

"My Poppa, He Was One of My Biggest Role Models: How Young Māori Men Negotiate Racism and Identity in the City"

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Keywords: Indigenous, Māori, masculinities, youth, discourses, resistance, poetry

<https://doi.org/10.54760/001c.124490>

Journal of Global Indigeneity

Vol. 9, Issue 3, 2025

In this article I explore how some young Māori men makes sense of Māori masculinities. In particular, I explore the complications and contradictions young Māori men negotiate within a sociocultural context shaped by colonisation, racialisation and marginality (alongside sexism, ableism and other forms of structural marginalisation). Taking a Kaupapa Māori approach, I constructed data poems as a form of pūrākau (Māori storywork) from interviews with twenty-two young Māori men between the ages of 16 and 24. These data poems, *Māori men* and *Role models*, explore young Māori men accounts of how Māori masculinity is represented socially, as well as constructed within whānau (extended families). My analysis of the poems then explores how particular constructions of Māori masculinity be(come) naturalised, including Māori men as *physical* and Māori men as *deviant*. I explore how these dominant masculine subjectivities function to reproduce the current social inequities and power hierarchies. Moving beyond these limiting identity possibilities, I also highlight how young Māori men construct alternative identity possibilities beyond the norms of Māori masculinity currently available to them. These disruptions are achieved through counter-storying, humour, and takatāpui (LGBTQ+ Māori) identities. The conclusion of the article then offers some reflections on how to challenge and move beyond the limiting masculine norms for Māori men.

Indigenous masculinities, as a particular field of research, is still emerging (Mukandi et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the field has offered important contributions to an array of disciplines through highlighting how masculinity is constructed through engagements with age, race, sexuality, class, and other intersections of identity (Anderson & Innes, 2015; Hokowhitu, 2004, 2007, 2008; Morgensen, 2015; Mukandi et al., 2019; Tengan, 2008, 2016).

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However, this growing interest has yet to be fully realised within Aotearoa New Zealand¹ (henceforth Aotearoa; Hokowhitu, 2014; King & Robertson, 2017; Rua, 2015).

Stanley (2002) specifically addressed that psychology in Aotearoa New Zealand has had little interest in the potential decolonial possibilities of Indigenous masculinities research. Although I write this article over twenty years after Stanley's call-to-action, there is little work in psychology that has taken up this challenge (with notable exceptions by Elkington, 2017; King et al., 2015; King & Robertson, 2017; Rua et al., 2017). Instead, psychological research about young Māori men predominantly frame young Māori men as problems to be addressed, 'at-risk', or pitiable, rather than people worthy of interest and possessing of dignity (Hamley & Le Grice, 2021).

As one intervention on these deficit-laden narratives, I want to uncover the ways that (colonial) masculinities impact young Māori men and the resourceful ways in which they resist colonial masculinities. Using a Kaupapa Māori approach rooted in Indigenous storywork, I use poetry to explore how young Māori men make sense of Māori masculinities, and the complexities therein. The following questions shape my exploration of Māori masculinities: What dominant representations of Māori masculinity are young Māori men aware of? What impacts do these representations have on their lives and experiences growing up? In what ways do they draw on alternative representations of Māori masculinities to create possibilities beyond the dominant representations of Māori masculinity? What hope might these alternative representations offer for decolonising Māori/Indigenous masculinities?

Research context

Māori were the first to arrive in Aotearoa in the 13th Century (Walker, 1990). Upon arrival to Aotearoa our ancestors fostered deep connections with this whenua (land) that nurtured the development of diverse iwi (tribe, extended kinship group), hapū (subtribe, kinship group), and whānau (extended family) that now pattern Aotearoa (Walker, 1990). During early contact with Europeans, Māori actively sought to trade and solidify relationships for mutual benefit, developing flourishing trade networks across the Pacific (Petrie, 2006).

In 1840, Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) was signed by rangatira (chiefs of hapū) by many, but not all, hapū, and the representative of Queen Victoria, affirming the relationship between Māori and the United Kingdom (Mutu, 2010). In Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the reassurance that the Queen will control British

¹ For the purposes of this article, I intentionally use the term Aotearoa to refer to New Zealand. While there are some who argue that using Aotearoa privileges a name used by Māori in Te Ika a Māui (The North Island), it is the one that today is most commonly used to refer to New Zealand in the Māori language.

citizen who have moved to Aotearoa, that she will respect and uphold the self-determination and authority of rangatira and hapū, and that English culture will be available to Māori (Came et al., 2017; Mutu, 2010). This agreement is widely considered the founding document of the nation, and an aspirational vision for a biculturalism. However, this vision of biculturalism was quickly eroded as larger numbers of British (and other European) settlers arrived, leading to large-scale colonisation of Aotearoa (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019).

Over the course of a century and half, warfare, confiscation and land sales led to 96% of whenua being taken by settlers (Glover et al., 2004). Concurrently, between 1840 and 1874, Māori went from outnumbering Pākehā approximately 35:1 to being a minority in the population (Durie, 1994). This demographic and geographic colonisation was devastating for both Māori social identities and Māori political standing. Māori were dislocated from their rohe (territory) and economic and whakapapa foundations, leading them to rely on economic policies that from the outset disadvantaged Māori relative to Pākehā (Orange, 2004).

These impacts resounds through generations today, impacting Māori in various ways. For this article, I focus specific on the impacts of coloniality on Māori men, particularly those growing up the city. This work forms part of a larger research project that formed my PhD, exploring the lived realities of young Māori men growing up in the city. This was shaped by my own experiences growing up in Auckland but having iwi (nation) affiliations to Ngāti Rangi and Whanganui, alongside growing up as takatāpui (LGBTQ+ Māori). I was interested in young Māori men's accounts of their identity construction, especially in relation to culture, gender, and place. I engaged in semi-structured interviews with 22 young Māori men in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, aged between 16 and 24 years old that explored their sense of culture, masculinity, and identity. The project received ethics approval from the human ethics committee of the University of Auckland in July 2019 (reference number 023281). While the study carefully followed the ethics process of the University of Auckland, it was also crucially underpinned by a relational ethics central to Māori and Indigenous ways of being and knowing (Brannelly et al., 2013; Smith, 2006; Tuck, 2009).

All 22 of the young Māori men were cis, and only one openly identified as Queer. The young Māori men in the study had an array of iwi affiliations, but the most common affiliations were to iwi from the Northern parts of Aotearoa. Fourteen were attending secondary school, five were in tertiary education, two were in full-time employment, and one was unemployed at the time. Recruitment occurred through an array of approaches including through school staff, snowballing, and social media, reflecting the need for a diverse array of engagement process to facilitate recruitment (for more discussion of this, see Hamley, 2023).

Research methodology

This project takes a Kaupapa Māori approach, a research approach that has its origins in critical theory and action, taking a structural analysis and using it to drive change (Hoskins & Jones, 2017). However, Kaupapa Māori research also centres Māori metaphysics, and presumes the validity and legitimacy of Māori ways of being, knowing and doing (Smith et al., 2016). Such an approach is intended to support the revival of Māori practices, assert Māori agency in research, and provide clear analyses of power and structural inequities (Pihama et al., 2015). As the Indigenous bricoleur (Hamley et al., 2021; Lee, 2009), I wove Kaupapa Māori with Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008; Lee, 2009) and poetic inquiry (Prendergast, 2009), forming poetry that tells stories of young Māori men's lives.

Poetic inquiry has been fruitfully used within Indigenous research, for example, to explore complex issues relating to education, health, and incarceration (Ahenakew, 2016; Kidd, 2018; McIntosh, 2018). In particular, I decided on poetic inquiry because of its connection to ancestral literacies, recognition of the visceral and spiritual aspects of life, and how it provides space for multi-vocality (Ahenakew et al., 2014; Lehmann & Brinkmann, 2021). My poetic inquiry took the form of constructing poems from the interview transcripts, a method commonly referred to as either data poetry or found poetry (Lehmann & Brinkmann, 2021; Prendergast, 2009).

Mapping out how a possible poem could look like took many different forms, and I would often read and say the poems out loud to check from how they 'sounded' in different forms. This process of editing reflected the advice of research poets, who emphasise that poetry becomes poetry through this process of editing (Lahman et al., 2019). The edits of the poems sought to bring out an embodied and spiritual resonance, where what was unsaid was as important as the text on the page, and that what was said held resonance in an embodied, cognitive and spiritual manner. I also draw from the work Unanga scholar Eve Tuck, who calls for desire-based research (Tuck, 2009). Desire-based research engages with people as neither victims nor heroic agents, but as complex and often contradictory people worthy of dignity, interest and consideration. To these ends, I felt an ethical imperative in the poetry to construct complex narratives of Māori masculinities, neither naïvely positive nor deficit-oriented.

These poems, as they compose direct quotes from young Māori men, represent their perspectives to some degree. However, I have selected specific narratives and (re)presented them in relation to one another. As such, these poems have been created from my own theorising on participant narratives within the context of Māori masculinities. I therefore argue the poems are more like mosaics of stories than any 'true' account of participant experiences or voices. The two poems I have constructed in this article, *Māori men* and

Role models seek to disrupt the dominant representations of young Māori men, and in their place offer diverse possibilities for who we are as Māori. The poems are both located in Appendix One.

ANALYTIC APPROACH TO THE POETRY

In analysing these poems, I drew inspiration from Foucauldian poststructuralist scholars (Gavey, 2005; Hokowhitu, 2004, 2007) alongside broader Kaupapa Māori theory. This analytic borrowing enabled me to consider how particular constructions of Māori masculinity can be(come) naturalised, and understand how these dominant masculine subjectivities function to reproduce the current social inequities and power hierarchies. These were the inspiration for the first half of the poem *Māori men* that explores many of the dominant representations of Māori men. The analytic approach also supported my thinking around alternative masculinities, and how young Māori men resist the norms of Māori masculinity currently available to them. This is the focus of the second half of the poem *Māori men* as well as the poem *Role models*. In most instances, I will quote from the poem directly to highlight an important analytic point. Where contextually relevant, I include a broader quote around a poem fragment to contextualise it. If I include a longer quote from a transcript I use a pseudonym for the young Māori men who is being quoted to maintain their confidentiality. Further, given many of the young people were under the age of eighteen, it felt inappropriate to include names or specific identifying details of the young Māori men.

Analysis

Two dominant (and often overlapping) dominant representations were described by young Māori: Māori men as *physical* and Māori men as *deviant*. These representations both reinforce a colonial norm that Māori masculinity is physical (and not intellectual), maintaining a hierarchy of masculinity that supports white masculinities as superior (Hokowhitu, 2004). While these narratives could offer some benefits Māori men who drew on these representations, they could still limit them in many ways, often valorising hypermasculinity, limited emotional displays, and using violence to exercise power (citation). In this section both dominant representations are articulated using examples from the poem, before considering broader sociocultural ramifications and how these identities shape particular cultural conditions of possibility for young Māori men.

Māori men as physical

Within this work, young Māori men would often describe the term Māori, especially in reference to Māori men, as being only being physically skilled, or better matched for 'active' jobs. Māori masculinity has often linked to blue collar, or working-class masculinity (Rua, 2015). Māori men "*work in forestry, tradies, builders, they always drink and stuff...always work hard.*"

Yeah, they're hard workers". Māori men who drew on this identity were constructed as hard working, easy going, and jokesters who enjoyed sports. These descriptions aligned with Brendan Hokowhitu's (2007) description of the 'good' Māori – Māori men are humble, hardworking, and affable, performing important manual work in society. Additionally, Hokowhitu (2004, 2007) argued that this representation of Māori masculinity was (re)produced by the colonial settlers (and eventually the State) to create a pool of cheap economic labour to work the landholdings violently taken from Māori.

Education of Māori men was oriented towards preparing them for working in farming contexts, and directed young Māori men away 'academic' subjects that were viewed as unsuited to their 'aptitude' (Hokowhitu, 2007). Over generations, this process of channeling Māori men into physical labour was such that Hokowhitu (2007) notes that by 1965, nearly 90 percent of Māori men were employed in physically demanding jobs. In this way, the representation of physical Māori men also more broadly (re)produces a hierarchy of power within the colonial landscape of Aotearoa, further enabling Pākehā (New Zealand European) men to accumulate power, resources, and wealth. Māori men being trained to work in physically demanding jobs, and then working in these jobs, over time has created a narrative where Māori men are best suited to physical jobs, with more 'academic' jobs, the ones associated with greater political power, associated with Pākehā.

Young Māori men often had limited insight into these deeper power relationships between Māori men and Pākehā men,

| *"[t]here was no evidence in our heads when we were young Māori men/ To suggest that the narratives we were hearing were wrong".*

Such descriptions highlight the hermeneutic violence of settler colonialism (Teo, 2010), wherein young people grow up without the necessary knowledge and context to make sense of the racism and colonisation that shapes their lives. Subsequently, this shaping of Māori masculinity renders particular possibilities for Māori men more or less in reach.

The naturalisation of Māori men as physical simultaneously frames Māori men as unacademic, foreclosing opportunities for them beyond the current(ly imagined) opportunities available to them:

| *"it was kind of like thing-ed into our minds that we weren't smart enough to study".*

For Māori men there are cultural norms that disciplined ("*thing-ed*") us into taking up a physical masculinity where particular subjects were deemed unsuitable. Even young Māori men who rejected and resisted this dominant representation also could face challenges for doing so. Manaaki described broader perceptions of Māori men as not academic:

"sort of makes you think you shouldn't be academic and you should be more towards the stereotypical end of being Māori".

This subjectification (Foucault, 1990) reinforces an educational context where young Māori men continue to be positioned as 'low achievers', with roughly 28% of young Māori men leaving high school with no formal qualifications (Webber et al., 2020).

Challenging this dominant representation risks compromising a sense of identity as a young Māori man. This culminated in Manaaki's ambivalence about receiving an academic prize at high school, wherein:

"I felt like, I don't know, I felt like I was losing... It's hard to talk about it, I don't know. It's kind of hard to think about".

Manaaki's challenges are perhaps best illuminated through Foucault's idea of *pouvoir-savoir*, as interpreted by Gavey (2005), who suggest your ability to act is tied to your capacity to know or make sense of that act. Amongst the gaps in his speech, we get a sense that Manaaki's success academically was linked with losing access to the dominant representations of Māori men. In not conforming to the dominant representations of Māori men, Manaaki was less able to make sense of where he 'fit' as a young Māori man.

Manawanui alternatively highlighted how the representation of the physical Māori man could shape interpersonal and structural experiences of racism. Growing up he had a group of Māori friends who all slowly dropped out of school, eventually leaving only him. He was successful at sport, achieved well at school, and eventually became Head Boy at his high school. However, even these achievements could be undermined by the discourse of Māori men as physical:

"when I was achieving well at school and not living out those stereotypes at all, or people above me, head boys before us, they [white students] were like affirmative action, that's why I got head boy... So, you could never just be, like a Māori who's doing well".

The physical Māori man as a representation was inconsistent with Manawanui's success at school. Therefore, it required an explanation that was consistent with the dominant discourses about the (lack of) scholastic success for Māori (Webber et al., 2020). This explanation then drew from the racist representations of Māori masculinity: the scholastic success of young Māori

men cannot be earned, it must be (unfairly) given to them (at the expense of harder-working, more deserving Pākehā). Manawanui's efforts which enabled him to become Head Boy were then explained away by 'affirmative action', drawing him back into a colonial power hierarchy.

The concept of Māori privilege relative to Pākehā has a long discursive history and is often deployed to invisibilise the impacts of colonisation, in particular the benefits afforded to white people (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Manawanui had to witness many of his closest friends drop-out, and while he continued to succeed in both sports and academics, he still had to deal with the indignity of being positioned as undeserving of his achievements by Pākehā 'friends'. When young Māori men are able to resist limiting physical representations of Māori masculinity, they can still be(come) fixed back into the colonial hierarchy by other discursive tools that frame Māori (men) as 'naturally' inferior to Pākehā.

Within these narratives we see the everyday consequences of dominant representations of Māori men available to young Māori men. Discourses of Māori masculinities continue to subject Māori men to regimes of 'truth' about who we are (Hokowhitu, 2004, 2008). Through an exploration of the representation of the physical Māori man, we see the ways that young Māori men must navigate contexts layered with discourses of coloniality, often without access to knowledge to make sense of them.

Māori men as deviant

The "deviant" identity was the most commonly discussed by young Māori men encapsulating many of the familiar and dominant stereotypes of Māori men. In this representation, Māori men are rendered as violent, criminal, and more generally expected to experience hardships in life because of this dysfunctional and violent nature (Hokowhitu, 2004).

For multiple young Māori men, a reference to the film *Once Were Warriors* (Tamahori, 1994) functioned as a short-hand for this representation. The film is somewhat infamous in Aotearoa for its depiction of violence within the Hekes, a Māori family, predominantly perpetrated by Jake 'the Muss' Heke, the father of the family. Without wanting to (over)analyse the film, the film generated significant debate within Māori communities when released (Hokowhitu, 2004). One layer of this debate focused on whether its representation of urban Māori dysfunction generated more harm for Māori than good in highlighting an issue that requires serious attention and resourcing (Hokowhitu, 2007).

Young Māori men held different views of the film depending on their different subjectivities and upbringings. In some instances, it was used to describe a *negative* image of Māori: for Tiaki there were "*Māori households*" like *Once Were Warriors* (abusive, violent, gang households) and then there were "*gentler homes*" (calm, caring households) which he viewed more

favourably. He argued that Māori who were like those portrayed in *Once Were Warriors* were a subset of 'bad' Māori who reinforced negative representations of Māori, and who continue to be depicted in media and news as a threat to the stability and safety of communities and the broader nation (Farr, 2019; McCreanor et al., 2014). In contrast, for Tiaki, good Māori were ones who challenged this representation and showed care and concern for one another. This binary positioning afforded Tiaki freedom from the negative representations associated with this film, as he identified more with the 'gentler households and thus was distanced from the negative representations. However, he still continued to endorse this representation as one which was true within *some* Māori households, thus naturalising the subject position within *some* Māori.

Some young Māori men sought to escape the representations of Māori as violent through particular forms of dress and behaviour. Manaia described how his dad was abusive growing up and that had informed his perceptions of what Māori masculinity was. In response to this upbringing, he stated:

"I like to act like passive a lot of the time, like I feel it's better to act passive and stuff and not aggressive cause it falls under the stereotype that I'm just another angry Māori".

Manaia further went on to describe how he changed his pattern of speaking and constantly used please and thank you during interactions in public because he does not "*want to seem scary*". Others also spoke about the ways in which they would change their behaviour or avoid wearing certain clothes (mainly hoodies and caps) to avoid followed by staff in stores, or to avoid being stopped and questioned by police. In this way, some young Māori men drew on alternative forms of masculinity to avoid being seen as 'deviant' by other (often, but not exclusively white) people. However, these alternative forms of masculinity often drew on alternative white middle-class masculinities, drawing them into a different colonial gender norm.

Further, this performance of masculinity still was underpinned by an uncomfortable 'truth': within a discourse of Māori male deviance, Māori men are, by default, "*scary*" and must *prove* they are not through performing particular ways of being in the world. In this way, young Māori are often navigating a complex and often compromising social world. Drawing on Pākehā middle-class masculinities offers some, *as individuals*, space to resist racist stereotypes (and reduce their risk of social sanctions), while simultaneously reinforcing Pākehā norms and values as the ideal way of navigating society. However, doing otherwise meant continuing to experience the realities of public life for many Māori men: being positioned as violent and threatening, being followed in stores, stopped by police, and a myriad of other negative impacts that they described. The racism and coloniality which

is embedded through particular representations must be addressed if we want to address the colonial barriers that shape Māori masculinities and the social, economic, and health outcomes of young Māori men (Hokowhitu, 2007).

Expanding beyond the known: young Māori men resistance of the limits

Although young Māori men highlighted many challenges they face, their stories also highlighted many ways in which they resisted colonial norms of (Māori) masculinity. Rather than just being products of particular socio-historical trajectories, Māori men have also interacted with, resisted and (re)shaped different subject positions to suit their needs (Hokowhitu, 2008). In this section I am then interested in how young Māori men resist and (re)shape dominant representations to create more expansive possibilities for Māori masculinities. I focus on three forms of disruption to the dominant representations as formative for understanding how young Māori men negotiate their subjectivity: counter-storytelling, humour, and takatāpui identities.

COUNTER-STORYTELLING

As discussed in the methodology section, storywork has been a potent method of Indigenous resistance to colonisation in an array of different disciplines (Archibald, 2008; Lee-Morgan, 2019; Watego, 2021). In particular, counter-storytelling (or what others call truth-telling, (Corntassel & T'lakwadzi, 2009) enables Indigenous people to advance our own narratives about who we are, our pasts, presents and our futures. Counter-storying can therefore remind us that the dominant narratives about Māori masculinity are able to be deconstructed through asserting our own stories of Māori masculinity. Narratives of masculinity from young Māori men were often peppered with various counter-examples of family (dads, uncles, older brothers, grandfathers) they knew who had resisted the dominant subject positions of Māori masculinity:

"My dad was the first on the Māori side to go to university

he wanted to create change

he's really proud of my academics, and my sporting too

he usually says you learn from the hard luck

He's gentle and understanding"

Webber and O'Connor (2019) also highlight the power of whānau/iwi (family/tribal) histories and storytelling as pedagogical tools to ensure Māori students are aware of how Māori adapted and resisted even during colonial upheaval and devastation. Through drawing on different counter-examples, young Māori men are then able to counter-story Māori men as fluid and

dynamic people who navigate oceans and immense social changes with foresight and vision, disrupting the dominant representations of Māori men. In this way, counter-examples could serve as an effective tool of disrupting not just the dominant representations of Māori masculinity but many of the norms of coloniality that have been enforced upon Māori.

Similarly, young Māori men could also engage with Māori ways of being and knowing which continue to resound within whānau, using them as powerful counter-narratives of Māori masculinity to (re)claim Māori forms of masculinity as interconnected and relational. These everyday acts then highlighted a form of Māori masculinity that rejected both the dominant positions of Māori masculinity as violent or physical *and* the dominant positions of white (hegemonic) masculinity as competitive, individualistic or controlling:

"my poppa, he was one of my biggest role models

He just taught me the basics

how to mow the lawns

how to just take care of myself,

how to be respectful,

he taught me manners,

just how to be a gentleman"

Through examples provided by his poppa, Anaru could begin to understand the importance of reciprocity, roles and responsibilities which are embedded within Māori ways of being and knowing (Ritchie, 1992). These gems of wisdom, in turn, could spark different possibilities for his own subjectivity, and foster a worldview in which care and service were important to their identity. Rua (2017) described how a nurtured and interconnected self for Māori men is underpinned by relationality, care, and connection.

Counter-stories were not limited to Māori men who young people had genealogical ties to; instead kaupapa whānau (one term for chosen family) who could open up alternative masculinities for young Māori men:

"Growing up

My dad was abusive

I think that stuck with me

When I think of Māori men now

I think of my kapa haka teachers

My PE teacher

"They value their culture and their family"

Teachers, community leaders, and broader networks of support can be formative to fostering counter-stories of Māori masculinity as relational, nurturing, and caring (cf. Le Grice et al., 2017). This insight aligns with research highlighting the value of broader community in shaping and guiding Māori youth to flourish (Hamley et al., 2022). In this way, counter-storying of Māori ways of being and knowing could open up new possibilities for young Māori men, creating possibilities for change, growth and development (and the possibility for this to continue in the future).

Perhaps interestingly, young Māori men did not solely look to older men to craft their own masculinity. Instead, they often sought to create a 'new' norm of masculinity through drawing on examples from their mums, aunties, nanas, and other women in their lives:

"I think a lot of my healing practices come

From shutting up

Listening to like my aunties, my sisters and my nans"

Through being able to draw on different values, behaviours and possibilities offered by women in their lives, young Māori men were able to fluidly construct alternative practices of Māori masculinity that were both resistant to the dominant representations of Māori men, and respond to a shifting sociocultural context where gender inequities are increasingly salient (Gavey et al., 2021). While the literature on hybrid masculinities has demonstrated that these masculinities can still reproduce inequities between men and women, in the current sociocultural context, such hybridity still affords young Māori men greater representational space than the narrow representations of who Māori men currently 'are'.

HUMOUR AS DISRUPTION

Humour could also be a potent tool of resistance to the dominant forms of Māori masculinity. Roberts et al. (2008) highlight how youth of colour in the United States use humour in a variety of ways to highlight, reject or subvert the realities, pains, and contradictions of their lives in a colour-blind but deeply racist society. Similarly, young Māori men also described various instances where humour could be used to disrupt, reject, or reflect on the dominant representations for Māori masculinity.

When I asked about the representations of Māori men in society, Tamati replied

"well based off what I read in the Stuff comments" paused and then said *"nah"* which led us both to laugh for an extended time.

Stuff, as a prominent online news platform in Aotearoa, has a long history of enabling and reproducing racism against Māori (Abel, 2013; Farr, 2019; McCreanor et al., 2010), with the *Stuff* comments section being a well-known site of racism (and other forms of oppression). However, in this brief and humorous phrase, Tamati alludes to this history of racism, while also rejecting those representations as warranting further discussion. Humour then could be used to call out racism and emphasise alternative representations both as more appropriate but also worthier of further consideration.

A slightly different form of disruptive humour was highlighted by Matiu. When I asked if he had experienced any racist comments like being 'pretty smart for a Māori', Matiu stated:

"nah my friends joke about that, like, it's just a joke. It's probably not a good thing, but me and my friend, most of our jokes are about racism and whatnot. But we're all good about it, cause two of us are Māori, two of us are Samoan, and we just trade. None of us take it personally, but you always have stuff like that."

Matiu's style of humour does not resist the dominant representations through dismissal, but instead leans into them. Self-deprecating humour, as a strategic resource, is commonly drawn on by marginalised groups in this way to deflate prejudicial attacks from dominant groups who would seek to use these representations for harm (Gilbert, 1997; Gordon, 1998). Through rendering the dominant representations of masculinity comedic, young Māori men could resist and reject them. In-group jokes could then be a way of both bringing Matiu's friend group together through laughter, and making comedic what is otherwise hurtful.

In this way, racially-laden jokes could be read as potentially affirming, providing both a space to deal with racism and giving space for young Māori men to self-define (Roberts et al., 2008). However, Matiu recognises making these jokes could have negative impacts (*"it's probably not a good thing"*). There is a risk in reinforcing the dominant subject positions if this humour is deployed uncritically (see Wall, 1997). Gilbert (1997) also notes the contradictions of this form of humour as both potentially oppressive (reinforcing hierarchies of oppression) and/or transgressive (through interrogating these hierarchies). Thus, it is important to consider the extent to which humour of this nature reinforces and/or transgresses dominant representations, especially when the dominant groups are the spectators or audience of this humour. As a strategy of resistance, this style of humour has to be carefully negotiated.

Finally, young Māori men could also deftly use humour, both to diffuse tension, but also to assert a positive sense of Māori masculinity beyond colonial limitations:

My granddad.

He's a big as guy. Like BIG. Loud. Funny.

He's like a massive

family dude. he was family oriented.

He always wanted us around. Me and all my other cousins.

In describing his granddad, Nikau subverts the expectations of Māori masculinity to emphasise the size of Māori men's love, humour or care for whānau, contrasting with the images of Māori men as physically dominating or threatening. Māori men could be represented as *massive* family men, or *big* in the sense of having a large personality. These humorous turns-of-phase could thus dismiss representations which position Māori in negative ways through combining the expected (massive, big, loud) with the unexpected (family dude).

As another form of disruption, humour could be a form of cultural critique that subverts dominant representations, opening up alternative possibilities for young Māori men and Māori masculinity more broadly. In particular, humour could be used to shut-down racist possibilities, buffer against everyday racism, and resist and (re)construct different representations of Māori. This style of disruption, as a conversational technique to navigate racism in dynamic ways, highlights how Māori youth can draw on sophisticated conversational techniques and fluidly apply them in different ways to both navigate the colonial representations, and resist and dismantle them.

TAKATĀPUI IDENTITY/IES AS DISRUPTION

Equally, takatāpui identity could present a powerful representational space for resisting colonial masculinity. Takatāpui is an umbrella term that describes Māori of diverse gender, sexuality and sex characteristics (Kerekere, 2017). Takatāpui, as a distinctly Māori identity, moves beyond Eurocentric imaginings of sex, gender and sexuality as separate from other parts of our identities (Hamley et al., 2021; Kerekere, 2017). As a term, it has been reclaimed since the 1980s in response to the ways in which colonisation has sought to make Māori conform to cisheteropatriarchy (Hamley et al., 2021; Kerekere, 2017; Te Awekotuku, 2005). This colonial process has created cultural conditions in which homophobia, transphobia and sexism have been reproduced within society and Māori whānau (Pihama et al., 2020).

However, takatāpui identities could also be drawn on by young Māori men to disrupt and reject the dominant representations that position queerness as either unmasculine or abnormal. Wiremu openly identified as takatāpui and described the ways in which his identity was interwoven:

"I know that I'm Māori and to me it feels a very natural fit. I say, I'm gay, I'm rainbow and takatāpui. I'm queer, I think all of these things, I feel that is me".

For Wiremu, his identity as takatāpui was a way of encapsulating a sense of who he is across the breadth of his identities. Takatāpui, in this sense, describes Wiremu's sense of gender and sexuality *as shaped by* Māori culture, resisting conformity to Eurocentric and colonial masculinities. Being takatāpui does not threaten his identity as Māori, but instead creates expansive possibilities for self-expression beyond the limited cultural constraints afforded him by dominant masculine subject positions in the settler colonial society. Takatāpui identities through this analysis are affirmed as both/neither traditional and/nor modern. Takatāpui identities are transformed, adapted and lived-in by takatāpui across generations who have taken up the term to express their sense of self (Rahurahu & Ranapiri, 2021). Takatāpui masculinities then, are ones which are fluid, expansive, and as infinite as these stars. This is the legacy that Wiremu draws on in his identity as Takatāpui.

This expansive approach to masculinities could also impact young Māori men who did not identify as takatāpui. Koa described how a friend coming out rippled across his friend group to create new possibilities for how they interacted with one another:

"a big thing that shifted within our group I noticed which made ourselves open up is my best friend. So, he's gay (mm). But throughout high school, like none of us knew. He hid it very well. But when he became open about that and started talking more about how that affects him, I noticed there was a big shift within our friend group and a lot of them were like coming to him and being more open with him. And from that it just, um, yeah just opened everyone up".

Takatāpui young people, through the ways in which they resist the norms of gender and navigate homophobia and other oppressive systems, can create opportunities for change in those around them. While homophobia, as an extension of anti-femininity, continues to inform the dominant masculine ideologies for young men in Aotearoa (Gavey et al., 2021), straight and cis Māori men can also reject this position and draw on alternative masculinities. Takatāpui identities thus offers one way of disrupting the limited ideas of Māori masculinity which foreclose possibilities to express emotion, affection or care as 'unmasculine' behaviours.

This is not the same as saying that *all* Māori men should or must embrace a particular set of behaviours, or that I believe that takatāpui masculinities *should* be(come) the dominant representation of Māori masculinity over other representations (or even that takatāpui men cannot reproduce dominant colonial masculinities). However, takatāpui identities hold liberational possibilities for people across the spectrums of gender, sexuality, and sex characteristics. In addressing the call to action given by Hokowhitu (2007) for a plurality of masculinities, takatāpui identities offer one pathway for disrupting colonial subject positions.

Conclusions

Through exploring the lives and sense-making of young Māori men we can get a sense of the complexities of their lives. Representations of Māori men as physical, violent or practically-minded continue to be naturalised as if they are the way that Māori men have been and continue to be. These dominant representations, and the ways they have shifted and transformed over time, are both potent examples of colonisation as an ongoing process, but also reminders of how these inequities are socioculturally located, able to be made and unmade. These representations must be challenged, and the broader colonial histories they invisibilise must be brought into the public consciousness. This process of conscientisation (Freire, 2017), requires addressing the very roots of settler colonialism in Aotearoa, and the ongoing privileging of whiteness, colonialism and therefore particular forms of masculinity.

Equally, in engaging with the complexities of young Māori men's lives, we are presented with richer possibilities of masculinities. Young Māori men are drawing on rich networks of relationships to forge their own expressions of masculinity. This can occur not only with the (cis and heterosexual) men in their lives, but with women and takatāpui people too. Indigenous masculinity research should better engage with the rich veins of feminist and queer Indigenous thought and practice to make sense of the full spectrum Indigenous masculinities. Such intersectional possibilities excite me, and provide hope that the plurality of masculinities imagined by Hokowhitu (2007), are closer than we might imagine in the dominant narratives of young Māori men.

Conflict of interest statement

The author reports no conflict of interest for this work.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge his former supervisors, Dr Jade Le Grice and Professor Nicola Gavey, for their insight and generous critique that has shaped this work.

Accepted: February 26, 2025 AEST. Published: April 30, 2025 AEST.



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Appendices

Appendix One: Poetry

MĀORI MEN

There's like different types

Tradies, builders, they always drink and stuff

They like watching the league or rugby

They're hard workers

Growing up

If someone had asked me what the stereotypical Māori man was

I'd be like

Māori males were very athletic

Very good at sport

But lazy

it was kind of like thing-ed into our minds

that we weren't smart enough to study

Growing up

I definitely knew there are two different types of Māori households.

The Once Were Warriors were closer to home.

And I suppose the gentler life was with my grandparents

There was no evidence in our heads when we were young Māori men

To suggest that the narratives we were hearing were wrong.

We were like 15

We weren't going to question it.

Its kind of hard to change stereotypes

It developed a framework

Around my perception of what being Māori is

*I kind of felt,
Felt
Sad,
That that's how you were seen if you were brown,
If you were
Māori
That you would have to like look out
We get downed a lot
Our culture - I guess - gets downed so much
But we ain't snotty nosed and wear no shoes
Or have holes in socks and stuff like that
My dad was the first on the Māori side to go to university
He wanted to create change
He's really proud of my academics, and my sporting too
He usually says you learn from the hard luck
He's gentle and understanding

My granddad.
He's a big as guy. Like BIG. Loud. Funny.
He's like a massive family dude.
He was family oriented.
He always wanted us around. Me and all my other cousins.

My poppa, he was one of my biggest role models
He just taught me the basics
How to mow the lawns
How to just take care of myself,
How to be respectful,
He taught me manners,*

Just how to be a gentleman

I'm gay, I'm rainbow and takatāpui. I'm queer, I think all of these things,

I feel that is me

I feel like if people got to know me better

Without just judging me on first appearance

They'd understand

ROLE MODELS

Definitely my mum and my uncle.

They've just always been there for me

Even in my hardest times

My nan is my role model

She'd always make sure I'm just okay

I'm happy

Checks up on me

My koro

Taught me the value of hard work

He was one the hardest working people I've ever known

He's always been the first out of the home for work

The last to come back.

That's just always how it's been.

My father

Taught me the value of being kind in the face of adversity

My mum taught me always be strong,

Stick up for yourself

Nana, she's a staple in my whānau,

Kind, loving

She represents my whānau

My aunty

She's always kind, loving, nice, cool,

I don't know

She's like my dad and my mum,

She's my go-to person.

I think a lot of my healing practices

come from listening to like my aunties, my sisters, and my nans

They've taught me

How to, like, really be a man.

Not like, as in like men don't cry but like

Being a man as looking after your family

Being there for your friends and family

Treat others with respect

Growing up

My dad was abusive

I think that stuck with me

When I think of Māori men now

I think of my kapa haka teachers

My PE teacher

They value their culture and their family

The men of my dad's family

His dad

I think they all had a really rough upbringing

Seeing dad come out of that

Be able to do really well

*That has been a really big thing for me
Something I can aspire to.*

*I saw mum as a role model
What she'd been through
I just always admired just how strong she was
I don't know if it was hope or determination
Just to get through hardship that she faced
I remember she would always tell me and my sister
We were the most important thing in her life
We always will be
I really admire that*

Appendix Two: Participant information

Research Group	Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Home
High School	Kauri	18	High School Student	Northland
High School	Manaaki	18	High School Student	North Shore
High School	Eruera	16	High School Student	Central Auckland
High School	Atama	18	High School Student	Waikato
High School	Kahurangi	16	High School Student	East Coast
High School	Ihaka	17	High School Student	South Auckland
High School	Anaru	17	High School Student	Hawkes Bay
High School	Matiu	17	High School Student	South Auckland
High School	Taika	17	High School Student	South Auckland
High School	Manaia	16	High School Student	North Shore
High School	Nikau	17	High School Student	South Auckland
High School	Te Ariki	17	High School Student	South Auckland/Waikato
High School	Ari	17	High School Student	Waikato
High School	Ihaia	16	High School Student	Northland
Community	Piripi	23	University student	Rotorua/Central Auckland
Community	Tamati	24	University student	West Auckland
Community	Tiaki	21	Unemployed	South Auckland
Community	Wiremu	22	University student	Central Auckland
Community	Te Kohatu	24	University student	Central Auckland
Community	Manawanui	24	University student	Waikato
Community	Koa	23	Construction worker	West Auckland
Community	Atawahi	23	Bar worker	Central Auckland/Bay of Plenty