

Article

Hei Te Wā Tītoki: Time to Hold Ground, Ground to Hold Time

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Abstract

The authoritarianism of the Modern/colonial (Western) one-world ontology includes an insistence on the nature of time, and this dogmatism persists in the face of other temporalities. The normative status of coloniality is evident in the ways trans and takatāpui communities are compelled to operate on straight, Settler time, from research ethics and sexualities education to medical wait times and parliamentary submissions. To begin, we outline the research on which this claim is based, which employed wānanga as a mode of co-designing decolonising, gender-affirming (sexualities) education, and how deviations from the intended approach allowed the study to centre what was important to the participants. Next, we unpack the predicaments of resistance as we sought to embrace temporal multiplicity and the need for an alternate strategy for holding spacetime. This strategy emerged through Waiti's whaikōrero and poem, which construe the participants' contributions as seeds to be cultivated in their own time. Across the three wānanga, three seeds emerged. Whakataukī and pūrākau are employed to unpack these seeds from the wānanga, illustrating the importance of valuing all contributions, both absent and present, and how whanaungatanga offers a strategy for meeting participants on their own terms and in their own time, kanohi ki te kanohi.

Keywords: takatāpui temporality; trans time; wānanga; coloniality; chrononormativities; whanaungatanga

1. Introduction

Colonisation imposed Western temporalities as a mechanism of maintaining Modern ontologies (aka colonialities of chrononormativity; Pasley and Jaramillo-Aristizabal 2024; cf. Freeman 2010). This dogmatism persists in the face of other temporalities, such as Pacific (Case 2021), queer (Halberstam 2005), trans (Pearce 2018), Indigenous (Refiti et al. 2026) and crip (Kafer 2013) times. The normative status of coloniality is evident in the ways trans and takatāpui¹ communities are compelled to operate on straight, Settler time (Muñoz 2009; Rifkin 2017), from research ethics (Pasley 2025) and sexualities education (Le Grice and Braun 2018) to medical wait times (Veale et al. 2019) and parliamentary submissions (Suszko 2005). To begin, we outline the research from which this claim is illustrated, which employed wānanga as a mode of co-designing decolonising, gender affirming (sexuality) education, and how deviations from the intended approach allowed the study to centre what was important to the participants. Next, we unpack the colonialities of chrononormativity, the predicaments of resistance as we sought to embrace temporal multiplicity, and the need for an alternate strategy for holding spacetime. This strategy emerged through Waiti's whaikōrero and poem, which construe the participants'



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contributions as seeds to be cultivated in their own time. Across the three wānanga, three seeds are drawn. Whakataukī and pūrākau are employed to unpack these seeds from the wānanga, illustrating the importance of valuing all contributions, both absent and present, and how whanaungatanga (Hamley et al. 2025; Burgess and Moko-Painting 2020; M. Jackson 2020) supports the coexistence of temporalities. Rather than a means of wielding research relations, whanaungatanga presents a strategy for meeting participants on their own terms and time, kanohi ki te kanohi.

2. Dis/Establishing the Project

The present research emerged as a response to Ampersand Pasley’s doctoral study, which mapped the educational worlds of four trans high school students. Based on an agential realist ethics (Barad 2007), this work demonstrated how trans (spacetime)genderings—the configurations of relations that constitute (trans)gender—are fundamentally response-able because their materialisation requires a tracing of entanglements (Pasley 2022). Subsequently, Pasley applied for the Marsden FastStart to extend on this work, exploring how to enable more capacious, gender-affirming education. At that point, the Ministry of Education’s (2020) Relationship and Sexuality Education Guidelines recommended whole-school approaches to gender and sexuality, appreciating that these lessons occur both officially and unofficially across all areas of schooling (Murphy 2019). Given Quinlivan’s (2018) illustration of how sexuality education is often most effective when student-led, as students’ questions and curiosities are addressed in real time, the study employed wānanga (Mahuika and Mahuika 2020) as a conduit for co-design.

Wānanga are pertinent because they foreground relational onto-epistemological assumptions. The root word in wānanga is wā, which refers to the simultaneity of space and time (Royal in Refiti et al. 2026), constituted through congregation. This brought together Māori and Tauīwi (non-Māori) trans and irawhiti people to engage in ako within and across the multiple temporalities we held between us. As Mika (2017) explains, ako does not simply blur the distinction between teacher and learner or treat teaching/learning as a reciprocal becoming, but understands mātauranga as emerging from a specific arrangement of relations that allow prior thought (M. Jackson 2015) to emerge.

Two separate groups of young trans and takatāpui people², based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and Kirikiriroa Hamilton, in Aotearoa New Zealand, initially met separately to explore what it might mean to co-design educational worlds that supported trans and takatāpui flourishing. Acknowledging the colonialities of gender (Lugones 2007) that underpin cisheteronormativities in Aotearoa (Kerekere 2017), all efforts to enact gender justice are necessarily decolonising projects (author). This underpinned the emphasis on ensuring all stakeholders were involved from the beginning and that the research was produced by and for trans and takatāpui young people. In contrast to Pasley’s (2022) doctoral research, which was unable to maintain takatāpui participation (Pasley 2026), takatāpui and te reo Māori have a strong presence across this project. This presents an important (but atypical) dynamic in gender research because engaging takatāpuitanga on its own terms is fundamental to commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as neglecting mātauranga Māori violates tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake (Kerekere 2021).

Following the presentation of the overarching provocation for this kaupapa in the first wānanga, we suggested that participants could address an area of the curriculum that resonated with them, spend the time before the second wānanga exploring that area, then return to combine their thoughts. This strategy was swiftly derailed as the participants agreed that producing another document that would be at risk of disestablishment, such as the RSE Guidelines (Ministry of Education 2020), which had been abruptly removed by the 2023 coalition government (Casey 2025), would be unwise. Moreover, even if the

document were not removed, a curriculum or policy document would remain subject to the weaknesses of previous policies, unable to deliver on their aspirations due to a lack of compulsory sexuality education, inadequate teacher education, and effective sexuality education often resting on the shoulders of individual teachers (Fitzpatrick 2018). Pasley discusses how the trans art of failure (Pasley 2026), wherein failure informs response-abilities beyond extant imaginaries, allowed the research to embrace this disruption of the anticipated approaches to meet the participants on their own terms (Hoskins 2010). From this, we began to understand how our inclination to foreground policy and curriculum—staples of the colonialities of schooling (Coloma 2013)—reproduced the metronome that kept the project's rhythm in colonial time. In place of the second set of wānanga in each location, the participants requested a combined wānanga, conducted in the form of noho marae. This paper illustrates how we were able to hold divergent temporalities together—apart in wānanga.

3. Un/Settling Chrononormativities

Pasley and Jaramillo-Aristizabal (2024) combined insights from Quijano's (2000) colonialities of power and Freeman's (2010) chrononormativity to illustrate how Modern/colonial systems impose temporal ontologies, compelling more-than-Modern subjects (i.e., those who exceed the colonial/Modern imaginary) to operate on colonial time. The authors draw on the feminist theory, agential realism (Barad 2007), given its appreciation of time as fundamental to being and ethics, and trace how colonialities of chrononormativity affect the boundaries of im/possibility in/as the lives of working and trans children. de la Cadena (2010) discusses how colonialities coerce non-moderns to sacrifice their worlds to engage in 'politics' because the parameters of 'exchange' assume one-world ontologies (cf. Law 2015). That is, debate requires that Western logic be treated as real, while Other worlds are consigned to the realm of belief or 'culture' (Jaramillo-Aristizabal 2026). In Aotearoa, this can be seen in the revision of the newest edition of the New Zealand Curriculum, Te Mātaiaho (Ministry of Education 2007, 2025), wherein Te Ao Māori, Te Reo, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Relationships and Sexualities Education (RSE) are excluded from that which is deemed 'important knowledge.' Similarly, the proposed Relationships and Sexualities Education Guidelines (Ministry of Education 2025) neglect to address gender, sexuality, body and onto-epistemological diversity. Therein, these documents mark the boundaries of in/valid student subjectivities and the characteristics of the citizenry this system seeks to produce.

Muñoz (2009) and Halberstam (2005) describe how these chrononormativities materialise as straight and queer time, respectively, wherein heteronormative lifespans—birth, youth, experimentation, marriage, children, death by 'natural' causes—are naturalised through the othering of queer lives, for whom these milestones are inaccessible and render them destined to die young by 'unnatural' means (aka AIDS; cf. Kafer's (2013) Crip Time). Snorton and Haritaworn (2013) draw on Mbembe's (2003) necropolitics, whereby state sovereignty is understood as the right to decide who is entitled to live, die and kill, to illustrate how transness becomes grounds for being considered unworthy of life (as cited in Pasley 2023); often deprived of life's necessities, if not subject to attempts at one's life. Similarly, Rata et al. (2023, p. 12) illustrate how "white-imperial state sovereignty" generates death worlds where Indigenous communities are in a "constant state of necropolitical precarity—or closer proximity/precarity to death". However, they suggest that whakapapa offers routes beyond settler colonialism because it assumes Māori futures beyond death and precarity. "Through whakapapa, Indigenous ontology haunts and ruptures the very fallacy of white imperial sovereignty, carrying forth not merely the possibility but the inevitability

of worlds beyond necropolitics.” Whakapapa allows us to see through the fallacy of settler state longevity in New Zealand and exposes alternative temporalities to make this so.

Expanding on Quijano’s (2000) colonialities of power, Lugones (2007) addresses how ‘im/proper’ gender was a key mechanism of colonial control, justifying the treatment of colonised subjects as less than human (i.e., enslaveable). Moreover, while ‘cis/trans’ has slowly become incorporated into the Genres of Man (Wynter 2003), alongside ‘straight/gay,’ ‘man/woman,’ etc., Warren (2017) contends that black(ened) subjects (cf. Z. I. Jackson 2020) were used to define the (white[ned]) human through exteriority, so can only inhabit these labels under erasure. In Aotearoa, this is evident in the current coalition government’s efforts to legally define ‘man’ and ‘woman’ in a recent amendment bill (Legislation (Definitions of Woman and Man) Amendment Bill) (Marcroft 2026), which passed its first reading as we composed this text, riding on the tailcoats of international trans-exclusionary politics that exploit gender panic to incite violence (Pasley 2023). This biologising narrative (McKittrick 2021) reinforces the colonialities of gender (Lugones 2007), which undermine more-than-Modern personhood based on failing to adequately perform the Genres of Man (Wynter 2003). In turn, this ‘failure’ is used to justify (white supremacist) cisnormative violence against trans and takatāpui communities (Butler 1993).

(Pasley 2025) describes how, even with Indigenising policy (Hoskins and Jones 2022), decolonising research continues to be forced to operate on colonial terms and times, such as ethics committee timelines, time spent negotiating institutional definitions of Māori concepts (e.g., koha) that are couched in capitalist frameworks, and spending time (emphasis on the transactional nature) on ethics applications that are designed to reduce the university’s liability, rather than support participants’ hauora. In organising hui with participants, examples of chrononormativities materialised as venue hire, university room-booking systems, recording equipment hire and purchase, food and refreshment purchase, transportation systems, and reimbursement processes. That is, we were obligated to work within these capitalist architectures that reinforced colonial time, dependent on facilities management approval, and navigating public transport systems or privatised parking and traffic congestion. This is not necessarily to cast aspersions on the un/ethical nature of these systems, as ethics cannot be determined in advance of relations (Barad 2007). We received considerable support, such as the School of Critical Studies in Education co-funding our recording devices, and have faced few operational obstacles in this process when using these systems, illustrating the response-abilities rendered possible and enacted through these relations. Furthermore, we mobilised funding to reduce the cost of engagement for participants, such as providing food (as is tika), covering travel costs, and providing payment in kind, as response-able research praxis (Mead 2003). However, these systems are not optional, embodying the colonialities of power (Quijano 2000) that enforce colonial terms of engagement (de la Cadena 2010) and render our response-abilities conditional on conforming to institutional terms (Pasley 2025). Likewise, students have little option but to engage with educational systems and RSE, lest they risk the consequences of failing to correctly perform studenthood (Coloma 2013).

Therein, akin to Warren’s (2017) contention, other temporalities may exist within these systems, but chrononormativities force them to operate under erasure. Moreover, navigating these terms of engagement demands expertise in dominant paradigms, which these systems do not reciprocate, thereby embodying the “epistemological privilege of unknowing” (Sedgwick 1990) and asymmetrical distributions of agency (Barad 2007). For example, Quinlivan et al. (2014) discuss how Durie’s (1985) Te Whare Tapa Whā, which illustrates the relational and interdependent nature of hauora, was compelled to fit atomising Pākehā models of ‘wellbeing’, grounded in Western individualism and reductionism (cf. St. Pierre 2016). Similarly, Quinlivan (2018) cautions against Western liberal progres-

sive sexuality education's tendency to reduce queer complexity to palatable stereotypes, maintaining cisheteronormativity and alienating non-conformity, rather than witnessing queer and trans subjectivity (Allen 2004). However, Warren's (2017) claim relies on treating Modern/colonial humanism as the objective referent. While Modernity's effects are pervasive, its logics are aberrations, despite its insistence on being natural (Pasley and Sturm 2026). If we assume that each world's ontology and temporality are no more or less valid (Jaramillo-Aristizabal 2026), this potentiates their capacity to converse in a manner that is open to being affected by the other, *kanohi ki te kanohi* (eye to eye; Hoskins 2010). Therein, the Modern/colonial one-world ontology loses its grip on im/possibility and pluriversal politics (de la Cadena 2010), whereby worlds can understand each other on their own terms and times, becoming possible. When able to operate on their own terms, trans and takatāpui temporalities produce multiplicitous im/possibilities that exceed the colonial imagination and potentiate deep coalition (Lugones 2007) with other non-Modern temporalities.

Embracing more-than-Modern temporalities presents a two-fold balancing act. On the one hand, these critical alternatives to chrononormativity face the same issue as Warren (2017) if they are grounded in a politics of recognition that treats chrononormativities as their objective referent (Stark 2014; Pasley 2026) or assumes Modernist linear, geometric and/or positivist temporal ontologies (St. Pierre 2016; Pasley 2022). That is, we must find a means of escaping colonialities of power/being/truth/freedom (Wynter 2003). Simultaneously, we must mitigate the risk of colonial creep via the qualification of who belongs to the Genres of Man (Wynter 2003), including the false binary of cis/trans, which produces hierarchy and lateral violence from within (Pasley 2025). That is, trans(normative) time colonialities of chrononormativity by recentring whiteness as the objective referent, and the settler temporalities that accompany those performativities. As a case in point, in *Honouring Our Ancestors: Takatāpui, Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQI+ Well-Being* (Pihama and Green 2023), Mika describes how Western frameworks reduce gender and sexuality to individual, epistemically certain concepts (i.e., defining takatāpui according to a set of stable characteristics). This renders takatāpui comprehensible to (Te Ao) Pākehā but restricts the relational nature of being takatāpui (within Te Ao Māori). Indeed, the unknowability of mātauranga Māori in its entirety is fundamental to te Ao Māori's expression on its own terms (Cameron-Lewis and Mika 2025; Mika 2020, 2017). As researchers, we were wary that normative definitions of trans might inadvertently coerce takatāpui into the colonialities of gender that are present in trans and cis distinctions. For example, these transnormativities might make space for trans time (Pearce 2018) while reinforcing Settler time (cf. Rifkin 2017). In wānanga, we avoided privileging one temporality over another by grounding the research in whanaungatanga.

This project is specifically intended to support trans and takatāpui flourishing, not survival, so we sought other tools to dismantle the master's house (cf. Lorde 1984); another metronome that could keep other times and multiple temporalities, simultaneously. Hoskins' (2010) reading of Levinas' (1985) responsibility with the Māori notion of *kanohi ki te kanohi* invites an interrogation of how mātauranga Māori can help engage this conundrum. To begin with, Hoskins (personal communication) notes that Te Ao Māori is not Levinasian, although it is grounded in a similar relational ontology, which foregrounds relationships and the idea that the quality of these relations is integral to politics. Moreover, responsibility's appreciation of our co-constitution with the (infinite) other does not rule out the possibility of violence towards others or of turning away from their needs. She explains that reciprocal relationships, or *utu*, historically governed Māori relations. While *manaakitanga* is observed as a matter of *tikanga* and regardless of asymmetrical power dynamics, which offers the possibility of fruitful return, a breakdown of goodwill can be

expected to be met in kind. This dynamic can proliferate mutually beneficial relations, but also has the propensity to devolve into destructive spirals. However, Hoskins (personal communication) elaborates that aroha affords a break in utu. This became increasingly important following colonisation and associated imperial abuses, and affords a restoration of destructive dynamics. Integrally, aroha is offered as a response to maltreatment, which is notable because this choice foregrounds the mana or agency of the wronged party to break the cycle. Therein, we explore what it takes to foster better relations within and between times, ensuring we are accountable to one another's worlds and their temporalities. Subsequently, the next section explores what it means to operate on Māori and takatāpui time.

4. Hei Te Wa Tītoki: In the Time That the Tītoki Blooms

To understand Māori time in Māori terms, one starting point is through creation stories that embody Māori ontologies. Ngāpuhi knowledge holder Māori Marsden explains how Māori understandings of the creation of the world are a “three-world view, of potential being symbolised by Te Korekore, the world becoming portrayed by Te Pō, and the world of being, Te Ao Mārama” (Marsden 2003), with a multi-dimensional temporality. Te Kore, or Te Korekore, is the realm of limitless potential, and the plane between being and non-being where all seeds of the universe gestate (Marsden 2003). Furthermore, as referenced in Waiti's poem that follows, Te Kore is the becoming that bears unseen worlds, such as the fertile soil that the seeds from the wānanga were planted into. Writing on te Reo Māori verb tenses, Marsden (2003, p. 22) observes, “Time is a continuous stream. The temporal is subordinated under the cosmic process and denotes not time but sequences in processes and events which occur in the cosmic process.” The limitless potential of Te Kore, the indeterminacy of Te Pō and the emergence of reality through Te Ao Mārama occur simultaneously. That is, the phases Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama are not consecutive but rather worlds within worlds, in which the potential and indeterminate are always present but not visible to us in Te Ao Mārama (Pasley and Sturm 2026). While Te Korekore is a useful place to begin, there is no singular understanding of Māori time because Māori ontologies are situated. That is, each hapū and iwi's understandings are constituted by the local environment (Hoskins 2012). Māori astronomer Rangi Mātāmua writes that the imposition of the Gregorian calendar has interrupted our experience of Aotearoa lands, skies and waterways, disrupting our embodied connection to the natural environment and its seasons (Mātāmua 2020). Reclaiming Māori orientations to our lands includes reclaiming Māori ontologies in their multiplicities. Rather than a single truth, as Western one-world ontologies try to assert, the many different hapū and iwi understandings of the world provide insight into a diversely woven universe.

These many variations of Māori temporalities can be found in pūrākau. The pū (core) of rākau (tree) are foundational stories in Māori cosmologies, which hold lessons, beliefs, and ethics that provide hidden messages that are sources of empowerment for their descendants (Ngātai-Tautuku, this volume) and fertile soil for research (Lee-Morgan 2019). Likewise, Indigenous storywork, as a decolonising methodology, values the meaning-making power in Indigenous stories (Archibald 2008). Lee-Morgan (2019) and Mikaere (2017) have detailed how Māori pūrākau have been disregarded as mere mythologies. Moreover, they were historically recorded through a patriarchal lens that marginalised wāhine Māori and destroyed the sacred balance in Māori society. These are the same influences that reduce non-Modern worlds and times to perspectives, while maintaining Western perspectives as the one legitimate ontology (de la Cadena 2010). However, many Māori and Indigenous scholars have shown that reclaiming and retelling Indigenous stories is a powerful antidote to the colonial project (Case 2021; Yates-Smith 1998). In

particular, takatāpui scholars, such as [Kerekere \(2017\)](#), [Doyle \(2023\)](#), [Pihama and Green \(2023\)](#) and [Ngātai-Tautuku \(2025\)](#), have utilised personal and collective pūrākau in their research on takatāpui hauora. Indeed, the term ‘takatāpui’ was salvaged by [Te Awēkotuku \(2001\)](#) from the pūrākau of Tutanekai, Tiki and Hinemoana, which has carved the way for all subsequent takatāpui resistance to cisheteronormativities, thereby demonstrating the immense possibility embedded in these pūrākau.

Pūrākau are not only oral and written, but are also embodied in carved, woven and painted histories. This includes whakataukī, or proverbial sayings, of which there are four that inform this article. The first was ‘poipoia te kākano kia puāwai’, to nurture seed so it may flourish. The second is the title of this article: ‘hei te wā tītoki’, in the time that the tītoki blooms. The third whakataukī, ‘ā tōna wā, means in some future time. Finally, the fourth, ‘Iti te kupu, nui te korero,’ values the knowledge that is carried through little words. These whakataukī ground the subsequent analysis in te ao Māori, decentring chrononormativities and other colonialities. When we are attentive to the relations that constitute us in relation to the infinite (and more-than-human) other, such as the soil and fostering the conditions that allow the tītoki to bloom, then we can meet others in their own time. In a settler society such as New Zealand, where trans and takatāpui lives are caught amidst the necropower of the coalition government, the Māori temporalities demonstrated in pūrākau like these whakataukī resist chrononormativities. This is the first step towards allowing participants to show up on their own times and capacity. While these whakataukī elucidated this need, we still sought to unpack the tikanga of supporting the co-existence of temporalities in wānanga.

It is important to note that, just as trans time ([Pearce 2018](#)) is a function of the colonialities of gender ([Lugones 2007](#)), whereby such distinctions are only intelligible in relation to colonial gender complementarity ([Butler 1993](#); [Pasley 2022](#)), takatāpui time, as distinct from Māori time, is a product of inherited colonialities ([Kerekere 2017](#)). Mika (in [Pihama et al. 2020](#)) delineates how the treatment of takatāpui as a distinct identity is grounded in Western atomisation (cf. [Salmond 2012](#); [St. Pierre 2016](#)). The immanence of Te Ao Māori ([Mika 2017](#)) means that nothing can be known in advance. While this undermines the prefiguration of trans or takatāpui time, it also affords broader spectra of temporalities to emerge in relation. However, this is not to say that takatāpui time, as a distinct phenomenon that emerges through coloniality, is not an equally valid experience for Māori navigating Te Ao Pākehā. Throughout the wānanga, we were mindful to hold spacetime for all temporalities that emerged, without qualification of their validity.

5. Ā Tōna Wā: Nourishing Seeds in Their Own Time

Commenting on the Waitangi Tribunal decisions on Te Tiriti o Waitangi claims, [M. Jackson \(2022\)](#) notes “treaties aren’t meant to be settled, they’re meant to be honoured.” Likewise, it would be a mistake to assume that it is either possible or desirable to develop a mode of resolving the spectre of chrononormativities. Indeed, the very pursuit of strategies that smooth and blend, if not erase, difference is imperialistic ([Jaramillo-Aristizabal 2026](#)). In a kōrero between [Cameron-Lewis and Mika \(2025\)](#), Mika points out that the epistemological capture of relations—seeking to know in absolute terms—renders those relations inert, unable to operate as The All. In other words, Te Ao Māori cannot function because, unlike Western onto-epistemologies built on definition through negation ([St. Pierre 2016](#)), it operates as an ontology of being that is predicated on un/knowability ([Mika 2017](#); [Pasley and Sturm 2026](#)). While the pure potential of Te Korekore is also present in the other cosmological worlds of Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama, it can never be fully grasped and known because only a fraction of Te Korekore’s infinite possibility materialises ([Nepia](#)

2012). Therein, we looked to whanaungatanga to understand what it means to foster good relations.

When we opened the joint wānanga with both the Kirikiriroa and Tāmaki Makaurau cohorts, we were welcomed into the marae by hau kāinga from those lands with a pōhiri that formally opened the space and allowed all of us to stay in the marae. In line with this custom, we also closed wānanga with a whakakapi, taking the time to wrap up, acknowledge each other and the hospitality afforded to us by hau kāinga. Waiti's whaikōrero during this whakakapi allowed them to honour tikanga Māori, while also passing the responsibilities of the research project forward to the facilitators. This action is important in that it averts a responsabilisation of the participants for the issues they have inherited, but is also significant in the way the whaikōrero enacted the reciprocal exchange of koha, fulfilling the participants' obligation to the research and returning the responsibility to us to act on their contributions (Mead 2003). Moreover, this closing of the wānanga simultaneously opened the opportunity for new configurations of the relationships with participants, inviting Waiti to co-author this work with us. Waiti's position, both as a former participant and someone who straddles Te Ao Pākehā and Te Ao Māori, as a te reo Māori speaker and community member, is pertinent in this exercise of bridging worlds.

On this sunny autumn afternoon, Waiti spoke eloquently on the paepae at Ngā Taurua Marae in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, to close our third research wānanga. Waiti's poem below draws on their whaikōrero, which centred on the whakataukī, poipoia te kākano kia puāwai; nurture the seed so that it may flourish. Moreover, they shared that the thoughts and kōrero that took place in the wānanga that weekend formed seeds that we collectively planted, but now the participants pass it forward to the research team to continue to nourish those seeds. In this way, participants offered themselves as koha, fostering an obligation for fellow participants and researchers to meet them on their own time and terms. Waiti also remarked that the growth and thriving of these seeds of research cannot be held to strict Western expectations. For the seeds, just like the tītoki, will bloom only when the conditions are right, when time allows: ā tōna wā. Therein, the whaikōrero marks the closure of this cycle and the beginning of a new cycle as we, the researchers, fulfil our obligation to the seeds of mātauranga that emerged. This section responds to the poem Waiti composed that speaks to the three seeds that resonated with the notion of holding multiple times with/in the research. Drawing on the theoretical tools developed thus far, we address the absent presences (cf. Haraway 2016) that co-constituted the research; disentangling colonialities of chrononormativity; and how whakawhanaungatanga affords a re-weaving of temporalities that enables them to co-exist together-apart. What follows is a poem bridging worlds and temporalities, followed by Waiti's expansion.

Soil,
foundation,
Where you and I begin and end

This singular darkness bares untold worlds
He kākano, seeds, a burst of light unfurls,
Root networks outstretched,
Like hands at prayer,
Reaching out to friends and lovers, they snare

All of this buried and bound beneath our feet
In our blood stream
On the wind and on the sea

Mātauranga, passing fluidly

Making worlds
 Between you and me
 What came before
 And what will be
 Ā tōna wā,
 Hei te wā tītoki

The tītoki blooms only when the time is right, when its conditions for growth have been met, not before, not after, in its own space and time. When wānanga came to a close, I (Waiti) was reminded of these sentiments of the natural world. As a participant, this research was akin to the act of sowing seeds. The shoots, saplings and results of which would, like the tītoki, come to the fore just when the time was right. These seeds wouldn't necessarily grow or bear fruit on a schedule, or in the season we expect, but the importance of sowing them and nurturing them regardless of what was expected of them tapped into something special. As the wānanga was coming to an end, I was reflecting on the work of British mycologist Merlin Sheldrake. [Sheldrake \(2020\)](#) illuminates the expansive universe of fungi and lichen, and in doing so offers the understanding of mycelial networks as a map of the histories of fungi and "that all life-forms are in fact processes not things". I saw a comparable network of connections sprawling out before me as I thought about the series of events and connections that had led me to engage in this research, and I could begin to see an outline, an echo, a blueprint of where this research could go. Every contribution in a wānanga, including that which is not said, has the power to nurture this budding seed. Like the complex networks of mycelium, the outcomes of these unique seeds may be wide-reaching and express themselves in ways that we may never expect. Nutrients, whakaaro and energy may be transmitted through the roots that these seeds embed in the whenua, "bound by a covenant of reciprocity" ([Kimmerer 2013](#)). All of this, going on beneath our feet, sprawling, intertwined, connected.

6. The First Seed: Iti Te Kupu, Nui Te Korero

A prominent dynamic in each wānanga involved the absence of some prospective participants. In the first Tāmaki hui, three were sick on the day, and potential replacements could not be organised at short notice. In the Kirikiriroa wānanga, one of the expected attendees could not make it. For the combined wānanga, a combination of sickness, reduced capacity and schedule clashes meant that only a portion of the whole group could make it to the noho marae. Without qualification, we trusted that participants were the best judges of their own capacity, so when they were unable to attend, we sought to honour this absence. Often, absences, no-shows or dropouts are framed as a methodological breakdown, which renders the research less valid or valuable ([Pasley 2026](#)); however, this is problematic because it denigrates embodiments that do not conform to the researchers' agenda ([Kafer 2013](#)). To honour and value the Crip Time ([Kafer 2013](#)) that some participants operate with/in will sometimes mean that they will not be present. This is integral to our commitment to participants' hauora, embodying an access intimacy ([Mingus 2014](#)) that refuses to penalise non-participation. Our communities are co-constituted by the inclusions and exclusions performed through this research, and manaakitanga for absences is part of the broader project of care for our communities. Moreover, while koha fosters obligations from participants ([Mead 2003](#)), this can obfuscate the researchers' broader investment in our communities beyond the research. By remaining absent when needed, the participants are fostering the same affordances for the community as a whole by feeding into a culture that appreciates the variation and variability of our capacities.

Kanohi ki te kanohi, this was also evident in how different contributions were given space and time, even if they did not come in the form of extensive oral input or literally

face-to-face. Occasionally, participants had to step away or focus on being present but not adding their thoughts to discussions. Often, methodocentrism (Snaza and Weaver 2015) leads to methods pre-determining who counts as a 'good' participant, by virtue of whether or not they can contribute in the manner anticipated by researchers. However, our goal was to resist this proceduralism (Springgay and Truman 2018) and allow participants to turn up as themselves, whatever that means. One participant, Tiwha, demonstrated an adept awareness of their capacity, contributing few words to conserve their energy, but providing a robust kōrero when they did. While other participants stoked the fire of the kōrero with their many thoughts, Tiwha embodied the whakataukī, *iti te kupu, nui te kōrero*, which demonstrated how mātauranga emerges through embodied listening. As facilitators, it was important to ensure that all communication, including silences, was received with equal enthusiasm, as they were all fundamental to the configuration of relations that made the mātauranga that sprouted from this wānanga possible. Rather than facilitating 'solutions-focused' discussions, seeking to produce resolution, the wānanga allowed participants to turn up as themselves and address what was important to them. At more than one point, Tiwha highlighted that they did not know the answer to some of the questions that were raised. This was a useful reminder for Ampersand and Moana, as researchers, that the purpose of this wānanga was not to saddle the participants with the responsibility to solve the issues we addressed, but to foster the wā in a manner that allowed participants to share what was important to them.

Wānanga are particularly appropriate in this regard because they encompass the seen and unseen, the spoken and unsaid. That is, this is a material embodiment of what it means for Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama to be present in the sharing of mātauranga. Further, our research wānanga valued silence, deep listening, and spoken kōrero. The participants' proclivities and how they turned up and communicated on the day are necessarily part of the variation of bodies and embodiment (Pierre 2015). Just as Te Kore is a limitless realm of potential, rather than a void of nothingness, the absence and silence are not a "lack" but an integral component of the research, sowing a seed that was just as critical to the kōrero. Together, the calls and responses, vocalisations and silences, shaped the wā that all of us shared.

7. The Second Seed: Different Relations, Relations of Difference

While the wānanga provide a precedent for participants turning up on their own terms and times, they are not exempt from the spectre of colonialities that inevitably haunted our engagements. In particular, we were mindful that transnormative temporalities, which seek to contort trans and takatāpui bodies into colonialities of gender (Lugones 2007), were liable to creep back into discussions (Pasley and Sturm 2026). For example, medical temporalities - from the age of consent (Pasley et al. 2022) and access to age-appropriate performativities (Siverskog 2015)—could become the normative backdrop for discussions. This risk was also present in the proposition of reworking the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education 2007, 2020), as this might have grounded discussions within schooling temporalities (Hohti 2016). Fortunately, we embraced the rejection of our initial proposition (Pasley 2026), appreciating the more capacious response-abilities that emerged from participants' desire to focus on building public pedagogies, less constrained by established orders. This also appreciated the reality that schools may not be the most effective site of learning for those who exceed normative subjectivities (Fenaughty et al. 2021). In this way, the kōrero became much more capacious and made wā for all contributions.

However, Ampersand and Moana note that it was not their job to police participants' 'good' participation. While we did not need to valorise one form of communication over another in our analyses, it was integral that the researchers allowed the participants to

navigate these dynamics as a group. Similarly, participants' discussions were not the researchers' to refine or develop, even as members of trans and takatāpui communities themselves, as participants' contributions were not valued based on their sophistication or merit. At one point, while Ampersand interceded in a discussion around relationship styles to suggest that we should not denigrate any relationship that meets the needs of those in those relationships, it was important for participants to explore these issues for themselves. To judge the participants' contribution based on an external sense of 'veracity' prefigures what is counted as meaningful, and misses the point of meeting them as they are. This comes with the risk of participants causing offence or overstepping, which could lead to a breakdown in relationships, in line with utu (Hoskins, personal communication); however, the participants demonstrated aroha in their generosity of spirit, allowing each other to turn up as themselves (Hoskins 2010; personal communication). Transnormativities did not materialise in the way we feared they might, but this was the participants' doing. As Hoskins (2010) articulates, it is through this willingness to know and be affected by the other on their own terms that they can receive the other, as they are and with whatever temporality they materialise with. This demonstrates a dissolution of the queer quantum that seeks to qualify community membership by degree (cf. Pasley 2026). Furthermore, it illustrates the obligation inherent in the koha that is participants' vulnerability to be themselves, which demands the commitment to manaakitanga for the other turning up as themselves. The final seed presents the whanaungatanga that embodies this overarching process of fostering good relations.

8. The Third Seed: Whanaungatanga, for Better or Worse

As an ongoing practice in wānanga, whanaungatanga was the method by which all those gathered could meet each other on their own time/terms, including participants who were unable to attend or had to leave early. This echoes Ngātai-Tautuku's (2025) research wānanga with queer and takatāpui Māori, which found whanaungatanga to be a common thread in takatāpui identity, belonging and expression. Whanaungatanga holds the root word 'whānau', which can be translated as family, but is more accurately described as one of the fundamental social structures in te Ao Māori that is not limited to the nuclear family structure. 'Whanaunga' generally refers to relations, as in the kinship connections that make up whānau. Further, while the word can refer to genealogical kinship ties, known as whakapapa whānau, 'kaupapa whānau' refers to kinship through shared intent and is comparable to the queer notion of chosen family (Doyle 2023; Pihama et al. 2020; Cram and Pitama 1998). Similarly, Rata and Al-Asaad's (2019) research concerning relationships between Māori and settlers of colour describes whanaungatanga as "family-like" kinship, based in mutuality and solidarity. Whanaungatanga can also be translated as belonging, which (Hamley et al. 2025) argue is crucial to trans and non-binary Māori hauora, particularly when belonging needs to be fostered, rather than being a given, as a consequence of marginalisation. Pihama et al. explain how wānanga, as a "collective approach to research," embodies the importance of whānau and the recognition of "whanaungatanga (relationality) that is practised within all such gatherings (Pihama et al. 2025, p. 12).

Whanaungatanga informs what it might mean to foster ethical encounters between the multiplicitous ontologies and temporalities that proliferated throughout the wānanga, without privileging one ontology over another. By way of example, Burgess and Moko-Painting (2020) describe a Māori futurism that allows other temporalities to co-operate beyond the settler state through whanaungatanga. They explain that whakapapa—the intergenerational layers of relationships to people and the natural world—allows us to simultaneously see with the eyes of our ancestors (onamata) and with the eyes of our mokopuna (anamata), which unsettles the fiction of colonialism's authority and inevitability.

Their perspective, while grounded in Te Ao Māori, provides for the meeting of other worlds outside of Māori ontologies, such as Pākehā, trans and crip worlds and times. The work of whanaungatanga is to foster good relations amongst, within, and between these worlds and times, such as meeting the other as they arrive, in whatever ways they choose to participate (or not). It means acknowledging that all research participants, Māori and Tauīwi, come into wānanga as their full selves, with their own temporalities. Anchoring our research in whanaungatanga affirms all relations and their ancestors (pasts) and descendants (futures) they embody.

Therein, the immanent constitution of wānanga potentiates whanaungatanga; however, an important distinction is that this mode of engagement does not give researchers control of relations, but allows relations (including the participants and researchers they constitute) to show up on their own terms. The example that gave life to this seed can be seen in how the participants radically shifted how the wānanga materialised. Though we held the first two wānanga in separate cities, months apart, and with two different groups of trans and takatāpui young people, both groups communicated a desire to come together in one large wānanga. The groups were very different in their backgrounds, life experiences, and demographics, but everyone expressed a desire to share kōrero with more trans and takatāpui people, to strengthen and grow connections between us. Following the commitment to co-design, the researchers prioritised the participants' mana over pre-established methods and ensured that they could turn up in ways that were meaningful to them.

While we embrace [Burgess and Moko-Painting's \(2020\)](#) argument, there were also some reservations around the limits to whanaungatanga's generalisability; that it might not function as intended if it encountered worlds that do not share the ontological assumption of relational co-constitution. Indeed, both Māori and Pākehā participants were wrestling with coloniality and may each find responsible modes of operating with/in their respective worlds, but what is to say that these modes are compatible across worlds? As [\(Smith 2000\)](#) denotes, the answer to the question of what is ethical may be fundamentally different because the relations that define whanaungatanga are situated with/in different ontologies, and to insist on one's superiority over the other is in itself colonising ([Jaramillo-Aristizabal 2026](#)). Therein, our concern emerged from the fear that those not grounded in the principles of whanaungatanga, albeit engaging ethically through the principles of their own worlds, might present the limits of whanaungatanga as a means of accounting for the fruitful meeting of worlds. Specifically, we worried that transnormative approaches to gender ([Pasley et al. 2022](#)), which employ relative privilege to gain purchase amidst colonialities (of gender, whiteness, ableism, etc.), might dominate discussions and minimise takatāpuitanga. Our discussions were focused on Western educational institutions ([Coloma 2013](#)), touched on trans medical apparatuses, and highlighted capitalist inequalities. Despite these fears, these dynamics did not transpire, and the relations that emerged speak back to the capacity of whanaungatanga to afford participants' autonomy, including the risk of relations breaking down.

Through the tikanga of kanohi ki te kanohi, [Hoskins \(2010\)](#) illustrates how responsibility for the other requires engaging with and being willing to be affected by the other. This attention to the other and the relations that define them offers novel ways of knowing and being; im/possibilities that as of yet only exist in Te Korekore ([Pasley and Sturm, 2026](#)). However, this articulates the most impactful insight from this seed: as researchers, it is not our responsibility to ensure that participants practised manaakitanga for one another's differences. That is up to them. Appreciating one another's co-constitution does not remove the possibility of relations collapsing (Hoskins, personal communication). While there is always a risk of relations breaking down, the capaciousness of wānanga is evident in how

this was averted through the participants' aroha for one another, allowing one another to turn up as themselves. In turn, Wānanga provided the conditions for whanaungatanga, and whanaungatanga allowed multiple worlds to meet, but it was their commitment to each other through this difference that sustained the positive relations. To put it another way, this dynamic supports participants to turn up as themselves, and this offering of self becomes the koha offered to one another, which fosters an obligation to meet others on their own terms (Hoskins 2010). Our participants honoured this obligation, beautifully. Other onto-epistemologies have developed ethics of meeting others on their own terms, from political ontology (de la Cadena 2010) to response-ability (Barad 2014), but these seeds illustrate how wānanga, sustained through manaakitanga for difference and buttressed by the affordances of aroha in the face of potential breakdown, support whanaungatanga to foster positive relations. As this project brought together multiple worlds and times in Aotearoa, it followed that mātauranga Māori, seeded in the whenua of this place, should inform this kaupapa. While wānanga conjure mātauranga through kōrero, the ideas that participants offered were less important than how they articulated what was important to them. It is not their responsibility to solve the issues they raised, but their compulsion to come together tells us that, whatever worlds they encounter, they have the capacity to build better relations. A critical role for us as researchers is to invest in the mana motuhake of participants as individuals and the tino rangatiratanga of the group, in all their multiplicity. This is integral to the overarching praxis of fostering everyone's autonomy to turn up as themselves, individually and collectively, bringing their worlds and temporalities along with them.

9. A Final Kōrero

Whanaungatanga, potentiated through wānanga and supported by manaakitanga and aroha, emerged as a seed rooted in the lifeblood of this kaupapa and its participants. Notably, while integral to kaupapa Māori research praxis, this seed was offered by the participants and germinated through this paper. In our pursuit of cultivating mātauranga around what it might mean to co-design decolonising gender-affirming (sexualities) education, whakawhanaungatanga emerged through and with presences, absences and all the difference that constituted the wānanga, demonstrating their capacity to hold relations as they emerge. Therein, while there is always the risk of relations breaking down and the creep of colonialities of chrononormativity, the participants exemplified what it means to meet others on their own terms. Grounding the analysis in Te Ao Māori, informed by pūrākau and whakataukī, allowed us to illustrate the importance of supporting participants to turn up as themselves, including ensuring that the methodology can embody what is important to them, as a means of meeting them on their terms and times, in all their multiplicity.

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Glossary

This is a brief glossary of kupu Māori used in this paper. Given the relational nature of definition in te ao Māori, these definitions are by no means absolute; however, they are explained according to how they are used in the context of our writing.

Ako	reciprocal learning (Mika 2017)
Anamata	seeing into the future
Aroha	love and respect
Ā tōnā wā	in his/her/their own time
Hapū	sub-nation, sub-tribe
Hau kāinga	tribal people of the marae
Hauora	health
Hei te wā tītoki	in the time the tītoki tree blooms (Moorfield n.d.)
Hui	meeting
Irawhiti	A Māori identity/way of being that can be translated to trans
Iwi	nation, tribe
Kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face
Kaupapa	plan, programme, agenda (Te Aka Māori Dictionary n.d.-a)
Koha	gift, exchange
Kōrero	discussion
Mana motuhake	autonomy, self determination
Manaakitanga	hospitality
Māori	the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand
māori	This refers to ‘usual’ things. For example, takatāpui might be perceived as Other within te ao Pākehā, but māori within te ao Māori.
Mātauranga	Māori knowledge, the knowledge cultivated in wānanga
Mauri	life force
Mokopuna	grandchildren, descendants
Mōteatea	chants, songs
Onamata	seeing into the past
Paepae	orator’s bench (Te Aka Māori Dictionary n.d.-b)
Poipoia ngā kākāno kia puawai	nourish the seeds so they may flourish
Pūrākau	foundational stories
Rangatahi	young people
Takatāpui	Māori gender and sexual diversity
Takatāpuitanga	the uniqueness that is being takatāpui
Tauīwi	non-Māori people
Tauira	students
Tauparapara	chant at beginning of whaikōrero
Te Ao Mārama	the world of being (Marsden 2003)
Te Ao Māori	the Māori world, Māori worldviews
Te Korekore	the world of potential being (Marsden 2003)
Te Pō	the world of becoming (Marsden 2003)
Te Reo Māori	the Māori language
Tika	right, just, in accordance with tikanga
Tikanga	Māori cultural protocol, processes, the original law of Aotearoa that governs social relations

Tino rangatiratanga	sovereignty
Tohunga	expert Māori knowledge holder
Tuakana	elder sibling, used in this paper to refer to the reciprocal exchange of lived experience between an elder person and a younger person
Utu	reciprocal exchange
Wā	the simultaneity of space and time (Royal in Refiti et al. 2026)
Wānanga	a gathering for the purpose of learning and exchanging knowledge, grounded in Māori cultural values and processes
Whakapapa	intergenerational connections and relationships that transcend linear time
Whakaaro	thoughts
Whakakapi	a closing
Whakatauki	proverbial sayings
Whakawhanaungatanga	the practice of making good relations
Whaikōrero	ceremonial speaking role during events such as wānanga
Whānau	family, fundamental unit of social structure to Māori society
Whanaunga	kinship connections based in shared experience, mutuality, and shared responsibility (Rata and Al-Asaad 2019)
Whanaungatanga	fostering good relations, being in good relation

Notes

- ¹ Throughout, Māori terms are predominantly employed without translation in the body of the text, except where we unpack the implications of a concept. Translations are provided in the glossary at the end of the text. While we appreciate that this may inconvenience unfamiliar readers, it allows Māori words to be first read without the distortion of an English translation, especially given how fraught translation is at the best of times. As scholars committed to the integrity of mātauranga Māori, we reject conventions that prioritise intelligibility on colonial terms (e.g., italicizing ‘foreign’ terms or providing definitions in parentheses; [Te Punga Somerville 2022](#)) and treat language deficits as pedagogical failings, without appreciating that te reo Māori is fundamental to Māori ways of knowing and being or demanding that the reader confront their own epistemic limitations (cf. [Stewart 2020](#)). For accessibility purposes, readers can open two copies of the manuscript, should they find flipping back and forth difficult or disruptive.
- ² While we appreciate that ‘trans’ is only meaningful relative to the colonialities of gender that are being critiqued ([Pasley 2022](#)), and there is mounting scholarship that is mindful of how Indigenous terms like ‘takatāpui’ have been captured and coerced to operate within the bounds of the Western ontologies of gender/sex/sexuality ([Pihama et al. 2020](#); [Quinlivan et al. 2014](#)), we retain these terms as part of our kaupapa for multiple integral reasons. First, they are the terms that our participants used and, as this paper has argued, it is fundamental to the tikanga of whanaungatanga that they be able to turn up on their own terms. Furthermore, while it is necessary to be cautious of the risks of reinscribing colonialities of gender, they are not going away. Grounded in principles of decolonisation, as opposed to anti-colonisation ([Singh 2017](#)), we understand the ethics of this mahi to be a matter of honouring the relations that comprise the lives of our participants, whatever their relation to colonial inheritances are. This allows us to help them explore what it would mean to foster more capacious responses to the dynamics we encounter as a group, rather than holding individuals accountable to a predefined set of values, which is inconsistent with the immanent relational onto-epistemologies held by the researchers and foundational to te ao Māori ([Mika 2017](#)).

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