MAI Journal A NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP
DOI: 10.20507/MAIJournal.2026.15.2.5

NAVIGATING TE AO MĀORI

Pākehā engagement in waka ama

Christina Severinsen
Angelique Reweti
Hoani Moriarty

Abstract

This qualitative research examines Pākehā New Zealanders' experiences in waka ama through in-depth interviews. The analysis reveals cultural identity negotiation and knowledge exchange processes as Pākehā paddlers develop bicultural identities through deepening connections within te ao Māori. For many, waka ama serves as a gateway to tikanga, te reo Māori, and community. Participants emphasised that meaningful engagement requires sustained, humble participation to avoid the risk of appropriation. Humility emerged as an orienting ethos enabling learning as cultural outsiders and fostering openness to discomfort, continuous learning, and recognition of knowledge limitations. While positive relationships with Māori are foundational for Pākehā identity formation, systemic inequities must be analysed. This research illuminates the complex dimensions of cross-cultural experiences and highlights the need for further scholarship that centres diverse perspectives. These interactions also raise complex questions about belonging, power, and whose perspectives shape inclusion within Māori-led spaces.

Keywords

cultural identity, decolonisation, humility, Māori, Pākehā, waka ama

Introduction

In the advancement of Māori development over the past few decades, there have been strong calls to recentre Māori cultural knowledge, methods and practices to benefit all New Zealanders (Bishop et al., 2009). The oft-repeated mantra, "What works for Māori, works for everyone", advocates for Māori cultural knowledge, methods and practices to become mainstream (Bishop et al., 2009). The vital role of kaupapa Māori is recognised for Māori, and there is a growing body of scholarship examining the experiences of Pākehā in kaupapa Māori environments (e.g., Bell et al., 2022; Hotere-Barnes, 2015, 2023; Jones, 2021).

This article focuses on the experiences of Pākehā waka ama paddlers, contributing to developing literature reflecting on Pākehā experiences within kaupapa Māori contexts. Our research aimed to explore Pākehā experiences of waka ama and how these experiences shape their

Corresponding author: Christina Severinsen, Professor, School of Health Sciences, Massey University, Palmerston North, Aotearoa New Zealand. Email: c.a.severinsen@massey.ac.nz

cultural identity, offering insights into the ongoing evolution of bicultural identity in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through this, we contribute to the broader discourse on decolonisation and the intergenerational journey towards a more inclusive understanding of what it means to belong to Aotearoa, for both Māori and Pākehā. While waka ama offers meaningful opportunities for intercultural connection, Pākehā participation within kaupapa Māori contexts must also be understood as negotiated and contingent on Māori leadership and authority.

In this article, "Māori" refers to the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa, defined through whakapapa. The term "Pākehā", originally used to distinguish Māori from European settlers in 19th-century New Zealand, lays the groundwork for examining the nuanced identities that emerged from early cross-cultural exchanges (Bell, 1996; Fitzpatrick, 2016; Jones & Jenkins, 2011). Central to this discussion is the term "Pākehā Māori", which highlights the potential for cultural integration and mutual respect between Māori and Pākehā. This term refers to early European settlers who, by embracing tikanga and te reo Māori, found acceptance within Māori communities during the early 19th century (Bentley, 1999, 2007; Brown, 2011).

Bentley (1999, p. 11) characterises Pākehā Māori as embodying a "third kind of New Zealander" navigating both Māori and Pākehā cultures. Despite their vital role as intermediaries, they faced marginalisation and ridicule from an increasing expatriate population resistant to embracing Indigenous culture. This bridging of worlds by Pākehā Māori became increasingly challenging as the 19th century progressed, particularly after the 1840 signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, when a wave of British settlers began to prioritise a Eurocentric agenda, overshadowing the emergent bicultural legacy of mutual respect and integration (Bentley, 1999; Walker, 2005). The subsequent shift towards assimilation and the impact of colonisation resulted in the marginalisation of Māori cultural identity, alongside the diminishing presence of the "third kind of New Zealander" in the societal narrative.

The 1980s witnessed a resurgence in Māori efforts towards cultural revival and decolonisation, inspired by global civil rights movements and dissatisfaction with prevailing Eurocentric societal norms (L. T. Smith, 2012; Walker, 2004). This era of activism was crucial not just for the preservation of Māori culture; it also served as a catalyst for Pākehā to reconsider their own roles and connections with te ao Māori. This transformative period witnessed efforts from both Māori aiming to recover their ancestral heritage and Pākehā individuals seeking to redefine their cultural identities within the fabric of New Zealand's distinct bicultural environment. This shift towards decolonisation involves challenging the legacy of Pākehā privilege and fostering a deeper understanding of belonging and identity among both Māori and Pākehā (Crawford & Langridge, 2022; McKegg, 2019).

Identifying as Pākehā today signifies not only an acknowledgement of one's European heritage but also an embrace of New Zealand's unique biculturalism, a move towards understanding and valuing the rich cultural landscape shaped by both Māori and Pākehā ancestors (Amundsen, 2018; Network Waitangi, 2025; Spoonley, 1993). Engagement in activities such as waka ama not only enrich Pākehā understanding of te ao Māori but also foster a more nuanced appreciation of New Zealand's bicultural foundation. Our research aimed to explore Pākehā experiences of waka ama and how these experiences shape their cultural identity, offering insights into the ongoing evolution of bicultural identity in Aotearoa. Through this, we contribute to the broader discourse on decolonisation and the intergenerational journey towards a more inclusive understanding of what it means to belong to Aotearoa, for both Māori and Pākehā.

Method

This qualitative study explored the social, cultural and health benefits experienced by paddlers involved with a local waka ama club (Reweti & Severinsen, 2022). The research design and analysis were carried out by Māori (AR and HM) and Pākehā (CS) researchers, informed by a Kaupapa Māori approach that prioritises Māori worldviews, knowledge systems, and experiences. Kaupapa Māori research seeks to empower communities by validating local perspectives while ensuring research participants are empowered and benefit from the research (Bishop, 2005; Cram, 2001; Pihama, 2010; L. T. Smith, 2012).

Waka ama has experienced rapid expansion over the past decade, and the annual championships attract record fields (Sport NZ, 2020). Affiliated membership has risen nationally from 3,400 (2022) to 6,323 (2025) (Waka Ama NZ, 2025). The waka ama rōpū Heretaunga Ararau o Ngāti Kahungunu, located on Te Awa o Mokotūāraro in Hawke's Bay, was established in 2002. In 2024, the rōpū reported 83 affiliated

members, with participation spanning all age divisions (taitamariki to Master 70+) and a mixed ethnicity profile (44% Māori, 42% NZ European/Pākehā), indicating both breadth and diversity locally (Waka Ama NZ, 2025). With affiliations with Ngāti Kahungunu, Kohupātiki Marae, Waka Ama Kahungunu and Sport Hawke's Bay, Heretaunga Ararau o Ngāti Kahungunu adheres to tikanga Māori. While many members whakapapa Māori, increasing numbers of Pākehā are joining, deepening their engagement with te ao Māori and strengthening community connections.

An established relationship between the primary researcher and the waka ama club facilitated invitations to training sessions to meet members and gain insights into club activities. The club supported member participation in the research, enabling face-to-face interviews with 16 paddlers at the club. Nine members also participated in filmed interviews for a short documentary (Severinsen & Reweti, 2020). Participants ranged from 35 to 65 years old, including seven women and nine men with mixed experience levels. This article focuses on the perspectives of 10 Pākehā participants. These interviews with Pākehā paddlers focused on eliciting their perspectives on their experiences within waka ama, specifically exploring their sense of personal and cultural identity.

Semi-structured interviews enabled open-ended conversations exploring members' motivations, the personal significance of waka ama, changes they noticed since joining, and perceived social, cultural and health benefits of participation. Participants provided verbal and written consent for the interviews to be recorded. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis was carried out to identify, analyse and report patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). Participant feedback guided the coding and refinement of concepts and key themes. Native tree names have been used as pseudonyms.

As noted above, the research was informed by a Kaupapa Māori framework, a flexible, philosophically grounded approach underpinned by Māori worldviews and values (L. T. Smith, 2012). Kaupapa Māori research emphasises relational accountability, collective benefit, and mana-enhancing processes (L. T. Smith, 2012), aligning with the tikanga of the waka ama rōpū. Ethical approval was obtained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (No. 4000018859), and research procedures included informed consent, reciprocity, and data stewardship. Thematic analysis facilitated reflective engagement with the data to identify, analyse and interpret patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022). This involved an iterative inductive-deductive approach, starting with exploratory coding, grouping codes into themes, evaluating themes, and refining interpretations through researcher wānanga and scholarly literature.

Findings

Analysis developed three themes. *Community and belonging* describes the relational fabric of the rōpū and the manaakitanga extended to newcomers. *Identity, learning and growth* traces how sustained participation opened access to te reo and tikanga Māori and reshaped how participants understood themselves as Pākehā. *Tikanga, adaptation and humility* addresses how paddlers learned to conduct themselves in Māori-led space, and where that learning reached its limits. While participants described waka ama as inclusive and life-enriching, these accounts must also be understood within the wider dynamics of Māori-led spaces. The openness experienced by Pākehā paddlers reflects Māori generosity and manaakitanga, yet inclusion is negotiated and conditional, shaped by Māori authority and by ongoing colonial power relations.

Community and belonging

A prominent theme was the profound sense of community, belonging, and inclusiveness fostered through participation in waka ama. Paddlers spoke of a welcoming atmosphere that enabled diverse individuals to find connection, camaraderie and acceptance within an environment likened to whānau.

Ngaio explained that "the women were just so inclusive" from the very first encounters she had with the club, emphasising patience and support in teaching a newcomer unfamiliar with paddling. She recalled that "they let me in the waka and were so patient with me" during the learning process. Ngaio reflected that the guidance she received, especially when initially struggling with grasping paddling fundamentals, illustrated the club's core values of encouragement and collective advancement. She felt that the club had become "a whānau" and an integral source of support through members' warmth and active engagement in nurturing her growth.

Rātā also emphasised the familial bonds within the club, characterising it as an integrated, caring whānau. She explained that this climate of patience enabled quick acclimation for those new to the sport and community: "It really is the whole whānau, family . . . You can go over

to [another club]. They might not know you, but you're still welcome. And everybody is really friendly." As part of this whānau environment, she highlighted feeling invested in the development of young paddlers over time through a shared journey: "As part of the campaign we had when we went to Rio, we had junior teams . . . You're on a journey with them, and you just sort of become incorporated into their lives."

The club's diversity across ages, ethnicities, and paddling abilities was seen as a core strength contributing to the richness of the waka ama experience. Puka highlighted the inclusivity across ethnic differences and the respect within waka ama based on a shared passion for the sport rather than ethnicity: "It's a very inclusive environment. You get respected as a paddler, rather than whether you're white or Māori." All members were valued for their contributions regardless of identity and cultural background. In her view, waka ama constitutes a unifying, levelling activity beyond social divides and fosters manaakitanga, support and encouragement among all paddlers.

Pūriri echoed these sentiments around the diversity of membership as well as the welcoming atmosphere:

> Everyone was real welcoming, and there's always a lot of friendly banter. Like you miss a couple of sessions, and people go, "Aww, where are you?" So there's that checking up that you're ok or that you haven't dropped off the radar . . . You've got a whole lot of people looking out for you . . . That's the thing I love about it, is all the different personalities and the different upbringings, but you all have that one thing in common which you come together for. It's real. There's something special about it.

Pūriri's narrative also points to perceptions of waka ama as an experience beyond recreational activity or casual acquaintances. He emphasised the importance of social support networks and tight communal bonds in contributing to paddlers' wellbeing and connectivity. Despite members' varied backgrounds, the shared passion for paddling facilitates unity. Pūriri's account further acknowledges and cherishes the diversity across ages, ethnicities, and walks of life as an essential part of the enrichment and solidarity cultivated within the club. He portrayed waka ama as a platform that enables unexpected yet meaningful connections across differences that might not have occurred otherwise.

Several other participants also emphasised waka ama's capacity to unite individuals from diverse backgrounds who may not ordinarily interact. Tītoki, for example, emphasised the forging of friendships he would have been unlikely to make otherwise:

> We're such a cross-section of people, from the Māori world and from the corporate world, all different worlds. And you can kind of leave all that behind. It doesn't matter where you come from. We've built up amazing friendships over the years with people that we would never probably had made friendships with . . . For a sport that's based in kaupapa Māori, some of our teams are the most unlikely paddlers.

The participants highlighted the openness of waka ama to people from all backgrounds. For Kānuka, it challenged his initial assumptions that waka ama would be restricted to Māori participants and underscored the diversity and inclusivity he discovered. The narratives collectively illustrate waka ama's unique power to bridge cultural and social differences that may otherwise divide people. Participants consistently emphasised that the shared experiences centred on paddling training and competition facilitated unexpected yet enduring friendships and collegial bonds across identities.

For some Pākehā members, waka ama offered rare opportunities to establish substantive connections with Māori individuals and communities, enriching their intercultural perspectives. Karamū called his waka ama friendships the "closest connection I've had with Māori" in New Zealand society, emphasising the depth of interactions cultivated through the sport. Similarly, Kānuka valued the cultural diversity and viewed his positive experiences engaging with Māori team members as shaping his personal growth and identity: "I actually feel a better New Zealander for it, too, to understand both sides of the coin."

Such narratives reveal the perceived impacts of cross-cultural relationship building through waka ama on the sense of belonging at both interpersonal and national identity levels for Pākehā. However, these positive encounters also depend on Māori willingness to welcome and teach Pākehā newcomers, a process that can reproduce unequal expectations on Māori to facilitate others' learning.

Generosity, care, and emotional support emerged as integral social dimensions that paddlers emphasised regarding the waka ama community and its facilitation of their sense of cohesion, belonging and purpose. Participants spoke widely

of the significance of these elements in shaping the familial interconnectedness and shared commitment they experienced among members on and off the water.

Paddlers consistently characterised the club community as oriented around service, generosity, and active care for one another's wellbeing and growth. Rātā described her group as having a "great heart" and emphasised that "if you asked someone for help, you would get it", without hesitation. Her statement illustrates a prevailing communal ethos in which assistance and guidance were readily extended to others seeking them. Rātā further remarked that seeking advice or support from fellow club members, especially those with many years of experience, was always met with a reliable, affirmative response. Her narrative underscores perceived norms of mutual support and care for collective needs, superseding individual priorities. It speaks to the fundamentally cooperative nature that defines and strengthens the waka ama community.

Some paddlers also recounted poignant personal experiences where the support system and care from the waka ama community provided vital emotional support during significant life events beyond the sport itself. Ngaio shared a powerful narrative about the paddling club members coming together to honour her mother after her passing:

> I'll tell you a really lovely story . . . It's going to make me cry now. My mum passed away in September last year [*crying*]. And I said to the ladies, "I would really like to take some of Mum back out," and they said, "Yeah, we can do that." . . . So Mum was cremated, and had Mum in a little box, and we paddled out . . . to sea, and . . . it was really early in the morning. I wanted us to face into the sun, and I can see [peninsula] and everything across there . . . They were just so wonderful, and they did karakia, and they sang, and it was so nice. And afterwards, when we came back after our paddle, the [neighbouring] club were all out there, and they said to me, "Ngaio, you should have come to us and told us what you were doing because we all would have come with you." It's just so cool. They don't even know me, and they would do that for me . . . Yeah, it was really special [*crying*] . . . Especially for me being a Pākehā . . . you know, to be sort of taken in like that so quickly [*crying*]. It means a lot to me . . . This whole journey has been a big thing for me . . . I guess just feel as one. I feel a part of them. I belong.

Ngaio's narrative illustrates the emotional resources embedded in the support network provided through participation in the sport and club community. The group paddling excursion she organised to commemorate her mother by scattering her ashes at sea, accompanied by traditional Māori karakia and waiata, served as a profound bereavement ritual that carried deep meaning. Her teammates' willingness to support her grief process in this way before sunrise, and the care shown by members of another club who would have participated had they known, demonstrate a high level of empathy, compassion and understanding for Ngaio's perspective. She explained that the experience reflected the depth of emotional bonds formed through shared rituals and events that contribute to social cohesion and the sense that the waka ama community had become like family.

Karamū articulated a similar prevailing sentiment in the community:

> There's an acceptance, a different acceptance of people. There's an acceptance of problems . . . But I find there's an acceptance of people's lives; somebody's got to work. I don't know. There's a generosity of spirit in waka. "That's ok. I'll pick you up."

He characterised the waka ama community as oriented by a collective attitude of openness and unconditional positive regard, where members demonstrate care and concern for individual needs and willingly contribute their support towards the wellbeing and growth of others.

Karamū's statements emphasise perceived norms of cooperation and mutual assistance driven by compassion rather than obligation. They hint at a problem-solving mindset where setbacks are viewed as opportunities for collaborative growth rather than individual failings, further showcasing communal resilience. His narrative speaks to strong perceived interpersonal bonds underpinned by a shared ethos of service, understanding and proactive generosity.

Tawa described needing to find the "rhythm" and "shared place" with fellow paddlers, also highlighting the communal flow central to waka ama:

> Because to all move together in harmony, and it's often the rhythm replacing strength, actually you have to find the wairua of the waka. You have to find your shared picture, or shared place . . . But it's like, we have to find each other somehow, and it's non-verbal. It's through paddling. But you find each other, and suddenly it happens, you're away.

> It gels. And when that's not happening, it's like the most disgusting thing ever. It's like, really, like an irritation under your skin. And when it does happen, you just feel like you could just about get the waka out of the water and fly. It just feels so good.

Tawa's narrative brings harmony and rhythm to the forefront as she articulates the essence of the waka ama experience. She stresses the importance of working together in synchrony. The idea of shared experience emerges as a key component of waka ama. Waka ama is depicted as a shared journey towards a common goal, emphasising the interpersonal dynamics contributing to the sport's appeal.

Houhere's narrative sums up the sense of whanaungatanga, collective effort, and harmonious coordination in waka ama. This showed an interconnectedness that extended across practical, social and spiritual dimensions. He stated: "You can't paddle on your own. You can't win the race on your own. You have to work with other people." This sentiment echoed throughout all participants' narratives, emphasising the relationships and cooperative participation that are imperative in waka ama.

Identity, learning and growth

A prominent theme across participant narratives was the significant evolution of personal and cultural identity that Pākehā paddlers experienced due to their immersive involvement with waka ama and deeper engagement with te ao Māori. This gradual identity development was conveyed as a complex, iterative process unfolding across multiple dimensions over time through accumulated experiences, relationship building, and layers of learning. Many participants emphasised their initial discomfort and self-consciousness when entering Māori cultural spaces as "outsiders" within waka ama contexts. Several traced this awareness back to the early days of their membership, when they lacked a clear grasp of waka ama protocols (e.g., not sitting on the paepae). For others, the discomfort stemmed more from a fear of unintentionally causing interpersonal offence due to limited familiarity with navigating tikanga Māori environments.

Mahoe described uncertainty about whether she was "vibrating on the right frequency" within te ao Māori and struggled to feel a coherent sense of belonging as Pākehā. Over months and years of consistent participation, the details of rituals and language became more familiar for most through accumulated immersive experiences. Practices or concepts once seen as foreign or strange became normalised, indicative of gradually increasing cultural capital. As connections strengthened through waka ama involvement, many Pākehā participants articulated a heightened sense of belonging and self-assuredness when participating in Māori community contexts or discussing Māori concepts.

Mahoe described a transition in her self-perception as she gained experience: "We are all meant to be here together, and there's reasonable confidence now in me that I've got a place here." Her narrative exemplifies perceived identity shifts, as verbalised by other Pākehā members, from initial acute self-consciousness towards greater internalisation of their role within te ao Māori. Some Pākehā paddlers emphasised that their participation in waka ama served as their foremost gateway through which to engage with Māori language, cultural practices, values, communities and worldviews—dimensions of te ao Māori that would likely have remained inaccessible to them otherwise. For example, Pūriri articulated: As a Pākehā, there's not many inroads into Māori culture, unless you're born into it, or married into, or quite strong-willed to get involved yourself. Through waka ama, there is, because the whole kaupapa of it. I've gone on to do the course through the wānanga, which is great for learning karakia and waiata, which I wouldn't have experienced through any other way . . . I think that it's a real positive thing for non-Māori. It's a way to get involved that's not so direct but kind of alongside. For me, it's enhanced my understanding more and my reo as well. You know, just everyday commands, like kia rite, hoea, and kia mau, the names of the parts of the waka, and all those just everyday phrases that just become part of your everyday life.

Pūriri explained how discovering unexpected openings into Māori concepts of navigation, identity, and environmental ethics that waka ama facilitated altered his self-understanding over time. For several Pākehā without prior cultural entry points beyond surface-level Treaty discourse, immersion in waka ama served as a catalyst and touchstone for delving into te reo Māori learning and for embracing Māori ceremonies to enrich connection. The hands-on requirements of paddling commands, equipment terminology, and protocols provided an organic foundation of initial language and concepts to anchor further growth.

Some participants described how they shifted from feeling intimidated to an understanding of the value, richness, and deeper meaning in tikanga

Māori over months and years of regular participation, facilitating comprehension. However, most participants emphasised the ongoing, unfinished nature of personal identity and the development of cultural knowledge fostered by sustained participation in te ao Māori contexts. As articulated by Puka: "We live and learn . . . I'm still learning." Some participants reflected on the challenge of engaging across cultural differences without assuming fixed boundaries between insider and outsider identities. Rather than occupying static positions, they described a sense of being both within and alongside te ao Māori, participating in waka ama and kaupapa Māori while remaining conscious of their non-Māori standpoint.

This reflexive awareness underscores the importance of humility, openness, and relational accountability in intercultural learning. Participants stressed the need to resist rigid assumptions, viewing learning as an iterative process of discovery and becoming. Close relationships with Māori mentors and friends were described as sources of nurturing guidance, role modelling and gentle nudging towards elevated comprehension. Whether relative newcomers or involved for decades, the paddlers consistently emphasised that deliberate, energetic commitment was imperative to advancing beyond surface familiarity into nuanced tikanga understandings. The metaphor used by several participants of perpetual open-water paddling captured this ongoing relational journey—personal growth understood not as mastery but as immersion. The vital impact of lasting cross-cultural relationships and friendships forged through cooperative waka ama involvement was integral to many accounts of identity negotiation and enriched perspectives.

The interdependent team connections, inside jokes, and collective support networks that formed organically through side-by-side training and working through shared challenges were highlighted as profoundly shaping openness for numerous participants. Tītoki explained:

> You know, some of the teams we put in the water, in a sport based in kaupapa Māori, yeah, some of our teams are the most unlikely paddlers. But as the relationship with different community groups has expanded, and acceptance of you as an individual into those communities, it's now just, you just feel really relaxed.

Tītoki points to team building across differences as integral in accelerating cultural belonging for initially unlikely allies. His narrative showcases transformation facilitated through collaborative work towards shared goals, eroding barriers. Friendships he had built cooperatively in waka ama frequently extended well beyond race completion, enriching his sense of identity and participation alongside Māori without internal questioning.

Tawa also emphasised the importance of waka ama as a means to connect with place. She described this connection as something that had deeply affected her:

> It's also to connect with the water and the environment, and this awa, this river. It's really helped me. We're from [another town] originally, and we've lived here for quite a few years, but somehow being on the water and being connected to the river, seeing it in that way, it's really helped me be in a relationship with this land and place more deeply. And to identify as a Heretaunga paddler, I guess, helps with that more.

This highlights how participation in waka ama offers a unique perspective on the environment and fosters a sense of connection to the land and waterways. Connecting with nature and the river underscores the holistic nature of waka ama, which extends beyond physical exercise to encompass a spiritual and environmental connection.

Tawa's self-identification as a "Heretaunga paddler" goes beyond mere participation in a sport; it represents a deeper sense of belonging and cultural identity. By aligning herself with the Heretaunga region through waka ama, Tawa not only strengthened her cultural identity but also contributed to the broader interactions between Pākehā and Māori in social life.

Tikanga, adaptation and humility

The interwoven themes of tikanga, adaptation and humility emerged across participant accounts as instrumental dispositions and practices for Pākehā navigating unfamiliar dimensions of te ao Māori as relative newcomers or outsiders. Willingness to move through the discomfort associated with the inevitable initial lack of competence was depicted as pivotal in signalling deep respect while avoiding assumptions. Adapting to tikanga Māori was primarily characterised as an experiential process centred on tacit observation, proactive participation, and guidance from Māori members rather than structured learning. The gradual familiarity and ownership that accrued over months and years of regular immersive "doses" stood out. Once perceived as foreign or strange, Māori practices became positively integrated, appreciated

and normative. However, while participation in waka ama is often shaped as personal growth for Pākehā, this also raises questions about whose cultural boundaries are being crossed and who defines the terms of acceptance within kaupapa Māori contexts. Some Pākehā paddlers detailed the early wariness, questioning, and subtle social exclusion they perceived from Māori members upon entering waka ama spaces as newcomers.

Tītoki, for example, reflected that some within the Māori paddling community were "standoffish" initially and relatively closed towards his overtures or presence as Pākehā on the periphery:

> Some of the paddlers, when I first joined, didn't really speak to me for three months. They would greet you, but because I'm Pākehā . . . but as they got to know you and realised [you're] supportive of tikanga and the kawa of the different events and situations, and then after time their gesture changes . . . As a Pākehā coming, you've got to have a certain amount of humility because you're living and working in a tikanga that's not from your cultural background.

Through consistent participation and quiet observation, Tītoki described how he gradually gained acceptance within waka ama spaces by learning through doing rather than asserting his own views. Demonstrating his willingness to support tikanga, he found that trust and warmth grew naturally over time, as whanaungatanga deepened through shared practice. Rather than demanding inclusion or recognition prematurely, Tītoki framed his approach as "turning up", attending training, working alongside others, and listening carefully.

Similar narratives from other paddlers highlight how small acts of service, humility, and reliability were seen by Māori as signals of genuine intent and respect. Collectively, these narratives emphasised that persistence, humility, and contribution without self-centeredness were pivotal in bridging and establishing belonging within the waka ama whānau. For Māori, who have been historically marginalised by colonisation, evaluating "outsiders" involves understandable caution regarding co-option risks. Kānuka explained that his initial experiences with practices such as pōwhiri and hongi felt intensely foreign and intimidating. Coming into waka ama spaces with limited knowledge of te ao Māori, he found it intimidating to be among members who were fluent in these practices:

> I'd never been near a marae . . . To me, that was all rather strange at first, but now it's so natural. It's such a great, great thing. Even how to hongi. You know, to be able to meet somebody, you know, the old bro slap and the old shoulder thing? . . . Being in waka ama has given me a greater understanding of the protocol.

Through sustained participation, he noticed that adapting to protocols became almost innate.

Kānuka's narrative mirrors the sentiment across Pākehā accounts that continual humble exposure transformed unfamiliar dimensions perceived as imposing barriers into comfortable, intrinsically valued practices. Rātā advised that new Pākehā members should observe respectfully to comprehend, remain quiet, and watch rather than feign empty expertise: "So you stop and think about what is important before you open your mouth." Asking questions only of those who extended permission, and not presuming knowledge, was encouraged.

Ngaio described how the gentle guidance she received in negotiating tikanga was "helping [her] grow":

> At times, I sit there and go, "Mmmm." People are speaking in Māori, and I sit there and go, "Mmmm, I don't understand" [*laughing*]. From a cultural side, I hope that I'm growing. They're helping me grow. And they're helping me understand . . . they talk about stuff and I listen . . . it's opening me up and raising my cultural awareness, which is a positive thing . . . Especially for someone who was so ignorant like me, it's good [*laughing*]. Anything I can learn is ok. One time when I was paddling, I was the only European. And the whole thing was done in Māori. And I sort of thought, "Oh. What about me?" [*laughing*]. Didn't understand any of that. But you know, and that's ok . . . they let me in the waka, and they were just so patient with me, 'cos I hadn't ever paddled, and I was just all over the place. They said, "It's ok, because we can see that you want to be here."

The welcoming support of Māori members who patiently educated without judgement provided the reassurance Ngaio needed to persevere beyond her initial discomfort.

Collectively, these narratives reveal the processes by which Pākehā members earned secure belonging in the rōpū. Participants broadly positioned openness, patience, and humility as instrumental for Pākehā navigating te ao Māori realms with incomplete lived reference points. Houhere explained succinctly that recognising narrow perspectives shaped elsewhere is essential:

"We have a little glimpse—but there's much more out there." Awareness of others' cognitive horizons fosters curiosity.

Various paddlers indicated that humility mitigated inevitable misunderstandings by recognising positional and experiential limitations. Such a mindset of accountability discourages assumptions while stimulating questions. Participants linked humility tightly with acknowledging dependence on Māori guidance to fill gaps. Tītoki suggested patience and avoiding indignation are compulsory, remarking: "If you're humble enough, and you have to be humble in that situation, you're eventually accepted. And once you're accepted, then, then the rewards come back to you." Hence, humility and adaptation were framed as interdependent growth pathways for outsiders seeking authentic participation and knowledge.

Some tensions participants described included internally debating their positioning around promoting consistency with tikanga principles and prioritising Māori leadership within clubs as Pākehā membership expanded. Several reflected on moments when karakia might be missed for convenience or when decision-making defaulted to non-Māori voices in committee settings, instances they worried could gradually dilute Māori authority and tikanga-based practice. These concerns capture the potential loss or sidelining of Māori-led processes, language and values. They also highlight delicate considerations about the complex contours of insider-outsider legitimacy and influence, and about non-Indigenous group members holding institutional sway.

Those in formal coaching or leadership roles described a profound sense of responsibility to uphold and embody cultural values and to foster cultural immersion among newer generations. However, their ability to lead directly in this capacity was inherently limited, primarily because they were Pākehā who, despite their positions, were not fluent in the appropriate use of te reo and tikanga Māori. This situation underscores a crucial tension: the desire to actively support and promote Māori culture while not holding the traditional knowledge or authority that comes with being Māori.

This paradox highlights the challenges Pākehā of navigating cultural stewardship respectfully and effectively while recognising the boundaries imposed by their cultural outsider status. Tītoki described how he navigated these situations by tactfully seeking alternative ways to exert influence. Instead of imposing his views without proper authority, he adopted a subtler approach, serving as a "quiet advocate" and offering educational guidance:

> I'll be the quiet advocate for maintaining the tikanga and kawa of the club . . . I'm always really having to push, "Actually, you need a Māori in that situation." 'Cos in some situations the leadership must [be Māori] because [we're] based on tikanga Māori . . . You know, so easy to slip into the water without a karakia. You know, it's so easy for people with administrative skills to take on leadership in a Māori world. So quietly advocate for the continuance of [Māori-led practices]. You've just got to quietly work on those things because you've made a commitment to that.

Walking the tightrope of nudging cultural adherence while recognising boundaries demands continual reflexive recalibration.

Discussion

This discussion critically examines key findings from the research interviews with Pākehā paddlers involved in waka ama. We examine the nuanced development of cultural identity fostered through immersive participation, alongside how activities like waka ama can facilitate an important entry point into the expansive world of te ao Māori. However, we also contend that inclusion narratives demand scrutiny, particularly concerning underlying power dynamics shaped by histories of colonisation and ongoing structural privilege. Moreover, we discuss the nuanced role of humility as a guiding ethos for cross-cultural engagement while acknowledging the complexities arising from its intersection with privilege.

Evolving cultural identity

Research findings revealed that many Pākehā participants experienced a gradual development of their cultural identity after sustained involvement with waka ama over time. This aligns with other research (Barnes, 2013; Forsyth, 2018; van Halderen, 2023) and shows a complex, iterative process of bicultural self-concept construction through progressively deeper interpersonal relationships. Pākehā paddlers accumulated cultural knowledge and learned to navigate inevitable discomfort when engaged with unfamiliar Māori-centred environments. For some who lacked previous meaningful exposure to te ao Māori, the cumulative immersion experiences nurtured perceptual shifts towards embracing a distinctly bicultural Pākehā identity as part of their personal growth journey (O'Toole, 2020). Participants agreed

that developing a secure Pākehā identity involves moving beyond superficial, episodic interactions with te ao Māori, emphasising the importance of sustained experiential understanding and relationship building (Barnes, 2013; Forsyth, 2018; van Halderen, 2023).

Purposeful engagement helped build confidence in participants' evolving bicultural positioning. A sense of belonging in Māori contexts requires humility, conscious reflexivity, and the avoidance of making assumptions (Barnes, 2013). Many participants shared that their lack of familiarity with tikanga and te reo Māori led to intense feelings of discomfort and a sense of being outsiders upon their initial involvement with the waka ama club. For some, social discomfort arose from uncertainty about expected etiquette in unfamiliar contexts, such as pōwhiri or noho marae. For others, the awkwardness stemmed primarily from internal fears of unintentionally causing offence due to limited comprehension of kawa and tikanga Māori.

However, such discomfort proved to be transformative, reshaping participants' perceptions of self through exposure to Māori culture, as demonstrated by other research (Brown, 2011; Campbell, 2005; Jellie, 2001; Mitcalfe, 2008). Over time, these feelings gradually dissipated as participants' cultural understanding expanded through regular immersive experiences and mentorship, leading to a more profound identification with and ownership of the term "Pākehā" (Forsyth, 2018). A key to many paddlers' experiences was developing reciprocal relationships with Māori paddlers who warmly offered insider guidance when requested by Pākehā members seeking to learn protocols. These connections led to a heightened sense of belonging and confidence in te ao Māori contexts, reflecting the interplay between deepening relationships and the accumulation of experiential cultural know-how (Forsyth, 2018).

A nuanced perspective, highlighted by several participants, was that integrating Māori cultural elements into their evolving identity did not require outright rejection of their Pākehā upbringing and ancestral roots. This navigation was depicted as a marker of internal evolution, underscoring the nonlinear process of identity recalibration fostered by immersive participation in waka ama over a period of years. Participants' narratives provide insightful perspectives on the relational interdependence between Pākehā and Māori identity constructions, suggesting that cross-cultural interactions can lead to positive changes and strengthen societal relationships in Aotearoa—a dynamic also noted in broader discussions of decolonising practice (e.g., Huygens, 2011; Milne, 2016).

Gateways into te ao Māori

Participants highlighted that without waka ama as an entry point, their understanding of mātauranga and tikanga Māori would have remained limited, citing societal barriers and isolated social circles as significant obstacles to broader engagement. However, concerns were raised about the potential for cultural appropriation, underscoring that genuine engagement demands continuous, humble involvement rather than superficial exposure. Cultural appropriation is understood here as the unacknowledged or disrespectful use of Māori cultural knowledge or practices by non-Māori, detached from tikanga, whakapapa, and Māori authority. Acknowledging that engaging in waka ama marked the beginning of their cultural journey, participants stressed the importance of progressing beyond initial excitement to foster meaningful connections and reflective practices for mutual cultural enrichment.

At the most fundamental level, waka ama necessitated actively using te reo Māori terminology for equipment, rituals, role positions and paddle stroke commands. For Pākehā new to speaking te reo Māori, this provided an immersive linguistic introduction to using unfamiliar words and grasping functional meanings in context. Several commented that they acquired a more usable Māori vocabulary through hands-on paddling instruction than was offered through years of mainstream schooling. This reflects the value of situated, experiential learning environments, where language is acquired through authentic social practice (Hond, 2013).

Waka ama, like other kaupapa Māori activities like kapa haka and marae-based engagement, offers an applied participatory pathway for second language development and strengthens cultural connection through repeated, embodied use of te reo Māori (Hond, 2013). Beyond vocabulary, a pivotal insight was the multidimensional impact of waka ama for widening substantive engagement with mātauranga Māori. Pākehā members gained tangible insights into Māori worldviews, ethics, and cultural concepts that were largely unfamiliar previously beyond a superficial level. The hands-on experiential nature of waka ama offered a rich applied platform for witnessing values like whanaungatanga, manaakitanga and kotahitanga in action, enabling participants to grasp intricacies that intellectual learning alone cannot replicate.

Additionally, deepening familiarity with tikanga Māori practices was experienced over time. Through observational learning coupled with sustained participation, Pākehā members described cumulative growth in their confidence in enacting protocols. This ability then facilitated a sense of belonging through competence. Another vital access gateway emphasised was the interpersonal connections forged collaboratively with Māori teammates and support crews through shared pursuits. Friendships organically formed accelerated cultural learning through guidance. Immersive experiences within the richness of waka ama ultimately facilitated multidimensional access to Māori cultural spaces and practices for Pākehā paddlers over time. However, participants also noted the risks of engagement without ongoing critical reflexivity. Sustaining ethical participation demands acknowledging positionality, evaluating representation, and centring tikanga Māori (Crawford & Langridge, 2022).

Problematising inclusion narratives

This study has documented the positive experiences shared by Pākehā participants regarding their sense of welcome and inclusion by Māori members within their waka ama club. Many recounted how Māori teammates acted as patient mentors, fostering a supportive atmosphere that facilitated cross-cultural friendships and mentorship, echoing historical instances of Pākehā-Māori interactions (Bentley, 1999, 2007). However, accepting these welcoming narratives without deeper scrutiny could obscure existing power imbalances. While individual acts of kindness and connection are significant, they exist within a context of broader systemic disparities that hinder truly equitable Māori-Pākehā relationships.

This research, by focusing primarily on Pākehā experiences, may overlook the complexities of Māori autonomy and its potential to uphold Pākehā privilege, such as the expectation that Māori educate Pākehā newcomers. This expectation places an unequal burden on Māori, operating against the backdrop of New Zealand's colonial history and the ongoing effects of breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. A more nuanced understanding of these interactions requires incorporating Māori perspectives to fully grasp the dynamics at play within these clubs. The findings prompt a reconsideration of who gets to set the parameters of inclusion, especially in contexts such as waka ama, which are deeply rooted in te ao Māori. Pākehā must critically reflect on their expectations for access and participation to ensure they do not infringe upon tino rangatiratanga (Lourie, 2011). Despite good intentions, there's a risk that Pākehā actions could impose undue expectations on Māori to welcome and educate, potentially entrenching the notion that Māori acceptance is an entitlement rather than a privilege. This underscores the need for Pākehā to evaluate their impact on Māori spaces critically and to understand the significance of stepping back to promote Māori leadership and self-determination (McKegg, 2023; van Meijl, 2009).

Effective allyship involves a thoughtful balance between participation and restraint (Kluttz et al., 2020). To address the intricacies of inclusion and acceptance, Pākehā participants in waka ama are called to engage in critical self-reflection, embrace the discomfort of learning, and question their presuppositions. Such engagement should be carried out with an awareness of the broader implications for Māori autonomy and leadership, ensuring that interactions within waka ama or similar contexts contribute positively to Indigenous self-determination (G. Smith & Smith, 2019). This approach requires a commitment not only to navigate but also to appreciate the complex nature of these cultural intersections.

The complex role of humility

Humility stood out in participants' narratives as a crucial element in navigating their roles as outsiders within Māori cultural settings. This humility was described as more than a passive trait; it was an active approach that facilitated self-reflection, openness to diverse perspectives, and a willingness to embrace discomfort during the learning process. Moreover, it signalled an acknowledgement of the breadth of knowledge yet to be acquired.

However, exploring humility exposes complexities, particularly in its interplay with privilege (Newcombe & Amundsen, 2022). While Pākehā individuals may demonstrate humility on a personal level, larger systemic inequalities remain untouched. The dual potential of humility to either foster empowerment or perpetuate dependence adds layers to its evaluation (Amundsen, 2018; Newcombe & Amundsen, 2022). This dual nature prompts further reflection, cautioning against a shallow, performative adoption without a deeper, critical consciousness. The emphasis on humility as a foundational ethos for learning and inclusion among participants highlights its significance in navigating cultural engagement.

Participants' narratives reveal humility to be a dynamic force shaping their entry and integration into waka ama, enriching the dialogue on identity

negotiation and cultural entry points previously discussed. Their insights demonstrate humility's role in facilitating intercultural understanding and addressing power dynamics. By embodying humility, Pākehā participants engaged in a deeper form of cultural participation, marked by continuous learning and fostering inclusive, mutual understanding. Nonetheless, the nuanced challenges of balancing humility with inherent privileges reflect the ongoing journey of intercultural engagement and understanding (Abe, 2020; Greene-Moton & Minkler, 2020; Mosher et al., 2016).

Conclusion

This research provides insights into an underexplored area: the intersections of waka ama, cultural identity, and cross-cultural engagement for Pākehā. The findings show that waka ama can promote meaningful connections with te ao Māori and contribute to evolving bicultural identities in Aotearoa. These experiences highlight both the potential for relationship building and the need for ongoing reflexivity about power, privilege, and the responsibilities that accompany participation in Māori-led spaces. Humility was a central practice through which Pākehā participants navigated cultural boundaries, signalling respect and openness to learning. Pākehā engagement in waka ama requires continual awareness of whose knowledge is centred and whose labour sustains inclusion. Humility, in this context, operates as a relational practice through which Pākehā participants can consciously decentre their own authority and defer to Māori leadership, thereby helping to disrupt historical hierarchies rooted in colonisation. These findings illuminate humility as a bridge towards resonant cross-cultural engagement, but one that requires critical evaluation at every turn. Waka ama offers a powerful site for exploring what ethical, reciprocal engagement might look like in practice. The challenge for Pākehā is to participate with awareness, recognising that belonging in kaupapa Māori contexts is both a privilege and a responsibility.

Future research should prioritise Māori voices to further understand these dynamics. Longitudinal, comparative, and critically oriented research could deepen understanding of how Māori paddlers experience Pākehā participation and how tino rangatiratanga and equity are enacted within shared spaces. Tensions between intentions and impacts need ongoing examination. This groundwork sparks deeper dialogue and discovery, opening possibilities for co-constructing ethical, empowering ways forward. Additional scholarship from diverse cultural standpoints is also required to gain a richer perspective on humility and its complex role in balancing power dynamics between Māori and Pākehā participants within Māori-led spaces. Further investigation of how humility enables or hinders empowerment and self-determination is vital.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Massey University Research Fund. The authors acknowledge Heretaunga Ararau o Ngāti Kahungunu Waka Ama Rōpu, tēnā koutou ki a koutou ki te tautoko te kaupapa nei. The authors thank all the kaihoe for generously sharing their time and stories with us. Nā koutou i whatu te kākahu, he tāniko tāku.

Author Biographies

Professor Christina Severinsen
School of Health Sciences, Massey University
c.a.severinsen@massey.ac.nz
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0451-6728

Dr Angelique Reweti (Ngāpuhi)
School of Health Sciences, Massey University
a.reweti@massey.ac.nz
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9509-1069

Hoani Moriarty (Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Koata)
School of Health Sciences, Massey University
h.j.s.moriarty@massey.ac.nz
https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8070-6115

ORCID iD

Professor Christina Severinsen
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0451-6728

Dr Angelique Reweti (Ngāpuhi)
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9509-1069

Hoani Moriarty (Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Koata)
https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8070-6115

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (No. 4000018859), and research procedures included informed consent, reciprocity, and data stewardship.

Funding

Massey University Research Fund (MURF) grant.

Glossary

awa	river
hoea	paddle
hongi	pressing noses in greeting
kaihoe	paddler
kapa haka	Māori performing arts
kaupapa	purpose, subject
kaupapa Māori	a Māori approach
Kaupapa Māori	research approach that is informed by Māori philosophy and principles and is by Māori for Māori
karakia	incantation, ritual chant
kawa	protocol
kia mau	hold, or stop paddling
kia rite	get ready, or paddles up
kotahitanga	unity, togetherness, solidarity
Māori	Indigenous population of Aotearoa New Zealand
manaakitanga	hospitality, kindness, generosity, support
marae	courtyard—the open area in front of the meeting house where formal greetings and discussions take place; often also used to include the complex of buildings around the marae
mātauranga Māori	Indigenous Māori knowledge systems
Ngāti Kahungunu	tribe located along the eastern coast of the North Island
noho marae	overnight stay at a marae
paepae	gunwale or the side/upper-edge planking of the waka ama hull
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
pōwhiri	rituals of encounter, welcome ceremony
rōpū	group, club
taitamariki	youngest waka ama category (usually under 10/11 years old)
te ao Māori	Māori world
Te Awa o Mokotūāraro	river in Hawke's Bay, North Island
te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840. Te Tiriti o Waitangi (in reo Māori) guarantees continued Māori sovereignty, protects Māori interests, and promotes Māori wellbeing
tikanga Māori	correct customs, protocols
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination, sovereignty
waiata	song
waka	canoe
waka ama	outrigger canoe
wānanga	meetings
whakapapa	genealogy, lineage
whānau	extended family group
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship, sense of family connection

References

Abe, J. (2020). Beyond cultural competence, toward social transformation: Liberation psychologies and the practice of cultural humility. *Journal of Social Work Education, 56*(4), 696–707. https://doi.org/hwp7

Amundsen, D. (2018). Decolonisation through reconciliation: The role of Pākehā identity. *MAI Journal, 7*(2), 139–154. https://doi.org/gcrk

Barnes, A. (2013). *What can Pākehā learn from engaging in Kaupapa Māori educational research?* New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Bell, A. (1996). "We're just New Zealanders": Pākehā identity politics. In P. Spoonley, D. Pearson & C. Macpherson (Eds.), *Nga patai: Racism and ethnic relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (pp. 144–158). Dunmore Press.

Bell, A., Yukich, R., Lythberg, B., & Woods, C. (2022). Enacting settler responsibilities towards decolonisation. *Ethnicities*, *22*(5), 605–618. https://doi.org/gnxx43

Bentley, T. (1999). *Pākehā Māori: The extraordinary story of the Europeans who lived as Māori in early New Zealand*. Penguin.

Bentley, T. (2007). *Images of Pākehā-Māori: A study of the representation of Pākehā-Māori by historians of New Zealand from Arthur Thomson (1859) to James Belich (1996)* [Doctoral thesis, University of Waikato]. Research Commons. https://hdl.handle.net/10289/2559

Bishop, R. (2005). Freeing ourselves from neocolonial domination in research: A Kaupapa Māori approach to creating knowledge. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 109–38). SAGE Publications.

Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2009). Te kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Māori students in New Zealand. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*(5), 734–742. https://doi.org/czhvz5

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic

analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/fswdcx

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/gsn6sb

Brown, M. W. (2011). *Decolonising Pākehā ways of being: Revealing third space Pākehā experiences*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Waikato]. Research Commons. https://hdl.handle.net/10289/5341

Campbell, M. (2005). *Negotiating biculturalism: Deconstructing Pākehā subjectivity* [Doctoral thesis, Massey University]. Massey Research Online. http://hdl.handle.net/10179/2441

Cram, F. (2001). Rangahau Māori: Tona tika, Tona pono: The validity and integrity of Māori research. In M. Tolich (Ed.). *Research ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 35–52). Pearson Education.

Crawford, A., & Langridge, F. (2022). Pākehā/Palangi positionality: Disentangling power and paralysis. *New Zealand Medical Journal, 135*(1561), 102–110. https://doi.org/rjfm

Fitzpatrick, E. (2016). *The art of letting the ghost come back: A serendipitous tale of exploring the complex issue of becoming a Pākehā educator* [Doctoral thesis, University of Auckland]. ResearchSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/2292/30913

Forsyth, H. (2018). An identity as Pākehā. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, *14*(1), 73–80. https://doi.org/cqvg

Greene-Moton, E., & Minkler, M. (2020). Cultural competence or cultural humility? Moving beyond the debate. *Health Promotion Practice, 21*(1), 142–145. https://doi.org/gpc2hc

Hond, R. *Matua te reo, matua te tangata: Speaker community visions, approaches and outcomes* [Doctoral thesis, Massey University]. Massey Research Online. http://hdl.handle.net/10179/5439

Hotere-Barnes, A. (2015). Generating 'non-stupid optimism': Addressing Pākehā paralysis in Māori educational research. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 50*(1), 39–53. https://doi.org/cqt9

Hotere-Barnes, A. (2023). *Te toka whakaea*: *Co-governance education in Aotearoa New Zealand* [Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Tuwhera. http://hdl.handle.net/10292/16863

Huygens, I. (2011). Developing a decolonisation practice for settler colonisers: A case study from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Settler Colonial Studies, 1*(2), 53–81. https://doi.org/ghtw42

Jellie, M. (2001). *The formation of Pākehā identity in relation to te reo Māori and te ao Māori* [Master's thesis, University of Canterbury]. UC Research Repository. http://hdl.handle.net/10092/961

Jones, A. (2021, July 11). When Pākehā acquire te reo. *E-tangata*. https://e-tangata.co.nz/reo/alison-jones-when-pakeha-acquire-te-reo/

Jones, A., & Jenkins, K. (2011). *He korero: Words between us: First Māori–Pākehā conversations on paper*. Huia Publishers.

Kluttz, J., Walker, J., & Walter, P. (2020). Unsettling allyship, unlearning and learning towards decolonising solidarity. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 52*(1), 49–66. https://doi.org/rjfn

Lourie, M. (2011). 'Canaries in the coal mine': The reframing of biculturalism and non-Māori participation in Māori language learning. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *21*(3), 217–230. https://doi.org/c256tf

McKegg, K. (2019). White privilege and the decolonisation work needed in evaluation to support Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, 34*(2), 357–367. https://doi.org/ggtggw

Milne, A. (2016). *Colouring in the white spaces: Reclaiming cultural identity in whitestream schools*. Peter Lang.

Mitcalfe, M. (2008). *Understandings of being Pākehā: Exploring the perspective of six Pākehā who have studied in Māori cultural learning contexts* [Master's thesis, Massey University]. Massey Research Online. https://mro.massey.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/e9c714a0-1273-45c2-aa8d-3d015096196a/content

Mosher, D. K., Hook, J. N., Farrell, J. E., C. Edward Watkins, J., & Davis, D. E. (2016). Cultural humility. In E. L. W. Jr., D. E. Davis, & J. N. Hook (Eds.), *Handbook of humility: Theory, research and applications* (pp. 91–104). Routledge.

Network Waitangi. (2025). *Joan Cook memorial essays: State of the Pākehā nation*. https://nwo.org.nz/resources/joan-cook-memorial-essay-state-of-the-nation-speeches/

Newcombe, N., & Amundsen, D. (2022). Why Pākehā should implement Te Tiriti o Waitangi in charitable organisations, and how we could do better. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online,* 17(4), 479–498. https://doi.org/rjfp

O'Toole, M. (2020). Responsibility, language movement, and social transformation: The shifting value of te reo for non-Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. In L. Siragusa & J. K. Ferguson (Eds.), *Responsibility and language practices in place* (pp. 195–212). Finnish Literature Society (SKS). https://doi.org/rjfq

Pihama, L. (2010). Kaupapa Māori theory: Transforming theory in Aotearoa. *He Pukenga Kōrero*, *9*(2), 5–14.

Reweti, A., & Severinsen, C. (2022). Waka ama: An exemplar of Indigenous health promotion. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 33*(1), 246–254. https://doi.org/qncg

Severinsen, C., & Reweti, A. (2020). Promoting health through waka ama. *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, *11*(1). https://www.gjcpp.org/en/photovid.php?issue=34&photovid=69%20-%2017.5kb

Smith, G. & Smith, L. T. (2019). Doing indigenous work: Decolonizing and transforming the academy. In E. A. McKinley & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous education* (pp. 1075–1101). Springer. https://doi.org/qmkb

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Otago University Press.

Spoonley, P. (1993). *Racism and ethnicity*. Oxford University Press.
Sport NZ. (2020, July 8). *Growth of waka ama case study*. https://sportnz.org.nz/resources/growth-of-waka-ama
Van Halderen, L. (2023). Reflections and lessons of a non-Māori student working in a Kaupapa Māori research space. *MAI Journal, 12*(1), 93–109. https://doi.org/rjfr
Van Meijl, T. (2009). Māori intellectual property rights and the formation of ethnic boundaries. *International Journal of Cultural Property*, *16*, 341–355. https://doi.org/dps2vb
Waka Ama NZ. (2025). *Statistics 2025*. https://www.wakaama.co.nz/statistics/2025
Walker, R. (2004). *Ka whawhai tonu mātou: Struggle without end*. Penguin.