

Cross-Cultural Research: Insights and Reflections from our experiences in Manaaki Taha Moana

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Overview of Presentation

- Impact of 'multiple cultural frames' on way we approach cross-cultural initiatives.
- Is Cross-Cultural Research Appropriate / Beneficial?
- Implementing cross-cultural collaborative research programmes: What helps make it work?
- Principles to guide cross-cultural research that utilises knowledge from distinct knowledge systems.
- Personal cross-cultural learnings: unique perspectives from our team

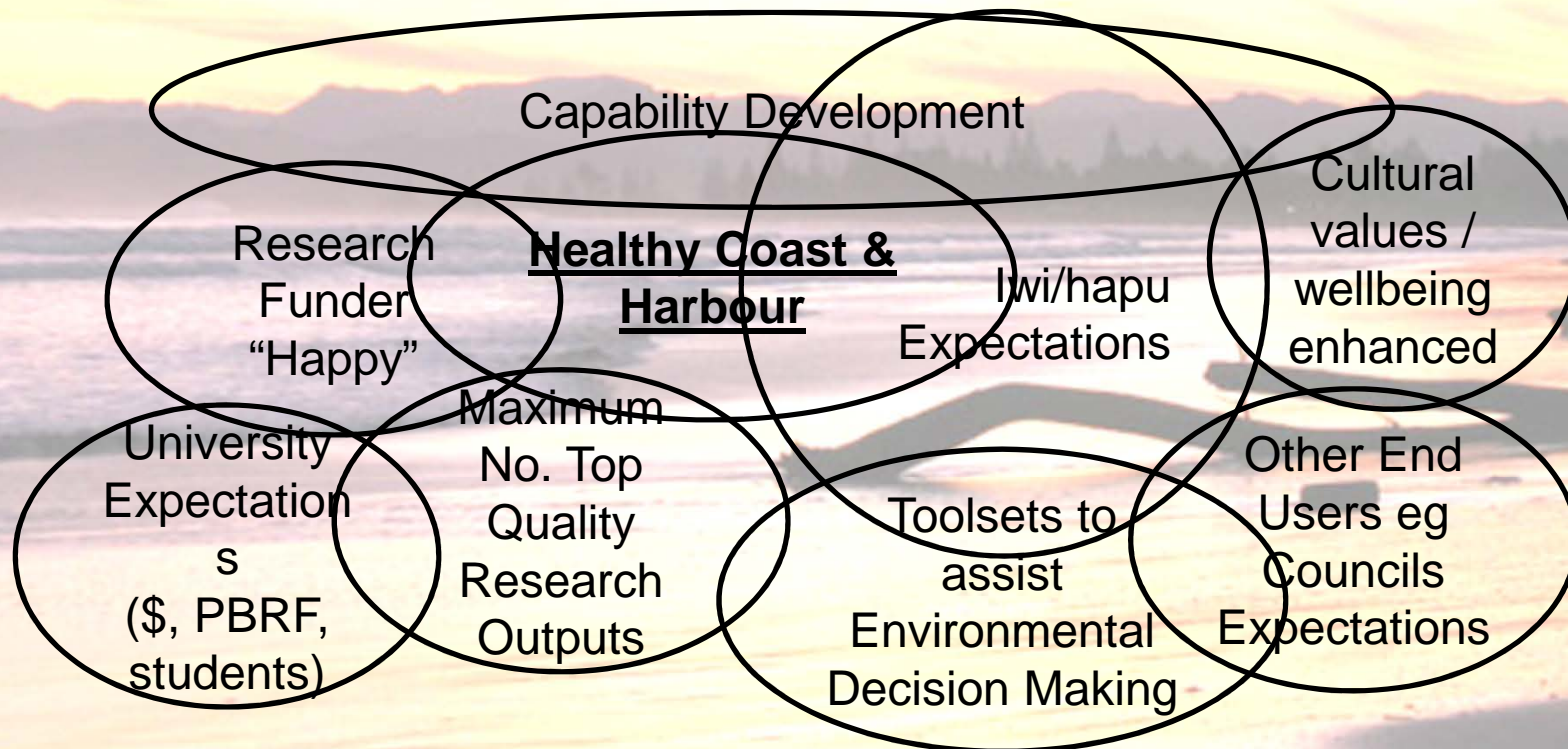
Designing Cross-Cultural Collaborative Research Programmes:

My MTM Experience
(not prescriptive)



Dealing with Complexity is a Balancing Act

- The reality is that cross-cultural, cross/trans-disciplinary environmental research is complex.
- There are multiple parties to keep “happy”, often with very different (and sometimes opposite) expectations, and “outcome-oriented goals” to meet – It is a Balancing Act!



Acknowledging Multiple (Competing?) Cultural Frames

- Cross-cultural learning: important to acknowledge the multiple cultural frames we work within, ie disciplinary cultures, organisational cultures, ethnic cultures, familial cultures – and the expectations that come from each.
- In our MTM journey, our team had different:
 - *organisational affiliations & related institutional support AND institutional expectations
 - *academic / disciplinary backgrounds (eg specialised vs holistic/integrative)
 - *personal life experiences and value systems
 - *levels of research experience (let alone cross-cultural research experience).
- Acknowledge the diversity of cultural frames/expectations.

'Disciplinary' prisons: Can we break free?



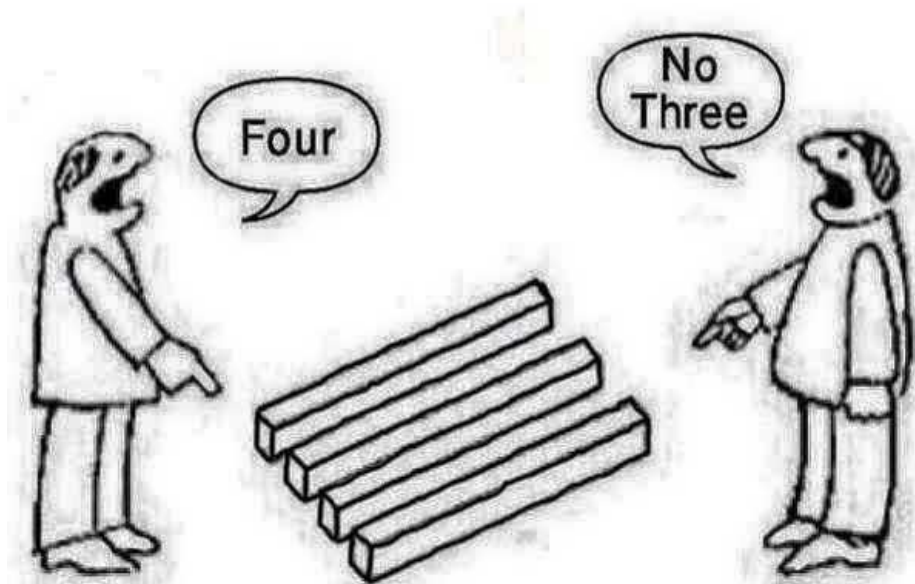
Not Everything Sees Things The Way You Do – and That's OK!



$6 + 3 = 9$
but so does $5 + 4$

The way you do things is not always
the only way to do them.

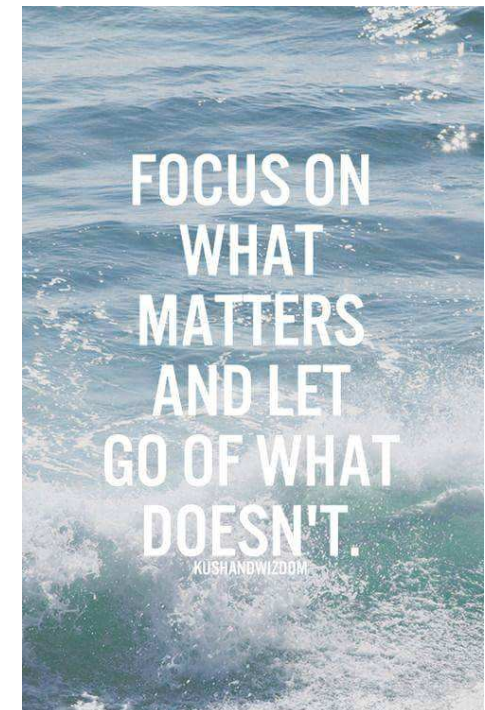
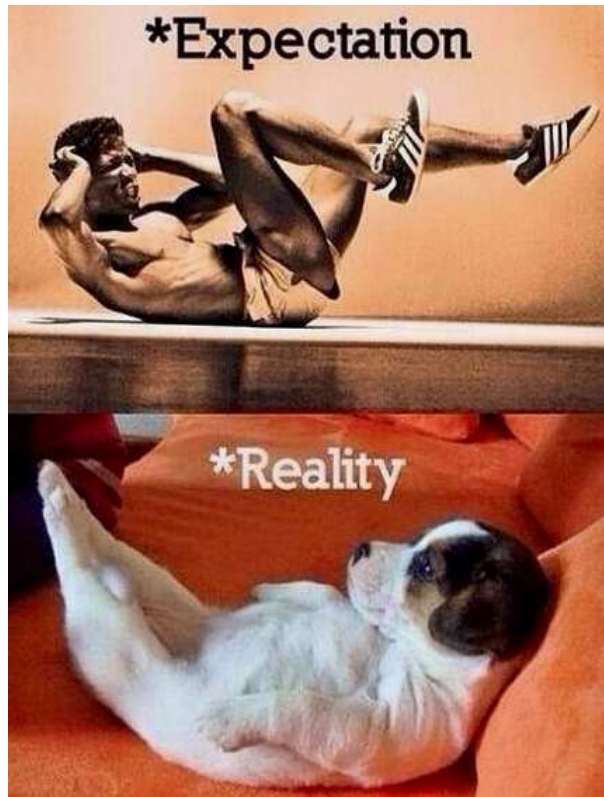
Respect other people's way of thinking.



Appropriateness of Cross-Cultural Research

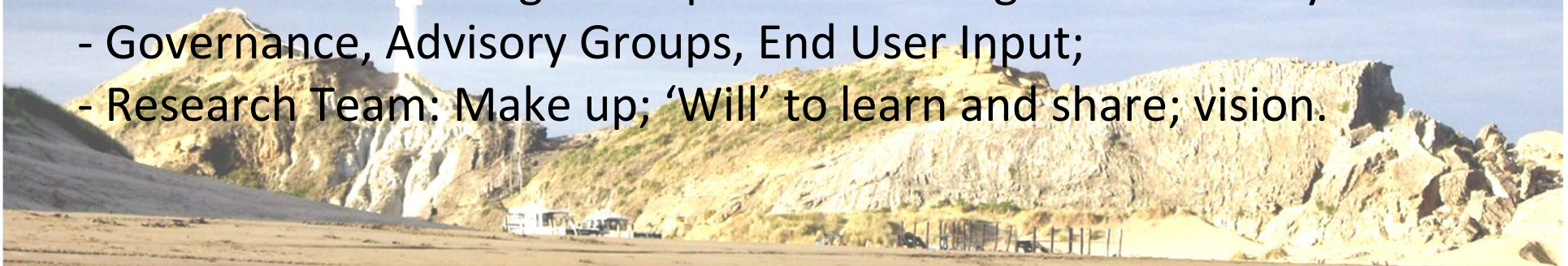
- Cross-cultural collaborations with Māori required by funders.
- Greater knowledge of a problem and its causes increases likelihood of developing effective, sustainable solutions that work in practice.
- Builds capacity and capability in research communities & society.
- Important in NZ coastal research context because we have such limited knowledge of coastal ecosystems... we need to make use of all knowledge systems available.
- Utilising TEK and Western Science utilises strengths of both knowledge systems; engaging with local communities assists in conflict management over resource use; thus change is more likely to be enduring.

Principles for Cross-Cultural Research



Principles for Cross-Cultural Research

- Not everyone has aptitude/willingness to operate in this space.
- Respectful relationships are critical.
- Whole-of-systems holistic approach (which necessitates the research include more than just an 'environmental' focus).
- Methodological pluralism – working with multi disciplines/frames.
- 'Space' in which researchers from both knowledge systems can operate independently, and together / co-learning opportunities.
- 'Measures of success' to be meaningful in both 'worlds' (next slide).
- Effective communication vehicles/tools/methods.
- Need a research design to capture knowledge from each system:
 - Governance, Advisory Groups, End User Input;
 - Research Team: Make up; 'Will' to learn and share; vision.



Assessing Quality/Success in Cross-Cultural Research

- Western Science / academia typically prioritises international publications, peer esteem, contribution to research environment, etc.
- These have value to Māori, but *not in isolation* from other important system-wide outcomes/benefits. There must be a benefit to participants of the research and 'researched' communities and their environment: eg: actual improvements in coastal ecosystems; increased capability to engage in decision making processes about the management of their natural resources; increased research/technical capability; research tools that are developed are accessible and understandable.
- The way that the research is conducted must reflect key values.
8 Guiding Kaupapa / Principles – interrelated set of principles including, for example:
 - *Āta (respect – building/nurturing relationships with people, kaupapa and environments; behave in mutually mana-enhancing ways);
 - *Kotahitanga (collaboration – recognises individuality as well as cooperation and contributions to holistic wellbeing of the collective).

Factors that Promote Positive Cross-Cultural Research Experiences: Summary

- Research is meaningful and beneficial to Māori; outcomes oriented; there are real, practical benefits to local community (as determined by them); capability development.
- Shared vision/purpose and 'will' to collaborate, incl. on topics.
- Respect for, and space to work in, different knowledge systems.
- Honesty; communication; time; long-term relationships.
- Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Intellectual Property (eg Cultural Reviews).
- Co-learning experiences.
- Process is critical... value systems of culture are respected.



Take home message

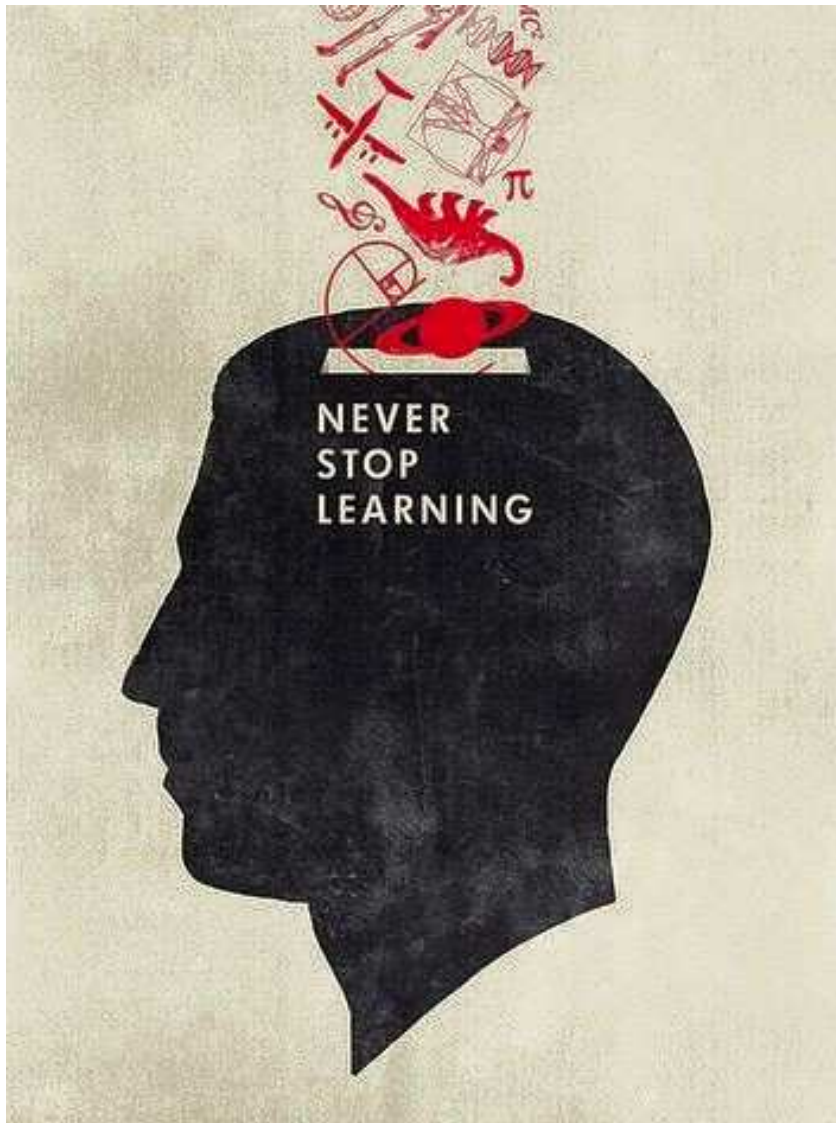
Cross-cultural research is more likely to be successful when:

- right people, right attitude and willingness to collaborate;
- genuine respect for others, and ability to consider “different” ways of knowing to your own;
- research programme is designed with intentional spaces to work within own discipline AND with intent to collaborate/co-learn;
- agreed vision, goals and outcomes;
- reasonable expectations (don't oversell, or overcommit);
- ‘stakeholders’ are in the tent with you, helping plan and implement the research, and action the findings.



Participatory Action Research !!

Surround Yourself With People Who Get It



Thanks to:

- Foundation for Research Science and Technology (FRST) – then MSI, now MBIE – who funded our previous ‘Iwi Ecosystem Services’ and the current ‘Manaaki Taha Moana’ research programmes.
- Members of our Research Team; our many co-funders and supporters, without whom there would be no MTM research.

Everyone's experience is unique!

Research partners will share key thoughts:

- Key take home message about cross cultural-research from Jim, Huhana, Caine and Aaron.

**Positive Benefits of
Western Science and
Mātauranga:**

**Dr Huhana Smith
(Taiao Raukawa)**

Jim Sinner
(Cawthron Institute)

Aaron McCallion
(WakaDigital Ltd.)

Caine Taiapa

(Manaaki te Awanui)

Murray Patterson
(Massey University)