



LIGHTING THE ACADEMY

Rainbow Research Symposium 2025



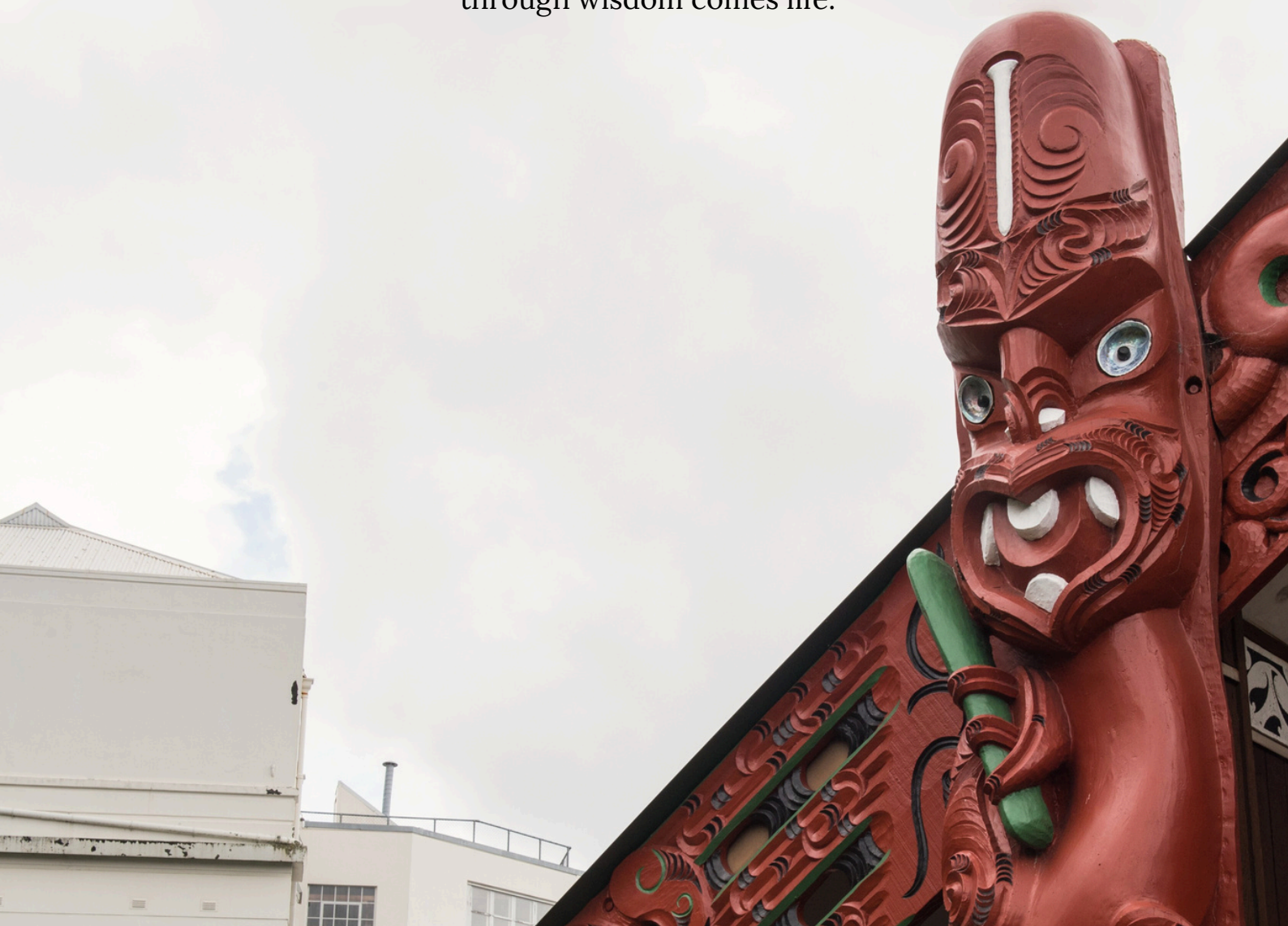
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Mā te rongō, ka mōhio;
Mā te mōhio, ka mārama;
Mā te mārama, ka mātau;
Mā te mātau, ka ora.

Through listening comes knowledge;
through knowledge comes understanding;
through understanding comes wisdom;
through wisdom comes life.



WELCOME

We are delighted to welcome you to Lighting the Academy 2025. This symposium is more than an academic event: it is a celebration of creativity, resilience, and brilliance within our rainbow communities.

Today brings together researchers, practitioners, and creatives from across Aotearoa and beyond. Whether you are presenting, supporting, or listening, your presence makes this space possible.

Throughout the day you will encounter stories, ideas, and scholarship that reflect the richness of our communities. Some may challenge, others affirm, and many will inspire us to imagine new possibilities. Together, they remind us of the power of research to connect, strengthen, and transform.

May this symposium spark new connections, collaborations, and energy for the mahi we carry forward together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, we acknowledge Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei as mana whenua. We recognise their enduring connection to this land and express our gratitude for the opportunity to gather here under their guardianship.

Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone who has made this symposium possible. This includes the organising committee and volunteers for their dedication and energy, and Auckland University of Technology for providing a space to host this kaupapa.

Gratitude is also extended to the institutions, networks, and communities who encouraged participation and supported contributors to be here.

Most importantly, to the presenters and attendees: by sharing your work, insights, and presence, you make this gathering meaningful. Together, we light the academy and affirm the value of rainbow scholarship for a more inclusive future.



LIGHTING THE ACADEMY

In 2023, the *Rainbow Studies NOW: Legacies of Community* symposium highlighted the importance of remembering and reclaiming queer histories, archives, and community knowledge. That gathering reminded us that research is not only about producing ideas but also about carrying forward the resilience, creativity, and activism of those who came before us. It showed how rainbow research can bring to light what has too often been silenced or overlooked, while also affirming the richness and power of our communities.

Lighting the Academy: 2025 Biennial Rainbow Research Symposium continues this legacy. Rather than being only an academic event, it is envisioned as a shared space where researchers, creatives, and practitioners connect, exchange ideas, challenge boundaries, and celebrate visionary scholarship. We honour the mahi of archivists, activists, artists, and scholars who have shaped the field, while also creating space for emerging voices who are pushing narratives forward and imagining rainbow futures.

At its heart, this symposium affirms that research is at its most powerful when it reflects lived experience, values diversity, and connects communities. By coming together, we hope to create a collective light that transforms the academy, inspires collaboration, and lights pathways toward equity and belonging for rainbow communities in Aotearoa and beyond.



Schedule

Duration (minutes)	Session Start	Activity
30	8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Registration and Networking Reception
15	9:00 AM – 9:20 AM	Mihi Whakataua, Welcome & Opening Remarks
10	9:20 AM – 9:30 AM	Move to next session
60	9:30 AM – 10:30AM	<u>Parallel Session 1</u>
20	10:30 AM – 10:50 AM	Morning Tea
60	10:50 AM – 11:50 AM	<u>Parallel Session 2</u>
10	11:50 AM – 12:00PM	Move to next session
60	12:00 PM – 1:00PM	<u>Parallel Session 3</u>
50	1:00 PM – 1:50PM	Lunch
60	1:50 PM –2:50 PM	<u>Parallel Session 4</u>
10	2:50 PM –3:00 PM	Move to next session
60	3:00 PM – 4:00 PM	<u>Parallel Session 5</u>
20	4:00 PM – 4:20 PM	Afternoon Tea Break
40	4:20 PM – 5:00 PM	<u>Parallel Session 6</u>
5	5:00 PM – 5:10 PM	Move to final plenary session
15	5:10 PM – 5:25 PM	Student Animations
20	5:25 PM – 5:40 PM	Mihi whakakapi
10	5:40pm – 5:50 PM	End of symposium
–	5:50 PM	Optional dinner at Mezze Bar

The Rainbow Research Symposium 2025 will begin with a warm welcome and ceremonial opening before transitioning into a full day of thought-provoking presentations, workshops, and discussions. Sessions are arranged in six parallel streams across various rooms, allowing attendees to choose topics most relevant to their interests. Breaks for morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea are scheduled to provide space for rest, connection, and kōrero. The day will close with a student-led animation plenary followed by poroporoaki, where we will reflect, honour contributions, and formally conclude our gathering. We encourage you to move freely between sessions, and make the most of the opportunities to engage with diverse voices, ideas, and communities.

Parallel Session 1

Session 1 features presentations across four themed rooms: Rainbow Advocacy, Pedagogy Across the Curriculum, Out of the Archive, and Claiming Space, Making Stories. The mahi shared in this session spans community-based support, inclusive teaching practice, archival exploration, and creative, culturally grounded storytelling.

Time	Presentation Rooms – Themes			
	WG308 – Rainbow Advocacy	WA224 A – Pedagogy Across the Curriculum	WA224 B – Queer Histories, Queer Futures	WA220 – Claiming Space, Making Stories
9.30-9.50	Queer Housing and Wellbeing in Aotearoa: Lived Experiences, Structural Barriers, and Community Resilience	Holding the Family Photo: Queer Tensions and Happy Objects on Teaching Practicum	Queer Archives and Personal Collections	Zine-making as feminist, queer, tangata Tiriti research
9.50-10.10	Ōhanga Rearea: An Organisational Rainbow Inclusion Framework	Culturally responsive storytelling methodologies for engaging and challenging vulnerable adult learners	Exhibiting the Archive: A Practice-Led Approach to Queer History in Aotearoa	‘Where’s our living room?’ Envisioning āhurutanga for Te Whanganui-a-Tara’s rainbow community
10.10-10.30		Rainbow+ health in medical education: Students’ perceptions of education and practice		“Something Isn’t Right:” Dissonance as Subversive Queer TTRPG Play

Attendees are warmly encouraged to explore different rooms and sessions throughout the day to follow their interests and engage with new kaupapa.

To ensure minimal disruption, please move between rooms only during scheduled breaks or between session blocks, and remain in the room for the duration of each session to support all presenters.

Each 15-minute presentation is followed by a **5-minute Q&A**, offering space for kōrero and connection between presenters and attendees.

Parallel Session 2

This session brings together research focused on Trans Healthcare, Diversity in RSE and ECE, Queer History, and Addressing (Internalised) Stigma. Presentations in this block highlight experiences from early childhood through to structural barriers in healthcare, as well as language, decolonisation, and resistance in both local and global contexts.

Time	Presentation Rooms – Themes			
	WG308 – Need and Potential in Trans Healthcare	WA224 A – Looking for diversity in RSE and ECE	WA224 B – Defining the Terms of Queer History	WA220– Addressing (Internalised) Stigma
10.50-11.10	The Variegated Effects of Testosterone Therapy on the Voice of Singers Assigned Female at Birth and Differentiation by Means of Administration		Celebrating LGBTQIA+: Towards a taxonomy of non-stigmatising best language practices	Cisheteronormativity within LGBTQIA+ communities
11.10-11.30	The Right to Thrive: Structural Barriers and the Power of Gender-Affirming Healthcare in Aotearoa	The experiences of ākonga Māori who identify as takatāpui and/or sex, gender and sexuality diverse in Relationships and Sexuality Education	Bakla ‘di Bacla: The Story of Queer Filipinos from the Pre-Colonial Era to the 20th century	Sexual Orientation, Crime Victimization, and Relationship to the Offender: Insights From New Zealand Police Records, 2014-2024
11.30-11.50	Community-informed research and the development of The Trans Heart Health Project	Trans and Irawhiti Takatāpui Educational Worlds: Imagining Decolonisation through Wānanga	Better Blatant than Latent! Exploring Aotearoa’s Radical Queer Histories	Sex work, discrimination, and gender-expansive resistance

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Parallel Session 3

This session brings together presentations across Takatāpui, Trans, and Same-sex Perinatal Care, Mapping Trans Affinities, and a practical Workshop on Rainbow Media Training. The kōrero spans healthcare access, cultural belonging, family formation, and spatial experience, offering rich insight into trans and gender-diverse lives in Aotearoa.

Time	Presentation Rooms – Themes		
	WG308 – Takatāpui, Trans, and Same-sex Perinatal Care	WA224 A – Mapping Trans Affinities	WA224 B – Workshop
12.00-12.20	Warming the Whare: Building system readiness for trans-inclusive perinatal mental health services	Campus experiences of transgender and non-binary tertiary education students in Aotearoa New Zealand: Findings from a nationally representative survey	Workshop: Rainbow Community and The Media
12.20-12.40	Ideal donors, conceiving realities: experiences of same-sex and gender-diverse couples using home insemination to conceive in Aotearoa	Young transgender Asian New Zealanders' relationships to culture, neurodivergence, religion, and family	
12.40-1.00	Te Whare Takatāpui: Celebrating Trans Tamariki Produced in Association with the Celebrating Trans Lives Project	Exploring Trans Geographies of Aliveness in Te Whanganui-a-Tara	

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Parallel Session 4

This session explores themes of Creative Practice Affirmations, Parents and Family, Proud and Otherwise, and Technicolor Rainbows. Presentations range from trans-led arts-based research and film to the lived experiences of rainbow families and queer media representations across Aotearoa and beyond. These sessions offer creative, intergenerational, and global perspectives on affirmation, visibility, and storytelling.

Time	Presentation Rooms – Themes		
	WG308 – Creative Practice Affirmations	WA224 A – Parents and Family, Proud and Otherwise	WA224 B – Technicolor Rainbows
1.50-2.10	Arts-based research with and for trans people in Aotearoa	Ethnic Parents' Experiences with their LGBTQIA+ Children	Apocalypse now: the representation of gay characters in the post-apocalyptic world of <i>The Last of Us</i>
2.10-2.30	Navigating silence in the design of queer New Zealand film	Inclusion through difference: Experiences of Rainbow parenting in Aotearoa	'By us and about us': Trans Indigenous Storytelling in <i>Rūrangi</i>
2.30-2.50	Irarere: Pakiwaitara: Poetic Portraiture and Takatāpui Tāne Identity	From Acceptance to Advocacy: How Families Support Transgender and Non-Binary Wellbeing	Exploring queer African media representations in Sex Education, Neptune Frost and The Valley of a Thousand Hills

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Parallel Session 5

This session brings together presentations under the themes of Student Bodies and Embodied Students, Queer, Christian, Learning, and Subcultural Subversions. Discussions explore international student identity, mental wellbeing, gender and sexuality in Christian education, fan communities, censorship, and the politics of queer refusal. These sessions offer bold, reflective, and critical insights into navigating education, belief systems, and subcultures.

Times	Presentation Rooms – Themes		
	WG308 – Student Bodies and Embodied Students	WA224 A – Queer, Christian, Learning	WA224 B – Subcultural Subversions
3.00-3.20	Queer Migration, the ‘Ethnic Closet’, and the Im/Possibility of Home: Chinese Queer International Students’ Intersectional Experiences in New Zealand	Te Taputoru Ōrite: Reimagining Gender and Sexuality Discourses in Christian Teacher Education	From Reading to Practice: Chinese Online Danmei Novel Fan Communities and Queer Imagination
3.20-3.40	Belonging and Mental Well-being of LGBTQ+ University Students	“I’m not welcome or safe to be the entire person God has created me to be.” Takatāpui/Rainbow Christian perspectives on Church Safety in Aotearoa.	Back to the backlash: a history of queer comics censorship
3.40-4.00	Safe learning environments and curricular inclusion: LGBTQIA, Takatāpui, and MVPFAFF+ friendly teaching and learning	Perspectives of Queer Adolescent Learners and Their Experiences of Gender-Affirming Support and Acceptance of Sexual Orientation Within Their Christian School Contexts.	Manananggal as Queer Figure and Philosophical Refusal

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Parallel Session 6

Our final parallel session brings together presentations under the themes of Live, Laugh, Thrive and Communities of Wellbeing. The kōrero in this block explores humour, identity, and creative expression, alongside powerful reflections on belonging, community connection, and intersectional trans experiences in Aotearoa.

Time	Presentation Rooms – Themes	
	WG308 – Live, Laugh, Thrive	WA224 A – Communities of Wellbeing
4.20-4.40	Laughing the Self into Being: The Role of Humour in Identity Construction in Chinese Gay Vlogs	Plurisexual Young Adult’s Experiences of Dis/Connection with Communities
4.40-5.00	Te Whakahaumanu i ngā Taonga Takatāpui: Belonging and Thrivance for Takatāpui	Intersecting cultural, disability, and gender identities of the Aotearoa trans community: Findings from the 2022 Counting Ourselves Survey

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Celebrating LGBTQIA+: Towards a taxonomy of non-stigmatising best language practicesm.

Quentin Allan · Sari Andajani

This presentation draws from a forthcoming chapter in the Routledge Handbook of Language, Discourse and Mental Health.

Stigmatising language around LGBTQIA+ individuals continues to impact mental health and remains a global concern. This presentation outlines a taxonomy of non-pathologising, non-stigmatising language practices that affirm the fluidity, diversity, and openness of human sexuality.

To learn from the past, we examine manifestations of homonegativity in language—when such expressions were socially acceptable and institutionally legitimised. Although ‘homosexuality’ was removed from the American Psychiatric Association’s DSM in 1973, perceptions of gay men as mentally ill persisted, even in progressive democracies like Aotearoa New Zealand. Building on Allan’s (2025) critical discourse analysis of homosexual law reform debates, we explore how parliamentary rhetoric of the era systematically framed gay men as deviant, diseased, and dangerous—portrayed as existential threats to family, morality, and the social order.

Alarmingly, many of these same discursive strategies have resurfaced in contemporary attacks on trans communities. Trans-negative discourse echoes past attacks on gay men during the HIV/AIDS crisis and law reform campaigns, gaining traction among right-wing factions such as Family First, Destiny Church, New Zealand First, and increasingly among conservative mainstream New Zealanders. Together, these historical and contemporary discourses provide a powerful lens for understanding the enduring legacy of pathologising language and its psychological consequences.

Grounded in queer theory, critical discourse analysis, and minority stress theory, the proposed taxonomy distinguishes between gender identity, sexual orientation, and sex characteristics. It defines non-stigmatising language as affirming, respectful, and rooted in autonomy, lived experience, dignity, and harm reduction. It rejects essentialism in favour of identity fluidity and socio-cultural context. Informed by recent research (du Preez et al., 2022; Collens & du Preez, 2023), this taxonomy offers a vital resource for researchers, educators, and practitioners committed to fostering inclusive, affirming communication.

Keywords: Queer Theory · Discourse · Minority Stress · Language Practices

Apocalypse Now: The Representation of Gay Characters in the Post-Apocalyptic World of The Last of Us

Sarah Baker

The Last of Us is initially set in 2003, where the show starts with the chaotic early days of a worldwide Cordyceps fungus pandemic. In the pandemic, humans are transformed into violent, zombie-like creatures. The show then moves twenty years later, where a society exists around military-controlled zones and other communities that struggle to survive outside the walls.

Joel Miller is dealing with the trauma of his daughter Sarah's death and becomes a smuggler in Boston QZ. He is hired to escort 14-year-old Ellie to a Fireflies lab believed to be working on a cure. The two main characters endure harrowing events as they journey across the United States. While the programme blends survival drama and human stories, it is a brutal world that has significant gay representation.

This occurs in episode three, where Bill and Frank's story is told. The entire episode is devoted to their 20-year relationship from their meeting to growing old together and choosing to die together. Ellie, apart from being immune to the virus, also offers another groundbreaking portrayal of queer romance and life. Her romance with Dina unfolds naturally, with a school dance, shared fears, and hopes for the future.

The Last of Us is very good at humanizing its characters, adding emotional depth, "In a world where they face punishing circumstances" (Mendez, 2023). This presentation then asks what it is about the apocalypse that means that permits the gay experience to be normalized and made human when so many popular texts have struggled to present gay storylines past coming out stories. I will explore the importance of these stories as extending LGBTQ+ representation beyond tokenism and the bury your gays tropes that have been the frequently disappointing portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters.

Zine Making

Liz Breslin

In this paper I argue for the potential of zine-making as a feminist, queer and tangata Tiriti research creation tool. Colonisation, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes, is perpetuated by ‘re-arrangement, re-presentation and re-distribution’ of space, and we may consider the page to be a space on which colonisation is again and again rewritten. So how may we attempt to re-re-arrange, re-re-present and re-re-distribute stories inside, and in rejection of, colonised spaces? Building on Stacey Waite’s interpretations of Jack Halberstam’s writing on queer scavenging, I demonstrate how the cutting and pasting together of an undertold story can show different versions of the story itself and the gaps left behind in its creation. I share three different zines created for my recent PhD studies (‘Show you’re working out: a queer exploration of gender, space and violence in Pākehā stories of the rural south of Te Waipounamu, Aotearoa New Zealand’) about the life of Hannah Hayes, a relatively-unknown settler coloniser woman from the 1890s, showing how we may fix our complicity with scissors and glue and/or leave narratives open for possibilities.

I fix Hannah’s story as a ‘straight’ story, following heteronormative timelines, as a choose your own adventure story in ‘Colonise your own adventure’, with one adventure strand imagining a romantic relationship with another woman. There’s no evidence of this relationship, but there’s no evidence that it didn’t exist; I imagine it in the light of José Esteban Muñoz’s assertion of queerness as an ‘ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future’. Lastly I join Hannah up in a white Western lineage of ‘QUEER COWS’ from goddess Hera to myself in a fixed flip-book format, showing how zines have both personal and political narrative potential.

Te Taputoru Ōrite: Reimagining Gender and Sexuality Discourses in Christian Teacher Education

Daniela Brown

This presentation intends to share the initial stages of a practice-led doctoral project that seeks to provide LGBTQIA+ visibility and solidarity within Christian Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Grounded in 'Te Taputoru Ōrite', a conceptualization that engages with and negotiates the authoritative voices regarding gender and sexuality in Christian education (Biblical, Cultural, Policy Environment). This project aims to develop an experimental pedagogical resource that supports Christian educators in navigating these complex discourses. Considering the whakatauki: He toka tū moana arā he toa rongonui, the question must be asked- Is there a productive place to stand amongst the swirling waters of education within Aotearoa NZ?

As a cisgender heterosexual Christian woman of Roma descent, the researcher brings a deeply embodied awareness of institutional marginalisation and cultural loss. The project responds to the urgent need for safe, affirming spaces for LGBTQIA+ students in Christian schools, where theological gatekeeping often silences diverse identities. The work of Andre Afamasanga and Analosa Veukiso-Ulugia, Amanda Pilbrow and Shaneel Lal serves as a point of reference in this work.

This presentation will explore how post-qualitative inquiry, and critical pedagogy might serve to disrupt binary thinking by inviting ITE students into a reflexive, empathetic praxis. It offers a response to the pain experienced by LGBTQIA+ students in faith-based settings (Afamasaga, 2019; Lal, 2022; Pilbrow, 2019) and contributes to the broader movement of educational justice by prophetically imagining a future where educators can uphold a holistic Christian worldview that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and protects human rights.

Plurisexual Young Adult's Experiences of Dis/Connection with Communities

Abbey Busch | Elizabeth Du Preez | Paula Collens

Connection with communities is a meaningful protective factor for plurisexual young adults, who face health disparities across both queer and general populations. Plurisexual people also encounter distinct challenges to belonging and community connection.

In reviewing relevant research, it appears there is a scarcity of literature exploring plurisexual young adults' experiences of connection with communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Guided by an interpretivist paradigm and photovoice methodology, seven plurisexual young adults (aged 21–29), from five cities in Aotearoa, took photographs representing their experiences of connection and/or disconnection with communities; and shared narratives about their images in semi-structured interviews.

This presentation shares findings that participants navigated varied experiences of capacity and accessibility of opportunities to connect through active engagement and effort; and held space for the multiplicity of connection and disconnection in the process. Participants' journeys towards self-understanding and acceptance, and the people and places they come from, were intertwined with and shaped experiences of community.

Participants assessed perceived levels of relational safety and acceptance to safely and authentically express themselves across contexts; and often drew on symbolic expressions of self and community. Participants fostered communities grounded in shared meaning, understanding, and reciprocal care; and navigated norms that led to interpersonal and systemic harm and marginalisation, within and beyond community spaces.

Responding to harm and marginalisation, participants and members of their communities took meaningful actions to resist norms and activate change. Reframing deficit-focused narratives, these findings highlight the resilient and empowered ways participants navigated connection and disconnection with their communities, offering meaningful implications for mental health practitioners.

Keywords: Community Cultivation | Wellbeing | Sexuality Diversity

Queer Migration, the 'Ethnic Closet', and the Im/Possibility of Home: Chinese Queer International Students' Intersectional Experiences in New Zealand

Taylor Le Cui

This study investigates the lived experiences of Chinese queer international students in New Zealand's tertiary education system, focusing on their motivations for transnational education and the complex negotiations of identity in a new sociocultural context. Drawing on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, the research reveals that while New Zealand is often imagined as a progressive and queer-friendly destination, students frequently encounter racialized heteronormativity that undermines this perception. Their experience is profoundly shaped by what I call the 'ethnic closet'—a power structure situated at the intersection of race/ethnicity and sexuality. This intersectional marginalization manifests through microaggressions on campus and queerphobia within the Chinese community, where cultural expectations and norms often inhibit queer identity development.

Participants also reported experiencing racism and exclusion in New Zealand, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which further compounded their sense of marginalization. At the same time, the enduring influence of political censorship from China shaped their behaviours and self-expression abroad, leading many to adopt self-censorship and self-protection strategies. These dynamics illustrate that the process of seeking a “queer home” is not a linear transition from repression to liberation, but rather an ongoing, embodied negotiation shaped by intersecting identities such as race, citizenship, and migration status.

The findings challenge the simplistic binary of China as homophobic and the West as inherently inclusive, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of queer international students' experiences. Rather than viewing these students solely as educational subjects, the study emphasizes their complex social identities and the structural inequalities they navigate. It calls for higher education institutions to develop more culturally responsive and intersectionally informed support systems that recognize and address the unique challenges faced by queer international students of color.

Cisheteronormativity within LGBTQIA+ Communities

Chelsea D'Cruz

Cisheteronormativity is the societal assumption that everybody is cisgender, heterosexual, and endosex. This assumption can be held by both cisgender heterosexual populations and LGBTQIA+ populations. Across two studies, the current research explored LGBTQIA+ people's beliefs about the innateness and stability of gender/sex (i.e., gender essentialism) and how much they deny discrimination towards LGBTQIA+ communities. Study 1 (n = 291 LGBTQIA+ people) indicated that participants who had stronger LGBTQIA+ ingroup identity were less likely to deny discrimination, unless they also had high endorsement of gender essentialism. Study 2 (n = 293 LGBTQIA+ people) partially supported this; participants who had stronger LGBTQIA+ ingroup identity were again less likely to deny discrimination, even when accounting for age and socioeconomic status.

Comparatively, people who endorsed gender essentialism were more likely to support policies and ideas that were discriminatory towards LGBTQIA+ communities. Altogether, this research suggests that some LGBTQIA+ people's endorsement of gender essentialism may be a mechanism to justify unfair, cisheteronormative systems. This raises the question as to the potential danger of messaging that relies on essentialist notions of gender and sexuality (e.g., "born this way") to be validating. Accordingly, research must consider ways to address endorsement of gender essentialism within LGBTQIA+ communities to increase acceptance, unity, and belonging within these communities.

Keywords: Cisheteronormativity | Gender Essentialism | Ingroup Identity

Warming the Whare: Building System Readiness for Trans-Inclusive Perinatal Mental Health Services

Chelsea D’Cruz | Elizabeth Kerekere | George Parker | Katie Graham | Fleur Kelsey | Alex Ker | Sara Filoche | Rona Carroll | Clarke Miller | Jess Smith-Jones | Kim Myhill | Liora Noy | Ed Hyde | Jaimie Veale

The perinatal health system is a driver of distress for trans people due to lack of provider capability, invisibility of trans whānau, and systematic inequalities which lead to unmet healthcare needs. In our presentation, we will provide an overview of a 3-year participatory action project: Warming the Whare. This project builds upon and implements Elizabeth Kerekere’s Te Whare Takatāpui framework and the Warming the Whare Guidelines developed from the Trans Pregnancy Care Project. The aim of this project is to transform the perinatal mental health space to make it more equitable and inclusive for trans, non-binary and takatāpui people/whānau. This project uses a cooperative group enquiry process within two perinatal mental health services, alongside the research team and trans whānau advisory rōpū to plan, implement and evaluate targeted changes within the partnering perinatal mental health services.

We will present initial findings and reflections from Warming the Whare, with a specific focus on insights from Phase 2 data collection which aimed to understand the current capacity to provide trans inclusive care within the services. These findings will outline the understandings, attitudes, and challenges that health professionals produced when asked about trans-inclusive care within perinatal mental health services. Our research process provides an example of how system transformation can be built into the research process, making it possible for research to both inform and transform. We will reflect on the possibilities and challenges of such research and advocate for more collaborative and transformative research within the perinatal care space.

Queer Archives and Personal Collections

Alison Day

Up until the 1960s and 1970s many queer personal collections were lost or destroyed because of the prevailing criminal and social stigmas. Aotearoa's galleries, libraries, archives, museums and universities (GLAMU) institutions ignored queer materials rendering them invisible in history and creating a conspiracy of silence. It was these attitudes that spurred the establishment of queer independent/community archives, to preserve and provide access to their narratives and collections. However, as societal attitudes have evolved, collaborations between GLAMU institutions and queer independent archives have become more evident, as the value and significance of the collections they hold are recognised as part of Aotearoa's cultural heritage. Retaining autonomy in such collaborations is often vital for many queer archives and their communities, in Aotearoa and overseas. Queer independent archives play a vital role in their communities, preserving and making accessible narratives that might otherwise still be lost.

These issues were explored from the perspective of New Zealand's three queer independent archives. As part of a larger PhD project, interviews were conducted with representatives from each queer archive (6) and with representatives from GLAMU institutions (30). The findings revealed a variety of institutional collaborations, depending on the needs and situation of each archive. Some of the challenges faced by queer archives in making their collections accessible and visible were addressed through collaborations, particularly in the areas of collection digitisation and preservation. While institutional collaborations can be beneficial, they can also have disadvantages. The review and renegotiation of collaboration agreements is when power imbalances between a queer archive and a GLAMU institution can become evident, with implications for the queer independent archive. Nonetheless, institutional collaborations are important to support the sustainability of independent archives, enhance collection accessibility, and perpetuate queer visibility and representation.

Arts-Based Research with and for Trans People in Aotearoa

Julia de Bres | Ia Morrison-Young | Tara Ravi

Arts-based methods are becoming more prominent in social science research, resisting Western scholarly traditions that devalue subjectivity and creativity in research. Queer researchers, with their drive to question dominant norms and power structures, are well placed to contribute to this development. Indigenous researchers have long used art as a basis for knowledge creation, meaning arts-based research can also serve decolonial goals.

Arts-based research includes various art forms, which can be used to collect, analyse and present research data. This presentation will discuss the use of drawing and poetry in two research projects focusing on the health and wellbeing of trans people in Aotearoa.

[Project Village](#) is a Marsden Fund project investigating what good family support looks like for trans young people of different cultural backgrounds in Aotearoa. We ask trans young people and their most supportive family members to draw and describe their experiences of giving and receiving support. We analyse their drawings alongside their words, looking for recurrent discourses of family support. In presenting the results, we use drawing to make 'village portraits', illustrating each young person's support network.

[To Be Ourselves](#) analysed the experiences of trans and non-binary disabled people in Aotearoa, using their open-text responses to the 2022 Counting Ourselves survey. We found common themes across the participants, who gave rich descriptions of their experiences. This inspired the creation of 'data poems' to convey these themes via combining the words of several participants. We illustrated the poems with drawings to uplift the participants' voices.

Using arts-based methods legitimises forms of knowledge production that can decolonise the academy. In discussing how we use drawing and poetry to achieve our research goals, we hope to highlight the benefits of using these methods in queer research in Aotearoa and encourage other researchers to imagine how they might do so too.

Keywords: Arts-Based Research | Decolonial Knowledge | Trans Wellbeing

From Acceptance to Advocacy: How Families Support Transgender and Non-Binary Wellbeing

Elizabeth du Preez | Paula Collens | Hugo Cordue

This presentation reports on a scoping review conducted to identify specific family processes and relational actions that contribute to and support wellbeing in transgender and non-binary (TGNB) family members. The review followed the Arksey and O'Malley framework and PRISMA-ScR guidelines.

The search was conducted in April 2025 and yielded a total of 1359 studies. Of these, 152 texts were selected for full review, and 68 articles were included in the analysis. Basic content analysis was used to synthesise the results.

Content analysis identified that families engage in three main family processes, underpinned by specific relational processes. These appear to follow a developmental trajectory as families adjust to change. The three key processes are: (i) actively seeking out education and support independently from the TGNB family member; (ii) acceptance and affirmation communicated through specific relational actions; and (iii) engaging in advocacy on behalf of the TGNB family member, both inside and outside the family system.

The findings suggest that future research should include TGNB adults and their family systems, and explore the perspectives of transfeminine family members, of fathers as parents of TGNB people, and of TGNB people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Campus Experiences of Transgender and Non-Binary Tertiary Education Students in Aotearoa New Zealand: Findings from a Nationally Representative Survey

Andromeda Fey

Most studies of rainbow student experiences in education aggregate the results of transgender participants with those of their cisgender queer peers. Disaggregation of secondary education data has revealed differences in factors influencing academic achievement. This study aims to create a nationally representative overview of transgender people's post-secondary education experiences in Aotearoa by analysing data from the 2022 Identify community report.

Using SPSS 30.0, data from Identify were disaggregated, and a subset of participants engaged in tertiary education (N=1448) analysed. Responses from transgender and nonbinary participants (n=665) compared against those of the whole subset. Of specific interest were experiences on campus, sense of belonging and safety at their educational institution, and representation within the curriculum. Significant results were determined using Pearson Chi² tests.

Transgender students' self-reported academic performance was not significantly different from aggregated 'rainbow' results for either 'likelihood of completing current qualification' or 'grades compared to peers'.

However, there were significant differences in factors associated with academic achievement: Significantly fewer transgender students felt as though they were 'a part of their course or program'; 'treated with as much respect as other students'; that their place of study was 'supportive towards rainbow students'; or that 'rainbow people, history and topics have been represented appropriately or fairly in their course content' compared to queer students overall.

Transgender participants were significantly more likely to engage with rainbow group meetings or events than their cisgender queer peers, and engaged at a greater frequency. The degree to which this community engagement provides a protective factor requires further exploration. These findings emphasize the need for institutional support for student queer community groups; queer staff; and professional development for all staff that centres transgender experiences.

Ideal Donors, Conceiving Realities: Experiences of Same-Sex and Gender-Diverse Couples Using Home Insemination to Conceive in Aotearoa

Angela Jayne Fyfe

Donor conception outside clinical settings is becoming increasingly common, yet little is known about the real-life experiences of those who choose this path. This study explored the personal experiences of eleven parents from same-sex and gender-diverse couples in Aotearoa who conceived through home insemination with known donors. In-depth interviews revealed the motivations, challenges, and relational dynamics of their conception journeys. Although participants were parents of children conceived after the introduction of the Human Assisted Reproductive Technology [HART] Act (2004), their decision to conceive outside clinical settings meant they were not subject to the mandatory medical, ethical, or legal procedures typically involved in fertility clinics.

Participants expressed a strong desire to find donors who shared similar values and would be part of their child's life in a meaningful way. A key focus was ensuring that the child grew up with a clear connection to their origins. Donors were not seen as 'fathers' but rather 'helping uncles'. Home insemination was chosen for reasons including financial factors, a desire for agency, and a preference for a non-medical, 'personal' conception experience. However, participants often had to compromise on their ideal donor criteria when faced with the reality of finding and recruiting a donor. The process of home insemination was frequently described as relationally awkward, and parents often spoke of a lack of support, understanding, and practical information about self-insemination.

This study highlights a gap in support for same-sex and gender-diverse couples using known donors and self-insemination, emphasising the need for informed, accessible, evidence-based resources and psychosocial support. This may include contributing knowledge to equip counsellors and others to more effectively assist families created in diverse ways. Additionally, enabling inclusion in the HART register (2004) could help protect the rights, health, and safety of all donor conception stakeholders.

How do Culturally Responsive Storytelling Methodologies Potentially Engage and Challenge All Vulnerable Adult Learners?

Nigel Gearing

Many adult learners may be vulnerable in one or more aspects of their identities. Learners may view vulnerability as limiting or even prohibiting their active participation in higher learning environments. This may be expressed by a lack of motivation or demotivation to engage with their current learning environment, community, teacher and curriculum.

Derived from second language acquisition, the branch of learning with the highest rate of recorded failure (Dörnyei, 2005), amotivation is the learner's belief that their current related learning trajectory is either too difficult or pointless and demotivation is the specific catalyst that triggers amotivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

This presentation will posit that even with international student cohorts for whom English is their second language, when deeply informed by Māori and Pacific culturally responsive pedagogies (CRPs), oral and written biographical or autobiographical storytelling methodology testimony that directly relates to their identities, empowers them to thrive. Storytelling acts as a springboard for their initial engagement. This then motivates commitment to subsequent learning.

As this presentation will demonstrate, this methodology is potentially transferable to any vulnerable adult learning environment.

Bakla 'di Bacla: The Story of Queer Filipinos from the Pre-Colonial Era to the 20th Century

Zepphia Gonzales | Christopher Valenzuela | Patricia Tauro | Raine Montecillo | Eunice Gaerlan

This presentation is a collaborative work originating from a student-created social media slide deck tracing the history of LGBTQIA+ experiences in the Philippines. Spanning precolonial gender diversity to 20th-century developments, the slide deck catalysed a wider inquiry into how queer Filipino histories can be understood, reinterpreted, and expressed from the positionality of young queer Filipinos living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This presentation is structured as a creative dialogue between historical narrative and personal reflection with each presenter interweaving moments from history with their own vignettes, memories, or poetic fragments. Rather than offering a definitive account of queer Filipino history, this presentation explores how research can also be an act of meaning-making and invites audiences into a reflection on how the past travels with us, and how queer lives in diaspora might be informed by, but not confined to, inherited stories.

The work will contribute to growing forms of creative research practices that centre diasporic voices, and that blur the boundaries between scholarship, art-making, and lived experience.

From Reading to Practice: Chinese Online Danmei Novel Fan Communities and Queer Imagination

Xin Guo

This study aims to explore how heterosexual female fans within Chinese Danmei culture—those who primarily consume, create, and circulate cultural texts centred on romantic relationships between male characters—negotiate and construct gender consciousness and queer imaginaries through diverse fan practices within online communities. The research focuses on Sina Weibo, one of China’s leading social media platforms and a key site for Danmei fan engagement. As a hybrid platform that combines microblogging and social networking functions, Weibo offers a distinctive digital space for fan interaction and self-expression.

This study investigates how these fans strategically navigate media censorship and construct alternative queer discursive spaces, often taking on a leading role in shaping such narratives. In doing so, they may either challenge or reinforce dominant gender norms. A mixed-methods approach will be adopted, including textual analysis of publicly available fan-generated content on Weibo—such as posts, memes, images, and videos—to identify emerging patterns in gender and queer discourse. In addition, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with fans, including content creators, community moderators, and active participants within the online space. These interviews will explore participants’ engagement with Danmei fandom, their understandings of gender and queer issues, and their views on platform censorship.

By analysing these interwoven practices, this research seeks to shed light on how Chinese Danmei fans negotiate and produce meanings of gender and queerness within the digitally mediated environment of state media regulation. It also aims to examine the tensions and contradictions embedded in Danmei culture and fan practices—particularly between enhancing queer visibility and appropriating queer public discourse. Ultimately, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex intersections among fan culture, media censorship, gender politics, and queer discourse in the Chinese digital landscape.

Keywords: Danmei Fandom | Queer Discourse | Media Censorship

Better Blatant than Latent!

Exploring Aotearoa's Radical Queer Histories

Will Hansen

Queer politics in Aotearoa is characterised by a tension between liberalism and radicalism. While queer liberals sought a better deal for queer people primarily through achieving legal rights, radical approaches targeted the structures of heterosexist domination as part of an anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist struggle. Though the two tendencies have never been mutually exclusive nor a rigid binary, histories of queer radicalism have often been overshadowed by a focus on progressive law reform campaigns. This paper “queers” that narrative, focusing on the revolutionary queers.

Gay liberationists in the early 1970s were informed by Marxism and saw themselves as part of a broad countercultural revolutionary movement. They faced challenges from liberals, who feared gay liberation was too radical and alienating straight society. These detractors often sought to police gender deviancy among activists, targeting trans femininity in particular. Trans activists fought back, reminding their comrades that a rigid gender binary was a key mechanism of sexist oppression. By the late 1970s liberalism became the dominant approach in queer politics, but not without significant contestation. A collective of Māori and Pasifika lesbians known as the Black Dykes emerged in the early 1980s, expanding what sexual liberation meant by exploring its relationship to Māori sovereignty. The Black Dykes – renamed Wāhine Mo Nga Wāhine o te Moana-Nui-A-Kiwa in 1985 – are a criminally underrated group in Aotearoa's history. They challenged their comrades to witness racism within gay activism, and show up for Māori self-determination. Wāhine Mo Nga Wāhine influenced a generation of lesbian activists, whose radical politics were tested and calcified through activity in the anti-apartheid and Māori land rights movements during the 1980s and early 1990s.

‘Where’s our living room?’

Envisioning Ahurutanga for Te Whanganui a-Tara’s Rainbow Community

Chelsea Haughton

Rainbow communities in Aotearoa New Zealand face persistent barriers to inclusion, safety and belonging. While much research and policy attention has been focussed on rainbow youth, the experiences and needs of older rainbow individuals remain under-explored. This practice-based research project sought to understand what makes environments inclusive and supportive for rainbow adults in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, using a qualitative methodology grounded in feminist, queer, intersectional and te ao Māori approaches.

Data was collected through 24 semi-structured interviews and two participatory zine-making workshops with LGBTQIA+ individuals aged 27-76. Thematic analysis revealed key themes of general definitions and understanding of safety, community and inclusion as rainbow individuals, current landscape of Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington for rainbow individuals, barriers to entry to the rainbow community in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, and key elements required and dreaming the ideal.

The research demonstrated how intersecting experiences of race, disability, neurodivergence, age, and class shape people’s ability to access and feel safe in rainbow spaces.

Findings underscore the need for co-designed, community-led spaces and services that are affordable, accessible, culturally affirming, and reflective of diverse identities and life stages. Zine-making emerged as a powerful tool for collective reflection and imagining radically optimistic futures. The study contributes valuable insights for policymakers, funders, and community organisations, highlighting practical changes that can be made to support the creation, or improvement of, inclusive, responsive environments that centre self-determination and foster intergenerational queer connection.

Belonging and Mental Well-being of LGBTQ+ University Students

Skyler Hsieh

Background: University students are at higher risk of experiencing mental health problems. In particular, LGBTQ+ students experience disproportionately higher levels of mental distress compared to cisgender and heterosexual peers. Research suggests students who feel that they have a place at university report lower levels of mental distress, higher academic performance and completion. However, LGBTQ+ students face additional barriers to place-making as LGBTQ+ identities are often marginalised within university spaces. This is especially challenging for students with intersectional LGBTQ+ identities such as ethnic minority groups, where cultural understandings of rainbow identity are absent in western LGBTQ+ communities. Research on LGBTQ+ university students' sense of belonging and mental health has been limited, and few studies have included an intersectional approach. Even fewer studies have explored LGBTQ+ university students' own perspectives. This current study aims to fill the gap in the literature by exploring the perspective of LGBTQ+ students at a local New Zealand university of their sense of belonging and mental health.

Method: 20 semi-structured qualitative interviews were completed with LGBTQ+ university students between 17-30 years old. Participants were enrolled in an undergraduate degree at a local New Zealand university and had been living in New Zealand for at least six months. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis. This study draws from intersectionality and queer theory.

Keywords: Sense of Belonging | Mental Health | Intersectionality

Navigating Silence in the Design of Queer New Zealand Film

Welby Ings

In 1963 Charles Wright Mills described independent artists and intellectuals as different yet, “among the few remaining personalities equipped to resist and to fight the stereotyping and consequent death of genuinely living things” (p. 299). Fifty-three years later, Jean McNiff suggested that it is the role of artists and scholars to pursue “a more intellectually turbulent, and thereby a more peaceful and productive world than the one we are living in at present” (2016, p. 25).

But what is it to engage with turbulence in the pursuit of peace and productivity? Drawing on my experience as a queer film maker who tells queer stories set in Aotearoa, this paper examines a condition that often requests revelation while expecting selective cultural silencing. Referencing my New Zealand feature film PUNCH (2022); the documentary, Interference (in production) and my short films, Sparrow (1917) and boy (2004), the paper illustrates how one must navigate the pressures of revisionism, exoticisation and cultural sanitising. In considering these issues, the presentation examines pressures brought to bear on queer storytelling by producers, distributors and funding agencies who have vested interests in narratives as marketable products. While these external pressures exist, one can also encounter questioning from queer audiences who have developed distinctive perspectives about what constitutes queer identity, experience and appropriate focus. Given that queer experience is sometimes uneven and often internally incoherent, one is faced with Edward Said’s argument that an intellectual must resist and dispute sanctioned narratives. Such a thinker, he suggests, is neither,

... a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say (1998, p. 23).

Te Whare Takatāpui: Celebrating Trans Tamariki Produced in Association with the Celebrating Trans Lives Project

Prof Elizabeth Kerekere

Te Whare Takatāpui is a conceptual and practical framework which emerged out of Professor Kerekere's groundbreaking research on takatāpui health and identity. It is a vision of health and well-being for takatāpui and all people with diverse genders, sexualities and innate variations of sex characteristics, and their whānau. Professor Kerekere's framework draws on her background in kaupapa Māori, queer communities, youth development, community health and art to promote the well-being of whānau through the integration of cultural values with contemporary understandings of identity and well-being.

Te Whare Takatāpui is inspired by Te Whare Tapa Whā. It features six values of whakapapa (genealogy), wairua (spirituality), mauri (life spark), mana (authority/self-determination), tapu (sacredness of body and mind) and tikanga (rules and protocols) representing different parts of a whareniui. When these values are interwoven, Te Whare Takatāpui can shelter and nurture all people with diverse genders, sexualities, and innate variations of sex characteristics, and their whānau - a conceptual tūrangawaewae (a place to stand/be). Professor Kerekere will introduce Te Whare Takatāpui and provide practical examples of how to apply it, based on the multiple projects using this framework. This includes policy and strategic development, suicide prevention resources to framing research reports and government-funded projects to change the health system for trans perinatal and intersex care. She will be able to distribute copies of Tīwhanawhana's brand new resource: Te Whare Takatāpui: Celebrating Trans Tamariki produced in association with the Celebrating Trans Lives Project.

Inclusion Through Difference: Experiences of Rainbow Parenting in Aotearoa

Katie Knowles | Dr George Parker | Prof Suzanne Miller | Prof Clive Aspin

Social norms regarding family organisation are biased towards coupled, heterosexual, cisgender parents, with children who are biologically related to them. These norms dictate the institutions, services, and practices family's encounter while parenting, meaning for those whose family structures do not align with these norms—such as takatāpui (Māori gender and sexuality diverse) or Rainbow parents—accessing these institutions can result in discrimination and exclusion. Challenging these norms relies on having knowledge pertaining to how Rainbow families navigate and experience parenting and parenting-related services. There are currently no Aotearoa-specific studies detailing the diversity of rainbow-parent whānau/families and existing national child and family cohort studies have not collected parents' gender and sexuality data, meaning rainbow parent whānau/families and their experiences cannot be identified or tracked. We aim to explore how diverse rainbow-parents navigate gender, sexuality, and relationship norms across the institutions, services, and practices (e.g., healthcare, early childhood education) they encounter while parenting, and what their strategies are for resisting and challenging these norms?

Data will be collected through a mixed-methods survey of Rainbow-parents currently living in Aotearoa. The survey will detail the diversity of Rainbow whānau/family organisation, the ways they navigate social norms regarding family organisation with Aotearoa, and their experiences of engaging with family-related institutions and services. Quantitative questions will identify material conditions and contexts of rainbow-parents in Aotearoa, including how they identify and organise their whānau/families; where they are located; their social circumstances; and intersectional differences in ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, and socio-economic status. Open-ended questions will give insight into experiences of rainbow-parents and their families/whānau as they navigate gender, sexuality, and relationship norms, and the strategies they use to resist and challenge these norms. We intend to present preliminary results from the data collected through this survey.

Keywords: Rainbow Parenting | Family Norms | Institutional Navigation

Queer Housing and Wellbeing in Aotearoa: Lived Experiences, Structural Barriers, and Community Resilience

Dr Lori Leigh

Queer communities—used here as an inclusive umbrella encompassing Takatāpui and LGBTQIA+ identities—face significant and often overlooked challenges in accessing safe, secure, and affirming housing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite 2023 Census data indicating that 1 in 20 adults identify as queer, there remains a critical lack of research and policy attention addressing their specific housing and wellbeing needs. These gaps are exacerbated by systemic inequities, intersecting forms of discrimination, and a widespread absence of queer perspectives in mainstream housing and health discourse.

This study responds to these gaps through a qualitative open-text survey distributed via Rainbow Housing NZ, a private online housing forum administered by Gender Minorities Aotearoa for over eight years. With a membership of over 5,000, the platform serves as a vital peer-led network for Transgender and Rainbow individuals seeking housing or offering queer-affirming spaces. The survey investigates participants' lived experiences navigating the housing system, the barriers they encounter, and the strategies they use to create safe and supportive domestic environments.

Preliminary findings reveal that housing insecurity, affordability, discrimination, and safety are persistent concerns, deeply entangled with broader structural and social marginalisation. However, the data also highlights the innovative, community-based practices of care, resilience, and mutual support that characterise queer approaches to home-making. This research advocates for targeted, equity-focused housing policy reform and calls for the recognition of queer domestic life as central to broader frameworks of public health, social justice, and community wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand.

'By us and about us': Trans Indigenous Storytelling in Rūrangi

Paige Macintosh

Max Currie released his much-celebrated independent trans drama Rūrangi as a feature film in 2020, marking a critical turning point for Aotearoa New Zealand's emerging trans media canon. The drama modelled a radically inclusive production process, centring both trans and Indigenous voices as it grappled with issues of identity, community, and environmental activism.

More than simply casting trans and Indigenous performers, the film's production team modelled Barry Barclay's Fourth Cinema to transform the media production into a radical act of community building. An Indigenous filmmaker in his own right, Barclay advocated for cinema that privileged both the Indigenous gaze and Indigenous audiences, asking how Māori filmmakers like himself might "take this maverick yet fond friend of ours—the camera—into the Māori community and be confident it will act with dignity" (1990, 9).

Using Rūrangi as a case study, this paper considers how Indigenous and trans filmmaking traditions intersect in Rūrangi's production. In doing so, I draw attention to solidarity practices within and between trans and Indigenous communities, highlighting opportunities for expanding our theorisation of both trans and Aotearoa cinema.

Ethnic Parents' Experiences with their LGBTQIA+ Children

Prof Camille Nakhid | Agustina Marianacci

This research, exploring the experiences of ethnic parents of LGBTQIA+ children in Aotearoa New Zealand, aimed to understand how ethnic parents navigate their relationships with their children alongside the cultural, religious and societal influences that shape these responses. Conversations were held with six individual parents and one parent couple in homes, parks, and cafés across Whanganui-a-Tara, Tāmaki Makaurau and Kirikiriroa.

Despite the small sample size due to the sensitivity of the topic, common themes emerged. Parents generally believed they had open and honest relationships with their children, yet often misgendered them or dismissed their same-sex relationships. Parents interpreted these behaviours as acceptance of the child “as they are”, which seemed to imply “as the child they had always known”. A strong desire for societal approval led to anxiety and minimisation of the child’s queerness. None of the parents expressed full comfort with their child’s identity, often attributing greater resistance to the parent who was absent. Culture, religion, family and tradition were frequently cited to justify their responses to their LGBTQIA+ children.

Parents who considered themselves generally accepting of rainbow communities struggled with their own child’s identity, often blaming themselves or fearing societal blame. Many expressed concern over the mental health impacts for their children from non-disclosure, including suicide, perhaps using the worst-case scenario as a way to cope with the “bad news”.

This research highlights the need for honest, community-based conversations among ethnic parents. Sharing diverse parental experiences may foster connection and reduce isolation; acknowledging the manipulation of cultural and religious narratives could support the genuine acceptance of LGBTQIA+ children within ethnic families and communities.

The Experiences of Ākongā Māori who Identify as Takatāpui and/or Sex, Gender and Sexuality Diverse in Relationships and Sexuality Education

Dr Hayley McGlashan-Fainu | Assoc Prof John Fenaughty

This presentation will showcase the initial findings from an HRC funded project which explores the experiences of ākongā Māori who identify as takatāpui and/or sex, gender and sexuality diverse in Relationships and Sexuality Education in schools (RSE) in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The project drew on focus group hui and individual interviews, underpinned by Kaupapa Māori and feminist decolonial theory and methodologies to explore the experiences of ākongā Māori who identify as takatāpui or sex, gender and sexuality diverse in RSE.

Previous research suggests that western colonial cis-heteronormative culture and language are pervasive in schools in Aotearoa, and that LGBTQI+ and takatāpui identities are not visible in the classroom or broader education system. The refreshed (and recently removed) Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidelines (2020) specifically focused on a range of intersectional identities and provided a useful framework for those working in schools. Research continues to state however, that RSE should include more diverse subject matter to offer a variety of perspectives to all students and affirm and validate all identities. With the recent removal and current re-write (in process) of these guidelines there is an urgent need to know what this looks and feels like for ākongā Māori who identify as takatāpui and/or sex, gender and sexuality diverse.

In this presentation we will prioritise the voices of diverse ākongā Māori to understand their intersectional and heterogeneous needs and wants in culturally inclusive curriculum and school wide RSE.

Ōhanga Rearea: An Organisational Rainbow Inclusion Framework

Connor McLeod

Undoubtedly, there have been strides in LGBTQIA+ rights within Oceania. And many groups and organisations, inspired by work overseas, have brought advocacy and pride to the forefront for many New Zealanders. From pride to progress flags, we have been undergoing a queer revolution.

But with this has come with other challenges. Of corporate pinkwashing - LGBTQIA+ commercialisation and the tokenisation of queer identities. Further, and particularly for our takatāpui peoples here in Aotearoa, some of us have found that rainbow initiatives require more support in how they engage with decolonisation, intersectionality, and the more complicated aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

And so we present here a new resource; a co-designed, and indigenous-centred approach to takatāpui and rainbow advocacy: the Ōhanga Rearea Framework.

Inspired by the journey of the small green rearea bird, this framework enables takatāpui and rainbow inclusion in a meaningful way. It presents five essential growth pathways, and provides various tools and resources for the categorisation and development of initiatives at both a strategic and operational level within various contexts.

It is, in sum, the perspectives and aspirations of countless takatāpui and rainbow people - told through the journey of one of our smallest birds in Aotearoa, the rearea. And it is a journey. For we exist within the context of Aotearoa, and are obliged to serve the diverse needs of our communities, and our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We must then harness indigenous knowledge and practices that extend throughout time and space. As such, our approach to rainbow and takatāpui community development must be contextualised.

This presentation, while centred around indigenous perspectives within Aotearoa, will be applicable to any organisation, department, or service seeking fresh, tangible approaches to LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

“Something Isn’t Right:” Dissonance as Subversive Queer TTRPG Play

Emily Morris

Since the initial publication of the genre-defining tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) *Dungeons & Dragons* in 1974 (TSR, Inc), players and academics alike have been fascinated by the potentiality of TTRPGs. Starting with Fine’s *Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds* (1983), a growing body of scholarship has examined TTRPGs through a variety of lenses. However, in the vein of queerness specifically, TTRPG literature has yet to fully blossom; literature that has looked at queerness in TTRPGs through the 2010s mainly focused on queer representation (and lack thereof) in available source material such as rule books. The issue here is that, in the context of *Dungeons & Dragons* specifically, queer content was officially outlawed from the game until at least 1994 (Morris, 2022; Stenros & Sihovnen, 2015); queerness in TTRPGs has not historically been made explicit in source material, even though queer players have interacted with TTRPGs like *Dungeons & Dragons* since their conception (Carter, 2022). While documenting representation is a worthy endeavour, it is not nearly all that TTRPGs have to offer players or scholars in terms of queerness. If we cannot find queerness in the source material (even in the 2024 version of *Dungeons & Dragons*), then surely we must need to turn to the players instead.

This presentation will draw from the presenter’s forthcoming PhD thesis, exploring how queer play strategies actively queer TTRPGs and play experiences. By both playing queerly and queering play, such strategies can open characters, players, and people to different types of transformation—of selves, minds, relationships, and beyond. Using a case study conducted using (auto)ethnographic methods, this presentation will discuss the idea of vocally and symbolically dissonant queer TTRPG play strategies, and the resulting transformative subversion they create.

Te Whakahaumanu i ngā Taonga Takatāpui: Belonging and Thrivance for Takatāpui

Te Aorere Ngātai-Tautuku | Prof. Donna Campbell

This presentation draws on a recently completed Master's research project on how takatāpui and queer Māori identify and express belonging and thrivance. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, anti-Māori racism, homophobia and transphobia have risen exponentially in Aotearoa, spurring an increase in aggressive violent attacks on marginalised communities. The intention of this study is to privilege the voices and lived experiences of takatāpui who have been consistently subject to the systematic dehumanisation of Western research conventions.

Drawing upon the springs of mātauranga takatāpui (re)generated by takatāpui academics, this rangahau is firmly grounded within a takatāpui worldview. Adapted elements from Te Pū o te Rākau methodological framework are implemented in this rangahau to (re)affirm the importance of takatāpui voices and interdependent relationships.

Experienced through the ritualistic ceremony of wānanga, informed by Kaupapa Māori tenet - titiro, whakarongo... kōrero - I facilitated a wānanga for a group of six kaipūrākau to share their pūrākau at Te Kohinga Mārama marae. Throughout the wānanga the kaipūrākau shared hilarious, heartwarming and painful pūrākau about their lived experiences as Indigenous queer people navigating a settler-colonial Western society and their encounters with belonging.

These precious pūrākau are then translated into key themes that communicate the findings of this rangahau, that are described as Whanaungatanga, Tuakiritanga, Mana Motuhake and Te Hari Te Koa. Whanaungatanga explores the significance of our interdependent relationships with our whakapapa and kaupapa whānau, with each other and with ourselves. Tuakiritanga describes the esoteric interconnectedness of our identities. Mana Motuhake is an inherent element grounded in our Indigenous position in Aotearoa, (re)asserting Māori as tāngata whenua and (re)affirming the guaranteed self-determined rights (re)assured by our identity. Te Hari Te Koa (re)presents the vast spectrum of takatāpui humour and thrivance as our inherent resistance to cisheteropatriarchy settler-colonialism.

Back to the Backlash: A History of Queer Comics Censorship

Sam Orchard

Comic books and graphic novels, especially queer comics, have a long history of entanglements with censorship and suppression. After decades of increasing acceptance of comics and queerness alike, censorship of queer content is on the rise again internationally, and comics have been particular targets of the backlash. This paper considers the history of queer comics and censorship, and the present fraught moment wherein queer comics are experiencing both rapid growth and aggressive censorship.

In 1954, American psychiatrist Frederic Wertham and his book *Seduction of the Innocent* kicked a moral panic over comics into overdrive. Comics were accused of causing childhood delinquency and "promoting homosexuality." Comic book burnings, bans, government and industry censorship swept the world. In New Zealand, the Mazengarb report led to the collapse of an emerging industry, which has never recovered.

Underground comix challenged social norms in the 1970s. Then, in the 1980s, restrictions began to weaken, comics as a medium started to gain legitimacy, and "silence is death" became a queer motto in response to governmental neglect during the AIDS crisis. Through the mid-2000s we continued to see restrictions removed, and the 2010's brought an explosion of queer comics in print and online.

Then the explosion hit a backlash. Over the past five years, there has been a sharp rise in anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation internationally, with queer comics disproportionately targeted. Maia Kobabe's graphic memoir *Gender Queer* was the most frequently challenged book in the US for years, and in 2023, three of the ten most challenged books were comics, all of which included queer content. In China, an ongoing crackdown on danmei (gay fiction inspired by "boy's love" manga) has led to the arrest of dozens of authors. The number of out queer creators and comics is increasing, and more international than ever, but both face an uncertain future.

Irarere: Pakiwaitara: Poetic Portraiture and Takatāpui Tāne Identity

Tangaroa Paora

This paper explores how pakīwaitara (a form of poetic inquiry grounded in a kaupapa Māori research) was employed to consider and express takatāpui tāne identity. Rooted in my 2023 doctoral research, the project emerged from a commitment to Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, and performative expression as Māori pathways for understanding gender, identity, and embodiment.

The nine takatāpui tāne in the project carried an innate understanding of irarua (the coexistence of dual energies) and were able to manifest this through fluid expressions of identity. When such identity is both physically and spiritually aligned, it is known as irarere. The thesis was constituted as a book of poetry, portrait photography, oratory and performance. These artistic manifestations were accompanied by a written exegesis. Within the study the tāne Māori formed poupou (pillars) within a conceptual Whare Takatāpui.

Each participant was presented in two photographic portraits: the first recorded how he “passed” in the world; the second captured how he expressed identity. Two interviews with each participant explored perceptions of being Māori, takatāpui, and the essence of their ira (the life principle within). These interviews included kōrero (discussion) on iwi and hapū knowledge of historical takatāpui presence, its cultural and spiritual dimensions, and the role of performance in self-expression. From these interviews, poetic portraits as pakīwaitara were crafted that retained each participant’s spoken words. Drawn from interviews (some times of over one hour in duration), statements were essentialised so ira shaped a literary form from the rhythm and breath of each tāne’s speech.

By combining performance and analysis, the paper seeks to bridge the understanding of takatāpui and Indigenous queer scholarship by demonstrating how a creative, practice-led approach situated in a kaupapa Māori paradigm can interpret marginalised knowledge so it affirms identity and serves as a powerful tool for understanding, healing, and transformation.



Keywords: Pakiwaitara | Takatāpui Identity | Creative Practice-Led Research

Trans and Irawhiti Takatāpui Educational Worlds: Imagining Decolonisation through Wānanga

Ampersand Pasley | Moana Murray

Despite the New Zealand Curriculum's (1999) commitment to non-discrimination, there is a long history of policy and practice perpetuating colonialities of gender (Lugones, 2007; Kerekere, 2017; Hamley & Doyle, 2023) that demonstrably undermine trans and irawhiti takatāpui students' education (Ellis & Bentham, 2021; Fenaughty et al., 2021). The present kaupapa involves wānanga with 10 trans and irawhiti takatāpui taiohi (young people) to reimagine what the (relationships and sexuality) curriculum might look like if it supported them to flourish. Facilitated by the investigators, taiohi were given creative control over wānanga, including engaging in kōrero (conversation), raranga (weaving), mapping, creative practice, and kapa haka, to facilitate ako (Mika, 2017). A Matike Mai framework (Mutu, 2016) informed the researchers' approach to wānanga with tangata whenua and tauwiwi participants. This talk presents the initial findings and how taiohi would like to mobilise their vision for trans- and irawhiti takatāpui-affirming education.

Rainbow+ Health in Medical Education: Students' Perceptions of Education and Practice

Nicola Paton

Negative healthcare experiences contribute to queer health disparities through avoidance or delayed access to healthcare. Medical educators have an important role in contributing to improving the health of queer communities through developing, delivering and researching the impact of curricula on queer health. However, curriculum on queer health in medical education is limited. This qualitative study investigates medical students' experiences and perceptions of queer health education and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The eight participants had completed the Medical Humanities course *Queering Healthcare* as part of their undergraduate medical education. Participants were interviewed about experiences related to queer health during their subsequent clinical placements. Seven of these participants also gave permission for the reflective journal they had written as part of *Queering Healthcare* to be included in the study.

Participants observed that doctors they frequently had limited skills or knowledge about providing healthcare to transgender and non-binary people, in particular, along with dismissive and sometimes antagonistic attitudes. Participants also encountered derogatory and cynical humour, often justified as a way to cope with the stress, demands and emotional challenges of medical practice. Hierarchies made it difficult for students and junior doctors to speak up.

Recognising and expanding the spaces for everyday resistance to hegemonic power structures and cis-heteronormative practice in medicine is likely to improve the health and wellbeing for queer students, health professionals and communities – and for students, junior doctors and patients more generally as well. Opportunities for validating students' everyday resistance through critical medical education are explored.

Safe Learning Environments and Curricular Inclusion: LGBTQIA, Takatāpui, and MVPFAFF+ Friendly Teaching and Learning

Nicola Paton | Andy Fey | Nicoletta Rata-Skudder

Aotearoa New Zealand research has found that LGBTQIA, Takatāpui and MVPFAFF+ students feel “safe but not safe” on campus (Allen et al., 2020). One in six (17%) tertiary students report feeling unsafe as a rainbow person at their place of study in the past 12 months. Of these, almost half (47%) feel unsafe in classrooms or lecture theatres (Fenaughty et al., 2022).

Addressing cis-heteronormativity requires the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ issues within teaching and learning as well as campus life, and highlights the need for professional development around LGBTQIA+ issues for both new and longstanding staff (Allen et al., 2020).

Learning designers at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland created an online course, “LGBTQIA, Takatāpui and MVPFAFF+ friendly teaching and learning.” The course is tailored for teaching staff and aimed at fostering safe, equitable and inclusive educational spaces. Beyond this, it supports teaching staff to prepare all students to appreciate the importance of belonging and advocate for just societies, in line with the University’s aspirations for its graduates.

The comprehensive, self-paced course consists of 10 hours of learning for staff to engage with, including interactive online activities. It includes identities of Tangata Whenua and Nga Iwi o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa (Pacific Peoples), LGBTQIA+ identities, pronouns, intersectionality, inclusion in curriculum, supporting individual students, advocacy/allyship skills and more.

This presentation will describe the process of developing the course, showcase course content and share feedback received from teaching staff. The course is the result of a collaborative effort with a student and staff advisory group whose collective expertise was instrumental in shaping the course in line with community priorities. We also received invaluable support from senior equity staff. The course is an example of an initiative led by impacted communities which builds capability towards equity and belonging for LGBTQIA, Takatāpui and MVPFAFF+ university students.

Keywords: Inclusive Education | Professional Development | Belonging

Exhibiting the Archive: A Practice-Led Approach to Queer History in Aotearoa

Scott Pilkington

This presentation discusses an ongoing practice-led MDes thesis that uses exhibition-making to surface and reframe Queer histories in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through the design of a low-cost, travelling exhibition, the project examines how curatorial practice can serve as a critical intervention into archival silences and structural absences. Despite increasing institutional commitments to diversity and inclusion, many Queer histories remain fragmented, contested, or invisible within public museum collections. This research asks: how might exhibition design help visitors engage with these stories in ways that are public, affective, and open-ended?

Drawing on contemporary and historical taonga held in public collections across the whenua, the project foregrounds archival gaps not as deficits to be filled, but as sites of inquiry. Many taonga in museum collections are not explicitly Queer, and few were collected with Rainbow Communities in mind, yet they can still be activated through community knowledge, visitor interpretation, and critical design. This design-led embraces contradiction, plurality, and affect, acknowledging that Queer histories resist linearity or closure.

The project contributes to a broader Queer and decolonial museological shift: one that challenges traditional institutional authority embraces participatory, visitor-centred approaches. Informed by critical scholarship, the project is grounded in creative practice, consultation, and iterative prototyping.

This presentation outlines the project's research questions, evolving methodology, and current state of development. It also reflects on the ethical and emotional complexities of working with institutional collections as a Queer researcher – seeking to honour community memory without appropriation or over-claim. The resulting exhibition will offer not answers, but provocation.

Sexual Orientation, Crime Victimization, and Relationship to the Offender: Insights From New Zealand Police Records, 2014–2024

Anna L. Gilmour | Brian A. Feinstein | Alexander Plum

Objectives. To estimate and compare crime victimization rates and relationship to the offender by gender and sexual orientation among cisgender individuals in New Zealand.

Methods. We linked New Zealand Census data and police records collected between 2014 and 2024 to compare rates of crime victimization reported to the police (i.e., any crime, sexual assault, crime with a weapon involved, violence, and serious violence) across individuals stratified by sexual orientation and gender using logistic regression, adjusting for demographic covariates. Further, we compared individuals' relationship to the offender (e.g., stranger vs. known person) by sexual orientation separately for women and men.

Results. Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals, especially women, were at significantly higher risk of being victimized across categories of crime compared to heterosexual people. Victims' relationship to the offender also differed across sexual orientation, with particularly substantial differences among women.

Conclusions. LGB individuals experience significantly higher rates of crime victimization than heterosexual individuals. There are differences in individuals' relationship to the offender by gender and sexual orientation, which may have important implications for tailored crime prevention strategies.

Keywords: Crime Victimization | Sexual Orientation Disparities | Gendered Risk

Young Transgender Asian New Zealanders' Relationships to Culture, Neurodivergence, Religion, and Family

Tara Ravi

Intersecting forms of oppression can impede access to suitable community and institutional support for Asian transgender young people (Pipkin & Clarke, 2024). Additionally, the wellbeing of transgender Asian diaspora has fallen through the cracks of contemporary transgender health research (Tan et al., 2022), despite this group's special vulnerability to feeling unsafe at home (Fenaughty et al., 2022).

My master's research addresses these points by investigating how young, transgender Asian New Zealanders' discursive constructions of identity and support are influenced by their personal and familial identity markers, particularly transgender identity, culture, neurodivergence and religion.

My approach is intersectional, acknowledging the interplay of identity categories that complicate each person's narrative and the oppressive structures that constrain the discourses available to them. For example, the two dominant discursive orientations available to Asian New Zealanders about their culture are either orienting towards or away from their heritage: being like or not like other Asians.

As part of my master's thesis, I worked with three trans Asian young people of varying cultural heritages, and their self-selected greatest supporters. My data collection involved the participants drawing pictures of their experience of receiving or giving familial support and reflecting on these drawings in extended interviews. I conducted a multimodal discourse analysis of the drawings and interviews, looking for common themes in the narratives of individuals, and within and between families.

In my presentation, I will explore how my participants' worlds are shaped by a multitude of identity markers, focusing on transgender identity, culture, neurodivergence and religion, and how the combinations of these identity markers can be both sources of tension and connection.

Keywords: Intersectionality | Diaspora | Support

“I’m not welcome or safe to be the entire person God has created me to be.” Takatāpui/Rainbow Christian Perspectives on Church Safety in Aotearoa.

Rev. Dr Paul Reynolds | Rev. Richard Bonifant

This paper offers reflections on the ‘Safe Faiths’ survey, which was carried out in 2024/2025 and sought to gather data on the experiences of Rainbow Christians and allies. The survey was initiated as a response to concerns by the survey team that there is little or no research or quantitative data that explores the safety of Takatāpui/Rainbow people of faith in their church or faith community. Quantitative and qualitative questions were asked, and responses were received from 375 participants in total, representing thirteen Christian denominations.

Overwhelmingly, the data collected from this survey shows that takatāpui and allies do not feel safe in the church or faith community that they attend or used to attend. Takatāpui respondents highlighted a variety of ways that made them feel unsafe, including having to keep quiet. Allies similarly felt unsafe, especially in advocating for takatāpui whanau, with one respondent highlighting the cost of advocating, “Too many good people have been hurt when they have advocated for the rainbow community.” The paper concludes by offering reflections on what this survey might mean for Christian communities in Aotearoa today.

Keywords: Faith | Safety | Advocacy | Religion

The Variegated Effects of Testosterone Therapy on the Voice of Singers Assigned Female at Birth and Differentiation by Means of Administration

Dr Tessa Romano

Due to the accessibility and variability of hormone replacement therapy by transgender individuals, there is still little known about the effects of testosterone therapy on the singing voices of persons assigned female at birth. Furthermore, testosterone therapy administration takes many forms, all of which can affect the voice differently. This presentation attempts to unmask the effects of testosterone therapy on the singing voice of people assigned female at birth using information from collated research studies and student anecdotes.

Dr Tessa Romano will discuss the reported effects of testosterone therapy on transgender singers and inform on the research continuing to be done in unveiling the effects of testosterone therapy for singers using evidence from their doctoral dissertation and 2022 article within the Journal of Singing. They will also address the many forms that testosterone therapy can take and the further variability of testosterone therapy's effects on the singing voice due to variability between means of administration.

Keywords: Testosterone | Voice | Transgender

Perspectives of Queer Adolescent Learners and Their Experiences of Gender-Affirming Support and Acceptance of Sexual Orientation Within Their Christian School Contexts.

Abigail Sanford

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outlines legally binding rights tailored to safeguard the well-being of young individuals. Aotearoa New Zealand, in compliance with the UNCRC, mandates that all educational and state institutions prioritise these rights in their curriculum and engagement with young people.

In 2016, the United Nations recognised the systemic oversight of the rights of adolescent learners, particularly those within the rainbow community. This study investigated the experiences of support for young rainbow students in Christian schools and found that their unique needs are often disregarded.

This qualitative exploratory study employed semi-structured interviews (both face-to-face and via Zoom videoconferencing) for the data collection. The thematic analysis uncovered two key themes: The Need for Acknowledgment and Affirmation and Assurances of Belonging. These themes reflected the students' desire for normalising language use and supporting self-confidence (Theme One) and the need for inclusive school climates, adequate representation of rainbow perspectives in the curriculum, and access to Queer Straight Alliance groups (Theme Two).

These findings directly relate to UNCRC Articles 2, 8, and 12, which address a child's right to be free from discrimination, preserve their gender and sexuality identity, and have their voices heard in all matters concerning them. The study concluded that these rights have not been consistently upheld in some Christian schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

To create a safer and more equitable environment for all students, educators in Christian schools must learn to accept, acknowledge, and affirm their rainbow students, fostering a sense of belonging for everyone.

Keywords: Rights | Affirmation | Belonging | Religion

Exploring Trans Geographies of Aliveness in Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Declan Sperry

'I don't think you should come home. Things are changing quickly here, and I don't think it's worth the risk.'

I received this text from my brother earlier this year regarding my tentative plans to visit my family back in the United States over the holiday season. He wrote this, partially in response to transphobic legislation already enacted by the Trump administration, and partially in anticipation of increased hostility and decreased mobility for trans folk within the United States. As I sit here writing in Aotearoa New Zealand, I find my mind pre-occupied by concerns for my fellow trans folk back home, experiencing both gratitude and despair. Although more fringe and less encompassing, transphobic rhetoric and policy have also been on the rise in recent years in New Zealand. This trend is reflected in policy proposals from the current coalition government, such as New Zealand First's proposed member bill aiming to introduce biological definitions of 'man' and 'women' into law.

Against the threat of despair, I embarked on my master's research journey, wanting to better understand how trans-masculine folks, such as myself, have gone about creating and sustaining spaces of joy. My research utilizes a socio-materialist framework informed by trans geographies to explore trans-masculine experiences of trans joy and gender euphoria in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Within my work, Sarah Ahmed's concept of aliveness is posed to conceptualise trans wellbeing beyond the constraints of dominant social norms. This presentation will describe the conceptual framework I am assembling to understand trans masculine aliveness in Te Whanganui a Tara. I argue that aliveness can be deployed to challenge cisnormative scripts surrounding trans wellbeing and to promote a strength-based understanding of trans communities. Finally, throughout this talk I will present a case for the importance of research that is by, for, and about trans folk.

Keywords: Testosterone | Voice | Transgender

Workshop: Rainbow Community and The Media

Susan Strongman

Rainbow research plays a vital role in shaping public understanding of queer and trans lives, yet when such work enters media spaces it can be met with distortion, tokenism, or outright hostility. This workshop aims to provide researchers with the tools, strategies, and confidence to engage with the media in ways that protect their integrity, affirm their communities, and share their work with clarity and impact.

What the workshop covers

Over the course of this interactive session, participants will:

- Build confidence in speaking publicly about rainbow research in media contexts
- Gain insight into how rainbow content is framed in news, social media, and commentary, including common narratives of controversy, tokenism, and polarisation.
- Anticipate and prepare for challenges such as misrepresentation, online backlash, or hostile questioning.
- Learn strategies for crafting clear, community-centred messages that communicate both complexity and accessibility.
- Practice responding to difficult questions in ways that are evidence-based, values-driven, and respectful of personal boundaries.

Workshop activities

Participants will begin by reflecting on real-world examples of queer and trans representation in the media, identifying both positive and negative moments. Facilitators will provide an overview of the media landscape and how rainbow research is frequently portrayed, followed by small group activities where participants identify the core message of their own work. Guidance will be given on how to avoid jargon, frame research around values and impact, and tailor messages for different audiences.

The session will also include practice in anticipating hostile questions. Participants will work in pairs to role-play possible scenarios and experiment with response strategies such as redirecting to research evidence, reframing the conversation, and setting clear limits on what questions they will or will not engage with. Attention will also be given to self-care and safety, including preparing a support system for possible backlash, clarifying pronouns and terms with journalists, and drafting prepared statements for challenging moments.

Who should attend

This workshop is designed for rainbow researchers, postgraduate students, and academics with little to no media experience, who anticipate engaging with the media as part of their work. It will be valuable for anyone seeking to share research findings publicly while maintaining control of their message and protecting their wellbeing.

By the end of the session, participants will have practical strategies and a supportive framework for communicating rainbow research in public spaces.

Manananggal as Queer Figure and Philosophical Refusal

Gwen Subejano

The manananggal is a shape-shifting, self-severing figure in Philippine folklore and has been cast as monstrous, grotesque, and abject. Often depicted as a woman whose upper torso detaches from her body to fly into the night in search of viscera to consume, the manananggal is a symbol that has historically elicited fear and revulsion.

This presentation reclaims the manananggal as a site of queer potential and philosophical inquiry. I argue that the manananggal's capacity to split, fly, and feed signals not deviance but a refusal of containment. Through this lens, I propose a "Manananggal Philosophy": a framework that centres transgressive embodiment and queer becoming. By reading the manananggal as a queer figure, this research contributes to emerging conversations in queer Filipino studies and offers speculative reflections on how such a shape-shifting monstrosity might be reimagined as a form of queer resistance, autonomy, and desire within diasporic and decolonial contexts.

Sex Work, Discrimination, Gender-Expansive Resistance

Hannah Thompson

Sex work in Aotearoa New Zealand is a significant issue for social justice and public policy because, despite the country's longstanding globally unique decriminalisation model, sex workers, particularly those who are migrant and gender-expansive, continue to face intersecting forms of stigma, discrimination, and structural exclusion. These challenges are compounded by societal attitudes, political inaction, and institutional barriers that undermine the safety and rights of sex workers. This thesis focuses on the extent to which “risk” and “safety” are intersectional in sex work in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how migrant and gender-expansive sex workers actively resist discrimination.

The thesis draws on findings from a peer/ally-designed, qualitative and arts-based study of sex workers in Aotearoa New Zealand, which used reflective thematic analysis of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and a group “craft session”. This approach enabled a nuanced understanding of how individual, community, and structural factors shape the lived experience of people who sell sex and their strategies for existence and resistance. The analysis shows that sex workers actively manage risk and safety, and assert agency through personal strategies, collective support networks, and spatial practices, while simultaneously confronting systemic barriers rooted in misogyny, racism, and xenophobia. These experiences are captured through six themes, organised from micro to macro levels, under the overarching narrative of the “Right to Exist.”

The thesis argues that while decriminalisation provides a legal framework for safety, it remains insufficient without broader cultural and institutional change - particularly given that the current legal framework in Aotearoa New Zealand excludes non-resident migrants from its protections. This thesis concludes by suggesting that the decriminalisation law be extended to include all sex workers, removing the Section 19 amendment, and that recognising and supporting the diverse strategies of resistance employed by sex workers, especially those at the margins, is essential for advancing equity, dignity, and justice in sex work policy and practice.

Exploring Queer African Media Representations in Sex Education, Neptune Frost and the Valley of a Thousand Hills

Makanaka Tuwe

From casual conversations to formal speeches, from fictional narratives to legislation, queer African subjects are often constructed as “unimaginable” or “impossible”. As such, films and tv series play a significant role in visibilising diverse queer identities and non-heteronormative desires, relationships and societies. This presentation explores queer African media representations in Netflix’s TV series Sex Education (2019 – 2023), Saul Williams and Anisia Uzeyman’s African sci-fi musical Neptune Frost (2022) and rurally set South African film The Valley of a Thousand Hills (2022) with a focus on queer worldmaking, resistance, survival and avowal.

Keywords: Queer Representation | Worldmaking | Resistance

The Right to Thrive: Structural Barriers and the Power of Gender-Affirming Healthcare in Aotearoa

Skyler Watt

In Aotearoa New Zealand, gender-diverse and non-binary individuals often navigate a healthcare system that was not designed with their experiences in mind. While international studies have highlighted the positive impact of gender-affirming healthcare (GAHC) on mental health, there remains a striking lack of local research, particularly around how GAHC influences body image, resilience, and wellbeing among gender-diverse and non-binary communities.

This study set out to address that gap. I invited gender-diverse adults across New Zealand to share their experiences through an online survey, with a focus on their access to GAHC and its impact on how they see themselves and cope with life's challenges. 334 participants engaged in total.

What emerged was a clear picture: access to gender-affirming care does more than ease gender dysphoria, it strengthens body image, fosters resilience, and supports overall wellbeing. Participants who felt affirmed in their healthcare journey reported feeling more at ease in their bodies and more capable of handling stress and adversity.

However, the findings also underscored persistent inequities. Many participants, especially non-binary individuals, faced barriers such as stigma, long wait times, and difficulty accessing services that acknowledged and affirmed their identities. Even when care was available, it wasn't always inclusive or adequately tailored.

This research amplifies the voices of gender-diverse New Zealanders and highlights a pressing need: a shift toward person-centred, inclusive healthcare that truly reflects the diverse ways people experience and express gender. It's not just about access, it's about dignity, affirmation, and the right to thrive.

Community-Informed Research and the Development of The Trans Heart Health Project

Cassie Withey-Rila

Background: There is a paucity of data on transgender cardiovascular outcomes and often not a comparable demographic population. In response to the limitations of the research, The Trans Heart Health (THH) Project was formed. The project is a community-informed national research effort to understand the state of heart health in trans populations in Aotearoa New Zealand, and to understand the determinants of those outcomes.

Methods: Inspired by co-design and Kaupapa Māori research practices, community engagement country-wise events were held to understand what the community concerns and questions were on cardiovascular disease, as the leading cause of mortality across all demographics. These events ranged from stalls at Pride events to meeting with specific demographics, such as over-55s, and events co-hosted with community groups. This work was supported by a Community Advisory Group, other research groups, and community organisations.

Results: Community engagement named issues within the healthcare system, such as lack of clinical knowledge, lack of trans- or HRT-specific cardiovascular risks, as well as systemic factors impacting on 'lifestyle' decisions, such as physical exercise. Next steps are to investigate the cardiovascular health risks and outcomes for transgender adults in Aotearoa New Zealand. We hope to recruit into a longitudinal study of biomarker status, to establish if the existing range databases are appropriate for transgender populations. We will also collect data on lifestyle behaviours and the barriers and facilitators thereof, to establish if there are modifiable risk factors unique to trans populations.

Conclusions: Interpretation of the community concerns into practically applicable research protocols will lead to further national and international network building and grant applications. The recruitment for the next stages of the THH Project will be supported by the relational nature of the research design, as well as the trans researchers working on the project and its community-led design.

Laughing the Self into Being: The Role of Humour in Identity Construction in Chinese Gay Vlogs

Hanwei Wu

Amid increasing platform-state governance and algorithmic censorship in China, short videos and vlogs on digital platforms such as Douyin, Bilibili, and Weibo provide an important space for Chinese gay men to articulate and negotiate their identities. This research explores how humour, as a culturally adaptable and politically flexible tool (Critchley, 2002; Holm, 2017; Holm, 2022), enables Chinese gay vloggers to construct and perform gay identity under the constraints of platform-state regulations and traditional values. In contrast to Western identity politics that often centre on legal and social equality (Richardson, 2004), Chinese gay men face additional pressures shaped by traditional values such as filial piety, marriage obligations, and family continuity. These expectations contribute to what Luo et al. (2022) describe as "neo-Confucian homonormativity". Humour offers a creative strategy for negotiating these tensions, allowing Chinese gay vloggers to express queer subjectivity, establish emotional connections, and construct community.

This research draws on multimodal critical discourse analysis, rooted in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 1993) and developed by Kress and Leeuwen (2001), and thematic analysis to closely examine the different semiotic modes of Chinese gay vlogs, including verbal language, visual aesthetics, performative gestures, and editing techniques, as well as audience comments and interactive feedback, to explore how audiences interpret and resonate with these humorous practices and how Chinese gay identity is constructed through humour. This research highlights the ways in which humour operates both as self-expression and as a strategic tool, enabling a subtle yet powerful medium for Chinese gay identity construction in an increasingly regulated digital environment.

Intersecting Cultural, Disability, and Gender Identities of the Aotearoa Trans Community: Findings from the 2022 Counting Ourselves Survey

Ashe Yee | Ryan Bentham | Kyle Tan | Jack Byrne | Jamie Veale

Background: Previous research has shown that trans and non-binary (trans) people experience higher rates of discrimination and harassment compared to the general population, including exclusion from their communities. However, there is limited research exploring how trans people with intersecting identities interact with their communities. In this presentation, we will outline findings of participants' experiences of being trans within their Deaf/disabled, Indigenous, or ethnic communities, and vice versa.

Methods: We collected data, mostly online, from 2,631 trans people aged 14+ and living in Aotearoa in the 2022 Counting Ourselves survey. We asked participants who identified as Indigenous or a person of colour (n=347) and Deaf or disabled participants (n=535) about their positive or negative experiences in different contexts.

Results: Most participants reported that they were proud to be takatāpui, MVPFAFF+, or trans and Indigenous or a person of colour (83%), or feel connected to other people who share their identity (68%). Despite this, just over half of participants reported they cannot be open about their gender identity (54%) within their Indigenous or ethnic communities, and feel their culture is invisible within many trans communities (51%). Almost two-thirds of Deaf and disabled participants agreed that they felt part of a community of trans people (65%). Despite this sense of connection, more than two-thirds agreed that Deaf and disabled people are invisible within many trans communities (69%).

Conclusion: Most participants held a positive view of their gender, cultural, or Deaf/disabled identity, however they still reported negative experiences in their respective communities because of transphobia, cisgenderism, racism, or ableism. These findings underscore the importance for trans communities to address these negative experiences and make people who are Deaf/disabled, Indigenous, a person of colour, or from an ethnic community welcome in these spaces and vice versa.

Keywords: Intersectionality | Trans Communities | Inclusion

Holding the Family Photo: Queer Tensions and Happy Objects on Teaching Practicum

Ross Bernay | Toni Ingram | Eunice Gaerlan | Yael Cameron | Jess Lopez

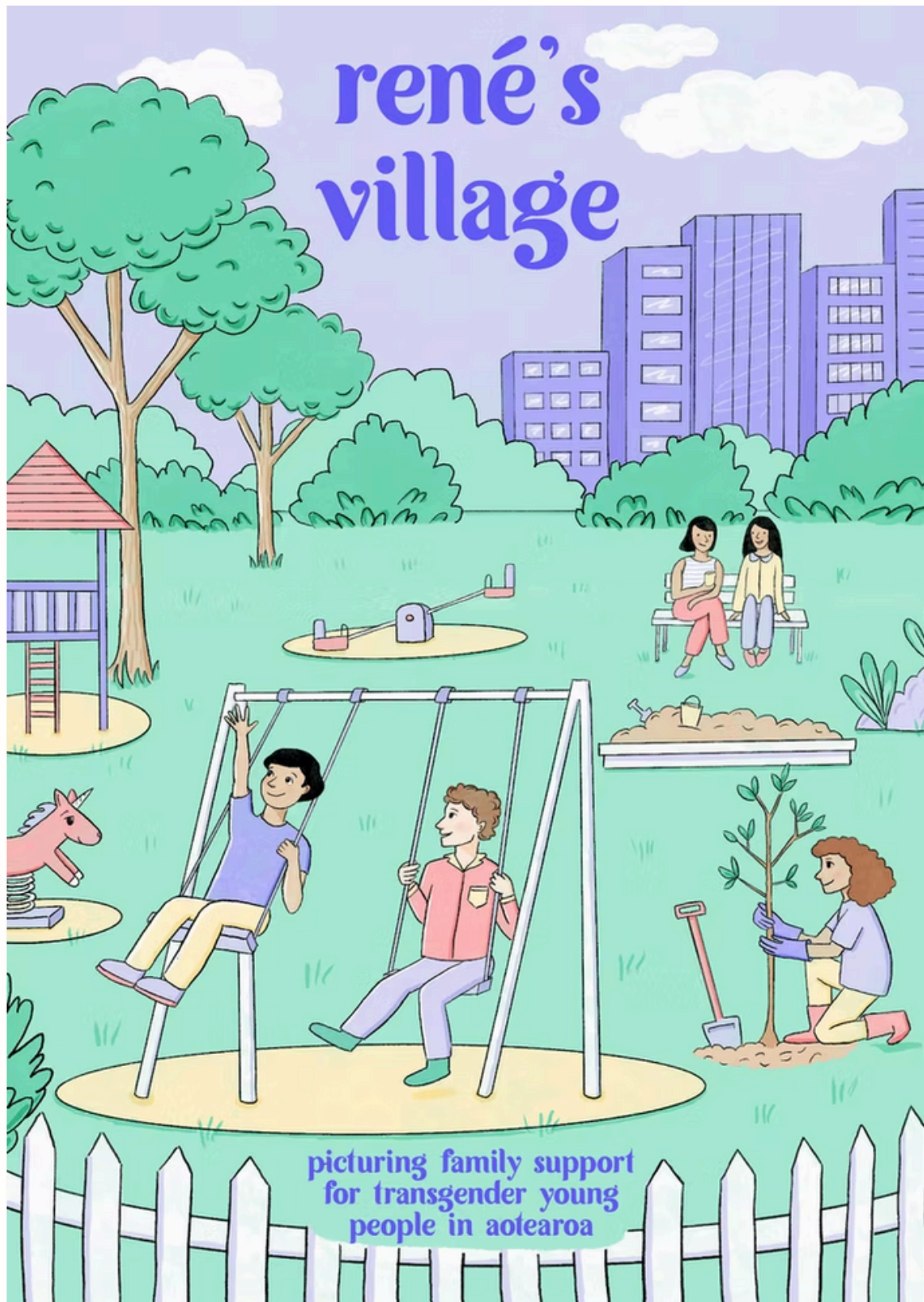
This presentation explores queer student teachers' experiences on professional practice placements through Sara Ahmed's (2010) concept of happy objects in *The Promise of Happiness*. Ahmed suggests that happiness is not only an emotion but a regulatory force that directs us toward socially sanctioned objects and ways of being. Within schooling, happiness is often tied to heteronormative ideals of family, love, and belonging, which are ideals that shape expectations of what a "good" teacher looks like.

Drawing on narrative accounts from our research, we focus on one participant's story about a family photo. Commonly seen as a "happy object," the photo becomes a site of tension: should it be displayed in the classroom, mentioned, or concealed? This moment reveals how the very objects that promise belonging can also expose queer vulnerability and risk.

By tracing how happiness operates as a form of regulation in practicum contexts, we consider how queer affect offers insight into the emotional and institutional boundaries of teaching. We conclude by suggesting that attending to these un/happy moments can help teacher education become more responsive to the complexity of queer lives and feelings within professional spaces.

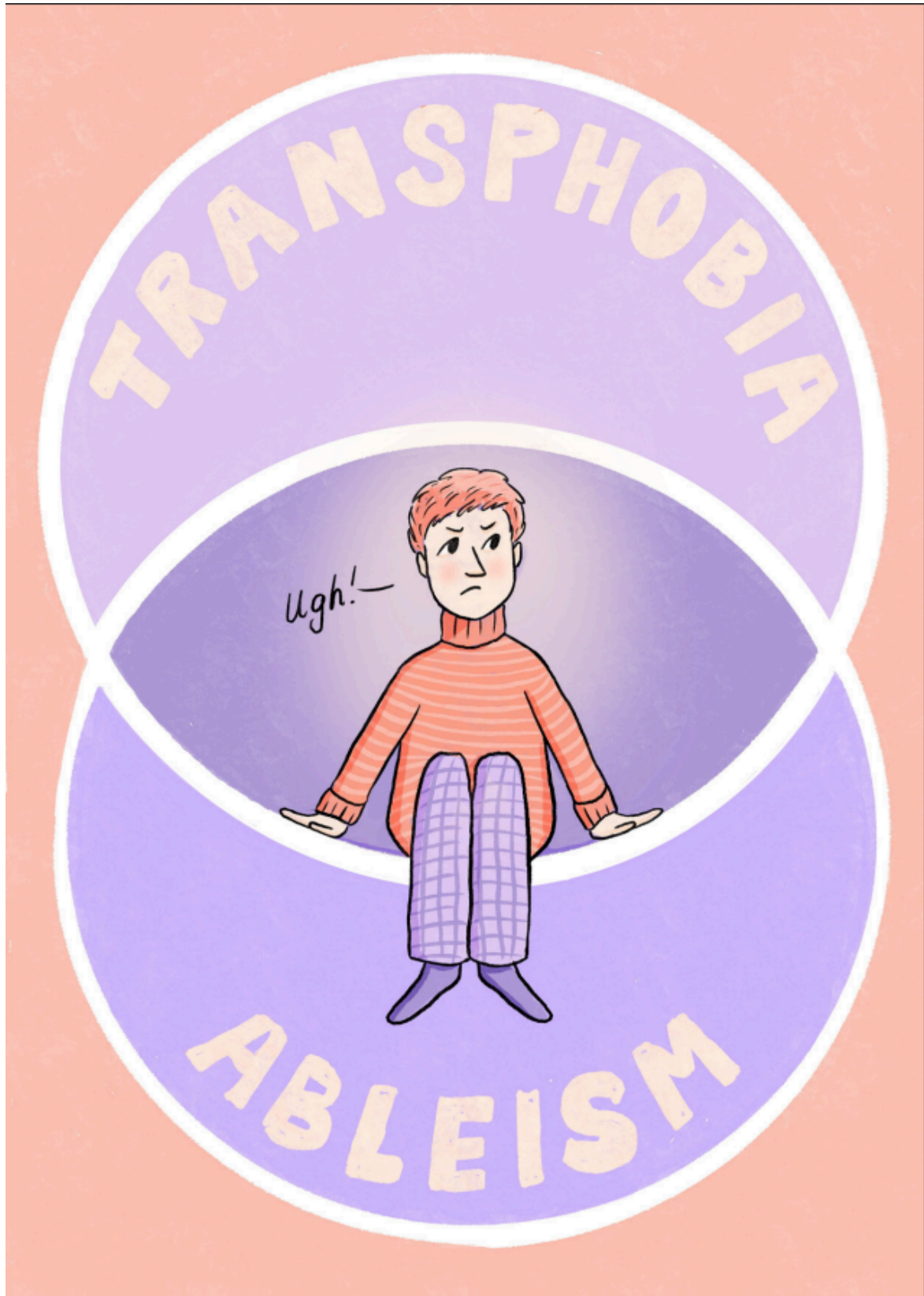
Keywords: Queer student teachers | Happy objects | Heteronormativity | Queer affect | Teacher education

Project Village: Marsden Fund project



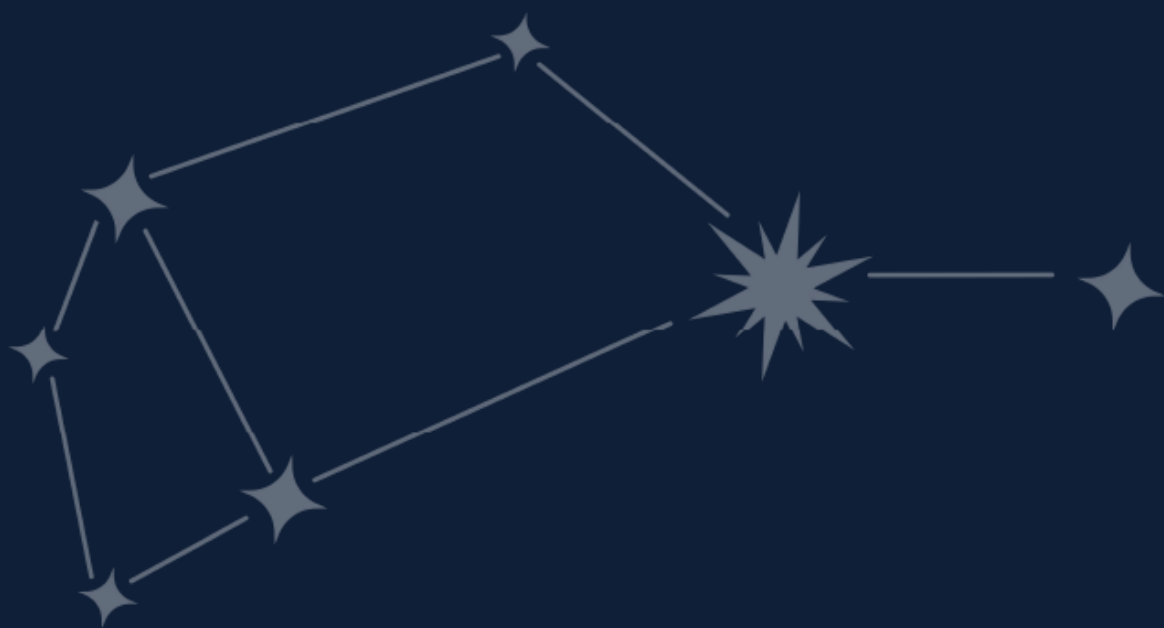
The cover of a 'village portrait'

To Be Ourselves: Trans and Non-binary Disabled People In Aotearoa



An illustration from 'To Be Ourselves

kia kaha, kia māia, kia
manawanui



Thank you for being
part of this kaupapa.
Your voices, your
research, and your
presence are what make
our communities thrive.