirit passed by Gods
Māoritanga	the very essence of being Māori
marae	communal meeting and living space
Ngāti Awa	traditional inhabitants of Whakatāne
Ngāti Kea/Ngāti Tuara	traditional inhabitants of Horohoro
noa	humane protection
oriori	lullabies/soothing chants
Pākehā	a person of predominantly European descent
Papatūānuku	Earth Mother
pūrākau	narrative
Ranginui	Sky Father
rōpū	group
ruahine	post-menopausal people
takatakahi	transgression of tikanga
takatāpui	Queer Māori
takatāpuitanga	Māori Queerness
tangata whakatāne/ whakawāhine	transgender men/women
tapu	sacred protection
te ao Māori	the Māori world
Te Kore	The nothingness
Te Mangu	son of darkness
te ura awha	the female spirit line
Te Whakatōhea	traditional inhabitants of Ōpōtiki
te whare tangata	the womb
tikanga	right way of acting/due process
tohunga	expert, skilled, learned
tūpāpaku	dead body
tūpuna	ancestors
wāhine	feminine Māori
waka	ancestral canoe
whaikōrero	formal speech, oratory
whakairo	carving
whakapapa	genealogy both ancestral and descendant
whānau	political and familial unit
whare wānanga	formal learning institutions

References

Amin, K. (2022). We are all nonbinary. *Representations*, *158*(1), 106–119. https://doi.org/gr45hs

Armitage, D. (2020). *In defence of presentism*. In D. M. McMahon (Ed.), *History and human flourishing* (pp. 44–69). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/m3wn

August, W. (2004). *The Māori female—her body, spirituality, sacredness and mana: A space within spaces* [Master's thesis, The University of Waikato]. Research Commons. https://hdl.handle.net/10289/10260

Bach, L., Luh, K., & Schult, U. (2011). "The samenesses and the differences": Representations of Māori femininities and sexualities in Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's short story collections *Tahuri* (1989) and *Ruahine—Mythic women* (2003). *Women's Studies Journal*, *25*(2), 26–42.

Barad, K. (2015). Transmaterialities: Trans*/matter/ realities and queer political imaginings. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *21*(2–3), 387–422. https://doi.org/gdccnb.

Barker, J. (Ed. (E.). (2017). *Critically sovereign: Indigenous gender, sexuality, and feminist studies*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/m3wp

Barnes, E., & Tse, C. (2022). *Out here: An anthology of takatāpui and LGBTQIA+ writers from Aotearoa*. Auckland University Press.

Bell, R., Kāwharu, M., Taylor, K., & Belgrave, M. (Eds.).E) (2017). *The Treaty on the ground: Where we are headed, and why it matters*. Massey University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Nice, R. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Brittain, E., & Tuffin, K. (2017). Ko tēhea te ara tika? A discourse analysis of Māori experience in the criminal justice system. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, *46*(2), 99–107.

Butler, J. (2006).*Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge Classics.

Caselberg, J. (1975). *Māori is my name: Historical Māori writings in translation* (Vol. 1.). J. McIndoe.

Casey, A. (2023, March 6). Georgina Beyer still has a fire in her belly. *The Spinoff*. https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/06-03-2023/georgina-beyer-still-has-a-fire-in-her-belly

Cooper, G. (2012). Kaupapa Maori research: Epistemic wilderness as freedom? *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, *47*(2), 64–73.

CRASSH Cambridge. (2019, March 8). *Susan Stryker—"Transgeneration: Or, becoming-with my monstrous kin"* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZreL7D8gQ8

Dudley, S. (2021). *Takatāpui youth suicide: An exploration of structural determinants for suicidality contextualised in inequality and social marginalisation* [Master's thesis, The University of Auckland]. ResearchSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/2292/60200

Elkington, B., Jackson, M., Kiddle, R., Ripeka Mercier, O., Ross, M., Smeaton, J., & Thomas, A. (2020). *Imagining decolonisation*. BWB Texts.

Elleray, M. D. (1999). Weaving the wahine takatapui: Mirimiri and Tahuri. *Span*, (48/49), 118–130.

Escaravage, E. (2016). *Voices of Māori sex workers* [Master's dissertation, University of Tromsø]. UiT Munin. https://hdl.handle.net/10037/9766

Fanon, F. (2004). *The wretched of the earth* (R. Philcox, Trans.). Grove Press.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977* (C. Gordon, Trans.). Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality* (F. Gros, Ed.; R. Hurley, Trans.) Vintage Books.

Freire, P. (2017). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin Classics.

Gillon, A. (2020). Fat Indigenous bodies and body sovereignty: An exploration of re-presentations. *Journal of Sociology*, 56(2), 213–228. https://doi.org/gjg9zh

Gloyne, P. (2023, July 16). Paraone Gloyne: Oriori feed the hearts and minds of our babies. *E-Tangata*. https://e-tangata.co.nz/arts/paraone-gloyne-oriori-feed-the-hearts-and-minds-of-our-babies/

Green, A., & Pihama, L. (Eds.). (2023). *Honoring our ancestors: Takatāpui, two-spirit and Indigenous LGBTQI+ well-being*. Te Herenga Waka University Press.

Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female masculinity*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/m3wq

Halberstam, J. (2005). *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. NYU Press.

Herdt, G. H. (Ed.)..) (1994). *Third sex, third gender: Beyond sexual dimorphism in culture and history*. Zone Books.

Heuer, B. N. (1969). Maori women in traditional family and tribal life. *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 78(4), 448–494.

Higgins, R. (2004). *He tanga ngutu, he Tuhoetanga te Mana Motuhake o te tāmoko wahine: The identity politics of moko kauae* [PhD thesis, University of Otago]. OUR Archive. https://hdl.handle.net/10523/157

Hines, S. (2007).*Transforming gender: Transgender practices of identity, intimacy and care*. Policy Press. https://doi.org/m3wr

Hutchings, J., & Aspin, C. (2007). *Sexuality and the stories of indigenous people*. Huia Publishers.

Ihimaera, W. (2020). *Navigating the stars: Māori creation myths*. Penguin Random House New Zealand.

Jones, R. (2021). *A brief theology of periods (yes, really)*. The Good Book Company.

Kerekere, E. (2017). *Part of the whānau: The emergence of takatāpui identity*—He Whāriki Takatāpui [PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington]. Te Herenga Waka. https://doi.org/m3ws

King, M. (1975). *Te ao hurihuri: The world moves on: Aspects of Maoritanga*. Hicks Smith & Sons Limited.

Lang, C., & Kuhnle, U. (2008). Intersexuality and alternative gender categories in non-Western cultures. *Hormone Research in Paediatrics*, 69(4), 240–250. https://doi.org/dzrthv

Lorde, A. (2019). *Sister outsider*. Penguin Modern Classics.

Madden, R. (1997). *Dynamic and different: Mana wahine*. Campus Press.

Marsden, M. (2003). *The woven universe: Selected writings of Rev. Māori Marsden* (T.A.C. Royal, Ed.). Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden.

Mead, H. (2016). *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori values* (Rev. ed.). Huia Publishers.

Mika, C. (2015). The co-coexistence of self and thing through *ira*: A Maori phenomenology. *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology*, 2(1), 93–112. https://doi.org/bgnm

Mikaere, A. (2011). *Colonising myths: Maori realities—He rukuruku whakaaro*. Huia Publishers.

Mildon, C. (2011). *An overview of tohungatanga in the 21st century*. AIO Healing.

Mill, J. S. (2019). *The subjection of women*. Arcturus.

Mitchell, K., & Olsen-Reeder, V. (2021). Tapu and noa as negotiators of Māori gender roles in pre-colonial Aotearoa and today. *MAI Journal: A New Zealand Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, 10(2), 84–92. https://doi.org/jz5r

Mitchell, S. (2018). *Sacred instructions: Indigenous wisdom for living spirit-based change*. North Atlantic Books.

Moore, H. (2007). *The subject of anthropology: Gender, symbolism and psychoanalysis*. Polity.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2011). Imagining the good Indigenous citizen: Race war and the pathology of patriarchal white sovereignty. *Cultural Studies Review*, 15(2), 61–79. https://doi.org/gf8vpx

Murray, D. A. B. (2003). Who is takatāpui? Māori language, sexuality and identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Anthropologica*, 45(2), 233–244. https://doi.org/bkrsqn

Oliphant, J. (2021). *An update for the provision of gender affirming healthcare across the district health boards of Aotearoa New Zealand*. Professional Association for Transgender Health Aotearoa.

Ortner, S. B. (1972). Is female to male as nature is to culture? *Feminist Studies*, 1(2), 5–31. https://doi.org/b272mw

O'Sullivan, S. (2021). The colonial project of gender (and everything else). *Genealogy*, 5(3), Article 67. https://doi.org/m3wt

Pihama, L. (2021). Mana wahine: Decolonising gender in Aotearoa. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 35(106), 351–365. https://doi.org/jz5q

Pihama, L, Tuhiwai Smith, L., Simmonds, N., Seed-Pihama, J., & Gabel, K. (Eds.) (2019). *Mana wahine reader. Volume 2, A collection of writings 1999–2019*. Te Tākupu, Te Wānanga O Raukawa.

Pihama, L., Tuhiwai Smith, L., Simmonds, N., Seed-Pihama, J., Gabel, K., & Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa (Eds.). (2019). *Mana wahine reader. Volume 1, A collection of writings 1987–1998*. Te Tākupu, Te Wānanga O Raukawa.

Reed, A. W. (2002). *An illustrated encyclopedia of traditional Māori life: Taonga tuku iho* (B. Mikaere, Ed.). New Holland.

Sedgwick, E. (1993). Queer performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel. GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/ghfnx2

Simmonds, N. (2009). *Mana wahine geographies: Spiritual, spatial and embodied understandings of Papatūānuku* [Master's [Master's thesis, The

University of Waikato]. Research Commons. https://hdl.handle.net/10289/2798

Simmonds, N. (2011). Mana wahine: Decolonising politics. *Women's Studies Journal*, *25*(2), 11–25.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.

Stewart, G. (2020). *Māori philosophy: Indigenous thinking from Aotearoa*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Te Awekotuku, N. (1991). *Mana wahine Māori: Selected writings on Maori women's art, culture and politics*. New Women's Press.

University of Otago, Wellington. (2020, October 30). *Unpacking the issues in Māori suicide mortality review for takatāpui rangatahi—Clive Aspin* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0SpJ-uO6mY

Waka Huia. (2011, September 4). *Part 1 of 2 Maori oriori or lullabies* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00Og1nd9_Hc