

Pā'ina: Using the metaphor of a potluck to reimagine a third space for ethical research in Indigenous contexts

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This paper delves into the innovative use of the potluck, or pā'ina, as a metaphor to reimagine a research approach to foster collective understanding between non-Indigenous knowledge seekers and Indigenous knowledge guardians in Indigenous contexts. By embracing the broader research context, this metaphor strives to create a dialogical, relational and ethical space for knowledge seekers to engage with knowledge guardians, promoting a reciprocal and respectful relationship. Central to this metaphor is recognising the insider/outsider binary and the need to transcend it. Indigenous knowledge is often guarded and restricted, granted access based on relationships and shared experiences. Understanding the complexity of these socio-spatial relationships is crucial for researchers to navigate respectfully. The metaphor also draws from the Oceanic concept of vā/va/wā, signifying the space between entities and the importance of maintaining harmony and balance within relationships. This relational space between the self and the other allows for transformative encounters and meaningful connections. To navigate this third space, researchers must undergo introspective reflexive exercises to understand their situationality and how it influences their research. Knowledge seekers must unsettle their histories, understand context, listen to the stories of others, create a shared understanding and launch new relationships centred on respect and reciprocity. Throughout the research process, the metaphor of pā'ina encourages researchers to be active participants, nurturing relationships with communities they seek knowledge from and reflecting upon their role within it. The pā'ina metaphor offers a transformative approach for Western academia to critically examine its historical impact on Indigenous communities and embrace a more respectful and inclusive research paradigm. By centring Indigenous voices and building meaningful relationships, this third space provides an opportunity for collaborative and sustainable research to benefit all stakeholders.

Keywords: community-centric research, cultural sensitivity in research, researcher positionality, power dynamics in research, decolonised research approaches, ethical engagement with Indigenous communities

INTRODUCTION

The sweet melody of Hawaiian Slack Key guitar fills the air as guests enter the house. They see the sign that says 'E Komo Mai. Welcome' and leave their *slippahs* (the pidgin word for flip flops) outside the door, as is customary in Hawai'i. The hosts greet all with a kiss and a hug, and the host shows them to the kitchen, where they can put down their heavy dishes. In the kitchen, the counter quickly fills with bowls of food, taking on the look of a Hawaiian-style buffet: fresh fish, *poke* (seasoned raw fish), *tako* (octopus), *poi* (pounded taro root), edamame, macaroni salad and many more cultural foods. Once everybody arrives, everyone gathers in a circle, and the host blesses the food. People line up, fill their plates with the bounty and compliment each other on their dishes. The evening continues with sounds of conversation, laughter and music until the last guest leave, putting on their slippahs at the front door.

This essay investigates and expands on using a potluck as a metaphor for a new approach to research. The metaphor illustrates the importance of shifting perspectives in research in which researchers view their work through the eyes of those they seek knowledge from and ensure that the knowledge is upheld throughout the research process. It aims to build collective understanding between knowledge seekers, who are non-Indigenous to the place where they stand, and knowledge guardians, who are the Indigenous peoples of a place, by examining the broader context of research.

POTLUCK OR *PĀ'INA* AS A BRIDGE

This scene of a *pā'ina*, the '*olelo Hawai'i* (Hawaiian language term for a small gathering around food like a potluck (Pukui & Elbert, 1986)), is a common way of getting together and is a fond and familiar memory of my experiences growing up in the islands of Hawai'i. As a non-Indigenous settler in Hawai'i living among Indigenous peoples, potlucks were places where I could meet with people from different backgrounds than mine and connect with *Kanaka O'iwi* (Native Hawaiians). Within the shared context of a meal, we could acknowledge our differences, respect these differences, and transform our relationship into one that was generative and respectful.

At one New Year's Eve *pā'ina*, my family and I were invited to celebrate with a local *Kanaka O'iwi* family. When we, a *haole* family (non-native Hawaiian) from Hawai'i, entered the house, we were greeted by the hosts, who invited us graciously, but an air of suspicion surrounded the aunts and uncles at the dinner table. Although my father worked with the host of the potluck, we were strangers to the other guests. As the '*ōlelo no'eau* (poetic saying) reflects, '*No nehinei a'e nei no; heaha ka 'ike?*' ([He] just arrived yesterday; what does he know?) (Pukui, 1983), we were *malihini* (guests), strangers in their home and context, and we had lots to learn.

One *kupuna* (honoured elder) brought a dish of raw beef liver, *limu* (seaweed) and '*inamona* (a Hawaiian condiment made from roasted nuts of the kukui, or candlenut tree) that I had never had before. The *kupuna* told us that most people, even *Kanaka O'iwi*, do not like this dish. The guests were impressed when my father reached for seconds, and the *kupuna* told stories of their memories of the plate. This conversation over food led to stories about their childhood on the west side of O'ahu and what life was like for *Kanaka O'iwi* during that time. This was a rare opportunity to listen to stories told by *kūpuna* (honoured elders) that I may not have had access to if I had not shared a meal with them. By laughing and telling stories together over food, we created a relationship that allowed me to hear their stories and knowledge. We formed a reciprocal relationship through mutual trust and understanding.

Food at a *pā'ina* tells stories about those who cooked the dish, and those who attend are obliged to listen to these stories (Julier, 2013). Responsibility for a successful meal is distributed among all who attend because every *pā'ina* guest is expected to bring a dish to contribute to the communal meal. As a result, the dynamics between the host (insider) and guests (outsider) transform into one that is more like kin. This blurring of boundaries between the insider and outsider suggests egalitarian sociability where each participant is obliged to help with the meal (Julier, 2013). However, the egalitarian nature of a *pā'ina* does not automatically assume that the guests transform into the host, but rather one where each guest's uniqueness and contribution are upheld and acknowledged (Julier, 2013).

As a result, this metaphor of a *pā'ina* is a relational space where respect and reciprocity are paramount, and the binary of the insider and the outsider is disrupted. By creating a shared reality through a metaphor of an event where food is shared, and stories told, new relationships

can form, and old relationships strengthen (Julier, 2013). The *pā'ina* is used as a cultural bridge between differing groups by sharing food that has meaning to those who make it, and, in turn, aims to lessen differences and create community (Jönsson, 2021).

PĀ'INA AS TRANSFORMATION

Traditional Western approaches to research often perpetuate a binary framework that reinforces the legacy of colonisation (Smith, 1999). These conventional paradigms have frequently framed the research process as a one-dimensional journey of discovery, setting up a stark dichotomy between the knower and the known, the observer and the observed. The binary perspective, rooted in positivism and objectivity, tends to prioritise the perspective of the researcher's worldview while lowering the knowledge and wisdom of the researched communities to a subordinate position (Derby & Macfarlane, 2020; Porsanger, 2004; Smith, 1999). As a result, it perpetuates and exacerbates the historical power imbalances wrought by colonisation. Indigenous and culturally diverse knowledge systems are often sidelined, diminished or dismissed within this binary framework, reinforcing a hierarchical structure where traditional Western knowledge reigns supreme (Porsanger, 2004). Recognising this problematic binary is crucial for advancing more inclusive and equitable research practices that acknowledge the multiplicity of knowledge traditions and foster genuine collaboration across cultural boundaries.

Because of the natural power imbalance embedded in research (Porsanger, 2004), Western academic researchers must pay particular attention to their role in research. Much of the literature on the researcher's role describes the history of research and the importance of being a good host in Indigenous contexts (Aluli-Meyer, 1998; Mead, 2016; Johansson-Fua, 2020). However, there is a lack of research on what it means to be a good guest researcher. The metaphor of a *pā'ina* offers an opportunity to reimagine how knowledge seekers, particularly those in the Western academy, approach research. It gives guidelines for what is the appropriate protocol for a guest to follow when invited by hosts to enter their home.

UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

My relationship to this research begins with my connection to my home, Kailua-Kona, on the Island of Hawai'i, and the place I have settled for my studies, Aotearoa NZ. As a non-Indigenous woman to Hawai'i and Aotearoa, I have grappled with my position as a settler on *Kanaka' Oiwi* and *tangata whenua* (people of the land) soil and the implications of calling these places home. Hearing the stories of the devastation caused by colonialism and the aftermath of this contact into the modern day has caused me to contemplate my role and sense of belonging. Through the relational and transitive Oceanic concepts of *wā/vā/va*, I have understood my relationship to the land I call home. Though I do not belong to this land and ocean genealogically, I do belong to this land and ocean in the way that I nurture my relationship with it and with the people who have called it home for thousands of years. One honours place and people in the way they relate to them.

Insider/Outsider

Researchers seek knowledge and understanding, often searching for what they want from others. Traditional European/colonial knowledge seekers usually take the position of an

observer, or outsider, to those they observe to achieve a higher level of rationality and objectivity. However, this binary view of knowledge acquisition does not acknowledge the complexity of the human experience and the relationships that form when research is performed. Recent scholarship (Cobb et al., 2019; Crossa, 2012; Hurley & Jackson, 2020; Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019) emphasises the need for understanding research as more complex than insider/outsider, either/or relationships, which is achieved by acknowledging socio-spatial relationships—suggesting that this either/or relationship does not affirm the complexity of the human experience and the notion that our reality is shaped by the relationships that we hold.

Unlike traditional colonial perceptions of knowledge, which should be accessible to all, Indigenous knowledge restricts who can access it and the qualifications to access it. Sanga and Reynolds (2020) critique this colonial view of knowledge by saying it limits the complexity of knowledge acquisition and sharing, especially in the Pacific. When describing the case of a tribal meeting, the authors explain, ‘The “house” of a person who truly understands and practices the knowledge gains credibility not by claiming it but by enacting the privilege of practice. One honours secret knowledge through how one relates to it’ (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020, p. 105). The ability to access knowledge is based on how one relates to the knowledge and those who hold it. These relationships can also be dynamic and not limited to the insider/outsider binary. A relational approach to this dynamic allows for the position of the researcher to change, which accounts for the complexity of human relationships.

Besides, the insider/outsider binary approach to research acknowledges the complexity of the human condition and relationships. It reinforces the ‘us versus them’ apparent in settler colonial constructs: those who hold power and those who do not. This binary needs to be pulled apart to ensure these constructs are not reinforced so that new relationships can emerge. *Kanaka O’iwi* scholar Hōkūlani Aikau suggests centring the role of the researcher on the notion of obligation and responsibility, *kuleana*, as a *malihini* (guest) (Aikau, 2019). She draws upon the ‘*ōlelo no’eau*’ (Pukui, 1983, as cited in Aikau, 2019) that describes the role of a guest, *Ho’okahi no lā o ka malihini* (one is only a guest for a day, then they must work). Traditional guests cannot continue to stay outsiders but are obligated to contribute to their host group. Aikau offers the term of *hoa’āina* (friend of the land), ‘a friend, caretaker, partner who is tied to and bound to ‘āina [land] based on *kuleana* that is not genealogical but that comes from *hanalima*, working with our hands in the *lepo* (dirt, soil)’ (Aikau, 2019, p. 87). A *ho’āina* is a guest who doesn’t sit around and watch others work but works alongside those who invited them, creating relationships through contribution and listening (Aikau, 2019).

In the context of Aotearoa, Māori have a process for transforming relationships between the insider and outsider. This transformation is seen in a *pōwhiri*, a Māori formal welcome. At a *pōwhiri*, the *manuhiri* (visitor) has *tapu* (sacred) when they come to the *marae*. The *tapu* is lifted from the *manuhiri* after the *pōwhiri* process, and they become *noa*. *Tapu* means sacredness or set apart from everyday/normal things (Mead, 2016). Something’s or someone’s *tapu* is inherited through *whakapapa* (genealogy) and history. In the context of a *pōwhiri*, the *manuhiri* has *tapu* when they come to the *marae*. The *tapu* is reduced during the *pōwhiri* process, and there is the state of *noa*. *Manuhiri* are brought back to a state of *noa* once they partake in the feast at the end of the *pōwhiri* (Mead, 2016). Through acts of sharing food and shared understanding, unity between the guest and the host can be made. However, once the *tapu* of a *manuhiri* is transformed into being *noa*, they are not transformed into *tangata whenua* with the same privileges. To be *tangata whenua* is a matter of birthright (Mead, 2016). But much like *hoa’āina*, they are no longer simply strangers but are expected to contribute.

Vā/Va/Wā (the space between)

The emphasis on the importance of relationships is a central aspect of many Indigenous worldviews. An essential element of the Oceanic view of reality is the concept of *vā* in Samoan or *va* in Tongan or *wā* in *te reo Māori* (Māori language) and *'olelo Hawai'i*. Albert Wendt (1996) defined *vā* in *Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body* as the space between, one that is not empty and separates but an area that relates and holds all entities in unity. *Vā* is the space where relationships occur. It is a 'socio-spatial' space that recognises the connection and the importance of balance in relationships (Cobb et al., 2019). The space holds the context of the relationships and gives meaning to things. Thus, as the relationships and contexts change, the purpose changes.

Vā, as a socio-spatial concept that acknowledges the interconnectedness and balance within relationships, mirrors the *pā'ina's* focus on the interplay between knowledge guardians and seekers, where the space between them holds the context and purpose of knowledge sharing. Both the *vā* and the *pā'ina* frameworks underscore the fluidity of relationships and their ability to evolve as contexts change, emphasising the cultural and social richness inherent in the spaces where people come together, whether for a communal meal or the exchange of knowledge.

Motutapu and thirdspace

The potluck table is a 'third space' where these relationships can occur, much like Seu'ula Johannson-Fua's use of the Pacific metaphor of a *Motutapu* (Johannson-Fua, 2016). Historically, *Motutapu* was an island off the main islands and considered a thirdspace in the Pacific. The thirdspace of a *Motutapu* is where visitors to the island can negotiate their relationships with the hosts, and the hosts can decide if they are welcome. Johannson-Fua argues for a third space that 'enables other positions to emerge'. She further explains, 'it displaces, unsettles the histories that constitute it and at the same time it settles the "unsettle"'. Though this third space is a place of tension, as a *Motutapu*, it is also a 'place of rejuvenation, a sanctuary, a place to launch new journeys'.

Much like the *Motutapu*, the metaphor of the *pā'ina* potluck is a dialogical, relational and ethical space for knowledge seekers to engage with knowledge guardians in Indigenous contexts. By practising relationality, negotiating and nurturing our relationships with each other and respecting people, land and ocean, outsiders can be a part of this shared context (Johannson-Fua, 2020). The focus of this essay is to turn the binary in research of insider/outsider upside down and introduce one based on the guest and host relationship. This reframing of the research relationship acknowledges the complexity of relationships in research.

This third space of a *pā'ina* is where guest researchers unsettle their histories, understand the context and provide a space to launch a new relationship with Indigenous knowledge centred on respect and reciprocity.

THE PHASES OF A PĀ'INA/ POTLUCK

The Set Up

The role of the host in the invitation is to set the event's purpose; what will the purpose of this get-together be? Is it a celebration of an event or holiday? Is it just to get people to meet one another for the first time? Is it to welcome new people into the community? Is it to resolve

conflict? Whatever the purpose, the underlying motivation behind creating the event is to bring people together for a common goal or purpose. The occasion binds the purpose of the potluck with who is invited (Julier, 2013).

Deciding the purpose of a *pā'ina* dinner is much like knowledge guardians setting the purpose of inviting knowledge seekers into their community. A knowledge seeker would be permitted into the space through careful consideration and dialogue between knowledge guardians (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). Considerations include determining whether the research addresses a specific issue, shares knowledge, or builds relationships. Setting clear research intentions provides a foundation for the entire research process. Knowledge guardians, akin to *pā'ina* hosts, understand their community's cultural and historical contexts. They guide the research process to ensure it respects cultural norms and sensitivities.

Much like the host of a *pā'ina* dinner determines the purpose of the gathering, Indigenous knowledge guardians, who act as hosts in their own right, wield the crucial responsibility of defining the purpose when inviting knowledge seekers into their community. This purpose-setting process involves meticulous deliberation and open dialogue between knowledge guardians and guest researchers (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021)—this phase concerns co-decision-making by the knowledge seeker and knowledge guardian, not just design. Knowledge guardians have the autonomy to decide when and how they are willing to participate in research.

As guest researchers step into unfamiliar contexts, they bring their unique perspectives and backgrounds into the community's space. Therefore, researchers must remain cognisant of the dual contexts. By utilising thoughtful discussion methods and engaging in meaningful dialogue, they can establish essential relationships and foster cohesion between themselves and the community members (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). This purpose-setting phase serves a profound objective in research collaborations: the creation of a shared understanding and the transmission of knowledge, much akin to the underlying motivation of a *pā'ina* dinner—to bring people together for a common goal or purpose, binding the specifics of the research event and those who are invited.

The invitation

The next phase in a *pā'ina* is to invite people to the potluck. The invitation sets the event's tone and context and predicates the event's purpose: what is the aim, who is invited, who is omitted and what dish is appropriate to bring. Within these parameters, those who are invited can act accordingly and assume what the proper protocol is. In contrast, whoever comes without an invitation is an unwelcome guest and could put the whole event off balance.

In the realm of research, the phase of extending invitations, akin to the *pā'ina* dinner's invitation process, serves as a critical juncture for defining the research's purpose and scope. Just as an event invitation outlines the aim, guest list and appropriate contributions, a research invitation establishes the study's parameters (Kwaymullina, 2016). As a result, the guest researcher must focus on the context, understanding how they relate to others and their role in the lives of those they are researching (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). Knowledge seekers, who view themselves as guests, seek and wait for the invitation to enter the relationship-building process with knowledge guardians. Taking this supplicant role places the knowledge guardians as the priority and acknowledges the host's sovereignty. This affirms that their host has the power to determine whether the research is worthwhile. This process emphasises the importance of contextual understanding for researchers, compelling them to consider their role and relationship with the community under investigation (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). Adopting the perspective of

knowledge seekers who await an invitation aligns with respecting the host community's sovereignty and authority in deciding the research's worthiness and direction.

Like most events, some guests positively contribute to the common goal, and some are uninvited. *No aku birds!* is a phrase I often heard when invited to a *pā'ina* in Hawai'i. *Aku* birds are those that swoop in and take food from other birds. This metaphor of the *aku* bird is often used in a *pā'ina* to represent a guest who does not contribute a dish at a potluck. In a research setting, these uninvited guests can take many forms. First, a researcher can just show up without an invitation. As any good guest knows, if you are not invited, you don't go. Second, they can be researchers who decide what is needed for the community without acknowledging what the purpose of their invitation was from the host. They can also be a researcher who is simply an observer invited by other guests to gather and use data for their purposes. At a *pā'ina*, the guest is expected to do more than just show up for the event; they must contribute.

What do you bring?

Once guests receive the invitations, they must decide whether to accept them. If they choose to accept, guests must decide what their contribution to the meal will be. Some invitations specify what one is supposed to bring, while others let the guests contribute what they want. Whatever the case, the contribution must be within the set parameters of the host and be beneficial. These parameters can also be linked to the participants themselves, what is appropriate to wear, what kind of language is allowed at the event, what subjects can be talked about, what topics of conversation are forbidden, who is allowed to speak, and who should listen. Respect for these rules generates a sense of belonging to the community.

Researchers must approach their work with high self-awareness and consideration for what they bring to the research process. This includes acknowledging their own perspectives, biases and preconceived notions. Just as guests at a *pā'ina* potluck must be thoughtful about the dishes they contribute, researchers should carefully consider how their methodologies, cultural backgrounds and prior experiences may influence their interactions with the communities they engage with. These factors can significantly impact the research environment, potentially leading to misunderstandings or power imbalances. Therefore, researchers need to engage in critical self-reflection and actively seek to minimise their presence's adverse effects. By doing so, researchers can create a more equitable and respectful research environment, fostering trust and collaboration with the communities they study.

In the research context, the Hawaiian concept of *ho'opono* offers profound insights into ethical and culturally sensitive engagement with Indigenous communities (Aluli-Meyer, 1998). *Ho'opono* (right behaviour) (Meyer, 1998) serves as a guiding principle for guest researchers seeking to establish meaningful relationships with Indigenous knowledge guardians. It underscores the importance of adhering to cultural protocols, norms and values when entering these communities. Researchers must approach their work with a deep respect for the historical and contextual factors that shape the lives of the people they study. By doing so, they demonstrate cultural sensitivity and contribute to maintaining harmony, balance and order within these communities. *Ho'opono* calls upon researchers to be conscious of their own position and to act in ways that foster mutual understanding and respect. This requires self-reflection and truthfully answering the question, 'how am I contributing?' and whether this contribution is positive or negative.

In Indigenous research, this self-awareness is crucial as it empowers guest researchers to situate their identities within the specific Indigenous context they are investigating. Indigenous academics (Hurley & Jackson, 2020; Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019) have advocated for this approach, emphasising the need for researchers to recognise their historical and social positioning, significantly impacting their research interactions. By grounding themselves in their positionality, researchers can approach the research process more consciously and reflectively, aligning their work with the epistemologies and ontologies of the Indigenous community.

Who are you?

The age-old adage ‘You are what you eat’ pertains to more than just diet. In the context of a potluck, the dish cooked for the event can be understood as an extension of your identity and history. Foods brought to a communal table signify a participant’s ‘moral and social contribution’ (Julier, 2013). For instance, the dish may have cultural significance or represent family history. In the context of a potluck, the dish brought to the communal table symbolises a participant’s moral and social contribution and often carries cultural or familial significance.

An aspect of understanding context is understanding history. Knowledge seekers enter the research process with history and positionality that shape how they encounter their research subjects—these relations to history and context anchor researchers in the epistemologies and ontologies they employ. By grounding in relational positionality, researchers can reflect upon how these histories and contexts influence their research questions. Non-Indigenous researcher, Veronica Crossa (2012), explains, ‘A researcher’s positioning in a web of power relations shapes how subjects engage with them, and therefore informs all aspects of field research’ (p. 117). The issue’s essence does not lie solely in a researcher’s identity but in the knowledge tradition to which they have been exposed, trained or have come to regard as the prevailing paradigm for research excellence.

As *Kanaka O’iwi* scholar, Manulani Aluli-Myer (2006), writes, ‘Self-reflection of one’s thoughts and actions helps you understand that who you are, how you were raised, what you eat . . . all act as agents for your mindfulness or mindlessness. And all affect how you see and experience the world’ (p. 273). Guest researchers must be aware of their positioning within power dynamics, considering the historical backdrop of colonialism and striving to mitigate power imbalances throughout the research process.

The meal

The meal can begin once the hosts have prepared the space, the guests have arrived, and the host welcomes those who have come with a speech or prayer. Hosts and guests take food from the buffet table and find a place to sit, sometimes with people they know and occasionally next to people they do not. With food being shared, new connections and old bonds are strengthened. It is an entry point to unveil different dimensions of social relations. These dimensions are often revealed in the stories told at the meal. The role of the knowledge guardian is to tell the stories they feel comfortable sharing and for the knowledge seeker to listen. As a guest and knowledge seeker, one must be mindful of the language used when speaking and know when to listen. The stories told by knowledge guardians have history and context. They also tell of what the right thing is to do, the protocol.

Sharing food in this context serves as a metaphor for sharing knowledge and stories within Indigenous communities. As researchers engage with community members, they can strengthen

existing connections and form new ones. These interactions unveil different dimensions of social relations, often through the stories told by knowledge guardians. For researchers, it is imperative to adopt a humble and respectful posture, similar to that of a guest at a potluck. Being mindful of language, actively listening, and respecting the historical and contextual richness of the stories shared by knowledge guardians aligns with research protocol that values the cultural heritage and perspectives of the community. Ultimately, this approach helps researchers understand the protocols governing the community and guides them in conducting ethical and culturally sensitive research.

In Hawaiian epistemology, the self-reflection needed to create and heal relationships is called *hana pono* (Meyer, 1998). *Hana pono* is used as a guide for the correct behaviour and explains how effective relationships and knowledge acquisition can occur. By adhering to the protocols described in *hana pono*, harmony, balance and order are found in your community. If this harmony is disrupted, there is a process for setting things right, *ho'oponopono* (Aluli-Meyer, 1998). Manulani Meyer explains the deeper meaning of this process:

Ho'oponopono reflects Native Hawaiian epistemology because of its focus on the maintenance and return to harmonious relationship. It is a key philosophical element in understanding the weight of causality with regard to how one exists in the world. It was a world based on inter-relatedness, not separateness and isolation. It was a world where the natural and supernatural environment offered itself for dialogue . . . Knowledge is found in other, reflected off other, continued from other, nurtured through other. (p. 45-46)

Only by making things suitable by *hana pono* (right behaviour) can the harmony of *ho'oponopono* be achieved (Meyer, 1998). *Ho'oponopono* happens at the table with others through collaboration. Where you give the space for others to say their truth, to allow the truth and hurts to come forward, and for it to be led by the spirit of *aloha*, it acknowledges that research is not a one-way process but rather a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and insights. As in the *ho'oponopono* process, where issues are resolved through dialogue and understanding, guest researchers should engage in meaningful conversations with Indigenous knowledge guardians. This involves actively listening to their stories, respecting their perspectives and working collaboratively to address any issues or conflicts arising during the research journey. *Ho'oponopono* encourages researchers to recognise the interconnectedness of knowledge, where wisdom is found in the collective experiences and narratives of the community.

The conclusion of the Pā'ina

The goal of a potluck dinner is for new relationships to be formed and a community to be built. Everyone invited must do their part for a potluck to reach its goals. The successful potluck is a mix of different plates that share different identities, where not only one is praised, but all are. Queer author W.G. Tierney (1997) writes about how potlucks are used in queer communities to support inclusion within the community. He writes:

I get to the table not because I have proven any similarity to you, but because you cannot do without me in a world that is based on mutual respect and understanding (agape) . . . Rather, [we] desire and demand to be equal partners at the table where we honor each other's differences. In effect, we not only get to the table, but we also have a say in what's on the menu (producing meaning). (p. 55)

In other words, a potluck dinner celebrates uniqueness while also fostering connectedness, thus diminishing the distance between the self and the other.

This merging of the self and other is central to the Indigenous worldview. Intimate relationships with other humans, nature and spirituality are the cornerstone of Indigenous knowledge (Porsanger, 2004). Mutual respect and understanding are foundational principles that should guide a researcher's approach to their subject, especially in Indigenous research contexts. These principles underscore the importance of recognising the autonomy, knowledge and agency of the individuals or communities being studied. Researchers must approach their subjects with humility, openness, and a genuine willingness to listen and learn. It involves acknowledging the historical, social and cultural contexts that have shaped the subjects' experiences. Through this approach, researchers can build trust and meaningful relationships. To achieve this type of relationship, there must be active participation, responsibility and reciprocity by all in the community (Hart, 2010; Gianan, 2011). Being an active participant requires accepting responsibility (acknowledging the history and context) and respectful participation (following cultural protocol). In doing so, one can become a part of the greater community (where the self and the other become one).

CONCLUSION

A meal is an enticement to gather people together. Still, the real value behind the scenes at these meals is the transformation that occurs through creating new relationships and maintaining old ones. By nurturing these relationships, new possibilities can emerge. As a non-Indigenous knowledge seeker, I wanted to create a metaphor that enhances decolonisation processes within my group. The principles that underpin the *pā'ina* have informed and continue to inform my work as a researcher in Aotearoa in a Māori research centre. As a *manuhiri* on this land, I have been able to transform my relationship with the land and the people who call it home by actively contributing to decolonising spaces. I have created lasting relationships through this work and extended my *whānau* (family).

There is a need for traditional research paradigms to critically examine their history and acknowledge their role in continuing the narrative of colonisation through research. By using relationality approaches to understanding history and context rooted in Indigenous and feminist thought, more ethical, reciprocal, understanding and decolonising research can be done. The metaphor of a potluck provides a third space where Western-trained researchers take a step back, and Indigenous voices are centred. It is about mutual self-becoming, where self-awareness and reflection help heal the collective. It is the often uncomfortable and unsettled position of listening to the stories of others (Aveling, 2013). Listening and hearing what is said is part of the learning and unlearning process needed to create more reciprocal and respectful relationships.

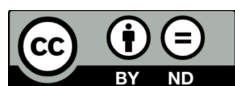
The focus of this essay is to turn the gaze around to deconstruct and decentre the normativity of Western paradigms in research, not to focus on the shortcomings of the 'other' (Indigenous researchers) in the academic context. Instead of knowledge seekers deciding what they think is appropriate, in a *pā'ina* research approach, the research method is negotiated through analysis of history, context and protocol to come together to create a shared understanding and productive relationships. Research by non-Indigenous peoples in Indigenous contexts must ensure that Indigenous self-determination is reached. It must support Indigenous peoples in their own goals and own research. It must centre on decolonising spaces; for this to occur, researchers must decolonise their approaches.

At a potluck, 'food tells a story and those who partake are obliged to listen' to these stories (Julier, 2013). Potlucks create spaces where people come together for a common goal of creating community and shared understanding. This shared understanding can only be achieved by acknowledging history and context, acknowledging differences and building respectful and reciprocal relationships that uphold uniqueness and connectedness. Relationships like these can lead to a change in the conversation of research. This change in the conversation can lead to research to find more meaningful ways that we all (Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples) may live together and sustain the land we depend upon (Kwaymullina, 2016).

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Pā'ina: Using the metaphor of a potluck to reimagine a third space for ethical research in Indigenous contexts

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