



V'ENUA ORA

V'enua Ora: A Cook Islands Māori Framework for Relational Well-being and Indigenous Health Research

Dr Inano Taripo-Walter

Coastal People, Southern Skies Postdoctoral Fellow

No 'ea mai koe?



Positionality

Māori and Pacific Historian
completed PhD in Pacific Studies

Cook Islands-born but raised in
Aotearoa va'ine

Influenced by connections to
customary land, marriage, and
women's lives

Many histories of Cook Islands
women remain under researched

Research Question

What does ora'anga or
well-being mean to
va'ine Taripo?

Well-being

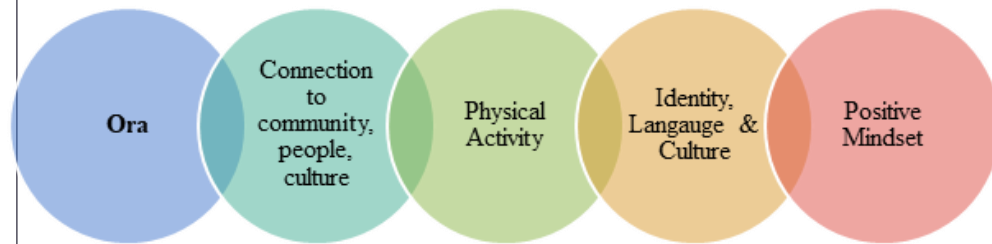
- Mental Health Foundation: *'tools, support and environments to build and sustain lives worth living'*.
- Cook Islands: 'ora'anga or 'ora'anga meitaki '-rather than an individual state, true well-being is holistic and collective. Relies heavily on family, genealogy, spiritual balance and cultural roots.
- Yet, in diaspora populations, 15% of Cook Islanders experience high or very high psychological distress, outpacing national averages.



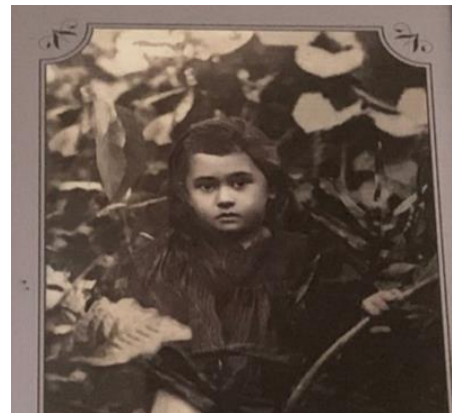
V'ENUA ORA: What is it?

V'enua Ora works by centering Indigenous Cook Islands Māori ways of knowing, being, and relating—especially through the lived experiences of va'ine Taripo. It's an embodied, relational methodology.





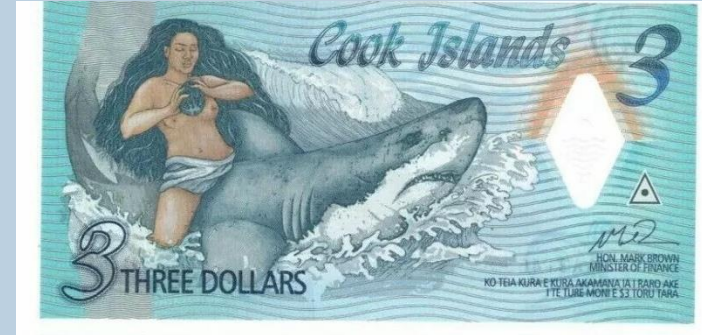
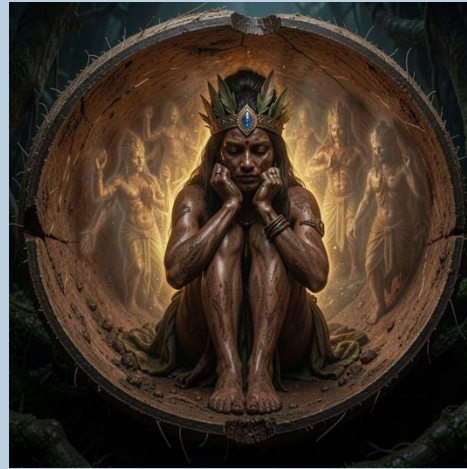
Ora'anga



TŪPUNA VA'INE

Theoretical Lens

- Dr Emma Powell's 'Akapapa'anga Ara Tangata: cultural practice, cultural paradigm, and research methodology
- Professor Upolu Lumā Va'ai's: relational hermeneutics



VARIMA-TE-TAKERE & INA AND THE SHARK

Piri'anga

Chapter Title	Ora	Va'ine Māori Philosophies
Chapter 4: Piri'anganao	Connection to community, people and environment	Mana
Chapter 5: Piri'āketa	Physical activity	'Akapapa'anga
Chapter 6: Piri'anga Kōpūtangata	Identity, language and culture	Vaerua
Chapter 7: Piri'anga	Positive mindset	Tapu

Study	Theoretical Lens	Gap	Output
What does ora'anga mean to va'ine Taripo?	'Akapapa'anga (Powell, 2021) - Relational Hermeneutics (Va'ai, 2017) - Relationality (Dudgeon & Bray, Tynan)	- Women, Land & 'Enua has never been discussed simultaneously - Acts of Resistance and Continuity - Challenges Colonial Notions of Well-being and wellness	- Women's Histories - Storytelling - Transformational

Why?	Why?	Why?	Why?
- The literature on Cook Islands women is limited - The literature on 'enua is always discussed in isolation (Crocombe, 1964; Holmes, 2014) - Published works by ethnographers, missionaries or men	- Each of these frameworks speaks to the necessity of connection—whether through genealogy, relational space, or kin-based responsibility. - Each scholar is Indigenous thus, prioritising Indigenous knowledge systems and worldview.	- There are limitations to the theoretical lens used - It responds to the need for a methodology that is not only <u>relational</u> in <u>theory</u> but <u>activated</u> through <u>lived</u> land-rooted practice through the eyes of va'ine Māori.	- Powerful way stories and narratives can transcend into research - Transformational approaches to health and well-being

Gaps

- The gaps in which this research responds to are:
- Women, Land & 'Enua have never been discussed simultaneously
- It prioritises women's histories, specifically va'ine Māori
- It challenges colonial notions of wellness and well-being
- It represents acts of resistance and continuity using a decolonial approach- throughout the **ENTIRE** thesis, not just the methods and methodology chapter
- It utilises Grounded-Theory where theory is built from the ground up

V'enua Ora through the lens of health research

- It's about engaging in meaningful connections with each other, within families and with our health providers.
- Four main themes to emerge were: Legacy, memory, connection to 'enua and healing.
- So much of well-being is not just about active movement and health statistics; it's through legacy, memories that we hold, connecting to our ancestral land and providing the space to heal through our historical memories.

Summary

Rather than a fixed framework, V'enua Ora is relational and iterative—it moves with the people and the land, responding to context, ceremony, and connection. It draws on narratives, stories, and metaphors to scaffold understandings of identity, belonging, and well-being.

