

Takarangi: Developing a framework for a large program of research towards decolonisation and racial justice



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Abstract

Large, multi-year research programs have the potential to yield transformative and impactful research outcomes, particularly for research programs working towards emancipatory and decolonial aims. In large, multi-year projects, there is a need for epistemological, ontological and axiological consistencies across the projects involved. However, few studies have been conducted to guide researchers working in such programs through the critical, ethical and reflexive processes needed to achieve theoretical coherence. Drawing from the works of Indigenous scholars and literature on anti-oppressive research approaches within the fields of anti-racism and decolonisation, this paper outlines how WERO (Working to End Racial Oppression), a multi-year research program based in Aotearoa New Zealand, developed the Takarangi research framework to address this large knowledge gap. The framework is based on the Takarangi, an ancient double spiral pattern prominent in Māori carving that circles inwards and outwards, visually capturing how multiple and interrelated elements are at play in the production of knowledge. The Takarangi aids researchers within teams to reflexively consider how their social positioning, ontology, axiology, ethics, epistemology and research goals shape all aspects of their research process, from community engagement to transformative action. While the Takarangi framework was built within and for a particular context of knowledge production, in detailing the processes involved in its development and implementation, this paper aimed to enable researchers working with Indigenous, racialised and

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minoritised communities to flexibly interpret, build upon and implement the Takarangi model to support their own projects, institutes and programs of research.

Keywords: Methodology; Anti-racist; Decolonising; Indigenous

Highlights

- This paper presents the Takarangi framework for decolonial, anti-racist research.
- The framework aids coherence across multiple projects, disciplines and knowledge bases.
- It addresses knowledge gaps in methodologies for large research programs.
- An organisational implementation plan for the framework is presented.
- The Takarangi framework can be applied to other projects, programs or institutes.

Introduction

Large, multi-year programs of research enable sustained, coordinated knowledge production. Insights can be shared across multiple projects, spanning many disciplines, and team members are able to work collaboratively, drawing on one another's expertise and relationships for their mutual benefit. Thus, large programs have the potential to yield transformative, impactful research outcomes to 're-connect research with real-world problems' (Hoffman et al. 2017).

However, for research programs to sustain ethical processes of knowledge production and achieve theoretical coherence, there is a need for epistemological, ontological and axiological consistencies across the projects involved. Aligned approaches to research are especially crucial for programs working towards emancipatory and decolonial aims. Within such contexts, the day-to-day processes of research can be further complicated by a variety of factors. The difficulties achieving alignment will be specific to each research program. For the WERO (Working to End Racial Oppression) program of research in Aotearoa New Zealand, these challenges have included: working across multiple knowledge systems, academic disciplines and geographical

locations, and working in a research area that has historically been under-funded and is therefore under-developed (anti-racism has received minimal scholarly attention in Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1990s) (Mutu 2019).

Research in the field of anti-racism and decolonisation must be done, at the very least, with knowledge of the history of modern research itself. Critical, Black and Indigenous scholars have long demonstrated how research through the modern academy has been tied to the Western colonial apparatus (Denzin et al. 2008; Smith 2021). The way research is embedded within colonial frames and institutions shapes how knowledge is 'created' or 'found', and how individuals and communities are engaged within the production of knowledge (Brown and Strega 2005). Within anti-oppressive work, clarity about basic starting points – such as 'Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve?' (Smith 2021) – is a core component of accountability. These starting points are therefore interrogated by many activists and scholars working with historically marginalised communities. The works of Indigenous, Black feminist, subaltern and queer scholars have resulted in a gradually growing acceptance of the potentialities for research to be





used as a tool of resistance, to ‘speak back’ to the colonial academy, and to amplify voices that have been systemically erased from how we come to ‘know’ (Brown and Strega 2005; Chilisa 2012; Hooks 2014; Smith 2021). The call to decolonise research – most prominently made by Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou) in her seminal book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) – led to numerous studies on Indigenous, subaltern and third-world methodologies (Wilson 2008; Windchief and San Pedro 2019; Ahmad 2021). Yet, there has been little exploration into how large research programs that comprise multiple projects and span many disciplines can commit to such emancipatory and justice-centred projects, with depth, care and consistency. Several journal articles have offered analytical frames for how to foster communities of practice within large research programs in the fields of sustainability, health and the ‘natural sciences’ (Adler et al. 2009; Hoffman et al. 2017; Gouais and Bates [1979] 2022). However, critical, liberatory and non-Western approaches, and specifically frameworks designed for decolonial and anti-oppressive research, were not included within the scope of these papers. For instance, Adler et al. (2009), in their study on working across research boundaries, recommended ways forward for research programs that allow for legitimacy of research leadership and developing business models. However, within these models, researchers’ foundational theories of change and knowledge are left unexplored.

As researchers working within WERO, this gap in knowledge has presented challenges in everyday research work. Addressing them became an indispensable part of establishing and strengthening the program. This paper outlines how the Takarangī research framework was developed to build from decolonial research approaches and guide work. The framework is based on the Takarangī, a double spiral

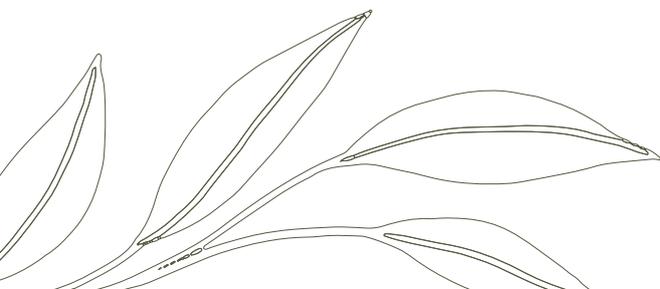
pattern prominent in Māori carving that circles inwards and outwards, to visually capture how multiple and interrelated elements are at play in the production of knowledge. The layers represent how assumptions underpinning research (positioning, ontology, axiology, ethics, epistemology and research goals) influence key stages in the research process.

This paper presents the Takarangī framework itself, along with details on how it was planned to implement the Takarangī, to address the challenges that inevitably emerge in inter-disciplinary research spanning multiple projects. While the Takarangī framework was built within and for a particular context – government-funded research located across universities and research institutes, involving a diverse team of academics and community researchers – its processes of development and implementation can be flexibly interpreted and applied to other research projects, institutes and programs. This paper begins with a brief introduction to the WERO program of research, before describing the development of the Takarangī research framework, and concluding with its potential applications for future research.

The WERO program of research

Working to End Racial Oppression (WERO) is a five-year, interdisciplinary, multi-method program of research that seeks to advance understandings of the social and economic costs of racism, the systems that produce and reproduce racism, and transformative responses opposing racism. Bringing together more than 30 researchers who work across four themes and 17 individual projects, the team explores pathways towards the horizon of decolonisation and racial justice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

At the first WERO research retreat, it was identified that the team came to the program with different





cultural knowledge and experiences of racialisation. The team included members who were Indigenous, as well as settlers, and ancestry was traced to many parts of the world. There were also different disciplinary backgrounds, preferred approaches to research, and levels of expertise in Indigenous and racism research. Notably, these differing experiences, perspectives and research expectations should be acknowledged prior to the commencement of any research project. This was identified as an issue that needed to be addressed to bring consensus to key objectives and ensure clarity about the goals of emancipatory and decolonial research. There was a clear need for a ‘roadmap’ of sorts to help ensure that the team worked with a shared purpose and coherence across research approaches.

Towards a shared research framework

Two Indigenous team members led the work developing a shared research framework, with support from the wider team. It is understood that to achieve a cohesive effort, research must be underpinned by jointly agreed goals, epistemological starting points (such as definitions of key terminology) and values to guide the work. During the first full team gathering and in the months that followed, discussions were held on research goals, working definitions of key terminology and charter documents (or core texts) that should inform the work.

Meetings were also held in workstreams to gather suggestions for what the shared values should be. An important aspect of this process was that team members came up with the values themselves, rather than having the values defined for them. All suggested values were collated and organised into themes (see [Appendices A and B](#)). As team members’ suggestions were arranged into themes, it was realised that some suggestions were best described as ‘values’ and others

as ‘research ethics’; the themes were therefore divided into those two categories. Suggestions were organised into 12 themes (six values and six research ethics). Positioning and ontology goals were also included in the framework, as they are important aspects underpinning research approaches ([Chilisa 2012](#)).

The research team wanted to include major steps in the research process in the framework, but to present them in a non-linear way, to capture how each layer of the framework can influence and be influenced by other layers. The Takarangī (double spiral) was chosen as a framework due to its potential for capturing this dynamic movement.

The Takarangī framework

The Takarangī is a double spiral pattern prominent in Māori carving ([Figure](#)). In this framework, the Takarangī spirals simultaneously inwards and outwards between the interrelated layers of positioning, ontology, axiology, ethics, epistemology and research goals. These aspects of research informed each step of the

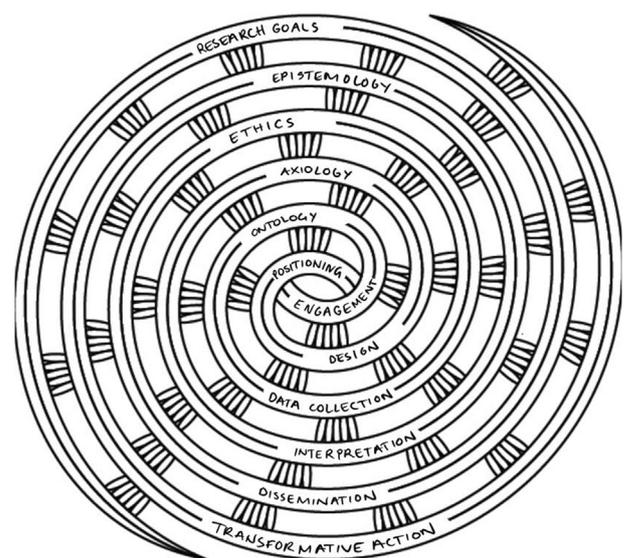


Figure: Takarangī double spiral.





research process: community engagement, design, data collection, interpretation, dissemination and transformative action.

As the analogy of the Takarangī suggests, rather than existing in a linear causal pathway, each layer simultaneously informs and is informed by the other layers. For example, the research goals had bearing on the ethics that were emphasised, and the planned outputs affected decisions that were made about the research design.

Takarangi: an individual, self-paced learning module

Having developed a research framework that could bring together the large multidisciplinary team, in-person training on the Takarangī was arranged for the second WERO research retreat. Prior to their attendance, team members were sent resources and asked to complete an individual, self-paced learning module. To prompt their thinking, team members read about different approaches to research and were asked to identify which approach most closely aligned

with their own research, as shown in the excerpt from the self-paced learning module in [Box 1](#) below.

After reading through the descriptions of each of the research paradigms, team members worked through the following questions ([Box 2](#)). Given WERO's research goals, specific questions relating to racism and colonialism (but not other specific forms of oppression) were included.

Having briefly considered how research approaches are underpinned by a series of assumptions, the module then introduced the layers of the Takarangī. Key concepts in the Takarangī were introduced in simple terms, and questions were posed to prompt team members' deep thinking, as shown in the excerpts that follow ([Boxes 4 to 9](#)). The instructions provided to team members are also presented in [Box 3](#), to show how team members were prepared for the challenging nature of some of the questions included in the module. Challenging refers to the potential for emotional

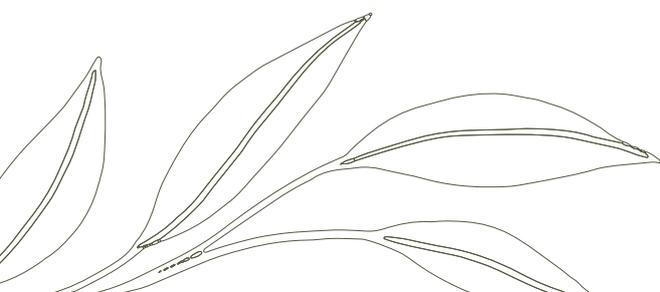
Box 1. Excerpt from the Takarangī self-paced learning module: Approaches to research

The WERO team includes specialists from multiple disciplines, who use vastly different approaches and methods in their work. In this section we make explicit that which may often be taken for granted within research approaches.

Methodologies, or approaches to research, are built upon the assumptions held by researchers about the nature of reality and our place within it (ontologies); value systems (axiologies); and theories of knowledge (epistemologies).

Bagele [Chilisa \(2012\)](#) identified three Western research paradigms (Positivist, Interpretive and Transformative) along with an Indigenous research paradigm. These paradigms are described below. All these paradigms have strengths and limitations. A strength of WERO is our ability to draw together research across these paradigms, into a coherent program of research towards ending racial oppression.

WERO researchers can use these loose descriptions to identify the paradigms they have tended to use in their own research. The point of doing so is to initiate our thinking about the assumptions underpinning our research, as opposed to prescribing any particular research paradigm.





Box 2. Excerpt from the Takarangi self-paced learning module: Questions for self-reflection

1. Which paradigm best corresponds to your research?
2. In what ways has your academic field reproduced unequal power relations?
3. Does your research typically consider the impacts of imperialism, colonialism or racial capitalism?
4. Does your research typically incorporate Indigenous or other non-Western knowledge systems?

reactions when researchers are asked to consider the impact of their worldview and identity on research. It felt important to prepare those researchers for whom this could be the first time they had been asked such questions.

Takarangi: group workshop

When the full team gathered at the second WERO research retreat, half a day was set aside for a workshop on the Takarangi research framework. During the workshop, team members worked through a printed resource that they had earlier received electronically. The workshop began by having team

members reflect on their experience working through the individual, self-paced learning module, and invited team members to share their thoughts in small groups, and then during full team discussion. The self-paced learning module had allowed team members to work through their own deeply held personal beliefs. The in-person workshop that followed allowed the team to go through the layers of the Takarangi as a group, specifically in relation to the WERO program of research.

Positioning

Once again, team members were asked to position themselves, this time in relation to their own project/s within the WERO program of research, as shown in [Box 10](#). It was noted that the term ‘race’ is seldom used in New Zealand; ‘ethnicity’ is preferred. This convention functions to obscure race and racism. Therefore, prompts were used that explicitly forced team members to consider their race. In other contexts, having participants consider their racial-ethnic identity positioning may be more appropriate.

Ontology

Ontologies were then considered in relation to the WERO program of research, as shown in [Box 11](#).

Box 3. Excerpt from the Takarangi self-paced learning module: Instructions

Once again, the purpose of the following exercise is to make explicit that which may be taken for granted within research approaches. WERO team members will work through the layers of the framework to interrogate the assumptions underpinning their research.

Critical questions will be posed at each level of the Takarangi, to stimulate self-reflection. Take the time necessary to consider these questions. You may not know the answers to some questions. You may even feel that the answer to some questions cannot be known. You may also choose to skip questions.

The responses are for each researcher’s own personal use, and do not need to be shared. As noted above, this process begins with looking at our own personal and cultural beliefs, values, practices and aspirations, before applying the framework to our WERO research. Some of the questions relate to groups you belong to. So we begin by positioning ourselves by answering the following questions.





Box 4. Excerpt from the Takarangi self-paced learning module: Positioning

Questions for self-reflection:

1. What ethnic, racial and cultural groups do I belong to?
2. How salient are these group identities to me?
3. How do I feel about being a member of these groups?

To illustrate how worldviews are shaped by ontologies, an example of key concepts in Māori ontologies was provided, as shown in [Box 12](#). Team members were invited to provide other illustrative examples of ontological concepts to add to the Takarangi, as they continue to work together.

The questions to prompt team members' deep thinking about ontologies in relation to their WERO work are presented in [Box 13](#). It was noted that the terms 'faith-based' and 'ethnic' may be preferable to the terms 'religious' and 'cultural', which this research used.

Box 5. Excerpt from the Takarangi self-paced learning module: Ontology

'Ontology' refers to a body of knowledge or particular theory relating to the nature of being ([Chilisa 2012](#)).

Questions for self-reflection:

1. According to my beliefs, what are the origins of the universe?
2. According to my beliefs, do I have a soul that is distinct from my mind and body?
3. According to my beliefs, can I be defined as an individual, or only in relation to others?
4. How do my personal beliefs relate to beliefs commonly held by other members of research teams and institutions I operate within?

Box 6. Excerpt from the Takarangi self-paced learning module: Axiology

'Axiology' means a body of knowledge or a particular theory about values ([Chilisa 2012](#)). Axiologies are closely tied with ethics, religious beliefs and aesthetics.

Questions for self-reflection:

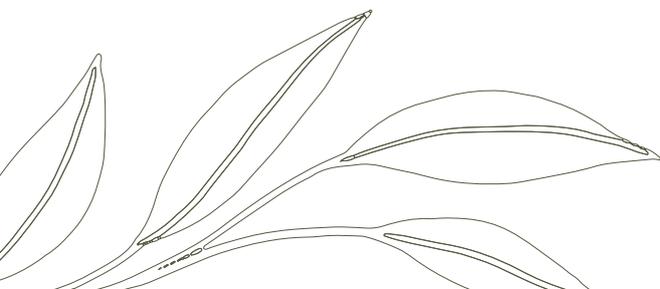
1. List three of your own personal values.
2. List three of your cultural values. (Note: if it is difficult to identify your cultural values, you may instead think about values you consider 'universal'.)
3. Are you able to identify the values of the research institutions you belong to?
4. Do your individual and cultural values align with the values of your research institution/s?

Box 7. Excerpt from the Takarangi self-paced learning module: Ethics

'Ethics' is a body of knowledge relating to moral principles, or a particular set of principles guiding good behaviour ([Chilisa 2012](#)).

Questions for self-reflection:

1. What practices do you follow to uphold your personal or cultural values outside of work?
2. What practices do you follow to uphold your personal or cultural values in your research?
3. What are university ethics processes designed to do?
4. Are there times when your preferred practices do not align with those required by your institution?
5. As a researcher, who are you accountable to, and how is that accountability formalised in your research projects?





Box 8. Excerpt from the Takarangi self-paced learning module: Epistemology

'Epistemology' means body of knowledge or particular theory relating to knowledge (Chilisa 2012). Epistemologies deal with the nature of truth, and how knowledge can be distinguished from belief or opinion.

Questions for self-reflection:

1. What counts as knowledge?
2. How can knowledge be verified?
3. What existing knowledge do you draw upon in your research, as a starting point?

Axiology

As noted earlier, meetings were held in each of the four workstreams in which WERO researchers put forward values that should underpin research. These ideas were synthesised into six values presented in Box 14 (see Appendix A for a full list of the values put forward in workstream meetings). Values were organised into Moana concepts, that is concepts from the cultures of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (loosely, the Pacific Ocean). Certain values were put forward in

Box 9. Excerpt from the Takarangi self-paced learning module: Research goals

We will now take some time to consider your personal, collective and past research goals.

Questions for self-reflection:

1. What changes would you like to see in society?
2. Are there actions you take to try to bring about these changes?
3. What were the goals of one of your past research projects?
4. What political projects have your past research projects related to?

Box 10. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Positioning

Questions for self-reflection:

1. What racial groups are included in my research project?
2. What group identities intersect with the racial groups in my research?
3. What group identities am I not including, or not making visible?
4. What is my power relationship to the groups included in my research (as an individual and as a member of the group/s I belong to)?
5. How can socioeconomic differences between my racial group/s and other racial groups included in my research be explained?

response to dominant Western research methodologies that have tended to disregard these values.

A more detailed description of these values is also provided in Box 15.

The questions to prompt team members' deep thinking about axiology in relation to their WERO work are presented in Box 16.

Box 11. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Ontology

If our research is to be decolonising and anti-racist, it must affirm Indigenous and racialised groups' ontologies. This does not require that WERO researchers share these philosophical beliefs but does require awareness of and respect for these differences, to avoid academic imperialism (i.e. the presumed superiority of Western ways of knowing).





Box 12. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Māori ontologies

As Māori are Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa, it is helpful for WERO researchers to have an appreciation of Māori worldviews and understand the significance of key concepts, such as: *mauri*, *wairua*, *whakapapa*, *tapu*, *noa* and *mana*.

According to a Māori worldview, there are three orders of reality: the spiritual, the psychic and the physical. Māori cosmogony reveals that the ultimate reality is the spiritual, which precedes and influences the psychic and physical realities (Royal 2003).

People have *wairua*: an unseen aspect that continues to exist beyond physical death (Mead 2003), which is often translated as 'spirit' or 'soul'.

All things living and non-living have a *mauri* (life principle or essential quality) (Mead 2003). The *mauri* is what binds the *wairua* and *tinana* (physical body).

All things (living and non-living, tangible and abstract) are connected through *whakapapa*, or genealogy (Royal 2003). Thus, people are connected through *whakapapa* to the *atua* (gods), to lands, oceans and waterways, to plants and animals, to ideas and to each other.

Tapu (often translated as sacred or prohibited) is inherited through *whakapapa* from the *atua* (Mead 2003), and influences a person's *mana* (prestige, authority).

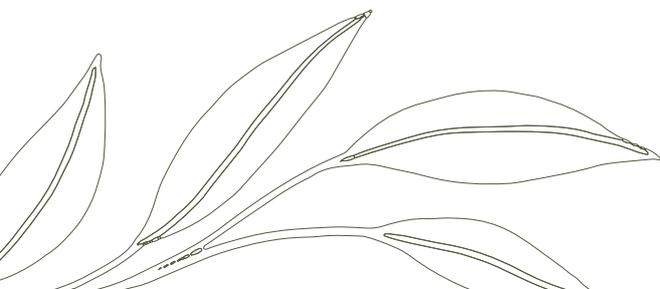
Tapu can also be ritually applied and ceremonially removed (that is, made *noa*, unrestricted or profane) by skilled knowledge holders (Mead 2003). In addition to inheritance, one's *mana* is also influenced through earthly actions (e.g. demonstrating oratory, performance, marital or leadership skills) (Mead 2003).

Box 13. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Ontologies, questions for self-reflection

1. What are some of the key concepts informing the worldviews of racial, religious or cultural groups who are included in my research?
2. How do my personal ideas and/or those of my cultural group align with or differ from the worldviews of groups included in my research?
3. Does my approach to research accommodate different beliefs about the nature of reality and relational ways of being?
4. How could my research approach better accommodate the ontologies of the groups included in my research?

Box 14. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Axiology, derived values

- *Mana atua* (the value placed on spirituality, God or gods – including natural elements)
- *Mana tangata* (the inherent value of all people)
- *Taonga tuku iho* (the value of ancestral languages and knowledges)
- *Ea* (the value of balance, equity and justice)
- *Mana orite* (the value of collective rights and shared power)
- *Vā* (the value of relationality)





Box 15. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Axiology, derived value descriptions

Mana atua means that we acknowledge and respect the value ascribed to gods or a God and have reverence for the natural environment. This means respecting religious freedom and condemning religious persecution. *Mana atua* means we act with respect towards *atua* (God, gods, physical elements) including *Papatūānuku* (the Earth) and *Ranginui* (the sky/atmosphere/heavens), as well as Tangaroa and Hinemoana, who preside over oceans and waterways and all aquatic life, and Tāne-mahuta, whose domains include terrestrial plants and animals.

Humans come into the world with *tapu* and *mana*. The value *mana tangata* means that we take for granted the inherent value and dignity of all people.

Taonga tuku iho means that we value Indigenous languages and ancestral knowledge, and the multiple ways of knowing of racialised groups. This value is necessary due to the damage that has been done to racialised peoples' ways of knowing through colonialism and imperialism.

Ea (balance) means we value equity and justice. In the absence of *ea*, a balancing potential (*rongoā*) must be applied.

Mana orite means that we value collective rights, as well as equal power and esteem. This value is closely related to the concept of *ea* but explicitly applied at the group level. *Mana orite* does not mean that power is unorganised, but that rights and responsibilities are balanced, exploitation is not present, and beliefs in racial superiority and inferiority are rejected.

Vā is a relational ethic that centres co-belonging, and values social and ecological relations as sacred.

As Albert [Wendt \(2002\)](#) explained:

Vā is the space between, the between-ness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things.

Box 16. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Axiology, questions for self-reflection

1. How do these values relate to my own personal ontology (theory of the nature of existence) and that of my cultural group?
2. How well do the WERO values align with the values of research institutions?
3. In what ways has my past research related to stated or unstated values?

Box 17. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Ethics, derived ethics

- *Āta* (humility)
- *Mana aki* (*mana* enhancing, strengths-based approaches)
- *Tiakina* (protection)
- *Utu* (reciprocity)
- *Pono* (integrity)
- *Pūkenga* (brave thinking)





Box 18. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Ethics, derived ethics descriptions

Āta (humility) focuses on our relationships, as well as working to create and hold safe space with corresponding behaviours. *Āta* reminds people to take care in how they behave when engaging in relationship with other people, kaupapa and environments.

Mana aki refers to recognising and upholding the inherent dignity of others. It relates closely with the concept *manaakitanga*: our basic responsibility to provide care, compassion and hospitality to those with whom we come into contact, particularly those in need or those most marginalised. *Mana aki* requires us to challenge deficit framing of oppressed groups and ensure our work promotes human flourishing.

Tiakina, protect and nurture, relates to our obligations and responsibilities to protect peoples, relationships and the *taonga* (things of value) that emerge from those relationships. Within the WERO team, this means assessing the risks our research could pose to ourselves and others and taking steps to mitigate risk. This requires us to think through what the intended and unintended consequences of our work might be.

This ethic compels us to consider the impact of our work and to avoid causing antagonism between racialised groups. *Tiakina* also requires us to look after and protect the knowledge generated by our research.

This includes protecting the intellectual property of Indigenous peoples and racialised communities and being able to distinguish between knowledge that should be shared through our research and that which should not.

Utu refers to reciprocity (such as payments, retribution or recompense) to bring about balance. This ethic requires us to uphold the individual and collective rights of those most marginalised as we strive toward racial justice. Ending racial oppression requires the redistribution of wealth and power. Our WERO research will identify and put forward interventions in processes that reproduce racial inequality.

Pono, integrity, requires that we engage with people openly and honestly, and that we do what we say we are going to do. We are respectful of the positions of others and hold the lived realities of oppressed peoples as true (e.g. by discussing ‘experiences of racism’ as opposed to ‘perceived racism’).

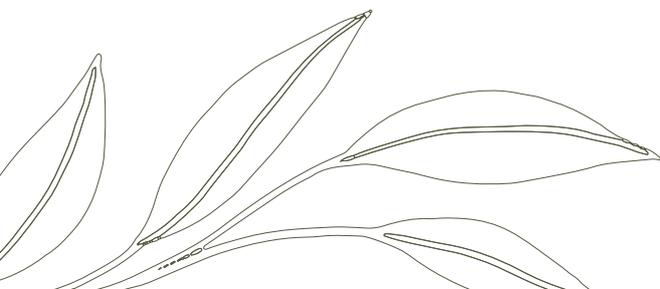
Pūkenga is a term that references knowledge experts. The ethic *pūkenga* means that we are brave in our thinking, curious, critical and bold. We use our disciplinary expertise to create new knowledge, provide nuance, debunk misconceptions and challenge hegemony.

Considerable discussion was generated by the first value *Mana atua*. It was challenging for team members who did not hold beliefs in divine power to include this value. The original wording of the description stated that we acknowledged and respected ‘the value of spirituality, God or gods – including natural elements’ (emphasis added). Considering this tension, the wording was altered to ‘the value placed on spirituality, God or gods – including natural elements’ (emphasis added). This change reflected the agreement that it was important for the WERO team to respect the

spiritual beliefs of the communities that the research is focused on, regardless of whether the researchers hold those beliefs themselves. It was also discussed how it was possible to act with respect towards deities that one does not believe in (e.g. by not disrespecting sacred places).

Ethics

As noted earlier, the values suggested within workstream meetings were also organised into six research ethics (see [Appendix B](#) for a full list of





Box 19. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Ethics, questions for self-reflection

1. Can you think of examples when these ethics have been violated through research?
2. Who or what are the WERO ethics designed to protect, in contrast to university research ethics processes?
3. How will you ensure that each of these ethics are upheld in your research?

suggested research ethics). These ethics describe practices that will be used to uphold values (Box 17).

A more detailed description of these research ethics is also provided in Box 18.

The questions to prompt team members' deep thinking about research ethics in relation to their WERO work are presented in Box 19.

Box 20. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Epistemology, charter documents and recommended texts

- He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī 1835
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi 1840
- The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Report of Matike Mai Aotearoa – The Independent Working Group on Constitutional Transformation
- The United Nations Draft declaration on the Right to International Solidarity
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Box 21. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Epistemology, questions for self-reflection

1. What are common English language translations for the word *rangatiratanga* in He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi?
2. State how your research will honour each of the four articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
3. How will your research contribute to decolonisation, as envisaged in the Report of Matike Mai Aotearoa?
4. Which articles of the UN Declaration of Human Rights is New Zealand failing to uphold, and which articles are particularly relevant to your research?

Epistemology

The goal within WERO is to work towards decolonisation and ending racial oppression. As

Box 22. Excerpt from the Takarangi group workshop: Research goals, questions for self-reflection

1. How does your WERO research work to end racial oppression?
2. What political projects does your research relate to?
3. What outputs or actions (e.g. media engagement, submissions, petitions, policy briefs, tool kits, open letters, directly sharing findings with communities or campaigns) could be built into your research?
4. How will you know that your research has been successful?
5. How does your WERO research work towards decolonisation?



Box 23. Excerpt from the Takarangi implementation template

Stakeholder engagement:

1. Outline the relationships you have, or you intend to build with racialised communities, the public sector and/or advocacy groups.
2. Describe the ways in which you will engage with these groups, and how they will be given opportunities to give feedback on your research.

Research design

1. How do you define racism in your research?
2. How does your research work to end racial oppression?
3. How does your research affirm *tino rangatiratanga* (as guaranteed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi)?

Data collection

4. What racial groups are included in your research project?
5. Have you reviewed knowledge produced by the communities you are researching?
6. How will you ensure that each of the WERO research ethics are upheld in this research?

Analysis and interpretation

7. Do you include an analysis of the impacts of colonialism and racial capitalism on your topic of research?
8. Is the framing of your findings deficit- or strengths-based?
9. What might be the intended and unintended consequences of publishing your research findings for racialised communities?

Dissemination

10. What types of accessible dissemination could be built into your research (e.g. meetings with communities, media, advocates, decision-makers)?

Transformative action

11. What types of transformative action will be built into your research? (e.g. action research, community-based education, campaigns, submissions, petitions, policy briefs, toolkits and training, open letters, etc)
12. How will your research benefit racialised communities?
13. How will you know that your research has been successful?

Support

14. What further support will you need to implement the WERO Takarangi into your research project/s?

researchers, team members draw on different knowledge traditions and academic disciplines. However, some consistency is required to ensure coherence across research projects. The team engage with different definitions of racism, but constructed a statement showing that they agree at base that:

We define racism as a structural phenomenon that creates and reproduces racialised inequities and power hierarchies through (often ostensibly 'colourblind') policies, institutional practices and representations. Thus racial inequities are themselves evidence of racism.



Box 24. Excerpt from the Takarangi implementation template

- The goal of the implementation plan is to make the Takarangi central to normal ways of doing things.
- A manuscript on the development of the Takarangi will be published, so WERO team members have an external text on the research approach.
- A manuscript on the implementation of the Takarangi will be published (e.g. focusing on specific case studies).
- Protocols for communication and publishing should be developed in alignment with the Takarangi. These protocols should include: (a) a standardised way of talking about WERO and its mission; (c) acknowledgement of funder; (d) authorship agreed in advance; (e) manuscripts reviewed for consistency with Takarangi prior to publication.
- WERO team members complete a Takarangi Implementation Template for each of the 17 research projects within six months.
- Theme leaders meet to review project implementation templates to ensure consistency with the Takarangi, and arrange any support required.
- A standing 'Takarangi' agenda item is added to monthly theme leaders meetings and meetings between theme leaders and researchers in their workstreams, prompting discussion on how each project is tracking against the Takarangi framework.
- Every three months, each workstream holds a one-hour workshop focusing on a particular issue they are working on in relation to the Takarangi to enhance implementation capability – a skill that will continue to be of use beyond WERO.
- A specific team member will attend all quarterly workstream workshops and be available to other WERO researchers to assist in Takarangi implementation.
- New members are taken through the Takarangi workshop as part of onboarding.
- The WERO science leader and project manager evaluate the Takarangi implementation plan twice-yearly.

As outlined above, WERO values include *taonga tuku iho* (ancestral ways of knowing). Therefore, WERO epistemologies must value the knowledge of Indigenous and racialised groups. Furthermore, values include *mana tangata* (the inherent value of all people) and *mana orite* (the value of collective rights and equal power). These values are upheld by including, as starting points, foundational constitutional documents, along with individual and collective human rights instruments. Through team discussion, the following charter documents for WERO were chosen (Box 20), which require close reading and careful implementation into the work. Additional

recommended texts are also presented here; this list will continue to be added to over time.

Unlike earlier workshop exercises (which required team members to work as individuals or in small groups to address the same questions), in this part of the workshop, each small group was given a different charter document or recommended text and was required to answer a question relating to that text (Box 21).

Research goals

Central to achieving coherence across the WERO program is ensuring that all projects and team





members are working towards shared goals. Research programs have inherent limitations in their capacity to transform deeply entrenched and unequal social relations. However, a transformative research agenda is necessary to push research beyond descriptive analyses of inequities, towards identifying the root causes of unequal social relations and offering research-based solutions. Broadly speaking, WERO works towards the horizon of decolonisation and racial justice. In the current context, this means Māori sovereignty and control over their lands, resources and ways of being and knowing; the absolute elimination of inequalities based on race. The following questions ([Box 22](#)) were posed to team members. Note that the final question was reserved for the following day and was completed by team members directly after a presentation on decolonising anti-racist research, delivered by team members Donna Cormack and Jeffrey Ansoos.

At the end of the workshop, the team was thanked for working through the activities, and invited to provide immediate verbal feedback or written feedback via email to the project manager, at any time. The Takarangi implementation template (which had been provided earlier via email) was then introduced.

Takarangi implementation template

The Takarangi implementation template was designed to help researchers apply what had been learned about the Takarangi framework to WERO research, to ensure coherence across projects and identify whether team members needed further support. It was asked that one implementation template be completed for each of the 17 projects within six months of the retreat. Many of the questions could be completed using responses that team members had already constructed during the group workshop. The implementation template is presented in [Box 23](#).

Takarangi organisational implementation

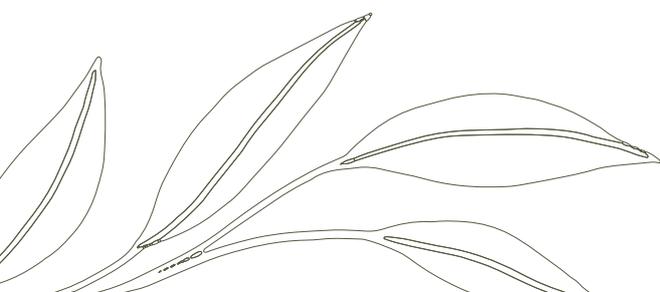
The organisational structure of WERO includes a Kāhui, or group of expert advisors who can be called on to provide strategic direction to the WERO team. A meeting was held with a Kāhui member, Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a foremost global expert on Indigenous methodologies. The implementation plan was formulated through discussion, the key points of which are presented in [Box 24](#).

Conclusion

Researchers who bring a range of ontological, axiological, ethical and epistemological perspectives to a wider team must appreciate different knowledge systems, be cognisant of their social positioning and be aware of deeply embedded power differentials. The differences also require development of a shared understanding of what it means to conduct decolonising and anti-racist research. Based on shared definitions, values and ethics, the team developed a sense of common purpose aligned with WERO's research goals.

The Takarangi centrally serves to build cohesion through collective reflection on how researchers understand themselves and as part of the WERO research team. It encourages them to consider their interplay between positioning in racialised social orders, ways of being and knowing, values and ethics and approaches to research. When conflict arises, they are thus better able to appreciate the assumptions underpinning their own and others' views.

Having enabled consideration of individual starting points through a self-paced individual learning module, the Takarangi then focuses on a shared set of values and ethical principles – developed by WERO researchers through workshops – that can guide work





at every stage of the WERO research process. More specifically, the Takarangī provides a foundation for how WERO researchers will work together, negotiate differences and ensure that research works towards WERO's decolonising and anti-racist objectives.

This paper has outlined the practices and reflexive exercises that were engaged in, in the process of designing the Takarangī research framework. Further, it offers insights into how WERO aims to put the program's commitments into practice. As part of this ongoing journey, team members will evaluate the implementation of the Takarangī framework and present their experiences using the Takarangī through case studies. In detailing the process of developing the Takarangī framework, other institutes, projects and programs of research will be able to consider the applicability of the Takarangī framework, undertake a similar process for their own purposes, and build upon this framework for their research contexts and agendas. The Takarangī offers one path forward for other research programs committed to decolonial, anti-racist and anti-oppressive research to work towards critical theoretical and ethical coherence and to naturalise processes of reflexivity in everyday research work.

Declaration of interests

Waikaremoana Waitoki serves as a Co-Editor-in-Chief on First Nations Health and Wellbeing – The Lowitja Journal. The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Supplementary material

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found in the online version at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fnhli.2025.100067>

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