



The New Zealand Psychological Society

Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa

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Media Release

Scholarships awarded for research into Māori emotions and gender diverse youth and homelessness

Two University of Auckland psychologists, Karis Knight and Tycho Vandenburg, are this year's recipients of two research awards from the New Zealand Psychological Society.

Karis Knight has been awarded the Karahipi Tumuaki President's Scholarship which recognises Māori-centred research of value to the Māori community. Karis is enrolled in a Doctor of Clinical Psychology degree (DClinPsy) at the University of Auckland. Her iwi and hapu affiliations are iwi: Ngāti Porou; Hapu: Te Whānau-a-Ruataupare.

She has delved into the exciting and under-researched area of Māori emotions; particularly whakamā (shame, embarrassment) and how Māori understand and experience whakamā as a mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) construct of psychological distress.

Māori concepts of emotions and their presentation is a growing area in kaupapa Māori research, particularly as a way of addressing the effects of intergenerational and historic trauma on mental health. Positioned within a kaupapa Māori framework, the research also seeks to utilise Māori ways of knowing how to deconstruct Western assumptions of what it means to experience whakamā and its consequences.

Her method includes in-depth interviews with Māori mental health professionals and Māori consumers. Karis hopes to provide new knowledge for community services and clinicians about how to support and whakamana (enhancing dignity).

Meanwhile, Tycho Vandenburg has been awarded the Society's Postgraduate Student Social Justice Research Scholarship. Tycho is a PhD candidate at the School of Psychology, University of Auckland. He is writing a thesis on "Transgender and gender diverse youth and early adult homelessness in Aotearoa".

The Awards Committee noted in relation to Tycho's research:

"Transgender and gender diverse communities are particularly vulnerable to social discrimination and other forms of injustice. This topic is important and topical with originality in the focus on youth and homelessness.

"It has the potential to give voice to some very difficult issues through the participatory action research method and empowerment approach. Theories drawn upon for the study were strong and included translation of those theories into guides for methods or analysis. Tycho has considered some of the ethical processes when working with transgender and gender diverse youth and early adults.

"With an exceptional academic and leadership record Tycho appears very capable of independent research at doctoral level and a worthy recipient of the Social Justice Research Scholarship."

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About the New Zealand Psychological Society

The New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPS) is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has around 1870 members, including students, and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology.