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Oho Mauri:
Cultural Identity, Wellbeing, and
Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Māori Studies

at Massey University, Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Lynne Mereana Pere née Russell
Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu, Kāti Māmoe, Rangitāne, Ngāti Porou
2006
This study, *Oho Mauri*, seeks to understand the experience of mental illness from the perspective of those it affects most— the consumer. In order to test the assumption that mental health depends as much on culture and identity as psycho-biology, *Oho Mauri* examines the worldviews of 17 Indigenous people - Māori - who have had experience of mental illness (Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake). Their views on mental illness, within the context of the recovery approach, constitute the core of the thesis.

*Oho Mauri* examines the relationship between cultural identity and wellbeing, in order to answer the research question: “Does a secure cultural identity lead to improved wellbeing for Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake?” Indigenous people the world over have considered this relationship, generally maintaining that greater wellbeing is a function of ethnic values, customs, and practices.

A methodological approach that is cognisant of Māori knowledge and understandings was key to this research. So too was the Kaupapa Māori research paradigm that was employed alongside other relevant qualitative methodologies: feminist, case study, empowerment, narrative, and phenomenological approaches.

Two main sets of conclusions emerge from *Oho Mauri*, both of which are drawn from the cultural values and cultural worldviews that Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake hold. First, just as a secure cultural identity pays dividends in the recovery process, so can a cultural identity that has not been allowed to flourish increase the intensity of confusion and complexity that accompanies mental illness.

Second, understanding mental illness has two dimensions: clinical; and personal. Whilst a diagnosis is a valuable clinical tool, understanding mental illness also requires recognition of the interpretations made by Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake and the meanings they attach to their personal experiences. Often these provide alternative
explanations and understandings of the experience of mental illness and are perceived as the most significant aid in a journey towards recovery.

The findings in *Oho Mauri* do not claim that a secure cultural identity will necessarily protect against mental illness. They do demonstrate, however, that cultural identity is an important factor in the recovery process and that the recovery process itself can contribute to a secure cultural identity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sadly, over the course of my doctorate studies some very important people in my life who have had a significant impact on me and on this study have passed away. I pay tribute to these wahine toa: my Aunty Ata Allen; my grandmother Mere Russell; my friend and mentor Irihapeti Ramsden; and my friend and colleague Olive Lewis. My whānau and I have also grieved a number of other whanaunga taken unexpectedly from us over this time, including my brother-in-law Manu, my Uncle Rusty, my cousin Nicole, my cousin-in-law Carol, and my kaumatua Aunty Sue, Aunty Kuini, and Uncle Maki. Death has a way of making us search out the memories, and these are what we try to fill the vacuums left behind with.

Throughout my study, I have been so very fortunate to have been financially supported and assisted by a number of organisations and rōpū. In particular, I wish to thank the Health Research Council of New Zealand/Te Kaunihera Rangahau Hauora o Aotearoa.
for awarding me a Training Fellowship in Māori Health, which provided a salary for nearly three years, as well as Strategic Development funding to support the fieldwork component of my study. Without their generous support, and particularly the support of Louisa Wall and Lex Davidson, this doctorate would never have been possible. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Health/Manatū Hauora for awarding me four successive Māori Health Scholarships over the period of my study. Ka tino nui te mihi aroha ki a koutou.

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\(^1\) The term 'whanauka' is the same term as 'whanaunga' which is used throughout the thesis to mean either 'a relative' (singular) or 'relatives' (plural). The 'k' used instead of 'ng' represents a dialect difference between Kāi Tahu (the predominant southern iwi) and most northern iwi. The term 'whanauka' has been used in this instance in recognition of Dr. Russell's (and my) iwi.

\(^2\) The title 'Oho Mauri', which loosely translates as 'the awakening', originates from a comment made by one of the research participants who described what being exposed to Te Ao Māori for the first time - through his involvement with the Kaupapa Māori mental health service - meant to him: "It felt like my wairua was reborn... I was free... It freed me..."
Specifically, I would like to acknowledge the late Dr. Irihapeti Merenia Ramsden, NZOM, for planting the seed over a decade ago now that set me on this path; the late Professor Eru Pomare for caring so much about our futures; Dr. Erihana Ryan for moulding my thinking; Professor Mason Durie, Chief Supervisor of this study and author of much of the literature regarding Māori mental health, for your unbelievable wisdom and generosity in sharing it with me; Associate Professor Marie Crowe and Dr. Te Kani Kingi for your co-supervision and understanding of my silence; and Tahi Takao, te rangatira o Tuhoe, kaumātua of this study, and treasured friend, for your unsurpassed knowledge and experience, and unreserved willingness to guide me.

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3 I was very fortunate in this study to have the support of kaumatua. Although Tahi and I are not linked by whakapapa, we are linked within the Māori mental health field. Despite living in Te Waipounamu, he agreed to act in a formal role for this study, providing supervision as Kaumatua of the Canterbury District Health Board. I was also incredibly fortunate to have the support of one of my Ngāti Kahungunu kōkā in this study. This kuia had always provided me with whānau support throughout my earlier years of study, so her sudden passing in the study’s second year was devastating. For a time I felt abandoned. Although I sought and was offered alternative support from other respected kaumatua from my Iwi, it was not at the same level. My leaning on my dear friend and kaumatua in Te Waipounamu consequently became stronger. I also learnt to take up the offers of support of other whanaunga - pakeke and kuia in their own right - and tried to fill some of the gap left by my kōkā’s passing in this way.
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⁴ The term ‘Tāngata Whai Ora’ is a general term used in Aotearoa/New Zealand to refer to Māori with experience of mental illness— that is, those who have at some point in their lives personally experienced a mental health disorder or other mental health problem. Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake advice is that the term is used to mean special, unique, and absolute and is associated with the whakatauaki ‘Kia maumahara ki tou mana āhua ake’ which means ‘Cherish your absolute uniqueness’. Advice from Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori is that ‘whai ora’ literally means ‘in search of wellness’; ‘tāngata’ meaning ‘people’ . In various regions in the country other terminology such as ‘Tāngata Motuhake’ is used instead, to mean the same. The inclusive term ‘Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake’ is used throughout the thesis in recognition of these differences.
# Rārangi Upopoko: Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whakarāpopotanga: Abstract</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mihihi: Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rārangi Upopoko: Table of Contents</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rārangi Whakaheke me Ngā Hoahoa: List of Tables</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rārangi Kupu Māori: Glossary of Māori Terms</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakataki: Preface</td>
<td>xxiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upopoko Tahi: Whakatau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One: Introduction to the Thesis</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakamārama: Explanation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Whāinga: Research Goals and Objectives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakatakoto Kaupapa: Thesis Layout</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakaine Oranga: Measuring Wellbeing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakaine Tikanga Tangata: Measuring Cultural Identity</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Hoe Nuku Roa</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whai Māoritanga: Secure Māori Cultural Identity</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikanga Tangata Hauora Hinengaro: Cultural Identity and Mental Health</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirohanga Ao Māori: Māori Worldview</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakarāpopototanga: Summary</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# UPOKO RUA: HUARahi Mahi

## Chapter Two: Methodologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whakamārama: Explanation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huarahi Mahi Rangahau: Developing the Research Methodology</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Ariā: Paradigms</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Whakapakaritanga o te Rangahau Māori: Māori Research History and Development</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā Wai te Tuhiwaoa?: Writing for Whom?</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangahau Māori He Aha Tēnei?: What is Māori Research?</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Hīranga o te Mātauranga: The Importance of Knowledge</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakamana: Empowerment</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matatika: Ethics</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hononga Ihiihi: Power Relationships</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāwai Tangata me te Rangahau: The Importance of Ethnicity in Research</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakawā Wawe: Bias</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangahau Manawahine: Feminist Research</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huarahi Inekupu: Qualitative Approach</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anga Kaupapa Māori: Kaupapa Māori Framework</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huarahi Mahi: Methodologies</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huarahi Mahi Tuatini: Mixed Methodology</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakarāpapotpototanga: Summary</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

# UPOKO TURU: Tikanga Tāngata

## Chapter Three: Cultural Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whakamārama: Explanation</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Kāwai Tangata: Dimensions of Ethnicity</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

x
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ariā Oranga Hauora Māori: Models of Māori Health and Wellbeing.</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Oranga me te Māuiuitanga ki Tō te Māori o Nehe: Traditional Māori</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing and Illness Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakakoretikangatanga: Deculturation</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whaiora: Māori Health Development</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rerekētanga: Disparities</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Whakamarama: Possible Structural Explanations for Poor Māori Health</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauora Whakatūtaki: Measuring Health Outcomes</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauora Hinengaro: Measuring Mental Health</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakarāpopototanga: Summary</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UPOKO RIMA: ĀHUATANGA MAHI**

**CHAPTER FIVE: METHODS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whakamārama: Explanation</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Tohutohu Kaumātua: Kaumātua Supervision</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whai Tauria: Sample Recruitment</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakawhiti Whakaaro i Mua i te Rangahau: ‘Pre-research Consultation’</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rau Whakamōhio: Information Sheet</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rārangi Uui/Arahi: Interview Schedules/Guides</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Uuiinga: Interviews</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uuiinga Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake: Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake Interviews</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Tāngata Whai Pānga: Participant Profiles</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uuiinga Pūkenga Tuarua: Secondary Expert Interviews</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuhiinga Kōrero: Transcription</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tātari Whakaaturanga: Analysis of the Data</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

## UPOKO ONO: NGĀ HAERENGA

**CHAPTER SIX: TĀNGATA WHAI ORA/MOTUHAKE EXPERIENCES OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND SERVICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tohatoha Hua: Dissemination of Results</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakarāpopototanga: Summary</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakarāpopototanga: Summary</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPOKO ONO: NGĀ HAERENGA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakamārama: Explanation</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kauri</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kōwhai</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maire</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mānuka</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miro</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūkeko</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pūriri</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rātā</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tōtara</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whio</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruru</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## UPOKO WHITU: TE AO MĀORI

**CHAPTER SEVEN: TĀNGATA WHAI ORA/MOTUHAKE IDENTITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whakamārama: Explanation</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Tū Māori: Being Māori</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Tohu Tikanga: Cultural Markers</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakapapa</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UPOKO WARU: KÖRERORERO Ö NGÄ KAUPAPA
CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION OF THEMES

Whakamārama: Explanation

Te Hohonga Whānau: Whānau Connectedness

Ngā Take Whānau: Whānau Determinants

He Whānau Kē: Whānau Substitution
Te Tū Māori: Being Māori ................................................................. 252
Tikanga Tika: Cultural Alignment .................................................. 255
    Tikanga tūturū: Cultural fit ...................................................... 255
    Tikanga pono: Cultural integrity ............................................... 257

    Waiata me rongoā Māori kia piki te ora: The place of waiata and
    rongoā Māori in recovery ............................................................ 259

Whakapapa .................................................................................... 259
Türangawaewae .............................................................................. 261
    Te marae kia piki te ora: The place of marae in recovery .......... 262
Ka Wehe i Te Pono: Escape from Reality ...................................... 264
Ahuatanga Whakamiharo: Phenomenological Significance ............. 265

UPOKO IWA: WĀHANGA WHAKAMUTUNGA
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION ........................................................ 268

TĀPIRITANGA – APPENDICES .......................................................... 274
Appendix A: Information Sheet ..................................................... 274
Appendix B: Consent Form for Research Participants ..................... 276
Appendix C: Interview Schedule for Tangata Whai Ora Interviews ... 277
Appendix D: Letters of Support ...................................................... 280
Appendix E: Assessment of the Research against a Tikanga Framework 286

RĀRANGI PUKAPUKA – BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................... 292
# List of Tables and Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Thesis research goals and objectives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2: The components of wellness/unwellness</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3: Principles for cultural assessment</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4: Measures of cultural identity</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5: Three categories of Marae Governance</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6: Te Whare Tapa Whā</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1: Social wellbeing for Māori, relative to Europeans/Pākehā</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7: Estimates of 12 Month Prevalence of Common Disorders among GP Attendees – Māori</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2: Diabetes in adults, by NZDep01 quintile and sex (age-standardised)</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8: Number of episodes by length of stay for clients seen who received an inpatient service, 2002</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RARANGI KUPU MĀORI
GLOSSARY OF MĀORI TERMS

Aroha: love or compassion
Ataahua: beautiful
Atua: Māori gods
Awhi: aid or help
Hākari: feast/s
Hāngi: Māori food cooked in traditional manner in an ‘earth oven’
Hapū: sub-tribe/s
Heretaunga: Hastings
Hēmanawa: disheartened
Hinengaro: mind or intellect
Hinu: oil or lard
Hōhonu: deep
Hui: meeting/s or gathering/s
Hūpē: mucus or snot
Iwi: tribal group/s
Iwi rohe: tribal area/s
Kai: food
Kaikaranga: wāhine who perform the formal welcoming call and responding call at pōwhiri
Kaimoana: seafood
Kaitautoko: supporter/s
Kaitiaki: caretaker/s or custodian/s
Kaiwaiata: the performer/s of ceremonial waiata at pōwhiri
Kaiwhakahaere: Manager
Kaiwhakapapa: a person/people skilled in genealogy
Kākahu: clothes or clothing
Kāore: not, but, or “no”
Kapa haka: group performance of Māori action song/s and dance/s
Karakia: prayer or religious or spiritual incantations
Karanga: call
Katoa: all, every, completely or total
Kaumātua: respected elder/s
Kaupapa: strategy/strategies, theme/s or philosophy/philosophies
Kawa: protocol
Kina: sea-eggs or sea-urchins
Kōrero: talk, speak, or discussion/s
Kōrero-a-waha: personal communication
Kōrero purakau: legend/s, or statement/s of cultural fact according to individual hapū and Iwi
Koroua: elderly man/men
Kōtimana: people from Scotland
Kuia: elderly woman/women
Kupu: word/s or remark/s
Mahi: work
Mamae: pain, ache or stress

Mana: integrity or prestige

Mana ake: unique identity or the unique nature of the individual and each whānau and the positive identity that flows from those unique qualities

Manaakitanga: according others total support, hospitality, goodwill, respect, and dignity

Manawa: heart or bowels

Manawapā: frugal or tight-fisted

Manuhiri: visitor/s

Marae: traditional meeting place/s of whānau, hapū or Iwi

Mate atua/mate Māori: illness/es for which there is/are no obvious physical cause/s

Mauri: life principle, life essence, life force, vitality or special character present in people and objects, including language

Mihimihī/mihi: greet, or greeting/s

Mihingare: missionary/missionaries

Mirimiri: physical therapies, massage and manipulation

Mohio: know, intelligent, clever, or conscious of

Mokopuna: grandchild/grandchildren

Mōteatea: tribal chant/s

Murihiku: Invercargill or Southland

Noa: something that is free from tapu, that is something that is not forbidden, restricted, confidential or sacred

Ōtautahi: Christchurch

Otepoti: Dunedin

Pā: traditional stockaded village

Pākehā: non-Indigenous New Zealanders
Pakeke: adult Māori who is learning and preparing for kaumātua status

Papakāinga: individual’s or group’s original home base

Pepeha: recitation of an individual’s whakapapa

Pēpi: baby/babies

Pōwhiri: formal welcoming process

Puku: abdomen

Pukuriri: angry or irritable

Putiputi: flower

Putiputi ataahua: term of endearment

Rangatahi: youth (singular or plural)

Rangatahi Māori: Māori youth (singular or plural)

Ringawera: cook/s

Rohe: area/s or territory/territories

Rongoā Māori: traditional Māori medicine

Rongoā rākau: herbal remedy/remedies

Rūnanga: assembly or institute

Tāmaki Makaurau: Auckland

Tamariki: children

Tāne: Māori man or Māori men

Tāngata: people

Tāngata Ingirangi: people from England

Tāngata Whai Ora: Māori with experience of mental illness

Tangata whenua: aboriginal or Indigenous person/people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, or the person/people hosting a welcome
Tangi: the mourning process associated with death and burial

Taonga: something/things that is/are precious or a treasure

Tautoko: support

Tapu: sacred or sacredness, or something/things which is/are forbidden, restricted or confidential

Te Ao Māori: The Māori World

Te Ika a Māui: the North Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand

Te reo Māori: the Māori language

Te taha hinengaro: the mental and emotional sides (of health)

Te taha tinana: the physical side (of health)

Te taha wairua: the spiritual side (of health)

Te taha whānau: the family and community sides (of health)

Te Upoko o te Ika: Wellington

Te Waipounamu: the South Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand

Teina: junior

Tika: correct, accurate, valid, realistic or reliable

Tikanga: custom or meaning

Tikanga Māori: Māori custom

Tikanga tuku iho: tradition

Tinana: body

Toa: warrior

Tohi: naming ceremony/ceremonies

Tohunga: expert/s or specialist/s

Tuakana: senior
Tūranganui a Kiwa: Gisborne

Tūrangawaewae: individual’s home-ground, considered a place where one is able to ‘stand’ and identify with particular Iwi, hapū, and marae

Tūroro: old term for Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake or Māori with experience of mental illness

Tūturu: real, trustworthy or authentic

Urupā: cemetery/cemeteries

Wāhine: women

Wāhine toa: women leaders

Waiata: sing, or song/s

Wairua: spirit

Wairuatanga: spirituality

Wānanga: learning or series of discussions

Whaikōrero: formal speech-making or oration

Whakaaro: thinking, or thought/s

Whakairo: carving

Whakamā: shy, embarrassed or loss of mana

Whakapapa: ancestry or genealogy

Whānau: family/families

Whanaunga/whanauka: relative/s

Whanaungatanga: concept akin to building relationships

Whare: house/s

Whare paku: toilet/s

Whāriki: carpet/s or mat/s

Whatumanawa: emotional, or the open expression of emotion
Whenua: land

Wiwi: people from France
In a previous life I managed a Māori mental health unit, Te Korowai Atawhai, at the old Sunnyside Hospital in Ōtautahi. It was staffed by 13 Māori mental health workers known as Pūkenga Atawhai, trained as experts in Māori mental health.

Through my experience in working in the mental health sector, I observed that many Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake were dislocated from their Iwi, hapū, whānau and marae, and unaware of their whakapapa. Anecdotally I have heard Māori health workers support this observation and hypothesise that those Māori who have a strong cultural identity, "who know who they are and where they come from", are not those seen in their mental health services.

During my time as Kaiwhakahaere of Te Korowai Atawhai I often spoke to training nurses, social workers, psychiatrists and psychologists, many of them new to Aotearoa/New Zealand, about Māori mental health. One of the things spoken about was the importance of identity for Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake. I instinctively knew this to be true, and professionally had seen evidence to support this.

Through my nursing training and working with Te Korowai Atawhai I had had the opportunity to observe and work with healing programmes that were based on knowledge...

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1 The Māori place name Ōtautahi is used throughout the thesis to refer to Christchurch.
2 The term 'Iwi' is used throughout the thesis to mean either 'a tribal group' (singular) or 'tribal groups' (plural).
3 The term 'hapū' is used throughout the thesis to mean either 'a sub-tribe' (singular) or 'sub-tribes' (plural).
4 The term 'whānau' is used throughout the thesis to mean either 'a family' (singular) or 'families' (plural).
5 The term 'marae' is generally used throughout the thesis to refer to the traditional meeting place/s of whānau, hapū or Iwi. When used to refer to a contemporary meeting place, the term is indicated as such in the text.
6 The term 'whakapapa' is used throughout the thesis to mean 'ancestry' or 'genealogy'.
7 The title 'Kaiwhakahaere' was used to mean 'Manager'.
of whakapapa. Typically these were healing programmes developed as treatment modalities for Tangata Whai Ora/Motuhake within Kaupapa Māori mental health services, and increasingly within mainstream services striving for biculturalism. Their focus included connecting Tangata Whai Ora/Motuhake with their whakapapa in order to enhance their identity and wellbeing.

In Ōtautahi we had one such programme named Te Awa o te Ora which essentially began using waiata as a therapy to increase self-esteem, enhance cultural identity and to encourage whanaungatanga. The programme later developed to include the teaching of individual whakapapa. The dramatic changes in behaviour and seeming levels of wellness as Tangata Whai Ora/Motuhake gained knowledge of their whakapapa is a phenomenon I have witnessed, and I relay two such examples:

The first occurred in the late 1980s when I spent some time as a student nurse with Te Whare Marie, the Kaupapa Māori mental health unit at Porirua Hospital. As part of their programme for tūroto (as Tangata Whai Ora/Motuhake were then referred to) once a week a powhiri would be held for any new staff or students. The tūroto on the programme would assume the role of tangata whenua and became familiar with powhiri processes including karanga and whaikōrero as a result. After the formal whaikōrero (and before

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8 Kaupapa Māori mental health services are defined as services which may offer a range of treatment and support services, but which include as base elements: whanaungatanga, whakapapa, cultural assessment, empowerment of Tangata Whai Ora/Motuhake and their whānau, te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, kaumātua guidance, access to traditional healing, access to mainstream health services, and quality performance measures relevant to Māori. Fundamental to the provision of these elements is also the need for sound management systems and practices (Ministry of Health/Manatū Hauora, 2002b).

9 The term ‘waiata’ is used throughout the thesis to mean either ‘sing’, ‘a song’ (singular) or ‘songs’ (plural).

10 The term ‘whanaungatanga’ is used throughout the thesis to refer to a concept akin to building relationships. It has at its core the value and respect of whānau, but this does not mean it solely refers to establishing rapport with family. The process of whanaungatanga is applicable to any relationship so may refer to communal contribution as much as family togetherness.

11 The term ‘powhiri’ is used throughout the thesis to refer to a formal welcoming process.

12 The term ‘tangata whenua’ is generally used throughout the thesis to refer to the aboriginal or Indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is often translated as ‘people of the land’; ‘tāngata’ meaning ‘people’ and ‘whenua’ meaning ‘land’. When used within the context of powhiri, such as in this instance, the term ‘tangata whenua’ refers to the people hosting the welcome who are differentiated from the visitors (or ‘manuhiri’).

13 The term ‘karanga’ means ‘call’ and is used to refer to the formal welcoming call and responding call of wahine at powhiri.

14 The term ‘whaikōrero’ is used throughout the thesis to refer to formal speech-making or oration.
the hākari\textsuperscript{15} a mihimihi\textsuperscript{16} would take place. At one such pōwhiri, as we were going around the room listening to people recite their whakapapa, it came the turn of a young man who was intellectually disabled. My understanding was that this rangatahi Māori\textsuperscript{17} attended Te Whare Marie from the community as respite for his parents. I do not know whether he had any diagnosis of mental illness. Although I had met him a few times, I had never heard him speak and had assumed he was mute. I later found out he could speak, but only communicated with his parents in te reo Māori\textsuperscript{18}.

The normal practice during such pōwhiri was that when it came to his turn to mihi, the kuia\textsuperscript{19} would stand wherever she was in the room, and would speak for him. However, on this day, before she had the chance to do so, he just stood and recited his pepeha\textsuperscript{20}. Not only this, he accompanied it with the most beautiful moteatea\textsuperscript{21} imaginable. I doubt anyone had ever thought he was capable, but obviously whilst he was accompanying his parents at hui\textsuperscript{22}, he was making connections. Once he had finished he just sat down again, the room moved to silence. I have often thought about this day and wondered about this man’s strength of identity that had not until that time been realised.

The second example is similar but relates to Te Awa o te Ora in Ōtautahi. At the time Te Awa o te Ora was made up of about 20-30 Tāngata Whai OralMotuhake (on a good day) who once a week met for waiata and whanaungatanga. These Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake were either living in the community receiving ongoing community mental health support, or were inpatients of the hospital.

\textsuperscript{15} The term ‘hākari’ is used to mean either ‘a feast’ (singular) or ‘feasts’ (plural).
\textsuperscript{16} The terms ‘mihimihi’ and ‘mihī’ are used interchangeably throughout the thesis to mean either ‘greet’, ‘a greeting’ (singular) or ‘greetings’ (plural).
\textsuperscript{17} The term ‘rangatahi’ is used throughout the thesis to mean either ‘a youth’ (singular) or ‘youth’ (plural). ‘Rangatahi Māori’ is used when referring specifically to either ‘a Māori youth’ (singular) or ‘Māori youth’ (plural).
\textsuperscript{18} The term ‘te reo Māori’ is used throughout the thesis to mean ‘the Māori language’.
\textsuperscript{19} The term ‘kuia’ is used throughout the thesis to mean either ‘an elderly woman’ (singular) or ‘elderly women’ (plural).
\textsuperscript{20} The term ‘pepeha’ is used throughout the thesis to refer to the recitation of an individual’s whakapapa.
\textsuperscript{21} The term ‘moteatea’ is used throughout the thesis to mean ‘a tribal chant’ (singular) or ‘tribal chants’ (plural).
\textsuperscript{22} The term ‘hui’ is used throughout the thesis to mean either ‘a meeting or gathering’ (singular) or ‘meetings or gatherings’ (plural).
They began by learning waiata—one or two at first. Only a few would participate. Most just congregated outside, smoking and coming inside for food when it was kai\textsuperscript{23} time. Over time—many months—the weekly sessions became a highlight of the week for most of these Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake, and more began to participate.

After a while it was decided that everyone, Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake, staff and whānau, should begin to learn their pepeha. Mainly through the dedicated work of the Pūkenga Atawhai and their knowledge of these people, lives began to unfold. The first time a ‘formal hui’ was held, where each of these Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake were to stand in front of manuhiri\textsuperscript{24} and mihi to them, reciting their pepeha, they were unashamedly petrified. Yet, one by one they did. Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake who had once appeared to be the most psychotic, aggressive, ‘off-the-wall’ people, and others who had appeared to be so severely withdrawn they were like curled up hedgehogs, blossomed. In fact, in time this group began to work the speaking circuit at mental health conferences both within Aotearoa/New Zealand and throughout Australia. Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake, once unable to even look you in the eyes, were now able to stand, mihi, hold their mana\textsuperscript{25}, and describe to rooms full of strangers what it was like for them to live with the experience of mental illness.

My belief is that they would never have got to this place had it not been for the strength they gained from knowing who they were and where they came from. This same strength was what I believe allowed the rangatahi Māori referred to in the first example, to mihi.

Others may differ in opinion and attribute these dramatic life changes and increased wellness to intensive therapy or just whanaungatanga. I believe however, that personal and cultural identity played a huge part. In this regard my hypothesis has been shaped by both my personal and professional experiences—the idea that a secure cultural identity provides an ideal platform for improved wellbeing, and that Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake benefit from this.

\textsuperscript{23} The term ‘kai’ has been used throughout the thesis to mean ‘food’.
\textsuperscript{24} The term ‘manuhiri’ has been used throughout the thesis to mean either ‘a visitor’ (singular) or ‘visitors’ (plural).
\textsuperscript{25} The term ‘mana’ is used throughout the thesis to refer to integrity or prestige.
Put simply, this study aimed to explore the possibility that a secure cultural identity, and strong links with whānau, hapū and Iwi, provided some protection for Tāngata Whai Ora/Motuhake.

Although this thinking originates in my experiences within the mental health sector, it echoes a commonly voiced belief of many others, that stronger cultural identity improves wellbeing. Professor Mason Durie has written extensively about the links between cultural identity and mental health for Māori. In a press release regarding closing the mental health gaps between Māori and non-Māori, where Durie (2000) is quoted as linking mental health problems of Māori youth to government policies over the last 100 years, he states “There is now strong evidence that where cultural identity is secure, mental health is better”. Indeed, this is a view that I, and many others share, and one that formed the subject of exploration for this thesis.

26 The terms ‘non-Māori’ and ‘Pākehā’ have been used interchangeably throughout this thesis to refer to non-Indigenous New Zealanders.
HAVE YOU NOT BEEN LISTENING?

We are the tangata whenua. Nau mai, haere mai.
Now we are all one.
We think a little differently, mind. We do things a little differently too.
We all think alike, really. And we don’t do things that differently, you and I.
Our whānau are the most important thing to us.
We love our families too, you know. But friends are just as important.
Our kaumātua are respected. Listen to them.
The age of retirement is 65 years.
Our reo is part of who we are. It needs to be taught in schools.
Is that going to get them a job? My child will learn French.
Our rangatahi need to see positive role models on television - to hear the reo spoken.
Are we going to make sure they use subtitles, so we can all understand?

How come their children can wear greenstones to school? Ours can’t wear crucifixes.
Who said you couldn’t wear your taonga?
They have too many children. They can’t even look after the ones they’ve got.
Another pēpi? Kia ora tāku moko.
Look at them all on the DPB and the dole - that’s taxpayers’ money, you know.
I hope that superannuation lasts.
Look at the amount of them in prison.
Those judges, lawyers, police - no hea koutou?
They’re in the news again, unable to account for funding they’ve received.
What news?

This is such a young land - barely 200 years old.
We have been here for well over a thousand years.
If it weren’t for us you’d be running around in grass skirts still, if you hadn’t all eaten yourselves first.
We thrived for generations before nearly being annihilated by those third world diseases.
What about the Asians? There are lots of other cultures in this country, you know.
Treaties can only be signed with Indigenous people. Did you not know that?
They can’t even look after the land they do have - look how overgrown it is.
And kia ora for the gorse.

That land is my tipuna’s. They named it. They are that land. That land is part of me.
That’s nice - quaint even. But I bought this land. And your ancestors are dead.
We have a Treaty. Honour it.
The Treaty is history and we’re sick of hearing about it. It has no relevance to today.
We cannot move forward until we have addressed the past.
I didn’t sign it. It has nothing to do with me.
Don’t takahia the mana of our marae. Learn our kawa or stay out of our house.
Why do you let them get away with this? They can’t do that, can they?

It’s about time someone stood up to them.
Have you not been listening?