

# Researching the safety of rainbow students in New Zealand's largest higher education institution

Smith, L., Beaumont, S., Addington, L., Gremillion, H., Burke, R., Kelsey, F., Nelis, M., and Smith, R.



## Aim and Scope

- Research process for a multi-site project
- Storytelling as feminist method and reflexive research: learning from mistakes and omissions



## The Team

- Whitireia and WelTec (3)
- Toi Ohomai (1)
- Ara (1)
- Otago Polytechnic (1)
- Unitec (1)

# Background

- Study of rainbow (diverse gender and sex/uality) student experiences of inclusivity and discrimination at Te Pūkenga, New Zealand's largest institution of higher ed. In process.
- Multiple polytechnic campuses across NZ.
  - With the 1993 Human Rights Act, discrimination based on sexuality banned in NZ
  - In 2021, ability to change birth sex on official documents and conversation 'therapy' banned
  - Yet discrimination against rainbow people persists
  - Research in these areas within higher ed (Powell & Gremillion, 2018; Trueman, 2020) is scant





# Feminist Storytelling and Research Mistakes

- Feminist storytelling as a research approach foregrounds personal accounts (de Nooijer & Sol Cueva, 2022) and challenges more conventional presentations of research data and findings
- It is a reflexive process with a long history (Klages et al., 2019)
- Widely used by rainbow researchers (Boatwright, 2019; Burfield et al., 2015; Valentine, 2008).
  
- This presentation is a narrative account in this vein, describing the formation of our research team, the process of survey design, and teething problems in data collection
- Mistakes and limitations are noted. These are relatively common in research processes, but are often sanitised from research reporting
- Instead, we draw on the work of those who have used errors or hurdles in research work as opportunities to be reflexive and to learn (Fraser et al., 2022; Nairn et al., 2004).

# Formation of our Research Team



- Team now 7 people: members of the rainbow community: 3 members of the rainbow community and 4 allies
- Despite efforts to attract as diverse a research team as possible, team members are all Pākehā (European) and are primarily cisgendered women, and all are somewhat removed from youth culture
- As a result we consulted extensively with InsideOUT, a Wellington based rainbow charity providing resources, support, and advocacy for rainbow youth as well as training for educators on safe and inclusive practice
- As part of this process we ensured thorough consultation with takatāpui (rainbow Māori) and Pacific members of InsideOUT

# Survey Design




- Data collection tool: online survey
- Consultation with InsideOUT revealed some gaps in our draft survey at the time
- Our revised survey includes additional relevant Māori and Pacific terms for rainbow identities (next slide)
- Also, the young people at InsideOUT alerted us to the fact that we had left off any questions regarding disability, noting the dual impact that cisheteronormativity and ableism may have on some students.
- The team had considered the potential multiple impacts of ethnicity plus cisheteronormativity, but after consultation added a new question addressing ableism (see slide after next)

How do you identify your sexuality? (Tick all that apply)	
Heterosexual	
Bisexual	
<u>Takatāpui</u> , <u>Irawhiti</u> , <u>Tāhine</u> , <u>Whakawahine</u> , <u>Whakatāne</u>	
<b>MVPFAFF+</b> (An acronym to describe Pasifika identities; Mahu (Hawai'i and Tahiti), <u>Vaka sa lewa lewa</u> (Fiji), <u>Palopa</u> (Papua New Guinea) <u>Fa'afafine</u> (Samoa) <u>Akava'ine</u> (Rarotonga), <u>Fakaleiti</u> (Tonga), <u>Fakafifine</u> (Niue)).	
Lesbian	
Gay	
Asexual	
Pansexual	
Queer	
Fluid/it changes	
Unsure	
Another sexuality (please describe)	

How do you identify your gender? (Tick all that apply)	
Man	
Woman	
Transgender- trans man, trans woman	
Enby- non-binary	
Agender	
<u>Takatāpui</u> , <u>Irawhiti</u> , <u>Tāhine</u> , <u>Whakawahine</u> , <u>Whakatāne</u>	
Demiboy	
Demigirl	
Bigender	
<b>MVPFAFF+</b> (An acronym to describe Pasifika identities; Mahu (Hawai'i and Tahiti), <u>Vaka sa lewa lewa</u> (Fiji), <u>Palopa</u> (Papua New Guinea) <u>Fa'afafine</u> (Samoa) <u>Akava'ine</u> (Rarotonga), <u>Fakaleiti</u> (Tonga), <u>Fakafifine</u> (Niue)).	
Gender diverse/fluid	
Another gender (please describe)	

**Option: For those who identify as queer Māori or Takatāpui,**

 **Irawhiti, Tāhine, Whakawahine, Whakatāne only**

Have you experienced any prejudice or discrimination at your Polytechnic because of your gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or cultural beliefs?	
Yes	
No	
Unsure	
Prefer not to say	

**Option: For those who identify as queer Pacific or MVPFAFF+ only**

Have you experienced any prejudice or discrimination at your Polytechnic because of your gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or cultural beliefs?	
Yes	
No	
Unsure	
Prefer not to say	

**Do you have a disability?**

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

**Option: For those who self-identify as having a disability**

Have you experienced any prejudice or discrimination in your Polytechnic because of your gender, sexuality, and disability?

Yes

No

Unsure

Prefer not to say

# Teething Problems in Data Collection



- After the survey went live at one business division of Te Pūkenga, the response options for two separate questions were mistakenly merged. We were able to fix this error subsequently, and plan to enter responses manually where needed
- We also picked up an error on the consent form attached to the top of the online survey. Although we gained ethics approval to circulate the survey amongst all staff, the consent form mistakenly referred to teaching staff only. We were able to fix this error as well after a debate amongst us about the best way to do so.
- Our learnings here are that a pilot study would have been advised, as the quality control measures we had put in place were not sufficient to pick up the above errors (see van Teijlingen & Vanora, 2002).

# Conclusion

- Our research team is comprised of emerging and more experienced researchers, which enhances the advantages of team-based research work such as the ability to draw on each member's strengths (McClunie-Trust et al., 2022).
- Ideally, while the research knowledge of the emerging researchers on our team grows, at the same time our experienced researchers will benefit from those employed in rainbow group facilitation and student support.
- We hope our own research process and mutual growth can serve as something of a model for working through and implementing best practices.



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