

WHATUORA

Theorising a Kaupapa Māori arts-based methodology

*Hinekura Smith**

Abstract

Māori and Indigenous people are methodological, yet how we theorise our ways of being, our languages and our cultural beliefs is often held to the academic margins. Sophisticated systems of Māori knowledge production, retention and transmission over many hundreds of years, twined together with hard-won kaupapa Māori territory, positions us well to re-centre our theorised ways of being, doing and speaking, as a robust research methodology most capable of telling our stories through our own Māori lens. Contributing to a whakapapa of Māori and Indigenous decolonising methodologies, I introduce here Whatuora—a kaupapa Māori arts-based methodology that emerged from research about living as Māori women and the stories the women spoke and wove into the Māori cloaks they created.

Keywords

kaupapa Māori arts-based methodology, whatu, Whatuora

Introduction

Indigenous methodologies have existed in various forms for thousands of years. These theoretical sets of knowledge supported great technological and creative advances, enabling Indigenous communities around the world to explore, adapt and advance their knowledge systems. Western-dominated academic research does not encourage us to look to our Indigenous methodologies, our own ways of knowing, our language, our practices, values and beliefs to form and inform our research approach. Enabled by kaupapa Māori and Indigenous theorists, this article encourages Māori and Indigenous academics, and in particular Indigenous postgraduate students, to look to our ways of being in the world, theorising methodologies that emerge from our “old”

Indigenous language and knowledge systems to create “new” knowledge that will serve us in our current lived realities (H. Smith, 2019).

At its broadest, methodology can be understood as a way of being in, thinking about and interacting with the world—the thinking behind the doing (Kovach, 2009). How we approach planting a garden, for example, or how we raise our children has a methodology to it based on our experiences and knowledge, values and beliefs. We test theories and discuss problems that arise. We may seek out “expert” or wise advice, or consult literature. Yet rarely do we think deeply about methodology as our way of being in the world and consider through what eyes we view, distil and analyse our experiences and how we come to view knowledge.

* Te Rarawa, Nga Puhi. Senior Researcher and Kaupapa Māori Advisor, Ngā Wai a Te Tūi Māori and Indigenous Research Centre, UNITEC, Auckland, New Zealand. hsmith2@unitec.ac.nz

Research methodology is an immutable aspect of academic scholarship. It refers to the concepts and theories that frame the way research is conducted. In academic research, methodology refers to the conscious articulation of the concepts and theories, knowledges and influences that underpin the project as a process for creating new knowledge. Elizabeth Grierson (2007), a professor of art and philosophy at RMIT University who writes about creative arts methodologies, uses a weaving metaphor to describe methodology as that which “contains the limits and holds the research strands in place as the researcher weaves the textures of new knowledge” (p. 5). Indigenous methodologies are understood here as broad and inclusive, and an integral part of “living life every day according to certain values” (Kovach, 2009, p. 62) rather than a term exclusively couched within academic language and writing. Re-framing methodology in this way is an attempt to re-complexify the idea of methodology in research that sees “old” sets of knowledge applied in “new” and theoretical ways (H. L. Smith, 2017; H. Smith, 2019).

Over the past 40 years, Indigenous methodologies in academic research have taken up critical Indigenous theories that seek to (re)claim, (re)frame and (re)present the lived realities of Indigenous peoples. Rather than accept a Western academic definition of methodology, I am encouraged by other Māori and Indigenous researchers to look to our own “ways of being” in the world based on our own methodologies to create new knowledges that will serve us in our current lived realities. By re-claiming methodology as an aspect of being Māori and Indigenous that has for centuries served our people and allowed us to flourish, we are re-framing how methodology can be viewed both within academic paradigms and beyond.

I am a Māori woman (Te Rarawa, Nga Puhī tribal groupings in the Far North of Aotearoa New Zealand), mother, daughter, teacher and kaupapa Māori researcher. Many years of deep engagement in Māori weaving practices led me to research that explored ideas about “living as Māori women” through the arts practice of whatu. This article introduces Whatuora, a Kaupapa Māori arts-based methodology theorised concurrently with my research (H. L. Smith, 2017). As eight Māori women learned the creative practice of whatu, they shared deeply moving stories of growing up and being Māori. When they became mothers and grandmothers, their stories spoke of re-claiming and re-presenting living as Māori women and, importantly, the aspirations they enact and articulate for their tamariki and mokopuna to live

holistically well and culturally connected lives “as Māori”. Through the journey of creating a family whatu kākahu, the women created, with both their fingers and their words, storied cloaks that instantiate the aspirations they hold for their tamariki and mokopuna to live connected to the land and their language, culture, values and beliefs. In short, they created storied taonga tuku iho or heirlooms to both physically and metaphorically cloak their children in their aspirations for them to live as Māori (see H. L. Smith, 2017).

I begin by re-complexifying the idea of methodology, discussing how Māori and Indigenous peoples have always been methodological—applying, developing and adapting to their physical and social environment. I then discuss how the emergence of Indigenous methodologies in research has created space in the Western academy to further develop methodological approaches that stem from our knowledge and language systems to better understand our current conditions and, importantly, effect positive change for our communities. From here I explain how I theorised the practice of whatu as the methodology most appropriate for a project that centralises Māori women through its language and knowledge systems, explaining how I twine together the old Māori knowledge and language of whatu with the active politicising agenda of kaupapa Māori theory to create a research approach I name Whatuora. By laying out my process and reasoning to theorise old Māori knowledge as a new Māori methodology, I seek to encourage other Māori and Indigenous researchers to do the same, adding to the whakapapa of Indigenous academic activism by theorising our knowledges, language and ways of being as a rigorous and robust methodology within academic research.

Indigenous methodologies

Indigenous methodologies, in their broadest sense, are informed by bodies of knowledge handed down, retained, evolved and adapted over generations to meet the changing needs of Indigenous people. More recently, Indigenous methodologies have evolved to fit a contemporary reality shaped by the struggle to resist the assault of colonisation through projects of cultural reclamation. Leah Abayao (2006), an academic who works in Indigenous peoples’ education, environmental studies, ethno-medicine and Indigenous methodology, defines the latter as that which is

acquired over generations by communities as they interact with the environment. It encompasses

technology, social, economic, philosophical, learning, and governance systems, and is not just about woven baskets and handicrafts for tourists per se. It is about excavating the technologies such as looms, textiles, jewellery, and brass work manufacture, exploring indigenous technological knowledge and knowledge transmission systems, and recasting the potentialities they represent. (p. 180)

Margaret Kovach (2009), a North American professor in education of Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry, explains Indigenous methodologies as ways of knowing that are both practical and capable of transmitting values and knowledge. She says:

Indigenous ways of knowing encompass the spirit of collectivity, reciprocity, and respect. It is born of the land and locality of the tribe. Indigenous knowledge ought to be purposeful and practical. It is born of the necessity to feed, clothe, and transmit values. As such the method of knowing must be practical and purposeful. Indigenous ways of knowing are organic with emphasis on reciprocity and humour. These ways of knowing are both cerebral and heartfelt. As the elders say, “If you have important things to say, speak from the heart.” (Kovach, 2009, p. 28)

Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori scholar Leonie Pihama (2001) reminds us that the notion of research and methodology did not arrive with the coloniser. Rather, Indigenous peoples have for centuries engaged in their own forms of methodological research to test theories and advance thinking:

As Māori we have a history of investigation. It is an ancient history of exploration, of navigation, not solely in the physical domain, but in ways that reach throughout the many dimensions of Te Ao Māori. These are all forms of research, they are all ways within which our people have developed knowledge and have located ourselves in the wider world. (Pihama, 2001, p. 47)

Consider, for example, the sophisticated navigational systems developed by Polynesian sea voyagers that enabled them to purposefully criss-cross the Pacific Ocean, technologies later regarded as superior to those of the Western world at the time (Evans, 2015). Navigational methods and methodologies such as these required high-level theorisation, research, development and testing in order for return voyages across vast expanses of ocean to succeed.

Indigenous methodologies hold sophisticated systems of knowledge that guide how we move through and relate to the world, how we learn and are taught, how we experience life and pass down knowledge. Historically, these ways of being were often practical and purposeful—such as the knowledge required to create clothing and shelter. They also embraced a holism that included the spiritual, relational and emotional elements of transmitting values and knowledge, making these methodologies “both cerebral and heartfelt” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 28). For the past few decades, Indigenous people have sought to re-claim knowledge systems, which in many cases have been disrupted or dismantled through colonisation, in order to create transformative change that will advance their current conditions and ensure cultural continuity into the future.

Indigenous methodologies in research

Indigenous methodologies in research came to the fore in the 1970s as part of a wider global movement of resistance and reclamation (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2005). Indigenous researchers sought to re-centre Indigenous beliefs and privilege Indigenous knowledge systems in an effort to “decolonize dominant research methodologies” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 31) by theorising Indigenous approaches as valid, robust and rigorous forms of inquiry. In her book *Indigenous Research Methodologies* Bagele Chilisa (2012) argues that Indigenous ways of being have always been practical and purposeful as well as critical and theoretical. She contends that Indigenous methodologies are decolonising and work to create legitimate academic space where the Indigenous disenfranchised and dispossessed, can re-claim, restore and re-present—seeing their history of colonisation through their own eyes (Chilisa, 2012). Indigenous research methodologies therefore are formed in resistance to Western colonial thought and further resist the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous methodologies in research are conceptual frameworks that stem from Indigenous knowledge systems and are theorised as an approach to research. Esteemed Māori theorist Rangimārie Rose Pere (1991), for example, used the wisdom of te wheke (the octopus) within academic discourse to explain her perspective on multidimensional ways of being. Māori academic James Graham (2005) theorised whakapapa as a methodology to explain how knowledge is connected, organised, stored and created. Indigenous research methodologies are not a recipe (Kovach,

2009) or process to follow to conduct research. Instead, they offer a sophisticated system of knowledge, language and concepts rich with the potential to help us understand and transform our current lived realities.

Indigenous methodologies in research position Indigenous knowledge within academic research. Often activated by a politics of resistance, Indigenous researchers using our own approaches speak back to Western research practices that marginalise our knowledge systems. Instead, applying Indigenous methodologies in research works to actively (re)centre, (re)claim and (re)present Indigenous knowledge as a valid and legitimate academic approach to research and, more importantly, as capable of contributing to positive transformations for Indigenous people.

When not fully engaged with, however, Indigenous methodologies run the risk of becoming appropriated, “culturally responsive” add-ons to research. Jacobs (2008) and Kovach (2009), for example, discuss how the Native American tradition of talking circles is sometimes “added in” as a research methodology but not integrated fully throughout the research project. In a Māori research context, this can occur when a kaupapa Māori methodology is included and even written about as a section of a research project but then disappears through the methods, analysis and conclusions. I suggest that to theorise or apply an Indigenous research methodology requires a commitment to understanding and engaging in that set of knowledge, and its language, at a theoretical, practical and personal level—a means of theorising practice as opposed to problematically trying to practise the theory.

Indigenous methodologies in research create space in the Western academy to view and conduct research through an Indigenous lens. Kovach (2009) says that in her early academic career there was a paucity of theoretical literature, particularly on human subject research, that centred Indigenous conceptual frameworks and tribal knowledge. Kovach, among others, encourages Indigenous researchers to look to our own systems of knowledge to develop methodologies to investigate our own problems and make visible the way we see the world. Instead of looking outside of mātauranga Māori for a research methodology to explore the relationship between living as Māori women and whatu kākahu in my research, it was important that a methodology for this work came from within the knowledge, language and embodied practice of the arts-based activity we were immersed in—weaving Māori cloaks.

Introducing the Whatuora methodology

The Whatuora methodology takes whatu, a traditional set of mātauranga Māori, and twines it together with kaupapa Māori theory. Through this intertwining, whatu is politically activated, transforming a “simple” traditional creative practice into a critical Indigenous and decolonising methodology.

I recognised that the most appropriate methodology for my research existed within its own body of knowledge and its richly embedded maternal language. As an example, whenu, the many hundreds of vertical strands or warp threads that make up the body of a kākahu, is an abbreviation of the word “whenua”, described dualistically as both placenta and land—one is the essential element that sustains the child within the mother’s womb while the other continues to nurture the child once she is born (Maihi, 2011). In another example, aho, the continuous horizontal weft strands that are twined together to form the kākahu, are defined as line, genealogy and chord. The word aho also means umbilical cord, that essential connection between a baby and its mother (Williams, 1997).

The term kākahu or kahu, used in this context as cloak, is another element of whatu that is rich with maternal language. A kahu or kahukahu is the Māori name for the amniotic sac or foetal membrane that envelops the unborn child (Henare, 2005; MacAulay & Te Waru-Rewiri, 1996). The depth of meaning contained within whatu terminology intrigued me: the idea, for example, that as mothers we “cloak” our children both literally and metaphorically in a protective (kā)kahu before they are born, and this protective and nurturing kākahu continues to be woven and influenced by us, as mothers, once our children enter the world. The complex and symbolic ideas embodied in whatu, and the cloaks it produces, as a means for cultural production and continuity (Henare, 2005) and the maternal nature of the language and practice of whatu demanded my attention and encouraged me to theorise these ideas further.

The term Whatuora twines together two not commonly associated ideas—whatu and ora—both of which are briefly explained here. Whatu is the term for traditional Māori finger twining, an ancient practice developed over centuries and used to create traditional clothing ranging from everyday rough rain capes through to ornately woven feathered cloaks considered valuable heirlooms. As an essential weaving technique, early forms of whatu were adapted and refined by Pacific peoples over thousands of years based on their needs and available resources (Hiroa, 1949). Brought across

the Pacific by the first voyagers, Māori applied their whatu expertise to the abundant natural resources available in Aotearoa New Zealand, developing a wide range of garments to protect them from the elements.

In its simplest form, the practice of whatu requires the twining together of two sets of aho or weft (horizontal) threads around a set of whenu or warp (vertical) threads (see Figure 1). As one set comes to the fore, it is exchanged for another that is then foregrounded, the two sets of aho interacting with each other. Neither can exist in isolation or independently of the other. Another way to view these aho are as theory and practice—both must co-exist and continually interact in order to create the “fabric” of the kākahu or research. The interdependent, intertwining action of the two sets of aho threads is a key idea in the Whatuora methodology.

Whatu is also the Māori word for “eyes”—the lenses through which we view the world. The concept of whatu as sight, vision and lens provides some interesting metaphorical language with which to think about how the women in my research “see” themselves, how they believe they are seen to be living as Māori women, and how they consciously and deliberately seek to “re-vision” living as Māori for their tamariki and mokopuna.

Ora is a common word in the Māori language that means to be well, to survive, to be healthy, fit and vital (Williams, 1997). Commonly heard in Aotearoa, the ubiquitous greeting “kia ora” literally means “be well”. Of particular relevance

to a Whatuora methodology is ora as a stative: to be safe, cured, recovered and healed (Williams, 1997). Ora in my research is understood as a journey to wellness and recovery from the impacts of colonisation by re-claiming, restoring and self-determining notions of living as Māori women. Whatuora binds together the ideas of whatu and ora into a theorised methodology that encapsulates the enactment of holistic wellness.

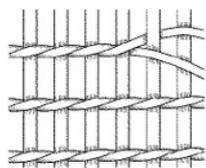
Ora, as holistic wellness, is a fundamental aspect of a *living as Māori* ideology. It is assumed here that to *live as Māori*, whether as an individual or as a collective, is to experience a healthy cultural identity that is positive and secure, and connects to land and language, cultural values and relationships. I add cultural continuity to the notion of ora as being collectively well, healed and recovered and therefore willing and able to transmit those elements deemed important to preserve cultural vitality and to pass this on to future generations.

A number of theorised models of ora support my theorisation of a Whatuora methodology. Mason Durie’s (1994, 2001) Māori-centric framework Te Whare Tapa Whā is an easily discernible model that was taken up by Māori and non-Māori to explore ideas of holistic Māori wellbeing, describing four essential and interdependent elements for holistic wellness as te taha wairua, te taha hinengaro, te taha whānau and te taha tinana. Taina Pohatu (2011) discusses a relationship between wellness and being in his theorisation of mauri. His explanations twine together mauri as a wellness of spirit with the concepts of moe (dormant potential), oho (conscious awakening) and ora (wellness of being).

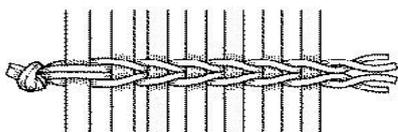
In another useful model, Māori academic Mera Penhira (2011) re-claims Taranaki tribal dialect to explain mouri (as opposed to the more common spelling, mauri) through tā moko as a Māori wellness intervention. Penhira theorises mouri beyond its simplified interpretation as “life essence” to include “being”, “wellbeing” and intergenerational wellness. Twining *mouri* with *ora*, Penhira (2011) discusses the idea of “mouri ora” as

the innate life force within each of us. In terms of our wellbeing it asks us to give consideration to the wellness of our energy, of the force/s that activate us to do things and to operate and interact with our world. (p. 43)

If mauriora is about wellness of spirit (Pohatu, 2011), and mouri is about the intergenerational wellness of being (Penhira, 2011), then Whatuora encompasses a wellness of sight perspective,



WHATU AHO PĀTAHI—
SINGLE-PAIR WEFT TWINING



WHATU AHO RUA—TWO-PAIR WEFT TWINING

FIGURE 1 Whatu. Source: Line drawing by Tim Galloway, Te Papa Collection. Copyright by Te Papa (MA_1.278976). Reproduced with permission.

orientation or point of view. How, as Māori women, do we create positive healing change, for future generations and ourselves, by critically “viewing” our experiences of *being Māori*, and re-visioning a secure, positive and well life living *as Māori*? Royal (2011) suggests that being and becoming well requires a critical decolonising (in) sight—a “cleansing of the lens of perception” (p. 5)—and is not necessarily about the accumulation of knowledge. I take up Royal’s statement as a continuing challenge to decolonise our vision—to create *Whatuora* or a well vision—so that Māori women may see more clearly how their experiences of being Māori affect the choices to live as Māori and subsequently the choices they make for their *tamariki* and *mokopuna*.

Whatu as mātauranga Māori

Whatu is a body of knowledge contained within mātauranga Māori—a modern term for a body or a continuum of knowledge with Polynesian origins (Royal, 2011). Described as a term that places importance on Māori histories, knowledge and language, mātauranga Māori refers to Māori ways of thinking, doing and acting (Doherty, 2010). Māori traditionally did not view knowledge as a discrete phenomenon, but instead as ‘know-how’ (Royal, 2011)—an external expression of internalised knowing.

While core values and principles held by Māori are expressed within mātauranga Māori, their application or action is not (Doherty, 2010). Tuhoe scholar Wiremu Doherty (2010) warns against an assumption that Māori knowledge, like identity, is a homogeneous set of practices and ideas. Instead, he reiterates that while mātauranga Māori provides many commonalities in language, traditions and beliefs, it also provides the space to contextualise and innovate mātauranga Māori to meet the localised needs of *whānau* and *hapū*.

Charles Te Ahukaramu Royal’s insights into mātauranga Māori and the creation of new knowledge through *wānanga* were useful in my theorisation of *Whatuora* methodology. According to Royal (2011), Māori did not traditionally view knowledge as a discrete phenomenon. He says that there was no conscious understanding that knowledge—as we understand the concept in academic terms—existed. Instead, Māori ancestors thought of knowledge as know-how, for example, the know-how necessary to build houses, fish and live sustainably from the land. Royal (2011) argues that we do not need to defend or justify mātauranga Māori—“it simply is what it is” (p. 10). Similarly, we cannot make unsubstantiated

claims for what mātauranga Māori contains. Instead Royal encourages Māori to take up the threads of what has been retained in mātauranga Māori, “building a bridge between pre-existing knowledge and new knowledge” (Royal, 2011, p. 11) by theorising what remains of the old knowledge in new and useful ways.

Traditionally, the accumulation of knowledge for knowledge’s sake was not the goal. Gaining wisdom, according to Māori Marsden (2003), is less about the amount of knowledge that you accumulate and more about the internalisation and theorisation of that knowledge:

A truly educated person is not one who knows a bit about everything, or everything about something, but one who is truly in touch with his centre. He will be in no doubt about his convictions, about his view on the meaning and purpose of life, and his own life will show a sureness of touch that stems from inner clarity. This is true wisdom. (p. 28)

Around the world and throughout history societies have fought to maintain the traditions, cultures and histories—their mātauranga—with which they identify. As Royal (2011) points out, “traditions and cultures offer people an orientation to life and a way of identifying themselves. They provide wisdom and guidance when faced with dilemmas” (p. 4). Creating *whatu kākahu* through a *Whatuora* methodology, for example, provides a body of knowledge with which to connect and theorise, bringing an old set of practices and beliefs to life in a new way.

Awakening new knowledge from the old

Theorising mātauranga Māori in new ways serves to awaken our creative potential, enabling Māori to take control of and create our own solutions. Royal (2011) suggests that Māori are moving from a time “dominated by the quest for social justice and cultural restoration” (p. 51) to a place where we are more capable than ever of awakening our creativity. In doing so, opportunities exist to theorise mātauranga Māori in ways that are meaningful and useful for transforming our present realities and seeking solutions to current questions. The world for Māori has changed radically since our arrival to Aotearoa. Physical survival and protection from the elements, for most Māori, is no longer our main challenge. As Royal (2011) reminds us, “A ‘way’ forward for mātauranga Māori is to discover within it certain perspectives and ideas that assist us in our contemporary experience” (p. 89).

The need and desire to innovate, learn and adapt can be seen as a taonga tuku iho. Think back to the advancements in technology and literacy that Māori would have experienced in a relatively short time. Evolutions of thinking have been consciously forged by our tūpuna so that other Māori voices can add their insights and interpretations. Therefore, mātauranga Māori has no beginning and no end (Mead, 1997). Instead, each generation is charged with refining and enhancing this knowledge to serve its people.

Theorising existing mātauranga Māori deepens its meaning and relevance. Much of the knowledge retained of whatu, for example, is via a colonised and gendered lens, and therefore new and innovative ways of viewing and understanding that knowledge are required. Royal (2011) says, “creativity and innovation deepens traditions and pre-existing knowledge rather than weakens them ... because in order for an innovation to take place, one has to fully understand all that has gone before” (p. 63). Although I doubt it is possible to know all that has gone before, I agree that theorising mātauranga Māori requires a deep theoretical and practical engagement with the practice, a commitment to contributing to its academic body of knowledge, and importantly, to retaining relationships to the artistic practice, and its language, people and histories.

In Aotearoa, Māori academics are theorising mātauranga Māori in new and innovative ways in research. Māori academic Jenny Lee (2008), for example, theorises pūrākau as pedagogy, method and methodology in her encounters with Māori teachers’ work in secondary schools. In the field of Māori art, there is exciting research being undertaken by Māori weavers Donna Campbell (2019) and Kahutoi Te Kanawa and John Turi-Tiakitai (2011), all recognised internationally as experts in traditional Māori arts, as they theorise tāniko and rāranga as research methodologies. Campbell and Te Kanawa’s in-depth practical expertise in their respective fields, bound together with their academic work in teaching and research, sees a rare intertwining of old know-how with innovative new ideas grounded in a politically active kaupapa Māori approach and seen through mana wāhine eyes. Their work to transform, re-claim, restore and re-present old Māori knowledge in their respective fields in new ways that seek positive change is inspiring and contributes to Māori artistic practices, Māori methodologies and a wider Kaupapa Māori agenda.

Awakening the creative potential within mātauranga Māori through theorisation seeks to

contribute new ideas to mātauranga Māori. Rather than undermine traditional mātauranga Māori, creative theorisation is designed to be grounded in it and must remain responsive, relevant and meaningful (Royal, 2011). As Royal (2011) says, the goal of theorisation “is not the creation of yet new knowledge for its own sake but rather to develop a way of encountering the world that upholds life, deepens our relationships with the natural world and with each other” (p. 48). It is important that our knowledge does not become rigid and static, but instead uses creative innovation to develop and address the needs and issues of our contemporary realities.

Where Māori once used our innovative skills to create clothing as protection from the elements, we are now theorising new and innovative ways with which to “protect ourselves” from the omnipotent threat of cultural assimilation to our ability to live as Māori now and in the future. The legacy of innovation, adaptation and theorisation, while retaining those key tenets within mātauranga Māori, provides a precedent to theorise the mātauranga Māori of whatu as the Whatuora methodology (H. Smith, 2019).

Activating mātauranga Māori with kaupapa Māori theory

While core values and principles held by Māori are expressed within mātauranga Māori, how these core values and principles might be applied or acted on in our current context is not explicitly expressed (Doherty, 2010). Whatu, seen “simply” as a creative practice, is a body of knowledge that evolved from technologies to produce clothing. To theorise this body of knowledge as a research methodology requires that it be twined together with theory to transform it from a body of practical knowledge into a research methodology. Theorising mātauranga Māori as a methodology requires an activating force to move the knowledge from know-how to an idea or activity that is driven by a politicising agenda. My research was motivated by a desire to re-claim and restore self-determined expressions of living as Māori women. The political activation to transform whatu from an artistic practice to a research methodology is provided by kaupapa Māori theory.

Kaupapa Māori theory is not a study of mātauranga Māori; nor is it a synonym for mātauranga Māori (Pohatu, 2003; Royal, 2011; G. H. Smith, 2003). Mātauranga Māori as a body of knowledge does not necessarily have a specific intention. Those working with mātauranga Māori may not be as conscious of

kaupapa Māori's emancipatory goals of transformation and liberation as those working to forward a kaupapa Māori agenda (Royal, 2011; G. H. Smith, 2003). As Royal points out, "those interested in advancing mātauranga Māori study ways in which mātauranga Māori explains aspects of existence" (Royal, 2011, p. 71). I argue here that when mātauranga Māori (the know-how) is twined together with kaupapa Māori theory (the activating force), a decolonising kaupapa Māori methodology is potentialised.

A desire to theorise mātauranga Māori as an approach to research is not a new activity. I follow in the footsteps of other Māori women whose creative work in academia, the arts, social movements and raising whānau have evolved to meet the changing social, political and environmental demands of their current conditions. For example, when Māori arrived in Aotearoa, they did not abandon their traditional knowledge but instead retained those aspects of knowledge considered important and useful, drawing on this knowledge to tackle the challenges they faced adapting to a new environment. Māori women now take up this legacy of creative innovation as we continue to whatu those crucial threads of cultural continuity from the past, into our present, for the future. From the intertwining and multiple theoretical threads of Indigenous methodologies, Whatuora emerges as an arts-based kaupapa Māori research methodology.

Whatuora: An arts-based kaupapa Māori research methodology

I argue above that developing and applying a methodology for research should stem from an intentional engagement with the history, knowledge, language, culture and beliefs from which that methodology emerges. My desire to theorise the Whatuora methodology comes from many years of engaging in Māori arts practices and experiencing its embodied transformative potential. It is through my experience that I feel capable of theorising my experience rather than attempting to experience the theory. I read with interest academic literature that uses Māori weaving metaphors and refers to weaving and or korowai as conceptual frameworks, yet the writers often appear to have little practical experience of whatu. While the analogous metaphor of weaving and cloaks has some value as a means to express or explain a concept, a deeper engagement with whatu, and importantly its language, is often missed. While these expressions of whatu and rāanga serve to celebrate and make visible our creative practices,

I am critically cautious when mātauranga Māori is used as vague metaphors that simplify and commodify our knowledge.

There is a risk that theorisations such as Whatuora can be misappropriated. The Aotearoa education system, for example, is rife with allusions to Māori knowledge, often as a well-intentioned attempt to express bicultural aspirations. Māori may even be consulted and valuable knowledge shared. But when Māori knowledge is used, absent of its language and cultural context, and becomes appropriated by Western institutions, the knowledge is inevitably simplified and the original intent lost. Take for example the Early Childhood Curriculum of Aotearoa—*Te Whāriki*—which refers to an intricately woven mat made of harakeke. This is a beautiful document, enriched with Māori imagery and the metaphor of the many strands that a whāriki comprises. As a weaver and educationalist, I am able to bring my experience of both fields to the metaphor to understand it as an integrated "woven" curriculum with a strong bicultural foundation. While the whāriki as a metaphor has the power to reveal culturally embedded messages (Barrett, 2013), how do those with little or no understanding of whāriki interpret the metaphor? Might they think of a mat as something you wipe your feet on when you enter a house? Is it the place where children sit in school? The paradigm and experiences that the reader brings to the metaphor are crucial, which causes me to question whether the aspirations and intentions of those who worked to create this unique curriculum can be realised in the Western institutions in which it is predominantly delivered.

Whatuora as a radical decolonising methodology

Radical ideas, methodologies and approaches are necessary to decolonise our current conditions. If "radical"—another politicised word that deserves some re-complexifying attention—means to change from the accepted, to go beyond the norm, or advocate for fundamental or revolutionary change, then Whatuora is forwarded as a radical kaupapa Māori methodology. The Whatuora methodology seeks to push the boundaries of whatu beyond its established understanding as eye or finger twining to a theorised approach to research that expounds a way of seeing the world through decolonising eyes.

At the start of my research, no established methodology appeared to me as appropriate for a project that explored living as Māori women and whatu kākahu. In some research projects,

methodology is explained in a small section within a chapter where established and accepted methodological approaches are drawn upon and then related to the research project. Methodology in this project is a far more diffuse, interwoven idea: theorising a Whatuora methodology is concerned with creating an approach to research, and in turn methods, from within the embodied knowledge of that Māori practice—in this case, whatu. In theorising Whatuora, I am weaving together a methodology that emerges from Māori knowledge and is activated by kaupapa Māori theory as a means to decolonise our vision as Māori women.

Whatuora asserts that the ability to see clearly or to see well requires an active and critical reflection of our past experiences in order to better understand what and how we view our present, and envision our futures. Applied to this research, Whatuora is a lens through which to see the pūrākau and experiences of Māori women living as Māori. While Whatuora has been developed concurrently with this research, it is not intended to remain in this Māori arts and education space, but has the potential to transcend a number of academic fields, educational settings and contexts. Therefore, Whatuora serves to encourage other Māori and Indigenous researchers to look with and through their own unique cultural whatu (lenses) to theorise their own robust and appropriate research approaches. While Whatuora emerges from within the Māori practice of whatu, the political decolonising lens of Whatuora is both fluid and flexible.

Summary

This article set out to re-complexify notions of Indigenous methodology by discussing the possibilities that are created when new knowledge is awakened from old practices. Activated by a kaupapa Māori politic, new knowledge useful to address our current lived realities is awakened from within the knowledge systems of mātauranga Māori—a decolonising emancipatory action repeated among other Indigenous peoples around the world. By encouraging new innovations and ideas that emerge from old knowledge systems, Māori and Indigenous researchers are re-claiming knowledge fragmented through colonisation and re-presenting this knowledge in new and useful ways.

Mātauranga Māori is a rich body of knowledge that holds within it embodied understandings possibly greater than we can currently comprehend. Kaupapa Māori scholars encourage us to bring forth the rich knowledge and experiences of our

ancestors in new and useful ways to transform our contemporary lived experience. As we continue to whatu together those fragments of knowledge that have been retained from mātauranga Māori in our current realities, we continue to strengthen and deepen our understanding of mātauranga Māori and choose those threads—ideas, ideologies, wisdoms and concepts—from the past to serve us in our present.

Somewhere in the past, someone, probably a woman, decided to drag a mussel shell across a piece of harakeke to extract muka, thus revealing one of the most important natural fibres that would be used to create clothing and shelter, bind fish-hooks, make nets and enable early Māori survival in Aotearoa. At some time, collective innovation evolved single whatu weaving into double whatu weaving, which made possible the fashioning of elaborately adorned feathered kākahu that were highly prized internationally for their beauty and workwomanship. This innovation, while holding fast to knowledge handed down over generations, created a new technique that spurred on further adaptation and innovation. This legacy of innovation and creativity is harnessed here to theorise whatu as a radical decolonising methodology used to discuss the experiences of re-claiming, restoring and re-presenting living as Māori women through Māori arts practice. This article encourages other Māori and Indigenous researchers to actively take up those threads of ancestral innovation and creativity, adaptation and problem-solving handed down to us to weave in new ways to advance our thinking and doing, our theory and practice. Tihei Whatuora.

Glossary

aho	weft; line; genealogy; chord; umbilical cord
Aotearoa	New Zealand
hapū	subtribe(s) that share a common ancestor
harakeke	flax
kahu, kahukahu	amniotic sac, foetal membrane
kākahu	a particular type of un-feathered Māori cloak
kaupapa Māori	Māori-based topic/event/enterprise run by Māori for Māori
korowai	traditional cloak
mana wāhine	power and status of women
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
mauri	life essence, life force, energy, life principle

moe	sleep
mokopuna	grandchildren
mouri	life essence, life force, energy, life principle
muka	prepared fibre of flax
oho	wake up, awake
ora	be well, survive, be healthy, fit and vital
pūrākau	ancient legends, myths
rāranga	weave; weaving
tamariki	children
tā moko	traditional Māori tattooing
tāniko	weaving of threads to create bodice, bands
taonga tuku iho	traditions, knowledge, treasures handed down by ancestors
Te Ao Māori	Māori worldview
te taha hinengaro	psychological aspects
te taha tinana	physical aspects
te taha wairua	spiritual aspects
te taha whānau	family aspects
tūpuna	ancestors
wānanga	Māori houses of higher learning, tertiary institute; conscious thought- processing discussion; transmitting the knowledge of the culture from one generation to the next
whakapapa	layered genealogy
whānau	family; nuclear/extended family
whāriki	mat
whatu	traditional Māori cloak weaving; eye
whatu kākahu	Māori cloak
wheke	octopus
whenu	strand, warp thread
whenua	land; placenta

References

- Abayo, L. E. (2006). Articulating indigenous people's culture in education. In I. Abu-Saad & D. Champagne (Eds.), *Indigenous education and empowerment: International perspectives* (pp. 179–187). AltaMira Press.
- Barrett, T. A. (2013). The river is me and I am the river: Principles for the organic Māori researcher. In M. Berryman, S. Soohoo, & A. Nevin (Eds.), *Culturally responsive methodologies* (pp. 221–244). Emerald Group Publishing.
- Campbell, D. (2019). *Ngā kura a Hineteiwaiwa: The embodiment of Mana Wahine in Māori fibre arts* [PhD thesis, The University of Waikato]. Research Commons. <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/12583>
- Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. SAGE.
- Doherty, W. (2010). *Mātauranga Tūhoe: The centrality of mātauranga-a-iwi to Māori education* [PhD thesis, University of Auckland]. ResearchSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/5639>
- Durie, M. (1994). *Whaiora: Māori health development*. Oxford University Press.
- Durie, M. (2001). *Mauriora: The dynamics of Māori health*. Oxford University Press.
- Evans, J. (2015). *Heke-nuku-mai-ngā-iwi Busby: Not here by chance*. Huia Publishers.
- Graham, J. (2005). He āpiti hono, he tātai hono: That which is joined remains an unbroken line: Using *whakapapa* (genealogy) as the basis for an Indigenous research framework. *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 34, 86–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14447190500046883>
- Grierson, E. M. (2007). Ways of researching: Creative arts methodologies and practices. In J. A. Park (Ed.), *Researching art education as critical cultural inquiry* (pp. 90–101). Mijinsa.
- Henare, A. (2005). Nga aho tipuna (ancestral threads): Māori cloaks from New Zealand. In S. Kuchler & D. Miller (Eds.), *Clothing as material culture* (pp. 121–138). Berg Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14447190500046884>
- Hiroa, T. R. (1949). *The coming of the Maori*. Maori Purposes Fund Board.
- Jacobs, D. T. (Ed.). (2008). *The authentic dissertation: Alternative ways of knowing, research, and representation*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14447190802444719>
- Kovach, M. (2005). Emerging from the margins: Indigenous methodologies. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 19–36). Canadian Scholars' Press; Women's Press.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.
- Lee, J. (2008). *Ako: Pūrākau of Māori teachers' work in secondary schools* [EdD thesis, University of Auckland]. Rangahau. http://www.rangahau.co.nz/assets/lee_J/leej2008_phd.pdf
- MacAulay, S., & Te Waru-Rewiri, K. (1996). Māori weaving: The intertwining of spirit, action and metaphor. In *Sacred and ceremonial textiles: Proceedings of the Fifth Biennial Symposium of the*

- Textile Society of America, Chicago, Illinois, 1996* (Paper 858). Textile Society of America. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1859&context=tsaconf>
- Maihi, T. T. R. (2011). Ngā aho: Threads that join. In A. Tamarapa (Ed.), *Whatu kākahu: Māori cloaks* (pp. 33–43). Te Papa Press.
- Marsden, M. (2003). *The woven universe*. Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden.
- Mead, S. M. (1997). *Landmarks, bridges and visions: Aspects of Māori culture*. Victoria University Press.
- Penehira, M. (2011). *Mouri tū, mouri moko, mouri ora!—Moko as a wellbeing strategy* [PhD thesis, University of Waikato]. Research Commons. <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/5945>
- Pere, R. T. (1991). *Te wheke: A celebration of infinite wisdom* (2nd ed.). Ao Ako Global Learning New Zealand.
- Pihama, L. (2001). *Tihei mauri ora. Honouring our voices: Mana wahine as a kaupapa Māori theoretical framework* [PhD thesis, University of Auckland]. ResearchSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/1119>
- Pohatu, T. W. (2003). Māori world-views: Source of innovative social work choices. *Social Work Review*, 15(3), 16–24.
- Pohatu, T. W. (2011). Mauri—Rethinking human wellbeing. *MAI Review*, (3). <http://www.review.mai.ac.nz/mrindex/MR/article/download/380/380-3362-1-PB.pdf>
- Royal, C. T. A. (2011). *Wānanga: The creative potential of mātauranga Māori*. Mauriora-ki-te-Ao/Living Universe.
- Smith, G. H. (2003, December). *Kaupapa Māori theory: Theorizing indigenous transformation of education and schooling* [Paper presentation], Kaupapa Māori Symposium—NZARE/AARE Joint Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Smith, H. L. (2017). *Whatuora: Whatu kākahu and living as Māori women* [PhD thesis, University of Auckland]. ResearchSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/36334>
- Smith, H. (2019). Whatuora: Theorizing “new” Indigenous research methodology from “old” Indigenous weaving practice. *Art/Research International*, 4(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/g8n6>
- Te Kanawa, K., & Turi-Tiakitai, J. (2011). Te mana o te kākahu. In A. Tamarapa (Ed.), *Whatu kākahu* (pp. 19–32). Te Papa Press.
- Williams, H. W. (1997). *Dictionary of the Māori language* (7th ed.). G. P. Publications.