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**CONCEPTUALISING
MIND, BODY, SPIRIT INTERCONNECTIONS:
perspectives of Māori and non-Māori healers**

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ABSTRACT

This study into the nature of the mind, body, and spirit aimed to enhance psychological understandings of the holistic nature of human beings. There is a focus in mainstream psychology on the biomedical model, which has a limited view of people, of health and illness. The biopsychosocial and biopsychosocialspiritual models of health and illness, and the Whare Tapa Wha and Te Wheke Māori cultural models encompass holism but there is little literature or research specifically on MBS interconnections.

Due to the difficulty of studying the mind, body, spirit according to scientific assumptions and methods, the interconnections between these three elements were explored through spiritual healers' understandings of spiritual healing practices. There were twelve participants, six indigenous Māori and six non-indigenous spiritual healers who participated in semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis techniques.

Three specific questions about mind, body, and spirit interconnections conceptualisations were studied. The first research question focused on how spiritual healers conceptualise mind, body, spirit interconnections. The second research question considered how mind, body, spirit interconnections are understood by spiritual healers practices of spiritual healing. The last research question examined how a Māori cultural worldview influences spiritual healers' understandings of interconnections between the mind, body, and spirit.

The diversity of mind, body, spirit interconnections broadened and expanded on the sparse definitions in the literature by showing the use of the mind, body, spirit as both separate and combined elements. There were illustrations of the theoretical and practical use of mind, body, spirit interconnections in healing and in

life. Cultural perspectives influenced and impacted on views of the mind, body, spirit with the addition of whānau and whenua to the mind, body, spirit concept that was considered culturally appropriate. The results provided a much broader picture than traditional models of health and illness, and showed further definitions and understandings of MBS interconnections. It is concluded that it is important that Māori cultural meanings of health and illness are included in the New Zealand health system.

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