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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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
List of Tables and List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter One: Conceptualising Mind, Body, Spirit: an introduction	1
Mind, Body, Spirit	2
Chapter Two: Spiritual Healing and Healers.....	15
Complementary and Alternative Therapies.....	15
Spiritual Healing: an introduction	17
Spiritual Healers	19
Chapter Three: Indigenous Perspectives on the Mind, Body, Spirit.....	25
Health, Illness and Disease.....	26
Māori Perspectives	28
Healing	30
Indigenous Spiritual Healers	31
Māori Healing and Healers.....	32
Purpose of Research	34
Chapter Four: Mind, Body, Spirit Research Process	36
Introduction to Interpretative Phenomological Analysis	36
Research Procedures.....	39
Data Collection	42
Reflexivity	48
Data Analysis.....	51
Chapter Five: Healers' Conceptualisations of Mind, Body, Spirit	
Interconnections	54
Considerations during analysis.....	55
Mind, Body, Spirit themes.....	56
Results.....	58
Chapter Six: Māori Healers' Conceptualisations of Mind, Body, Spirit	
Interconnections	90
Mind, Body, Spirit themes.....	90
Results.....	92
Māori Cultural Conceptual Model.....	125

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Considerations	128
Research Questions	128
Research Conclusions and Implications	132
Research Considerations	137
Appendix I: Interview Schedule	147
Appendix II: Information Sheet	148
Appendix III: Participant Consent Sheet	150
Appendix IV: Authority for the Release of Tape Transcripts Form.....	151
Glossary of Māori words	152
References	154

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: All participants' gender, ethnicity and location data.....	40
Table 2: Descriptions of spiritual methods methods mentioned most frequently across all participating healers	41
Table 3: MBS interconnection themes from Māori and non-Māori spiritual healers' interviews	58
Table 4: MBS interconnection themes from Māori spiritual healers' interviews	92

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Te Whetu (The Star) Māori cultural HTWWW (or MBSFL) conceptual model of health and well-being.....	128
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