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Wairuatanga and healing from sexual violence for Māori

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

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Abstract

The importance of wairuatanga (spirituality) for Māori is undeniable. Māori are wairua-led (spirit), holding ancient Mātauranga (knowledge) and connection of Io Matua Kore (Creator God) and all things in creation. The process of colonisation including the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 was devastating for Māori culture, beliefs and spiritual expression. Despite this, the importance of wairua endured, and continues to hold immense value for Māori in our contemporary realities. Wairua now is making a resurgence in rangahau (research) and hauora (health and wellbeing) practices for Māori. The aim of this qualitative Kaupapa Māori rangahau, was to identify the importance of wairua in healing from mahi tūkino (sexual violence). Six semi-structured interviews took place with Māori healers/practitioners working with mahi tūkino kiritaki (clients). Kōrero (conversations) were analysed using thematic analysis through a Kaupapa Māori lens.

The findings identified four themes covering the importance of wairua. The first unpacked the connections Māori have through ancestral Mātauranga with wairua including Io Matua Kore, mauri (vital essence), the environment/rongoā (Māori healing) and Māori culture. Secondly, the impact mahi tūkino has on wairua including damage to identity, health, and wellbeing. The final two identified wairua as the most important aspect of healing and wholeness for kiritaki and practitioners alike. This rangahau will contribute to the growing wealth of Mātauranga regarding the importance of wairua in healing from mahi tūkino. The main finding was that healing from mahi tūkino is not possible without the inclusion of wairua. Through access to wairua-centred practitioners, Māori have a culturally appropriate way of finding healing. Many more wairua-centred services are needed to boost healing opportunities

from mahi tūkino. This rangahau supports additional research into the importance of wairua in healing for Māori from mahi tūkino.

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Kāhore taku toa i te toa takitihi, he toa takitini
We cannot succeed without the support of those around us.
Whakataukī (proverb)

Firstly, I want to honour and acknowledge my saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. He has strengthened me to work with love, dedication and commitment on this thesis. Thankyou my Jesus, I love You. Secondly, I want to thank my beautiful tamariki (children) Mia and Nikau. You are my delights and I love you with all my heart. I pray you see that if Māmā can apply herself and succeed, you can too. I would also like to thank my parents Merlyn & Keith Patterson who have taken care of my tamariki, believed in me and championed me towards making my dreams come true. To my friends Gayle & Frans Swanepoel who have stepped up to care for my tamariki also so I can write, research and do interviews, your support for my whānau was invaluable and I'm so grateful to walk this path with you. Many thanks to my friend Chris Hudson who has been my IT support and bailed me out of all things technical – I am so grateful to you and without your help, this thesis would never have been finished, literally. My thanks also go to my supervisor Dr. Pikihuia Pomare without whom, I would never have started, continued or completed this thesis. I am indebted to you for your advice, feedback and support. I am humbled to have such an amazing supervisor and I am blessed to have had the opportunity to work with you on this thesis. Thank you also to my second supervisor Professor Julia Ioane for your encouragement, kindness, wisdom, support and guidance, I truly appreciate you. I would also like to thank Te Rau Puawai for the financial support, thank you Byron for seeing me ten years ago and believing I can achieve my academic goals. Finally, this report would not exist without

my six Māori practitioner participants. Without your engagement, time, willingness to share your taonga (treasure) with me, there would be no story to tell. I only hope I have honoured your voice and mahi accurately. Mei kore ake.

Glossary

This glossary provides meanings and translations of te reo Māori (Māori language) terms used within this study based on the context of this research. They are by no means intended to be exhaustive or definitive, as there are variations in translations, understandings, and meanings across different contexts, whānau (families), hapū (sub-tribe), iwi (tribe) and rohe (regions).

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Aroha	Love, care
Atua	gods, deities
Awa	River, waterway
Hapū	Pregnant, sub-tribe
Hara	Violation
Hau	Breath
Hauora	Māori philosophy of health
Hikoi	Journey, travel
Hinengaro	Mind, will, emotions, psychological state
Hine-nui-te-pō	Guardian of the deceased
Ihu Karaiti	Jesus Christ
Ira atua	Spiritual life
Ira tangata	Human element
Iwi	Tribe
Io Matua Kore	Creator God
Kai	Food
Kaitiaki	Guardian
Kanohi ki te kanohi	Face to face
Karakia	Prayer
Karakia pūkenga	Wairua Specialist
Kauaeraro	Lower jaw knowledge

Kauaerunga	Upper jaw knowledge
Kaupapa	Purpose, cause
Kaupapa Māori	Philosophy, approach, platform, foundation
Kete	Basket
Kiritaki	Client/s
Koha	Offering, gift
Kōhuru	Murder, homicide, assassination
Kōrero	Conversations, talk
Kuia/Kui	Grandmother, elder female
Kupu Māori	Māori Word/s
Mahi	Work
Mahi tūkino	Sexual violence
Māmā	Mum, Mother
Mamae	Pain, hurt
Mana wāhine	A term that encompasses the mana that is inherent to women
Mana	Prestige, authority
Manu	Birds
Māori	Indigenous People of Aotearoa
Marae	Meeting area of whānau, hapū or iwi
Mātauranga	Knowledge
Mate	Death
Mate wareware	Dementia
Mauiui	Weary, sick, fatigued, illness, disorder
Mauri	Vital essence, life force
Mei kore ake	Thank you
Mirimiri	Māori massage
Manaakitanga	Kindness, support
Moana	Ocean, sea

Moko	Grandchildren
Motu	Country
Muru	Wipe out, confiscate
Ngahere	Forest
Nga maramatanga	Building insights
Ngaukino	Distress
Noa	Māori philosophical concept that denotes an element of normalcy, free of restriction
Ora pai	Staying well
Pākehā	People of European descent living in Aotearoa
Papatūānuku	Mother earth
Patai	Questions
Pōuri	Sad
Pūkenga	Specialist
Puku	Stomach
Pūrākau	Ancestral narrative
Rākau	Trees, wood
Rangahau	Research
Rangatahi	Māori young people
Rangatira	A person of high rank/esteem
Reo	Language, voice
Rohe	Region
Romiromi	Māori massage. Deep tissue work, joints, stretching
Rongoā	Traditional Māori healing
Rongoā rakau	Herbal medicine
Rōpū	Group
Takahi	Degradation
Tamaki Makaurau	Auckland
Tamariki	Children

Tama	Son
Tamaiti	Child
Tāne	Man, male
Tāngata whaiora	Service users
Tangata	Uterus
Taonga	Treasure
Tapu	Sacred, A Māori philosophical concept denoting an element of restriction
Tara	Vagina
Tau	Calm, settled
Te ao Māori	Māori world, Māori worldview
Te ao Pākehā	Pākehā worldview
Te ao Taiao	The environment
Te ao Wairua	The spiritual realm
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Taha Hinengaro	The mental/psychological dimension
Te Taha Tinana	The physical dimension
Te Taha Wairua	The spiritual dimension
Te Taha Whānau	The family/social dimension
Te tai Tokerau	Northland
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi
Te Whare Tapa Whā	The four-sided house, Māori model of wellbeing
Tikanga	Māori protocols, practices and customs
Tinana	Body
Tino rangatiratanga	Sovereignty
Tīrairaka	Fantail
Tohunga	Traditional Māori healer
Tūpuna	Ancestors, forebearers, predecessors
Tūrangawaewae	Place to stand

Utu	Revenge, A concept informing the reciprocity of actions
Wai	Water
Wāhine	Women
Wairua	Spirit
Wairua Tapu	Holy Spirit
Wairuatanga	Spirituality
Waka	Canoe
Whakaaro	Thought, opinion
Whakamā	Embarrassed, ashamed
Whakapapa	Māori philosophical concept outlining the interconnection of all things, genealogy
Whakaaro pai	Positive thinking
Whakataukī	Proverbs
Whakawhanaungatanga	Building connections
Whānau	Extended family group
Whanaunga	Relatives
Whanaungatanga	Relationship, connection
Whanonga pai	Behaving effectively
Whare	Home, house
Whenua	Placenta, land

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Karakia

He hōnore, he korōria ki te Atua

He maungārongo ki te whenua

He whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa

Hanga e te Atua he ngākau hou

Ki roto, ki tēnā, ki tēnā o mātou

Whakatōngia to wairua tapu

Hei āwhina, hei tohutohu i a mātou

Hei ako hoki i ngā mahi mō tēnei rā

Āmene

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Chapter one: Introduction

Ko wai au: positionality statement

It is important for me to introduce myself, who I am, where I come from and my motivation for choosing this research topic. Mahi tūkino is a silent pandemic amongst Māori, derailing those who encounter it. Healing from mahi tūkino is only possible with the inclusion of wairua as I believe, we were created wairua beings who live a physical existence.

Ko Mataatua tōku waka, Ko Ngāpuhi tōku iwi,

Ko Ngāti Rēhia, Ngāti Kawa ōku hapū,

Ko Megan Grace tōku ingoa.

I am Ngāpuhi and Christian, the creation narrative I acknowledge is that originating from Io Matua Kore (Creator God). Reverend Māori Marsden (2003) speaks of Io as already existing. Io created Te Pō (darkness), Te Mārama (light) and then the rest of creation. As Io is the supreme God, the parentless One, the beginning of all things is spiritual in nature (Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2018). For Ngāpuhi, the knowledge of Io Matua Kore is considered as kauaerunga (upper jaw) knowledge (Salmond, 1985). The author states that this knowledge was reserved for chiefs and tohunga (priests) because it was considered extremely sacred knowledge. There was another form of knowledge kauaeraro (lower jaw), that detailed general human history including the great migrations to Aotearoa. This knowledge was widespread amongst

Māori society as it was not considered sacred. I have written this thesis from the perspective that I believe Io Matua Kore created the world and everything in it. Therefore, mankind as a created being, was created in his image who is triune – Io Matua Kore (Creator God), Ihu Karaiti (Jesus Christ) and Wairua Tapu (Holy Spirit). To reflect a triune (three parts) Creator, he created mankind with three elements of being - wairua (spirit), tinana (body) and hinengaro (mind, will and emotions). These elements are central to Sir Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā model of wellbeing. It includes whānau as Māori do not live in isolation, we are communal peoples and wairua is the essence of human life (Durie, 2007). Sir Mason Durie created Te Whare Tapa Whā as a representation of the balance needed in each element of ones being for the person to thrive and be whole. These are depicted as the four elements of being: taha wairua (spiritual), taha hinengaro (psychological), taha tinana (physical) and taha whānau (family). Of the four elements, wairua is considered the most important (Durie, 1985, 2003; Heaton, 2015). When these four elements of being are equally strong and balanced, the person is considered to have an optimum state of overall health. However, when an element is weak or out of balance, the person is therefore unbalanced and needs to strengthen that element, returning their overall wellbeing to a state of balance.

I was not raised with a te ao Māori (Māori worldview), rather a colonial, western home. My whakapapa (genealogy) is a blend of Māori and Pākehā and I was raised on the North Shore of Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland). Nothing in my childhood represented anything of my Māori heritage, however my kuia (grandmother) spoke to me about our roots and her longing for reconnection with te ao Māori and our ancestral lands of Te Tai Tokerau (Northland). As such, I had a glimpse but grew up disconnected and removed from all things Māori. In the last ten years, I have been able to begin

reconnecting with my iwi of Ngāpuhi and hāpū of Ngāti Rēhia and Ngāti Kawa. Though I have no Mātauranga of my own to pass to my tamariki, so I continue to learn, sharing with them who we are and where we come from. My journey continues in healing, uncovering my identity as Māori and reclaiming what was stolen.

Personal wairua experiences

As this research is centred on wairua, it is important to position myself in my rangahau by sharing my own understanding and lived experiences of wairua. Regarding wairua, I know that I am known by my Creator, I am getting to know Him each day and my life's goal is to know Him with all of my being. In this, we kōrero daily which helps me finetune my spiritual ears further. I am aware of Wairua Tapu with me each day and I often hear Io Matua Kore and Ihu Karaiti since I live my life in union with them. There have been dark times in my life where I was very much lost and had lost hope due to negative life experiences. On many occasions, I have physically heard Io Matua Kore talking to me aloud in an audible voice. One of these was when he broke through the white noise of my depression which had drowned out all goodness and hope. In this noise, I heard Him audibly say 'There is nothing in the way now, come home' which I knew meant to come home to Him. I tearfully said, 'ok'. Since that moment, I have been rebuilt, restored and refilled with hope. Without the ability to hear His voice, I would not have hope, faith and a belief that I have a good future ahead.

I have seen what I would describe as angelic activity around my whānau, at church as we worship and praise our Creator and out in the environment. An example with my whānau was when I witnessed a very large angel removing a hotdog from my tama's (son's) throat as he choked. I saw the angel (which is one of his four guardian angels)

put his hand into my tama's throat and pull out the hotdog which then flew across the room. It was an exceptional encounter and one that saved my tama's life. At church, I have seen and felt the presence of many angels who are between ten-twelve metres tall. They are present to join in worship and bridge the gap between the spirit and physical realms, bringing in the presence of Wairua Tapu.

Another wairua encounter I have experienced is seeing warring/fire angels around my whare (home). They are positioned to guard and protect my tamariki and myself and they are mighty. There are four ten-twelve metre angels on the corners of the property, with other angels between them linking and sealing in the premises with holy fire. I have peace in seeing and knowing that they are consistently looking over and protecting us from harm and danger. They are not there by chance; they are there because I have a living relationship with my Creator and He has sent them to care for myself and my tamariki. Across the whenua (land), I have experienced overarching regional angels that can be felt. There are certain geographical areas that I avoid if I can, as the regional entities over those areas are not positive or good. There are other areas however, that are the opposite and give peace and rest. One such place is the region between Te Hana and Kaiwaka on my way home to Te tai Tokerau. This is where a veil lifts and there is an opening up of space, time and rest. These areas allow me to breathe and relax in the space and peace that resides there. This dimensional shift is a partition of the physical and spiritual realms. Each time I travel north, I encounter the same lifting and overwhelming peace at the same geographical location.

Unfortunately, as already mentioned; seeing and feeling in the spirit is not aways a good and positive experience. On many occasions I have seen and felt the presence of dark and evil spirits in places and people that intended to either harm or intimidate. People's countenances alter and evil spirits then emanate from within them speaking

to me in the spirit. The person's lips do not move. In the past, these encounters were difficult to process, bringing fear and anxiety to my life regarding Te ao Wairua (the spirit world). In more recent times, I have learned to not be distressed, as I stand in the knowledge that I am fully protected by Io Matua Kore, nothing is stronger than my God.

The importance of wairua for Māori cannot be understated and is my own experience as Māori. While I am interpreting these experiences via a Christian lens, I also see there is overlap in the understanding with te ao Māori and wairuatanga. For example, angels may be viewed as kaitiaki (guardians, guides) while negative entities are also recognised from a Māori world view. There is also an understanding regarding the spiritual qualities of the Te ao Taiao (the environment) in te ao Māori. I wanted to talk about these experiences as wairua is susceptible to being pathologised in Western health and psychological settings.

The following chapter will cover the existing literature on wairua, healing and sexual violence for Māori while highlighting the gap in literature around the importance of wairua in the healing process for Māori from mahi tūkino.

Chapter two: Literature Review

This literature review chapter begins by reviewing what has been published about mahi tūkino from a global, national and Māori perspective. To try to provide context for this sensitive topic, the literature review then discusses essential Māori concepts that are critical to healing for Māori. The next two sections look at the role of colonisation and its socio-economic impact on Māori and how psychology within Aotearoa is experienced by Māori who seek healing. Lastly and most importantly, healing for Māori is unpacked.

Mahi tūkino

Research on mahi tūkino in published literature is called a variety of names including but not limited to sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, rape, incest and more (Douglas & Sedgewick, 2024; Dowling et al., 2024; Te Wiata et al., 2022; Woodling & Kossoris, 1981). The term mahi tūkino in this thesis is aptly named, as it covers all forms of violation and the depth of damage that results. Writing a literature review on the importance of wairua for Māori from mahi tūkino has been complex. This is in part due to the difficulties of defining wairua, and also because despite the centrality of wairua for Māori, the dominant Western society within Aotearoa, tends excludes it completely. Separately, healing and sexual violence have been researched however, there are scarce research articles regarding the importance of wairua in the healing journey from mahi tūkino (Te Wiata et al., 2022; Harrison & Le Grice, 2024). Even though broad mahi tūkino research is well established, specific research regarding the importance of wairua in healing for Māori from mahi tūkino remains vastly unresearched (Te Wiata et al., 2022; Harrison & Le Grice, 2024).

This thesis consists of four main topics that were identified in the findings of this rangahau in relation to healing. The purpose of this rangahau was to ascertain the role of wairua in healing from mahi tūkino and to explore if healing from mahi tūkino was possible without the inclusion of wairua for Māori. The findings came from the six Māori practitioners interviewed and their healing mahi with their kiritaki (clients) who had experienced mahi tūkino.

International literature on sexual violence

Around the world, when sex is used as a power weapon to harm and violate, it is sexual violence (Isaacs, 2018; Launer, 2018). Sexual violence is an abuse of power with most survivors being women and children, though there are also men and boys who also experience sexual violence. One in three women worldwide have experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime (Fanslow et al., 2007; Li et al., 2023). This is one of the greatest health issues women face. Within Indigenous, collective cultures, the rate of women and girls who are sexually violated rises to one in two as was recorded in Canada (Du Mont et al., 2017). In Australia, Aboriginal children are between two to four times more likely to suffer from child sexual violence (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014). These statistics are only inclusive of those brave survivors who chose to report, whereas most survivors who experience mahi tūkino will never report (Pihama et al., 2016). This level of trauma is correlated to colonisation with Indigenous peoples suffering greatly (Bodley, 2015; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Fast, & Collin-Vezina, 2010).

Indigenous peoples globally have suffered from colonial persecution (Bodley, 2015; Johnson-Jennings, 2020) with the Native Americans or First Nations Peoples of the

United States of America suffering tremendously (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Duran & Duran, 1995; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Fast, & Collin-Vezina, 2010; Johnson-Jennings, 2020). One of the less discussed impacts of colonisation is intergenerational trauma that is passed through the generational bloodlines to those living today. An openly visible symptom of intergenerational trauma are the visible disruptions in people's lives that stem from this deep level of trauma and unresolved grief (Brave Heart, 1999). These impacts cause disruptions to health, wellbeing and coping with the emotional and spiritual aspects of this harm. This is seen through dependencies on alcohol, drugs, sexual and other forms of violence, unemployment and a lack of educational opportunity. Some of the psychological symptoms seen in cultures who experienced the intergenerational impact of colonisation were depression, feeling marginalised and racially abused, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Blume, 2020; Brave Heart, 1999). Li et al., (2023) identified 95% of the Indigenous women in their study that had experienced sexual violence also suffered from PTSD. They also described difficulty in seeking help afterwards, as only 34% of those women sought help for their trauma. The authors continue to outline the destruction sexual violence creates in the lives of the women, their families and communities. According to Li et al., (2023), colonisation may have caused social harms and conditions that have increased the exposure to harm including experiences of trauma caused by sexual violence in approximately a third of all women in the world.

Aotearoa Mahi tūkino

Levenson, et al., (2016) identified some of the precursors of mahi tūkino as being Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs), intergenerational trauma and traumatic life events. ACEs can be experiences such as displacement from whānau, school and friends as

well as a lack of safe caregivers (Levenson, et al., 2016). ACEs are linked to intergenerational and historical trauma as those who have experienced colonisation, consequently, have higher rates of ACEs. Levenson et al., (2016) go on to say that people with higher ACEs have long term chronic physical health and mental health outcomes. They highlight the importance of this as mahi tūkino permeates all elements of being, it is not isolated to a physical experience only (Levenson, et al., 2016). Smith (2019) researched the reach of mahi tūkino as the persons whole life is affected by it until healing is received. As such, Smith (2019) posits that healing from mahi tūkino is not possible without wairua being included in the healing process since for Māori (as explained by Sir Mason Durie), the four elements of being: taha wairua, taha hinengaro, taha tinana and taha whānau, cannot be divided (Smith. 2019). Wairua leads and guides Māori practitioners in their healing practices with kiritaki, enabling deep healing in their wairua. Of the Māori practitioners I interviewed for this rangahau, they all stated that they cannot and would not, attempt to provide healing services for their kiritaki without wairua being foremost in their offering (Grace, 2023; Smith, 2019).

Mahi tūkino experienced by wāhine (women) in Aotearoa is at persistently high levels (Auckland Sexual Violence, 2002; Fanslow et al., 2007). The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention (2024) recently published statistics revealing one in three women had experienced mahi tūkino, which increased to one in two for wāhine Māori (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2017). The statistics breakdown further to a relational level whereby one in three women in Aotearoa New Zealand experience intimate partner violence which is on par with women across Europe and the Pacific nations (Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention, 2024). The findings also highlight the violence committed against women

in these relationships with fifty percent of women experienced psychological, emotional and physical violence (Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention, 2024).

The connection between mahi tūkino and physical violence in relationships sees all kinds of force (sexual, verbal, physical, emotional and financial) used as the method of the perpetrator to apply power and control over their victim (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Gavey, 2019; Gavey & Farley, 2020). This level of control takes advantage of sexual encounters to physically force a perpetrator's will over a wāhine, keeping them under his domination (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Gavey, 2019; Gavey & Farley, 2020). This level of violence is not easily forgotten, the effects of mahi tūkino remain with the wāhine and her whānau, affecting them throughout their lives (Durie, 2001; Gavey & Farley, 2020; Pihama et al., 2016; Roskvist et al., 2025; Te Wiata et al., 2022). Some of the recognised impacts these wāhine live with are a lack of self-esteem and hope, identity loss, substance abuse, poor mental health such as suicidal ideation, depression and anxiety and relational issues with whānau, friends and in the workplace (Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention, 2024). Of equal detriment is the transgression of the inherent mana of wāhine and tapu (sacred) and the violation of the sacredness of whānau. The Waitangi Tribunal describe mana wāhine as being inherent power, strength and authority that is exercised and possessed by wāhine (Waitangi Tribunal, 2026). They go on to locate mana wāhine as being uniquely Māori, handed down from tūpuna through whakapapa (genealogy) and in the whenua (Waitangi Tribunal, 2026). Mana wāhine is reinforced through Mātauranga, tikanga (customs, protocol) and in whānau and hapū relationships (Waitangi Tribunal, 2026). When there is consistent takahi (degradation) of the

importance and sacredness of wāhine; their health, wellbeing and healing is eroded and systematically diminished (Smith, 2019). This can be seen in the minimal numbers of wāhine who seek out therapy due to feeling whakamā (embarrassed, ashamed) and overwhelmed with the impact of mahi tūkino on their daily lives. The loss of protection and strength of identity provided through mana wāhine and whānau, predispose the survivor to environments where further mahi tūkino is likely to happen (Waitoki, et al., 2015). When there is consistent refutation of the importance and sacredness of wāhine; their health, wellbeing and ability to heal is compromised (Smith, 2019).

Prosecuting mahi tūkino in Aotearoa is difficult. Despite the statistics and level of police responses, only 42% are charged, 12% are convicted and just 7% are imprisoned. This leaves 35% that are not progressed. Of the offenders 83% were male and 82% of the reports were made by women. These statistics represent just 8% of mahi tūkino that are reported (The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention, 2024). During 2020, there were 5,066 mahi tūkino reports that proceeded to court. Of these, only 2,713 were convicted (N.Z. Justice Department, 2021). In all cases not reported or prosecuted, there was no further action taken. The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention reported a jump from 5,600 to 7,000 mahi tūkino reports to police during the seven years between 2016-2022. As mahi tūkino statistics are heavily under-reported, the actual figures are likely to be much higher (Anderson et al., 1993).

The mahi done in and through Te Aorerekura (Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa, 2026) is opening the door for more conversations around mahi tūkino and its impact on Māori

whānau. Te Aorerekura is the twenty-five-year strategy that started three years ago seeking to develop effective relationships between communities and government (Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa, 2026). In the strategy, they aim to develop community-based workforces and improve decision-making through data and evidence usage towards eliminating mahi tūkino across Aotearoa. They have seven areas aimed at improving safety and support which are investing and commissioning, keeping people safe, stopping violence, protecting children and youth, strengthening the workforce, taking action on mahi tūkino and preventing violence before it starts (Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa, 2026). In the strategy, it states one in two Māori wāhine experience mahi tūkino during their lives. This was supported by Fanslow et al (2023) which identified prevalence rates of mahi tūkino by ethnicity, in which Māori wāhine had the highest percentage of 64.6%.

When there is mahi tūkino, the impact on the persons wairua is significant. This level of assault and trauma creates trauma-forced separation between wairua and the other elements of being: hinengaro, tinana and whānau. In many cases the wairua of the person will leave the tinana as a protection mechanism (Lindsay et al., 2020). For those with multiple sexual violation experiences, the separation of wairua from the other elements of being then forces the other elements (hinengaro, tinana and whānau) to separate from each other. This creates a survival process whereby the survivor exists usually through hinengaro or tinana alone. This was my experience, I lived most of my life through hinengaro, making connection in all other elements of being extremely rare.

Māori view of Mahi tūkino

Māori view mahi tūkino as the transgression of whakapapa, whānau, hapū and iwi. It impacts the entire cultural collective and enshrouds everyone connected to the survivor (Angeli-Gordon, 2025; Gavey & Farley, 2020; Pihama et al., 2016; Roskvist et al., 2025; Te Wiata et al., 2022; Tuakiritetanga & Ibarra-Lemay, 2021). It is not a physical, individual act of violence. Mahi tūkino against anyone, including wāhine or tamariki was extremely rare prior to colonisation (Pihama, 2016). Wāhine in te ao Māori are considered tapu or sacred as we bring forth life and tamariki, are considered taonga (gifts) and are therefore treated as such (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Le Grice et al., 2017). Historically, if someone committed mahi tūkino against a wāhine or tamaiti (child), they would suffer severe utu (revenge) most likely resulting in mate (death) (Pihama, 2016). Mahi tūkino became a systemic problem for Māori whānau when the Pākehā patriarchal system replaced Māori whānau tikanga during colonisation (Bodley,2015).

Colonisation bought destruction of the whānau, subjugating wāhine to be the exclusive property of men (Pihama, 2016). Colonisation disrupting the balance between wāhine and tāne, this then empowered those who chose to perpetrate mamae (pain, hurt) against wāhine without the risk of justice. The relegation of wāhine and tamariki to a lower level was a destructive disconnection of the importance of relational tapu. It enabled a system to allow men to treat what was deemed as his ‘property’ as he wished without accountability to the wider whānau, hapū or iwi of the wāhine and tamaiti (Pihama, 2016). This was a profound shift from tikanga Māori. Colonisation separated Māori from the collective support system placing more pressure on the whānau system, while Māori men experienced other social harms that increase the

risk of this behaviour. For the tāne, this created further isolation and takahi on their mana through racism and discrimination. During the implementation of colonisation, Pākehā laws and societal values were forced on Māori which changed all interactions impacting wāhine tremendously. They were oppressed and subjugated into low value property without a voice, choice, or any protection (Fanslow, 2005; Tuakiritetanga & Ibarra-Lemay, 2021). This power imbalance was fortified by the colonial denigration of the value Māori placed on wairua, mauri, tikanga, whakapapa and mana forcing them to replace their own belief systems with introduced colonial ones. Traditional respect and reverence for wāhine was replaced with the normalisation of colonial values and norms, resulting in mahi tūkino (Fanslow, 2005; Tuakiritetanga & Ibarra-Lemay, 2021).

Tikanga

Tikanga is essential to discuss, as without tikanga, the violation of mahi tūkino is greatly minimised. Mead (2016) discusses tikanga for Māori as essential in all areas of life. Tikanga is the right way of doing things for Māori (Mead, 2016). This overlays relationships, interactions and why and how Māori carry out daily life. Tikanga and Mātauranga Māori provide the framework for all other concepts of importance within te ao Māori such as whakapapa (genealogy, ancestry), whangaungatanga (relationships, kinship), manaakitanga (care, hospitality) amongst others (Mead, 2016). Brittain et al., (2025) discusses the importance of tikanga as it underpins many central practices and beliefs such as karakia (prayer), wairua, connection or whangaungatanga and accessing traditional healing methods like rongoā. All of these practices have tikanga at the centre of them and ensure that they are used by Māori, for the benefit of Māori and in relationship with Māori (Smith, 2012).

Tikanga is essential in the healing process. Brittain and colleagues (2025) emphasise having access to Māori culture and practices which then increased a positive sense of wellbeing and the grounding of one's identity. The authors observed beneficial outcomes for their participants when they engaged in cultural activities and connection with whānau, hapū and iwi (Barnett & Lapsley, 2006; Lapsley et al., 2002; L. Pere, 2006; Waitoki et al., 2015; Wharewera-Mika, 2012). This involvement also created opportunities for healing from intergenerational trauma. The topic of healing is important for Māori as a firm and grounded sense of cultural identity is essential for wellbeing and encourages healing and wholeness (Barnett & Lapsley, 2006; Brittain et al., 2025; Lapsley et al., 2002). By honouring tikanga and wairua, more Māori will have access to healing from mahi tūkino (Levy & Waitoki, 2016).

Pūrākau

Tikanga underpins the artform of pūrākau (ancestral narrative) as a story-telling tradition of transferring Mātauranga Māori (knowledge), beliefs and Māori values intergenerationally (Lee, 2009). A well-known pūrākau within te ao Māori which highlights the consequences of mahi tūkino by men against women is that of Hine-nui-te-pō and Maui. Māui decides to violate Hine-nui-te-pō despite the knowledge of her tapu (Pearse-Otene, 2021; Pouwhare, 2016). For Māori, Hine-nui-te-pō was considered the Guardian or caretaker of those deceased. Hine-nui-te-pō is positioned at the entrance of the underworld and it is her role to welcome those who have died. The pūrākau speaks of Māui attempting to enter Hine-nui-te-pō's tara (vagina) in an attempt to hīkoi (travel) to her whare tangata (uterus). He believed that by entering in the place of birth and accessing this sacred area of her tinana, he would reverse the normal sequence and process of human mortality and be able to gain immortality

(Pouwhare, 2016). He chose to try and enter her while she slept, however, a Tīrairaka (fantail) made a noise to alert her, which awoke Hine-nui-te-pō to discover that she had been violated (Pouwhare, 2016). In retribution and fury, Hine-nui-te-pō crushed Maui between her thighs and killed him (Pouwhare, 2016). This pūrākau is a vivid and potent reminder that women within traditional Māori culture held positions of authority, power and worth. Women as child bearers are tapu and the reproductive ability needs to be protected, not violated.

Similarly, pūrākau are also used in clinical settings. Cherrington's (2016) rangahau used pūrākau to legitimise her kiritaki's expressions and cultural connection by using them as a Māori specific method for therapeutic processing to bring healing through inherent reconnection with wairua and wairuatanga. The use of pūrākau with tāngata whaiora (service users) resulted in a culturally safe method for processing difficult emotions, increased levels of spiritual wellbeing by connecting to the narratives of atua (gods/deities) and tūpuna (ancestors), identity support and connection to te ao Māori. Pūrākau was also used by Kopua et al., (2019), who centre pūrākau as an Indigenous method of healing within the 'Mahi a Atua' healing model they developed for use within Māori mental health. Mahi a Atua is based on Māori Psychology, in that it turns to the pūrākau of our atua Māori to understand relationships, tensions, challenges and offers various viewpoints and solutions from these narratives. The stories or narratives were passed from tūpuna (ancestors) as they contained key tikanga, Mātauranga and lessons for us that are applicable in our contemporary lives. This approach assists Māori to helps to regulate their emotions and be able to explain their experiences and where wairuatanga is normalised and openly acknowledged and explored in therapy from a te ao Māori world view.

Whenua

When the sacredness of women and the gift of bringing new life into the world is considered, one cannot separate the deep connection between whenua (land) and whenua (placenta). Within Māori culture, these dual meanings in te reo Māori are not coincidental but intentional, both the placenta and the land sustain, give life and provide the perfect conditions for life to thrive (Pomare et al., 2023). This is witnessed in the journey from conception to birth and equally in the way plants, animals and people flourish when the land is nurtured (Reweti, 2023). There is no differentiation between these two meanings within te ao Māori, and this is historically and culturally accurate, Māori are connected to the land and environment spiritually and it is a place of both physical and spiritual sustenance. This Mātauranga provides a deeper understanding of the sacredness of women and why mahi tūkino is such a profound violation within te ao Māori (Pihama et al., 2016). It also connects to our treatment of Te ao Taiao, whenua, historical and ongoing harm that occurs to Papatūānuku (earth mother) and wāhine more broadly (Pomare et al., 2023).

Colonisation

Colonisation was a tool that was heavily used by the British Crown to subdue Indigenous peoples (Bodley, 2015; Evans et al., 2007; Evans-Campbell et al., 2008; Mikaere, 2011; Osterhammel, 1997; Walker, 2004). Many weapons were used in the war of colonisation with the goal of completely destroying Māori (Pihama et al., 2014). Two of the weapons used were genocide and assimilation. Genocide is “any of the acts committed with intent to destroy a nation, ethnicity, race or religious group by killing, causing physical or mental harm, intentionally destroying life-sustaining

conditions, preventing births in the group or forcibly removing children" (as cited in Pihama, et al., 2014, p. 280). As genocide is so totally devastating, it was used in conjunction with assimilation. Assimilation is the removal of ancestral customs, cultural practices, traditions and traditional knowledge (Bodley, 2015). Mutu (2019) states that these two tools solidified colonial beliefs that as Māori are not of superior European descent, they must be liberated from savagery. This false and damaging belief created a power imbalance that underpinned all of the colonial interactions and institutional implementations across the country. This power imbalance was branded as helpful modernisations which created a western society that could not be challenged by Māori. This inferred that the traditional Māori belief system has no value which enabled the colonisers to assume power based on this false assumption of superiority.

The health, judicial, political and educational systems and structures were developed with a western world regime, prioritising English and the British values, beliefs and laws over tikanga and Mātauranga Māori. Once these imported systems were implemented, Māori epistemologies, ontologies, Mātauranga, tikanga, beliefs and values were excluded from their use. Colonisation directly targeted the cornerstones of culture and as a result te reo Māori, ancestral Māori health, judicial, political and educational systems were banned and replaced with British systems (Bodley, 2015; Huia et al., 2025). One of the ways this was carried out was through the introduction of the Tohunga Suppression Act (1907). Further, Māori experienced alienation from and removal of land and access to ancestral sites that are fundamental to the hauora of people (Pomare, 2023). The effect colonisation and their systems had across Aotearoa was catastrophic for Māori. These systems have disrupted all aspects of Māori life from communication, health and wellbeing, correction and justice, decision

making and leadership as well as how Māori could educate their tamariki (Bodley, 2015). These changes culminated in devastating levels of imbalance for Māori socioeconomically and in health and wellbeing (Brown & Bryder, 2023). Another colonial act forced upon Māori was the Native Schools Act (1867) which prohibited Māori students from speaking their mother tongue of te reo Māori (Harlow, 2007; Huia et al., 2025). This act directly affected the sense of identity, cultural identity, worth, self-perception and their sense of belonging for many generations of Māori (Harlow, 2007). Many Māori living today still experience reo trauma and feelings of inadequacy due to not being versed in tikanga and te reo Māori (Roa & Roa, 2023; Rua, 2025; Huia et al., 2025).

Te reo Māori is a medicine as it implants and reinforces Mātauranga Māori and tikanga in healthcare settings (Pihama et al., 2023; Huia et al., 2025). With the implementation of these essential elements of tikanga, Mātauranga and te reo Māori in healthcare settings, authentic, trust would be formed that would aide Māori on the pathway to healing and wholeness. Some of the Māori concepts needed to create trust are manaakitanga (protection, hospitality, mana enhancing), aroha (compassion, love) and whangaungatanga (Hamley et al., 2023; Latimer et al., 2022; Pene, 2025; Rewiti, 2023). As a result of embodying these values in practice, Māori would feel seen, respected, heard and valued which would develop and positively increase healthcare outcomes for Māori. Smith (2012), Smith (2015) and Walker et al. (2006) agree that to create positive health and wellbeing change for Māori, research must be conducted by, with, and for Māori which are fundamental values for Māori.

The suppression of te reo Māori, tikanga and Mātauranga Māori did not occur through Crown policy alone. A comprehensive examination of colonisation in Aotearoa must also acknowledge the role of institutional religion of Christianity in this process. Some religious activity actively sought to suppress tikanga Māori, tohunga, rongoā and wairua-based practices, repositioning them as primitive or ungodly. Mikaere (2011) identifies this as central to the systematic disruption of Māori identity, wellbeing and connection to wairua. Hutchings and Lee-Morgan (2016) similarly identify the religion of Christianity, alongside the education system and colonial constitution, as deliberate instruments of colonisation and assimilation. It is important to note, however, that the institutional religion of Christianity as a colonial tool is historically and conceptually distinct from personal faith as a source of healing, resilience and identity. Māori have consistently demonstrated remarkable agency in navigating, resisting and reframing Christianity on their own terms, incorporating it into existing frameworks of belief in ways that reflect strength rather than subjugation (Walker, 2004). This nuance is particularly significant within te ao Māori and in this research, where faith and Māori identity are held simultaneously by myself and many participants as complementary, rather than contradictory sources of wellbeing and healing.

Intergenerational Trauma

Damage on an individual and collective level creates intergenerational trauma often called soul wounding that is passed through the generations and is alive today in Indigenous people groups worldwide (Duran, 2006; Tuakiritetanga & Ibarra-Lemay, 2021). Soul wounding is defined by Walters (2007) as intergenerational trauma wounding that violates the collective group but is personally experienced. Heart & Chase (2016) identified intergenerational trauma among Native American Indians as

intensifying racism, discrimination and oppression. These societal outcomes of intergenerational trauma create psychological suffering and grief that is unresolved, unless healing occurs on both the individual and collective levels. Their research also identified Native American Indians suffering from poorer health and wellbeing resulting from intergenerational trauma like substance abuse, relational issues, unresolved grief, limited lifespans, depression and repeat trauma exposure (Heart & Chase, 2016).

For Māori, the term Intergenerational trauma encapsulates the trauma experienced within the elements of being wairua, hinengaro, tinana and whānau as well as their hapū and iwi (Moodley & Lee, 2020). Pihama et al., (2014) traced the impact of intergenerational trauma from Māori who survived colonisation, to their descendants who carry that trauma of destruction and dehumanisation until healing occurs (Pihama, 2001; Pihama et al., 2014; Pihama et al., 2016; Turia, 2000; Waitangi Tribunal, 1996). Similarly, Wirihana & Smith (2014) and Wirihana et al., (2020) associated colonial intergenerational trauma with high levels of inequity and Māori suffering experienced in today's dominant society. Identifying this correlation is significant as there is very little research regarding the collective impact intergenerational trauma causes. This is mainly due to the process of destabilisation that denies the historical existence of Māori suffering (Wirihana & Smith, 2014). Denial keeps the dominant societal narrative of false health and wellbeing equality between Pākehā and Māori operating (Pihama et al., 2016). Waitoki et al., (2015) discusses the many societal impacts Māori face due to colonial inequity.

Socioeconomic Impact

A significant societal impact for Māori was the removal of the ability to sustain themselves through traditional subsistence practices. They were systematically marginalised into low-income employment or unemployment, substandard housing, and significant disengagement from education (Eketone, 2020, Waitoki, et al., 2015). Sadly today, Māori also lead the negative statistic rates as both perpetrators and victims of sexual and physical violence, mistreating children, substance abuse, poverty, mental health issues and incarceration (Little, Akin-Little & Johansen, 2013; Pihama et al., 2014). For Māori to heal fully from trauma, Wirihana et al., (2020) identify the urgency of freedom to govern themselves, their resources and their land as essential measures. Essential elements that must be restored as the promotion of te reo Māori is our birthright mother tongue and a reacquaintance of Māori culture for Māori identities to be restored and healed (Te Huia et al., 2025; Wirihana, 2020).

Impact on Healthcare

Healthcare is a critical discussion for Māori. Durie's (2007) research identified Māori health and wellbeing as intrinsically connected to cultural identity. He also highlighted the critical need for Māori to be able to access healthcare that is culturally appropriate. This is a major issue for Māori as the lack of cultural competence of healthcare providers greatly increases their health disparities (Bacal et al., 2006; Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act. (2003). Wilson et al., (2021) speaks of cultural competency for Māori as including ways of communication, showing respect for Māori culture, cultural safety and most importantly, being vigilant against colonial power imbalances that can take place within a client/therapist relationship. Pihama & Tuhiwai Smith (2023) give the example in their study of the Ora framework which

incorporates Mātauranga and tikanga in their approach. This example shows that by including culturally traditional practices, Māori can receive health and wellbeing services that are beneficial since they involve peoples' historical, social and environmental connections (Pihama & Tuhiwai Smith, 2023).

The separation of healthcare from all other areas of life such as employment, housing, socioeconomic positioning, education and judiciary is also a colonial concept which affects Māori greatly (Pihama & Tuhiwai Smith, 2023). As the healthcare system in Aotearoa is based on Western-British or non-Māori values, Māori receive a lower standard of healthcare which often results in distrusting healthcare providers (Bacal et al., 2006). This is an issue for all Indigenous peoples as without culturally appropriate healthcare services, they receive inconsistent and incongruent support (Atkinson, 2013; Braveheart, 1999; Diala et al., 2000; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Real improvements must happen in the healthcare systems across the nation regarding cultural competencies of practitioners and health professionals to create healthcare equality and equity for Māori. Then the levels of health and wellbeing outcomes for Māori will begin to improve. Māori can and will begin to heal from colonial intergenerational trauma (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023).

Psychology in Aotearoa

Psychology, as a formal academic discipline, emerged primarily in Europe and North America, though ideas about the mind and behaviour existed much earlier in many cultures across the world. Psychology as a discipline is rooted in Western epistemologies. Indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems including Māori, Pasifika, African and Asian traditions had sophisticated understandings of mind,

wellbeing, and behaviour long before psychology was formalised. As is the case with other Indigenous traditional knowledge forms, they were largely excluded or marginalised in early psychology. Subsequentially, psychology remains within the WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic) structure here in Aotearoa (Baker & Sperry, 2024; Black & Huygens, as cited in Waitoki et al., 2016). As such, Māori epistemologies are excluded from the profession of psychology which limits the psychologist's ability to understand their kiritaki (Pihama & Tuhiwai Smith, 2023). One way of vastly improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Māori would be to decolonise psychology (Pihama & Tuhiwai Smith, 2023). The decolonisation effort of psychology must be led by Māori to safeguard the place of Māori narratives (Came, et al., 2020). The development of Māori psychology is a collaborative and community-based effort to develop interventions and psychological interventions (Adams et al., 2015). This collaboration would also include Indigenous leaders in the co-creation of culturally appropriate approaches that work for Māori (Pihama, 2005). With this change, psychologists would be able to provide thorough, culturally grounded and proven approaches that work in conjunction with their kiritaki (Curtis, et al., 2019).

Historical psychological treatment of Māori

The dominant colonial healthcare model is western, biomedically grounded and discounts anything Māori as unimportant regarding health and wellbeing. This system has been in place since the forcible introduction of the Tohunga Act (1907) and the implementation of the colonial healthcare system (Hokowhitu et al., 2022; Mutu, 2019). This Act banned traditional Māori practices of the tohunga (Indigenous healer) and replaced it with colonial healthcare practices and knowledge (Hokowhitu et al., 2022; Mutu, 2019). Historically within the discipline of psychology, wairua-based encounters

were viewed as negative experiences due to the biomedical focus (Lindsay et al., 2022; Moreira-Almeida & Cardeña, 2011). Wairua-centric encounters were deemed abnormal and therefore, unacceptable. Kiritaki were often classified as experiencing psychotic episodes and were medicated with anti-psychotic drugs (Moreira-Almeida & Cardeña, 2011). This resulted in decades of psychological services unable to meet the healthcare needs of Māori (Smith, 2019). The Māori approach to healing is from a completely different holistic approach and perspective.

Research into Māori traditional healing methods has been increasing over the past two decades (Cherrington, 2016; Durie, 1998; Levy & Waitoki, 2016; Mataamua, 2017; Wirihana, et al., as cited in Moodley & Lee, 2021). Some of the main areas that these healing methodologies cover are relational issues, unemployment, grief and mahi tūkino (Emery et al., 2015). Traditional Māori approaches to healing and wholeness that include psychology, can facilitate healing by recognising the roles of wairua, whānau, the wider community and restoring the ancestral connection Māori have with the whenua. These restorative actions have a direct impact on Māori health and wellbeing. Pihama et al., (2023) identified the need for health and healing support services to be offered by Māori, for Māori in traditional Māori ways. By including wairua in current models of mental health and training, more Māori wairua-centred psychologists, Māori will begin to receive wholeness and healing (Lindsay et al., 2022). One way this can begin is for the practitioner to engage in karakia. Karakia is the wairua-based practice of connecting with Io Matua Kore, deities and seeking protection and alignment. It can also be a way of engaging in wairuatanga with other elements in creation such as the ngahere (forest) and awa (waterway) and moana (Ocean). Karakia is a safe and traditional way for Māori to cover the kiritaki and

themselves with protection and peace as they do their mahi (work). Pihama et al., (2023) and Valentine et al., (2023) offer other powerful ways of including wairua in sessions which include revering wairua, acknowledging the vital connection with the whenua and the recognition of the importance of the mana (influence, power, prestige) of the kiritaki. These elements provide the room for the kiritaki to recover and explore intrinsic aspects of healing in their whakapapa, Mātauranga, tikanga and cultural identity on their journey of healing (Pihama et al., 2023; Valentine et al., 2023).

Current Psychology and Māori

The current Western-biomedically based mental health service is not designed to meet the needs of Māori. The current model is designed to help individuals who are expressing measurable symptoms that are treated with medical interventions (Kopua, 2019). Māori do not function that way as Māori are holistic. When there is an illness, all elements of being are affected: taha wairua, taha whānau, taha hinengaro and taha tinana (Durie, 1998; Smith, 2019). It is no wonder that so many Māori suffering from poor mental health are being damaged further in the national mental health system due to the lack of meaningful inclusion of all of these elements that are essential to hauora. For professionals working in healthcare, having a level of knowledge around tikanga is essential (Pene et al., 2025). Secondly, being able to engage in whangaungatanga is pivotal and is the first consideration when wanting to engage with Māori. By prioritising these essential relational elements, an honest and real therapeutic relationship can be developed (Hamley et al., 2023; Latimer et al., 2022; Pene, 2025; Rewiti, 2023). This will only happen if Māori feel equality, kindness, compassion, understanding and empathy is the foundation of the relationship (Durie,

2007). These values and practices demonstrate the reasons why a culturally appropriate approach with Māori is more beneficial for both practitioner and kiritaki.

Decolonising Psychology in Aotearoa

Wairua is central to creating Indigenous Māori psychology in Aotearoa (Valentine, 2016) and is fundamental to decolonising psychology across the motu. Pihama & Tuhiwai Smith (2023) posit approaches based in Indigenous healing methodologies will provide equitable and effective care models that work for Māori. These approaches consist of a variety of intertwined dimensions which can be successfully implemented in a psychological setting. This is important as Māori have traditional healthcare knowledge which has historically sustained health and wellbeing. Subsequentially, Māori can retrieve their health autonomy and address the current colonial healthcare discrimination (Pihama & Tuhiwai Smith, 2023). Through the provision of an Indigenous approach where Māori implement Kaupapa Māori methodologies informed by Mātauranga Māori, psychology can be decolonised in Aotearoa. Indigenous Psychology and Kaupapa Māori Psychology provide essential space to acknowledge and explore this possibility (Heine, 2008; Psychology Workforce Task Group, 2019).

Fittingly, psychological research conducted by Māori scholars and researchers will ensure it reflects the perspectives and needs of the Indigenous communities they work with (Hokowhitu et al., 2022; Ivanich et al., 2022; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2015). To ensure fuller opportunities for healing, practitioners can include karakia when they begin and close their sessions with kiritaki. This will provide an environment that includes wairua in the healing process (Levy & Waitoki, 2016). In their research, Kopua et al., (2019) discusses how they included the ‘Mahi a Atua’ approach to mental health healing for

Māori. Mahi a Atua includes pūrākau or narratives about atua Māori and the Māori perspective regarding holistic hauora including wairua and wairua-based experiences and encounters (Kopua et al., 2019). This is important in the understanding of mental health and wairua through a te ao Māori perspective as it centres Māori psychology as our way of understanding emotions, whānau systems and a traditional approach to healing.

Psychology and wairua

Indigenous wairua centric encounters have always been perceived to be abnormal in western psychology and therefore, unacceptable (Levy & Waitoki, 2015; Lindsay et al., 2022). In mainstream psychological services, there is a gap for Māori kiritaki, namely a Māori wairua-centred approach. Wairua-centred practices for Māori are when wairua is not just included, it is the centre of all healing and wellbeing practices. When Māori have experienced wairua-centred encounters and then seek help from Western psychologists, they are incorrectly diagnosed and medicated for having psychotic episodes (Moreira-Almeida & Cardeña, 2011; NiaNia et al., 2016; Smith, 2019; Valentine et al., 2017; Taitimu et al., 2018). Many Māori scholars have researched wairua and recorded the numerous interactions and encounters Māori have experienced in this realm (Maclean, 2018; Lindsay et al., 2022). These encounters range from everyday lived experiences to supernatural encounters with the angelic and beyond (Lindsay et al., 2022). For Māori who have been raised within te ao Māori, wairua-based experiences are normal and acceptable. Of the four elements of being, wairua is the most important as it is the essence being of Māori (Durie, 1998; Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022). Wairua leads and guides Māori practitioners in their healing practices with kiritaki, enabling deep healing in their entire

beings. The Māori practitioners I interviewed in this rangahau said they cannot and would not, attempt to provide healing services for their kiritaki without wairua being foremost in their care.

Māori Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (M-CBT)

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (Beck, 2019) is one of the most widely used forms of psychological intervention in Aotearoa. As CBT heavily focuses on the cognitive element of being (hinengaro), it is limited in its efficacy for Māori and needs to be more 'Māori friendly' for it to have a positive impact (Bennett et al., 2014, 2016). In their articles, the authors outline how they adapted CBT (Beck, 2019), to align with Māori health and wellbeing needs. The main differential that Bennett et al., (2016) introduces in Māori CBT is the inclusion of wairua. Critical inclusions can be the involvement or reconnection to Māori culture, learning te reo Māori and visiting important iwi and hapū related locations such as marae, awa and maunga (Huia et al., 2025). Other Māori psychology and hauora rangahau included whakataukī and whakawhangaungatanga (building relationships) alongside wairua in their investigations (Latimer et al., 2022; Pene, 2025; Rewiti, 2023). Whakawhangaungatanga is essential in the therapeutic relationship as it helps to establish connection and trust. There are five stages in Māori CBT which are whangaungatanga, ngā maramatanga (building insights), whanonga pai (behaving effectively), whakaaro pai (positive thinking) and ora pai (staying well). In their article, Bennett et al., (2016) made significant adaptations to CBT that aligns CBT more with Māori culture and values. These adaptations, especially the inclusion of wairua and whakawhangaungatanga; offer a culturally positive way to help Māori in therapeutic settings and were received well by participants. Overall, within psychology in Aotearoa,

there is a great need for many more treatment options and interventions for Māori psychologists that are Kaupapa Māori centred (Levy & Waitoki, 2016). Smith (2012), Smith (2015) and Walker et al., (2006) all posit that creating positive health and wellbeing-based change that benefits Māori, will require more Kaupapa Māori research that is done by, with and for Māori.

Healing

Research into the healing that is possible when Māori are connected to significant cultural elements is growing (Wirihana & Smith, 2019). Healing for Māori is not an individual endeavour as Māori are not individualistic peoples. For Māori, healing encompasses all elements of being and it is not restricted to the physical, human experience. The connective nature of wairua weaves through the environment, atmosphere and human experience ensuring that people live full, rich lives through balanced elements of being (Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022).

Historically, Maori believed that illness and disease stemmed from the spirit world. In the articles by Mark (2012 & 2017), this historical belief was discussed as being impacts of a spiritual nature on the physical world because of tapu violations. Illness and disease were not understood as a physical experience alone; thus, a tohunga would be engaged (Mark, 2012; Mark et al., 2017; Walker, 2004). The role of the tohunga was to engage with the spirit world, neutralise illness or disease and communicate back to Māori what the spirits were saying regarding the violations (Riley, 1994). In this traditional healing practice, many methods of healing were used simultaneously, to ensure healing and treat illness and disease (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011). It is in the embrace and acknowledgement of wairua as the most important

element of being for Māori, where lasting healing and wellbeing resides (Durie, 2007; Lindsay et al., 2022; Mathews-John, 2021; Pomare et al., 2023). This fundamental recognition of wairua is found throughout te ao Māori.

Mauri

Alongside wairua is mauri which is imbued in all things classically viewed as living and non-living such as marae, awa and maunga (Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022). For Māori, mauri is the life force that closely connects to wairua (Durie, 2001; Lapsley, et al., 2002; Mathews-John, 2021; Pere, 2006; Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022). The existence of wairua and mauri throughout creation is evident in all things also from the moana, ngahere and wildlife and is seen in the dance of rākau (trees), swaying of awa and songs of the manu (birds) (Pomare et al., 2023; Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022). Mauri as well as wairua are often not acknowledged, yet they are essential to Māori understandings of wellbeing and illness (Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022). Healing for Māori requires specific, Māori-centred practices and approaches that are not offered in mainstream healthcare systems (Mathews-John, 2021; Maxwell et al., 2020; Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022).

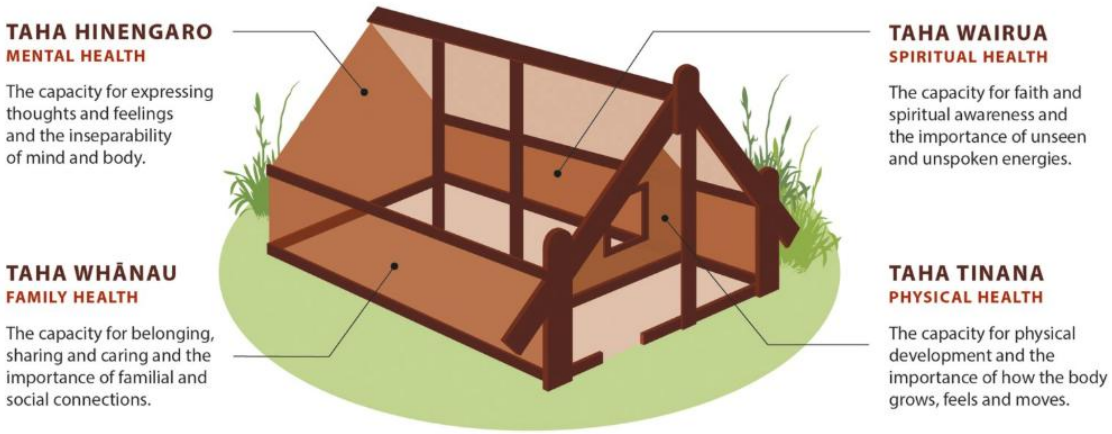
Te Whare Tapa Whā

The most well-known Māori healthcare model which identified the importance of wairua is Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1985, 2003). In the recent article by Sculley & Smith (2023), Sir Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā is discussed as a whare that is founded on wairuatanga and whenua. This is significant for Māori as this connection

creates and supports a sense of identity and belonging as well as being the foundation to the four elements of ones being.

Figure 1.

Te Whare Tapa Whā Model (Ministry of Health NZ).



This healthcare model is significant for Māori as discussed by Momo (2023); it offers a Māori model of care which develops understanding around the importance of health and wellbeing in each of the four interconnected elements. The foundation of Te Whare Tapa Whā is grounded in the understanding that a person achieves wellness and wholeness through balance and the interconnection of all dimensions of being (Brittain et al., 2025). Wellbeing is understood as residing equally across all dimensions of a person's being: wairua, hinengaro, tinana and whānau and their environment (Durie, 2001; Brittain et al., 2025). The absence, differentiation or exclusion across these dimensions is central to creating the conditions for healing and wellbeing to thrive for Māori. This reinforces the position of this thesis that wairua, tikanga and Mātauranga

Māori remain of the utmost importance for Māori today, strengthening senses of identity and experiences of belonging.

The consequences of disregarding these dimensions are evident in the significant gaps within end-of-life care provided for Māori in Western-based palliative care settings, just one example of Māori healthcare and wellbeing needs being systemically marginalised (Maxwell et al., 2020). Yet where Te Whare Tapa Whā has been implemented, measurable benefits have been demonstrated for both Māori and non-Māori clients, with improvements across all dimensions of being, wairua, hinengaro, tinana and whānau, for all cultural backgrounds (Maxwell et al., 2020). This speaks to the broader cultural effectiveness and appropriateness of Te Whare Tapa Whā, further established by Hunter (2020) who found that all peoples, regardless of culture, benefit from the recognition of their values and the acknowledgement that wairuatanga is inherent to every person.

Wairua

From a Western perspective, wairua is difficult to define as it is not seen with the physical eye nor does it have measurable parameters (Sculley & Smith, 2023; Tassell-Matamua et al., 2023). However, from a te ao Māori worldview, wairua is the ultimate lifeforce that creates, sustains and nurtures wellbeing (Valentine et al., 2017). Within Māori culture, wairua reinforces tikanga and is a connecting element for Māori to whakapapa, whenua and whānau. According to the authors, the intrinsic importance of wairua for Māori is understood to be a “delicate taonga (treasure) imbued with tapu

(spiritual restrictions) which invoke certain restrictions in its utilisation and understanding" (p. 66).

The many layers of te ao Māori are woven together through the connective nature of wairua. Wairua is intangible and experiential, revealing its fundamental importance for Māori (Maclean, 2018). As such, wairua is the ultimate reality for Māori (Marsden as cited in Royal, 2003), therefore Māori traditional ways of being, centre around wairua (Durie, 2003; Foster, 2009). Wairuatanga or wairua and mauri are the very essence of being, with wairua as the core that mauri flows from (Valentine, 2016; Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022). This woven relationship originates from the spiritual nature of creation (Royal, 2003) and centres wairua as the connection to the other elements of being. Wairua is active and occurrences in the spirit world and can be seen or felt by those who are connected to and are aware of wairua. Māori who have been raised within Te ao Māori view wairua-based experiences as normal and acceptable (Lindsay et al., 2022). Wairua is often experienced as a sixth sense, rather than through the five standardised senses of hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch (Dell, 2021; Tassell-Matamua, et al., 2021). This extra sense is known as a sense of knowing (intuition/wisdom/foreseeing).

Many Māori scholars have researched wairua and recorded the numerous interactions and encounters Māori have experienced in this realm (Maclean, 2018; Lindsay et al., 2022). These wairua-based beliefs are enduring as Māori still strongly hold traditional belief systems strongly, however do not always talk about it for fear of being judged or stigmatised (Taitimu et al., 2018). Some people sense wairua is present in the form of tūpuna, the environment, for others it is engagement with atua and Io Matua Kore. Conversely, some Māori who were raised within the dominant Western individualistic

culture, were influenced by this conditioning and described wairua centric experiences as negative and unacceptable (Levy & Waitoki 2015; Lindsay et al., 2022). Lindsay et al., (2022) identified a variety of very meaningful wairua experiences that happened for Māori which align with existing rangahau and historical accounts.

Rongoā

Rongoā is part of a wellness and wellbeing cycle for Māori. Māori are descendants of Papatūānuku, Māori are kaitiaki over the whenua, rongoā is located in the whenua and is used to heal and increase wellbeing for Māori. Māori are intrinsically connected to the whenua and rongoā through wairua. Rongoā itself is a traditional healing method that can begin the reconnection process for those needing healing and realignment with Māori culture (Levy & Waitoki, 2016). Rongoā is also in alignment with tikanga as it requires karakia to be used during the process to make sure traditions are maintained (McGowan, 2000). One way this connection is essential for Māori is in traditional Māori healing practices researched by Kopua et al., (2019); Levy & Waitoki (2016); Mark et al., (2019); McGowan (2000) and Wikaire, (2020). The research discusses a variety of traditional healing practices including rongoā, karakia, mirimiri (massage) and romiromi (deep tissue work, joints and stretching) (Mark et al., 2019; McGowan, 2000; Waitangi Tribunal, 2011; Wikaire, 2020). The main two forms of rongoā that will be further discussed are karakia and rongoā rakau (herbal medicine). The healing practice of rongoā specifically reflects the connection Māori have with the whenua as the herbal medicines created through this traditional practice are harvested from te ao Taiao. As rongoā is in its resurgence, it is perceived to be limited to plant or herbal medicine, however the scope of rongoā Māori extends far beyond this one form

(McGowan, 2000). Wairua underpins the process of rongoā rakau in the form of karakia (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2014; Durie et al., 1993; McGowan, 2000).

In the article on rongoā by McGowan (2000), karakia is attributed to the force behind the healing that occurs from rongoā rakau. It is karakia that is the foundation of all modalities of rongoā Māori as it acknowledges the wairua elements involved in the healing and the spirit and mauri of the plan and person collaborating together to bring about a positive outcome (McGowan, 2000; McGowan, 2014; McGowan, 2022). Authentic rongoā rakau adheres to protocols of engaging in karakia before, whilst and when applying rongoā to ensure healing occurs (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2014). This specific process is tikanga and authentic Māori Mātauranga concerning rongoā Māori. Karakia is important in the practice of rongoā, to ensure the healing is complete and acknowledges the mauri of the rākau (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2014; Waitangi Tribunal, 2011). For Māori, rongoā represents much more than a traditional healing practice, it is a way of connecting to whakapapa, developing and stabilising identity as Māori and strengthening a sense of wellbeing and belonging (Hakaraia, 2019). Rongoā is discussed by rongoā Māori experts, Hakaraia (2019) and McGowan (2000), as being a way of representing Māori identity, culture and connection through wairua to all created elements both living and inanimate. They identify that Māori wellbeing and balance are sustained through wairua as it connects to all elements of being (Hakaraia, 2019). Rongoā itself is then able to help Māori heal, restore and create balance from any form of illness or disease within their being (Hakaraia, 2019). Mark (2017, 2019) identifies te ao Taiao as the space through which rongoā connects Māori with ancestors such as Papatūānuku. This connection is essential as wairua through rongoā enables Māori to strengthen their sense of identity, belonging and whakapapa

to the whenua; while encouraging them to learn who they are as Māori (Mark et al., 2017; Mark et al., 2019).

Ahuriri-Driscoll (2014) discusses the foundational position of wairua within rongoā, highlighting the significant disparity in how the centrality of wairua is understood and recognised within national healthcare systems. This inequality in understanding of the centrality of wairua within Māori health and wellbeing models is prominent in the national healthcare system (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2014). Tokenistic attempts have been made to incorporate wairua into healthcare services — opening meetings with karakia or superficially acknowledging Māori practices, yet these gestures do little more than tick boxes while reinforcing the colonial healthcare model. Limiting access to rongoā Māori practitioners further prioritises colonial frameworks over the genuine health and wellbeing needs and preferences of Māori (Valentine et al., 2017). Since rongoā was introduced into the ACC providers schedule, opportunities for Māori to access truly Māori-focused healthcare have paradoxically narrowed rather than grown. Should wairua be meaningfully and authentically embedded across healthcare systems in Aotearoa, Māori would finally be able to receive health and wellbeing support that is culturally grounded, enhances wellbeing, and restores mana and the rightful place of wairua.

To summarise, this literature review has discussed the current literature on wairua, healing and sexual violence. There is however, a gap in the existing literature around importance of wairua for healing from mahi tūkino for Māori. This research addresses this gap. The following chapter outlines the methodology and the aims of this rangahau.

Chapter three: Methods

The methods chapter begins by discussing the foundational framework of Kaupapa Māori and its place within Māori rangahau. It is followed by a breakdown of the four principles of Kaupapa Māori and how they have been applied in this rangahau. This is followed by the ethics section, the data collection process, procedures and is concluded with the data analysis. The aim of this qualitative Kaupapa Māori rangahau, was to identify the importance of wairua in healing from mahi tūkino. Six semi-structured interviews took place with Māori healers/practitioners working with mahi tūkino kiritaki. The resulting kōrero was analysed using thematic analysis through a Kaupapa Māori lens.

Kaupapa Māori

The method that underpins this rangahau is Kaupapa Māori (Smith, 1990). This research method stands on its own mana as a research theory and methodology, it privileges Māori philosophies, worldviews, values, belief systems and processes. As such it can be a direct challenge against the western, dominant framework of conducting research. For Māori, it is important to challenge the western model adopted across the motu (country) by creating a discursive space that works for Māori (Hoskins & Jones, 2017). When we look at the fundamental elements that are unique to Māori, it is important to ensure the approach used, is applicable and aligned to Māori specifically. Kaupapa Māori does this as it endorses the legitimacy of Māori specific cultural ways of Mātauranga (Smith et al., 2022). This is essential as it allows Māori the freedom to express themselves while normalising Māori processes and ethics of engagement. Whereas, dominant western models disregard culture and Indigenous

identity. A Kaupapa Māori methodology enables Māori researchers to use Māori principles as the basis for understanding wairua-based phenomena or rangahau in the area of wairua and healing. Kaupapa Māori also focuses on the importance of relationships in the validation of Mātauranga interpretation (Kawharu, et al., 2024).

One of the specifically applicable elements of Kaupapa Māori is that it originates from principles, practices and customs that are uniquely Māori. The four principles of Kaupapa Māori are whakapapa (genealogy), tikanga (Māori ways of doing), te reo Māori and Tino Rangatiratanga (Māori autonomy and self-governance) (Smith, 1990). Kaupapa Māori is a flexible and fluid framework that has the ability to move and adapt according to the mahi required to produce a rangahau project that remains Māori centric (Smith, 2015; Haitana et al., 2020). The four principles of Kaupapa Māori set the foundation for any Māori rangahau to proceed within cultural integrity and structural safety for all involved. Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2015) outlines the four principles in light of the struggles they address and what implication in rangahau it aligns with. The four principles reviewed below align the principle with the natural overlay in Te ao Māori and Te ao Pākehā (Pākehā worldview) including implications it has for Kaupapa Māori rangahau.

Table 1.

Kaupapa Māori principles

Principle	Struggle	Rangahau implications
Whakapapa	related to identity whānau, hapū, iwi	classification whangaungatanga

		micro/macro credibility of researcher
Te reo Māori	identity education knowledge	kanohi ki te kanohi the researcher/s research process conceptual work
Tikanga	authenticity mana marae representation accountability	research process research design place people interpretation representation accountabilities credibility
Rangatiratanga	mana whenua mana tangata Te Tiriti o Waitangi	research policy research activity research funding definition/design priorities

Note: Recreated from Kaupapa Māori research - Some Kaupapa Māori principles. In L. Pihama & K. South (Eds.), *Kaupapa Rangahau A Reader: A Collection of Readings from the Kaupapa Māori Research Workshop Series Led*, pp. 46–52. Te Kotahi Research Institute.

This fist principle is whakapapa which forms the basis of Kaupapa Māori. As in all things Māori, whakapapa comes first. Whakapapa is the central principle which connects all Maori with our tūpuna and te ao Taiao as there is an enduring connection between all aspects of the created world. This founding principle stands in stark contrast to most western research methodologies as they give minimal credence to family and ancestral connections. Whakapapa grounds rangahau in relationship and

connection, which then influences all of the ethical and relational interactions within the perimeters of the rangahau (Smith, 2015; Haitana et al., 2020). Within this rangahau, I have aimed to emphasise the foundational nature of whakapapa not only in relationships, but across te ao Māori as I believe it is the glue that binds te ao Māori together. These connections deepen the ability of the rangahau to produce grounded, meaningful and impactful findings for everyone involved (Haitana et al., 2020).

An example of whakapapa being a strength within Kaupapa Māori rangahau is seen in the article by Kawharu, et al., (2024). Whakapapa and whangaungatanga were central to the success of the rangahau as they partnered with local kāinga (communities) (Kawharu, et al., 2024). They achieved this through a co-productive, co-design and co-development approach (Kawharu, et al., 2024). Co-productivity was created through whangaungatanga and relational emphasis (Kawharu, et al., 2024). It was co-designed by ensuring tikanga was adhered to throughout the duration of the rangahau (Kawharu, et al., 2024). Open kōrero and accountability was present throughout the rangahau ensuring that the importance of co-development was upheld (Kawharu, et al., 2024). The narratives, stories, voices and views of the kāinga were honoured and elevated to their rightful place (Kawharu, et al., 2024). Consequentially, the depth of the rangahau data and findings were far greater and covered more depth than would have been possible within a western research model (Haitana et al., 2020; Smith, 2012).

The second principle of Kaupapa Māori is te reo Māori. Te reo Māori enables everyone involved in the rangahau to express themselves freely and speak their truth plainly (Huia et al., 2025). This level of honesty and openness delivers connections where

very deep truths and heart-held beliefs can be expressed without the limitations of English (Smith, 2017). Kupu (words) in te reo Māori, often have their own Mātauranga and knowledge systems attached to them. Direct translation of many Māori words into English is not accurate, resulting in anglicization even if the meaning is not right. The kupu lose significance, meaning and value (Ratima & Wilcox, 2016). The results of the rangahau by Kawharu, et al., (2024) were richer and deeper responses from participants who had the option to kōrero in te reo Māori, their mother tongue (Huia et al., 2025). Te reo Māori is essential in the forming of Māori identity (Huia et al., 2025). As I was not raised in te ao Māori and my Kuia was highly assimilated and colonised; we were forbidden to speak te reo Māori or to involve ourselves in anything that supported or encouraged our stolen Māori culture. Therefore, within this rangahau, I endeavoured to include as much te reo Māori as I could. An example of this is the kupu ‘hauora’ which is used as wellbeing in English. Hauora however, is a far deeper kupu that weaves through all elements of being, wairua, hinengaro, tinana, whānau and Māori culture. The effects of hauora are seen in the creation of a sense of belonging and self and cultural identity and is deeply connected to ones Tūrangawaewae (place to stand). It offers connection to Mātauranga Māori, unique Māori expressions of being and identity (Ciofalo et al., 2022). If this kupu was honoured for its meaning, healthcare for Māori would change beyond recognition.

This principle of te reo Māori, is about honouring our language which holds the essence of who we are (Huia et al., 2025). There is a whakataukī by Henare (1985) that speaks of te reo Māori as the core of Māori culture and mana. It says

Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori

Ko te kupu te mauri o te reo Māori

E rua ēnei wehenga kōrero e hāngai tonu ana ki runga i te reo Māori

Ko te reo, nō te Atua mai.

The language is the life force of mana Māori

The word is the life force of the language

These two ideas are absolutely crucial to the Māori language

A language which is a gift to us from God

An example that shows the importance of te reo Māori is seen in the rangahau carried out by Menzies et al., (2022). They researched mate wareware (dementia) through a Kaupapa Māori approach. One of the themes they identified was that despite the degeneration of the brain and its ability to function due to advanced stages of mate wareware; some Māori participants were able to kōrero in te reo Māori, using kupu Māori. This was despite the fact that they had already lost the ability to kōrero in English. Some of their participants described te reo Māori as being “essential to the wellbeing of the brain” (Menzies et al., 2022). As seen in the above whakataukī, we can see Te reo Māori is aligned with identity, mana and the essence of being for Māori. The third principle of kaupapa Māori is tikanga. Tikanga adheres Māori practices and customs with the rangahau to ensure it is Māori centric from concept to conclusion (Smith, 2012). By looking through a Māori lens, Kaupapa Māori takes into consideration Māori culture, values and customs (Haitana et al., 2020; Mead, 2003). These considerations and inclusions ensure Māori values are at the forefront of all

rangahau activities (Smith, 2019). By aligning Kaupapa Māori to tikanga, the resulting rangahau will be created by, with and for Māori (Haitana et al., 2020; Smith, 2015). Tikanga was pivotal in this rangahau since I am Māori and a student researcher. As such, I interviewed only Māori practitioners who solely work with Māori clients. These clients are looking to find healing from their experiences of mahi tūkino through their therapy sessions with Māori practitioners whereby tikanga is the underlying foundation that guides their mahi. An important note regarding tikanga, is that there are a wide variety of understanding and meaning for iwi. Not all are the same and the application of tikanga also provides direction and emphasis for the researchers to follow (Mead, 2003; Smith, 2012). By incorporating nuanced tikanga, culturally relevant experiences and worldviews of the participants in this rangahau are kept safe and validated (Haitana et al., 2020; Thompson & Barnett, 2008; Walker, et al., 2006).

A rangahau example which highlights the importance of tikanga regarding mahi tūkino is by Pihama et al., (2016). Pihama et al., (2016) discusses the importance of tikanga in a cultural and historical way, as mahi tūkino is not committed against an individual. The impact of mahi tūkino disseminates from wahine and tamaiti to the whānau, hapū and iwi. Mahi tūkino was introduced by colonisation and is not a Māori issue, it is a colonial issue. Pihama et al., (2016) and Fanslow (2005) say that colonisation encouraged and continued the normalisation of mahi tūkino within Māori whānau. They accomplished this by distorting tikanga and other Māori principles such as wairua, mauri, tapu and mana (Pihama et al., 2016). When mahi tūkino is perpetrated against wahine and tamaiti, tikanga is seen as being transgressed (Pihama et al., 2016). In this report, Pihama et al., (2016) highlight the connection mahi tūkino has with the suppression of Mātauranga Māori and tikanga. These atrocities were forced

upon Māori through colonial indoctrination tools of Western practices, beliefs and the complete ownership of wahine and tamariki as property (Pihama et al., 2016). Had tikanga been respected and not distorted by the colonialists, the mahi tūkino that scourges Māori whānau would be non-existent.

The final principle of Kaupapa Māori is the principle of tino rangatiratanga which is the recognition of Māori autonomy and self-governance (Smith, 1990). Tino rangatiratanga provides the fundamental groundwork for rangahau to be conducted ethically for all involved. It is about setting the kaupapa, the agenda for the rangahau, and ensuring the methodological, interpretive and conceptual autonomy rests with Māori (Walker et al., 2006). Tino rangatiratanga also gives a uniquely Māori lens towards Māori experiences which is essential to Māori sovereignty and autonomy (Pihama, et al., 2012). This is essential as the researcher's ethnicity as Māori is critical to the success of the rangahau as it legitimises their mana and the central place of tino rangatiratanga for Māori (Smith, 2015). It is difficult at times to retain our rangatiratanga over our own hauora and research due to the imposition of western systems. These systems do not recognise our tikanga and expect Māori to assimilate to their ways of conducting rangahau. However, it is critical to address the power imbalance around mahi tūkino due to its Western, patriarchal origins.

A central tikanga in the delivery of this rangahau was whakawhangaungatanga which helped to establish trust and ethical relationality. Karakia was also critical given the tapu nature of mahi tūkino and the importance of wairua in healing. My participants kindness in supporting this rangahau was acknowledged through a koha. Each participant could choose either a petrol or shopping voucher. It showed that I am

grateful for their engagement and sharing of their Mātauranga Māori (Tuakiritetanga & Ibarra-Lemay, 2021). Tikanga was essential in the rangahau process as the very nature of the topic of mahi tūkino is tapu for Māori. Tikanga was instrumental in guiding the interview when the specifics of the kōrero was of a tapu nature. This helped to transition the kōrero from a tapu state to a noa state (a state that is restriction free and openness) moving towards healing and freedom where appropriate. This change in state also ensured I was safe throughout the rangahau process. Throughout the recruitment process, consent forms were sent to all invitees as consent is essential in all research, whether te ao Māori centred or Western.

Essentially, rangahau delivered through a Kaupapa Māori methodology is created for Māori, by Māori and in collaboration with Māori. This endorsement of mana Māori is a requirement of tino rangatiratanga (Smith, 2015), guaranteeing the methodological, creative and interpretive control remains with Māori (Walker et al., 2006). Essentially, this results in engagements that are culturally safe for gathering information and Mātauranga from Māori in the process of research (Kawharu, et al., 2024; Smith, 2017). Subsequentially, tino rangatiratanga is foundational within kaupapa Māori rangahau, laying the groundwork for Māori autonomy and sovereignty (Pihama, et al., 2002).

Data Collection

Table 2.

Rangahau participants

Pseudonym	Role	Gender
Moana	Wairua specialist	Female
Huia	Clinical Psychologist & Private Practice	Female
Ana	Rongoā/Mirimiri Practitioner	Female
Tane	Rongoā Practitioner	Male
Atawhai	Rongoā Practitioner	Female
Aroha	Tohunga	Female

Since this rangahau is focused on the sensitive topic of mahi tūkino, I chose to engage only Māori practitioners who's mahi was with Māori kiritaki. I was very concerned with not compounding or further traumatising clients who's healing journey was already long and difficult, therefore working with practitioners was the best option.

The main criteria for selection was three-fold. Firstly, the participant needed to identify as Māori as this rangahau is Kaupapa Māori based. Secondly, the participant needed to be currently working as a Māori practitioner in the field of healing. This area includes a vast range of disciplines including rongoā, mirimiri, tohunga, psychologists, counsellors and all other health-based field practitioners. Finally, the participants

needed to be actively working with kiritaki towards a goal of complete healing from mahi tūkino. To identify possible participants, I accessed the ACC sensitive claims rongoā practitioner's details from ACC and called them. I also called other possible participants who were registered as psychologists the with New Zealand Psychological Society. From this approach, I contacted five participants who practice rongoā and one Tohunga. In total, I was able to recruit six participants who were Māori practitioners.

Regarding occupations, there was 1 x clinical psychologist, 1 x karakia pūkenga (wairua specialist), 3 x rongoā practitioners and 1 tohunga. For my six participants, I met with four participants kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) while two participants were interviewed via zoom due to distance and restrictions of available time. Finally, my participants ranged in age from their early forties to a couple being in their sixties. There were five women and one man. I was fortunate to be able to recruit six Māori practitioners for this rangahau and for Kaupapa Māori, six practitioners is a good number of participants. All of the participants were offered the option of being anonymous when being quoted, all of them decided to remain anonymous which is honoured in this rangahau. The participants were given pseudonyms instead of their real names to protect their identities. Their aliases in order of being interviewed are Moana, Huia, Ana, Tane, Atawhai and Aroha.

Procedure

My research aim for this thesis was to further the awareness of the need for healing from mahi tūkino across the motu and that it is not just a female issue. It affects both genders causing lifelong trauma and debilitating relational patterns. Mahi tūkino within Māori communities is vast and remains hidden which perpetuates the crisis. Therefore,

awareness and the availability of help is essential in the struggle for healing and wholeness. The process began with identifying possible participants and phoning them. Once contact was made, I followed up by asking them if they would like to participate in my rangahau by sending them the invitation form (Appendix A). If they positively responded and wanted to be included as a participant, I emailed them the information sheet, participant consent and interview questionnaire forms (Appendix B, C & D). To further the process once the forms were sent, we arranged a time to kōrero either kanohi-ki-te-kanohi or via zoom.

Once the interview date was secured, I asked each participant what their favourite meal was and made sure to take them some kai (food) as aligned with tikanga. This took the interview from tapu to noa through the imbued nature of kai. For most of the participants, we chose to meet kanohi ki te kanohi which was essential as it offers a level of connection that is essential to whakawhangaungatanga. For Māori, kanohi-ki-te-kanohi is our preferred way of connection. I explained very carefully to all of the participants that the ownership rights to the rangahau data which included themselves, remained with them. That, at any point, if they chose they could withdraw from the rangahau and they didn't need to provide a reason for their decision. The ownership of data will remain with the rangahau participants since this is their personal information. This point was clearly written on the participant form and I made sure that all of my participants were aware of it. The participant data will remain at Massey University in a secured data facility within the school of Psychology.

The semi-structured interview questionnaire form was designed to be engaging, offering open-ended questions that gave room for discussion and reflection. This

aligned with Kaupapa Māori principles which required space for the practitioners to be able to have their voices to be fully heard. Open form responses sections were used to facilitate this including those questions requesting responses where the mahi was varied. This ensured that the responses were true to the mahi and was clear enabling themes to be created for data analysis. The interviews themselves were recorded using a dictaphone as well as a back-up recording from my phone. They lasted between one and two and a half hours. The variance in interview length was dependant on the depth of responses from the participants themselves. I used secure transcription software for the initial transcription process. As the transcription is in English, I spent many hours correcting the files where the participant used Te Reo as the transcription software could not transcribe kupu Māori. Analysing the data, themes and sub-themes also took many, many hours. The analysis took place over several months due to my own hauora reasons.

Data Analysis

This rangahau is qualitative and uses a Kaupapa Māori framework. It engages semi-structured interviews and utilises a Māori approach with thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is an analysis method frequently used to identify and report patterns and themes within data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The six steps of using Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis were engaged to guarantee the data was handled with the utmost respect. Thematic analysis guided the process by which I developed and constructed the kōrero that was gathered into themes. I chose thematic analysis as this approach aligns with a Kaupapa Māori reflexive thematic analysis framework (Komene et al., 2024; Lindsay-Latimer et al., 2024) which explicitly comes from a Kaupapa Māori interpretive basis. This approach provided the flexibility

needed for a joint rangahau effort between my participants and myself. Regarding themes, every and all possible themes and sub-themes were examined. To begin with, the data set was investigated to find any patterns and commonly occurring phrases or words that could be grouped (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This data set familiarisation occurred throughout the process of reading, transcription and recording ideas and possible themes throughout the rangahau process. Secondly, a top-level grouping process took place to categorise and align themes and groups of ideas and responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This occurred in collaboration with my supervisors, where tikanga and Mātauranga interpretations were explicitly centred.

Thirdly, the actual themes of the data were developed and aligned into more vigorous constructs. This process saw the creation of a draft list of final themes and possible connections (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the fourth step, the themes were reviewed, checking for alignment and accuracy against my participants intended responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, the last two steps were defining the themes and allocating accurate names to those themes were carried out. They make sure that the rangahau honours the participants during the writing and publication of the findings. In the final analysis of the data, four clear themes were constructed to include twelve sub themes which span all six interviews. The four themes are recorded in table 3 where the correlation relationship between them is highlighted. Table 3 is also listed in chronological order. The findings chapter begins with the introduction of theme one right through to the concluding fourth theme.

Ethics

Ethics is a significant factor in conducting rangahau within research institutions and Universities alike. This thesis was created in complete alignment with Māori research ethics or Te Ara Tika Guidelines (Pūtaiora Writing Group, 2010) which also aligned with Massey University's (2017) code of ethical conduct for research. As such, a low-risk ethics approval was appropriate as I chose to work with Māori practitioners rather than Tāngata whaiora. Throughout this process, I used Māori ethics to guide my rangahau. By working with Māori practitioners, I was able to mitigate against the risk of harm to self or others. The rangahau was extensively discussed and peer reviewed which was systemically done to ensure every layer of the rangahau was held in kōrero and possible issues uncovered. Dr. Pikihuia Pomare (Kaupapa Maori Associate Professor, Massey University) is my main supervisor and we thoroughly discussed and reviewed this rangahau from an ethical perspective.

The rangahau was discussed in depth to cover demographics, age, culture, possible harm, sensitive data, consent, data management, collection and disclosure. Another topic that continued to be discussed was the essential need for Kaupapa Māori framework to align with and champion Kaupapa Māori principles. In this, it is crucial to understand the ethical considerations required for this type of mahi. I received sound ethical guidance from Dr. Pomare which was essential to grow my own knowledge of the requirements for conducting safe and effective rangahau regarding wairua and mahi tūkino. Through this I was able to keep the rangahau safe for the participants and myself. One of the most important topics of discussion between Dr. Pomare and myself was the unwavering need to endorse and honour the mana of the Māori practitioners who chose to be participants in this rangahau. Throughout the rangahau,

all interviews were conducted and guided through tikanga. Grounding the rangahau in tikanga made sure that it was in full adherence to Kaupapa Māori. One of the main ethical considerations of this rangahau was the need to keep the identities of the participants and their kiritaki anonymous. As there are so few Māori practitioners working in and through wairua, it was essential to keep their identities hidden. This is due to the nature of this rangahau and the tapu nature of mahi tūkino.

Chapter four: Findings

The findings section aims to establish the importance of wairua in the healing process for Māori from mahi tūkino. It does this by unpacking the first theme which identified the importance of wairua for Māori. Standardised health offerings within dominant Pākehā mental health services do not include wairua. As Māori make up more than 50% of those using mental health services, it is essential to understand the place of wairua in healing for Māori clients (Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa, 2026). This theme breaks down further to identify four subthemes which cover Io Matua Kore, mauri, whenua and rongoā and culture. In the second sub-theme, the impact of mahi tūkino was discussed. This also breaks down further to identify three subthemes which are the impact on wairua, impact on ira atua (supernatural life) and impact on identity. The application of wairua within the participants clinics varied from traditional Māori rongoā to applying wairua in a clinical, psychological setting. Thirdly, theme three was positioned as a question, asking if healing from mahi tūkino could be obtained without wairua? The answer to this patai (question) was a resounding no. All of the participants clearly stated that full healing from mahi tūkino is not possible without the inclusion of wairua. Finally, theme four identified the important theme of practitioner wellbeing.

The findings identified above confirm the importance of wairua for Māori who are seeking healing from mahi tūkino. The findings section highlights the participants experiences regarding wairua while working with their kiritaki who are seeking healing from mahi tūkino. The themes were identified through the process of thematic analysis. The four main themes identified: the importance of wairua, the impact of mahi tūkino on wairua, the role of wairua in healing and practitioners' wellbeing; and the subthemes are seen in the table below.

Table 3.

Themes and subthemes

Theme	Topic	Subthemes
One	The importance of wairua	Io Matua Kore (Creator God)
		Mauri (life force)
		Whenua (land) and Rongoā (herbal medicine)
		Culture
Two	The impact of mahi tūkino	Impact on wairua
		Impact on ira atua (supernatural life)
		Impact on identity
Three	Wairua in healing	Imbalance of ira tangata (human life) and ira atua
		Self-awareness
		Connection
		Māori culture
		Is healing possible without wairua?
Four	Practitioners' wellbeing	

Theme one: The importance of wairua

Wairua is vast and underpins all things in life. Because of this, everyone's understandings and experiences of wairua are different. These experiences are influenced by iwi and hapū Mātauranga, learned Mātauranga and personal

experiences. There is a lot of variability within the theme of wairua itself as each person has their own beliefs and level of awareness of wairua. There were four subthemes that were identified regarding the importance of wairua. The first subtheme to discuss had the largest number of quotes of the rangahau. This was Io Matua Kore being intrinsic to the importance of wairua.

Subtheme one – Io Matua Kore

Subtheme one identified the role of Io Matua Kore in relation to wairua and discusses the participants' responses that placed importance on Io Matua Kore regarding wairua. One participant, Moana, described wairua in the following way:

> *Wairua is massive and is intrinsically who we are. Wairua is the thing that makes me who I am absolutely and so that's why, what I believe about myself is so important. If I believe I'm broken or if I'm abused, or if I have that kind of believing deep in the essence of who I am, that's who I am at the end of the day. My wairua is that part of me deep inside that I can choose to let other people in or not; into my essence.*

This quote from Moana identified the foundation of wairua as the basis for the connection between wairua and our identity as Māori. Wairua and identity are inseparable for Māori.

As Māori are spiritual beings, Māori have a direct relationship with Io Matua Kore. This was strongly identified by most of the participants and was a strong thread in the kōrero. Regarding this connection, Moana said "there is this willingness to

acknowledge that we're the little ones and God is the creator/big one. There's somebody way bigger than us. We're aware that we need that outside force". This quote by Moana shows that the relationship between the Creator and people is vital to our wellbeing and wholeness. When I interviewed Huia and asked her about the importance and place of wairua, she said in order to go forward, we need to look backwards as we are informed and instructed by our tūpuna's experiences and connection to God:

For me, wairua is totally important. When I think of our people who have the core belief and trust in God, what led them right through the Pacific here to Aotearoa was that key relationship with the supreme being. Those karakia, kai kōrero all those things were driven out of that faith in the unseen God. I would describe wairua as that fuel, that place where for me, God resides. It's that place where everything else springs from, it's that part of me where God resides within me.

For Moana, this is a personal relationship that she has with God and is the place that she functions from. It is faith and trust in Creator God who guided and led Māori from ancestral lands to the shores of Aotearoa. It is an active connection with God that motivates and drives her. For participant three, Ana, wairua is the connection that links her to Io Matua Kore which is part of her "Growing up, I always thought wairua was a spirit. It is a combination for me; wairua is within me and it's what connects me to Io". In this quote, Ana discusses her journey of discovery that wairua is the core element within herself. That with her wairua, she can connect with Io Matua Kore "Part of our belief system, part of our connection, our spiritual connection to Io. It's even when we

look at the knowledge and comparison of how we are created and how we see the creation of the world".

This quote is really important as it distinguishes Māori from Pākehā and other cultures that call our ancestral whenua home. The very way we view creation, Mātauranga, wairuatanga and tikanga, customs and beliefs are all encapsulated in wairua. Wairua also guided the tikanga and processes for practitioners as they prepared for sessions with kiritaki. Moana said:

> *it's just that straight karakia and have that kōrero with Io Matua Kore before the client arrives. Before I begin, I'm already preparing myself for my day and those that I will work with. I ask Io Matua Kore for the ones that are coming in that he will give me what I need to help them. Practically, I set myself up in the space to ensure everything is done in reverence and calm. I call upon Io Matua Kore to cover my space and come into this place to heal the people.*

Moana includes Io Matua Kore in her personal preparation as she engages in karakia over the kiritaki, the therapy space and the session itself. In a similar way, Huia said regarding her mahi with kiritaki that everything she does is grounded in Io Matua Kore. She simply said, "it's what I'm doing and being led by Io". This is important as without being led by Io Matua Kore and being focused to bring healing and wholeness in the sessions, healing is not possible as she goes on to say, "no, healing on this level is not possible without the inclusion of wairua, absolutely not".

Subtheme two – Mauri

The second subtheme identified the intrinsic connection between wairua and mauri. Atawhai said that she works on a combined level of wairua and mauri as they are intertwined. She indicated that if she were not able to do this, she would be unable to help her kiritaki in their healing process because:

> *as a practitioner, if I am devoid of wairua and mauri, then I'm actually not going to be able to help transform my client. All I can do is maintain the status quo and my client will remain stuck. For me, there is no separation as I breathe that energy every day, that life force, which is wairua. We need the energy of wairua in every action that we take.*

Wairua and mauri are so deeply intertwined, they dance around each other, creating, forming and stabilising our very beings. Together they reveal the importance of wairua in alignment with mauri, providing the building blocks. This balance makes someone more certain and solid in themselves as was discussed by Atawhai in her description of wairua as an “active part of yourself that can find peace and stillness, to me that’s what wairua is”. She says, “we were created to live in peace, with our elements of being - wairua, mauri, hinengaro and tinana coming back in harmony and balance”. Similarly, Aroha spoke about wairua and mauri in the restorative and healing-centred mahi she does:

> *When I'm working with clients, I help them understand the concept of wairua and mauri. I teach them that we need to restore them so they can have*

complete healing. When we restore them, what happens is you become more internally resilient. You are embracing your wairua and mauri.

Being able to restore ones wairua and mauri is essential in the healing process. Once they understand the impact of mahi tūkino on wairua, kiritaki can start to explore ways to restore areas of their life that have been impacted to develop better resilience. As mentioned by Aroha, wairua and mauri are both vital to the healing journey of mahi tūkino as they are both wounded during violation.

Subtheme three – Whenua and Rongoā

The third subtheme identified the close connection wairua has with the whenua and the traditional healing method of rongoā Māori. Rongoā Māori is a healing option available to kiritaki who can access it via their psychologist or counsellor. This is very helpful for people who want to access both traditional Māori healing methods alongside Western therapies. Rongoā Māori includes physical therapy, herbal remedies from te ao Taiao, physical therapies and healing in the spiritual realm. As Māori are wairua-led, the connection to the whenua is deep ancestral Mātauranga. Tane speaks of wairua as being life itself and representing water. He says “It’s simple, it’s our life. Wai is water. Wairua is present in te ao Māori so if you are separated from te ao Māori you are separated from your wairua. When someone is separated from their wairua, they disconnect. Wairua is important for life”. Tane has drawn on the integral connection Māori have to wai (water) which includes our moana and awa. This connection informs our identity as intertwined beings with the whenua and all other created elements in te ao Taiao. Regarding the connection wairua has with Rongoā Māori, Ana believes that giving kiritaki access to Rongoā Māori will satisfy the historical

desire for traditional healing practices to become available. She said that more Rongoā practitioners were needed to meet this demand for culturally safe and effective healing:

> *We need more Rongoā practitioners to help the people. Rongoā services needs to be put out there a lot more. ACC has just opened a whole big can of whoop-ass and now everybody wants it. So now we've been able to get into different government spaces and allowing it to spread into community organisations.*

Ana was referring to the community centres that are in local suburban communities. They are very accessible for Māori Rongoā practitioners like herself to book space to meet with kiritaki. With the increase in Rongoā practitioners registering with ACC, many more Māori will be able to access healing in a safe and local way. Moana also said that more Māori practitioners were needed for healing in wairua to happen. She said:

> *We need many more Māori wairua centred practitioners who are available and ready to meet the needs of our people. They are only receiving partial healing when wairua is not part of the mahi. We do need more Māori practitioners, more Māori Christian practitioners.*

There is a need for both traditional Māori practitioners as well as Māori Christian practitioners. Huia and Moana are both Māori Christian practitioners and work with clients who want a Christian approach to wairua. The other four practitioners who chose to participate in this rangahau are traditional Māori practitioners which is

essential for kiritaki who want a traditional Māori approach to healing. Tane spoke of the need for more Rongoā practitioners within communities and his desire to see the government supporting them in their mahi:

> *Now Rongoā is recognised through ACC, the government needs to look at utilising us to help those in the community. Most of my cases are not tinana [physical] ACC claims, they're exactly what we're talking about. All of the referrals I get, I get to read their past history and read about the trauma they've been through, incest, rape, abuse. ACC is now one of the only places to get help for wāhine especially, women in gangs who are beaten and raped. We need more practitioners to help them to heal within themselves first, help them to love themselves.*

This quote is powerful as it speaks of the historical gap that has damaged Māori kiritaki further, through the lack of culturally safe services available. It also highlights the ability the government currently has to resource, back and fund Māori practitioners. There is a strong need for Māori who have been wounded from mahi tūkino to find someone from te ao Māori with an intrinsic understanding of wairua and rongoā to walk the healing journey with them.

Subtheme four - Culture

The final subtheme regarding the importance of wairua for Māori, identified wairua as residing in the most sacred of places within Māori culture. Through colonial processes, many Māori were forced to assimilate into Western culture and were then raised

without the cultural knowledge that their tūpuna had. As such, they are often unaware that they are wairua first. When Māori have experienced a spiritual disconnect from their culture through mahi tūkino, their wairua is doubly wounded. Moana talks about her experiences with her kiritaki:

> *When they come to us they don't have language, they don't understand that something's going on inside of them. They know that they can separate, then when you give them language and talk about who they really are and what's going on inside of them, they connect with that. My clients can acknowledge that you can do something to flesh and bones and but that's not who I am, though it does affect who I am. As they learn that they are more, then they realise that we are more than just flesh and blood.*

This quote speaks of finding levels of identity as Māori that have been removed through forced acculturation. Once kiritaki have language for their experience, they are able to re-connect and discover who they really are. This reveals to them that they were created for more than just a physical experience. They were created wairua first, being destined to live in wholeness and full healing. Tane spoke about his experiences of wairua being:

> *a cultural connection to our spiritual world. It goes back to creation because things like trees weren't created by man, they were spiritually created like us. How do you explain to western science that eliminates spirituality? They give no room for wairua, for Māori. We have to return to our cultural belief system,*

to our spiritual connection. God created nature it like he created us, Io God, having that spiritual connection is very much a cultural aspect.

This quote speaks to the importance of cultural alignment and that in accordance with the very start of creation, we were created wairua-first by Io Matua Kore for connection. Wholeness was always meant to be wairua first and living in acknowledgement that we are spirit beings. When our spirits are not recognised, we can only function physically and psychologically. In discussing the importance of wairua for Māori, Ana also spoke of the cultural importance of wairua as being:

really important for everyone but specifically for Māori, we need to get a better understanding of Māori culture. We believe in wairua and acknowledge our spiritual beings are wairua, making us who we are. Wairua connects us to the elements, to the ngahere.

This quote aptly summarises the subtheme of the importance of wairua within Māori culture. It places wairua at the centre of Māori culture and speaks of the connection between te ao Taiao and te ao Māori. This is an important reminder that we are not singular bodies but inherently connected to all of creation.

Theme two: The impact of mahi tūkino

Wairua for Māori is the most important element of being and all elements of our beings stem from it. The impact of mahi tūkino on wairua is undeniable, causing alterations

and deviations from our original design. These changes are seen in the beliefs of kiritaki, their worldviews, cognitive processing and behavioural patterns. These become detrimental and are usually permanent unless full and complete wairua healing is obtained. Ultimately, these alterations cause identity issues. The first subtheme of theme two, looks at the impact mahi tūkino has directly on the identity of the kiritaki.

Subtheme one – impact on wairua

Subtheme one identified the importance of looking back into Māori historical processes related to mahi tūkino. Historically within Māori tradition, mahi tūkino on wāhine and tamariki was considered a form of 'death' to their wairua. This death forced them to exist in a lesser form that they were designed to be. Traditionally, justice for people who experienced mahi tūkino was often delivered against the perpetrator through the utu and muru (wipe out, confiscate) and through a uniquely Māori whānau, hapū and iwi based justice system. Tane spoke about his experiences within that process on the Te Arawa Marae Justice Council. Although this seems to be an extensively long quote, it is essential that I share it in its entirety for understanding of the Māori marae justice system's justice for kiritaki

> *Incest and rape in the old days, was seen as kōhuru (murder, homicide, assassination). Because it murders a wahine or tamariki's wairua. In the old days wahine and tamariki were taonga, treasures. Incest and rape was murder. If you harm a child, you kill a child, the killer was killed like a dog. There was no light stuff like parole, detention, or prison, no way!*

Today we have marae justice councils and I'm on the Te Arawa Marae Justice Council. In the late 1990's/2000's, our wahine were coming to marae but acting really strange or not coming at all. They were in deep depression and on drugs. When there was a tangi for a kaumatua, it came out that the kaumatua had committed incest or had raped them. So, all their lives they had to live with it and they had to come to the marae and hear for three days about how people respected the kaumatua and how amazing they were. We, the marae justice council decided everyone, even kaumatua had to be answerable for their crimes. Incest and rape were the biggest ones and kaumatua were involved. They should have known better.

I was a part of three cases in Rotorua in 2001/2002. The perpetrator was called to the marae without him knowing the marae investigation was happening. The council went and got evidence, talked to whānau and invited her side of the whānau as well as his side of whānau to the marae. He doesn't know the thing. So, they go to him and say, 'oh, we're meeting tonight, we need you to come'. He doesn't know what's happening. He is taken to the marae and when he walks into marae, her family's here, his family's here.

No one's allowed to touch him, no one's allowed to beat him. He's made to sit in the middle. And all accusations, all evidence, is put in front of everyone. Three of the kaumatua were found guilty. This is what they were told 'from the marae, you're going to be taken to the boundary of Te Arawa and nobody will touch you; you are never to return, you are a man with no name. If you return, you will be escorted off the boundaries. Your name will be wiped from all whakapapa, your name will never be spoken, you are a man without a people

or race. No one will touch your family'. That happened three times, two of them committed suicide. A man with no name, no race, no people, no culture.

What is needed is a more holistic and tikanga based approach to justice across the motu and within the national judicial system. Holding perpetrators to account for the mahi tūkino that results in severe harm for the wairua of wāhine and tamariki is needed. There needs to be honesty and for the perpetrator to recognise the devastation their actions have caused. It will, over time reduce and eventually eliminate sexually violent offenders from hurting others in this way. It is hoped that through this, a sense of restoration and justice for kiritaki would be experienced for everyone, including the individual impacted and their whānau, hapū and community.

Subtheme two – Impact on ira atua (supernatural life)

The second subtheme of this rangahau identified the impact mahi tūkino has on wairua and discusses the impact this has on whakapapa and our tapu or a person's identity. This is important to discuss in layers as already mentioned in theme one, people are created by and descend from Io Matua Kore as whole sacred beings. Likewise, as our spirit, mind and body forms our identity, all areas are impacted when mahi tūkino happens. Huia talks about this by saying it:

causes breaks in the persons God given design of three in one: body, mind and spirit. These split apart so the person can carry on in life but there are often parts of them that don't function. For example, it is common for the spirit to be

outside the body and the body to feel nothing. The head is in constant fear, freeze or flight.

This statement is well documented within mahi tūkino rangahau outlining trauma responses within a Western worldview and is also why relationships are extremely difficult for kiritaki. They may be present in body and mind; however, their wairua senses a fracture or disconnection with their hinengaro and tinana. Huia speaks of how she was led back to her sense of wholeness and alignment within her wairua, hinengaro and tinana. She spoke of how her relationship with God through Jesus, enabled this to occur:

I know in my experience the healing for me came from my decision to follow the Lord. He's been my protector and I know in whom I've put my faith and my trust. But for my extended whānau, it's not always there. They can get all the help they think they need through a psychiatrist or whatever. For me, it comes down to me having this hope, faith and experience with my heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. That's the bottom line.

This quote from Huia speaks of the protection and faith of God, through her relationship with Jesus Christ. For her, this was a lived experience through her daily relationship with Jesus that gave her comfort and protection to feel a sense of wholeness and healing after her experience of mahi tūkino. In the following quote from Ana, she speaks of the layers of reactions and responses coming from a sense of mamae in her wairua as a survivor from mahi tūkino. She tried some pathways to restore her tapu and ultimately as she went deeper, she arrived at wairua and that

enabled full healing. It is natural for people to try to fix themselves, however after exploring all other available avenues, they then understand that their wairua is precious and needs specific healing for wholeness to happen. She said:

> *emotions are generated from this kind of destructive life event [mahi tūkino]. These events create trauma which affects the emotions and the hinengaro. This is where you turn to spiritually get through these things headfirst, then finally through wairua. When the physical and emotional take over, it tends to push the wairua out or into a deep corner where it is out of daily contact. When we let Io Matua Kore do the mahi, the wairua is like whoa, I'm here!*

This quote paints a visual image of the separation Huia spoke of at the beginning of this subtheme. There is a separation and reprioritising that happens whereby the hinengaro takes over and wairua is separated to the lowest position or resides outside the tinana. Through the healing and restorative power of Io Matua Kore, healing can happen.

Subtheme three – impact on identity

Moana speaks about the perception of identity that covers the kiritaki as they cannot separate between the mahi tūkino they have experienced and how they feel about themselves as wrong and unclean. She says mahi tūkino:

> *devastates everything and creates a massive lie on every level of their beings because they recognize that this is unclean and wrong. There is a deep*

knowing that what is happening is wrong, but if they can't communicate that this thing is wrong, so they themselves become absolutely wrong.

Moana continues by giving an example of someone who has been raped and the damage caused to their identity during the attack:

Rape for example is more about power than sex. The wounding that happens in the wairua of somebody that's been sexually violated is horrendous. So much so that it can derail their lives and paths. An example of this was a client who said he was homosexual. I asked him, 'when did you first realize you are gay'? He said he was raped in Hagley Park in Christchurch when he was nine. Even the language of 'I was raped' - so you're saying that you were taken by violence. He could say that in the same sentence and not recognize what he was saying. The blinding that comes with it all and the false identity that's actually covering that person. Mahi tūkino impacts wairua absolutely and totally robs people of who they are, of their essence.

This kiritaki was working on how they understood and gave meaning to what they suffered and the impact of this narrative on their wairua. The violence perpetuated against this kiritaki was so great, much that his life was completely unrecognisable as a direct result. He explained that this was the moment he had adopted the identity of a gay boy and then man. The devastation of the rape changed how he identified and critically wounded his wairua. A very similar account was given by Atawhai. She spoke about the effects of mahi tūkino on wairua in identity as an imprint "It's like when you

put your foot in the sand, you can see the imprint of your foot. This imprint of mahi tūkino in your wairua is seen in their identity and this imprint keeps that person stuck".

Without the ability to receive healing in their wairua, kiritaki remain 'stuck' in an identity created by the mamae of mahi tūkino. However, when kiritaki can meet with a Māori practitioner who engages wairua in healing from mahi tūkino, they get the opportunity to recognise the impact mahi tūkino has had and find healing in a way that suits them and in their own time. Moana spoke of giving time and space to kiritaki to be themselves and be heard where:

> *they can rest and heal in their own time, not ours. In most services, they're talking to somebody that they don't know and have no trust with and in a compressed, limited session. Then they leave and they haven't told their story. We need more spaces where people can get true healing and we need people to acknowledge that we all need Jesus. I am involved in my community where we hold seminars. When people come in knowing they are Christian seminars, they're desperate and want to hear and know about Jesus. We've had a huge increase of people walking in off the street because we take the time to talk with them and love on them.*

As Moana indicates, the open and safe nature of an environment such as this offers the option of community-based healing services as an alternative to mainstream services which are often difficult for most people to access. As indicted, when the option is available and accessible, those in need of healing will be able to start their healing journey in a place where their wairua is prioritised. This quote demonstrates

the deep need for healing that comes from within many kiritaki. They are best able to receive help, healing and support in spaces like those Moana described, where wairuatanga is intrinsically woven into the environment, and where whanaungatanga and manaakitanga are prioritised so people feel seen, heard and valued.

Theme three: Wairua in healing

Theme three identified the need for healing in wairua whenever mahi tūkino has occurred. This is essential because Māori have wairua imbued in every area of life. This connection between wairua and Māori culture is extremely resilient, so when healing is discussed, it is essential that wairua is included in any healing attempts undertaken. Wairua is limitless and difficult to explain in words as it is beyond the bounds of language. Therefore, the way wairua is included in healing is varied, nuanced and expansive. The participants in this rangahau speak of healing in a variety of ways from self-awareness, dealing with fear, relationships and returning to what is known as our original design. Some participants spoke about the unrest their kiritaki feel when they come to see them. Ana spoke of one kiritaki coming to see her, saying “they need their spirit to be tau (calm, settled). They come in and they’re like I just don't feel right, their nervous and anxious. Over time balance and tau would be achieved”. The practitioners noticed that it was common for kiritaki to experience distress as a result of what they experienced. Particularly when they first started to engage in rongoā Māori and healing for their mauri and wairua. Over time, the kiritaki were able to find healing on the wairua level by tuning in to what their wairua needed. Skilled practitioners were able to do this work with kiritaki by walking alongside them and attending to wairuatanga first.

Subtheme one – Imbalance of ira tangata and ira atua

The trauma that results from mahi tūkino, emanates as imbalance and stress throughout the kiritaki's entire being which encompasses both ira atua (spiritual life) and ira tangata (human element). This is seen in a vast number of manifestations that cover all parts of life. This kind of trauma impacts the wairua which remains damaged until healing on this level is received. Ira tangata which contains hinengaro and tinana is forced from wairua by mahi tūkino which is seen in the response systems of ira tangata remaining in high states of trauma of fight, flight or freeze. Ongoing, this trauma forges trauma-based neural pathways that then control every area of their lives. Similarly, behaviours, relationships and ultimately their lives are changed to compensate for it. For tinana, trauma is held in a variety of ways when it is not released. Many illnesses and pain-based manifestations can be traced back to mahi tūkino. These adaptations can be a conscious decision or an unconscious one depending on our experiences, decisions and level of awareness regarding the impacts of mahi tūkino. Moana gave a powerful example of the impact of mahi tūkino on both ira tangata and ira atua:

> *We are wounded on so many different levels, so healing would be the journey back to original design. The healing journey is about enabling people to come to a place where they can see and understand that it doesn't matter what they do or say to other people. It's all about the way that we all make ourselves open to learning and to learn to get healed ourselves. For example, an older lady I worked with, she lived in the shame of mahi tūkino her whole life. So, a huge part of the healing process for her was to recognize that shame makes us the loser. She spent seventy-nine years of her life thinking she was dirty as a result.*

> *Part of my job is to help her heal from shame and that it was not her fault. Her healing came when she realized she wasn't dirty.*

This example clearly shows the damage that mahi tūkino has caused this wāhine. She lived in the belief that she felt dirty and filled with shame, therefore she was dirty and shameful. Her self-perception was cloaked in what her perpetrator had done to her. Moana's kiritaki suffered as a result from an imbalance in her self-perception encompassing both ira tangata and ira atua. Moana spent time with the kuia and walked with her through her trauma, to a place where she could finally see that she was a victim of someone else's destructive behaviour and ill intent. By the end of their sessions, the kuia was able to work through her trauma to a place a rest and peace. Huia said in her own experience and personal life, you can recover from the trauma of mahi tūkino, but:

> *only with God's help. No, healing on this level is not possible without the inclusion of wairua, absolutely not. Myself and all of the women in my whānau are survivors of mahi tūkino, my sisters, aunties, nieces – everyone. It is very important to change things and bring awareness to this disease.*

It is important to acknowledge that Moana was able to receive healing through her wairua connection to Io Matua Kore alone. Moana then offered a second example that profoundly explains the trauma that mahi tūkino has on people's lives and why wairua is needed for healing:

If you pick up a snail and turn it upside down and poke it, it will draw back up into its shell. The Lord showed me that's a picture of us. If somebody picks us up and wounds us, we draw back up into our shell. It can take forever for us to come out again and when it does it is very tentative. Its little feelers go out, and then for it to actually attach again is quite an ordeal. If we look at the healed thing being the house on the back of the snail, the wairua is the thing that withdrew up into the house. When those things come back into alignment and find a place of rest again, it will begin to function normally. You can touch the snail as tenderly as possible, but it's not gentle to the snail. Pāua is another example also recoiling when disturbed. Healing will not happen until your wairua comes back into a place of rest.

This is another vivid image of the way mahi tūkino damages our wairua. It infers that because of the violation there is a retraction because of the sense of safety has been disturbed. The person's wairua needs to feel safe again before healing can happen. Through this violation, the kiritaki no longer feels the same, responds the same or trusts the same as they did. This example offers a clear view of the imbalance caused in ira tangata and ira atua when mahi tūkino occurs. Without healing in our wairua, we will not be able to return to a state of feeling tau, rest, freedom and wholeness. Huia spoke about healing on this level coming from Io Matua Kore and the damage mahi tūkino does to the ira atua and wairua. Huia said:

This is the influence of wairua that only God brings. Healing only comes from God as he is the healer and we are designed in his image. Healing is not

possible without the involvement of wairua as the trauma goes that deep. As wairua is where God lives and dwells and He brings healing, this is where healing comes from.

The importance of healing from Io Matua Kore in the wairua of kiritaki is essential and cannot be replaced by anything else. We are made in his image, only he can restore and heal what has been broken. This is echoed in the following quote from Huia who speaks of this being:

the role of Io Matua Kore. He brings healing and if He is involved, the healing remains. It's all inter-related eh. This is the one thing for me, as Māori, we can hook into that wairua, we have some understanding of it, but for Pākehā, how do they unless they can come into that experience of understanding the role of Jesus Christ being the one who connects us with Io Matua Kore. I was never allowed to say that name when I was young! It was too Holy. Then when I became a Christian I was like, he is just a breath away and with me all the time. It was because He loves me that He sent his Son and if I want to make sure that I'm treating him like my Father, that I depend on him for everything, then I've got to walk this road in a way that's pleasing to Him. I'm serious when I say I pray for my clients, because I know the ultimate healing comes from Him. That's what gives me that hope, because I'm in it, God's in it. I bring His presence in, He's there to heal and love.

In the above quote, Huia is explaining the importance of connection to wairua and Io Matua Kore in the healing process. She also uses karakia as the way she connects to Io Matua Kore and covers her kiritaki and herself with protection. This brings a state of tau into her sessions. This is the importance of wairua in healing from mahi tūkino. It seemed to me that the practitioners who had lived experience of mahi tūkino had a deeper level of compassion and connection to their kiritaki and in some way were more invested in seeing them healed.

Subtheme two – self-awareness

The second subtheme of healing identified self-awareness as being helpful in the healing process. Ana spoke about her experience of healing being assisted by becoming self-aware as this resulted in her finding a state of rest. She said:

> *healing looks to me as being comfortable within myself. Taking whatever trauma there is and being able to say that's happened and be ok still. Wairua helps in the healing process, if my wairua is unsettled, then the healing process will take longer.*

Ana's quote echo's previous quotes regarding the importance of wairua being involved in the process of healing from mahi tūkino. Ana is self-aware regarding the impact of trauma and the place her wairua has in the healing process. This is important as one sign that the healing process is not full and complete is an unsettled wairua. When the healing process is full and complete, the kiritaki will be able to find healing from mahi tūkino and enter a state of rest, freedom and wholeness.

Another sign that the kiritaki needs healing from the damage and impact of mahi tūkino is that they continue to live in fear, which can be either conscious or subconscious. In this quote, Huia spoke of the need for kiritaki to move from a state of fear created by mahi tūkino, while remaining aware of people and situations that could allow additional traumatic events to occur. She said:

> *the influence of wairua in healing is that my clients feel safe in themselves and it's a process, but they are not scared anymore. They're feeling safe enough to be who they are, be self-aware but also be more aware of the dangers. You don't want to take that away from them, they need to remain safe. Just feeling safe and back in their bodies is important as they're so disconnected. There's so much loss and trauma because of this ngaukino (distress). It is about connecting the whole person through healing.*

Huia's quote shows that adjusting her way of practicing and interacting with her kiritaki is helpful for healing. It also assists in keeping the kiritaki safe in potentially risky situations. This is something that is developed in partnership with the kiritaki. Awareness on this level is the beginning of realising that mahi tūkino has not just been experienced in the tinana. It has permeated through all elements of being and caused mamae. Moana summarised the relevance of self-awareness in seeking full, complete and wairua-centred healing by saying kiritaki:

> *are aware and have tried other ways of getting help but they are still in pain. In my mahi, we say we 'build our houses by our belief structures' which are our*

belief systems. When our structures become overloaded, we end up with nowhere to go. These structures will only serve us until they can't anymore. People talk to others and have done as much as they can to find different ways to heal, then they come to the conclusion that they are still in need and come to us.

It is important to understand that there are levels awareness that drive people to seek healing. For some people, they are aware from the time that the mahi tūkino first happens, while for others it is a process and takes longer. Once the kiritaki have exhausted the easily accessible healing methods, they will look further for someone who can help them. This indicates that usually they try other means of help and come to understand that the wounding is very deep and needs deeper healing. Healing through wairua is found after many attempts at other forms of healing and is not typically the first avenue they try. This shows the importance of self-awareness in the process of healing and being aware of what works and what doesn't work for them.

Subtheme three – Connection

The third subtheme of healing identified the importance of connection to whakapapa, identity and culture and through relationships. When I asked Tane about the importance of wairua in the healing process, he spoke about it in relation to Māori culture. He looked back to place the importance of wairua in healing from mahi tūkino emphasising the transfer of cultural Mātauranga:

when our people came from Hawaiki, they bought great, great knowledge. When they came across the seas on the waka, they bought great knowledge of te ao wairua. Our tūpuna bought knowledge of the celestial and celestial beings, which is important. In that, they also bought their own celestial healing methods called rongoā. I am continuing that realm of healing because it is about this stuff, about connecting people to their culture.

This quote is vital for Māori when researching the place and importance of wairua in the healing journey of kiritaki. It links back to the knowledge that pre-existed our migration to Aotearoa. This Kauaerunga mātauranga was reserved for tohunga and chiefs and is central to full and complete healing from mahi tūkino. Tane is implying that this is very old knowledge relates to our inner being and essence of who we are as people, this knowledge is not new.

Atawhai also speaks of the central placement of wairua in the healing journey for Māori from mahi tūkino in the importance of connection with wairua and ourselves. She leans on a core elements of te ao Māori which are, tikanga and connection through whanaungatanga. She says:

The more we can connect sexual violence to Te ao Māori, the more that we can connect to tikanga. What that will do is it will give people hope and healing. Connection. Everybody knows that if you don't have connection, then you have addiction. When a person is violated, it results in them constantly abandoning themselves which is perceived as self-sabotage.

Atawhai speaks more into the resulting damage that occurs with mahi tūkino and frames the splitting of elements as abandonment. This is the pulling away of the wairua and hinengaro from the tinana. By emphasising Mātauranga from our tūpuna, the importance of connectedness of all aspects of our hauora is relevant today. Atawhai spoke of the connection wairua has in relation to healing. She continued by describing how wairua can be invited into the healing process through opening and closing sessions with karakia and using the technique of hau (breath). Karakia and the breath are known healing practices that are commonly used in Māori wairua based services. She says:

> *you can bring in the presence of wairua with karakia at the start and end. Another way is to close your eyes; take a breath in and let it go. That is wairua in action, it's the glue that gives you your healing. Just imagine if every therapeutic practitioner closed their eyes, took a breath in and breathe out that simple action is wairua. We know if you're having anxiety, what are you going to do? You breathe; it's breath work.*

This quote of Atawhai shows how wairua is a very active participant in the healing process. Wairua is the element, which is actively or consciously infused, enabling a pathway for healing to begin. This is a practical way to connect into wairua for both the practitioner and the kiritaki. When wairua is not included in the healing journey, healing is not possible.

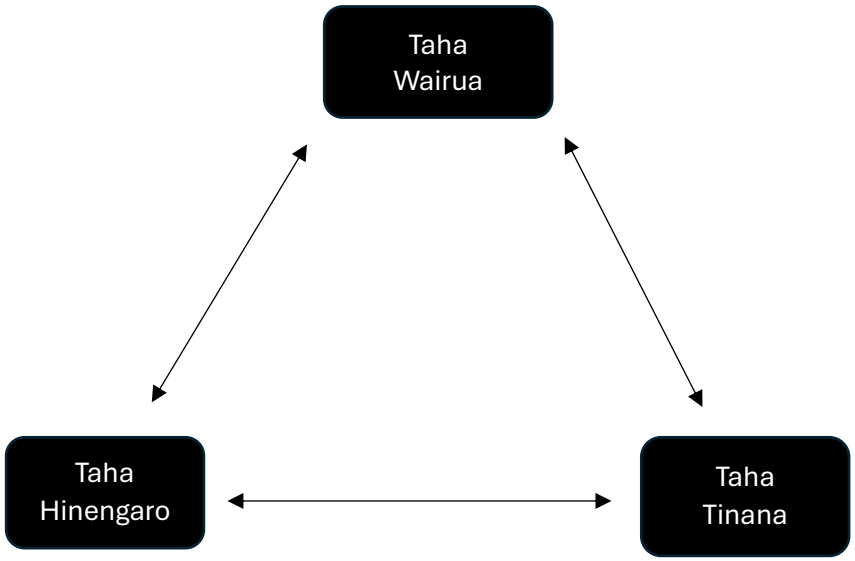
Subtheme four – Māori Culture

Subtheme four identified the importance of culture when healing from mahi tūkino is being sought. Māori culture is seen in every part of life for those who are bought up in te ao Māori. For those that are not, there is a gap that impacts their sense of their identity and therefore the way they heal from mahi tūkino. Tane who was raised in te ao Māori, speaks of the place of rongoā Māori within Māori culture as a traditional healing method. He identified Māori culture as:

> *part and parcel of my model of practice. I call it wairua, hinengaro, tinana. We start at wairua first, not tinana. Culture gives us the benefits of rongoā and that there is traditional Māori treatment available again for our people.*

Tane shared a diagram he developed to explain the ira tangata and ira atua of people. He uses this when he works with his kiritaki to bring clarity to the fact that human beings are all three elements (wairua, hinengaro and tinana) in one existence.

Figure 2. Tane's diagram of being



Tane explains it by saying:

> *we have three sides to us, taha wairua, taha hinengaro and taha tinana in a triangle. Tinana is where there is a physical mamae (shoulder, hip, stomach pain etc). Hinengaro, it is usually the whānau where there is the gap relationally which is seen in behaviour and thoughts. This creates a 15% gap in the person's wellbeing. My job is to heal that 15% to bring them back to wholeness. There's no wonder we've got to heal the wairua; it filters down māuiui (weary, sick, fatigued, illness, disorder) in a Māori way that when the wairua knows that it is unwell, it tells the hinengaro then the hinengaro filters down to the tinana. We work with taha wairua, taha hinengaro and taha tinana to bring them back to one.*

In this quote, Tane shows how the three elements of wairua, hinengaro and tinana intersect each other. He explains the path mahi tūkino trauma takes, as it moves through the three elements of being. What he's saying here about where the māuiui resides (illness or sickness) is important as is the sequence of how the healing needs to happen. This example identified the root of trauma residing within wairua, ratifying the necessity for wairua to be included in the healing process.

Subtheme five – Is healing possible without wairua?

In subtheme five, it was identified that there is a need to discuss and explore the question of 'is healing possible without the inclusion of wairua?' The participants stated that full and complete healing from mahi tūkino was not possible without wairua.

Moana spoke of the connection in wairua to Io Matua Kore by saying for her, wairua is where Io Matua Kore resides:

> *I don't think it is possible to heal without Io Matua Kore as that would be putting another band aid on it. Unless we can get to the root cause of their trauma and help them to begin working on their pain. We do this by asking questions to get people to connect to themselves and begin looking at their mamae. 'What do you see'? 'Oh, it's all dark. I can't see anything'. 'If that darkness could speak, what would it say'? 'I'm nothing, really, that's what it says, I'm nothing'. That is because they come back to the place where they're feeling destroyed, they have no voice or language, they can't express anything. The pain is too great to access and that's why people are numb and get into drugs and sex and stuff, because they don't feel anything.*

In this quote, Moana highlights that every area of life is connected to, in and through wairua. By guiding kiritaki through the journey of recognising the depths of their mamae, kiritaki can then start the process of healing and rebuilding their identities and lives. This is where they will find the strength to stop filling that numbness with substances and other harmful behaviour. The kiritaki have engaged in self-harm by using substances to numb their pain. In this quote, Moana has guided them to a place where they can articulate what is going on for them so they can then heal. By speaking about their experiences and giving them the right words to describe what they have endured, they can begin to heal. Without this assistance, their pain is too immense. Tane also spoke about wairua being important in the healing process. He said:

I can tell when I'm talking to a client that immense damage has been done to them. Their wairua needs to be involved, then they can find healing, without it they're stuck.

When wairua is included in the process of healing and wholeness, the healing will be complete. Without the inclusion of wairua, the kiritaki cannot heal from it. Huia spoke about the need for healing from a wairua first perspective and how it comes before all other things:

For me wairua is the start and everything else hangs off that. The physical body is imbued with this invisible - wairua, yet visible….you can touch, feel, know it's there. Healing can only come through wairua.

Huia spoke about the complete being emanating from wairua and all other elements of life coming from there. This can be understood as wairua having a physical experience, thus intangible elements within our physical bodies are expressed through tangible senses. Ana shared her lived experience to emphasise that full and complete healing will only happen when wairua is included in healing. She said wairua must be central to healing from it because:

most of us have experienced this. A lot of people carry it within themselves in their hinengaro, in their puku, in their tinana. For me, sexual violence was the

cycle that I committed to break from me so it would never touch my children, my moko (grandchildren). It's happened to most women; it needs to stop. Healing has to include wairua for real healing to happen.

In this quote by Ana, the damage throughout the kiritaki's entire being is discussed. She says it traverses their entire being and is finally stored within the tinana. There was no doubt for Ana that wairua is essential for full and complete healing which included breaking the impact of mahi tūkino so it was not passed on through her descendants. The final quote for theme three is from Aroha. She spoke about kiritaki needing to know that wairua is needed for healing to occur. She suggests a secondary opportunity to find further healing through sharing their experience:

healing is not possible without wairua as by accepting that knowledge they can then move forward. It makes things a lot easier for the person. Also, the person needs to be able to share that experience, not so much in detail, but to just share that this is what's happened with trusted whānau and friends and being allowed to heal by other people's aroha for them.

Aroha's quote speaks of the necessity for wairua to be the central element of the healing process from mahi tūkino. Without the recognition that wairua is essential in the healing process, they are limited in the healing they can receive. Aroha links the healing process to being able to share experiences with others. This promotes them being supported and loved on, while building support structures and creating space for kiritaki to rebuild their lives on truth and support.

Theme four – Practitioner wellbeing

The final theme of practitioner wellness offered the practitioners the opportunity to voice their personal practices of caring for their own wellbeing and wholeness in the midst of their mahi. This kind of deep healing mahi can involve emotional and psychological trauma transference due to the nature of the mamae which the practitioners had to actively guard against. Some of the ways they kept themselves grounded and safe were to connect with Io Matua Kore, spend time connecting in Te ao Taiao, time with whānau and friends, engaging in hobbies, sport and cultural practices such as going home to their marae. All of them spoke about the need for self-awareness and knowing their limits. In caring for themselves, they were then prepared for their kiritaki and healing sessions. Moana distinguished through boundaries that the trauma the kiritaki had experienced was theirs, not hers. It gave her the space to do all she could to help them but ultimately the journey is that of the kiritaki:

> *That's that whole thing of knowing and understanding that I can be in this, but it doesn't have to be in me. I can be in this and I can empathize and talk people through these things, but I don't have to take it on. It is that whole thing of learning to just leave it there. It's remembering to just leave it where it belongs with my client and come away.*

This quote is a lesson in itself, that the practitioner is there to help and guide the kiritaki through their healing journey but they also need to be aware of not absorbing the mamae. The boundaries and guidelines within tikanga and ethics provided safeguards

to ensure the kiritaki gets their healing with the help of the practitioner and the practitioner stays safe in the process. Huia said she spends a lot of time in relationship and karakia with her heavenly father:

> *I spend a lot of time with my heavenly Father in karakia for myself*
>
> *and for Him to imbue my clients with healing.*

Huia spends her time covering herself and her kiritaki in karakia as this enables her and them to receive protection and powerful healing. This essential connection with Io Matua Kore will ensure that the practitioner's wairua is kept safe and protected during sessions with kiritaki. Likewise, Ana speaks of her alignment in her mahi with Io Matua Kore and the support she has from her rōpū (group):

> *Well, thankfully I'm on a journey with my collective rōpū. We run regular clinics so we go to each other's clinics and give ourselves regular reboots and get recharged in an energy boost on a weekly basis. You know, when you're on this journey and your one with Io Matua Kore, you're never tired. I don't carry the mahi, once the mahi is done, I go about my day. When I go about my day I'm fully energised from the mahi that I do and to work with Io Matua Kore. I don't carry the hara (violation), I give the mahi to Io Matua Kore and He takes it.*

In this quote, Ana spoke about the power she finds in unity and support of her weekly rōpū with fellow rongoā practitioners in her area. This is essential for wellbeing and

resilience in the heavy mahi of healing from mahi tūkino. She also talked about her connection and oneness with Io Matua Kore. She does everything in alignment with him and does not take onboard or carry any of the impact, effects or mamae of mahi tūkino. Ana's quote reveals the importance that practitioners are versed in knowing how to work with wairua so that they do not carry the heaviness of the hara themselves. Tane also spoke about keeping himself safe from the heaviness of the mahi through karakia. He said:

> *Karakia is how I stay safe. I tell those I work with on their way into the office to do a karakia and cover themselves because if something doesn't go right in your work, you've got to ask yourself, did I cover myself right?*

Tane uses karakia as an expression of wairua to keep himself safe during his mahi and to teach his colleagues to cover themselves and their mahi in karakia also. Karakia is essential for the protection of the practitioner and the kiritaki and ensures the wairua of both people are centred, covered and grounded in peace. These quotes show the power of wairua, karakia and connection to our creator, Io Matua Kore in the mahi of bringing kiritaki healing from mahi tūkino.

In this final theme, the practitioners offered a glimpse into the way they stay safe, whole and unburdened by the hara their kiritaki are seeking healing from. They engage in a variety of practices to remain whole and avoid taking on emotional and psychological trauma transference due to their mahi. Some of these practices are engaging in karakia prior to and at the conclusion of their sessions, connecting with Io Matua Kore, spending time with whānau and friends and engaging in Māori culture

like going home to their marae. By staying safe themselves, they are able to help more kiritaki find their healing from mahi tūkino.

Summary

The participants responses regarding the importance of wairua for Māori in healing from mahi tūkino is essential Mātauranga going forward. All of them currently work with Māori kiritaki (clients) who are seeking healing. The findings section identified the ways in which Māori can receive Māori specific healing from the crippling effects of mahi tūkino. The themes identified in the kōrero revealed the essential role of wairua in healing. In summary, all of the Māori practitioners firmly place wairua as the most important element in the healing process from mahi tūkino.

Chapter five: Discussion

The aim of this rangahau was to identify the importance of wairua for Māori in the healing journey from mahi tūkino. Through in-depth interviews with Māori practitioners whose mahi was wairua-led and who worked primarily with kiritaki who had experienced mahi tūkino. Four key themes were identified. This chapter presents these themes and explores their implications for psychological practice, mahi tūkino services and policy. It considers these findings against the backdrop of the rangahau pātai and current literature regarding the importance of wairua in healing specifically for mahi tūkino. Next, the discussion chapter links to the few existing articles on this topic. It also summarises the strengths and limitations of this rangahau and possible future recommendations. This chapter finishes with a conclusion.

Summary of key findings

Theme one – the importance of wairua

The first identified theme was the overarching importance of wairua for Māori. The practitioners were clear that wairua is essential to every aspect of life, from connection to te ao wairua to the unique relationship Māori have with te taiao and everything in between. Secondly, the practitioners spoke of how mahi tūkino impacts wairua and the effects of this violation on every element of the kiritaki. Thirdly, the essential nature of wairua in healing from mahi tūkino was identified and finally, the importance of the practitioners themselves staying well was identified as an essential theme. The overall finding identified the importance of wairua for Māori in healing from mahi tūkino is not yet reflected in existing literature. However, connections to existing literature on

wairua, healing, and mahi tūkino are woven throughout each of the key findings and anchored within the wider context of the rangahau pātai.

One of the main ways the practitioners expressed the importance of wairua was that it was the element which enabled them to connect to a higher power, often referred to as Io Matua Kore, Creator God. One practitioner highlighted that this connection was what helped people to know who they really are as wairua-led beings. This connection with Io Matua Kore is consistent with previous findings by Marsden (1992) and Lindsay et al., (2022) that connection to wairua establishes and promotes a positive sense of identity and belonging for Māori. This is particularly significant in the context of healing from mahi tūkino, where the violation experienced is not only physical or psychological but strikes at the very core of a person's sense of self and wairua. When wairua is centred in the healing journey, the person's connection to who they are, their tūpuna and to the wairua foundation from which a sense of worth, belonging and wholeness can be rebuilt, is actively restored.

Practitioners described wairua as a foundational connection to Io Matua Kore that informs Māori understandings of tikanga, karakia, everyday life and ways of being. One practitioner spoke of this connection as central to all aspects of Māori life, guiding both her mahi and her personal relationships. Another practitioner described wairua as the connection from her wairua to Io Matua Kore and explained that this connection is intrinsic to her belief system, revealing Māori understandings of creation and humanity. Both of these accounts highlight wairua as central to Māori cosmological perspectives and lived experiences and practices, rather than as an abstract or symbolic concepts. This finding aligns with existing literature, which emphasises the

role of wairua in underpinning Māori cosmology (Brittain et al., 2025; Lindsay et al., 2022; Valentine et al., 2017), demonstrating that wairua is both a guiding force in everyday life and a foundational element of Māori worldview.

Wairua for Māori is the most important element of being, which is why it is the first and most important theme in this rangahau. Wairua was described by the practitioners as the essence of who they are and the energy that fuels them. These descriptions indicate the essential, interwoven relationship between wairua and mauri. These two elements of being are both distinct and interrelated. Mauri can change in relation to life circumstances and our emotions; expressions of mauri was spoken about by the practitioners as a part of their mahi with kiritaki. Practitioners taught them about wairua and mauri, how to connect with each of these aspects of their being and understanding how to respond to and nurture them for their hauora. Kiritaki, through their process of healing, learn that when their wairua is compromised, restoration is needed for healing to happen. Some did this by engaging in karakia, others spent time in te ao Taiao, while others quietened their wairua and connected with their tinana to assist the process of healing and wholeness. Powerfully, the practitioner participants said when they are healed, the person then becomes resilient, and they can embrace wairua. For some practitioners, karakia was central to helping them teach their kiritaki how to connect with their wairua. For other practitioners, this happened by understanding their own wairua and how to tune in by listening and responding to all four elements which can communicate what they need to achieve health and wellbeing.

The combined responses from the participants show that connection through wairua is the power behind karakia, this is also recorded in literature as being the source of where healing or protection occurs. This connection firmly places wairua as the central

element of being for Māori (Brittain et al., 2025; Durie, 2001; Ngawati, 2018; Valentine et al., 2018). The delicate relationship of wairua and mauri is woven throughout te ao Māori, being the foundation of health and wellbeing (Durie, 2001; Lapsley, et al., 2002; Mathews-John, 2021; Pere, 2006; Pomare et al., 2023; Valentine & Tassell-Matamua, 2022).

Another example that highlights the importance of wairua for Māori was identified in the practitioner's description of wairua and it's deep connection to te Taiao through wai. This wairua connection to the whenua was explained by one practitioner as life itself, since the kupu for life sustaining water is wai. In this kōrero, he went on to explain that as wai is water and wairua is in all things te ao Māori, wairua is therefore critical for all aspects of life, both the tangible and intangible. This practitioner drew on the integral connection Māori have to wai which includes our moana and awa. It is these waterways that bring sustenance through life giving water to the whenua and the whenua contributing to the wellbeing of the waterways. The importance of wairua was seen in the participants responses on the connection wairua has to whenua which fosters a deep sense of wholeness and wellbeing for Māori. These findings are discussed in existing literature which support the connection of our wairua as people in tune with te ao Taiao where Māori draw spiritual sustenance from (Lindsay-Latimer et al., 2024; Pomare et al., 2023). The connection of wairua to the whenua is essential for Māori health and wellbeing.

Regarding the important connection wairua has with rongoā, the participants referred to rākau, ngahere, the whenua and the entire ecosystem as a holistic healing location that reenergised and balanced life's daily challenges. This balance requires the foundational understanding of whakapapa, te ao Māori and Mātauranga Māori. It is

here that Māori find connection to wairua and then rongoā Māori (Wikaire, 2020). In this way, the four elements of being and hauora from Te Whare Tapa Whā are strengthened; encouraging health and wellbeing. This is important as rongoā is gathered through wairua-based relationship with the ngahere in accordance with tikanga practices (Davies, 2023; Keats-Farr, 2022; Wikaire, 2020). Rongoā contains physical properties for healing and can aid healing any imbalance within a person's hauora caused by mamae.

One practitioner said that rongoā is important to Māori health that more rongoā practitioners were needed to provide culturally safe and effective healing opportunities. Likewise, another practitioner said that without wairua included in their healing, kiritaki only receive partial healing, the foundation for rongoā Māori is wairua and therefore more Māori practitioners are needed who offer rongoā. Another practitioner stated that without access to rongoā Māori, kiritaki will not have what they need to heal and begin to love themselves again. This Mātauranga was so powerful, endorsing the need for services that are culturally safe and effective for Māori that can restore self-perception and acceptance. The need for Maori to have access to various forms of rongoā Māori, including rongoā rākau contained in our environmental elements identified in this research, is crucial. Consistent with previous research, rongoā Māori continues to have significant health and wellbeing benefits for Māori (Cashell, 2021; Keats-Farr, 2022; Pihama et al., 2020; Pomare et al., 2023; Tuari-Toma, 2021).

This first theme identified the importance of wairua for Māori, showing that wairua is central within Māori culture. The participants spoke about the complex reality for Māori who are disconnected from Māori culture through colonisation and the impact this has

on their healing journey. One participant said that her kiritaki do not understand that they are wairua beings as they were raised outside of te ao Māori and Māori culture. Once kiritaki had connection to Māori culture and their wairua, they could begin to heal. This kōrero speaks of kiritaki finding deep healing and wholeness through connection to wairua and Māori culture. Another participant discussed the ability Māori have to connect through wairua to Māori culture. He used a metaphor of trees being spiritual beings and states that they were created by Io Matua Kore when all of creation was made. He firmly connects wairua to Māori culture as a connection to Io Matua Kore. This example reveals that connecting with wairua begins the process of reconnection to whakapapa and ultimately, Io Matua Kore (Gilchrist, 2017). Many previous authors have described the important connection of wairua to Māori culture (Durie, 2007; Gilchrist, 2017; Harrison & Le Grice, 2024; Kennedy et al., 2015; Lindsay et al., 2022; Mathews-John, 2021; McLachlan et al., 2021; Pihama & Smith, 2023; Pomare et al., 2023; Royal, 2003; Tuakiritetangata & Ibarra-Lemay, 2021; Waitangi Tribunal, 2011; Waitoki & Levy, 2016).

Theme two – the impact of mahi tūkino

The second theme identified was the impact mahi tūkino has on wairua. This is due to the disconnection of wairua from the other elements of being as a result of mahi tūkino. This disconnection of wairua is spoken about by the practitioners across the following sections of the discussion as it is the preeminent impact of mahi tūkino on the survivor. A participant spoke of the impact of mahi tūkino as creating trauma, strong emotions and relational difficulties as it separates wairua from the other elements of being. Another practitioner spoke about the vast impact mahi tūkino has on wairua from a whānau, hapū and iwi perspective. As a result of the perpetrator's violations, the

perpetrator was cut off from his whānau and they from him. He was also stripped from his whānau name, removed from his ancestral lands and iwi. He was asked by the marae leaders to not to return. Although this is not a representative Māori response to mahi tūkino, it illustrates the profound ripple effect mahi tūkino has on survivors and perpetrators within their collective relationships. The impact of mahi tūkino goes both ways, damaging the personal and collective wairua of the survivor and the perpetrator, even if the perpetrator is not conscious of this consequence. In this case, for the wāhine who had survived mahi tūkino, the recognition and validation that came through justice enabled the healing journey to begin. There is significant literature that discusses the widespread impact of mahi tūkino (Fanslow et al., 2023; Harrison & Le Grice, 2024; Mathews-John, 2021; Mellar, 2023; Pihama et al., 2016; Pouesi, 2024; Te Wiata et al., 2022), with some noting the particular impact of mahi tūkino on wairua (Te Wiata et al., 2022; Harrison & Le Grice, 2024). What this account reflects, is the broader understanding within te ao Māori that a process of accountability and rebalancing is needed to enable healing to occur.

The theme outlining the impact of mahi tūkino on whakapapa was widely discussed by the Māori practitioners in this rangahau. One participant summarised mahi tūkino as being more about power than sex itself (Gavey & Farley, 2020; Mathews-John, 2021; Murray, 2019), which impacts both whakapapa and identity. There are also devastating impacts on the whakapapa of the survivors, their behaviour changed, they stayed away from whānau, hapū and iwi gatherings, they were deeply depressed and some were abusing substances as coping mechanisms. All of these outward expressions of mamae reveal a glimpse of the damage mahi tūkino did to the whakapapa of everyone involved. Conversely, whakapapa was also used as a

powerful way to bring about healing by drawing on the Mātauranga handed down from tūpuna. Another participant spoke about wairua in whakapapa in relation to bringing healing to kiritaki. He said that he uses the ancient Mātauranga handed down to him regarding wairua to bring healing to his kiritaki. He directly linked this Mātauranga to his tūpuna. Together, these accounts illustrate how mahi tūkino disrupts whakapapa and identity across generations, while also highlighting how wairua and ancestral Mātauranga provide pathways for healing and restoring these vital connections (Te Wiata et al., 2022).

Likewise, the identity of the kiritaki was impacted greatly by mahi tūkino as it changed their self-perception. One of the practitioners spoke of the impact of mahi tūkino changing the way kiritaki think about themselves, saying that if someone is broken or abused, that is what they believe is true about themselves.. One practitioner spoke of mahi tūkino causing deep identity disruption, where kiritaki absorb the hara of the perpetrator into their own sense of self, mistaking another's transgression for the truth about who they are as a person and as a wairua-led being. While another practitioner talked about the violation of mahi tūkino changing the person’s identity into a lie that says they are dirty, unclean and wrong. This is pertinent because if the person is unable to separate someone else’s violation from their own distinct identity, their identity will be negatively impacted and result in poor self-perception and a lack of self-worth and ultimately remain broken until they find healing. This forced change of identity is further exacerbated by the shame they feel externally from society and how society views people who have experienced mahi tūkino. The impact of mahi tūkino is compounded by both internal and external shame. All of the participants spoke about the impact mahi tūkino had on the identity of their kiritaki. The practitioners indicated

that it was impossible to heal identity and have it restored unless wairua was included. By healing the wairua, the kiritaki could then understand that their trauma is not who they are, rather they have taken on the violation as part of the hara or transgression perpetuated by others as their identity (Pearse-Otene, 2021). Healing in identity through the inclusion of wairua will ultimately heal their self-perception and sense of worth.

The findings on the impact of mahi tūkino indicates there are significant impacts to the survivor's self-perception, identity and hinengaro. Wairua has a positive effect on the impacted areas of being, as it permeates deep inside the mamae, creating healing from the inside out. While some research refers to the importance of healing whakapapa, there is little to no research that specifically refers to the healing of wairua from mahi tūkino (Harrison & Le Grice, 2024).

Theme three – Wairua in healing

The theme of wairua in healing is essential, otherwise, healing will be incomplete. In this theme, the unique and essential nature of wairua in healing is explored. Wairua is essential for Māori to heal from mahi tūkino as wairua is the foundation of te ao Māori. It is also essential that wairua is included in healing as wairua is the most important element of being for Māori (Durie, 2003; Valentine et al., 2023; Wilson et al., 2021). This level of wairua interconnectedness creates a strength for Māori that fortifies and supports the deep healing needed from mahi tūkino. Wairua plays a central role in healing, it is both the doorway and the connector that helps kiritaki move from distress to calm, safety and balance in the aftermath of mahi tūkino. One participant described how her kiritaki often arrive deeply distressed by their experiences. She works with

them through wairua guiding them towards a state of tau during their sessions, so that by the time they leave, they feel balanced. Another practitioner emphasised that wairua shapes the pace of healing, allowing time and space to respond to the needs of each kiritaki. She highlighted its role in forming a safe and trusting relationship between practitioner and kiritaki, enabling individuals to move at their own pace and engage in healing when they are ready.

As wairua is the foundation of all things Māori, it is important that all healing efforts on this level begin from a place of wairua first. Healing from mahi tūkino requires the active inclusion of wairua, as it enables kiritaki to engage with their trauma and restore both their wairua and mauri. Practitioners actively included wairua when their kiritaki first began coming to sessions. By engaging in wairua straight away, kiritaki could open up and work through their mamae, gaining healing of their wairua and other elements of being. Healing from mahi tūkino is complex, it causes deep and far-reaching trauma. Therefore, the healing process relies on wairua and wairua-specialist practitioners to support kiritaki in restoring wholeness. All participants emphasised that healing from mahi tūkino cannot occur without the inclusion of wairua. These insights are supported by a few authors who have researched the importance of wairua in Māori healing (Harrison & Le Grice, 2024; Te Wiata et al., 2022).

The trauma of mahi tūkino manifests across all four elements of being, wairua, hinengaro, tinana and whānau, creating separation and imbalance that permeates every area of a kiritaki's life (Durie, 1998). Practitioners consistently described the healing journey as a process of returning to balance and wholeness, understood within te ao Māori as tau, the place of calm, balance and peace. One practitioner spoke of

the imbalance in ira tangata, the human condition, affecting multiple dimensions of her kiritaki's lives identifying wairua as the essential element through which that balance could be restored. Without healing the imbalance in both ira tangata and ira atua, the effects of mahi tūkino remained unresolved. For one practitioner, whose worldview is grounded in both Māori and Christian frameworks, healing the imbalance in ira atua caused by mahi tūkino is understood as only possible through connection to God as creator. Her position was supported through her clinical experience and the lived experiences of wāhine in her own whānau who had survived mahi tūkino. This reflected the reality, acknowledged elsewhere in this thesis, that for many Māori, spiritual healing and Christian faith are not contradictory but complementary pathways to the same destination - the restoration of wairua and the return to wholeness. Karakia was a key tool used by Māori practitioners to support healing through wairua, helping to restore balance and wellbeing for their kiritaki. Karakia was used effectively as the healing power for the practitioners kiritaki. One practitioner believed that through karakia and wairua, her kiritaki can be healed and know they are loved. This was done through the spiritual and relational connection made through karakia. Similarly, another participant said she used karakia before her sessions to restore balance and prays that she will have what is needed to support their healing for herself and the kiritaki. Other participants spent a lot of time in karakia with God asking that her kiritaki will be healed. These accounts highlight the central role of wairua in healing for Māori, which is consistent with previous literature acknowledging the importance of wairua for wellbeing for Māori including the use of karakia (Lindsay et al., 2022). The importance of engaging with wairua in healing, using practices such as karakia has been acknowledged by previous literature (Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2014; Kopua et al., 2019; Kopua et al., 2020; Linsday et al., 2022).

Connection to wairua, whakapapa, culture and identity is central to healing from mahi tūkino. Participants emphasised that trauma disrupts these connections, while restoring them is vital for rebuilding wholeness and sense of self. One practitioner highlighted the importance of wairua in linking kiritaki to tūpuna, te ao wairua and ira atua; while another noted that connecting people to tikanga Māori provides hope and creates opportunities for healing. Wairua was described as essential for meaningful restoration, without it, any attempt at healing risks being superficial, a “band-aid” on trauma, leaving the deeper damage unaddressed. Through wairua-centred practices, kiritaki can process their trauma, reconnect with identity and rebuild their lives. These insights align with previous research highlighting the importance of wairua, connection and collective identity in healing from mahi tūkino (Mathews-John, 2021; Pomare et al., 2023).

Theme four – Practitioner wellbeing

The theme of practitioner wellbeing is critical to the ongoing effort to ensure there are enough healthy Māori practitioners available for the kiritaki to engage with. The need for the practitioners to keep themselves safe while helping their kiritaki with significant trauma was central to their practices. With firm self-care practices in place, the practitioners were able to mostly avoid transference and vicarious trauma. One practitioner said she grounds herself and releases the mamae by spending time with God and whānau, while another said she spends time in the moana and in te ao Taiao to release the sessions. All of the practitioners said they use karakia to both prepare and close out sessions with clients as part of their self-care strategy. Another said she enjoyed spending time in hobbies like her favourite sports and visiting her marae. There was another self-practice modelled by all practitioners which was being aware

of their own limits and what stage they are at in that continuum. This gave great insight to their own self-awareness and in turn gave them deeper understanding of what they were bringing into the room. These insights are in agreement with previous literature that identified the importance of practices that enable practitioners to maintain their hauora and wellbeing (Mathews-John, 2021; Pomare et al., 2023; Te Wiata, 2022).

Implications

Future rangahau

At the time of writing, this is the first rangahau to explore the role of wairua specifically, for Māori in healing from mahi tūkino. More rangahau is needed on this very important subject due to the complexity of wairua itself and how Māori experience wairua differently. It would be beneficial to have a deeper rangahau pool on this topic due to the deep damage mahi tūkino does to all elements of the person. For future rangahau, recruiting a larger pool of participants would be very beneficial. With more participants, the researchers would be able to gather more experiences, hear more voices and support the complexity, depth and breadth within te ao Māori and the various iwi across the motu. To increase the number of participants would also increase the demographics in the rangahau such as age, gender and religious beliefs. This would provide rich kōrero regarding experiences of wairua and its role in healing from mahi tūkino.

There is a significant gap in mainstream healthcare systems regarding culturally aware and aligned services for Māori (Smith, 2019). Specifically, there is a need for wairua to be implemented into healthcare services for treatment of mahi tūkino. For those few healthcare services and practitioners who are wairua centred, more rangahau on their

mahi would be a great addition to this rangahau kete (basket). Another possible future rangahau topic could focus on the need for training those who work with wairua and training pathways for healing of mahi tūkino. This is a very specialised area of mahi and would require wairua specialists to create a training curriculum that is inclusive of all engagements and experiential Mātauranga of wairua. The certification could be provided through Māori providers such as Hauora services and marae throughout regions in Aotearoa. In this way, more practitioners could be trained locally, drawing on the mātauranga from their respective areas. This would then ensure help is accessible to more kiritaki who have experienced mahi tūkino and their whānau locally.

Future research in this area would benefit Māori psychologists and practitioners by illuminating the range of wairua-led approaches being utilised across the field, building a stronger collective foundation for culturally safe and effective practice. This learning would be invaluable as working in and through wairua-based healing practices will always develop and grow, due to the limitless nature of wairua. Future research could also benefit from exploring collective, tikanga-based approaches to healing from mahi tūkino. This could include the role of marae and community settings as healing environments where Mātauranga Māori can be authentically centred. The significance of place and collective practice in Māori healing suggests that research in this area needs to move beyond individual therapeutic models, toward approaches that honour the communal dimensions of hauora. Equally important is research that is explicitly whānau-inclusive, examining how whānau relationships are disrupted by mahi tūkino and how collective healing processes can restore those relational bonds alongside the healing of the individual.

Communities

Future rangahau could also focus on community level care that includes wairua for healing from mahi tūkino. This currently is a substantial gap in wellbeing and healing provisions for Māori. As with healthcare, the minority of wairua practitioners are based in community settings, more rangahau of their mahi would greatly benefit our current gap in the literature and add to the rangahau kete. This would provide vital knowledge about the importance of wairua in healing for Māori from mahi tūkino. Since Māori are not one people group, rather hundreds of different hapū and iwi with their own pūrākau, whakapapa and who experience 'diverse realities' (Durie, 2003); future rangahau could seek to engage those communities in their area so their voices are all honoured and equally heard. As above, training could be provided to the practitioners so the mahi is relevant and specific to the kiritaki they work with.

Psychological practice recommendations

Some recommendations for professional practice of psychology, policy, services, training would be to acknowledge the importance of wairua for Māori as it is the most important element of being. The findings of this research highlight the need for a greater number of Māori psychologists who are able to authentically integrate wairua into their practice, as a fundamental component of culturally safe and effective care for Māori. There could also be specific training created for psychologists who are working with trauma and mahi tūkino, including those practicing with kiritaki who have sensitive claims with ACC. Again, this training could be created and delivered by wairua specialists from all areas of this specialist mahi, to remain in alignment with other practitioners training possibilities and provide mātauranga and skills to support psychologists who uphold wairuatanga in their practice. The authentic integration of

wairua into psychological practice requires more than a tick-box approach and cultural obligations are superficially met through gestures. An example of this is opening sessions with karakia without meaningful engagement in wairua as a foundational element of Māori hauora. Tokenistic inclusion of this kind fulfils a procedural function, while leaving the deeper spiritual and cultural needs of Māori unaddressed. Meaningfully centring wairua in psychological practice demands a sustained and genuine commitment to wairua as central to the healing journey, particularly for Māori survivors of mahi tūkino. It would underpin therapeutic relationships and enhance the healing modalities used, to encourage full and lasting healing. This unrestricted access to healing through wairua could reduce the length of time kiritaki remain in mental health services, opening up spaces for new kiritaki. Wairua based healing could also empower kiritaki to develop understanding of their wairuatanga, resulting in long lasting healing for themselves, their whānau and community.

Limitations

A possible limitation to this rangahau is the small number of participants. I was aware at the outset of the rangahau that more participants would be optimal. However, due to the sensitive nature of mahi tūkino and the limited numbers of practitioners working in this field, I was limited in the recruitment stage. Despite this, the limited rangahau on this topic, my aim was not to prove the results statistically. Rather, my aim was to honour the depth of the mahi, mana and kōrero of the practitioners who work with mahi tūkino kiritaki. Another limitation which is present in all rangahau is the possibility of researcher bias. Despite being difficult to eradicate entirely, acknowledging my own subjectivity and remaining conscious of its potential influence demonstrates transparency and a commitment to authentic interpretation grounded in my own

positionality as a wāhine Māori. Throughout the research process, I was encouraged to maintain a reflexive stance, standing back from my own assumptions while remaining close enough to the kaupapa to interpret the findings with cultural depth and sensitivity. A related limitation is response bias, whereby participants may have held particularly strong views regarding the importance of wairua given that they are practitioners themselves who are directly affected by the lack of wairua-based services available to Māori. This may have influenced both what they chose to share and how they articulated their experiences and practice observations. However, given how significantly under-researched wairua-led healing for mahi tūkino remains; the depth of knowledge and lived practice these participants brought to the rangahau, is equally a strength providing rich and expert insight into an area where very little documented evidence currently exists.

The final limitation is a societal one and addresses the lack of attention mahi tūkino has within the dominant society of Aotearoa. Though there is a recent national initiative of Te Aorerekura (National strategy to eliminate family and sexual violence), there are only a few organisations working tirelessly in this area. One organisation I presented my honours rangahau in 2022 is Te Ōhakī a Hine – National Network Ending Sexual Violence Together (TOAH NNEST) and the other organisation I recently learned of is Korowai Tūmanako based in Tamaki Makarau. Both of these organisations seek to prevent mahi tūkino by working with whānau, hapū and iwi directly. Most of the population is unaware of the unacceptably high rates of mahi tūkino within our nation due to the secretive nature of this form of violence.

I found conducting this rangahau difficult as the topic is heavy, the writing is hard as it is trauma-based and I have a young whānau. Future rangahau on this topic may be a limitation as few researchers would be willing to dive deep into such a trauma-filled topic. I explore this more below in my reflections.

Strengths

The first strength of this rangahau is that Kaupapa Māori methodology has enabled this rangahau to be carried out by, with and for the benefit of Māori. Centring Māori worldviews and voices was enabled by the Kaupapa Māori methodology that guided this rangahau. As I am a wahine Māori who is researching this topic as a tauira and not working in the field, I believe my participants were able to share deeper insights to help the rangahau speak truthfully and honestly, regarding the need for wairua in healing from mahi tūkino. They have years of direct experience of incorporating wairua into their mahi with kiritaki. Without them speaking honestly and bringing awareness to the essentiality of wairua in healing from mahi tūkino, this rangahau would not exist.

As this rangahau is qualitative, it has the strength of being flexible to move with the practitioners yet capture the heart of the rangahau. Qualitative rangahau is unique, in that it honours the depth of the whakaaro (thought, opinion) and nuance, which is particularly important with this area of rangahau that is complex and sensitive (Lawson-Te Aho, 1998). Participants and their Mātauranga was shared by conducting this rangahau in a way that is participant-led and also honouring the voices of the practitioner and experiences of the kiritaki they work with, from the initial kōrero and whakawhanaunga to the analysis and writing stages.

The outcome provided deep and meaningful findings regarding the importance of wairua for healing mahi tūkino kiritaki. The semi-structured interviews enabled the participants to talk about what was pertinent in their mahi and thereby the key themes were identified. This would not have been possible if I had used a quantitative method as it is difficult to measure wairua with quantitative scales that are prescriptive and reductionistic in nature. Another strength of this rangahau is the variety of practitioners who chose to participate. The wairua-based practitioners included wairua specialists, rongoā practitioners, clinical psychologists, tohunga and healers working in private practice. Their presence in the rangahau offered a richer scope of Mātauranga and findings that were identified. Finally, through whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, I offered the practitioners the option of anonymity which was a strength as the practitioner's identities and those of their kiritaki were protected. Subsequentially, they felt comfortable in sharing raw and brutally honest personal or whānau experiences and those of their kiritaki in the knowledge that their kōrero would be treated with the upmost respect, acknowledging the mana and tapu of everyone involved.

Final Reflections - Reflexivity

I have found this rangahau both rewarding and disappointing at the same time. It has been incredible to kōrero with such amazing Māori practitioners. To hear about their triumphs where they have been healed and brought healing to kiritaki who have suffered the whakamā and stigma of mahi tūkino. I felt their pain and heartache for those who struggle in mainstream services for years, unable to get the help they need. It was also difficult hearing about their personal experiences of mahi tūkino and realising this form of violence affects many more wāhine than we know.

Through the process of interviewing, analysing the rich kōrero and Mātauranga, I took many breaks to rebalance and recharge myself for the next section. There were many moments where hearing the depth of mamae, sadness and heaviness bought me to tears. The content of this rangahau is pōuri (sad) and is emotionally loaded, especially hearing about tamariki, when I have young tamariki myself. I wondered whether researchers would steer away from this kind of rangahau because of its 'heavy' nature. I am mindful of the very real impact of this kaupapa on myself and my whānau. I am more aware of myself, what I can handle and where my limits are in this mahi as a result. This process of protection or healing or rebalancing after sitting in this topic, has developed through wairua and my relationship with my Creator, Io Matua Kore. I am stronger for having produced this thesis, as I have protected myself and developed strategies to ensure I am not absorbing the mamae it causes, or the whakamā that surrounds it. I see this as an essential part of any rangahau of this nature, particularly for those researching wairua where transgression and mahi tūkino are involved. It is important to prioritise and tend to my own wairua and the wellbeing of my whānau to ensure I remain balanced throughout this rangahau.

Given the findings of this rangahau, it has been disappointing that Western therapies on the whole continue to ignore and fail to acknowledge and include wairua in psychological practice. I am also frustrated at the lack of acknowledgement that wairua is important and essential in the healing process for Māori. The participants in this rangahau all spoke about how essential it is, but it does not reflect the current healthcare system or care that is available for Māori who have experienced mahi tūkino. It is my strong hope and desire is that this rangahau will help to create space

for future wairua-based kōrero regarding the reality facing Māori kiritaki and practitioners in the search for healing from mahi tūkino.

Chapter six: Conclusion

Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua

The above whakataukī speaks of the importance of looking backwards to move forward (Norman, 2011; Rameka, 2017). This is critical in gaining understanding of the importance of wairua in the healing journey for Māori from mahi tūkino. By understanding that we consist of the four equal elements of being - wairua, whānau, hinengaro and tinana (Durie, 1998), we can fully comprehend what is required in the healing process from mahi tūkino. Maori are wairua first which is the most important element of being (Durie, 1998; Kennedy et al., 2015; Lindsay et al., 2022; Valentine, 2016; Valentine et al., 2017). When we connect with and to wairua, healing from mahi tūkino is possible. Essentially, wairua transcends all elements of being, it is critical that wairua is included in the healing process. By karakia and inclusion of wairua in healing sessions with kiritaki, healing from the impacts of mahi tūkino is possible.

The interconnected nature of our health and wellbeing is such that one part cannot be healed nor restored in isolation. All of the person's elements need to be considered and included as they are all connected through and by wairua. Health and wellbeing for Māori is holistic regarding the nature of healing (Harrison & Le Grice, 2024). Healing is essential for all nations and peoples when they encounter traumatic life events. For Māori, the inclusion of wairua in the healing journey is imperative as Māori are wairua centred (Durie, 1998; Harrison & Le Grice, 2024). Trauma caused by mahi tūkino effects all elements of being wairua, hinengaro, tinana and whānau (Durie. 1998). When mahi tūkino happens, a fracture occurs within, that can only be healed

by the inclusion of wairua in the healing process. For healing of wairua, we need to be reconnected and made whole again. For hinengaro, wairua is essential to repair memories and create long-term healing in thought processes and neural pathways. This can be done through choosing to work with a Māori practitioner who is skilled in wairua-based mahi. Within the tinana, wairua is needed to bring healing as it retains trauma in a cellular form until it is addressed and released. Wholeness in the tinana can be gained through reconnection also to wairua and hinengaro. Often this element is severed from the other elements due to the initial physical nature of mahi tūkino. Only then can tinana be reunited with wairua and hinengaro (Mathews-John, 2021). Finally, for whānau, healing needs wairua to repair relationships and connections as well as facilitate manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. This can happen by relationship or on marae in a larger setting with extended whānau there in support. Wairua is the active element that enables this level of healing to occur from mahi tūkino.

In conclusion, the final pātai asked at the conclusion of each participant interview was ‘is healing from mahi tūkino possible without the inclusion of wairua?’ All participants held the strong view that full healing from mahi tūkino must include wairua. Mahi tūkino is a silent, hidden, devastating scourge that has violated tamariki, wāhine, whānau, hapū and iwi intergenerationally, since the colonisation of Aotearoa. Healing becomes possible when wairua is collectively honoured, centred and woven into every aspect of the response to mahi tūkino.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview invitation

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

The importance of wairua for Māori in healing from sexual violence

Interview invitation

Tēnā koe [name],

Kō Mataka tōku maunga, kō Tahoranui tōku awa, kō Mataatua tōku waka, kō Ngāpuhi tōku iwi, kō Ngāti Rēhia tōku hapu, kō Ti Tii tōku marae, kō Megan Grace tōku ingoa.

I am a psychology masters student at Massey University and have chosen to research the importance of wairua for Māori in healing from sexual violence. This research study focus is tapu, therefore my supervisors Dr Pikihuia Pomare, Dr Julia Ioane and I have decided to approach this mahi in partnership with Māori practitioners who have or are working with survivors.

As a Māori practitioner working with this sensitive mahi, I would like to invite you to participate and add your experience to the rangahau. This will involve a sixty minute interview conducted kānohi ki te kānohi (face to face) or by zoom.

I am seeking to complete the interview stages over the coming two-three months, allowing for analysis and finalisation of the rangahau by the middle of 2024. Please let me know of your decision to participate or decline by replying by email: megan.grace.3@uni.massey.ac.nz

Mei kore ake for taking the time to read my invitation, I really appreciate it.

Ngā mihi,
Megan Grace

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Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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The importance of wairua for Māori in healing from sexual violence

Ngā kupu whakamārama / participant information sheet

He aha te kaupapa o tēnei rangahau? What is this research about?

My rangahau into the importance of wairua for Māori in healing from sexual violence is essential for Māori as we identify as primarily being led by wairua and wairuatanga. As sexual violence permeates all levels of one's being, it is essential that wairua is included in the healing journey to ensure healing is complete and constant. Since rangahau relating to sexual violence is highly sensitive, my supervisors and I chose to interview Māori practitioners who work with wairua in healing from sexual violence with survivors. This way, we hope to identify the various ways wairua is incorporated in healing for Māori. We would like this rangahau to contribute to the kete of healing to highlight the importance of wairua in healing that can be adopted into clinical and other therapeutic treatment options.

Mā wai e mahi tēnei rangahau? Who is doing this research?

Kō Mataka tōku maunga, kō Tahoranui tōku awa, kō Mataatua tōku waka, kō Ngāpuhi tōku iwi, kō Ngāti Rēhia tōku hapu, kō Ti Tii tōku marae, kō Megan Grace tōku ingoa.

Megan Grace (Ngāpuhi) is a postgraduate psychology student and researcher on this rangahau project.

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Ko Pīkihuia Pomare tōku ingoa. Nō Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi me Ngāi Te Rangi ahau. He pūkenga matua ahau kei roto i Te Kura Hinengaro Tāngata o Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa. He Kaimātai Hinengaro ahau hoki.

Dr Pīkihuia Pomare is a senior lecturer and clinical psychologist based within the School of Psychology at Massey University.

Ko Vaea te maunga, kō Polynesian Airlines te waka, kō Ngati Hamoa te iwi, kō Apaula Julia Ioane tōku ingoa. Talofa lava i le paia ma le mamalu o le tatou Aofia. Warm Pasifika greetings.

Julia Ioane is an associate professor and clinical psychologist based in the Clinical Psychology programme, at the School of Psychology at Massey University.

Ko wai ngā tāngata e whai wāhi ana ki tēnei rangahau? Who can take part in this research?

If you are a Māori practitioner who incorporates wairua in your previous (or current) mahi, with Māori who have experienced sexual violence in their lives; you are more than welcome to take part in this research.

He aha āku mahi mā ngā kairangahau? What will I be asked to do?

We are interested in talking with you to explore your client's (and your) experiences regarding the importance of wairua in healing from sexual violence. The kōrero can be arranged for your preference: kānohi ki te kānohi (face to face) or online through zoom. The kōrero will be approximately sixty minutes and audio recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

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He aha ōku mōtika? What are my rights as a participant?

Your participation is completely voluntary. As the questions are based on a sensitive topic, you can choose at any time not to provide an answer or please let us know if you require any further assistance or support that will make the process more comfortable for yourself. You can also withdraw from the rangahau at any time without need of explanation.

He aha te mea ka pā ki āku kōrero kua whakaratohia? What happens to my information provided?

All information provided will be used for the purpose of this research and will remain in secure and confidential storage. All data gathered, analysed and incorporated into this rangahau will have identifying descriptors removed, unless you would like to be named with the kōrero (information, knowledge) you share. There will not be any client-based identifying data gathered. The rangahau will be conducted in strict confidentiality. Only myself and my supervisors will have access to the data. During the results analysis stage, specific kōrero, excerpts or quotes selected in this rangahau will be returned to you to check for accuracy and your permission to use in the final thesis.

Mēnā he pātai āku, mā wai aku pātai e whakautu? Who can I contact about the research?

Now is a great opportunity, if you have any further pātai, queries, or concerns? You will receive a summary of the study once it is completed, there is an option to provide your contact details so the summary can be emailed or posted to you.

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Project Contacts

Please feel free to contact Meg Grace if you have any questions about this rangahau project.

Researcher

Megan Grace megan.grace.3@uni.massey.ac.nz

Main Supervisor

Dr. Pikihuia Pomare

Kaupapa Māori Senior Lecturer (09) 213 6104 P.Pomare@massey.ac.nz

Co-Supervisor

Dr. Julia Ioane

Associate Professor (09) 212 7160 J.Ioane@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern. Application 24/04/23 (4000027391)

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr. Fiona Te Momo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern (09) 414 0800 x 43347, email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz

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Appendix C – Participant consent form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

The importance of wairua for Māori in healing from sexual violence

CONSENT FORM

- I have read the information sheet provided and understand the material given to me
- A forum to ask questions and clarification was offered, and the answers were provided to my satisfaction
- I am aware that my participation in this Rangahau is voluntary and withdrawing is available to me at any time, with no need to provide an explanation
- I understand that all information during the kōrero will be kept confidential. No identifying data will be used or collected during the interviews; therefore, all interviewing data will remain anonymous

I .....[name] agree and would like to take part in this rangahau

I would like a summary of the project ☐

Date: .....

Signed: .....

Address for research project summary: .....

.....

.....

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Appendix D – Interview Questionnaire

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

The importance of wairua for Māori in healing from sexual violence

Master's researcher: Megan Grace
Supervisors: Dr. Pikihuia Pomare and Dr. Julia Ioane

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

WAIRUA

1. Based on your experiences, how would you describe wairua?
2. Why do you think wairua is important to Māori?
3. Why is the incorporation of wairua important to you in your mahi?
4. How do you include wairua in your mahi?
5. In your mahi with your clients over the years, what do you think they understand wairua to mean?
6. What is your understanding of wairua based services?
    a. What would an example of that look like?
7. What reasons bought your clients to you for wairua based interventions?

HEALING

1. What is your understanding of healing?
2. Do you believe wairua is important in the healing process? Why?
3. In your experience, how are wairua and healing connected?

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4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating wairua in a clients' healing journey?
5. In what way does wairua have a role in the retention of healing?
6. As a practitioner, how do you stay grounded and well in the midst of this mahi?

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. How does sexual violence impact wairua?
2. How does sexual violence connect to healing and wairua?
3. What is the role of wairua in recovering from sexual violence? Is this level of trauma recoverable, without the inclusion of wairua?
4. What do you think needs to be provided in the community and in health services for people who have experienced sexual violence?

CLOSING

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Ngā mihi,
Megan Grace

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Associate Professor
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Email: J.Ioane@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern as low risk. Application 24/04/23 (4000027391).

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.