

## HUKA CAN HAKA: TAONGA PERFORMING TINO RANGATIRATANGA

Tāwhanga Mary-Legs Nopera

*Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies, University of Waikato, Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand; Te Whariki Takapou; Body Positive New Zealand; Te Rākei Whakaehu, Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand.*

**Background/Approach:** Haka is a performance aesthetic developed and practiced by Māori over aeons. In this creative practice PhD project, I perform haka as a persona named 'huka' –a contemporary portrayal of the deified Māori ancestor Māui. Through performing huka, I explore ways that taonga, or treasured things, can perform tino rangatiratanga, which is the collective vision of Māori to positively self-determine.

**Analysis/Argument:** In particular, this research applies raranga as a methodology. Raranga is a tradition of Māori weaving, and in this research project I apply raranga knowledge to create and story-tell taonga in digital image, digital video, creative writing and performance art. By doing this I explore ways that a raranga methodology might heal historical sexual trauma. Specifically, within this research I take a subjective position as a Māori transgender person who has lived with HIV for nineteen years. I make art, apply raranga knowledge as an analytical tool, and objectively describe the personal transformations that evolve.

**Outcome/Results:** This project asserts creative practice research as a form of sexual expression that can help people to remember, re-story and re-generate mythologies of empowerment. It shows how Indigenous approaches to theory can challenge dominant stereotypes - describing strategies for researchers to embody the lived realities of participants and subjects within their research. This research details a raranga process as a powerful tool to interpret and heal the impact of sexual trauma, including HIV stigma and discrimination.

**Conclusions/Applications:** Ultimately, this project concludes that raranga can centre marginal identities and assert them as bodies full of hope. This research shows how raranga can be applied to typical daily practices to manifest transformative change. It can help a person gain agency in life by giving direction to multiple and conflicting strands of lived experience.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement**

No industry partners have been involved in the development of this research.